

Christ Is Savior and Judge

Many people believe that Jesus is our ultimate example of love and grace, and they are correct. Jesus said, “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart . . .” (Matthew 11:29). People remember the woman caught in adultery in John 8:1-11 and how Jesus forgave her and urged her to not sin any more. Consequently, people think that God forgives every kind of sin and action and they are correct! But many think that God will ultimately forgive and accept everyone into heaven because we are basically good people. The truth is that Jesus described us as sinners and warned us that we will spiritually die if we do not believe He is God (John 8:24). True Christians believe Christ is God and non-Christians do not. Therefore, it is not surprising that most non-Christians hate or struggle in their relationships with Christians. Conflicts are common. Jesus warns Christians that the world will hate them (John 15:18-19). In 2 Timothy 3:12 Christians are warned that those who desire to live godly will be persecuted. Why? The answer is that Christians are not of this world-system. The world hates Christians because they are committed to Christ and His holiness. Real Christians are salt and light and our godly conduct hurts their sensibilities (Matthew 5:13-16). Our study is Luke 12:49-59 and it is about conflict between non-Christians and Christians. Actually, non-Christians are in conflict with Christ.

I CAME TO CAST FIRE. In the opening verse of our study, Christ declares that He came to cast fire. Now that is a shocking statement for many. Some Christians may even be very concerned when they read His words and try to explain to give a different meaning to His words. They misunderstand His message.

I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled! Luke 12:49 (NASB)

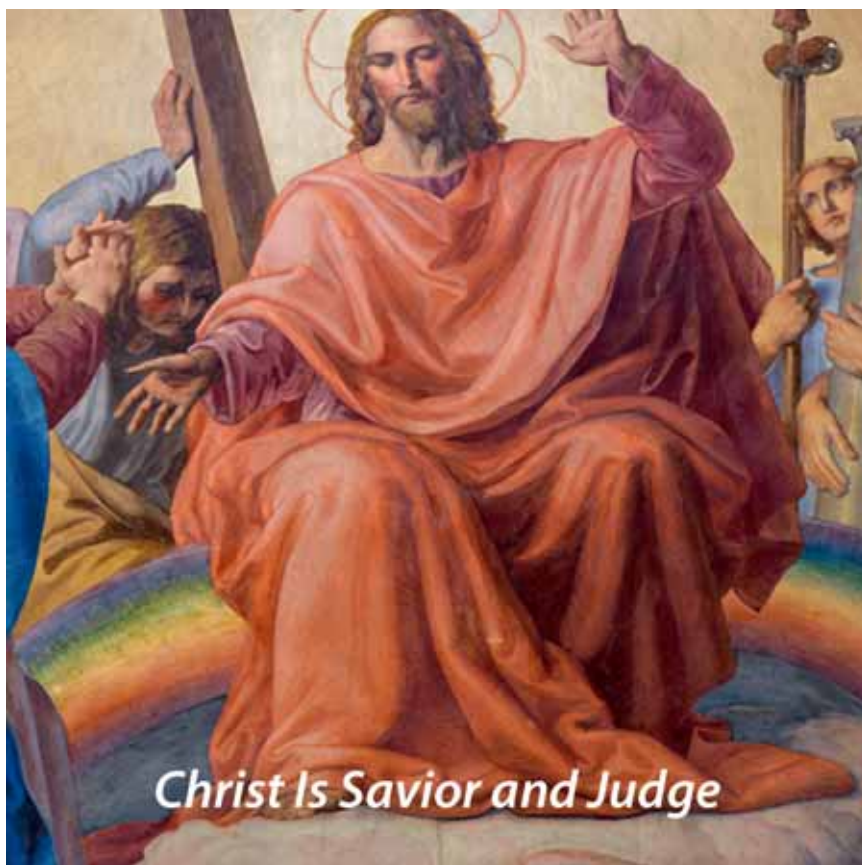
The words Jesus uses are common Greek words and do not have any hidden meanings. The Greek word for fire is *pur* and it always means fire, fiery or

burning. The Greek word He used for kindled is *anapto* and it means to set aflame. Therefore, it is clear that Jesus is saying He came to cast fire on the earth or to cause the earth to kindle, to burn or to be fiery. Now Jesus is not an arsonist

who enjoys watching things burn. He is referring to a future judgment of every non-Christian man and woman. He is referring to the end of this world-system.

Let us discover what Jesus meant by this statement. Let us look at an example of John the Baptist's preaching in Matthew 3.

First, we are told that he was baptizing many people and that some Pharisees came to him. Then John said this to them,



As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Matthew 3:11-12 (NASB)

John was referring to Christ when he said, “He who is coming after me is mightier than I.” That is, Christ would “. . . baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” The baptism of the Holy Spirit referred to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit within a Christian and the empowerment for spiritual transformation or progressive sanctification that follows. Only the Holy Spirit brings new life and spiritual transformation.

Fire referred to future condemnation and punishment. In John’s short statement he summarized the two works of Christ toward every man and woman. Christians would be indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and non-Christians would be judged and punished. Those who believe in Christ will receive the Holy Spirit. Those who do not will suffer eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:11-15). Christ is either a person’s Savior or Judge.

John’s next statement about wheat being put in a barn refers to Christians being kept safe. The chaff being burned up with unquenchable fire refers to non-Christians. It is very clear that John is using fire to refer to judgment.

Jesus also used the metaphor of fire often during His ministry to refer to judgment. For example, Jesus used illustrations of trees being burned because they do not produce any fruit. He warned that tares would be burned because they appear as wheat but are not real wheat. They only look like wheat - only look like Christians. In both illustrations He warned that fruitless trees and tares would be burned up.

Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Matthew 7:19 (NASB)

So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His

angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Matthew 13:40-42 (NASB)

The absence of fruit and a false reality of true spiritual life were easily identified by the type of lives these individuals lived. When the Holy Spirit indwells an individual Christian, spiritual transformation will occur. It is unavoidable because the Holy Spirit is performing the work. As Paul said in Philippians 1:6, when God starts the transformation, He will complete the transformation. But non-Christians are not being transformed by the Holy Spirit and their lives will demonstrate that truth. Those who claim to be Christians but whose lives look like non-Christians are not Christians.

Consequently on judgment day, the spiritual condition of non-Christians will be obvious and judgment by fire is their just reward.

. . . but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES . . . Hebrews 10:27 (NASB)

. . . for our God is a consuming fire. Hebrews 12:29 (NASB)

For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8 (NASB)

When Jesus said that He came to cast fire upon the earth, He was simply saying that He looked forward to the end of this age when sin, death and Satan would come to an end. That is, when evil and wickedness would cease and non-Christians would no longer have the freedom to afflict Christians and rebel against God. Someday all evil will cease!

I WISH IT WERE ALREADY KINDLED. When Christ said, “I wish it were already kindled,” He was not saying that He was eager to judge non-Christians. Instead, He was

simply saying that He was looking forward to the end of the hostility that sin creates in this world. He looked forward to the end of sin, death and Satan.

Sin will cease to exist when this world system is destroyed (Revelation 20:11; 21:7-8). When this age ceases Satan will be confined to the Lake of Fire along with death and every non-Christian (Revelation 20:13-15). Christ was looking forward to the end of all that is not holy. When He came the first time, He came to die so that He could forgive our sins, conquer death and defeat Satan (1 Corinthians 15:54-57; Hebrews 2:14). The next time Christ comes He will come as Victor and Judge (Matthew 24:29-31).

But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. Matthew 24:29-31 (NASB)

BAPTISM TO BE BAPTIZED WITH. Then Jesus announced that He had a baptism to undergo.

But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished! Luke 12:50 (NASB)

The King James Version (KJV) Bible and other Bibles accurately translate the opening part of this verse as “baptism to be baptized with.” That is an accurate translation of the Greek. It literally read *baptisma baptizo*. The first word is the noun form and the second word is the verb form of baptism. Jesus told the disciples that He was awaiting an incredible and total immersing experience. One could say He was waiting for an overwhelming experience. People who have had serious major surgeries have had an overwhelming experience of extreme pain, inconvenience, and long recovery peri-

ods and humiliation.

It is obvious that He understood what was going to happen to Him when He died on the cross. He so completely understood that He was in distress. As He anticipated this future horrible experience He had great distress as He thought about it. Have you ever wondered if Christ ever experienced great distress? The Greek word for distress is *syn-echo*. The word has the idea of being pressed hard from every direction. Luke 19:43 gives us a good example of the meaning of this word. There Jesus uses the word to speak of an army assaulting a city from every direction. Jesus was saying that He felt pressured from every direction, as if attacked and pressured from every direction. What a horrible feeling.

The prophet Habakkuk felt distress too. He wrote about His feelings in Habakkuk 3:16-19.

16 I heard and my inward parts trembled,
At the sound my lips quivered.
Decay enters my bones,
And in my place I tremble.
Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress,
For the people to arise who will invade us.

17 Though the fig tree should not blossom
And there be no fruit on the vines,
Though the yield of the olive should fail
And the fields produce no food,
Though the flock should be cut off from the fold
And there be no cattle in the stalls,

18 Yet I will exult in the LORD,
I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.

19 The Lord GOD is my strength,
And He has made my feet like hinds' feet,
And makes me walk on my high places.
For the choir director, on my stringed instruments.
Habakkuk 3:16-19 (NASB)

Earlier in Habakkuk 3 the prophet had prophesied that an invading army was coming. Now notice that he was in distress as he anticipated the arrival of the invading army. The prophet tells us he was trembling on the inside. He said that when he heard a sound, his lips would quiver. Now that

reveals stress. He tells us he was in distress, and it was great distress as he waited quietly for the people “who will invade us.” Have you had similar experiences? Everyone has experienced distress over some future event that we did not want to occur. How did you respond? Notice how the prophet responded to his distress. He says that he trusted in the Lord God who “is my strength.” Verse 19 is a wonderful verse that teaches us to trust God during times of distress.

Now let us return to Christ who was in distress. He told the disciples that He was in distress “until it is accomplished!” The distress was unavoidable but He worked through it by trusting the Father too! We can see Jesus trusting the Father in Luke 22:39-46 as He prayed to the Father - as He anticipated the baptism to which He was referring. He trusted the Father to help Him through the trial.

To what baptism was Christ referring? He was not referring to water baptism. He had already been baptized earlier by John the Baptist in Luke 3:21 (Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:9). That baptism did not save

Christ. It was a symbolic act of dedication. For the Christian, baptism is an identification with Christ. The believer dies to self and rises to new life in Christ. But in this passage, Jesus uses the word baptism as a symbolic term referring to the traumatic event of death on the cross - not a saving event. This definition of baptism is obvious in Luke 12:50. Here Jesus was referring to His coming death on the cross for the sins of the world. Verses 49 and 50 obviously refer to a future event. His physical death was coming and the fire being cast down on the earth was a future event. Christ was in distress as He anticipated His death on the cross and receiving the sins of the world in His body.

... and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 1 Peter 2:23-24 (NASB)

Christ was in distress as He anticipated this horrible event and He looked to the Father to help Him through the trauma. Jesus is a great example for us.

REJECTION OF CHRIST CAUSES DIVISION. The first time Christ came, He came to secure salvation for the elect. The next time He will come as Conqueror and Judge, and



fire is the tool of punishment. The first time He came to give spiritual peace to those who believe in Him. But the next time He comes, He will punish those who have refused to humble themselves and admit their sin and admit that Christ is God and Savior.

That was the mes-

sage of the angel at Christ’s birth.

Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased. Luke 2:14 (NASB)

Notice that the peace is for those with whom God is pleased. Those who reject Him will not have peace. Those who reject Him will not have the help of the Holy Spirit in their lives. They will not realize joy or peace. In fact, they are rebellious against God. Consequently, our holy God has no choice but to eventually punish Christ-rejecting people. That is hardly peace. The unrepentant heart and arrogant will not have

peace now but only anguish and great sorrow in the future. Those who believe in Christ as Savior and Lord are those with whom He is pleased.

When Jesus came the first time, He came to give us peace (Romans 5:1). Our God is a God of peace (Romans 15:33; 16:20; Philippians 4:7, 9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23) who gives believers peace (John 14:27; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 14:33; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Titus 1:4; Hebrews 13:20). Yet because most people reject Christ, division occurs. It is non-Christians against Christians. Non-Christians are intolerant of Christians. That is the message of Romans 1:32,

... and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them. Romans 1:32 (NASB)

Non-Christians want Christians to approve of their behavior and they hate Christians who will not support their views and conduct.

That was the message of Jesus' next statement.

Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division; for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three. They 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. Luke 12:51-53 (NASB)

Jesus first asks a rhetorical question, "Do you think I came to grant peace?" Is that what you thought Christ came to do? If so, notice how He answers the question. No, His coming would cause division because people would be divided because of Him. The Greek word that is translated as "division" is a unique word since it is used only one time in the New Testament right here in Luke 12:51. The word is *diamerismon*. It has the sense of hostile groups opposed to one another. In the next verse, Luke 12:52, the verb form of this Greek word is used. It is a perfect participle which implies an ongoing condition of division. That is, people

would not be temporarily divided but permanently divided because of Him. What a sad and disappointing reality that people will reject and quarrel with one another because of Christ. It reveals their lack of spiritual maturity to allow divisions over differences of viewpoint. It is the immoral person against the moral person, or the non-Christian against the Christian. Sometimes it is Christians who are not Spirit-filled against Christians.

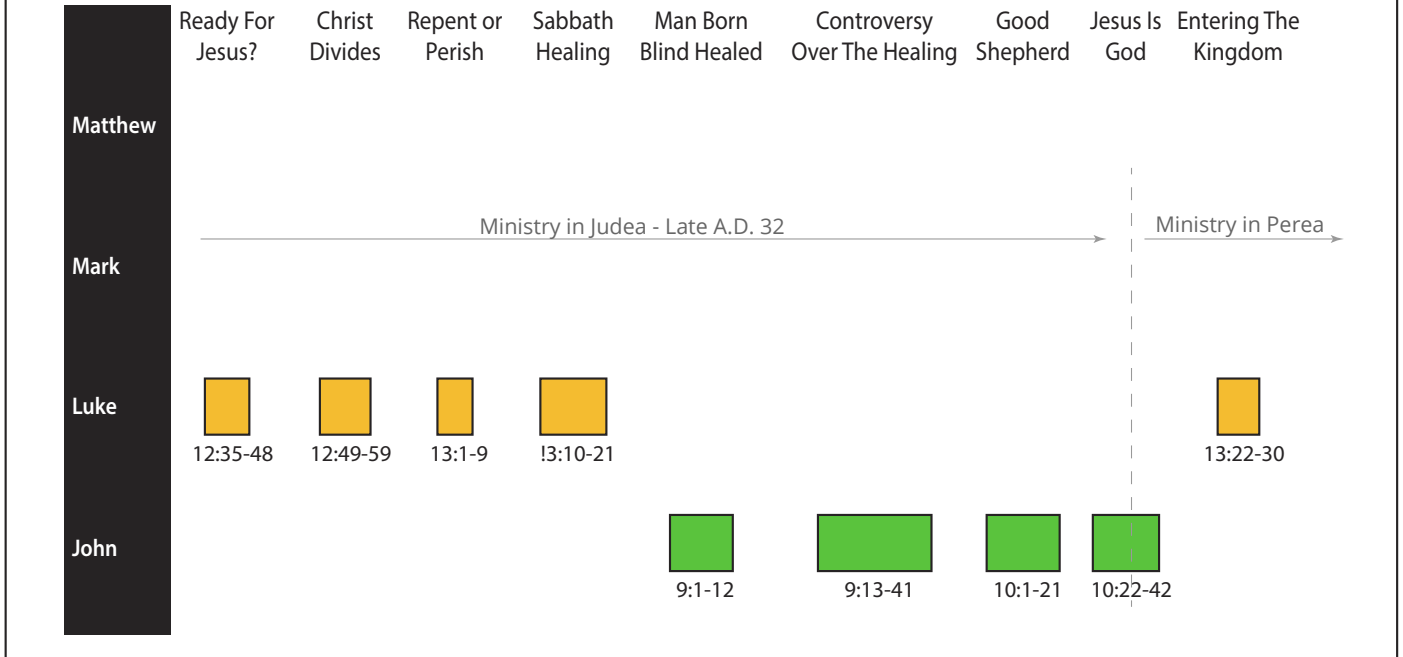
We see this almost every day in our nation and in nations around the world. The teaching of the truth of the creation of the world versus the theory of evolution is a classic struggle. Non-Christians embrace the theory of evolution and reject the biblical teaching of God creating the world. One of the famous atheist evolutionists of our day, Richard Dawkins, when asked if God created the world answered, "No!" Then when asked how the human race came into existence, he answered that aliens from another planet placed us here. His reply revealed his utter bias against God who would create everything. As long as the alien was not God, he was happy.¹ The battle over truth is a war. Non-Christians against Christians. The battle is being waged in schools, and at the city, state and national levels.

Jesus' next statement is that the battle is also being waged in homes. Three against two. Maybe one against one. Father against a son or daughter and mother against a daughter or son. In some homes it is one son or daughter against everyone else. Sometimes it is wife against husband or vice versa. Parents have disowned children and rejected their children because they became Christians, that is, followers of Christ. History has so many examples of this tragedy. But the reason it happens is that evil hearts are proud hearts and do not want to humble themselves to God. Differences of opinion are regarded as personal attacks. When Christ came to earth to die for our sins, He knew this would occur. This helps us to understand the meaning of His statement.

If you are a Christian and you are being attacked by others, remember that Christ warned us this would occur. For example in Matthew 10:37-39, Jesus warned that Christians must love Christ more than parents, children and brothers and sisters.

¹ Ben Stein. Expelled (DVD). Statements are made at the end of the DVD.

Life and Heart of Jesus



He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it. Matthew 10:37-39 (NASB)

Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” Luke 14:25-27 (NASB)

Now most non-Christians and even some Christians will find His statement to be unacceptable or offensive at worst. For many people love, between parents, children and siblings is more important than loving Christ first. Those who love others more than Christ are in tremendous conflict with Christ and are in sin.

This time He uses stronger language and says we must hate our parents, children, brothers and sisters. Now He does not literally mean hate, but we get the message. Our love for Christ is to be much greater than our love for anyone else that the contrast will make our love for people seem like hate.

For those Christians who think we are misunderstanding Christ, read Luke 14:25-35, specifically verses 26-27. Jesus repeats Himself.

Then Jesus continues in verses Luke 14:28-35 where He warns anyone who becomes a Christian to count the cost of becoming a Christian. Why should we count the cost? The reason we must count the cost is that others, including our parents, children, brothers and sisters may hate us because we are Christians. Unfortunately, many are easily influenced by family to not become a Christian, or are in fear then live as secret Christians. Are you a secret Christian? The world system wants us to believe that Christ is too demanding and unreasonable. Romans 1:32 reminds us that the world wants us to agree with them and approve of evil conduct.

Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.

1 John 3:13 is a wake up call or a warning that the world

hates Christians because of that for which we stand.

Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. 1 John 3:13 (NASB)

In John 15:18-19 Jesus tells us that a real Christian is not of this world system. Notice that He says the reason they hate us is that Christians are not like them.

If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. John 15:18-19 (NASB)

As a result, conflicts within families will and do occur between Christian family members and non-Christian family members and even lukewarm Christian family members. Jesus said that He came to cause division. He did not come with the goal to cause division; but He knew that when He came, division would occur as individuals became Christians. Division was unavoidable.

REJECTION OF THE EVIDENCE OF CHRIST. Having warned the disciples that even though He, the Prince of Peace had come, men and women would be divided over Him; and the world would hate Him and His followers. Then He told them that the world should have known who He is! He makes this point with the next two illustrations. The first illustration is about our ability to forecast the weather, at least to some degree, and then He concludes with a court case.

And 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. And when you see a south wind blowing, you say, ‘It will be a hot day,’ and it turns out that way. You hypocrites! You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time?” Luke 12:54-56 (NASB)

His illustration is obvious. When the Jews saw dark clouds in the sky, they knew it might rain. When the winds blew up

from the south across the Arabian and Negev deserts, they knew it would be a hot day. In southern California when the Santa Ana winds would blow, everyone knew it would be hot and people would react to the pollens in the air. Why did Jesus give such an obvious illustration? What was His message? The message was that they could see Him perform signs, wonders and miracles. The crowds were amazed at His teaching, yet the religious leaders hated Him and announced to the crowds that He was empowered by demons. That is how they explained His signs, wonders and miracles. They could not deny the obvious, but they could create an excuse that created doubts in the minds of people. Therefore, Jesus’ point is that they could forecast the weather, but they could not recognize the time of the Messiah’s arrival. He was the Messiah (John 1:41; 4:25), Savior (Luke 2:11) and coming king (1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 19:16). What a judgment upon them!

What about you? Who do you believe Christ is? Jesus cannot be ignored and explained away. Most people have rejected Jesus Christ. Because they have rejected Christ, they reject Christians, the followers of Christ. When Jesus came, He wished He could already torch the earth to eliminate sin and conflict.

Next, Christ makes the same point about recognizing Him again with the next illustration which is about a legal matter.

And why do you not even on your own initiative judge what is right? For 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. I say to you, you will not get out of there until you have paid the very last cent. Luke 12:57-59 (NASB)

The illustration is simple. If you must appear before a judge for some violation of the law or offense and you are guilty, you hurry to settle the legal matter with your opponent before you appear in court. That is, admit your guilt and settle your case. But most people plead “not guilty” instead and fight it out in court. In Jesus’ illustration, the individ-

ual does not admit his or her guilt and hopes to win but loses and goes to prison. Then Jesus gave a warning. You will remain in prison until you have fully paid your sentence.

The same is true for those who reject Christ today. They are guilty of rejecting the only One who can save them from eternal condemnation. They have rejected the only One who can forgive their sins. They have rejected the only Savior, Lord and King, and the penalty they will receive is eternity in the lake of Fire. They will never escape! That is the penalty for rejecting Christ.

CONCLUSION. At the beginning of this study, Jesus stated that He came to cast fire. He came to end sin, death and the

rule of Satan. That was and is the ultimate goal of Christ. In the process of coming, division would occur. Jesus does not talk about the hearts of men and women. He does not talk about some believing in Christ and others not believing in Christ. He does not talk about election. Instead Jesus warns that each person must love Him and not reject Him. Each person must admit He is the Christ and make Him more important than any one else. The penalty for making a wrong decision is eternity in hell or the Lake of Fire. What is your opinion of Christ? Is He more important than anyone and anything else? Your decision will determine your eternal destiny!