

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' ἢ 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	the	earth
G1380	G3754	G1515	G3854	G1325	G1722	G3588	G1093
οὐχί	λέγω	ὑμῖν	ἀλλ'	ἢ	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.