

Why Jesus Spoke in Parables

Messages from Jesus to the Churches

**From
Jesus Christ**

*“God, ...has in these last days
spoken to us by His Son”
Heb. 1:1-2*

Through His Friend
Joseph M. Smith

Why Jesus Spoke in Parables
© 2005 *A Message from Jesus Ministry*
All rights reserved
Printed in U.S.A.

Unless otherwise specified, all Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of The Holy Bible.

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the *Holy Bible*,
New Living Translation, copyright © 1996.
Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.,
Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

Emphases not found in original text are ours.
(2008 Printing)

Acknowledgments

Jesus' Prayer of Thanksgiving

***“Then Jesus prayed this prayer:
'O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank You for hiding the truth from those who
think themselves so wise and clever, and for revealing it to the childlike.
Yes, Father, it pleased You to do it this way!’***

***“My Father has given Me authority over everything. No one really knows the Son
except the Father, and no one really knows the Father except the Son and those to
whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.”***

(Matt. 11:25-27 NLT)

The Parables of Jesus

Why did Jesus speak to the people in parables? His disciples asked Him the same question. Let's see what Christ told them.

“And the disciples came, and said unto Him, ‘Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?’ He answered and said unto them, ‘**Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven**, but to them it is not given’” (Matt. 13:10-11).

“And He said unto them, ‘**Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God**: but unto them that are without, all *these* things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and *their* sins should be forgiven them’” (Mark 4:11-12).

Didn't Jesus come to save sinners? But here He is trying to hide information from them so they couldn't understand and be converted. Why would He conceal from some people and say to others it is given to you to know and to understand?

“And He said, ‘**Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God**: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand’” (Luke 8:10).

“Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.”

What is Jesus talking about here? Who is the “you” spoken of in these verses? The “you” is us! That is, God's people—the Body of Christ. It is given to us, as believers and followers of Christ, to comprehend all about His plans for a structured government and ruling family.

“All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake He not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet [Isa. 6:9-10; Psa. 78:2], saying, ‘I will open My mouth in parables; **I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world**’” (Matt. 13:34-35).

Some of what Jesus spoke of in the parables reveal parts of God's secret plan set in place from before the foundation of the world. Discerning these “veiled or hidden” messages from Jesus will make clear the mysteries He declared to His servants the

prophets. There will be no more mystery about God and His plan when we grasp God's message to the Church hidden in the parables from Jesus. (See Rev. 10:7.)

The parables are used to conceal the purpose of God's plan, that is, the secrets of God's Kingdom or family of God, from the people at large and to reveal it to the Church. **Parables, therefore, are information or prophecies to, for, and about the Church. They reveal how God has been and is now working with the Church!**

The key to understanding the parables from Jesus is the Holy Spirit. **The parables are spiritually discerned and the only way to understand them is to listen to what the Spirit of Jesus is saying to the churches.**

"It is the spirit that quickeneth [gives life to or understanding to]; the flesh profiteth nothing [spiritually speaking]: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit [can only be spiritually discerned], and *they* are life" (John 6:63).

One of the problems with the study of theology throughout the centuries has been that of trying to decipher the Word of God with human intellect alone. This is why Jesus had to reprimand the Churches in Revelation by saying, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Many try to read the Word and then apply human intellect to unscramble the Bible. The Word, combined with human intellect alone, will benefit nothing spiritually. The Word, without the Spirit, equals false teachings, for it is the Spirit that, "...will guide you into all truth..." (John 16:13).

If you want to understand about the growth and progression of the Kingdom or the Church from the time Jesus walked the earth in a physical body to the time of His Second Coming, then learn the meaning of the parables as revealed through the Spirit.

The Gospel Message

The Gospel Jesus Christ gave contained two messages. One was a message of the Good News of the coming of Jesus Christ and the formation of the Kingdom of God. It is a message for the whole world—for the believer and unbeliever alike. The second message of the Gospel was veiled or hidden in parables and only accessible to those with childlike faith. The parables are open only to those that are willing to listen to what the Spirit of Jesus is saying to the Churches.

Today, most churches are content with telling the message **about Jesus** but, as a whole, have little understanding or interest in Christ's prophetic message to the Churches. Parables are Church History written in advance. Most churches have been reluctant to listen to what the Spirit of Jesus is telling them today.

You see, Jesus knows the end from the beginning. He understands human nature. And He has laid out the history of the way His Words would be treated and received. After all Jesus knows our nature extremely well. "But Jesus didn't trust them, because

He knew what people were really like. No one needed to tell Him about human nature” (John 2:24-25 NLT).

“To those who are open to My teaching [spiritually—childlike in attitude and heart], more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But to those who are not listening [not having a childlike heart and attitude], even what they have will be taken away from them. That is why I tell these stories, because people see what I do, but they don’t really see. They hear what I say, but they don’t really hear, and they don’t understand” (Matt. 13:12-13 NLT).

This is why the Pharisees were so easily offended.

They heard what Christ said but they didn’t understand what He meant. They were spiritually blind.

“Then the disciples came to Him and asked, ‘Do You realize You offended the Pharisees by what You just said?’ Jesus replied, ‘Every plant not planted by My heavenly Father will be rooted up, so ignore them. They are blind guides leading the blind, and if one blind person guides another, they will both fall into a ditch’” (Matt. 15:12-14 NLT).

The Greek word for “blind” used in the above verse means, “opaque (as if *smoky*), that is, (by analogy) blind.” These teachers, as so many today, were able “to see” but they were not able to grasp the deep spiritual messages Jesus had to give. They saw only enough of His teachings to be offended. And while they saw and heard what He said, **they had no idea what He meant.**

These “spiritual leaders” saw what they could see from human vision and intellect, but they were blind to comprehending the things of the Spirit. The Apostle Paul put it this way, “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5). They chose to rely on their wisdom and intellect to see and to perceive from human thought and reason instead of asking God to show them the meaning and understanding of the Truth.

In Luke 10:21(NLT), “Then Jesus was filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit and said, ‘O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank You for hiding the truth from those who think themselves so wise and clever, and for revealing it to the childlike...’”

Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man

The parable about Lazarus is a good illustration of Christ’s teaching for the Church. His instruction is hidden in a story so casual readers would have no idea what He meant.

This parable, like all the others from Jesus, has an obscure message. It is a warning from Jesus Christ Himself about our Christian walk and how we perceive ourselves in our

relationship with God. Jesus Christ is the greatest prophet that has ever lived. The parables are Christ's messages to the churches and are a part of the Gospel message largely ignored by the churches today.

In this parable, Jesus was, as always, speaking in spiritual principles.

In Luke 16:19, "**There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.**" This affluent believer in God considered himself to be wealthy, spiritually speaking. He lived in luxury every day on the Word of God and soared with the intellectually elite. He was like the privileged few that spent his time "doing church" and other "religious" matters. He was wrapped up in religion and "the spiritual"—possibly a teacher of religion and a Pharisee at heart. He measured his righteousness by what he did and knew. He thought he experienced it all and had all the answers, spiritually speaking. He was busy with the theories and details of the Word and was always ready for the next hypothesis about a vague scripture. No one could teach him anything from the Word of God that he didn't already know. And because Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, couldn't teach him, he found himself spiritually naked and spiritually bankrupt.

The Word of God, without the work of the Holy Spirit to guide into TRUTH, does not bring us into a close relationship with God.

Verse 20, "**And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus** [He was humble in attitude. The name Lazarus means, "One whom God helps." He put his trust in God. He knew and understood his "spiritual" condition. He saw his need for God and begged God for mercy. He saw himself as a publican and a sinner and loathed his destiny apart from God. Lazarus lived by faith and knew it was only by God's grace that he would be saved. He had total dependency on God.], **which was laid** [cast (out), thrust] **at his gate** [He was placed, thrown down, thrust into a congregation to worship at the door of the "know-it-all, rich-in-knowledge, teacher of religion, rich, spiritual leader."], **full of sores.**" He understood he was weak, full of tender spots and blemishes, and his eyes were open to see clearly his need for Jesus as his redeemer and his Lord.

Verse 21, "**And desiring to be fed** [set his heart upon being fed and was always hungry for more "spiritual food"] **with the crumbs** [any bit he could obtain from the discarded parts of the Word of God deemed unimportant and viewed as nothing by the spiritually rich man] **which fell from the rich man's table** [spiritual food from God, pushed off the rich man's table as trash and considered worthless. He was always starving for more of the Word of God. He knew, in this life he would never have all the education and "knowledge" of this "spiritually bright one." But he yearned for even a few, tasty morsels of the simple truths of God.]: **moreover the dogs** [spiritually speaking—unbelievers] **came and licked his sores** [helped him out]."

The irony and the mockery of his whole ordeal is that this man named Lazarus received more spiritual help and comfort from the unbelievers—spiritual dogs (see Matt. 15:26-27) outside the walls of the church than he did by going to church, sitting and

listening to “the great one, self-absorbed in his intellectual vanity.” He received little assistance for his spiritual condition from those supposedly there to minister to him. And so it is in far too many houses of worship today. Sometimes, the world is offering more spiritual support to the “poor in spirit” than they are getting from the “spiritually wise” and the “spiritually rich.” In too many cases, these “spiritually rich” are too busy teaching for doctrine the commandments of men to stop and assist a hungry, spiritual waif.

Verses 22-31, “And it came to pass, that the beggar [the man spiritually dependent on God] died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell [“Hades” or the place (state) of departed souls: grave, hell] he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence.’ Then he said, ‘I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ Abraham saith unto him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘Nay, father Abraham: **but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.**’ And he said unto him, ‘**If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.**’”

A Prophecy for the Church

Lazarus is like any true worshiper of God with the Spirit of Jesus working in him. Christ came in the weakness of human flesh and was horribly mistreated by the government of the Jewish Church. True worshipers of God are also often miserably mistreated and abused today. Jesus is stating in this parable that this exploitation comes from those who are in the reigns of power within the religious community. Those who consider themselves “spiritually rich” are often in charge of the Body of Christ and treat Jesus, in others, with no more respect or love than the “rich man” did with Lazarus.

The rich man—the one that thought himself so “spiritually wise,” looked down upon the one that was poor in spirit and rich in faith as being a worthless menace to the Church. When he finally realized his fate, he wanted Jesus, in the person of Lazarus, to be sent back to the Church (his spiritual brothers) from heaven to preach to those who were physically alive so they would repent. He said, “**But if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.**”

Who is the only one that came to us from the dead? Jesus! He is the only one that has been resurrected from the dead to spirit life!

In this parable, Jesus raises an interesting thought through the person of Abraham. **Would we, as believers of God, recognize or listen to Jesus Christ if He were to send us a message after being resurrected from the dead and returning to heaven?**

Jesus is coming to us now, in Spirit, **but who is listening?** Will we repent at the Words of Jesus?

The key to the parable is this: If the people of God are not willing to listen to the written Word of God, they will not listen to Jesus, even if He speaks to them from heaven—that is, through His Holy Spirit!

The Bible is a living book to all Christians because it **is Jesus Christ in writing**. But the Bible can only come alive if we are willing to listen to Jesus as He reveals Himself to us. Only then can we come to really understand and know Him!

Jesus is coming to the Church. The problem, however, is that many can only visualize a message about Jesus, walking the earth in the flesh, but are not willing to see or to listen to the Living Jesus as He attempts to come to them in Spirit. They stop their ears and will not hear a message from Jesus that He is delivering to them through His Spirit!

Jesus is calling out to all that think they are “rich” in their knowledge of God. He is asking us to examine our association with God to see if we even have a relationship with Him. All of us, as God’s people, need to repent and be truly poor in spirit so we may be rich indeed. We need to do this now! **Jesus is calling for an awakening of all believers everywhere before it is too late!**

Listen to what Jesus says to those of us that are so “rich in religious knowledge.” “Because thou sayest, ‘I am rich, and increased with goods [Jesus is always speaking spiritually], and have need of nothing [spiritually rich—a spiritual “know-it-all”];’ and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked [spiritually]: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire [tribulation and suffering are ahead], that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent” (Rev. 3:17-19).

The point of the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man is this: **If we, as believers in God, will not accept the Word of God given to us so far, then we are not going to listen or receive any further instructions from Jesus!**

Most believers are willing to accept the Words of Jesus that He gave before His death and resurrection. But how eager are we to accept a message from Jesus after His return to heaven?

The Little Book is a message from Jesus to the churches. If you are not willing to allow the Spirit of Jesus to bring to life the written Word of God—The Bible, then how are you going to listen to the Spirit of Jesus if He brings you a message from beyond the grave?

Many are comfortable with a message “about Jesus” but few are really interested in hearing from Jesus and, fewer still, are willing to do what He says!

This is just one of the parables to Christians.

Will history repeat itself? Will the Church today acknowledge Jesus coming to us in Spirit any better than the Jewish leaders recognized the Messiah in the flesh?

Jesus warns us, “He that hath an ear [for spiritual things], let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

To Contact Us:

A Message from Jesus Ministry

P. O. Box 4483

Bethel Station

Spanaway, WA 98387

www.thelittlebook.com

Additional Booklets

The Little Book

The Godhead, The Holy Spirit, The Family of God

How Would God Have Us Worship Him?

The Gospel Truth

The Doctrine of Christ

How God's Work Is Accomplished

A Bride For His Son

Customs and Traditions of the First Century Church of God

If a Man Dies, Shall He Live Again?

The Day of the Lord, Understanding the Book of Revelation