

Luke 12 – “Gospel” Defined

Introduction

Luke's account of Christ's ministry in this week's reading has been narrowing down further and further. Chapter 7 concerned the overall acceptance/rejection of Christ's authority followed by Christ's authority over all realms in chapter 8. The focus narrowed in chapters 9 and 10 to three viewpoints of Christ Himself and then more specifically of His message; and became more focused in chapter 11 contrasting the characteristics of the believer vs. the hypocrite. The issues were more “global” dealing with large groups, narrowing down to smaller groups and ultimately to individuals. Chapter 12 is Christ's gospel focused completely on the individual. It is comprised of 12 individual teachings – each valuable in and of themselves – that are interweaved into the single most important message every person on earth must accept or reject. The entire plan for our lives in this present world and the one to come is plainly revealed in 4 groups of 3 teachings each.

¹Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of people had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, He began saying to His disciples first of all, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ²But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. ³Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed upon the housetops.

⁴“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. ⁵But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him! ⁶Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? Yet not one of them is forgotten before God. ⁷Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

⁸“And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God; ⁹but he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God. ¹⁰And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him. ¹¹When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defense, or what you are to say; ¹²for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

[Read 1-3]

Q: How does this teaching fit with the previous chapter's topic?

A: Chapter 11 contrasted the believer with the hypocrite. Hypocrisy – as well as true faith – will one day be plainly and clearly exposed.

Q: What should our viewpoint be of our life if we believe this to be true?

A: We should live knowing that every thought, choice and action will one day be exposed as either being for Christ or for ourselves.

[Read 4-7]

Q: How does verse 4 fit in with the teaching in verses 1-3?

A: Since everything will be exposed, the **REAL** issue is not **THIS** life but the **NEXT**.

Q: What is the message to us personally about the sparrows in verses 6 and 7?

A: We are personally valuable to God. He is providing for our good in **THIS** life which will translate to even **GREATER** good in the next.

[Read 8-12]

Q: What do verses 8 and 9 have in common?

A: Actions on earth before men and their result before angels in Heaven.

Q: What is significant about the word “confess”? Isn't “know” or “acknowledge” or even “believe” enough?

A: We know from Scripture that Satan and his demons all “believe”, “know” and even “acknowledge” Jesus Christ but they have not confessed Him as their Savior nor seek redemption through Him.

Q: What is the test for BOTH this life and the one to come?

A: Public confession of Christ our Savior.

Q: What are the two kinds of persecution being described in verse 4 compared to verses 11-12?

A: Verse 4 is physical persecution, verses 11-12 convey spiritual persecution. Because our eyes are transfixed on the assurance of our eternal life with Christ, there is nothing in this world that can actually invoke irreparable harm.

Summary #1: This life is an extension/precursor of the next, REAL life.

- Do we truly act like every thought, decision and action will one day be revealed in the light of God's truth?
- Do we live like it's more important to publicly confess Christ as Savior than just "live like a Christian should live"?
- Do we understand that God values us and has good things for us; that temporary "setbacks" or "deficiencies" may be leading to a greater good in the life to come?

¹³Someone in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me."

¹⁴But He said to him, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?" ¹⁵Then He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."

¹⁶And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. ¹⁷And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' ¹⁸Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'" ²⁰But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' ²¹So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

²²And He said to His disciples, "For this reason I say to you, do not worry about your life, as to what you will eat; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. ²³For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. ²⁴Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds! ²⁵And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life's span? ²⁶If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters?"

²⁷"Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. ²⁸But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is

[Read 13-21]

Q: In this example, if Jesus had decided the issue of property rights for the man, what kind of "reward" would the man get?

A: Just an earthly reward. There would not have been any lasting effect for the next life where it matters most.

Q: According to verses 19 and 20, what is the specific thing that's at stake? Both man and God make it the focus.

A: The soul. At stake is something far greater than personal wealth or possessions. It's a false belief to associate earthly wealth and comfort with eternal security for one's soul, the only possession you "take" with you from this life.

Q: Reverse verse 21 and state it as a principle for how we should live.

A: Store not treasure for yourself so that you'll be rich toward God.

[Read 22-32]

Q: Why shouldn't we worry about the needs of this life?

A: God more than amply provides.

Q: In verse 30 the distinction is made between what WE seek and what "the nations of the world eagerly seek." Aren't we members of one of the nations?

A: Not if, as stated in verse 31, we seek His kingdom. We become part of a new "nation", a new kingdom that is rooted in eternity, not in this temporary earth.

Q: Is it hard to find the kingdom of God, to measure up to attaining it?

A: No. According to verse 32, He has already given it to us.

alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you? You men of little faith!

²⁹"And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying. ³⁰For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. ³¹But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you. ³²Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.

³³"Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

³⁵"Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit. ³⁶Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks. ³⁷Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them. ³⁸Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

³⁹"But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect."

[Read 33-34]

Q: If our eternal soul's health lies in heaven, and God has chosen to make us part of His new kingdom, where does our treasure lie?

A: Where we have set our hearts: Jesus and our eternal life with Him.

Summary #2: Set your heart on the things of the next life.

- Are we making decisions for the eternal well-being of our soul?
- Do we live as citizens of God's kingdom or as members of an earthly kingdom?
- Is our heart aligned with our future?

[Read 35-38]

Q: Within the context of the teachings so far, what does it mean to be "dressed in readiness"?

A: That we live, knowing that this life will come to an end without notice and we will live with our treasure.

[Read 39-40]

Q: Is this really a warning just about the Second Coming? Why not fear the end of our lives by natural death?

A: Both are the same. Whether through the Second Coming or through death, we will "meet" the Son of Man and will bear the consequences or rewards for where we have set our hearts and treasure.

⁴¹Peter said, “Lord, are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone else as well?”

⁴²And the Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? ⁴³Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. ⁴⁴Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁵But if that slave says in his heart, ‘My master will be a long time in coming,’ and begins to beat the slaves, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk; ⁴⁶the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers. ⁴⁷And that slave who knew his master’s will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, ⁴⁸but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.

[Read 41-48]

Q: How has the focus changed in this teaching?

A: Whereas previous discussions focused on things we need or want, here we’re discussing a thing that God has given or entrusted.

Q: On a practical level for each of us, what is the “thing” God has given or entrusted to us?

A: Many answers: Spiritual gifts, physical gifts, talents, abilities, opportunities, etc. They have a common tie in that **ALL** are to be used to attain heavenly treasure, not earthly.

Summary #3: We will be held accountable.

- Are you “dressed in readiness”?
- Are you ready to meet the Son of Man tomorrow? Tonight?
- Are you ready to make an account of that which He has entrusted you with?

⁴⁹“I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled! ⁵⁰But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished! ⁵¹Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division; ⁵²for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three. ⁵³They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

[Read 49-53]

Q: Why is there no peace concerning Christ during this, His First Coming? Why division?

A: Luke 11:23, “He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters.” There is no middle ground concerning Christ – you’ve either confessed Him as your Savior or rejected Him.

⁵⁴And He was also saying to the crowds, “When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, ‘A shower is coming,’ and so it turns out. ⁵⁵And when you see a south wind blowing, you

[Read 54-56]

Q: Based on your interpretation of the signs of this present time that we live in, what is the best choice – to focus on the needs of this life or the next?

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say, 'It will be a hot day,' and it turns out that way. ⁵⁶You hypocrites! You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time?

⁵⁷“And why do you not even on your own initiative judge what is right? ⁵⁸For while you are going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate, on your way there make an effort to settle with him, so that he may not drag you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. ⁵⁹I say to you, you will not get out of there until you have paid the very last cent.”

A: [Hopefully this is a rhetorical question.]

[Read 57-59]

Q: Is this really just a teaching about lawsuits and personal reconciliation?

A: In the context of these teachings Christ is stating that time will run out. Make the right choice while you still have the opportunity.

Summary #4: The outcome is completely up to our personal choice.

- Are we 100% committed to Christ? Do understand that 99% committed is viewed by Him as rejection?
- Are we interpreting the signs of our time correctly, motivating a deeper commitment to Him?
- Are we taking advantage of the opportunity still before us to choose Him over everything else?

Overall Summary

This sequence of teachings covers the personal gospel Christ came to convey to each of us:

- **THIS** life is a precursor to the next, **REAL** life.
- Set your heart not on the things of this life but on the things of the next life.
- Regardless of where you set your heart, you will be held accountable.
- The outcome is completely your choice.