

## Without A Parable

An Ingredient Missing in Many Judgments

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**Deuteronomy 30:19-20** I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live, and that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.

Judging and evaluating before making a choice is a very clear, major part of a Christian's responsibility. It impacts on every aspect of Christian living, in order that we might glorify God and be created into the image of Jesus Christ. The keys to making right choices depend upon gathering truths of God, evaluating the factors involved, and then making wise judgments as we choose the path we will go. This sermon touches on our judgments, and an aspect of God's sovereignty. Making judgments is not always cut-and-dried.

Jesus clearly warned us, in Matthew 7:1, to "judge not, that you be not judged." Now choosing to do or not to do has its roots deeply embedded in rightly judging, and thus the warning is justified. To evoke this strong warning, there must be something about judging our fellow Christians that must be filled with unseen difficulties.

The scattered condition of the church of God following the breakup of the Worldwide Church of God, has presented us with a number of judging challenges.

Among the more serious and longest-lasting has been the challenge to our discernment and judgment of each other as groups. People with a church of God connection have claimed that they are one of the Two Witnesses, or that their group contains the Two Witnesses, or that they will teach the Two Witnesses. Some are teaching that people must be part of their group, in order that they be taken to the Place of Safety. Three different groups claim that they are the *one* group that God is really working through, and they say the other groups (and that would include the Church of the Great God) have Christians in them, but *they* are the only one that God is truly working through.

Where are these groups getting that information? And if they claim it is God, does it not

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imply that God is somehow, on some level, somewhat confused, that He would tell three different groups the same thing? Is such a posture really glorifying God?

Let us take a look at those verses in Matthew 7.

**Matthew 7:1-6** Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck in your brother's eye. Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.

Pretty gruesome! That admonition is pretty clear. But turn with me to John 7. I want to contrast that with what Jesus said in Matthew 7:

**John 7:24** Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.

Jesus clearly says here that it is alright to judge, but He puts a limitation on it. Do not just judge by what one might see with his eyes.

Let us go back to Matthew 7. Comparing these verses clearly shows that Jesus' "judge not" statement in Matthew 7 is not a blanket command forbidding judgments of others, but it does modify it clearly enough to see that something more or less hidden is involved. Matthew 7:3-5 contain the word "brothers." Each verse, 3, 4, and 5, contains the word "brother" or "brothers." Jesus makes it clear that we are permitted to judge one another, but when combined with the thought that is in John 7, He focuses on the accuracy and force of the judgments, as well as how clean we are in terms of possible defilements from sins of our own.

Matthew 7:6, combined with Matthew 7:2, is a not-so-veiled warning that the level of judgment may come back to bite the accuser, especially if made against the wrong people. The overall warning in this series of verses is that our judgment of our brothers *must* be carefully weighed before being made. They must be accurate, and not given in a high-handed, self-righteous censoriousness, knowing full well we may be equally or

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even guiltier in another area of righteousness in which we fall short.

It is true that we cannot read our brother's heart with anywhere near the depth with which Jesus could. Therefore, Jesus is admonishing us to be very careful of our judgments of one another. Our judgments must *not* be final. They must always be open to new information and repentance. They are therefore subject to be modified, and perhaps even entirely changed. Thus, what Jesus is advising here is that a Christian must avoid a condemning spirit of harshness, including elevating ourselves by judging self-righteously, hypocritically, and without mercy and love.

To be discriminating and critical is necessary. But being hyper-critical crosses the line, because we then may be getting into the area of actually lying about another, involving ourselves in rank hypocrisy. We must always know that a fellow servant does not stand or fall on *our* judgment.

This in no way means that we cannot approach a brother to inquire about and understand his conduct, so that we might know whether our appraisal is correct, and what we must pray about. This, of course, is assuming that our intent in questioning him is truly for his good.

I Corinthians contains a number of examples of Paul's approach to this issue. That congregation had a number of cliques that were pretty strongly at odds with each other. In most of the cases, the differences of opinion were handled by Paul in a manner in which he reasoned with people, knowing full well that some of the problems were fairly serious. In chapter 5, he gets to a case of sheer immorality.

**I Corinthians 5:11-13** But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person. For what have I to do with judging those who are on the outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? [That clearly backs up what Jesus said, we have the right, the privilege, of judging our brother.] But those who are outside God judges. Therefore “put away [he means disfellowship] from yourselves that evil person.”

In the King James he called that person “wicked.” This was the man who was committing *pornea* with his father's wife. I think we would understand that his father's wife was not his flesh-and-blood mother, but nonetheless a woman that his father had married. What is interesting is that II Corinthians shows that this man was converted,

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and that he repented! Paul then ordered them to put him back into the congregation, and treat him like a brother again—love him.

This issue that we are going to keep expanding on, is not just judging our brother, but judging those on the outside. I am mostly interested, though, in judging those who are in the congregation, and as God shows us in a number of places, one of His congregations is going to contain both those who are converted and those who are unconverted. What is even more mystifying is that some of those people who look like they are converted are not really converted! Are you beginning to see why Jesus said “Be careful”?

On the other hand, a congregation is going to contain people like this person [in I Corinthians 5] who indeed was converted, but he was sinning worse than the people who were unconverted and in the congregation. That can be quite a problem. It is no wonder that Jesus said “Be careful!” We will see why as we go along.

I am sure that Paul’s judgment, as expressed in I Corinthians 5, as well as the entirety of the book, was guided by God for the purposes of His inspired Word. But how often is our judgment accurate? How much do we truly discern? How much is human nature driving our suspicion, or the desire to control, or to put down another person, or at the same time to elevate ourselves?

We are looking into an aspect of judgment that is not often considered. In fact, it may not even be known, let alone considered, as we judge one another. And if this aspect of judging is not considered, we may be very quick to make judgments that are unfairly harsh and offensive.

In Luke 12 we will see an important principle. Jesus is in the midst of a parable.

**Luke 12:47-48** And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

One of the things that Jesus is showing us of the realities of judging is that His judgments are individually rendered, based upon what each individual has been given to work with. Each person is held accountable only for what he has been given to work

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with. There are no blanket evaluations given on any sin, by either the Father or the Son—and that is a wonderful safeguard. Everybody is held accountable for what *they* have been given to work with. None of us is held accountable for what your next door neighbor has to work with.

From here, go to II Corinthians 5:9-10. I read these verses to you and expound on them because we are those who are called upon to live by faith.

**II Corinthians 5:9-10** Therefore we [Paul writes, meaning Christians] make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in his body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

This is a reaffirmation of what we just read in Luke 12, that each one of us within the church is going to be judged according to what we have been given. We have to answer for what we have been given, though we are living by faith. So I do not want us to understand that human nature carelessly assumes that God judges and treats everybody equally, as though they are nothing more than yellow pencils. It is a biblical reality, brethren, that He does not. And should we not, then, strive to follow His pattern, and try to judge one another according to what we understand they might have been given?

I am going to continue this theme of how God does not treat everybody equally. This is something that we have to know, know that we know, understand, and accept, because human nature, in its evilness, will try to take advantage of that, and make a bad judgment.

Let us go back to the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 7. This is a familiar set of scriptures. God is speaking to Israel, but the principle applies to you and me under the New Covenant, as we will see shortly.

**Deuteronomy 7:7-9** The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand

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generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments.

I especially tried to emphasize the word *love*. God *loves* Israel, and God gave *love* to Israel far in excess of what He showed to any other nation on the face of the earth. Let us see this more personally, as we consider this, because this is something that we must understand and accept, or it is possible that we can make ourselves and others miserable about something that is far beyond our ability to judge. It is this principle: God has His purposes that He is working out. God is the sovereign God, despite what our pride might assert. This series of verses states that God gave a level of love to Israel that He did not give to other nations, and that is His right, as Creator and sovereign God.

Let us look at an even clearer statement in Romans 9. These are familiar scriptures, but we are applying it to judgment so that we have a good foundation to understand.

**Romans 9:16** So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

Those He calls into the church have received that mercy. We have not earned it in any way.

**Romans 9:21-23** Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory.

Now who, brethren, is going to call Him into account for the moves that He makes on His part within the purpose that He has determined? Do you know what, brethren? We do it. But we do it through the back door, by unfairly judging a brother that God has also called into the church. Do we realize that when we judge like that, we are actually, in the spirit of the judgment, calling God into account?

Brethren, we are ill-equipped to do this judging because we do not know the level of gifting God has given others. God can do things like this with total unfairness. He does not make mistakes, when He calls one and not another. He has His reasons, but He

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does very clearly give love on different levels. “Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated.” He did not really hate Esau in the sense that we might think, but he did not love Esau in the way that He loved Jacob.

We are working with a principle here that is important to making judgments. Let us go to I Corinthians 12, just to put in an idea, a piece of true information.

**I Corinthians 12:11** But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

You know that this chapter is talking about the church as the body of Jesus Christ, and God gives gifts to every one of His children. There is nobody that is left out. But He does not, as we will find out later, gift everybody on the same level. He gives some more than others. That is something that is a reality and we have to accept it. So God—the Potter—gives gifts to each member—the clay—as He wills, as He fits them into the body, and of course into the purpose that He is working out.

What if God has not gifted a person to understand, and we judge that they should easily be able to understand something because we can? Consider for just a moment that we have been given one of the greatest gifts and favors possible at this time in mankind’s history, by being included as part of God’s church, and therefore, as part of God’s firstborn. None of us, brethren, were behind the door when the blessings were handed out, and we did absolutely nothing to earn it.

We were certainly not passed by, but neither does this mean that everybody in the blessed group knows and understands on the same level. (I am going to give you something surprising a little bit later on.) Nor does it mean that God has revealed Himself and is holding everybody within it on the same level of responsibility to Him. God puts people into the church as it pleases Him and gifts each person as it pleases Him.

Let us pursue this more specifically in terms of judgment. In Matthew 13 Jesus gives quite a number of parables, but there are two of them that I want to focus on. One is the Parable of the Sower and the Seed, and the second is the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares.

In both parables, it is possible that people in the circumstances described could have fellowshipped with the church. This is certainly true in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, because they are going to be in there all the way to the end, and then finally get

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burned in the fire. It is certainly possibly true with the Parable of the Sower and the Seed.

In either case, such people would be subject to being judged by fellow church members. In both parables, people received some truth and they responded to that truth, but as those in the parable of the sower fell away, how then would we judge those that fell away? We know that those in that parable are going to fall away; Jesus said they would. In the parable of the tares, they may not fall away, but they are unconverted. They are not operating with a "full load," if you know what I mean. The unconverted tares would give some evidence of being faithful, converted people, when in reality, they were unconverted.

On the other hand, converted people give evidence from time to time of being unconverted, as clearly happened with the man in I Corinthians 5.

Do you think it would alter your judgment if you knew that there might be a truly and sincerely converted person in the congregation, but who was not gifted to the same high level of understanding because God had not given it? I mention this because I want you to think about it. God may be playing a role in His own congregation, His own people, that we may not think of very often.

We know that God *clearly* withholds things from the unconverted. But I am going to show you evidence that He continues to do this to some degree with the converted. Let us begin to look at some of this evidence in an orderly sequence.

**I Timothy 2:1-4** Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, [verse 4 is the one I really want to focus on] who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

**II Peter 3:9** The LORD is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

The world has taken the approach that God is offering salvation to everybody, and that now is the only time that salvation is offered to those who are alive. Thus, they lay great

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stress on urging their membership to witness to people in order to convert them. The church of God does not follow this approach. The church of God knows that this is not the only day of salvation, and at the same time, we understand and believe that God will fulfill His desire expressed in these scriptures. But He will do it according to His schedule and purposes.

In Romans 10 is something that folds into this, because it helps to determine the way that we act (not necessarily us, but the way that the world might act).

**Romans 10:8-13** But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.”

The world takes those two scriptures that we just read before, and now this one, and plucks these truths from their contexts, and reaches the conclusion that they apply at all times. To them, conversion is mostly a matter of intellect and feelings.

Not so, brethren! Intellect plays a role, but revelation plays a greater one. Other scriptures show that now is only a day of salvation, and two more judgments lie in the future. God is performing His work of salvation in a selective, orderly, organized progression that covers, as best as we are able to see, 7,000 years of time.

This does not mean that we hide who we are and what we are, in terms of our conduct, nor does it mean that we hide what we believe in speaking. Rather, as opportunities present themselves, we can speak freely of what we believe, but without feeling the pressure of having to convert them to what we believe.

We will see in a moment that Jesus practiced this constantly in His lifetime. As an apostle sent from God, His responsibility to preach to the public was exceedingly greater than any who followed after Him. However, it is clearly shown in Scripture that He was not always attempting to convert people.

I had to go through what I just went through so that you will understand those two

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parables. It is possible for unconverted people to know, understand, and even believe, to a degree, some of the truths of God and show up in the congregation. It kind of messes up our judgment, of both them as well as the converted people. I say “messes,” it does not destroy it, but if we are wise, we will make better judgments.

**Proverbs 20:12** The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the LOORD has made them both.

That seems pretty simple, does it not? But there is more here than meets the eye, because there are two levels of application. Physically, it is easily understood. God created the physical eye, and God created the physical ear. Thus, we can literally see and hear, because of the means that He created and graciously supplied us with, so that we can see and hear the world around us.

However, it is imperative that must learn to look beyond the first level of understanding, by considering the proverb’s spiritual consequences. This is partly because the Hebrew word for “hearing” is also the Hebrew word for obedience. The word “see” is also used in the Hebrew to indicate understanding.

**Proverbs 2:1-6** My son, if you receive my words and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the LOORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LOORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Solomon makes very clear that it is God who gives this to us; it is God who gives those who seek Him knowledge, wisdom, and understanding.

Now go back to Proverbs 20:12, which is saying on a second—and more important spiritual level—is that it is God who gives us understanding; it is God who provides us with spiritual sight and hearing. He does this through His calling by means of His Spirit.

Never forget, brethren, that we are a new creation. The old is passing away. We are part of something new. Under the old creation (we will say entirely physical), what God did was give eyes and ears to Adam and Eve and all of their progeny, so that they would be able to function within the world around them. Now, Paul makes very clear in II

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Corinthians 5:7 that we are a new creation, and that is founded upon different terms.

We need something that is spiritual. So you put these scriptures together in Proverbs and you understand very clearly, that just as surely as God gives physical sight and God gives physical hearing, God also makes us able to see things spiritually and also able to understand spiritually. He gives us spiritual eyes and spiritual ears by tweaking our mind, tweaking our heart, so that we are willing to accept it and begin to use it, and to put it into practice.

But remember, we must do our part, as He shows in Proverbs 2:1-6. We have to seek after Him, and as we seek after Him, He fills our minds with understanding, and knowledge, and wisdom that otherwise we would not ever get. He does it spiritually, because He gives us the spiritual eyes and the spiritual ears. Are you getting that?

If we do not have spiritual eyes and spiritual ears, how can we judge spiritual things? How can we judge, or how can we discern, spiritual things?

Now we will throw something else in here. Look at that first line:

**Proverbs 20:24** A man's steps are of the LORD. . .

You do not see God, we do not hear Him talking to us. But I will tell you, those people, primarily those people that God has given spiritual eyes and ears to, their feet are directed by the LORD. He is not just doing that to us, He is also doing it to some degree to the world, because He is always moving the pieces around in His purpose. God is working out a purpose, and right now, we have been drawn into the inner sanctum of that purpose, and He is directing our lives.

Brethren, do we see God? Do we look for Him? We have to look for Him in life. If we are seeking, we will be looking for Him in our life, and wondering, is what is happening to me because I am part of this purpose? And what about that person over there, are they converted, or unconverted? What should my judgment of them be?

Because we are living by faith, we are on a "need to know" basis. Feed that into Proverbs 20:24. So many times we do not have the faintest idea what is going on in our life, because Somebody else is directing the path that we are travelling on. That is why we have to live by faith, to keep on trusting, because He is there, and He knows what He is working out. But we do not have the discernment sometimes to even think about it.

Remember, brethren, we are on a “need to know” basis. And He will not tell us until we *really* need to know, in many cases. So many times in our lives, we are operating in the dark, and befuddled, as to where things are headed in our life. But consider, that this has a similar, but far less meaningful parallel in physical life as well.

What I am getting at here, is that when you were a little toddler, you did not know what your parents were doing. You just did not have the mind, the experience, to know why they said “No, Johnny! No, Johnny! Don’t do that, Johnny! Yes, you can do that!” That is the way we are. He [God] knows where He is headed. But we do not. But this verse assures us that a man’s steps are of the Lord.

I want you to turn to Genesis 50, and I will show you something that shows that we are on a “need to know” basis. This issue involved Joseph and his brothers.

**Genesis 50:19-20** Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.”

Joseph knew. I want you to hang on to this point. Joseph knew; why did he know? Because God revealed it to him. His brothers did not know. His flesh and blood brothers did not know, because God did not reveal it to them until just then.

That is another important principle to understand, and we are getting closer and closer to seeing that the same God is operating the same way today. That is why Jesus admonished us, “Be careful in your judgments. You don’t know everything that’s going on.”

Brethren, it is what God gives or withholds that makes all the difference in the world as to the direction of life. But we must look for His hand in things and commit ourselves to using our eyes and ears spiritually and righteously. Thus, what we are looking at is part of the reason why some will endure sound doctrine, and others will not; and why some will endure to the end, and others will not. But again I ask, as we are living, how are we judging our brothers? What if God is withholding sight or understanding from them, and they are right in the congregation?

Let us go to Matthew 13. I said to you earlier that the name of this sermon is “Without a Parable,” because now we are going to look at how Jesus customarily taught.

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**Matthew 13:3** Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying “Behold, a sower went out to sow.”

**Matthew 13:9-10** “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?”

The first thing I want you to take notice of is that Jesus said “He that has ears to hear, let him hear.” Is he not indicating that not everybody has ears to hear? Maybe they could hear Him physically, but they did not understand what He was saying. Now I am sure that the disciples were somewhat puzzled, so they asked, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” Jesus replied with a statement with very serious implications regarding judging. Only those who have been given ears to hear, can hear (I am talking about the spiritual things).

This directly ties in with Proverbs 20:12. The Father is the one who gives gifts only to certain people, to be able to hear and see with spiritual understanding, and take the steps necessary to make them part of their life.

**Matthew 13:12-16** “For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: ‘Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.’ But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear.”

They asked him, “Why do you always speak to them in parables?” Now parabolic teaching is clearly intended to hide spiritual truths. Even the converted do not all hear with the same clarity of understanding. Among the unconverted, some grasp some doctrines for a while, and may even fellowship with the church, but eventually, they will drift away. How are we to judge somebody who has what he formerly had taken away?

Do you not think that this ought to temper our judgments of them? Yes, because they

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were not converted in the first place. In addition, those verses state that this circumstance exists partly because mankind is dull of hearing, and partly because God ensures that they will not hear at this time. Thus, those verses reveal that God exercises His sovereignty so that those He wants to hear at this time definitely hear, and others will not.

**Matthew 13:34-35** All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world."

Let me first clarify that a better translation of verse 34 is available to us, and it is better understood that when He taught, He *used* parables. In other words, the scripture is not saying that *everything* He spoke was taught in parables. But hold onto that, because we are going to see that He used things that would still hide His intended meaning without going into what we think of as a real parable. So it does not mean that *all* of His teaching was in what we commonly think of as the form of a parable, but very much of His teaching was parabolic, even though it may not appear to be a parable to us.

Now are not all parables given in the form that we clearly see here in Matthew 13? The answer is no, they are not.

In the Old Testament—and Jesus was well-schooled in the Old Testament—parables appear very often, and they do not even look like parables. In Hebrew, it is called *may-sal*, which means "to be like." What I gave you in Proverbs 20 was a *may-sal*. There were two levels to that. There was the physical level, which was *like* the spiritual level. Or there was the spiritual level that was somewhat like the physical level. *May-sal*, which was a parable, and it can be translated as "parable," means "to be like." The physical is like the spiritual, the spiritual is like the physical. But there is a difference in the depth of the two.

If a person is not careful, they will get the first level, and that is as far as they get. The second level bounces off them, and they do not get it. That is what happened to the disciples so often. That is why you frequently see them coming to Jesus and saying, "What did you just say?" They got the first level, they did not get the second level, and then Jesus described the second level to them.

The word "parable" in Greek is similar in meaning to *may-sal*. It essentially means a comparison or a similitude. I like a definition that was given by a scholar named

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Boucher, who said: “A parable is a brief narrative with two meanings.”

Jesus used parabolic teaching in the form of figures and symbols, and He was really good at this. Thus, a parable has one thought right on the surface that is easily understood, and then a far more serious thought buried, sometimes very deeply.

There are some researchers who feel that the entire Bible is a parable, and that it runs its course from beginning to end, and I am coming closer and closer to believing that is indeed true.

**Deuteronomy 29:29** The secret things belong to the LOORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Here is what happens. God throws the switch in our mind so that we are able to see that second level. Thus, what He is doing to us that He is not doing to others, is switching things so that the secrets of Him and His purpose are revealed to us, and then they belong to us. We then begin to be held responsible for using them, and our judgment becomes just a little bit stiffer.

In Matthew 16, we have an example of something that happened between Jesus and His disciples.

**Matthew 16:6-12** Then Jesus said to them, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.” And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “It is because we have taken no bread.” [You see, they are on the first level there.] But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, “O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Now there is a parable that is not in the form of a parable. It is a symbol; it is a figure that has two levels of teaching. Leaven can be understood as what goes in bread.

Leaven can be understood as representing sin.

Let me interject something here. The second level, the deeper level, will always have to be found within the Bible itself, because the Bible will define its own terms. Unless the second level, the symbol, is not also used in the Bible elsewhere, it will not work.

In John, we can see many examples. I will give you enough so that you will see the principle.

**John 2:18-22** So the Jews answered and said to Him, “What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?” Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Then the Jews said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?” But He was speaking of the temple of His body. [The next verse is important] Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

The disciples did not really get it until after He was resurrected. He withheld it from them for almost three years. We have that example there. He does not always reveal something to us all at once. Even if He does reveal it, even the people in the congregation who have spiritual ears and eyes are not all going to get it at exactly the same time.

**John 4:10-14** Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.” The woman said to Him, “Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well [she did not get it!], and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?” Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst.”

The woman missed the spiritual truth entirely. Water is a figurative symbol for Holy Spirit, but this is not clarified until John 7:37-39. Another parable, two levels of teaching.

**John 6:32-34** Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses

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did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always.”

They did not get it! They wanted a loaf of bread to eat, just like the woman wanted a drink of the water that Jesus had with Him.

**John 6:53-56** Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.”

They did not get it either.

**John 6:60** Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?” When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, “Does this offend you?”

**John 6:65-66** And He said, “Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.” From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.

The sower and the seed is coming to pass. They got it for a while, and then they dropped away.

Let us go to I Corinthians 2. This a very rich chapter on what I am talking about.

**I Corinthians 2:4-5** And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

What was the Spirit demonstrating to them? It was demonstrating that they were miraculously hearing God's Word through Paul with understanding! They got it! That was the demonstration of the Spirit's power, that these unconverted Gentiles were getting it!

**I Corinthians 2:6-8** However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

To whom was he writing this? He was writing this to the Greeks, who were renowned for their wisdom and understanding of things. Paul is saying that he is speaking on a level to these common Corinthians, that they were understanding things that even the great wise men of Greece did not even begin to understand one iota of.

**I Corinthians 2:9-16** But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard [To whom do you think he is referring to? He is referring to these so-called "wise men" in Greece.], nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." [And how do those who love Him know? Because God has tweaked the mind.] But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. [That is what I have been telling you most of the way through this sermon.] But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

We have had some of the mind of Christ revealed to us. What are we going to do with it? In John 8:47, we see what the mind of Christ drives us to do.

**John 8:47** “He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore, you do not hear, because you are not of God.”

Can you see there is a very clear differentiation that Jesus Christ is making between those who are converted and those who are not? We have already seen that it is entirely possible for those who are unconverted to be fellowshiping with us. Because they are tares, they give every appearance, on the surface, of being converted. That is why Jesus said, “Be careful, don’t judge on appearances only.”

Jesus also said, “Just be very careful about the judgments that we make of one another.” There is so much that we do not know that is going on in the mind and the life of our brother, even to the point that God has withheld understanding from them. We saw that there are a lot of scriptures regarding this.

**Matthew 17:1-9** Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, “Arise, and do not be afraid.” When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. [Notice now what verse 9 says.] Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.”

“Tell no one.” Not even their fellow disciples. He gave information, wonderful information. He gave them a wonderful vision, a wonderful experience, and then told them, “Keep your mouth shut until later.”

I read this because I want you to see that God is not necessarily doing this all the time. But it is very clearly something that He will do even for those who are in the highest positions within His Family. He will withhold information from them that He gives to others. Why does He do it? I do not know! Who is going to call Him into account? Even

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though He does things like this, He never treats anybody unfairly, because He knows exactly what He is doing and to what ends He is moving toward.

But we see partial information, and we may get real excited about it, and we may judge it wrongly altogether, as compared to what God is actually doing. Again, we go back to why Jesus said “Be careful.”

Let us go to I Corinthians 12, where Paul goes into this in a pretty fair amount of detail.

**I Corinthians 12:1-8** Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: you know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. [“Ministries” means “services”, that word is derived from *diakonos*, deacon; a deacon is one who serves.] And there are diversities of activities [Within a congregation, there are different kinds of things that need to be done.], but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one [Everybody in the congregation is gifted.] for the profit of all: [For the profit of whom? They are gifted in order to perform services, activities, within the congregation, that is why they are given.] for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit. . .

Do you see the way that is translated there? I checked this out, and that is exactly a correct translation. What Paul is saying is that not everybody receives the whole package, and it is entirely possible that most of us within the congregation will be given only one gift, but we are to use that one gift for the service of those within the congregation.

**I Corinthians 12:9** . . . to another faith by the same Spirit. . .

This faith here is not the faith that we need for salvation, rather, this faith is a faith, a confidence, a conviction maybe for one specific thing to perform—like as a martyr. That was an example that one commentator made. You would need faith at a time that you knew that your life was going to be taken, and God would give the faith at that time in order to go through what you need to go through. So this is a special endowment of faith

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for a special occasion. Anybody can be given that by God.

**I Corinthians 12:9** . . . to another gifts of healing. . .

The commentators feel that this is not a specific gift given to one person for all time. It may be for a prayer that is made at one time and then God withdraws it, because God is glorified for that time by the healing that came through this person's prayer. Do you begin to see? God is pushing the buttons all the time.

**I Corinthians 12:10** . . . to another the working of miracles. . .

Again, the same thing. The same person is not doing the miracles all the time. God picks and chooses.

**I Corinthians 12:10** . . . to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues.

God gives gifts as they are needed for the congregation's good. It is almost like God is a supervisor and He is handing out tools to do the job on this occasion and that occasion. If we are working under God, then He will give us the tools to perform what He wants us to perform.

But it does not necessarily mean that we have it all the time. These other gifts, the ones that were more general at the beginning, are generally given to everybody.

**I Corinthians 12:11** But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

*Individually* is an important word there.

A summary of that verse will tell you that God gives gifts to everybody. But He is not necessarily giving them equally, and He is not necessarily giving them for all time. Rather, they are tools to be used in His glorification.

But *everybody* receives a measure of understanding. *Everybody* receives a measure of wisdom. *Everybody* receives a measure of knowledge. Without these three, we could

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not function, and those three build and provide the foundation for the faith for salvation. But in other cases, God gives tools to His people as they are needed, to bear them up through situations that are going on in their life or something within the life of the congregation.

If you go through the entire book of I Corinthians, you will find that was a group of people that was loaded with problems. They had a lot of conflict between people, because there were a lot of different opinions. I am convinced that it was not Paul's purpose to make everybody into "yellow pencils," and everybody to be absolutely uniform in what they believed and the way that they practiced. That is God's job. What Paul did was instruct people so that they would have the means by which to understand what they needed to do to fit themselves within the congregation, and above all, within that particular epistle, to quit judging one another so harshly.

There is a theme that begins right in the first chapter of I Corinthians, but I am going to break in to chapter 4, because Paul says something there very significant.

**I Corinthians 4:5** Therefore judge nothing before the time. . .

That confirms that he is on the same page as Jesus. Jesus said "Be careful. Don't judge anything quickly regarding our brothers."

**I Corinthians 4:5-6.** . . until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God. Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.

Now verse 7 is really significant. Notice this first question.

**I Corinthians 4:7** For who makes you differ from another? [What is the answer? God does.] And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

Brethren, it is God who has formed this eclectic group. And I am sure that He has done it in Living, Philadelphia, United, and others as well. God is not creating "yellow pencils."

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He is creating people who judge the way He does. That is what a king does; that is what a priest does.

So we are cautioned by Jesus to make sure that we are careful in our assessments of one another, because we do not know the whole story of what is going on in their lives. God may even have put them in the congregation, converted, though they are a person with a great many difficulties.

Let us finish with this. If David was in this congregation, how would you have judged him after he did what he did in committing adultery with Bathsheba, and being guilty of murder in the death of Uriah the Hittite? How would you have judged that converted man?

Read the whole story. After he committed those sins, ***he did not understand the depth of what he did. He did not get it!*** It had somehow escaped his mind that he did something extremely detestable, until almost nine months later. God finally revealed it to him.

Do you see how different even deeply converted people can be? How would you judge him?