

Luke 12:50

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!

Analysis

But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! (βάπτισμα δὲ ἔχω βαπτισθῆναι, καὶ πῶς συνέχομαι ἔως οὗ τελεσθῇ)—baptisma (baptism) refers metaphorically to overwhelming suffering, not water baptism. Jesus uses baptism imagery for his death—immersion in judgment, engulfed by wrath (cf. Mark 10:38-39). Sunechomai (straitened, distressed, constrained) describes intense pressure or anguish. Heos hou telesthe (until it be accomplished) points to the cross—Jesus lives under the weight of impending crucifixion.

This verse reveals Jesus's human emotional state: distress, urgency, constraint. He faces the cross with both determination and anguish. His mission requires passing through judgment-baptism before fire can spread. The cross is the necessary precursor to Pentecost—substitutionary atonement before Spirit-baptism. Until tetelestai ('It is finished,' John 19:30), Jesus lives under redemptive constraint.

Historical Context

Baptism imagery for overwhelming catastrophe appears in Psalms (42:7, 69:1-2) and Isaiah (43:2). Jesus adopts this metaphor for his vicarious suffering—drowning in judgment meant for sinners. The 'straitening' or constraint reflects Jesus's fully human experience of anticipating horrific death, documented in Gethsemane's agony (22:44).

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's anticipatory anguish ('how am I straitened') demonstrate the costliness of redemption?
2. What does this verse teach about Jesus's emotional experience of his mission —was his sacrifice easy or agonizing?
3. How should Jesus's urgency to complete his 'baptism' affect your gratitude for the cross and commitment to the mission it accomplished?

Interlinear Text

βάπτισμα	δὲ	ἔχω	βαπτισθῆναι	καὶ	πῶς	συνέχομαι
a baptism	But	I have	to be baptized with	and	how	am I straitened
G908	G1161	G2192	G907	G2532	G4459	G4912

ἔως	οὗ	τελεσθῇ
till	G3739	it be accomplished
G2193		G5055

Additional Cross-References

John 19:30 (Parallel theme): When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Psalms 40:8 (Parallel theme): I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

John 4:34 (Parallel theme): Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

