

People of God, we spoke in the last few weeks about the pressing need of the disciple of Christ to have single minded devotion to His Lord and his kingdom. We are not to worry or have anxiety over such things as food and clothing. Living your life for the sake of those things in and of themselves, brings about a divided mind, and keeps you from seeking first the kingdom of God.

The Lord in this passage today, describes what his single-minded devotion to the kingdom of God is - He says, he has “a baptism to be baptized with, and he is under distress until it is accomplished.” But this distress is not one of anxiety, or worry, or dread, that he had just warned us against. The Lord is not neurotically consumed with his baptism of suffering and death, anxiously thinking about all the bad things that are about to happen. It’s a distress of compulsion. Jesus is constrained to go to the cross where he will receive his baptism of suffering and death. Jesus is ready to complete his mission, and he looks forward to what his baptism of death will accomplish in the world. It will bring fire to the earth, and division, he says. And he is determined to the death to bring it about.

FIRE TO THE LAND

“I came to send fire on the earth, Jesus says. And how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a Baptism to be baptized with, and I am under constraint to finish my course until it is accomplished. Do you think I came to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but division.”

Now the fire that Jesus speaks of here is the same which John the Baptist spoke of in the beginning of Luke, saying, “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear out his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will

burn with unquenchable fire.” So this fire that Jesus speaks of is the fire of salvation, the Holy Spirit, and the fire of judgment.

Let us first look at the fire of judgment. Joh, and Jesus are warning Israel of the eschatological fire of punishment that is about to come upon them. When Jesus says, “I cam to cast fire to the earth, it is important that we understand the proper translation of the word ‘earth’ in Greek is actually the word “land”, meaning the land of Israel. Because of Israel’s perpetual unbelief and their hardened hearts toward Christ, Christ is going to send the fire of wrath and punishment upon them.

Deut. 32 records the second song of Moses, wherein Moses extols the Lord’s mercy in redeeming Israel from Egypt. Israel grew up fat in the blessings of God, but then he spurned God and went after other gods that were demons. And Moses writes,

*“And when the LORD saw it, He spurned them,
Because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters.*

*²⁰And He said: ‘I will hide My face from them,
I will see what their end will be,
For they are a perverse generation,
Children in whom is no faith.*

*²¹They have provoked Me to jealousy by what is not God;
They have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols.
But I will provoke them to jealousy by those who are not a nation;
I will move them to anger by a foolish nation.*

*²²For a fire is kindled in My anger,
And shall burn to the lowest hell;
It shall consume the earth (land) with her increase,
And set on fire the foundations of the mountains.*

Our Lord Jesus is drawing from Deut. 32 when he says that he came to bring fire to the land. The Lord is pronouncing a judgment of punishment upon Israel for her idolatry with demons and her unbelief in Him. And within a generation, the Lord poured out the whole bag of covenantal curses upon Jerusalem when the Roman army, along with the help of the zealots and Edomites, came to destroy and burn the city of Jerusalem and the Temple with fire.

The Apostle Peter speaks of the Temple's destruction in terms of the heavens and earth melting away.

¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. ¹¹Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹²looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? ¹³Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Puritan John Lightfoot, one of the men who participated in the Westminster Assembly, rightly recognized that when the Bible *speaks of a new heaven and a new earth, [it is referring to] a new state of the Church under the Gospel among the Gentiles, when this old world of the Jewish state should be dissolved.*" (John Lightfoot, Westminster Assembly Divine)

Now this judgment of Israel in history is a type of the great and final judgment which comes upon all those who hate God and reject his mercy, and spurn his blessings, and instead commune with demons. Christ looks forward to the day when the whole world, which is typified in the land of Israel, will be totally and finally rid of all the demonic evil and wickedness

and unbelief. He looks forward to the day when the world will stop groaning under the burden of the sins of evil people, and when at last they will be thrown into the lake of fire, and the earth along with the sons of God will be resurrected.

And this fire of God's judgment awaits all those who do not have true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so he calls all of you today to examine yourselves, to see if you have been living a false faith, if you have been unfaithful to your God, and not dedicated to him with your whole heart, mind, soul, and strength. If so, repent, turn to him with all your heart, seek him with all that is in you. And you will find a loving merciful savior who delights in you.

FIRE OF REVEALING

Secondly, the fire of God's judgment does not only refer to punishment. It can also mean a manifestation, or a revealing. With the coming of Christ into the world, the curtain is pulled back on all our lives, and we get to see glimpses of the true state of our heart, and of the spiritual condition of the world.

As Simeon said to Mary, Jesus mother, "*Behold this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and also for a sign that is opposed, so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.*" Lk. 2:34-35.

The Lord Jesus exposes people's hearts and minds to see whether they are true to him or not. The whole world is made up into two camps, those who are with him, and those who are against him. Now Jesus will of course at the very end of time separate the sheep from the goats, and the wheat from the chaff. But he also does this in history as well. Christ brings about times of crises to manifest this judgment even now, to reveal the true spiritual nature of things before the end.

Consider our own recent times. God's judgment has been revealing the true state of things over the past couple years. God uses historical crises to divide people up and show where people are at on certain important issues, but ultimately where people are at in their relation to Christ.

The Secular world order did a good job of lulling people to sleep, making us think that there is such a thing as neutrality. Even Christians came to believe that the State and the public square were to remain religiously neutral and were to be governed by some universal man-made ethic which all men supposedly hold to. But this whole thing has collapsed. And now we see where this supposed Neutral morality has brought us. Transgenderism, pedophilia, abortion on demand, and the total destruction of the Western Christendom, and the in your face promotion of all that is sick and twisted and evil and demonic. That is where Neutrality got us.

The call for the Separation of Church and State, as the left would have it, has really just been a mechanism to silence Christians, and to silence the word of God from speaking to the leaders of the nations, so that they can go about under the cloak of neutrality to do absolutely horrible things. And now that Christians are finally beginning to wake up to this madness, the tactic now used against us is to call us names in order to silence us. Racist, homophobe, antisemite, Christo-fascist, and whatever other names they can call us. And when that no longer works, they will send out their new army of 87,000 IRS agents to find something wrong with your taxes and throw you in jail.

The point I am trying to make People of God, is that their false demonic system is revealed to be what it truly is. There is no longer any pretense. God is removing the blinders from the people, and he is revealing the true nature of things. We are literally ruled by Satan worshiping Pedophiles.

To quote 2 Peter 3 again,

“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.”

The word exposed here is the word Eureka. They will be Found. The Lord brings about judgments in history so that our works would be found out, and we would be shown to be either for Christ, or Anti-Christ. And this is a kindness of God, because then he makes it ever more clear about the state of the world, and the spiritual realities that we exist in, so that we might be more dedicated to Him and His Kingdom.

PURIFYING FIRE

And this brings me to the third aspect of this judgment of fire, which is related to the second – and that is its purifying nature. God’s fire punishes, God’s fire reveals, and God’s fire purifies. Malachi 3 says:

*“Behold, I send My messenger,
And he will prepare the way before Me.
And the Lord, whom you seek,
Will suddenly come to His temple,
Even the Messenger of the covenant,
In whom you delight.
Behold, He is coming,”
Says the LORD of hosts.*

²*“But who can endure the day of His coming?
And who can stand when He appears?
For He is like a refiner’s fire
And like launderers’ soap.*

³*He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver;*

*He will purify the sons of Levi,
And purge them as gold and silver,
That they may offer to the LORD
An offering in righteousness.*

This historical judgment of fire purifies God's people from evil and toward righteousness. As the times continue to get more and more evil, God's people get more and more righteous. We see what the souls of wicked, demonic men turn into during times of judgment, when their works of darkness are exposed. They become increasingly more wicked and evil, and more brazen in their rebellion against Christ and His word and world.

And we should reflect upon that. And we should be utterly terrified. Not terrified of them, but terrified that wickedness begets wickedness, and knowing that we still have evil in our hearts too. Therefore, we ought to be people who seek to purify our hearts in righteousness by the Holy Spirit of God with all seriousness and diligence and stop with the half measures. Our righteousness needs to beget more righteousness, and we need to act according to the will of the Master, so that we are ready for that day when he comes.

We see what their demonically inspired New World Order produces in the world. But praise the Lord, we also see by faith that Christ is in the process of removing it. Just as Peter looked forward to a New Heavens and New Earth where in righteousness dwells, we too are looking forward to building a True New World Order based upon the Lordship of Christ and the authority of God's Word as the foundation for all law and ethics, where righteousness dwells. Christendom 2.0. And we should be purposeful in pursuing this kingdom, in whatever we do.

It is for the establishment of this Christendom that Jesus came. Christ didn't just come to the earth save souls out of it, and let the earth go to hell. Christ died to save the world, and everything in it. His reign from the right hand of the Father is over all the nations of the earth. He came to make his blessings flow as far as the curse is found. Of the increase of His government there will be no end.

When Jesus says he came to cast fire to the earth, he intends to purify the world of its evil and filth and also incrementally remove the dross of unbelief from his people and the world. Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, of all men, and especially those who are of the household of God. This means that the Christian faith is not a private religion. It is a world conquering religion. We are not just waiting around to inherit the kingdom of Heaven, that exists only in Heaven. But as our Lord taught us, we pray that His kingdom would come on Earth as it is in Heaven. This world, with its people, in its times, with all of its institutions of power is the place which Christ came to rule and save. He died to save it.

Some people think that is not true because Christ said to Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world. But he did not mean that his kingdom was not located in this world. He meant the ethic and power and authority of his kingdom was not of this world. That is why Christ could die on the cross, and it prove to be the most powerful act in all of history. If Christ's kingdom power were of this world, then his servants would fight, he says. But since his kingdom power is not of this world, it is of another, we have all the confidence in the world, that his kingdom will come on earth, just as it is in Heaven, because it has Heavenly power.

FIRE OF ELIJAH

When Jesus also speaks of casting fire to the earth, I think he is echoing Elijah's battle with the prophets of Baal at Mt Carmel. After it had not rained for 3 years, Elijah called upon the prophets of Baal to build an altar to Baal and to call upon him to send fire from Heaven. And day and night, they were yelling, cutting themselves and begging for Baal to respond with fire from heaven. But they were met with silence from Baal, and a whole lot of mockery from Elijah.

Then Elijah builds an altar made up of 12 stones for the tribes of Israel, baptizes it by pouring 12 jars of water all over the sacrifice. Elijah then prayed that God would respond by fire from heaven, and in this way they would know that YHWH is the true God and that he turned the people's hearts back to him. Fire then fell from heaven, and consumed the sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and he licked up the water that was in the trench. And the people's response was, YHWH is God, YHWH is God!

And because God sent fire from Heaven to the earth to consume the sacrifice, and because Elijah slaughtered the prophets of Baal, ridding the land of their evil influence, God sent the rain, and the land received the blessing, and the people's hearts were turned back to God.

In the same way Jesus, as the New Israel, comes to present himself on the altar of the cross, where he also undergoes a baptism. God then pours out his wrath on His Son, to take away the sins of the world. The Father then accepted Christ's sacrifice, by raising him from the dead, and then he pours out his fire upon the rest of the world when he poured out the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

Tongues of Fire were on the heads of the disciples, making each of them miniature holy mountains and altars. They became living sacrifices,

burning altars, and burning bushes that are on fire with the Holy Spirit but not consumed. And 40 years later, Christ destroyed His enemies in AD 70, purging his new world of their evil influence as well, just as Elijah slaughtered the prophets of Baal.

And ever since that day of Pentecost, as the message of Christ goes forth from the Apostles throughout the world, the fire of the Holy Spirit is cast down upon all the people of the earth. Christ brings people from every tribe, language, people, and nation into this burning fire of the Spirit in His own Body, through the cleansing waters of Baptism, which brings life and purification to dry and barren world.

God pours His Spirit out on the earth so that the hearts of the people would be purified and turned back to God. The Fire of the Spirit burns away the chaff of unbelief in God's people, turns us from wickedness and unbelief, paganism and the worship of demons, and in time, he removes the wicked from the world. This is what Jesus Christ came to accomplish for the entire world. And he will not stop until all is accomplished. And in the end, all those who proved to be nothing but chaff, he will burn with the unquenchable fire.

People of God, it is so very important that we understand and believe that Jesus Christ came to bring nothing less than a total restoration and renovation of the entire world and its spiritual order. He restructures everything around himself and His word. He inaugurated the new creation in himself and his people, with the Word of God as the Constitution of the new world. He cast down principalities and powers in the heavenly places; and because he is exalted over them all, the manifold wisdom of God has been made known the rulers and authorities in Heavenly places through the Church, which is Christ's Body on Earth, through which he rules over all things.

The Law of the Spirit of Life is more powerful than the law of Sin and Death. The strong man has been bound; Christ has defeated the devils. And so too will we defeat all the devils who inhabit the positions of power in this land when we are faithful to Christ and worship him in righteousness and truth, and seek his kingdom first before all things.

Jesus says, "I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it was already kindled." Jesus wished to see the righteous purified, then wicked overthrown, righteousness inaugurated in the world even before he went to the cross. But he knew that he could accomplish this regeneration of all things only through His suffering and death, only through His baptism. And he gave himself to it, without reservation. He was constrained to see it accomplished.

And we also are constrained, People of God, to see the fire of the Spirit of God poured forth on our land. But in order to see it, we need to have a burning unquenchable desire to see His righteousness formed in us, and all our evil repented of. We need to make divisions in our lives and separate the light from the darkness. We need to heed the sword of the Spirit, and when the word makes sharp cuts in our consciences, we need to obey them, and not take half measures.

The Lord manifests a division in the world between those who belong to Christ and those who do not, firstly, when we receive the fire of the Holy Spirit poured out upon us in the waters of Holy Baptism. The font is the place where light is divided from darkness, good from evil, the sons of God from the sons of the Devil.

For it is in the Baptismal font that we are united to Christ's death and resurrection. And every time parents bring their children to the font to receive baptism, they are testifying that the Lord will be the foundation and

bedrock between father and son, and mother and daughter and mother in law and daughter in law. For if Jesus Christ is not held in common by parents and children, then even our family loyalties take a back seat to the Lord Jesus Christ. For he is Lord of all.

Therefore, People of God, continue to give yourself over to the purifying fires of God's Spirit. He is bringing you into a new world where righteousness dwells. And by serving the Lord with your whole heart, and not divided in your loyalties, you will be blessed. For blessed is the man whom the Lord finds doing his will when he returns. He will be set over all his possessions in the world to come. Amen.