

Luke 12:51

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:

Analysis

Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division (Δοκεῖτε ὅτι εἰρήνην παρεγενόμην δοῦναι ἐν τῇ γῇ; οὐχί, λέγω ὑμῖν, ἀλλ' ἡ διαμερισμόν)—Jesus corrects messianic expectations. The question format (dokeite, suppose ye?) challenges the assumption that he brings eirēnē (peace). Instead: diamerismos (division, separation). This startles hearers expecting the peaceful messianic kingdom prophesied in Isaiah.

Jesus brings ultimate peace with God but immediate conflict among people. The gospel divides humanity—those receiving Christ versus those rejecting him. This isn't Jesus's desire but the inevitable result of light confronting darkness, truth opposing falsehood. Neutrality about Christ is impossible; he forces decision.

Historical Context

Jewish messianic expectation emphasized Messiah bringing peace, defeating enemies, establishing righteous kingdom (Isaiah 9:6-7, Micah 5:5). Jesus reframes this: before eschatological peace comes present conflict. The 'sword' of the gospel (Matthew 10:34) divides even families as individuals choose for or against Christ. First-century disciples faced this reality—conversion often meant family rejection.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's 'division-bringing' mission challenge therapeutic Christianity avoiding conflict?
2. What relationships have experienced 'division' because of your allegiance to Christ?
3. How do you balance Jesus's call to be peacemakers with his warning that following him brings division?

Interlinear Text

δοκεῖτε ὅτι εἰρήνην παρεγενόμην δοῦναι ἐν τῇ γῇ
Suppose ye **that** **peace** **I am come** **to give** **on** **G3588** **earth**
G1380 G3754 G1515 G3854 G1325 G1722 G1093

οὐχί λέγω ὑμῖν ἀλλ' ἦ διαμερισμόν
Nay **I tell** **you** **but** **rather** **division**
G3780 G3004 G5213 G235 G2228 G1267

Additional Cross-References

Luke 12:49 (Parallel theme): I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?

Zechariah 11:14 (Parallel theme): Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.