

The Parables of Jesus

- The Goodman of the House and the Thief

(Matthew 24:23; Luke 12:39)

The Parable of the "Goodman of the House and the Thief" was given twice by Jesus two separate times in two separate settings. As presented in the Gospel of Luke, this parable was used by Jesus during the same setting in which He was teaching His disciples to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees." We see

in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus uses this same short parable a second time as it was given at the end of His ministry in the midst of His last series of parables to His disciples concerning the "end times." Jesus used this parable twice. Therefore, though it may seem like a short little parable, it must express a valuable and important message that Jesus wanted His disciples, to grasp, both at that time and for His disciples, today.

The Parable of the "Goodman of the House and the Thief" - *"And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through."* - Luke 12:39 Matthew 24:23

As we begin our discussion on this parable, let us first review the "characters" in this brief parable.

- The "goodman" - is another term for the "master or owner of a house."
- The "thief" is just that, a thief.

The use of the term "thief" or "thief that comes in the night" has always bothered me. You can say that it has been a "thorn in my flesh," per se. I have always had difficulty with the use of this analogy. Paul, Peter and even Jesus, Himself, used this term. Why would Jesus compare Himself to a sinful "thief?" Therefore, I must be missing something. Let's see...

The use of the term "thief" or "thief in the night" throughout the New Testament is always found within the context of Jesus and His coming upon the earth. It is always associated with, as in its usage in this parable, as a warning to be on watch, to be ready and prepared for the unannounced and unexpected coming of Jesus.

- *"You know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a **thief in the night.**"* (1Thessalonians 5:2)
- *"The day of the Lord will come like a **thief in the night...**"* (2Peter 3:10)
- *"I will come like a **thief**, and you will not know at what time I will come to you."* (Revelation 3:3)
- *"Behold, **I come like a thief!** Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."* (Revelation 16:15)

The term "thief" is not usually thought of as complimentary term to call someone. It seems to be the complete opposite of the character and nature of Jesus. Jesus used the concept of a "thief" to refer to the devil who comes to "steal, kill and destroy." (John 10:10) Why would he refer to Himself as a "thief in the night?" Is Jesus one who comes "sneaking" stealthily and surprisingly to those whom He loves and who are preparing and waiting expectantly for His promised return? Is Jesus a thief and therefore one to be not trusted? This does not fit the character and nature of my Bridegroom, my beloved, the Jesus whom I love.

The answer to my question was to be found in the full context of its usage in 1Thessalonians 5:2-5

- *"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness." This clearly states that Jesus will come as a "thief." However, He is coming as a "thief" to those **not expecting Him**, those who are in darkness!*

The language is clear that "they," the ones in darkness, are the ones to whom sudden destruction will come. Paul goes on to say, "*ye...children of the light,*" referring to Jesus' beloved Bride, the Body of Christ; those who are prepared and ready for Him and who **are not** in darkness. The "day of the Lord" **will not** be as a "thief" to those He loves because they are always ready and looking for Him. Their mind and hearts are always serving and tending to His "household."

If you are always ready and watchful you are never caught "off guard." If the true believer is aware of the scriptures found in Daniel, Revelation and others throughout the entirety of scripture concerning the second coming of Jesus, they will be not caught off guard. They will know the "signs" of those times. It would only seem like it was a "sneak" return by Jesus to those whose minds and hearts were not looking and yearning for the return of their beloved King and Bridegroom.

Now that I have that "thorn in my flesh" removed and settled in my heart, let's continue...

What was Jesus trying to teach His disciples with this parable? Let us first discuss it as it was first used by Jesus in Luke's Gospel account. In Luke we must discuss it within the context of the parables just prior to this one, as well as, within the entire teaching setting beginning in Luke 12:1 where Jesus was teaching and warning His disciples to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees?"

In this section of teaching to His disciples, Jesus is definitely using this parable within the context of His "coming." However, He was speaking of this His "**first coming.**" Jesus was letting them know that His coming would be (and it was) like a "thief" that would come, catching the leadership of the Jewish people (the Pharisees, Scribes, etc.) as well as others of that time who were not looking and "watching" for their Messiah, unprepared and not ready.

The **unprepared** "goodman"/homeowner (referring to the Pharisees and Jewish leadership) were not ready for the appearance of their Messiah. This is directly opposite of the servants in the previous parable Jesus gave - the parable of the "Faithful, Watchful Servants," who were found faithful, prepared and looking for their master. In this parable, the "goodman"/homeowner **was not** a good "caretaker" of the house he was given. The "household" Jesus was referring to were the Jewish people.

Therefore, within the context of this teaching setting in which Jesus began with a warning to beware of the "leaven of the Pharisees," we can see that Jesus was referring to the Pharisees as those who were not ready nor were they found being faithful over the "house." The "house" being the Jewish people that God had entrusted them with.

The Pharisees and the religious leaders of that day were not ready for Jesus' first appearance - even when He was right in front of them. To the people who were in darkness and not spiritually prepared, ready and watching - keeping the spiritual house in order - this coming of Jesus, their Messiah, was a complete surprise. The Jewish leadership was not ready or prepared for Jesus when He came on the scene. Therefore, Jesus was looked upon as a "thief" to them.

In the context of what we are discussing, it is of no coincidence that the scriptures tell us that Jesus was labeled as, and identified with, the "transgressors." He was placed on a cross between two "thieves." Yes, He bore the sins of sinners but He also was looked upon by the leaders of that day as a sinner and a "thief." In their eyes He was "stealing" the people from their wicked grasp. However, the important thing we must grasp is that, as prophesied and fulfilled in His first coming, they were not ready nor were they looking for their Messiah.

Below are scriptures concerning how Messiah would be mistaken for a “transgressor” and a “sinner.”

- Isaiah 53:12 - *"Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he **was numbered with the transgressors**; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."*
- Mark 15:28 - *"And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he **was numbered with the transgressors**."*
- Luke 22:37 - *"For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he **was reckoned among the transgressors**: for the things concerning me have an end."*
- Luke 23:32, 33 - *"And there were also two other, **malefactors**, led with him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the **malefactors**, one on the right hand, and the other on the left."*
- Matthew 27:28 - *"Then were there **two thieves** crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left."*

As previously mentioned, this short parable was given a second time by Jesus in Matthew 24:23. In Matthew's account, Jesus was speaking to His disciples at the end of His ministry. The context in which it was given was within a teaching that Jesus was speaking to His disciples concerning the "end times." It was part of His response to the disciple's questions concerning when and what would be the signs of the "end times." Jesus uses this same parable again.

However, in Matthew 24; 23, Jesus was definitely referring to His "**second coming**," His return. He was "warning" His disciples, for they would soon become the leaders of the Body of Christ, to always be watching, ready and prepared for His return. They may not have fully understood it at that time but after they were filled with the Holy Spirit, He would bring this parable and its teaching back to their remembrance.

They were each to be the "goodman of the house" and "keep watch" over the Master's "house," the "household of faith," the Body of Christ, which included themselves and all believers, until He would return. This is also a teaching, as well as a warning, for all future leadership of the Body of Christ and for all of us as believers to always be watching, ready, and prepared for Jesus' return.

As we do and if we do this, Jesus' second coming will never take us by surprise as a "thief in the night." We may not know the time or day. Yes, we may know the season, but it will not matter because we are ready by "being about our Father's business."

The parable of "The Rich Man Foolishly Building Bigger Barns," in Jesus' teaching setting in Luke 12 pointed to a person whose heart was covetous. Jesus was expressing that the "leaven" and hypocrisy of the Pharisees had to do with the wrong attitude of heart towards God and His people. Jesus was stating that for the most part, the Pharisees in general became greedy, covetous hypocrites. It was all about themselves and not about watching and preparing both, themselves and those entrusted to them, for Messiah.

In the following parable of that same teaching setting, the "Faithful, Watchful Servants," Jesus expressed what the correct attitude of heart should be for those entrusted with God's "household. In our parable of the "Goodman of the House and the Thief," we see that the covetousness, greed and self-seeking attitude of heart within the Pharisees, Scribes and other religious leaders portrayed in the parable of "the Man Building Bigger Barns," caused these leaders to not be prepared nor were they watching for their Messiah.

They were to be the ones that were to be watchful and ready for Messiah. They were the ones who were not to be taken by surprise upon His appearance. If they were ready, Jesus would not have "sneaked up" on them. They would have recognized the true "Master of the Household." However, their heart was pulled in a different direction and their eyes became blinded to the one who they supposedly were waiting for. They were waiting but not "watching." There is a difference. Because of this, their "position" as ministers of God to his people was about to be taken away and given others.

Will we heed the warning and admonition of this short parable? We have been given the example of those who were not watching and prepared for their Messiah's first appearance. Will we learn from their error? Jesus used this parable twice which meant its message was to be taken very seriously. It is a parable that is so very relevant for each and every believer in their everyday life as we watch, pray, prepare and be ready for the soon return of our Lord and Savior, our beloved Bridegroom – Jesus. It is our choice. Will His second coming be as a "thief in the night" to us or will we be ready with our lamps burning?