

'THE PARABLES OF JESUS, #032 A Chronological Study

*"To Him who opened His mouth in parables and
uttered things hidden since the creation of the world."
Psalm 78:2*



"The Pharisees Scoff At Jesus' Parable" Luke 16:14-18

INTRODUCTION

Previously in this chapter Jesus we have already dealt with the "Unrighteous Steward." Part of the message there concerned the unrighteous use of money and how using money this way can lead you into personal expectations of doing well. But, financial success rarely brings about eternal success.

The deeper meaning that trickles down in the chapter is all about the misuse of authority. In our parable the authority issue is all about the religious leadership believing they can take the authority of God's Word and subjugate it by creating a system of authority filled with

"works" and subjecting the their people to it in order them to be holy.

As Jesus takes the Pharisees to task over the misuse of wealth (Lk 16:1-13), and closes out that segment by saying to them, "*You cannot serve God and wealth.*" And that introduces us to this next parable.

The Pharisee's Scoff

THE TEXT

Luke 16:14-15 [NASB]

14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him.

So, here's where our parabolic adventure begins. The Pharisees have become Israel's self proclaimed authority. Their money and their enforced teaching of their "Oral law," and not the simplicity of God's Word as their absolute authority position on all things. As far as they were concerned everyone that was not part of their religious hierarchy were unimportant lowly and dirty sinners.

Here now, following in the footsteps of John the Baptist, was this itinerant rabbi Jesus, and as far as they were concerned... He was just a big troublemaker.

We should be reminded again that Jesus is on His way to the Cross. He's probably just a week away from His "Triumphal entry" into Jerusalem. His messages have become more and more pointed at the Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes (religious lawyers), and Jesus is now right in their faces.

After hearing Jesus speak about the unrighteous use of wealth the Pharisees are turning to each other and laughing at Him and the words He is saying, because, "***The Pharisees... who were***

lovers of money.” They have been using unrighteous ways to gather wealth for themselves and their activities. What Jesus is telling them is based on God’s Word, and the unrighteous Pharisees are laughing at His interpretation. They fully believe their view is right, and when it’s a problem for them, they write in “loop-holes” into their false laws to give themselves certain unrighteous rights under their laws. This allows them certain liberties that they wouldn’t have if they strictly relied upon God’s Word.

In an even larger and more important view, they were scoffing at Jesus, the Son of God, who has been, and will be the absolute authority in their promised kingdom.

15a

And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men,

The book of John (starting at 5:39) reports to us, speaking to the Jewish leaders, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me.” He told them, “If you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”

Just so we are clear, the rabbis over the years have been re-writing God’s revelation to Moses (and the writings, and the prophets) in order to benefit them and their various religious groups - mainly the Pharisees, a leadership group that was most popular with the masses, the Sadducees, another leadership group that did not hold to spirits and life after death or resurrection, and the Scribes, those responsible for the duplication of God's word, which became a means of “re-writing the Scriptures according to their own interpretations of it. Their

writings became written laws that specifically benefitted these religious leader groups.

Here in our verse Jesus makes it clear that these leaders are "Those who justify yourselves in the sight of men." These men had been making these loop-holes in their oral laws so that they could easily divorce a wife, for instance, so that, even when breaking God's written Law for His covenanted people, they could point to their Oral Law as their method of justifying themselves.

Here in our own time we see much evidence of this kind of behavior in our political systems, every day worldly life and media.

15b
but God knows your hearts;

So there's the setting. The hearts of these leaders does not fit the requirements of the Word of God, so they have made up rules that excuse their need for authority and wealth – as well as keep the common man under the control of their made up laws – "***But God knows your hearts.***"

The lesson here to God's people, by way of the very words of His Son is... Be aware and careful of all that you plan, say, and do so that it conforms to the Will of God – and specifically, don't make up rules for yourself, or others, that seemingly release them from the desire and/or performance of His holiness.

15c
for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.

I'm sure what they heard was, "for that which is highly esteemed among YOU... is detestable in the sight of God." There's no word on how the Pharisees reacted to this statement, but I'm sure they became most angry being lectured to by this seemingly simple rabbi.

Jesus' words were extremely pointed at these self-righteous leaders. They harken back to the Fall. Since then that which was seemingly innocent was shown to be the wicked nature of the human heart. Without God's Spirit in control in the human heart the human's actions are truly wicked. Even our best ideas, thoughts, or actions are nothing more than each of us trying our best to benefit ourselves – even our greatest outward deeds for others are desperate attempts to prove our value and worth to ourselves and all those around us. Without Him we are **"detestable in the sight of God."**

These men have hearts that are preparing to put Him to death. Another reason for their scoffing.

But Jesus is not finished with them quite yet. Jesus will now tell them something they will probably not understand and then He will give them two examples to make His words clear.

16 "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.

Throughout these lessons on The Parables of Jesus, a central theme has been "What the Kingdom of God is like." A little bit ago we talked about John's Gospel and Jesus saying to them, **"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life."** Now Jesus tells them that the proclamation of the Law and the Prophets has ended, but now **the GOSPEL of the kingdom of God has been preached**, by John and his

disciples; by Jesus and His disciples... and crowds of people have been following Jesus in order to have access to the kingdom of God.

Since Moses and his receiving the Law of God on Mount Sinai no one has ever been righteous before God by keeping the Law. We're all born under the rule of sin and death and every thought and deed has in some way violated God's holiness. We all stand condemned. These men believed that by rewriting God's Word and placing deeper and higher requirements to it, and then writing rules to keep them, the rulers, free from those requirements, and therefore they became holy and righteous under their laws.

But now the Gospel has been preached and many hear the truth and believe Jesus and they are flocking towards The Kingdom of God.

17

But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail.

Example #1

These words from Jesus are pointed at the Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes and religious leaders. They hold to the Law as the entry qualifications to enter the Kingdom of God. Jesus makes it very clear where the law stands – You cannot be saved through the keeping of the law, you can only be condemned by it. Heaven and earth itself could pass away – but the Law of God remains. It is the very nature of God. The only way past that condemnation... is by the Grace of God to grant it as a gift of forgiveness and love.

18

"Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery."

Example #2

This example seems to be pretty far out of context, but it's actually right on. God's word states that He hates divorce (Malachi 2:16). The deepest reasons concern Genesis 2:18 and the creating of the woman by separating her from the man (using His rib). ***"This is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman because she was taken out of man."*** The man and the woman were created to be together as a unit.

The Godly wedding ceremony is the act of reuniting a man and a woman and once again, making them "one flesh." So, now we might ask, "Why is this so important?"

At a time in our future, when we believers are brought together for the first time in Heaven at "The Marriage Feast of The Lamb,"ⁱⁱ the Body of Christ (the Church) will be officially married to Jesus as His bride. All of the Marriage rite for all time has been a foreshadowing of this moment in the future in heaven. To divorce one from the other is a sacrilege of the heart and mind of God in His intentions for Christ and His bride... And the corrupt religious leadership of God's "Chosen" nation wrote their laws to that no one could divorce except the writers of this new set of laws. They made sure that they were exempt. They were claiming their faithfulness to Divorce, but relying upon legal "loopholes" to free themselves from the marriage divorce laws.

This verse has probably touched a nerve in many people. This was the law given to a covenanted nation (a nation under a binding contract with their God). That's the relationship of Israel and God. Then, by extension, all Old Testament non-Jewish believers were also included by default. In the New Testament

(and promised by the Prophets) believers now fall under the early benefits of the New Covenant which will come into full force at the end of the Tribulation and the introduction of the promised Kingdom of God being established on earth and the New Jerusalem. When Jesus died on the Cross, and was resurrected, mankind was freed from the effects of the Law. Now all of humanity is responsible for only one moment in their entire lives: The moment when they say "Yes" to believing in Jesus the Savior God. Those who never come to that moment, before their deaths, will find themselves fully guilty of rejecting the Son of God, and being sentenced to eternity apart from God in the torturous place called Hell.

John 3:18

The one who believes in Him is not judged; the one who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

So, this lesson is to all those who scoff at the existence of God, His Holy Spirit, and His beloved only begotten Son, Jesus, and those who specifically scoff at the salvation freely offered through Jesus' death on the Cross. This negative choice deserves serious consideration. As philosopher Sorin Kierkegaard observed that aside from the constant suffering and burning, there would be the hopelessness felt by rejecting Christ (as one would feel being alive eternally in Hell) desperately wanting to die... but not ever being able to die.

Make your choice wisely.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS WITHOUT ANSWERS

- 1. In the first part of the chapter, what is the lesson (Lk 16:1-13) that Jesus teaches the Pharisees?**

 - 2. Why does Jesus bring up this lesson at this time?**

 - 3. What verse tells us the main point of this parable?**

 - 4. What is your reaction to acquiring wealth for yourself?**

 - 5. The last conclusions that you should get from this parable is...?**
-

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

1. In the first part of the chapter, what is the lesson (Lk 16:1-13) that Jesus teaches the Pharisees?

It tells us of two separate, and important, lessons concerning the 1.) the misuse of money and 2.) the misuse of power and authority. Jesus uses this introduction to the chapter to bring out the important truth – “You cannot serve two masters – The Lord God and money at the same time.

2. Why does Jesus bring up this lesson at this time?

If you stand back from this parable and view the bigger picture you should see the importance that the Pharisees place on money and power. They have made up hundreds of rules for living a “righteous” life to have more control over the populace. Both they and the Romans had introduced any number of cultural laws and taxes in order for themselves to become wealthy. In doing so they have set themselves to “serve money,” but then this makes them not being able to serve their God effectively. God is very unhappy with them taking this route – placing money above good works for His Kingdom. God reveals that they, by choosing money as their most important job, the Pharisees (and all of the Jewish leadership) have placed themselves into the position of becoming those who are devoted to money and not God (“*You can not serve two masters... you cannot serve God and wealth*”). So Jesus brings this up to the Pharisees while He is ministering to all those who are following Him.

3. What verse tells us the main point of this parable?

Luke 16:14 – “Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him.” It’s here that we hear Jesus’ explanation of the route cause for this parable. Jesus was talking about money as a dividing line between serving God or serving self to the exclusion of God.

4. What is your reaction to acquiring wealth for yourself?

Do you sit at home reading the financial times but not reading your Bible. While in Church is your mind spread all over your financial affairs and you are intellectually fully engaged in your own affairs, especially financial affairs while the Pastor preaches. Or... is your head clear and your focus upon God's Word as it is being preached to you? Is your heart contemplating that new beautiful car (and it's cost) instead of going to church and worshipping Him? Or is that church project tucked way back in your mind while you dream of wealth and things?

5. The last conclusions that you should get from this parable is...?

First, recognize the difference between what you want (money and power) and what God wants for you (A clear conscience and a mind occupied with service to Him. And remember... "You cannot service God and wealth."

Then, secondly, the revelation (Lk 16:16) that God's Word is the ultimate authority for those who wish to belong to Him. The Pharisees (and other religious leaders of His Son's time) were all classified by Jesus as the ones who have set God's Word aside and replaced it with a Pharisaic set of "works" laws for all the people, except themselves. Jesus then tells them, "that it is easier for God's heaven, and our earth, to pass away than a single stroke of the pen of God's Law to fail."

The "The Ancient Path" Study materials on this website are made available here free and may be copied for use in Bible study groups, in limited numbers, providing that no charge is made for them. Items that appear as copyrighted materials that are not of our authorship are not to be copied without the express permission the original copyright holders. Every effort has been made to give proper footnote credit for items that are quoted.

J. Deering [AncientPath.net] is the author and editor of this study.

AncientPath.net © 2019

Jeremiah 18:15

"Don't stumble from the Ancient Path"

2023-08-03 updated

i

ii The Marriage Feast of the Lamb. Believers celebrating in Heaven during the last 7 years of the Tribulation. Revelation 19:6-9; Isaiah 25