

**THE PARABLES
OF JESUS THE
MESSIAH**

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Parables That Teach Warnings

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The Lord wants everyone to live the gospel requirements and acquire his promised blessings. But he warned of potential failure. The Jews belonged to a favored race, the people of Israel. This esteemed position led them to believe that they were automatically entitled to the promised kingdom. But it was not to be so.

The things of the world can blind a person to spiritual decisions. And even when living within the parameters of the gospel's teachings, all of the Lord's children must be cautious so that their humility and meekness are not overcome.

The Foolish Rich Man

Luke 12:13–21

13. And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.

14. And he said unto

him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

15. And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the

abundance of the things which he possesseth.

16. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

17. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

18. And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

19. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

20. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

21. So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

The twelfth chapter of Luke is a teaching unit based on the theme of godliness as contrasted with worldliness. (These same concepts appear in widely divergent sections of the other Gospels.)¹ Like many other parts of Luke's Gospel, this parable is set in a real-life situation that gives added insight into the Lord's character and reputation. Luke did not identify the whereabouts of Jesus on this occasion, but the Lord was teaching his Apostles and others when he was interrupted by a man in the crowd. The intruder was apparently totally disinterested in the spiritual truths that the Lord was teaching, and interrupted him with a selfish, secular question.

The man asked the Lord to intervene in an inheritance problem between himself and his brother. The Jewish law on inheritance was clearly defined, and it can be assumed that the man had no just legal claim or he would not have appealed to Jesus.² But the fact that he did gives insight into the stature the Lord had attained by this time in his ministry.

The Savior treated the man's question with complete forthrightness, stating that he would not act as judge between the man and his brother. He warned the man and those who had drawn close around him about their covetous nature, having their hearts set only upon the things of the world. After this admoni-

tion Jesus taught the parable of the foolish rich man to warn the individual about the relationship between worldly things and the things of the spirit.

The Lord began the parable by declaring that during the harvest the ground of a certain man brought forth an unanticipated abundance of good. The man wondered what he should do with his newfound wealth. He had always been obsessed with the accumulation of worldly things, and was concerned about how he should preserve his huge surplus. This reaction is characteristic of a covetous man.³ His thoughts and actions were centered around how he could secure his personal ease and sensuous enjoyment.⁴ His heart was proud, selfish, and self-indulgent, and he considered his carefully planned future as if it were a foregone conclusion.

The Lord purposely embodied in this wealthy man the selfish propensities he was warning against. The man, by his declarations, admitted that the innermost thoughts of his heart were set upon his provisions for the flesh.⁵ His plans stretched no higher than to satisfy his earthly desires, and he failed in all particulars to include God in his gain.⁶ He had placed the things of the world above the worship of God, and thus had broken the first great commandment. In addition, he had decided to use his abundance for his personal, selfish, and lustful desires rather than in the service of his fellowman—thus breaking the second great commandment. Although he was laying up in abundance worldly things, he was impoverished spiritually (Matthew 6:20–21).⁷ Then the Lord gave the warning of the parable when he said to the man, “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.”

This is an interesting use of the word *fool*. The Psalmist had recorded many centuries before, “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Psalm 14:1), thus emphasizing the biblical meaning of the word *fool* as “a man who practically denies the existence of God.”⁸

The emphasis of the parable thus far had been on the relationship between the laying up of spiritual versus worldly treasures, and the competition between them. Now it shifted to a warning about making the wrong choice. It was not the imminent death of the individual, but his impending judgment that

the Lord warned of. The man had carefully assessed his personal situation and judged his needs, but had made the wrong choice. "Whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" the Lord then asked in the parable. All that the man had accounted so dear, all that he determined he would profit by, was now for naught. The author of Ecclesiastes had warned, "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity" (Ecclesiastes 5:10). The rich man had emphasized all the wrong things (self, world, riches), and had forgotten all the right ones (God, his neighbor, the poor).

The relationship was perfectly clear: "The man whose treasure is of earth leaves it all at death; he whose wealth is in heaven goes to his own, and death is but the portal to his treasury."⁹ The Talmud records "that a Rabbi told his disciples, 'Repent the day before thy death;' and when his disciples asked him: 'Does a man know the day of his death?' he replied, that on that very ground he should repent today, lest he should die to-morrow. And so would all his days be days of repentance."¹⁰

Our personal pathway to the kingdom of God is one of choices, and the parable emphatically warned that we would be judged according to those selections. "How brief, yet how rich in significance, is that little parable which He told them, of the rich fool who, in his greedy, God-forgetting, presumptuous selfishness, would do this and that . . . who . . . thought that 'my fruits,' and 'my goods,' and 'my barns,' and to 'eat and drink and be merry' could for many years . . . sustain what was left him of a soul, but to whom from heaven pealed as a terrible echo to his words, the heart-thrilling sentence of awful irony, 'Thou fool, this night!'"¹¹

After giving the parable, Jesus finished his instructions by concluding, "For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Luke 12:30–31.)

Paul, to the Romans, expanded the warning when he declared, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:14)—a strong warning for each of God's children.