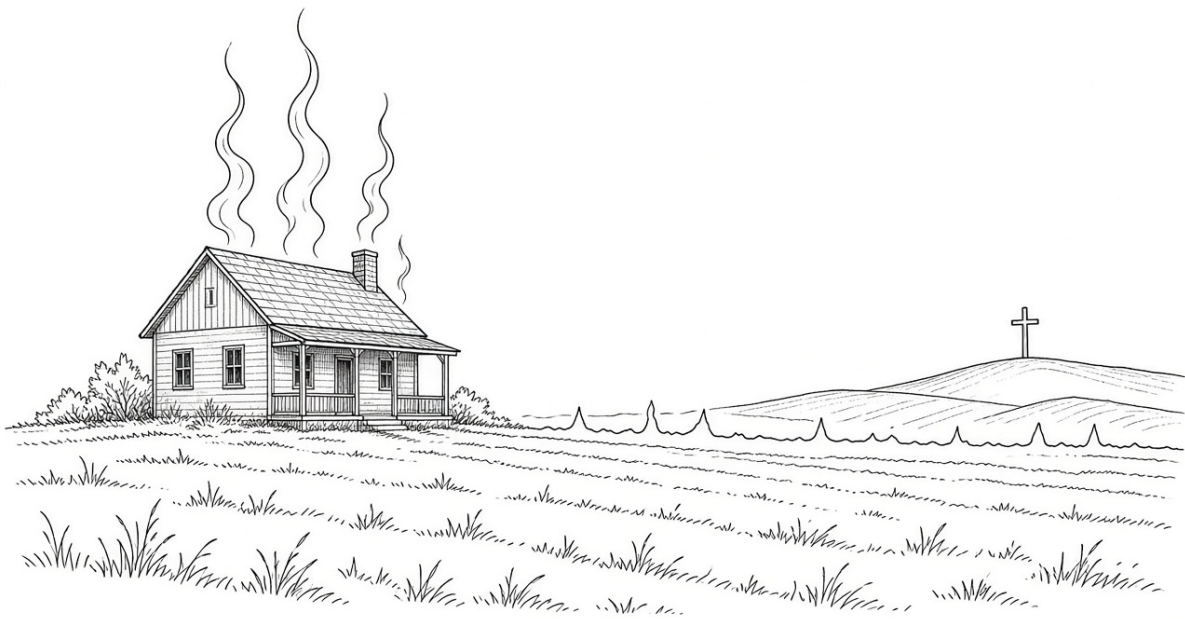


FREE GRACE BIBLE STUDY

Luke 12:49-59

Fire on the Earth



LUCAS KITCHEN

Luke 12:49–59

How to use this study

Here's a simple path through Luke 12:49-59:

1. **Read the passage.** Begin by reading Luke 12:49-59. Take your time with it.
2. **Work through the questions.** Short excerpts from the Commentary will guide your thinking, and there's room to write your answers.
3. **Go deeper.** When you want more, turn to the verse-by-verse Commentary at the end of this study.

Introduction

When I was about twelve, my brother Lance and I were turned loose in the woods while Dad helped a friend build a house. We had matches in our fanny packs—tough-guy gear, somehow still in a fanny pack. We came to a field of tall, crispy, late-season grass. Lance lit a match, dropped it, and we stamped it out. Then another. Then another, waiting a little longer each time. It was fun—until it wasn't.

The burn stopped being a little circle and started spreading. One of the other boys wanted to run. We had a moment of indecision that almost divided our group. Fire does that. We turned back, dipped our turtlenecks in a nearby pond, and beat the flames until we were choking and covered in ash. We got it out. When we got back, Dad joked that we looked like we'd been playing in a fire. That night Mom got a call: the burn was the size of three school buses. Our punishment was no fireworks at the church lock-in. We never played that game again.

I tell that story because Jesus talks about fire in this passage, and it is jarring. When we hear “fire,” we often jump straight to hell or final judgment. But fire meant more than that in their world. It cooked food. It warmed houses. It also burned things down. Jesus came to bring a fire—and in this section, He tells us what kind.

Bible Study

Read Luke 12:49-59

When you meet Jesus, you face a decision. You can believe and stay quiet, or you can believe and follow.
(See the Commentary on 12:49 to go deeper.)

1

Luke 12:49

Where do you feel pressure to stay undecided about Jesus in front of others?

The gospel is sometimes sold as a social lubricant that smooths over every conflict. That is not what Jesus is saying. He is not neutral.

(See the Commentary on 12:51 to go deeper.)

2

Luke 12:51

Where are you trying to keep the peace by keeping Jesus out of the conversation?

Loyalty to Christ comes before family approval. That is worth thinking about quietly: who in your life would be hardest to disappoint for His sake?

(See the Commentary on 12:52-53 to go deeper.)

3**Luke 12:52-53****Who in your life would be hardest to disappoint for the sake of Christ?**

They were trying to minimize the fire. That does not mean they lost everlasting life. It means they were not doing what they should have been doing. Many of us know that same pressure—at school, at work, in a friend group—when staying quiet feels safer than speaking up.

(See the Commentary on John 12:42 to go deeper.)

4**John 12:42****When have you kept your faith quiet to stay accepted?**

His miracles were the signs they should have discerned. The Messiah was standing in their midst, and they missed Him.

(See the Commentary on 12:54-56 to go deeper.)

5

Luke 12:54-56

His miracles were the signs of their times. What has God been doing right in front of you that you might be missing?

And remember, everyone around you is on that same road. Do not let politeness or fear of awkwardness keep you from helping them get it settled.

(See the Commentary on 12:58-59 to go deeper.)

6

Luke 12:57-59

Everyone around you is on the road to court. Are you afraid of awkwardness when the gospel comes up?

Jesus came to send fire. The fire is the Division of Decision. The cross was on His mind. He is not neutral. Following Him may cost you something among people you love. Meanwhile, settle with Him before court, and help others settle too.

(See the Commentary on 12:58-59 to go deeper.)

7

Luke 12:58-59

Who is one person this week you could help get it settled?

Commentary

Jesus opens with a startling statement.

12:49

“I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!” (Luke 12:49)

Without the verses that follow, that line would sound like pure judgment. But the context points somewhere else. When you meet Jesus, you face a decision. You can believe and stay quiet, or you can believe and follow. Especially in His day, that choice would split households. So what is the fire? I think it is the **Division of Decision**.

Before Jesus explains that division, He pauses to tell us what is weighing on Him.

12:50

“But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!” (Luke 12:50)

He is not talking about water here. He is talking about the cross. We are getting to the place in Luke where His face is set toward what is coming. The cross was on His mind, and He would essentially face it alone. He is eager for it to be accomplished so He can move past it. Then He gets back to the fire.

Now Jesus returns to His main point, and it surprises us.

12:51

“Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division.” (Luke 12:51)

That is a surprising line from the Prince of Peace. The angels announced peace on earth at His birth. So how do those fit together? Believers who walk with Him can know personal peace now. And one day, when His kingdom is established, there will be peace on earth in the full sense—like the later years of David’s reign after the wars were settled. But in the immediate sense, Jesus says what He brought would result in division.

The gospel is sometimes sold as a social lubricant that smooths over every conflict. That is not what Jesus is saying. He is not neutral. There is no real middle ground of “I’ll be Switzerland on this one.” With Him or against Him—that is the dividing line.

Jesus then shows how close to home that division can land.

12:52-53

“For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.” (Luke 12:52-53)

Following Him will cost. Salvation—receiving everlasting life—is a free gift. But following Him is where the division shows up, because following costs something. For His first hearers, it could cost family relationships. In some places today it still does. Elsewhere the costs look different: awkwardness at work, pressure in a classroom, tension with people you love.

Jesus is not giving us an excuse to be obnoxious. Truth is divisive by nature, but His followers found ways to bring the message with connection, not cruelty. Loyalty to Christ comes before family approval. That is worth thinking about quietly: who in your life would be hardest to disappoint for His sake?

The Gospel of John gives us a real-life picture of people who felt this exact pressure.

John 12:42

“Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue;” (John 12:42)

John shows us people who believed but would not confess Him publicly, because they did not want to lose their place. They were trying to minimize the fire. That does not mean they lost everlasting life. It means they were not doing what they should have been doing. Many of us know that same pressure—at school, at work, in a friend group—when staying quiet feels safer than speaking up.

Next, Jesus turns from His disciples to the crowds and gives them a weather lesson.

12:54-56

Then He also said to the multitudes, “Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, ‘A shower is coming’; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, ‘There will be hot weather’; and there is. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?”
(Luke 12:54–56)

They could read a cloud in the west or a south wind and call the forecast. But they could not read what was happening right in front of them. In this passage, Jesus is not mainly teaching end-times charts. He is talking about **their times**. His miracles were the signs they should have discerned. The Messiah was standing in their midst, and they missed Him.

12:57

“Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right?” (Luke 12:57)

That generation of Israel had to judge for itself what was right about Jesus. So does every person in every generation, and we get to help others face that same decision.

Jesus closes with a picture everyone in the crowd would understand: a walk to the courthouse.

12:58-59

“When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite.” (Luke 12:58–59)

On the way to the magistrate, settle with your adversary before you reach the judge. In the analogy, God is the Judge. The person in trouble is the one who has not believed. And the adversary—the one you need to make it right with before court—fits Jesus. We are all traveling a timeline toward judgment day. Settle with Him before you get there. You cannot pay the debt yourself. Believing in Jesus is how you make peace with the One who can clear it.

And remember, everyone around you is on that same road. Do not let politeness or fear of awkwardness keep you from helping them get it settled.

Jesus came to send fire. The fire is the Division of Decision. The cross was on His mind. He is not neutral. Following Him may cost you something among people you love. Meanwhile, settle with Him before court, and help others settle too.