

Luke 12 Chapter Study

INTRO

VIII. The Judean Ministry 9:51-24:53

J. The Teaching of Jesus 12:1-19:27

In this section of Luke, as Jesus is making His way through the southern region of Judea, Luke records the teaching of Jesus.

As we've mentioned in a previous study, Jesus didn't come up with brand new material in every village & place He spoke.

He repeated the same lessons again & again.

This is why in Matthew's gospel we find Jesus teaching something early in His ministry in Galilee, then Luke records Jesus saying much the same thing 2 or 3 years later in Judea.

It was this repetition of the same lessons that ensured the disciples had them firmly committed to memory & were able to repeat them with such precision after Jesus' ascension.

So in this section of his gospel, Luke gives us a *review* of the kind of things Jesus was teaching.

One of the things that becomes clear as we read on is that there's little connection between these lessons. They each stand on their own. And while this may seem a bit awkward & disjointed to us – it was very much the style of Jewish preaching in Jesus' day.

They called preaching "charaz," which means *stringing pearls*.

This passage is like a collection of pearls strung together without

the close connection which modern preaching demands. ^[1]

1. Beware of hypocrisy 12:1-3

¹ In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ² For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. ³ Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.

The chief sin of the Pharisees was hypocrisy.

As Jesus made clear in His criticism of them, they made themselves to appear all righteous & holy on the outside, but their hearts were far, far from God.

They were like newly painted tombs – Pretty on the outside, but filled with vile corruption on the inside.

As anyone knows whose made bread, it only takes a small amount of yeast to raise a large mass of dough.

In the same way, it only takes a toe-hold in a person's life for hypocrisy to move in & take over.

Once we start down the road of compromise, accommodating sin, hiding it, nurturing it in some private, dark, little corner, it won't be long till our whole lives are compromised.

The word "hypocrite" means "actor."

It comes to us from Greek drama where actors wore masks that were symbolic of their character's intent.

Hypocrite = beneath a mask

In time, the word came to mean anyone who played a part, who pretended to be one thing while in fact they were something else.

Jesus warned His followers that hypocrisy doesn't fool God.

And that one day, all actors will be unmasked; all secrets laid bare.

2. Healthy fear 12:4-7

4 "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!"

As these are the last months of Jesus' mission, the hostility toward Him on the part of the religious leaders has become intense & concerted.

They're out to get Him, scheming on how they can trap & condemn Him.

The leaders have made it clear to the people that anyone who follows Jesus stands in danger of their wrath as well.

So Jesus tells the disciples to not fear what men can do.

After all, what the worse they can do – execute them.

But all that does is send them to heaven. Where's the fear in

that?

Now, let's be honest – for the disciples – there was fear at the prospect of being put to death!

There was fear because they had no idea what heaven was like; all they knew was this life; & their experience with death was that it was something to avoid at all costs.

The thought of being executed by cruel men was something they did not, *could not* look forward to.

But as Jesus spoke this – He *did* know what heaven was like!

And He knew that the momentary suffering of death was nothing to worry about in light of the glory & bliss of heaven.

Bill didn't like to fly – hated it!

Seats cramped, & it's just boring; plus, he didn't really trust the whole idea of flight.

Any turbulence freaked him out!

One year he won an award at work for most sales.

The prize was a 2 week vacation for 2 in Fiji.

Now, Bill had never been out of his home state of Iowa, so he had no idea what a tropical island like Fiji is like.

While his wife was ecstatic, He didn't want to go; all because it meant a long flight.

But she persuaded him & they went – him dreading it the whole way – UNTIL they landed in Fiji. Then he went nuts!

He couldn't believe the beauty & had such a good time the 2 weeks they were there, he & his wife decided they would come back as often as they could.

Now – Bill still doesn't enjoy flying, but he gladly endures it, because he knows that's how he gets to Fiji.

If you & I knew what heaven was like, there'd be little fear of death!

We wouldn't look forward to death – but it would lose its sense of terror.

Jesus knew all about what heaven is like, & that it's the destiny of those who believe in Him, so He tells His followers to not fear those who are able to take our physical lives.

Rather, we ought to concern ourselves with God, the One Who determines where we *spend* eternity.

6 “Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And

not one of them is forgotten before God. ⁷ But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

God cares about *all* life, even the life of little birds.

If He shows such care for them – how much more does He care for those who bear His image?

The average person has about 100,000 hairs on their head. ^[2]

But each day, several will fall out to be replaced by new hairs.

At any given moment, God knows the numbers of hairs on your head - even though that is an inordinately useless piece of information.

Jesus' point is that if God knows such a mundane detail about you as your hair inventory, rest assured He knows about every *need* in you life.

3. The necessity of confessing Christ 12:8-12

⁸ “Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. ⁹ But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

As I mentioned, word had gone out from the religious leaders that Jesus was to be shunned.

The threat was issued that anyone who attached themselves to Jesus stood in danger of being excommunicated from the synagogue, which was the center of Jewish social life.

Despite these warnings, as v. 1 says, massive crowds still followed Him.

They felt safe in the fact that there were too many of them for the officials to deal with.

But Jesus knew that was about to change & the crowds would soon be thinning dramatically.

So He issued this challenge. And as He does, He draws the line very clearly: How people decide about Him determines their eternal fate.

This was an unmistakable claim to being the Messiah.

When Jesus says, “**Whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God,**” He’s means

whoever declares his/her loyalty & attachment to Jesus. It's the confession of *identification* with Him.

Our faith in Christ cannot be some hidden thing that is never declared to others.

It *must* find expression in our words & lifestyle.

A faith that's never declared to the world in some way, shape or form, is no faith at all.

Now, Jesus adds a bit more to this, & we can be thankful He does.

If we take just what we have in vs. 8-9, some might fear that they're hopelessly lost because at some point, they denied they were a follower of Christ.

Maybe as a young Christian with their friends, they begged off being a believer because they were being mocked or stood in danger of rejection from their peers.

Who among us hasn't felt the gentle nudging of the Holy Spirit to speak up at a time when God was being mocked, but we kept silent, & went away wondering if we'd just denied the Lord?

Jesus knew there would be times when even the strongest believer would fall short of confessing his/her faith – so He adds -

10 “And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven.”

When Jesus says, “Anyone who *speaks a word against the Son of Man,*” He's referring to a momentary weakness where one's faith falters, but then recovers.

This is “a” word, spoken in an instance, then regretted.

But when He says, “to him who *blasphemes against the Holy Spirit,*” this is something very different.

Here He uses words that speak of an on-going position of opposition to the Holy Spirit.

What is the main ministry or work of the Holy Spirit?

As Jesus says in John 15 & 16 – to convict them of their sin & need of Christ.

The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is to resist Him & to count conviction as nothing to pay attention to.

What Jesus is saying in v. 10 is that while a believer's momentary failure of faith can be forgiven, what *can't* be forgiven is a flat-out, life-long *rejection* of Christ.

11 “Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. 12 For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

Jesus didn't say, “**IF** they bring you,” it was “**WHEN** they bring you.”

We live in a hostile world at war with God.

It's inevitable we will face the world's hostility.

Jesus says we aren't to *worry* about what to say when challenged.

At the time of need, as we yield to Him He will teach us what we should say.

Many of us have experienced this very thing.

Facing hostile relatives, co-workers, or authorities; & there, forming in our hearts is not only a reply, but a wonderful peace.

I have sat as a student in classrooms where the professor was espousing some trite piece of godlessness.

And knowing I was a Christian who would have no answer to what he had just said, would ask my response.

A quick prayer goes up – there's a moment of silence, then the words come.

It is so fun to watch the professor stutter, stammer, then change the subject.

In 1 Pet 3:15, Peter says that we should always be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks us why we believe what we believe.

Does that contradict what Jesus says here in v. 11?

No! Jesus didn't say we shouldn't study & be prepared to answer the questions of unbelievers.

What He said was not to *worry* about it – for the Holy Spirit would recall to our memory the things we've learned, as it says in John 14:26.

Don't forget that Jesus calls the Holy Spirit the “*Advocate*.”

That was a legal term, referring to someone who acted as your lawyer when you went to court.

When we're hauled before the court of world opinion, the Holy Spirit will be there to assist us.

4. Beware of covetousness 12:13-21

13 Then one from the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” 14 But He said to him, “Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?”

It was not uncommon for people to ask rabbis for help in dealing with personal matters, after all, they were the most learned men of the day when it came to the will & counsel of God.

But this guy approached Jesus on a matter that was totally outside the scope of His work as a rabbi.

A matter like this had to be handled by the elders of the town where he lived who knew his family situation and could hear from all sides in the matter.

This guy was trying to bypass the means of justice to grab for something that in all likelihood wasn't his.

If it was, & his case was just, he'd have gone to the city elders.

Jesus made it clear – He was not going to get embroiled in something outside His scope of ministry.

But Jesus knew the motive behind this man's request, & used it as the backdrop to speak about the danger of greed.

15 And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”

Jesus uses strong words when He says, “Take heed & beware.”

They give the idea of someone who's about to be attacked so they're standing in a posture of defense, alert to danger.

Covetousness is a tendency to which almost all human beings are susceptible.

Being the physical creatures we are, if we're not careful, we can easily alter the center of our lives from the spiritual to the material.

Once we do that, then we start thinking of life in terms of possessions & the pleasure they provide.

But life is more, far more, than things.

True satisfaction comes not from things, but from relationships.

And there is one relationship that trumps all others – The one relationship that alone gives substance to life is with God.

Jesus now gives a parable about the futility of defining our lives in a

purely materialistic way.

16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’

It was such a rich harvest it overflowed his storage bins.

18 So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.” ’

This guy was the classic materialist, who thought that the sum total of life was wealth & the goodies it could buy.

20 But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ 21 “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

If we place our sense of value in earthly things it leads to an impoverished spiritual life.

We must put our treasure in the things that last for eternity.

It's important to note here that Jesus does not say that those who are wealthy in earthly things are automatically excluded from heaven, or that they are somehow spiritually deficient.

It's not the amount of material wealth a person has that is important.

It's where their real treasure lies, in their possessions or in heaven.

There are many wonderful, godly wealthy people.

Though they have millions of dollars, they do not count that as the substance of their lives.

If they were to go from wealth to poverty in a day, nothing would really change about their lives because they base their identity on their relationship with God.

At the same time, there are lots & lots of people who are poor, barely getting by, who are all wrapped up in their possessions.

Being greedy, being covetous, has nothing at all to do with how much money a person has. It has only to do with what has their heart; this world, or God.

God has gifted the Body of Christ with certain individuals who have great skill at making money.

Whatever they do, it prospers – they have the golden touch.

These people are valuable assets to the Kingdom because they help finance the works of the Kingdom in this world.

If you're one of those who has that a talent at making money, I suggest you realize you're uniquely placed in the Body to use that money for Kingdom work.

5. Don't worry – Trust God 12:22-34

22 Then He said to His disciples, “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. **23** Life is more than food, and the body *is more* than clothing. **24** Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? **25** And which of you by worrying can add one cubit [18 inches] to his stature? **26** If you then are not able to do *the* least, why are you anxious for the rest? **27** Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. **28** If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more *will He clothe* you, O *you* of little faith? **29** “And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. **30** For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. **31** But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. **32** “Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

This whole section can be summed up simply: God loves you!

Surrender to that love, give yourself without reservation to Him &

He'll take care of you, like a Father takes care of his children.

Because that's who He & you are – a Father and His kids.

All of this comes under the heading of v. 15 & the warning about

defining our lives in materialistic terms.

The antidote to materialism & the death-dealing covetousness it brings is found in v. 33 -

33 Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The way to combat the ever present temptation to covet is to make it a habit to give.

Some people are *shopaholics*; they have a serious compulsion to buy things.

There's an inner drive to purchase stuff & when they do, it's like a fix that provides comfort for a few hours, but then it wears off and they have to buy again.

Here's a great way to overcome compulsive buying – take the amount of money you would spend on the ginzu knife set, and write a check to a missionary.

Take the amount for that chopper/slicer/dicer/carpet-cleaner/zastromatic work-out center that folds up and stores under your bed, & write a check out for the building project.

In a very short period of time, the compulsion to buy future garage sale items will diminish.

And you will have built a heavenly savings account that pays eternal dividends.

6. Always be ready 12:35-48

35 “Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; 36 and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. 37 Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. 38 And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. 39 But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he

would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰ Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

Since we covered these vs. in depth Sunday, we'll just read on -

⁴¹ Then Peter said to Him, “Lord, do You speak this parable *only* to us, or to all *people*?”

Peter didn't know if Jesus meant this for all the people who were standing round, or only for the disciples.

You see, Peter was still thinking that Jesus would soon reveal Himself as the Messiah.

Jesus was speaking about the 2nd Coming, but Peter thought He was referring to some imminent revelation He was about to make.

So he asked, “Are you going to reveal Yourself to the whole nation, or just to us?”

Jesus doesn't answer Peter's question because there *was no* answer to it – Peter had His coming all wrong.

He goes on to say that which would only later become clear to the disciples.

⁴² And the Lord said, “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* master will make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of food in due season? ⁴³ Blessed *is* that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁴ Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has.

The servant who will be rewarded is the servant who's been faithful with what he/she has.

⁴⁵ But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, ⁴⁶ the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him*, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint *him* his portion with the unbelievers.

The wicked servant is one who shirks his duty.

He lives as though no day of reckoning is coming.

When that day *does* come, as it surely will – he loses everything.

Does this mean some believers will lose their salvation?

After all, Jesus calls this guy a *servant*. But his end is with the *unbelievers*.

Let me ask – though he’s called a servant – did he serve? No!
True servants serve.

Those who don’t serve, aren’t servants, no matter what label they may go by.

The true servants of God are *always* revealed by the *fact* of their service to God.

There are many both today & in the history of the church who’ve taken the title “Christian.” But the label does not a Child of God make.

The Children of God will be like their Father & will love His Son. That love will be the motivating source of their lives.

47 And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

Again, the warning about making sure our profession matches or confession.

It is not enough to **SAY** you’re a Christian – are you obeying God?

Those who don’t will be punished.

48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

Knowledge is responsibility.

To know about God & what He requires, & not comply is absolute foolishness.

Each of us will be judged on the basis of the light we’ve received.

People of Calvary Chapel, pay special attention to that – for we are the recipients of much light.

7. Christ at odds with the world 12:49-53

49 “I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!

What exactly Jesus is referring to here is a bit of a mystery.

Is He speaking of the final judgment He will bring in the last days

when the rebellion of satan & man is finally put down?
Or is He referring to the fire John the Baptist spoke of – the fire of the Holy Spirit that would come on His followers?
I think He's referring to the work of the Spirit, empowering His people.

The harshness of judgment was something very distant from Jesus' mind during His mission.

When James & John wanted to call down fire on the Samaritan village, Jesus rebuked them, saying that was not His mode of operation and was not to be theirs either.

So I can't see this as a reference to judgment.

No, I think He's referring to the baptism of the Holy Spirit that John said He would bring.

And it's this reference to baptism that moves Him to say -

50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!

The baptism He means here is the immersion into sufferings He was about to endure.

As He looked at that end that was swiftly coming, He saw the line that was being drawn between the peoples of the Earth – a line that would divide believer from unbeliever, but would not respect such things as family & friends.

51 Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. 52 For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. 53 Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

The closest bond in human society is the bond of family; marriage & parents & children.

But Jesus was about to launch a new era in human history where there would be a bond even more precious & important than the human family – the spiritual family.

Through His suffering & death, men & women would be able to be born again, & would become the children of God.

The problem is, this new affinity, this new family linkage would

create a tension with those who do not share it.

Christian, listen – you have more in common with other believers than you do with your physical family.

No matter how close you may be to your unsaved relatives, the fact of the matter is, when it comes to your faith in God, there's going to be tension.

They may do well with the news of your conversion at first. but the more you grow in Christ, the more messy it's going to become.

Either they will come to faith too, or the relationship will cool. It's inevitable.

8. WAKE UP! 12:54-59

a. know the times! Vs. 54-56

54 Then He also said to the multitudes, “Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, ‘A shower is coming’; and so it is. **55** And when you see the south wind blow, you say, ‘There will be hot weather’; and there is. **56** Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how *is it* you do not discern this time?”

The prophets of the Tanach (OT) had been quite clear.

The signs & oracles all pointed to that being the time of the Messiah's coming.

Daniel had set a time-table in his prophecy for when the Messiah would come, & the last seconds on the clock were ticking down.

Jesus said, “Look, you can forecast the weather by looking at the skies. But you remain *willfully oblivious* to the forecast of the scriptures about the moment in which you live! And you call yourselves the people of God! You pretend to be such learned scholars in the scriptures!”

What Jesus says here is a crucial insight for us.

You see, in Amos 3:7 we find this –

Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.

God's plan for history has been given to us in the pages of Scripture.

Prophecy tells us ahead of time what will take place so we can be confident in knowing God is the Great Shepherd Who steers all things to their desired end.

What I want to ask you to take note of is that Amos 3:7 means that a *futurist* view of prophecy is the only one that can be right.

Let me explain.

The futurist view of prophecy takes the prophecies regarding the last days literally.

We believe the Bible tells us about future events that will take place surrounding to the Return of Christ.

Futurists believe in -

- 1) A literal Rapture of the Church
- 2) A literal 7 year Tribulation
- 3) A real world ruler called the Antichrist
- 4) A literal mark without which no one can buy or sell
- 5) That Israel will be allowed to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem
- 6) That Jesus will come back at the end of the Tribulation and reign visibly on Earth for a 1,000 years, during which the devil is bound & Earth is restored to the condition of Paradise.

Now, there's a growing school of interpreting prophecy called the *historical view*; AKA *Preterism*.

Preterism says that all of these things were fulfilled from 68-70 AD in the destruction of the temple.

And that now we are in the Millennium & Christ is reigning spiritually.

The only prophecy left to be fulfilled is for Jesus to come back & end history with the dissolving of the physical universe & the Final judgment.

But if that's true, then Amos 3:7 doesn't apply because all prophecy has been fulfilled!

And we are living in an era without prophecy – and history is rolling on undirected by God.

Preterism can't be valid because it contradicts Amos 3:7 which says that God tells the prophets what will be and that history progresses inside the prophetic word of God, not outside it.

So, here's the deal – Jesus rebuked the people of His day for being

willfully ignorant of the time in which they lived.

Yet there is far more prophetic information about the timing of His 2nd Coming that there was about the 1st.

If *they* ought to have known the moment in which they lived, *we ought to even more.*

This is a call for us to study the Word of God and understand what it says about the Last Days.

b. know what to do! Vs. 57-59

57 “Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right?”

Once we realize the moment we live in & how it speaks of the coming of Christ, we need to take a good, hard look at our lives & make sure we’re living in a manner appropriate to the moment.

58 When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. 59 I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite.”

Why wait till you’re hauled before a judge & sentence is passed on you, when you can deal with things ahead of time & so escape judgment?

In this illustration, Jesus assumes that they’ve done something wrong that they can put right.

He says, “Put it right *before* you’re brought before judgment.”

You see, He has the idea of His coming in mind – that all of us are going to face a day of judgment.

Realizing that day is coming – we must be prepared by taking care of business now.

Is there something you need to take care of?

Is there some relationship that needs mending?

Some sin that needs forsaking?

Some secret that needs exposing? [cf. v. 2 • Elaborate]

[1] *The Gospel of Luke*. 2000, c1975 (W. Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, Ed.). The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

[2] <http://hairloss.about.com/od/thehairgrowthcycle/f/Number.htm>