

## ***Luke's Gospel: Chapter 12***

### ***Lessons for Jesus' Followers...***

#### ***The leaven of the Pharisees (Luke 12 v 1 to 3)***

- What specifically was the 'leaven' of the Pharisees (v 1)? The 'law of expositional constancy' means that a word tends to retain the same meaning throughout Scripture. 'Leaven' (yeast) is an idiom for sin, particularly hypocrisy (as in this passage), and more generally pride, which 'puffs up' in the same way that yeast puffs up dough, or corruption of an insidious nature – see 1 Corinthians 5 v 6 to 8.

“Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known” (v 2) – the art of being a 'hypocrite' (literally an 'actor') depends on concealment, but one day all will be revealed. We can only be hypocrites before men, but never before God: he sees through the actor's mask we put on.

#### ***Have no fear and acknowledge Christ before men (Luke 12 v 4 to 12)***

- Why are the disciples to “have no fear” of their persecutors? Whom should they fear, and why (v 28)? Instead of being afraid, what should the Jesus' disciples be doing, even in the midst of persecution? What does this passage tell us about God?

“Do not fear those who kill the body” (v 4) – hypocrites will always despise true believers, so these words concerning persecution fit in well. In addition, when Jesus spoke to these disciples of His about martyrdom and persecution, he knew that each one of them, except John, would die a martyr's death for him. “After that have nothing more that they can do” – all your persecutors can do is kill you, and God has ultimate power over the life and death of the believer. “Not one of them is forgotten before God” (v 6) – if God remembers the sparrows, he is not going to forget you. So don't lose heart. “You are of more value than many sparrows” (v 7) – those who are persecuted are tempted to give in to the feeling that they are worthless and no one cares for them. But someone does care about you, a loving God in heaven.

In verse 10 Jesus warns the religious leaders against completely rejecting the Holy Spirit's testimony of Jesus – the 'unforgivable sin'. The Spirit's prime ministry is to testify of Jesus (John 15 v 26), and when that testimony is rejected, one has committed 'blasphemy against the Holy Spirit', essentially calling him a liar.

#### ***The parable of the rich fool (Luke 12 v 13 to 21)***

“Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me” (v 13) – Jesus has just taught on the importance of standing for him, and God's care for us. Then a man interrupts Jesus to ask him to take his side in a financial dispute! “Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?” (v 14) – it is not that Jesus is unconcerned about justice; rather, he is aware that this man's covetousness will harm him (Colossians 3 v 5).

“But God said to him, ‘Fool!’” (v 20) – there is little doubt that everybody (except God) thought a great deal of this man; but this man was a fool. Consider his heart: “my barns... my grain... my goods” (v 18) – it is all about *him*, and not about God. In the end, it turned out that nothing was his – not even his own soul! “The things you have prepared, whose will they be?” (v 20) – good question: they will not belong to God, because the man never surrendered them to God, and they will not belong to the rich fool, because he can't take them with him. “So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God” (v 21) – the man's problem was not that he had treasure on earth; but that he was not 'rich toward God'...

- Was the rich man wrong to make provision for the future? In what ways was he wrong? In what does one's life consist (v 15)? So, how do we become rich toward God? By giving to those in need (Luke 12 v 33, 34; 1 Timothy 6 v 17 to 19), and by trusting in Jesus for all our needs (Revelation 3 v 17, 18).

***[MORE OVER...]***

### ***Do not be anxious (Luke 12 v 22 to 34)***

“I tell you, do not be anxious about your life” (v 22) – material greed and worry are closely connected. Greed can never *get* enough, whereas worry is afraid it will never *have* enough. “Do not be anxious” is a loving command: we often fail to appreciate the amount of damage anxiety can do in our lives.

- What reasons does Jesus give for us not to be anxious? What is the difference between being anxious and taking responsibility? Is there a link between anxiety and prayer (Philippians 4 v 6 and 7)?
- How exactly, in practical terms, can we provide ourselves “with a treasure in the heavens” (v 33)? See Proverbs 11 v 30, Daniel 12 v 3, 1 Peter 1 v 3 to 5. If we are preoccupied by material gain, then we are not serving God; but if we are truly serving God, we do not need to be overly concerned about money!

### ***You must be ready (Luke 12 v 35 to 48)***

- What reasons do these verses give us for being alert? In what practical ways can we be ready for Jesus’ return? See 2 Peter 3 v 10 to 14.

“You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (v 40) – the ‘Second Coming’ dilemma: is it at an unexpected hour, or is it definitely predicted? Is it ‘business as usual’ or ‘cosmic cataclysm’? Is it ‘meeting Jesus in the air’ (1 Thessalonians 4 v 16, 17), or is he ‘coming with the saints’ (Zechariah 14 v 5b)? The dilemma is resolved by seeing that there are *two* second comings – the first is unexpected, when Jesus the Bridegroom meets his Bride (the Church) in the air (the ἀρπάζω, *harpázō*); the second is clearly predicted, when Jesus comes to the world, with the Church, “with power and great glory” (Matthew 24 v 30). We must always be ready, because his coming for us (his Bride) is without warning...

“But if that servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed in coming’...” (v 45) – a poor servant lives without the expectation of his master’s return. He mistreats other servants, and he wastes his time and resources on unprofitable things. The servant who says, ‘He hasn’t come quickly, so he isn’t coming at all’ has made a fatal mistake.

### ***Not peace, but division (Luke 12 v 49 to 53)***

“I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled!” (v 49) – this purifying power – the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives – can only come after Jesus has accomplished his work on the cross (“I have a baptism to be baptized with”, v 50). “How great is my distress until it is accomplished!” (v 50) – why was Jesus distressed until his work on the cross was finished? Because he knew all the good that would come of it, as a woman in the late stages of pregnancy looks forward to giving birth.

- If Jesus is the promised “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9 v 6), what do you make of verse 51? If the Ten Commandments include the command to “honour your father and your mother” (Exodus 20 v 12), what do you make of verse 53?

### ***Interpreting the time (Luke 12 v 54 to 56)***

“Why do you not know how to interpret the present time?” (v 56) – Jesus rebuked the people of his day because they could not interpret the present time. They should have understood more about the prophecies regarding the first coming of Jesus. Would Jesus rebuke Christians today for the same lack of insight? Are we aware of just how completely the stage is set for the Jesus’ Second Coming?

### ***Settle with your accuser (Luke 12 v 57 to 59)***

“Make an effort to settle with him on the way” (v 58) – how do we ‘settle out of court’ with God? By accepting God’s offer to settle our account at Calvary, before the Day of Judgment. Of course, this passage also has relevance to common sense regarding how Christians should regard the courts. If there is a dispute with someone, we are to do all that we possibly can to avoid going to court. But if we believe Jesus is coming soon, what should our response be? We must get our account settled with God now, through Jesus’ work on the cross, and then we must live ready for Jesus’ return.