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Luke 12:35 - 13:17



Gospel of Luke - Steve Gregg

In Luke 12:35-13:17, Steve Gregg discusses Jesus' teachings on being prepared for the return of the master and the potential judgment to come. He argues that Jesus' reference to sending fire on the earth may be referring to this judgment, rather than a positive spiritual revival. Gregg also addresses Jesus' message that those who do not follow him may face persecution and the importance of not judging others unfairly. In Chapter 13, the discussion shifts to events that may foreshadow the coming destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Transcript

We left off last time in Luke 12, kind of in the middle of it. Most of what we covered up to about verse 34 has parallels in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6. And now we come to other material, most of which has parallels in Matthew 24, after Jesus gives the woes against the scribes and Pharisees. At the end of the Olivet Discourse, he gives some of this material.

And he says in verse 35, And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Then Peter said to him, Lord, do you speak this parable only to us or to all people? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise servant, excuse me, steward, in Matthew he says servant, whom his master will make ruler over his household to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will make him ruler over all he has. But if that servant says in his heart, My master is delaying his coming and begins to beat the men servants and maid servants and to eat and drink with the drunk, then the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour when he is not aware and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

And that servant who knew his master's will and did not prepare himself or do according to his will shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know and yet committed things worthy of stripes, yet he shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given from him, much will be required.

And to whom much has been committed of him, they will ask the more. Now that was a little choppy reading, but it was all one large section about servants and masters. And he said, you need to be like servants are waiting for the master to come back from the wedding.

Now, servants waiting for a master to come back from a wedding is reminiscent a little bit of Matthew 25's parable of the 10 virgins waiting for the bridegroom to come for the wedding. It's not the same concept, but it is illustrating probably the same point. And that is that Jesus is coming back.

And when he comes back, he expects us to be found waiting for him, expecting him occupied with the work he's assigned to us. And so that is basically what he's talking about. He also slips in an analogy of a man guarding his house from a thief, not knowing when the thief will arrive.

He is ready at all times for the thief. Now, servants waiting for their master to return and a man, a householder waiting, you know, because he believes a thief is coming and being ready at all times are two different ways of saying that we don't know when Jesus will return. And it's important that when he does come, we are involved in what he has given us to do, that we are not surprised.

It's interesting that Jesus said that the master, if he finds his servants doing what they should be doing, verse 37 says, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down and eat. And he will come and serve them. Now, girding himself, no doubt is referring to what Jesus did when he washed the disciples' feet, when he girded himself with a towel and served his disciples.

Now, it's not common for a master to serve his servants. In fact, it's unheard of. In fact, in Luke 17, we have Jesus indicating that the norm is that it would be unthinkable for a master to serve his servants.

He says in Luke 17 7, which of you having a servant plowing or tending sheep will say to him when he has come in from the field, come at once and sit down and eat. But will not he rather say to him, prepare something for my supper and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk. And afterward you will eat and drink.

Now, Jesus is not teaching about how masters and servants should behave. He's just talking about how they do behave. It's understood that the servant is there to serve his master.

He is, he's the property of his master. He's a slave. Therefore, after he's served all day in the field, he comes in and serves in the kitchen.

Whenever the master has no further needs, then the servant can get his own food. But as long as the master has needs, the servant is still on duty. And he doesn't just come in from one job and sit down and say, okay, I'm done for the day and bring my food on.

Instead, he comes in from one job and says, okay, now what does the master want to eat? And he serves the master. That was the understanding in every household that had servants. And therefore, it's the more striking that Jesus says of himself as the master of his servants, I say to you in our present passage, Luke 12, 37, I say to you that he, the master, will gird himself and have them sit down, his servants sit down and eat.

And he will come and serve them. So Christ is a very different kind of a master. He does what is unthinkable for a master to do.

And when he washed the disciples' feet, it was so unthinkable that he, the master, would do something that is the task of a lowly servant that Peter objected to. You're never going to wash my feet. He was not willing to let Jesus take such a lowly role with reference to him.

It felt uncomfortable. It seemed inappropriate. And yet Jesus said, if you don't let me wash your feet, then you have no part with me.

And so Peter caved in and even went the other directions, he washed my whole body, my head, everything. But you see, Jesus' manner as a Lord and as a savior and as a king and as a master is very different from that of earthly masters. Jesus himself set a model for his disciples.

He said, you call me Lord and master, and you're right, I am. But he said, if I, your Lord, have washed your feet, then you should wash each other's feet. And so Jesus taught his disciples on another occasion.

In Matthew, he said, you know, the rulers of the Gentiles exercise authority over them. And, you know, it shall not be that way among you. But he that would be chief among you must be the servant or the slave of all.

And Jesus put his money where his mouth is. He served his disciples when they ought to be serving him. Of course, we should serve him too.

But he's saying that if we are faithful servants, he will treat us as if we're not servants anymore. He'll serve us. Jesus said in the upper room in John 15 to the disciples, I don't call you servants anymore, but friends.

And by that, he means I don't call you merely servants, but also friends. Of course,

you're servants because he goes on to say, you're my friends if you do everything I command you to do, which suggests they're still servants. Of course, they have to do everything he's commanded them to do, but they are also friends.

And so here, Jesus represents himself as a master who's going to be away. Now, they don't understand this. It was a while yet before they knew that he was really going away.

They didn't even understand when he told them he's going to be crucified and rise again the third day. He told them that three times and they never understood it. And they certainly didn't grasp what he was saying here.

They must have wondered, what in the world is the connection here to any reality? He's talking about being away and coming back and so forth. Well, they remembered it afterwards and recorded it for us, but I'm sure this didn't make an awful lot of sense in connection with any of their thoughts at the time because they weren't thinking that Jesus was going to go away and come back. They thought he was, since he's the Messiah, he's here to stay.

He's here to rule. And the Messiah is supposed to be here forever, so what's all this talk about being away? Yet, they at least retained a memory of what he had said so that after it made sense, they recorded it. And it makes sense to us because he has gone and we do know he's coming back and he'll reward those who are faithful servants, he says.

Then verse 41, Peter said to him, Lord, you speak this parable only to us or to all? The word people is in italics in the New King James. It's not in Greek. Do you speak this to only us or all? Does he mean, is this a general instruction for all human beings? Or does he mean all of your disciples in addition to us apostles? Is this just instructions for us apostles or do all your people, all the disciples have to have these instructions? I'm not sure which Peter is asking.

And furthermore, Jesus' answer doesn't seem like a direct answer, though I think it is. At first, it's not clear that it is, but I'm going to assume that since the answer is as it is that Jesus gives them in verse 42 and following, Peter's question means something like, is this our special mission as the apostles or do all of your followers who aren't apostles, is this about them too? Now, Jesus' answer is that the Lord said, who then is that faithful and wise steward whom his master will make ruler over his household to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has.

Now, if Peter is saying, is this instruction only for those of us who are the 12 apostles or is this for everybody who's a follower of yours, Jesus' answer is very pertinent. Any steward, not just apostles, but who is that faithful steward who's been given responsibility? Well, we know from later scriptures that all Christians are given stewardship and Peter, for example, who asked this question later wrote on this subject

in 1 Peter 4 and I think he might even have been thinking about this conversation he had with Jesus on the occasion that he wrote this. He says in 1 Peter 4, 10 and 11, as each one has received a gift, here the word gift is charisma, a spiritual gift from God, minister it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Okay, so everyone has received a gift, a spiritual gift, which is some aspect of the many varied, the many faceted grace of God. Each one according to the grace given to us has a particular gift. Now, he says if you've received a gift and everyone has, then minister it to one another.

The word minister means serve. So, take whatever gifts God has given you and serve the body, serve your brothers. It's like the master has given a steward an assignment to minister to his fellow servants or as Jesus said, whom his master has, well, Lord said, who is that faithful and wise steward whom his master will make ruler over his household to give them food, give them their portion of food in due season.

The idea is if God has given you something, you're a steward of it to minister it to others, to give it to others, to feed others, not necessarily always physically. In fact, with spiritual gifts, more often than not, it could be spiritual food. But in 1 Peter 4, 10 and 11, after he says that we should take these gifts that God's given us and minister to one another with them, he says in verse 11, if anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God.

If anyone ministers, which means serves, let him do it as of the ability which God supplies in that in all things, God may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. Now, here he's saying that there are gifts.

Some of them involve speaking and some of them involve serving. He says, if you've received a gift, be a good steward of that gift by ministering to others with it. And that applies whether your gift is in the area of speaking.

If you speak, then speak as the oracles of God. Or if your gift is in the area of serving in some practical way, well, then do it according to the ability God gives you in a way that glorifies God. The point here is that there are different kinds of gifts that God has given people in his church, but everyone has received some kind of gift, even if it's just serving or just talking.

It's a gift that God has for you to minister to others, to give his servants food in their season. And Peter says, you got to be a good steward of that. And so Peter, who wrote that, had also earlier had this conversation with Jesus, where he said, you know, this business about servants being busy about your business and watching for you and being diligent, is that just for us apostles or for everyone? And the Lord said, well, who is that good and faithful steward? Well, the answer is any steward, obviously.

I'm applying this to anyone who's a steward of mine, whom his master will make ruler of his household to give them their portion of food in due season. God has given you assignment to feed his household in one way or another with whatever gift he has made you the steward of. Joseph was this way in Potiphar's house.

Joseph was a steward. Everything that Potiphar had was entrusted to Joseph. And what was he supposed to do? He was supposed to feed the servants and manage the household.

He was supposed to make his master, you know, well off. And so that's where we stand in God's household. He's given each one something, something that they can contribute either in a practical area or in a spiritual area directly.

Speaking gifts could be evangelism, could be prophecy, could be teaching, it could be tongues and interpretation, it could be word of wisdom, word of knowledge, exhortation. These are all gifts that are mentioned in Scripture and they are speaking gifts. If one has a gift like that, Peter says, use it as the oracle, speak as the oracle of God.

That is, speak with the gravity of someone who's speaking on God's behalf through the ministry of the Holy Spirit given, the revelation or the insight given by the Spirit. It's a spiritual gift we're talking about. But likewise, if someone serves, and that would mean gifts of helps or gifts of showing mercy or gifts of leadership or gift of giving, I mean any practical kind of service provided, that too is a gift.

And Peter says, do that as of the ability which God gives you so that God will be glorified. So even if it's just a serving or giving or leading or showing mercy to others, that is something to be done for the glory of God. That's being a good steward of the gift that God has given you.

And Jesus said in Luke 12, 43, blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. If he's given you an assignment, do it and hope that you're still doing it when he shows up because he gives this other scenario. It says in verse 45, but if that servant says in his heart, my master's delaying his coming and begins to beat the men's servants and maid's servants and to eat and drink with the drunk.

In other words, if he thinks, well, I've got some time here, the master's gone for a while, I'll get back to my chores before he gets back. But in the meantime, I'm going to go out and party and I'm going to abuse my fellow servants. I'm going to just do things that are not pleasing to the master, hoping, of course, that I'll correct that behavior before he shows up.

But because the servant doesn't know when the master is going to show up, he doesn't have the leisure and the luxury of letting his guard down because the master, he said, is going to come at a day he's not thinking of him, not looking for him, verse 46. And at an

hour when he's not aware and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. Now, that's one fate that will befall some servants.

There's two other fates mentioned in verses 47 and 48, apparently for other servants, depending on how it's going, when Jesus shows up and finds them. Verse 47 says, and that servant who knew his master's will and did not prepare himself or do according to his master's will will be beaten with many stripes. That's a bad punishment, but it's not as severe as being cut in two and given your portion with the hypocrites.

So there are some who backslide altogether, apparently, and they'll be given their portion with the unbelievers. And that's apparently hell. But there are servants who maybe they haven't backslidden, but they've neglected their duties.

And some have neglected duties that they knew they were assigned and others neglected duties that they didn't know they were assigned. He said, the one who knew his master's will and didn't do will be beaten with many stripes, but he who did not know yet committed things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few. Now, he makes it very clear that God's judgment will be proportionate based upon things that really mitigate guilt.

If a person neglected to do what they're supposed to do, but they didn't know they're supposed to, well, they can hardly be given a severe beating for that. And there may be some punishment due if they've done harm to other people or done what they shouldn't do. But if that was ignorant, it's more or less innocent.

Then, of course, culpability will not be assigned at as great a level. This is clearly saying that the punishment of sinners will be at different levels, even the chastening or the punishment of God's servants when he comes back. I don't know exactly what this looks like for every kind of person in every circumstance, but it's obvious that Jesus has three different kinds of punishment in mind.

There's those who have totally backslidden and they get their portion with the hypocrites. And there's those who are servants who are neglecting their duties, apparently not backslidden, but not very diligent or not faithfully doing all that they should do. And they'll be punished in various degrees, depending on how much they should have known or did know.

He says, for everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required, obviously. If you've been given more, much more can be expected of you than others. And we, of course, have been given more than almost everybody in the world.

We have more money, more freedom, and more access to the scriptures, more availability of media to reach the world, to help the world. Those in this room in particular have unusual gift of liberty to be, to set aside some weeks and just sit around

and fellowship with other people and study the Bible. How many people in the world have that opportunity? That's such a rare opportunity.

Now, those who are given much, and we are probably given more than about 99.99999% of the world in terms of opportunities, will be expected to produce more. I mean, it's only reasonable. Those who know more have more responsibility.

And some might say, well, then I don't want to know much because I don't want to be held responsible for much. But if you don't know much, there's less you can do. There's less you can do of value too.

I mean, along with opportunity comes responsibility. If you don't have responsibility, it's because you don't have opportunity. Opportunity is a good thing.

And responsibility comes with it. So if you've been given much, you'll be expected to produce much. If you're not given much, less is expected of you.

Now, in verse 49, Jesus said, I came to send fire on the earth and how I wish it were already kindled. But I have a baptism to be baptized with and how distressed I am until it is accomplished. Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you not at all, but rather division.

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. Then he said, well, let's stop there for a moment.

Some of these words are difficult to know exactly what he's saying. In fact, would be included among what some would call the hard sayings of Jesus. What does it mean? I came to send fire on the earth and how I wish it were already kindled.

And it seems to be linked with, I have a baptism to be baptized with and how distressed I am until it is accomplished. What do these things mean? Well, the fire and baptism mentioned together may cause us to think back to what John the Baptist said about Jesus, that he will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Now, the statement that Jesus would baptize with fire is often linked with this statement.

He says, I have fire to send on the earth. Now, whether the fire in that statement is positive or negative would be much debated. And it seems to me like many commentators feel that it's talking about a positive fire, the flame of God's kingdom blazing throughout the earth, emblemized by the fact that fire, tongues of fire appeared on the heads of those who were baptized in the Holy Spirit when they were baptized on the day of Pentecost.

He baptized them with the Holy Spirit and apparently with fire. And so some would think

that's what he's talking about here. There is a fire, there is a blaze of revival that's going to be coming and I'm eager to send it on the earth.

I wish I could do it right now, but I have a baptism to go through. Now, the baptism would be his suffering, of course. You remember there was a time when James and John came to Jesus privately, or actually they sent their mother and she said, can my boys sit on your right hand and your left hand in your kingdom? And Jesus turned to them, the boys and said, do you know, you don't know what you're asking for.

He said, can you be baptized with baptism that I'm going to be baptized with? And they said, we can. But they didn't know what he was talking about, but we do. He was being referring to his suffering.

And he said, can you drink the cup that I'm going to drink and be baptized with the baptism I'm going to be baptized with without having a clue what that meant? They said, sure, why not? And he said, well, you will indeed drink the cup and you will be baptized with the baptism I'm baptized with. But as far as the positions at my right and left hand, that's for my father to determine, not me. But it's interesting.

He referred to his sufferings that were coming up as the cup he had to drink and the baptism he must undergo. Here, he certainly must be speaking about his own suffering as the baptism because he says, I'm distressed until it's accomplished. Jesus was beginning to feel pressure and discomfort because his death was approaching and it was a frightening, stressful thing to contemplate.

And he was distressed until he got that part over. But the part about the fire still is kind of interesting because as I said when we were talking about John the Baptist ministry, I'm persuaded that when John said Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire, in the context, he's talking about the judgment that was coming on those who would not follow him. That is, baptism of the Holy Spirit would be for his followers, the baptism with fire for those who rejected him.

And that is because John, in the same context, said that God or Christ was laying the axe to the root of the trees and every fruitless tree would be cast into the fire. And the wheat and the chaff were about to be separated on the threshing floor and the wheat would be gathered but the chaff would be burned in an unquenchable fire. Now, John the Baptist keeps talking about fire and puts it contrast with some other faith.

Fruitless trees will be burned, the others won't even be cut down. Chaff will be burned but the wheat will be preserved. Some will be baptized with the baptism of the Holy Spirit and others will be baptized with fire.

John the Baptist was basically saying the days we're living in are the days where God is separating in Israel between the remnant who will be preserved and the apostate who

will be subjected to judgment, which is fire. I personally think that when Jesus said, I came to send fire on the earth in verse 49 here, he is talking about that judgment. Although the thing that makes it difficult is it says how I wish it were already kindled.

It makes it sound like he is eager for it and we can hardly think that Jesus was eager to see the Romans come in and wipe out Jerusalem as they did. However, I mean that is to say it would not be a happy thing for him to contemplate, something he would be wishing for. On the other hand, if he knew that he was here to do it and that was something that was inevitable and it was his assignment, he might be wishing that it were already done.

In other words, I wish it was behind me instead of ahead of me. I wish that fire was already kindled so I could not have to anticipate it anymore. It is hard to say.

He certainly seems to mean that with reference to his own suffering. He says, I wish, he says, I am distressed until it is accomplished. There are some unpleasant things ahead here.

One is my own suffering. Another is the suffering I have to bring on the apostate Jerusalem. I wish both of these things were behind me instead of ahead of me.

I think that may be what he is saying. The reason I do is because of what he says next in verse 51. Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division.

Now, this statement is similar to what was stated in Matthew 10. Jesus said something much like it, only he said, don't think that I came to bring peace on the earth. I came not to bring peace, but a sword.

Now, in my opinion, and I could be wrong, but I have always felt like that sword or that division he speaks of here that he came to bring is between believers and unbelievers. That is to say that houses will be divided because part of the household will follow Christ. The other part not following him will persecute him, will persecute their family members.

And this is, I think, how that passage, both passages, the one in Matthew and the one here are usually understood. And I've usually understood it that way. However, when Jesus goes beyond that and says, 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, and all that. If you look over at Matthew 10, where we have a similar statement, Jesus quotes an Old Testament passage. And the Old Testament passage may give the understanding of what he's talking about here.

Because he says in Matthew 10 34, do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth.

I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's foes will be those of his own household.

This is a quotation, at least partially, of Micah chapter 7 and verse 6. In Micah 7, if you read verses 5 and 6, Micah says, do not trust in a friend, do not put confidence in a companion, guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your bosom. For a son dishonors his father, a daughter rises against her mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's enemies are the men of his own house. Now, the context of Micah seems to be that judgment is coming upon Israel.

That's Micah's milieu. That's what's going on. And in this judgment, people will be so confused and so desperate that they'll be not even maintaining the loyalties to the members of their family.

They can't trust each other. It's every man for himself. Such a desperate situation the nation's in that people will be just looking out for themselves.

Even their family members won't matter to them in their frantic and desperate attempt to escape the problems that are coming upon them. And that would be something that did happen also later, not only in Micah's case, where Judah was overrun by Babylon, but also in the time of Jesus or the generation of his disciples, Judah was overrun again by Rome. And as we read of the things that happened, especially during the siege, but even before the siege of Rome, Josephus tells us that in the wars in Galilee, villages were divided against themselves, fighting each other.

Families were divided against each other. In the siege of Jerusalem, it got even worse. No one could trust anyone, even their own family members.

And Jesus seems to be alluding at least to Micah chapter 7, which is a prediction or is a description at least of people who are giving up their family ties in order to just desperately seek their own survival in a desperate situation, I think. And that could be what Jesus is referring to also. The fire that he's sending on the earth is going to disintegrate the society because everyone's so selfish and everyone's so much in danger that you're not going to be able to trust anybody to look out for you.

You're going to have to look out for yourself, even your relatives who normally would be your loyal helpers. They're going to have problems of their own. And so everyone's going to be against everyone else.

So what Jesus said could go that way, or it could go the way it's more commonly, that when a family is partially converted and the other part is not, then the ones who aren't converted would be alienated from their converts because following Jesus does alienate people. Whether this alienation he's talking about, and he does describe alienation,

whether it's caused by some being converted and others not being converted, or whether it's caused simply by the whole society disintegrating in the war of the Jews that was coming, I'm not sure. It seems like it could be taken either way.

But because he mentioned sending fire on the earth, my suspicion is he may be talking about the judgment that was coming. And he seems to be talking about the same as he goes forward in verse 54. Then he also said to the multitudes, when 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? This was the time that the prophet spoke of where the Messiah would come and the judge. The prophet spoke of both of those things extensively.

Jesus said a similar thing, gave a similar kind of a rebuke to the Sadducees and the Pharisees in Matthew chapter 16. It's not exactly the same example that he gives, but it's got the same meaning. In Matthew 16, it says, Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came and tested him, and asking that he would show a sign from heaven.

And he answered and said to them, when it is evening, you say it will be fair weather, for the sky is red. And in the morning it will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening. Hypocrites, you know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.

So obviously he's saying you can predict the weather based on current conditions fairly accurately. So why can't you see the storm that's coming right now? There's signs of it everywhere and you're not paying attention to them. It's interesting, this verse in Matthew 16-2 is the only verse I think in the Bible that uses the term signs of the time.

We hear that term a lot from preachers, the signs of the times. They usually mean things that are going on right now in the world. There's signs that we're living in the end times and that Jesus is coming back.

The Bible never speaks of signs of the times in that sense. Jesus talked about the signs of the times they were living in, the signs of the first coming of Christ and the judgment that was imminent in their day is what he's talking about. And we know it because over in Luke he doesn't say signs of the times, but he says you cannot discern this time, the time we're living in, the time they were living in, which was of course a crisis time.

The remnant was being gathered to the Messiah and the apostate were being alienated more and eventually there would be a total disintegration of the society of those that rejected Christ. Verse 57, this, excuse me, yes and why even of yourselves do you not judge what is right? 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 and the judge

deliver you to the officer and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you, you shall not depart from there until you have paid the very last mite or last coin you have.

This little pericope actually is found also in Matthew 5 in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount and to me it's a really straightforward teaching, but for some reason virtually every commentator and preacher I've ever heard or encountered give it a meaning that's not at all what it seems to be saying. I mean they're very counterintuitive in their interpretation. They make it sound like the judge in this case is God on the judgment day and that if you're thrown into prison that's being thrown into hell or the Catholics would say into purgatory.

They interpret this to be a reference to purgatory and Jesus said if you're thrown into hell or purgatory, depending on which way you're interpreting this, then you won't get out of there until you've paid your last penny or you've passed until you've paid your whole debt. You see this is thought to be supportive of purgatory to the Roman Catholics because purgatory is a temporary place in their theology. A person who's not really good enough to go to heaven but not really bad enough to have to go to hell goes to purgatory.

They believe the really wicked people go to hell, the really saintly people go to heaven when they die, but the really average people, which is most of us, will end up in purgatory. Now purgatory is a place where you don't get any worse so if you weren't bad enough to go to hell you'll never be bad enough to go to hell. If you go to purgatory you're not going to get worse and eventually go to hell.

You'll eventually go to heaven. The question is how long will it take. Purgatory is a place which is purging which is called purgatory.

It's based on the word purging. Purging the remaining sin out of people who've died but the idea is that you eventually get out of there. Once you've done with it there is a way out and they say this Jesus is talking about getting out after you've paid your last penny so that's talking about a temporary place.

They say it's purgatory. Others have taken it to be a reference to hell and they take sort of a universal reconciliation view that once you go to hell there will be an opportunity to eventually get out of there once you've paid your debt to society so to speak. Once you've paid the penalty of your sins by your own suffering.

Neither of these makes any sense in the context of the passage. Jesus is not talking about the judgment day. He's not talking about eternal destinies.

He's talking about how to deal with a person in this life who's an adversary. Somebody that has a legal dispute with you. He said when you go with your adversary to the magistrate.

Now the magistrate is the courthouse. That is he's envisaging a situation where you and your neighbor have some kind of a legal dispute. He says well settle with him before you get there.

Settle out of court is what he's saying because it may not go well with you if it comes to court. Especially if there's any legitimacy in his complaint against you. If you've done something and he's taking you to court the assumption is they're not living in the kind of litigious society we do where people go to court against corporations for spilling their own coffee on their lap.

This is a situation where people went to court because they felt they had a real legitimate complaint against somebody. And maybe they do. If somebody has a complaint against you reconcile with them without taking it to court.

If it comes to court the judge may agree with your adversary. He may turn you over to the officer and throw you into prison. Jesus I think is supposing here that his disciples who are not perfect may at times step over the line and do things that are actionable against their neighbor.

And instead of defending themselves in court against their own guilt they should pay what's owed or like Jesus said elsewhere if your brother wants to take you to court and take your coat give him your cloak also. The idea is settle out of court so you don't put your fate in the hands of the magistrate. If you do that and you're guilty or you're found guilty you'll go to jail.

Now why would Jesus teach that? You might say well that's such an obvious thing. I mean don't you know if you're guilty better to settle out of court than go to jail. The point I think he's making is in the last line you will not get out of there until you've paid the entire thing that is owed.

And I believe what he's arguing against is that Christians may at times think that because God is on their side things will always go well for them. But if they're guilty of crimes or if they've done things that have hurt their neighbor God's not going to bail them out of that. If they've done something that is actionable and they go to jail don't think God's going to send an angel to spring them out like he did Peter.

Peter was not guilty of anything. Peter was put in jail in Acts chapter 12 for being a Christian and an angel came and let him out. Paul and Silas were singing in prison but they were innocent and God sent an earthquake and broke the jails open.

God can let his people out of jail but if you're guilty of something and the court finds you guilty God's not going to do any special miracles to get you out of there. So avoid doing those things. Avoid any unjust behavior to your neighbor I believe he's saying.

There's really nothing in this that would point in the direction of the judgment day or God

being the judge or the prison being hell or purgatory anything like that. There's not really any suggestion that his disciples would take from this that he's talking about the afterlife or eternal destinies or anything like that. Likewise in Matthew where it's there it's likewise that there's nothing in that in the passage to suggest he's talking about the afterlife in my opinion.

Now chapter 13 he's still on the subject of what's coming in AD 70 I believe as we shall see. It says there were present at that season some who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Now it's not likely that Pilate had actually taken their blood and offered it with their sacrifices.

More likely this is a figurative way of saying that they were offering sacrifices in the temple and Pilate sent soldiers in and just slaughtered them. So along with the blood of their sacrifices their own blood was shed there in the temple. As it were Pilate had mingled their blood with that of their own sacrifices.

This is an event we know nothing about from other sources. We do know from secular history that Pilate was prone to do tyrannical things and he was very much hated by the Jews because he oppressed them so much and this is apparently a case that never made the records elsewhere but it's obvious that Luke records that it happened and this is the kind of awful stuff Pilate and the Romans often did. Now no doubt the people who told Jesus about it figured that that would make his blood boil.

Jesus was a Galilean and his fellow Galileans were in the temple worshiping and Pilate sent soldiers in and kills them. No doubt these people were intending to get Jesus riled up perhaps to start a revolution. Many people thought the Messiah was supposed to do that and if Jesus was the Messiah this would be just the kind of thing to trigger the the revolution.

Here's Pilate doing an atrocity against some of Jesus' fellow Galileans. Most people would get up and say we got to overthrow that tyrant we got to do it now and Jesus instead said do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered such things? I tell you no but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. It's interesting because Jesus acted as if they were suggesting the Galileans were more guilty than others.

I don't think that was what they were thinking at all but I think he used it as an opportunity to say what happened to them is going to happen to you too if you don't repent and he said it says I tell you no unless you repent you'll all likewise perish. Likewise means in the same way and in verse 4 he says or those 18 on whom the tower of Siloam fell and killed them do you think that they were worse sinners than all others men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you no but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. So twice he says if you don't repent you will perish in the same way as who as those Galileans who were slaughtered in the temple as those people who were killed by

falling masonry when the tower of Siloam fell another event we don't have any other record of but obviously they knew about it had happened perhaps not very much before this and Jesus and the people knew there had been 18 people killed when a Jerusalem tower near Siloam which is in Jerusalem fell he said you might think that those few people who died in those calamities were under some special judgment of God because they were more wicked than the average person.

This is sometimes the way that certain kind of people interpret disasters. Katrina for example you know well that's a horrible disaster it must have been because those people were more sinful than other people. A lot of times we assume that acts of God or even acts of war come upon people because they are more wicked than other people sometimes they might but Jesus is saying that's a wrong thing to assume you can't assume that is true and in this case especially not because he was indicating that everyone in the society with the exception of his disciples was equally worthy of death.

If you don't repent this will happen to you too. Now again you shall likewise perish often is assumed to be a reference to hell. I know that there was one of the books on the on hell that I read by a Presbyterian scholar and it was called repent or perish and he was actually trying to support the traditional view of hell although the statement repent or perish if it actually applied to hell would sound more like annihilation but in any case his title is repent or perish obviously taken from this passage.

This is the only passage that would yield that particular line unless you repent you'll all perish but he didn't say you'll just all perish he said you'll all likewise perish that's in the same way that these people perish. How did these people perish? They perished at the hands of the Romans. Many of them perished in the temple.

Many of them perished because rocks fell from towers in Jerusalem and fell on their heads and killed them. This is the way thousands of Jews died shortly after this when the Romans conquered the city. They knocked down the walls there was falling masonry many people were crushed under the walls and the towers that fell.

Thousands ran into the temple and tried to stage a last stand against the Romans. The Romans burned them down and killed them that burned down the temple upon them. Josephus records all this.

In other words the things that have happened to these people now are similar to the things are going to happen to the rest of you if you don't perish. You will die in the same way. Now he's not mentioning hell here at all.

He's not mentioning annihilation or the traditional view of hell or any other kind of view of hell. He is not saying that these people went to hell and so will you. We have no evidence that the people who were slaughtered in the temple while they're offering their sacrifices went to hell or that the 18 men at the tower fell and went to hell.

There's no suggestion they were bad people. In fact Jesus is saying it's wrong to think they were. Are you thinking they were worse sinners? They weren't.

They're just ordinary people. Some of them may have been bad sinners but we don't have any reason to believe it. And those who are offering their sacrifices for all we know some of them might have been very righteous people.

They were worshiping God after all when they died. I mean Jesus is not saying these people went to hell and you'll go to hell if you don't repent. This is not a teaching about hell.

It's a teaching about AD 70. It's a teaching about the death of Jerusalemites at the hands of the Romans and from the collapsing of the walls and so forth of Jerusalem. At least seems so to me.

I can't think of any argument to make this a passage that even alludes to hell at all though it's very commonly used by preachers to suggest that it is. Now verse 6, he also spoke this parable. A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard and he came seeking fruit on it and found none.

Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, look for three years I've come seeking fruit on this tree and I find none. Cut it down. Why does it use up the ground? But he answered and said to him, sir let it alone this year also until I dig around it and fertilize it and if it bears fruit well but if not after that you can cut it down.

Now this little parable is not found in any of the other gospels. This is the only place you find it. It seems, I mean there's no explanation of the parable given to us.

He doesn't explain who the owner is or who the keeper of the vineyard is or what the tree represents but it's not very difficult to assign meanings to this that seem to be the only meanings that present themselves as possibilities. I don't know of even two possibilities. Maybe there are but I think everyone can see that the fig tree here is representative of Israel in the days of Christ and it has not been bearing fruit.

Jesus basically did an acted parable about this later on when he found a fig tree growing on the slopes of Mount Zion and he went looking for fruit and there's no fruit in it so he cursed it and it withered up and died. Virtually everyone agrees this is a reference to Israel. Jesus came to Israel looking for fruit.

The idea of God looking for fruit from Israel comes initially back from Isaiah 5 where in Isaiah 5 verses 1 through 7 we're told that Israel is like God's vineyard and he came looking for fruit and the fruit he was looking for is justice and righteousness and that he had given Israel every advantage to produce that fruit but they for some reason produced only bad fruit and so he was going to tear down the hedge and let the wild beast come and destroy the vineyard. This is his way of saying God has given Israel

every opportunity to produce the fruits of justice and righteousness. He's given them the law.

He's given them the prophets. They've got advantages the Gentiles never had. They should be the most just and most righteous society on the planet but they weren't.

They were as oppressive as anyone else maybe worse than some and so he said I've done everything I could to get fruit I wanted from this vineyard but it's produced bad fruit so I'm going to just give it over to its enemies. That's Isaiah 5 verses 1 through 7. Now when Jesus cursed the fig tree because it didn't have fruit and it's generally understood by commentators this is probably a reference to Jesus coming in looking for that fruit that justice that righteousness that God's always been looking for from Israel but the fig tree didn't have the fruit so it was cursed. In fact Jesus said no one will ever eat fruit from you again and the fig tree withered up.

He announced this was the last chance. The fig tree had had other opportunities but it had never produced the fruit so there would never be another opportunity. He says no man shall ever eat fruit from you again Jesus said and the fig tree withered up.

Now here's a parable which seems to have the same theme. Here's a fig tree it's not producing fruit. It's in danger of being cut down because it's just burdening the ground.

It's absorbing nutrients from the soil that could be used for better fruit producing plants but it's not producing any fruit. So the owner of the vineyard says I think I'm getting rid of this tree. I've been waiting for three years for fruit and it hasn't produced anything and the keeper of the vineyard says well let's give it a one more season here.

Let me fertilize it. Let me work on it. Maybe we can get some fruit from it and if not then let's tear it down.

Now I think what this is saying I think almost anyone would reach this conclusion just contemplating but Jesus is saying that God has given Israel the past three years probably the past three years of Jesus' ministry to bear fruit and they haven't borne the fruit. They've not been responsive to Jesus and so he's just giving them one more season. He's going to do his best to try to give them every advantage to produce fruit.

He'll preach to them. He'll you know as it were fertilize the tree and see if it will he'll put nourishment into it so that it can possibly bear fruit but if it doesn't it's going down. Now this is probably the only passage in the Bible we have that points in the direction pretty strongly of a three and a half year ministry of Jesus.

The number of passovers in Jesus' ministry is disputed and if there were three then we know his ministry was at least two and a half years long. If there were four which seems possible it was three and a half years long. We don't have anything that tells us exactly how long Jesus' ministry was but we do have this parable suggesting that this tree had

been given three years at this point and was going to be given apparently a little while longer not much maybe a few months one more season and so it probably reflects the length of Jesus' ministry and of course it predicts that if the Israel does not respond to him in the time allotted they're going to be destroyed.

So we can see that Jesus is talking about AD 70 here. The tree's going to be torn down. If you don't repent you're going to perish.

I have fire to send on the earth. This is a section of Jesus' teaching where the destruction that is impending is threatened but avoidance of it is also suggested. If you repent you won't perish.

If the tree produces fruit it won't be cut down. So Jesus is still giving them a chance but warning them very strongly this tree's going down if it doesn't produce fruit soon. Verse 10, and he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath and behold there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity 18 years and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up.

She had probably I guess a hunchback or something like that some curvature of the spine. This is referred to as a spirit of infirmity. Now a spirit of infirmity doesn't have to mean an evil spirit or a demon but I think it may in this case.

Many of the demon-possessed people that Jesus ministered to only had physical conditions as symptoms. You know we think of demon-possessed people as people who act in a crazy way and lots of them do but some of the demon-possessed that Jesus delivered were just blind or mute or dumb or I mean deaf and so he was able by casting demons out to cure these physical conditions. We don't read that their behavior was abnormal.

Likewise this woman there's no reference to her behavior being affected but she does have a physical malady a curvature of her spine which is said to be a spirit of infirmity and although Jesus isn't said to cast out a demon he does say that she is delivered from the devil. In verse 16 he says this woman being a daughter of Abram whom Satan has bound for 18 years shouldn't she be loosed. So this woman has a spirit and he says Satan has bound her.

This sounds as if he's referring to it as a physical condition caused by a spiritual entity. Not all sicknesses are described this way in scripture and some sicknesses are just regarded to be organic in nature but this one sounds like a demon is causing it though we don't have your typical exorcism going on here. It says but when Jesus saw her verse 12 he called her to him and said to her woman you are loosed from your infirmity.

Now on another occasion when a woman came to Jesus the Syrophoenician woman her daughter was possessed and needed to be delivered. We're specifically told her

daughter was vexed with a demon. Jesus said your daughter is loosed and essentially she was delivered.

So Jesus doesn't always speak to the demon and command it to go out. He can just announce you're free and then the demon has to go apparently. There's no specific reference to evil spirit or demon here but I think the spirit of infirmity is to be understood that way because he says woman you are loosed from your infirmity and that's similar to what Jesus said about the woman's daughter who was said to be demon possessed.

She was loosed also and he laid his hands on her and immediately she was made straight and glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath and he said to the crowd there are six days in which men ought to work therefore come and be healed on them not on the Sabbath day. This ruler of the synagogue apparently was not familiar with Jesus, not well enough to know that he shouldn't confront Jesus in the synagogue unless he wants to be humiliated because that's what happened every time people confronted Jesus in the synagogue.

He always pointed out their hypocrisy and the Lord answered and said to him hypocrite does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead it away for water. In other words your donkeys and your livestock have to drink water every day. You keep them tied up in the barn but on the Sabbath you certainly have to take your animals out to give them water so you unloose them you untie them to do that.

He says so ought not this woman being a daughter of Abraham whom Satan has bound think of it for 18 years be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath and when he had said these things all his adversaries were put to shame and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him. Now this is kind of like the case where there was a man with a withered hand in the synagogue and Jesus healed him and he was criticized for that and he said well you know if a lamb falls into a ditch on the Sabbath he'll pull it out. In fact on that occasion Jesus gave more teaching about he said it's lawful to do good on the Sabbath.

Here it's a similar kind of case different malady but similar kind of criticism. Jesus is not supposed to heal on the Sabbath and he says you treat your animals better than you treat children of Abraham. This woman's a daughter of Abraham she's not just a animal she's one of Abraham's offspring like you are a human being and a Jew and you don't care about her as much as you care about your animals and that put them to shame and this kind of thing didn't make it any better for Jesus in the eyes of the religious leaders.

I mean imagine being a guest speaker at a church. I mean that'd be a tense situation. I've spoken in people's churches as a guest.

I come into a church and suppose you know something I said caused the pastor to interrupt me and say that's not okay to do here and I rebuked him and called him a hypocrite. I mean that would be so embarrassing. That'd be so tense.

Everyone in the congregation would be oh that's that doesn't happen every day in church but it happened most of the days when Jesus went to church. It hasn't happened when I go to church actually. I've never done that and I don't expect I ever will but I could just imagine how that would feel to everybody in the room.

Oh there's something going on. This tension. The pastor and the guest speaker are confronting each other and the guest speaker's calling the pastor a hypocrite.

That's what happened when Jesus went to the synagogue. He just confronted the leaders and he was there to correct what was wrong in their religious lives and what was wrong in their lives was usually hypocrisy and judging by a double standard. Criticizing someone for healing on the Sabbath but not criticizing themselves for letting their animals drink on the Sabbath.

Jesus points out how inconsistent religion can be. Legalism is almost always inconsistent. There's a certain arbitrariness about it where a legalistic person will criticize someone on some standards that they've decided to criticize people by but there are things in their own lives that could be equally criticized on similar standards and they don't see it and that's one of the real identifiers of legalism is judging someone by a standard that you wouldn't be able to be vindicated by the same standard.

Jesus said if you judge by a certain measure that same measure will be used against you. So be careful who you criticize because it may be that you would have a beam in your own eye where you're trying to remove a speck and certainly that would be in this case the man was trying to remove what he considered a speck in Jesus' eye. You shouldn't be healing on the Sabbath or yet actually he didn't have the guts to confront Jesus.

He confronted the poor woman. The woman got healed and he says you people don't come here and be healed on the Sabbath day. Come and be healed the other days.

The guy didn't have the guts to stand up to Jesus but he criticized the congregation so Jesus turned on him and called him a hypocrite and told him he's inconsistent and the man was shamed and deserved to be shamed but he was not doing anything that other religious leaders of the time wouldn't have done. He was just going by the rules. They believed that God was more interested in the rules than he was interested in people.

Jesus was interested in helping people and this woman was a daughter of Abraham who needed help. For 18 years she needed it and they didn't have any compassion on her. They didn't rejoice that she was fixed after 18 years of being bent over.

You'd think they're going to be rejoicing but the leader doesn't like that. It would happen on the Sabbath. You're breaking the rules and that's how legalism is.

It cares more about rules than it cares about people and that's the conflict Jesus often had with the religious leaders of the time. That was a fairly consistent problem with them. Breaking the Sabbath was always wrong in their ideas although every time Jesus defended someone or defended himself for breaking the Sabbath it was because he was putting people and their needs ahead of the rules and God cares more about people than he cares about rules.

That's why Jesus said man was not made for the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made for man. The rules are made to benefit man.

Man wasn't made because God had a bunch of rules. He needed someone to go obey so here's the rules. Let's make some people to be in bondage to them but God made people first and they are his first concern and then the rules are made to benefit them.