

THIS WEEKEND,,, JESUS GRASPS OUR ATTENTION,,, WHEN HE SAYS:

“I HAVE COME TO SET THE EARTH ON FIRE”

THAT’S NOT THE KIND OF NICE MESSAGE,,, THAT WE WANT TO COME TO CHURCH TO HEAR,,, IS IT?

LETS PUT IT THIS WAY,,, *IT’S NOT NICE TO HEAR ANY MESSAGE OF DESTRUCTION,,, LET ALONE,,, TALK OF DESTRUCTION,,, BY BRINGING FIRE TO THE EARTH.*

IF JESUS WERE WALKING THE STREETS OF LAS VEGAS,, NEW YORK,,, OR,,, WASHINGTON,,, TODAY,,, WITH THAT KIND OF MESSAGE,,, HE’D BE PLACED,,, ON THE TOP OF THE FBI’S,,, MOST WANTED LIST!

WELL,,, *IN HIS DAY,, THE JEWISH LEADERS AND THE ROMAN GOVERNMENT,,, DIDN’T DISAPPOINT.* THEY HAD JESUS AND HIS MESSIANIC MESSAGE,,, ON TOP OF THEIR “TOP SECRET**”,,, “**WATCH THIS GUY**” LIST. THEY FOLLOWED JESUS EVERYWHERE AND THEY LISTENED,,, TO EVERY WORD HE PREACHED.**

NOW THESE WEREN’T FOLLOWERS! THEY HAD THEIR OWN AGENDA! THEY WEREN’T LOOKING TO BE SAVED! NO,,, THEY WERE HUNTING HIM,,, SO THEY COULD BRING HIM,,, TO THEIR OWN JUDGEMENT.

HOW IRONIC IT WAS,,, THAT JESUS SPOKE ABOUT BRINGING FIRE TO THE EARTH,,, BECAUSE THE WORD “FIRE**”,,, TO THE PEOPLE OF HIS DAY,,, COULD SOMETIMES MEAN,,, “**THEIR JUDGEMENT**”.**

“I HAVE COME TO SET THE EARTH ON FIRE AND HOW I WISH IT WERE ALREADY BLAZING”!

THIS PHRASE,,, HAS MANY MEANINGS,,, AND IT WAS DESIGNED TO STIR JESUS’ LISTENERS,,, TO ACTION. ACTIONS OF DECISION,,, OF THINKING,,, AND,,, OF CONFLICT,,, WITHIN THEIR HEARTS.

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT,,, THE WORD FIRE,,, IS USED MANY TIMES,,, IN DIFFERENT FORMS.

BUT IT WAS USED,,, IN RELATION,,, TO THE
CONDITIONS,,, AND ENVIRONMENT,,, OF THEIR DAY.
IN LUKE,,, JESUS SPOKE OF HIS DEATH AND THE
GREAT ANGUISH HE FELT,,, SAYING:

“UNTIL IT IS ACCOMPLISHED”.

ONE OF THE EARLIEST RECORDINGS OF THE WORD
“***FIRE***” WAS IN *CHAPTER 3,,, OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
GOSPEL OF LUKE,,,* WHEN JOHN THE BAPTIST WAS
INTRODUCING JESUS,,, TO HIS FOLLOWERS,,, WHO
CAME TO JOHN TO BE BAPTIZED.

JOHN SAID: *“I BAPTIZED YOU WITH WATER; BUT ONE,,,
WHO IS MORE POWERFUL THAN I IS COMING; I AM
NOT WORTHY TO UNTIE THE THONG OF HIS SANDALS.
HE WILL BAPTIZE YOU WITH ***HOLY SPIRIT*** AND ***FIRE***”.*

JOHN’S BAPTISM WITH WATER,,, SYMBOLIZES THE
WASHING AWAY OF SIN,,, WHICH IS IN LINE,,, WITH
JOHN’S MESSAGE OF REPENTENCE.

JESUS’ BAPTISM BY “FIRE”,,, INCLUDES THE POWER
NEEDED TO DO GOD’S WILL,,, SO,,, THE USE OF THE
WORD “***FIRE***” HERE,,, INDICATES POWER AND
JUDGEMENT. IT SYMBOLIZES THE WORK OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT,,, AS THOSE WHO REFUSE TO REPENT,,,
BRINGS GOD’S JUDGEMENT,,, AND SPIRITUAL
DESTRUCTION,,, UPON THEMSELVES.

SO,,, IT’S AGAINST THAT BACKGROUND,,, THAT JESUS
MADE HIS STATEMENT. IN TODAY’S GOSPEL. JESUS’
BAPTISM,,, BROUGHT THE HOLY SPIRIT AND FIRE
DOWN ON HIS DISCIPLES,,, WHICH WOULD BE
NEEDED,,, FOR THEM,,, AND FOR ALL OF US,,, TO
CONTINUE ON,,, DOING THE WORK,,, OF OUR LORD
JESUS CHRIST!

THEN JESUS WENT ON TO SAY:

***DO YOU THINK THAT I HAVE COME TO ESTABLISH
PEACE ON THE EARTH?***

NO,,, I TELL YOU,,, BUT RATHER DIVISION.

WOW! DIVISION?????

DO YOU THINK THAT,,, IN THIS PASSAGE,,, SHOULDN'T JESUS BE SAYING;

DO YOU THINK I'VE COME TO BRING PEACE ON EARTH?

YES,,, I'VE COME TO COMFORT FAMILIES. I'VE COME TO BRIDGE THE RIFTS OF SILENCE,,, THAT SEPARATE FATHERS AND SONS. I'VE COME TO HEAL THE WOUNDS OF REGRET,,, THAT DIVIDE APART MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS?

WOULDN'T IT MAKE MORE "HUMAN SENSE",,, FOR THE PASSAGE TO SAY THAT!

LUKES GOSPEL HAS MANY MIRACLE STORIES ABOUT JESUS' HEALING INDIVIDUALS AND RESTORING FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS.

PERHAPS,,, THAT'S WHAT THIS PASSAGE SHOULD SAY! PERHAPS,,, THAT'S WHAT MANY OF US WOULD LIKE THIS PASSAGE TO SAY!

BUT IT DOESN'T! LIKE IT OR NOT,,, THIS PASSAGE TALKS ABOUT DIVISION,,, NOT RECONCILIATION.

JESUS ISN'T TALKING ABOUT THE SMALL AND LARGE RIFTS,,, IN THE FABRIC OF THE FAMILY,,, THAT HAPPENS,,, AS A RESULT OF THE NATURAL WEAR AND TARE,,, OR,,, THE UNEXPECTED TRAUMA AND TRAGEDY OF LIFE'S SITUATIONS.

NO,,, IN THIS PASSAGE,,, JESUS IS TALKING SPECIFICALLY ABOUT THE DIVISION THAT HAPPENS AS A DIRECT RESULT OF A DECISION;

TO FOLLOW HIM!

DIVISION! IT'S A HARD WORD TO HEAR AND IT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE GOOD NEWS,,, ESPECIALLY SINCE JESUS DOESN'T SIMPLY IMPLY,,, THAT DIVISION **CAN OCCUR AS A RESULT OF HIM**,,, BUT,,, HE VIGOROUSLY STATES,,, THAT DIVISION,,, **WILL OCCUR BECAUSE OF HIM!**

ONCE AGAIN,,, JESUS GRABS OUR ATTENTION,,, BUT THIS TIME,,, IT WAS WITH A NEW WORD; "***DIVISION***". **WITH THAT,,, JESUS SUDDENLY TURNED UP THE**

INTENSITY OF HIS MESSAGE.

IF JESUS' MOTHER,, MARY,, WAS IN THAT CROWD THAT DAY,, I DON'T THINK THAT SHE WOULD HAVE BEEN SURPRISED BY HIS WORDS,, BECAUSE;

MARY KNEW,, FROM THE VERY BEGINNING,, THAT JESUS WOULD BE CONTROVERSIAL.

BEFORE JESUS WAS EVEN BORN,, MARY KNEW THAT JESUS WAS THE KEY TO GOD'S PLAN TO BRING DOWN THE POWERFUL,, FROM THEIR LOFTY THRONES AND LIFT UP THE LOWLY,, TO FILL THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS AND SEND THE RICH AWAY EMPTY.

JESUS CAME TO BRING FIRE TO THE EARTH,, TO MAKE ALL THINGS NEW!

FRICITION,, BROTHERS AND SISTERS,, IS INEVITABLE HAVING BECOME A NEW CREATION IN CHRIST,, THEN ENCOUNTERING AND CONFRONTING,, THE SINFUL OLD WORLD!

AS A NEW CREATION,, YOUR PEACE IS DEFINED,, ***NOT AS THE ABSENCE OF CONFLICT***,, BUT,, ***AS THE FULFILLMENT,, OF THE PROMISE OF THE KINGDOM,, BIRTHED IN YOUR SPIRIT.***

LUKE'S GOSPEL ALSO MAKES CLEAR,, THAT THE PEACE OF CHRIST,, IS NOT,, ***JUST A MATTER OF PERSONAL ATTITUDE***,, BUT,, AS A NEW CREATION,, SCRIPTURE DECLARES THE REALITY,, THAT THE LOWLY,, ARE LIFTED UP,, THE HUNGRY,, FILLED,, THE CAPTIVES RELEASED,, AND THE BLIND,, SEE.

AS A NEW CREATION IN CHRIST,, JESUS,, SAID;
THAT HIS FOLLOWERS,, WOULD BECOME LIKE HIM IN SPIRIT,, HUMBLE AND READY TO SERVE

WHERE ***THE OTHER CHEEK IS TURNED***,,

WHERE ***NOT ONLY A SHIRT,, BUT ALSO A COAT IS GIVEN FREELY***,,

WHERE ***LENDING IS DONE WITHOUT EXPECTATION OF RETURN***,,

WHERE GOD'S PEOPLE,, LOVE NOT ONLY THEIR FRIENDS,, BUT ALSO,, THEIR ENEMIES.

**HOW DOES THAT KIND OF PERSON,,, SOUND TO YOU?
BEING A NEW CREATION,,, BY THE LOVE AND GRACE
OF JESUS,,, IS BEING; UPSIDE-RIGHT!
AND LOOKING FROM THAT PERSPECTIVE,,, THE
WORLD AROUND US,,, IS UPSIDE-DOWN!**

**PERHAPS THAT'S WHY THESE MESSAGES ARE SO
HARD. THEY REMIND US,,, THAT THE DECISION TO
FOLLOW CHRIST,,, ISN'T A WALK IN THE PARK! IT'S
NOT JUST BEING NICE,,, AND POLITE AND MINDING
OUR OWN BUSINESS. TO FOLLOW WHERE JESUS
LEADS US,,, IS TO BE PICKED UP AND TURNED UPSIDE-
RIGHT. WHEN THAT HAPPENS BROTHERS AND
SISTERS,,, IT'S GOING TO BE PAINFUL AT TIMES,,, AND
PEOPLE AROUND US,,, MAYBE EVEN OUR OWN
FAMILY,,, ARE NOT GOING TO UNDERSTAND. THERE'S
GOING TO BE FRICTION AND DIVISION!**

**BUT REMEMBER,,, JESUS,,, IS JUST TELLING THE
TRUTH,,, THAT FOLLOWING HIM,,, WASN'T MEANT TO
BE EASY OR COMFORTABLE!**

**IT'S NOT EASY,,, TO WALK "UPSIDE-RIGHT",,, IN AN
"UPSIDE-DOWN" WORLD,,, BUT *BY THE POWER OF
JESUS AND BY WHAT HE DID FOR US,,, ON THE CROSS,,,
WE'RE EMPOWERED TO DO EXACTLY THAT,,, AS THE
HOLY SPIRIT GUIDES US,,, AND AS WE LISTEN,,, AND
OBEY HIM!***

**THE PEACE OF CHRIST ISN'T ABOUT OPPOSITION,,,
UNLIKE THE AGENDA,,, OFFERED BY THIS TEMPORAL
WORLD. THE PEACE OF CHRIST,,, BROTHERS AND
SISTERS,,, HAS ONLY ONE AGENDA AND THAT IS;**

TO MAKE ALL THINGS NEW,,,

**IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROMISE OF JESUS.
FOLLOWING JESUS,,, MEANS LIVING EACH MOMENT,,,
OF EACH DAY,,,**

WITH HIM,,, AT THE CENTER OF YOUR LIFE!

**TO SAY THAT JESUS CHRIST IS LORD,,, IS LORD OF
OUR LIVES,,, TO SAY THAT CAESAR IS NOT AND THAT
OUR MODERN DAY IDOLS,,, WHATEVER FORM THEY**

MAY TAKE,,, ARE NOT!

WE MIGHT ASK,,, *IF THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP IS SO HIGH,,, AND IF THE DECISION TO FOLLOW CHRIST,,, LEADS TO DIVISION,,, THEN WHY FOLLOW?* WELL,,,

(*) WHY DID THE APOSTLES LEAVE EVERYTHING BEHIND AND FOLLOW JESUS WHEN HE CALLED?

(*) WHY DID THE EARLY CHRISTIANS SUFFER PERSECUTION AND DEATH,,, TO FOLLOW CHRIST?

(*) WHY,,, HAVE THERE ALWAYS BEEN SOME,,, WHO WILLINGLY ACCEPTED THE COST OF STANDING UP FOR THE “**UP-SIDE RIGHT**” WAYS OF THE KINGDOM,,, IN AN “**UPSIDE-DOWN**” WORLD?

WHY,,, BECAUSE THE TRUE CALL OF CHRIST,,, *OVERRIDES ANY OTHER LOYALTY,,, ANY OTHER COMMITMENT,,, AND ANY OTHER RELATIONSHIP.*

THE CALL OF CHRIST,,, *OVERRIDES “ALL LOGIC” AND THE JOY OF A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST,,, OVERRIDES ANY FEAR!*

SO,,, I ASK YOU,,, ARE YOU ANSWERING;
THE CALL OF CHRIST”

MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS,,, IF WE ARE TRULY COMMITTED CHRISTIANS,,, AND IF WE WISH TO SINCERELY ANSWER THE “CALL OF CHRIST”,,, THEN; WE MUST,,, *LOOK PAST THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD* AND KEEP OUR FOCUS,,, **ON THE SPIRITUAL GROWTH,,, OF THE NEW CREATION**,,, THAT IS WITHIN US,,, THROUGH OUR LORD,,, JESUS CHRIST!

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

+++ AMEN+++

(1,452) WDS,,, 6 PGS