

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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THROUGH DEATH
TO PRODUCE
THE KINGDOM

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Living Stream Ministry

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In Luke 12:1-48 the Man-Savior warned His disciples of the hypocrisy of religion ([vv. 1-12](#)), covetousness ([vv. 13-34](#)), and concerning watchfulness and faithfulness ([vv. 35-48](#)). Then in 12:49-53 He expressed the longing to be released through His death. Here we see that the Lord aspired to be fully released from the bondage of His flesh. This short portion of the Word is very deep, and we need adequate spiritual experience in order to understand it.

When I was in Shanghai more than fifty years ago, I read a book by brother T. Austin-Sparks entitled *The Release of the Lord*. That book made reference to [12:49](#) and [50](#). The writer pointed out that the Lord in His incarnation was bound and concealed in His flesh. He was God, and He had the divine life as His essence, strength, and power. Nevertheless, He was concealed in

His humanity, which was a restriction to His divine being. Therefore, He needed to be released through death; that is, He desired that His divine being would be released through death.

Luke 12:49 and 50 correspond to John 12:24: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” Here the Lord likens Himself to a grain of wheat. If a grain of wheat does not fall into the earth and die, it will abide alone and remain the same. But when it falls into the ground and dies, the death of that grain releases the life within it. We may say that death becomes a release to the inner life of the grain of wheat. Through such a release, the riches of the life of the grain of wheat come forth to produce many grains. The Lord Jesus as a grain of wheat fell into the ground and lost His soulish life through death so that He might release His eternal life in resurrection to the many grains.

When we compare John 12:24 with Luke 12:49 and 50, we see that both portions of the Scriptures describe the release of the divine life, or the release of the divine being of the Lord’s Person. As God, the Lord Jesus possessed the unlimited eternal life. However, this unlimited

life was greatly restricted and restrained in His humanity, in His flesh. Therefore, the Lord was anxious and desirous for the release of His divine life. Once the divine life was released from within Him, He could impart it into His many believers. This is the basic thought in 12:49-53.

COMING TO CAST FIRE ON EARTH

In 12:49 the Lord Jesus says, “I came to cast fire on the earth, and what can I desire if it has already been kindled?” This “fire” is the impulse of the spiritual life, which comes from the Lord’s released divine life and which causes the divisions mentioned in [verses 51 through 53](#). In these verses we see that there will be divisions even in the families of the believers. These divisions come from the fire which is the impulse of the spiritual life, and this impulse comes from the Lord’s released divine life. His life was concealed, and the Lord wanted it to be released. He wanted the fire to burst into flame.

In [verse 49](#) the Lord says, “What can I desire if it has already been kindled?” This part of the verse may also be rendered, “How I wish that it were already kindled!” This indicates that the fire was not kindled before the Lord’s death. We

know from the record in the book of Acts that after the Lord's death this fire became a flame.

PRESSED UNTIL HIS BAPTISM IS ACCOMPLISHED

In [12:50](#) the Lord goes on to say, “But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am pressed until it is accomplished!” The word “baptism” here reminds us of the Lord’s word to James and John in [Mark 10:38](#): “Are you able to drink the cup which I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” Both the cup and the baptism refer to the Lord’s death. The cup signified that His death was the God-given portion for Him to take for the sinners whom He would redeem for God. Baptism denoted that His death was the God-ordained way for Him to pass through for the accomplishment of God’s redemption for sinners.

The Greek word rendered “pressed” in [Luke 12:50](#) may also be translated “constrained.” The Lord was constrained in His flesh, which He put upon Himself in His incarnation. He needed to die, to be baptized, in physical death so that His unlimited and infinite divine being with His divine life might be released from His flesh. His divine life, after being released through His

physical death, became the impulse of His believers' spiritual life in resurrection.

A CONFLICT BETWEEN TWO KINGDOMS

In [12:51](#) the Man-Savior says, “Do you think that I came to give peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.” Here the Lord asks if the disciples thought that He came to give peace on the earth. In a sense, the Lord did come to give peace. When He came, peace came, for He brought peace to mankind. When He was born, the multitude of the heavenly army praised God and said, “Glory in the highest places to God, and on earth peace among men of His good pleasure” ([2:14](#)). Hence, the coming of the Savior rendered glory to God, in the heavens and brought peace to men on earth. In [Ephesians 2:14](#) Paul even says that Christ is our peace. But, in another sense, the Lord did not come to give peace but rather division. This division is due to the satanic life in the unbelievers struggling against the divine life in the believers—a conflict between the satanic kingdom and the kingdom of God.

The Lord spoke a similar word in [Matthew 10:34](#): “Do not suppose that I came to bring peace

on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.” The whole earth is under Satan’s usurpation ([1 John 5:19](#)). The Lord Jesus came to call some out from his usurpation. This certainly arouses Satan’s opposition, and he instigates the ones under his usurpation to fight against those called by the Lord. To be sure, the Lord’s coming did not bring peace but a sword.

The conflict between the satanic life and the divine life is actually a warfare between the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God. A kingdom is a matter of life; that is, a certain kind of kingdom has a certain kind of life. For example, we may speak of the vegetable kingdom. The vegetable kingdom depends on the vegetable life. In the same principle, the human kingdom depends on the human life, and the kingdom of God depends on the life of God. Since we have the life of God, we have the reality of the kingdom of God, and we are in this reality. But the unbelievers, who live by the life of Satan, are in another realm, another kingdom. This means that they are in the reality of the satanic kingdom. The kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan certainly do not agree but are contrary to each other. Hence, there is a struggle between

the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, and this struggle causes division.

In Luke 12:52 the Lord continues, “From now on there will be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.” This kind of division has taken place again and again throughout the last nineteen centuries.

In verse 53 the Lord goes on to say, “They will be divided, father against son, and son against father; mother against daughter, and daughter against the mother; mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law.” Here Luke characteristically mentions the details. The kind of division described here is not pleasant, for it is due to the struggle between two lives, the divine life and the satanic life.

We have seen from 12:51-53 that there will be division caused by the satanic life in the unbelievers struggling against the divine life in the believers. We have pointed out that this is a conflict between the satanic kingdom and the kingdom of God.

Now that we understand the thought conveyed in these verses, we should not do anything to start a war in our family. We should never go to those in our family and say, “I have the divine

life, but you don't have this life. Because I have the divine life, there will be war between me and you. Even though I don't want to be against you, you will be against me.” To say something like this would be very foolish. Instead of doing anything to provoke conflict with our family, we should live a life that is humble, peaceful, and submissive, and allow the Lord to work in the situation.

TEACHING ABOUT THE DISCERNMENT OF TIME

In 12:54-59 we have the Lord's teaching about the discernment of time. The Lord's words recorded in [verses 49 through 53](#) were delivered to His disciples. What He says in [verses 54 through 59](#) is addressed to the crowd, to the unbelievers.

In 12:54-56 the Lord said to the crowds, “When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say that a rainstorm is coming, and so it happens; and when a south wind is blowing, you say that there will be heat, and it happens. Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the earth and the heaven; how is it then that you do not discern this time?” The word “discern” in [verse 56](#) also means prove

by testing, and “face” denotes appearance. The Greek words rendered “how is it then that you do not discern” may also be rendered “but this time you do not know how to discern.” To discern this time is to discern the signs of the time (Matt. 16:3). These signs are that John the Baptist has come to announce the coming of Messiah, as was prophesied (Luke 3:2-6, 15-17), and that Messiah is here, ministering Himself so that the people may receive Him and be saved. The people could discern signs concerning the weather and the appearance of earth and heaven, but they could not discern the signs brought in by John the Baptist and the Messiah Himself.

In verse 57 the Lord continues, “And why do you not even of yourselves judge what is right?” Even without the teaching of the Lord, the Jews had enough signs to judge of themselves the right way to follow and the right thing to do at that time, that is, to receive the Lord and follow Him. However, they refused to receive Him and follow Him.

A WORD SPOKEN TO THE CROWDS FOR REPENTANCE AND SALVATION

In verses 58 and 59 the Lord says, “For as you

are going with your opponent to a magistrate, endeavor to be released from him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge will deliver you up to the officer, and the officer will throw you into prison. I tell you, you will by no means come out from there until you have paid the very last copper coin.” The Greek word translated “copper coin” is *lepton*, the second smallest coin of the Greco-Roman coinage of Palestine. The word “for” at the beginning of [verse 58](#) indicates that [verses 58 and 59](#) are a continuation of [verse 57](#), in which the Man-Savior charged the Jews that, while they were still on the way (going), under the law (their opponent—[John 5:45](#)), to meet God (the magistrate) and be judged by Christ (the judge—[John 5:22; Acts 17:31](#)), they should endeavor to be released from the law so that they might not be judged by Christ and thrown into the lake of fire (prison—[Rev. 20:11-15](#)) by the angel (the officer—see [Matt. 13:41](#)). If that should happen, they will by no means come out forever ([Luke 12:59](#)).

A WORD SPOKEN TO THE DISCIPLES FOR THEIR KINGDOM LIFE

The word in [12:58](#) and [59](#) was spoken to the

crowds (v. 54) for their repentance and salvation. But in Matthew 5:25 and 26 this word is applied to the disciples for their kingdom life: “Be well disposed quickly with your opponent, while you are with him in the way, lest the opponent deliver you to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Truly I say to you, You shall by no means come out from there until you have paid the last quadrans.” Here the Lord says that we should “be well disposed quickly” lest we die, our opponent die, or the Lord come back, and thus there be no opportunity for us to be reconciled to our opponent. In Greek “opponent” means an opponent in law, a plaintiff. “In the way” signifies that we are still living in this life. Being delivered to the judge will take place at the judgment seat of Christ when He comes back (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10). The “judge” will be the Lord, the “officer” will be the angel, and the “prison” will be the place of discipline. To “come out from there” (prison) is to be forgiven in the coming age, the millennium.

The Roman quadrans was a small brass coin equal to a quarter of an assarion, which is equal to one cent. The meaning here is that even with the smallest thing we need to make a thorough

clearance. This kind of clearance is related to the kingdom life.

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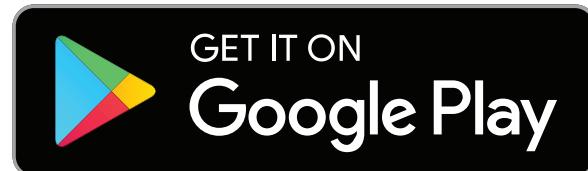
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