

## Why did Jesus Speak in Parables?

During a very successful ministry on earth as the incarnate Son of God and Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ had great multitudes following. If preachers today were in Christ's shoes, they would immediately try their utmost to keep the great multitude coming, and if at all possible would try to increase the size of this multitude. This is the modern day "church growth" where numbers count. Many churches today are obsessed with numbers. They sincerely believe that large numbers equal success and God's blessings. Church growth gurus are invited by struggling pastors who pay these charlatans five figure sums to do a diagnostic study of their church's set up. The gurus come up with a "treatment" that will guarantee immediate growth in their churches within a certain period of time if it is implemented to the very detail. More often than not, these "solutions" to the church's "number problem" have come with a heavy price. We are not referring to dollars and cents. The price is a jettison of the Truth of God and a replacement of a theocentric focus in ministry with an anthropocentric one.

But the Lord was not interested in a large following, especially those who followed Him for the wrong reasons. The Lord did not compromise the truth for the sake of numbers. From Matthew 13 onwards the Lord began speaking in parables, whereas in the earlier part of His ministry He spoke to the multitude in discourses such as the Sermon on the Mount. By the end of the long parabolic discourse, the multitude had left Jesus and only those who were truly interested remained to ask Jesus what the parables meant. **Matthew 13:34-36** – *"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, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field."* The phrase, "declare unto us" literally means, "make thoroughly clear right now", i.e. with a sense of great urgency they urged the Lord to explain the meaning of the parable whereas the rest of the multitude were not interested and left.

We are thankful that the Lord explains to us why He spoke in parables in order to achieve the result of the multitude being dispersed, with His true disciples remaining to find out the meaning with urgency. The disciples' question and Christ's answer are found in Matthew 13: 10-17. The question was, *"Why speakest thou unto them in parables?"*

Jesus answered and said unto them, --

- **To Divide** -- *"Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given."* –In the parables are the revelations of God concerning His Kingdom. Those who understand the parables of Christ will understand the Kingdom of God. Those who do not understand the parables will not

understand the Kingdom of God and therefore are not born again. This is a very serious distinction in every sinner's heart. This knowledge is given by God. The ones who show disinterest in the parables will not receive this gift of understanding. They cannot blame anyone but themselves for they did not come to Christ to receive the gift.

- **To Give and to Take** -- *“For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.”* – To those who go to Christ for understanding they will be given understanding and more. They will learn and understand more and more and become more like Christ with every level of understanding. But to those who do not come they will not understand, and what little they have been given will be taken away. The “little” given will include the privilege of hearing the Word of God, the prompting of the Holy Spirit, the convictions they once felt when they first heard.
- **To Conceal and be Condemned** -- *“Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.”* – Listening to the Word of God has its consequences. Those who consistently and persistently harden their hearts will find themselves completely hardened by the judicial hardening of God. Their day of salvation is over. The day of God's grace has come and is passed. This is a very sobering truth to those who persistently reject God's Truth. Matthew Poole explains this well when he wrote, “But, saith he [God], this shall be all the fruit of thy [Isaiah] ministry, it shall but make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, they shall more and more shut their eyes: their time of conversion and healing is past; it is now too late, I will not convert, I will not heal them. Now (saith our Saviour) what was applicable to the Jews in the time of Isaiah, is in like manner applicable to you, and the prophet Isaiah did foretell what I should meet with. The generality of the people are a people that have so despised the grace of God, that their day of grace is over; God is resolved he will not convert nor heal them. They have had light, they have seen me and my works, they have heard my sermons and John Baptist's; in seeing they would not see, in hearing they would not hear nor understand. So they are fallen under a judicial hardness and blindness. They shall not now have the light as they have had: my Spirit shall no longer strive with them; neither shall they have a heart to make a due use of the means they have. This is doubtless the meaning of these words.” This is a warning to all of us: beware of a heart of stone.

- **To Reveal and be Blessed** -- *“But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.”* – To those who believe and receive the Word of God the blessings are infinite. It is like a bottomless well of cool refreshing spring water that the believer can go to and drink his fill all his life even unto eternity. The guidance and presence of the LORD Jesus Christ will be his for life and he will never need to walk on this sin-filled earth alone. He does not have to fend for himself for the Lord will be by His side always and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit will keep him safe and the peace of God will guard his heart and mind in Christ Jesus. His hope is endless whereas before he was hopeless. This is only a glimpse of some of the blessings promised to the believer by God.
- **A Privilege to See and Hear** -- *“For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”* – To be able to see and understand the Truth of the Word of God is a great honour and gift bestowed to us by the LORD. We are living in an age and time after the First Coming, and the death and resurrection of Christ. The OT saints had longed to see and know what we are seeing and knowing (by faith for us, but by sight and faith for the disciples during Jesus’ days on earth) today through the study of Scriptures. Do not despise the knowledge that is found in Holy Scriptures. Instead, let the Scriptures be the believer’s daily diet for the rest of his life and sojourn on this earth.

Parables are more than real earthly stories coated with spiritual truths. In them are found the knowledge of the Kingdom of God. Love them, study them and the knowledge of our eternal home will be ours forever. We shall by God’s grace try to study ALL the parables in the Gospels for our blessing and understanding. May God open our eyes to see and our ears or hear.

#### TWO QUESTIONS –

1. Why is interest in the Word of God so important that the LORD has to use parables to separate the real from the false disciples? How is your interest in the Word of God?
2. If the parables were meant to hide God’s truth then can God be charged with hiding the truth from sinners? What do you do when you come across a verse or passage of Scriptures that you find hard to understand?