

Luke 12:49

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?

Analysis

I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? (Πῦρ ἥλθον βαλεῖν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν, καὶ τί θέλω εἰ ἥδη ἀνήφθη;)—Jesus declares his mission: pur...balein (to cast fire) upon the earth. Fire in Scripture symbolizes judgment, purification, the Holy Spirit, or conflict. Context suggests division/judgment—the following verses describe family conflict (v.51-53). The enigmatic question *ti thelō ei ēdē anēphthē* (what will I if it already be kindled?) expresses urgency: 'How I wish it were already kindled!'

This startling declaration reveals Jesus's mission includes conflict, not just peace. His coming divides humanity—those receiving him versus those rejecting him. The 'fire' represents the gospel's divisive impact, forcing decisions that fracture families and communities. Jesus isn't a safe, comfortable teacher but a prophet demanding total allegiance.

Historical Context

In Jewish expectation, Messiah would bring judgment fire upon God's enemies (Malachi 4:1). Jesus reframes this: the fire includes division within Israel itself, even within families, as people choose for or against him. The Pentecost fire (Acts 2:3) and persecution fire (Acts 8:1) both fulfilled this prophecy.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's 'fire-bringing' mission challenge modern therapeutic Christianity that avoids conflict and division?
2. In what relationships has following Jesus created 'fire'—division, conflict, persecution?
3. What does Jesus's urgency ('what will I if it be already kindled?') reveal about his passion for accomplishing his mission?

Interlinear Text

Πῦρ	ἥλθον	βαλεῖν	εἰς	τὴν	γῆν	καὶ	τί	θέλω	εἰ
fire	I am come	to send	on	G3588	the earth	and	what	will I	if
G4442	G2064	G906	G1519		G1093	G2532	G5101	G2309	G1487

ἥδη	ἀνήφθη
already	it be
G2235	G381

Additional Cross-References

Malachi 4:1 (Parallel theme): For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

Isaiah 11:4 (Parallel theme): But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

John 9:4 (Parallel theme): I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

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