

Our first question concerning these verses: how many subjects are here in Jesus' teaching? Translations divide the verses into three or two or only one topic. If there is still only one major theme, what is it? Notice that Jesus began the chapter confronting the hypocrisy of His day (vs. 1), and now the chapter ends with the same warning (vs. 56).

"I have come to cast fire on the earth!" "I have a baptism to be baptized with" (Mark 10:38). What IS He talking about? **Fire and Water!** He speaks of both events as (near) future. His full humanity shows as He anticipates the "wine press" of Gethsemane.

It will be the offense of the cross of Christ that will start the firestorm in the earth. It is still burning. Such a message still divides with great emotional fervor. **The cross tells men what they are like by nature.** "See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may boast in your flesh. But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the Israel of God" (Gal 6:11-16).

Do not be surprised at the division, the separation, the alienation, the conflict that will come, because Christ did not come to bring peace.

Do not be in denial of the "inevitable." We don't like that word. It implies that something is going to surely happen, and we will have no control to stop it. So the foolish way of responding is simply to ignore, postpone thought and preparation.

"You hypocrites!" We are willing to predict the weather and make plans accordingly, but when it comes to the more eternal matters of life, death, and moral judgment, we stall or deny. Won't you admit to Who I AM? The evidence screams at you.

Two examples:

"After some days Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, and he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, 'Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you.' At the same time he hoped that money would be given him by Paul. So he sent for him often and conversed with him. When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison" (Acts 24:24-27).

"And while *Paul* was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, 'Paul, you are out of your mind! *Your* great learning is driving you mad.' But Paul said, 'I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth. For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do.' And Agrippa *replied* to Paul, 'In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian. And Paul *said*, 'I would to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains.'" (Act 26:24-29).

It is hypocritical to pat yourself on the back for your ability to predict rain while under the storm clouds but not "see" the gathering storms of moral judgment. Things are plain. You can see them, you don't want face what they mean. You know but "pretend" not to know. Can you not see what is coming? No, we are not alarmists. We "co-exist." We "visualize peace." There will be "peace in our time." "No, I did not come to bring that kind of peace." We are hugely divided on this.

So what are we to do? John preached, "Flee from the wrath to come." "Up! Get out of this place, for the LORD is about to destroy the city. But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting" (Gen. 19:14).

So Jesus admonishes, as part of this extended theme: **Settle things now** with the Judge of all the earth. There is a way to get out of your criminal sentence. What grace that the debt of your sin can be **fully** paid by Another! Then live obediently under His Lordship.