

The Hidden Gospel

“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: 12 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.” (Mar 4:11-12).

I. Defining the terms.

Mystery- A religious truth known only from divine revelation; usually (cf. sense 5), a doctrine of the faith involving difficulties which human reason is incapable of solving.

Without- A. *adv.* I. Outside, in various senses: opp. to within *adv.* Now only *literary* and somewhat *arch.*

Lest-1. Used as a negative particle of intention or purpose, introducing a clause expressive of something to be prevented or guarded against; = L. *nU*, Eng. *that+not, for fear that.*

Converted-†1. Turned, turned back; 2. That has turned or been brought over to a religious faith or profession, whether from a different religion or from irreligious life.

II. The dilemma.

1. Were these elect children of God or reprobates that Jesus was speaking of?
2. Was this a condition set forth for people to hear and understand the gospel, be converted, and then receive the eternal forgiveness of sins?
3. Was this an eternal or a temporal forgiveness of sins?
4. If they were elect children of God, and “he that is of God heareth God’s words” (Joh 8:47), then why did they hear but not understand?
5. If they were elect, why would Jesus try to prevent or guard against their conversion and subsequent forgiveness of sins?
6. If they were reprobates, could they be converted and have their sins forgiven them in any capacity?
7. If they were reprobates, why would Jesus bother to use parables to prevent them from hearing and understanding the gospel when “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither CAN he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Co 2:14)?
8. If they were reprobates, could Jesus have been speaking to them in parables with the intent of preventing them from repenting and being spared a temporal destruction such as Sodom and Gomorrah would have if they had seen the mighty works that were done in Capernaum (Mat 11:20-24), even though they were still eternally damned (Jud 7)?

III. Jesus’ audience.

1. Jesus had just finished speaking to a great multitude of Israelites by way of a parable (Mar 4:1).
 - A. Jesus was sent to preach primarily to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mat 15:24; Mat 10:5-6).

- B. Jews were present (**Mar 4:10**) and it was not lawful for Jews to keep company with Gentiles (**Act 10:28; Joh 4:9**).
- C. Therefore the entire audience were Jews.
- 2. There were two groups of Jews in the crowd:
 - A. The first group were Jesus' disciples to whom He said "Unto YOU it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God" (**Mar 4:11**).
 - B. The second group were "THEM (unbelieving Jews) that are without".
 - i. "Them that are without" denotes unbelievers who are outside the faith (**1Co 5:13; Col 4:5**).

IV. The divisions of Israel.

1. The Bible makes it clear that there are two Israels (**Rom 9:6**).
 - A. There is natural Israel, Israel after the flesh (**1Co 10:18; Rom 9:8**), the natural seed of Abraham (**Rom 9:7**).
 - B. There also is the spiritual Israel of God (**Gal 6:16**), the spiritual seed of Abraham, who are the children of the promise (**Rom 9:8**).
2. Not all of natural Israel are God's Israel.
 - A. Isaac was, but Ishmael wasn't (**Rom 9:7-9; Gal 4:28-30**).
 - B. Jacob was, but Esau wasn't (**Rom 9:10-13**).
3. Counted in spiritual Israel are the elect Gentiles as well as elect Jews (**Gal 3:7-9 c/w Gal 3:16 c/w Gal 3:29; Gal 4:28; Phi 3:3; Rom 2:28-29**).
4. The natural-only Jew is cast off forever (**Rom 11:1-2 c/w 11:7-10**).

Always- 1. All along, all the time, perpetually, throughout all time.

5. Among spiritual Israel, the remnant (**Rom 9:27**), the foreknown (**Rom 11:2**), the election (**Rom 11:5-7**), there is a division as well.

Remnant - 1. a. With *the*. That which remains or is left of a thing or things after the removal of a portion; the remainder, rest, residue. Now applied only to a small remaining part.

- A. Some of them were believers like Paul (**Rom 11:1**) and thousands of other Jews (**Act 21:20**).
- B. Some of them were unbelieving enemies of the gospel, yet were elect and beloved of God Who covenanted to take away their sins (**Rom 11:25-29**).

V. Forgiveness of sins only through the blood of Jesus Christ.

1. There is an unconditional forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ that is a completed accomplishment for all of God's children whom He gave to Jesus to die for on the cross (**Eph 1:4-7; Col 1:13-14; Rom 5:9-10; Rev 1:5**).
2. There is a temporal and conditional forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ that God's children can receive if they confess their sins and repent (**1Jo 1:7-9**).

3. The shedding of blood is required for any type of forgiveness of sins (**Heb 9:22**).

Remission- 1. Forgiveness or pardon *of* sins (cf. 2) or other offences.

4. Those who receive the blood of Jesus Christ are only those who were elected UNTO it (**1Pe 1:2**).

VI. Conclusion: Who were “them that are without”? What was their eternal state? What was Jesus trying to prevent them from obtaining?

1. Who were “them that are without”? - They were unbelieving Jews that were outside of the faith of Christ (Section III.2.B)
2. What was their eternal state?
 - A. They were elect, blood-bought children of God based on the following:
 - i. They had the ability to have their sins forgiven them, hence the reason Jesus was trying to prevent (definition of lest) them from doing so.
 - ii. Only the elect can obtain forgiveness of sins (Section V.2-4)
 - iii. They had the ability to be converted (hence the reason Jesus was trying to prevent it) which requires hearing, understanding, and believing the gospel (**Mat 13:15; Act 15:3 c/w Act 13:48, Act 14:1, 22-23**).
 - a. Unregenerate men CANNOT hear, understand, or believe the gospel (**Joh 8:43-47; 1Co 2:14; Joh 10:26**).
 - b. Therefore if these Jews had the ability to be converted, they were elect and regenerate.
 - B. Based on the above points, these were Jews who were elect, regenerate children of God who were blinded unbelievers.
 - C. This should be no stretch to imagine since Paul describes a group of such Jews in (**Rom 11:25-29**).
3. What was Jesus trying to prevent them from obtaining?
 - A. Jesus was trying to prevent them from seeing, hearing, and understanding the gospel and being converted (**Mar 4:11-12**).
 - B. Jesus was trying to prevent them from receiving temporal forgiveness of sins.
 - i. Temporal forgiveness is conditional and may or may not be obtained by God’s children (**1Jo 1:7-9**).
 - ii. Jesus was not trying to prevent their eternal forgiveness of sins because eternal forgiveness of sins is not conditioned on anything a person does, but on God’s grace alone (Section V.1).

VII. An objection: Was Jesus speaking to hell-bound reprobates in parables to prevent them from changing their ways, since even hell-bound reprobates can change their ways and be spared temporal destruction? For example: the eternally damned Sodomites (**Jud 1:7**) would have repented and been spared destruction if they had seen Jesus' mighty works (**Mat 11:20-24**).

1. First of all, these Jews were not unregenerate reprobates because it was possible for them to be converted and receive forgiveness of sins from Jesus, as was proven in sections V and VI (**Mar 4:11-12**).
 - A. On the contrary, Sodom and Gomorrah were hell-bound reprobates (**Jud 1:7**).
 - B. These are two spiritually different classes of people.
2. It was never said that Sodom and Gomorrah would have been converted or would have received forgiveness of sins, but only that they would have repented (**Mat 11:20-24**).
 - A. Being spared from destruction was never said to be a forgiveness of sins or a conversion.
 - B. Repentance doesn't necessarily equate to forgiveness of sins; consider the following reprobates that repented:
 - i. Pharaoh repented and let Israel go (**Exo 12:30-33**), but was not a recipient of God's mercy through election (**Rom 9:15-18**).
 - ii. Judas repented after betraying Jesus (**Mat 27:3-4**), but was not a child of God and did not have forgiveness of sins (**Mat 26:23-25; Joh 17:12; Joh 6:70**).

Perdition - 1. The fact or condition of being destroyed or ruined; utter destruction, complete ruin.

3. The temporal destruction of these Jews or their city is not mentioned in this passage or in the context of it, as it was with Sodom and Gomorrah in Mat 11:20-24.
4. Jesus' primary purpose was not to prevent these Jews from being spared temporal destruction as Sodom would have been, but rather His primary purpose was to prevent them from perceiving and understanding the kingdom of God and thereby being converted unto it and having their sins forgiven them (**Mar 4:11-12**).
5. Things that are different are not the same.

VIII. Another objection: Was the forgiveness of sins here spoken of the forgiveness that a Jew could receive by offering a sacrifice? (**Lev 4:20, 26**). Was this what Jesus was trying to prevent from happening?

1. No, this forgiveness was the forgiveness that Jesus would give them (**Mar 4:12 c/w Mat 13:15**).
2. This forgiveness was associated with the salvation of God that was given to the Gentiles, which was in no way connected to the sacrifices under the Law of Moses (**Act 28:26-28**).
3. This forgiveness was linked to conversion (**Mar 4:12**). The conversion of Jews living under Moses' Law would be to the faith of Jesus Christ, not to the animal sacrifices of Moses' Law.
4. Jesus' call to men was to take on His easy and light yoke (**Mat 11:28-30**), not the heavy yoke of the Law of Moses that they could not bear (**Act 15:10-11**).

IX. The reason for speaking in parables.

1. Jesus spoke in parables to prevent the unbelieving Jews from believing the gospel in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah (**Mat 13:11-15 c/w Isa 6:9-10**).
2. Jesus spoke in parables in general to fulfill prophecy (**Mat 13:34-35 c/w Psalms 78:2-3**).

3. This was not a pattern that was continued by the apostles after the earthly ministry of Jesus.
 - A. New Testament preaching is characterized by great plainness of speech (**2Co 3:12; 2Co 1:13; 2Pe 1:19; Act 20:20-21; Eph 3:4**).
 - B. We do not need to speak in dark sayings to keep people from believing the gospel, the gospel will sort people out (**1Co 1:18; Act 17:32; 2Co 2:14-16**).

X. The cause of the hardened heart.

1. By comparing the different accounts, it can be ascertained that the following persons were said to have been responsible for the hardened hearts:
 - A. God blinded their hearts (**Joh 12:39-40 c/w Isa 6:9-10**).
 - B. The prophet was to “make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes...” (**Isa 6:10**).
 - C. They closed their own eyes (**Mat 13:15**).
 - D. Satan is also held responsible for blinding minds and causing the gospel to be hidden from people (**2Co 4:3-4**).
2. Putting it all together: God allowed Satan to cause them to shut their own eyes when they heard the preaching of the word of God by His prophet.

XI. The reason that Jesus used parables to prevent or guard against the conversion of the unbelieving portion of elect Israel.

1. The gospel was to the Jew first and then to the Gentile (**Rom 1:16**).
2. Jesus came to His own and His own received Him not (**Joh 1:11**).
 - A. When God’s children rebel and refuse to believe the truth, God will turn them over to strong delusion so that they will believe a lie (**2Th 2:10-12; Joh 9:39; Eph 4:17-20; 1Ki 22:20-23**).
 - B. A space of repentance is given (**Rev 2:21; Luk 13:6-9**), and then God gives people what they want as a judgment against them (**Pro 1:20-32; Rom 1:21-32**).
 - C. When God’s people will not hearken to His word, He will take it away from them and let them walk in their own counsel (**Psa 81:11-12**).
 - D. Jesus was simply ensuring that they got what they wanted.
3. God’s children can sin and rebel to a point where there is no remedy (**Pro 29:1**).
 - A. Israel did so before the Babylonian captivity (**2Ch 36:14-16**).
 - B. The nation of Israel, many of whom were children of God, were destroyed in the wilderness because of their unbelief and rebellion (**1Co 10:1-12**).
 - C. God was done dealing with unbelieving Israel and therefore took the kingdom of God from them and gave it to the Gentiles (**Mat 21:43**).
 - D. This happened in 70AD when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman armies (**Luk 21:20-24, 31-32**).
 - E. Isaiah preached to Israel in the same way for the same reason prior to Jerusalem being destroyed by the Babylonians many years earlier (**Isa 6:9-12**).
 - F. The same thing can happen to us if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth (**Heb 10:26-31; Heb 2:1-4**).
3. Beware that the same thing does not happen to you that happened to them (**Rom 11:17-21**).
4. “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (**1Co 10:12**).