

Parables and Sayings of Jesus (a)¹

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This article contains a number of parables which enlighten us about topics such as wisdom, this world, and preparing for the Hereafter.

The Parable of Scholars Who Do not Act According to Their Knowledge

355. Do not be like a sieve that lets out the soft and good flour and keeps the trash. Similar to that, you let wisdom out of your mouth, and let impurities remain in your chest (Harrani 1983, 393, 510; Ibn 'Asakir 1415AH, 47:460).

356. How long should water flow over the mountain without the mountain being softened by it? And how long do you study wisdom without your heart being softened by it? (Mufid 1404AH, 209; Ibn 'Asakir 1415AH, 47:462)

357. How many a fruit trees have, that are not edible or useful! How many a scholar that do not benefit from their knowledge! How vast the earth is and not all of it is habitable! And how many a speaker whose words are not entirely true! (Harrani 1983, 503; Ibn 'Asakir 1415AH, 47:461)

Therefore, keep yourself away from the evil of lying scholars who wear woolen clothes and look down while walking² to make their mistakes and faults look good. Like foxes they look from under their eyebrows, but their speech does not match their deeds. Is it possible to pick the grape from the

¹ This is a translation of the pages 228-251 of Muhammadi Rayshahri, Muhammad. 1391 Sh. *Hikmat Nama-i 'Isa ibn Maryam (s)*, 1391 Sh. 1st. Qom: Dar al-Hadith

² To look down and lowering the gaze normally signifies modesty.

thorn bush or the fig from the colocynth plant? In the same way, words of a lying scholar have no effect expect false-hood. Not everyone who speaks is telling the truth (Harrani 1983, 503).

358. What is the benefit of igniting light on the roof of a dark house while it is empty and dark inside? Likewise, what is the point of having the light of knowledge in your mouth while you have not benefited from and are empty of it inside? (Harrani 1983, 506)

The Parable of Evil Scholars

359. The parable of bad scholars is that of a rock in a stream which prevents water from flowing; it neither drinks the water nor lets it reach the grain field (Warram n.d., 1:84; Zamakhshari 1410AH, 1:274).

The Parable of the Heart of a Wise person

360. Honey will not always remain safe in a *ziqaq*.¹ Likewise, wisdom will not be always preserved in the hearts. A *ziqaq* can contain honey as long as it is not torn, dried, or rotted. In the same way, hearts can contain wisdom as long as desires have not torn them, greed has not made them impure, and pleasures have not hardened them (Harrani 1983, 504).

The Parable of Wisdom in Man's Heart

361. Truthfully I say to you, polishing sharpens a sword and makes it shiny; in the same manner, wisdom polishes the heart and purifies it. Wisdom in the heart of a wise person is like water in a dead field. It revives his heart as water revives the dead field. Wisdom in the heart of a wise person acts like light in darkness, and he walks among people with it (Harrani 1983, 512).

362. Indeed God revives the dead hearts by the light of wisdom, as He revives the dead fields by means of heavy rain (Harrani 1983, 393).

The Parable of Teaching Wisdom to an Unqualified Person

¹ Ziqaq in Arabic means a goatskin liquid container.

363. Jesus (a) would constantly say that “Indeed, he who leaves treating the wound of an injured person, without a doubt, is a partner to the one who has caused the injury. For the one who injured him was after his destruction, and the one who left his treatment did not want to cure him. And since he did not want his healing, therefore, he is after his destruction.

In the same way, do not teach wisdom to the one who is not worthy of it, since it is an act of ignorance. And do not withhold wisdom from the one who deserves it, since it would be a sin; rather, every one of you should be like a treating physician who cures when it is needed and, otherwise, refrains treatment (Kulayni 1407AH, 8:345).

364. There are people who deserve wisdom. If you teach it to the people who are not worthy of it, you have corrupted it, and if you withhold it from the people who are worthy of it, you have corrupted it. Be like a doctor who uses the medicine in its proper place (Abu Nu‘aym 1387 AH, 7:273).

365. O apostles! Do not give a pearl to a pig, for a pig does not do anything with it. Do not give wisdom to the one who does not want it. Wisdom is better than a pearl, and the one who does not want it is worse than a pig (Ibn Hanbal n.d., 118).

366. Do not hang jewelry to the necks of pigs (Ghazzali 1412AH, 1:85).

367. Do not throw gems under the feet of pigs (Zamakhshari 1410AH, 3:219).

368. Verily, all the people see the stars, but none will be guided by them except those who know their routes and stations. In the same way, you all study wisdom but none of you will be guided by it except those who act according to it (Harrani 1983, 507).

369. Truthfully I say to you, moving stones from the top of a mountain is better than talking to someone who does not grasp what you say. [This is] like the act of the one who puts a stone in the water so that it be softened or like the act of the one who cooks food for the people of the graves.

Happy is he who restrains the excess of his speech, which, he is worried, may bring about God’s wrath; he who does not talk unless he understands [what

he says] and does not envy anyone's speech unless his deeds become clear to him (Harrani 1983, 512).

The Parable of a Heart That is Not Softened by Remembrance of Death

370. Surely, when an animal is not ridden, used for carrying goods, or used [in any other way], it becomes disobedient. And so are hearts, when they are not softened by the remembrance of death and do not bear the pain of constant worship, they become hard and dark (Harrani 1983, 506).

The Parable of the Heart's Need for Purity

371. Truthfully I say to you, there is no rainfall without clouds; in the same way, there would be no deed done for the sake of God's pleasure, except by a purified heart (Harrani 1983, 512).

The Parable of a Self-Admiring Worshiper

372. O apostles! How many a light put out by the wind, and how many a worshiper self-admiration has corrupted (Hilli n.d., 223).

The Parable of Learning Wisdom from the One Who Does Not Benefit from it Himself

373. Truthfully I say to you, if you found a light that consumed tar oil in a dark night, you would seek its light despite its bad fragrance ; similar to that, it behooves you to take wisdom from whomever you find it with, and his evil interest in wisdom should not prevent you from taking it (Harrani 1983, 392).

The Parable of This World

374. Imam Sadiq (a): "This world was embodied before Jesus in the form of a blue eyed-woman. Then Jesus said to her, "How many times have you got married?" She said, "Many times." Jesus said, "So did all [your husbands] divorce you?" The woman said, "No, rather, I killed them." Jesus said, "So, woe to your remaining spouses! How come they do not take lesson from the ones who have passed!" (Harrani 1983, 396).

375: It has been quoted that the reality of this world became manifest to Jesus who saw it in the form of a white-haired old woman wearing all kinds of adornment. Then he told her, "How many times have you got married?" She said, "I do not have their number." He said, "Have they all died or did they divorce you?" She said, No, rather I killed them." Jesus said, "Woe to your remaining spouses! How come they do not take lesson from the ones who have passed! How come you are killing them one by one and they are not keeping away from you!" (Ibn Tawus 1413AH, 28)

376. The apostle of God: "This world was embodied before my brother Jesus in the form of a woman. Then Jesus told her, "Do you have a spouse?" She said, "Yes, many spouses." Jesus said, "Are the alive?" She said, "No, but I killed them." At that moment Jesus realized that indeed, that was this world embodied for him (Muttaqi Hindi 1397AH, 3:236).

The Parable of Servants of This World

377. Woe to you, O servants of this world! You carry a lamp in the light of the sun, while the light of the sun is sufficient for you. You do not ignite a light in darkness while it was disposed for you because of that. Similar to that, you use the light of knowledge for your worldly affairs while this world has been guaranteed for you, but you do not use the light of knowledge for the affairs of the hereafter though this is why it has been given to you.

You say that the hereafter is true, but you prepare for this world. You say that death is true, but you try to escape from it. And you say that God sees and hears, but you are not afraid that He counts your deeds. How can anyone who hears you believe you? For the one who lies without knowledge is more justified than the one who lies with knowledge, although there is no justification for any kind of lie (Harrani 1983, 506).

The Parable of Hypocrites

378. O bad servants! You are neither God-wary servants nor free honorable people. Verily, your parable is that of an oleander that impresses whoever sees it but kills whoever eats it (Mufid 1404AH, 209).

379. O servants of this world! The parable of yours is that of lofty graves whose exteriors impress the viewer, but inside them are the bones of dead people, filled with wrongdoings (Harrani 1983, 501).

The Parable of Companions of This World

380. In the same way that a person who enters water becomes wet inevitably, the companion of this world also finds rust and hardness in his heart inevitably (Hilli n.d., 104).

381. Truthfully I say to you, in the same way that a patient looks at a delicious food but does not enjoy it because of intensive pain, the owner of this world also does not enjoy worship and does not find its sweetness because of his affection for his wealth (Harrani 1983, 507).

382. Truthfully I say to you, whoever does not take out the weeds of his grain field, they will increase to the extent that they will take over his whole field and corrupt it. In the same way, whoever does not remove the love for this world from his heart, it will take over his heart to the extent that he will not feel the taste of love for the hereafter (Harrani 1983, 506).

383. The seeker of this world is like the one who drinks water from a sea; the more he drinks the thirstier he becomes till it kills him (Ghazzali 1412AH, 3:318).

384. Imam Sajjad (a) said to his companions, "Have you not received what Jesus said to the apostles? He said to them, 'Who among you would build a house on the waves of the sea? This is the story of the house of this world. Therefore, you should not consider it as a place of residence'" (Mufid 1404AH, 43).

385. Imam Sajjad (a) said to his companions, "Have not you received what Jesus said to the apostles? He said to them, 'This world is a bridge; thus, cross over it, and do not construct on it'" (Mufid 1404AH, 43).

386. Jesus (a) was asked, "O spirit of God! Shall we not build you a house?" He said, "Yes, but build it beside a sea." They said, "But water would destroy

it!” He said, “Where are you going to build it for me, on a bridge?” (Ibn ‘Asakir 1415AH, 47:419).

The Parable of This World and the Hereafter

387. The parable of this world is that of a man who has two wives; if he pleases one, the other becomes displeased (I. A. Warram n.d., 1:138).

388. No slave can have two masters; if he pleases one, he displeases the other. Similar to that, a servant cannot be the servant of this world and, at the same time, work for the hereafter (Ibn ‘Asakir 1415AH, 47:445).

The Parable of the One Who Disobeys God

389. Truthfully I say to you, if a sheep is drowned in a sea, the sea will not be abated or harmed in any way. Similar to that, you cannot abate God or harm Him in any way; rather, you harm and abate yourselves (Harrani 1983, 507).

The Parable of the One Who Does Not Forbid What Is Wrong

390. Truthfully I say to you, whoever sees a snake going towards his brother to sting him and does not warn his brother until the snake kills him, he should not consider himself blameless of his [brother’s] murder. In the same way, whoever sees his brother committing misdeeds and does not warn him of the consequences till he is besieged by his misdeeds, he is not blameless of being a partner in his sin.

And whoever is able to prevent an oppressor from doing injustice, yet does not stop him, is like the committer of the injustice. How is an oppressor supposed to fear when he is safe among you and is not forbidden or stopped? How are the oppressors supposed to stop and not become arrogant?

Is it enough that one of you says, “I will not oppress, but whoever wants to oppress, let them do so,” and he sees oppression but does not stop it? If it were as you say, you would not have been punished along with the oppressors with whom you did not cooperate when the punishment comes upon them in this world (Harrani 1983, 504).

The Parable of the One Who Looks For Others' Mistakes

391. Jesus (a) said to his companions, "When one encounters his brother and sees that his clothes are revealing his private parts, will he reveal it further or cover it?" They replied, "He will cover it." Jesus said, "No, but he will reveal it." They realized that he was telling them a parable, so they said, "O spirit of God! How is that?" Jesus said, "That is when one of you becomes aware of the misdeed of his brother but does not cover it" (Harrani 1983, 305)

The Parable of the One Who Is Born Twice

392. He who is not born twice will not find a way to the kingdom of heavens (Qaysari 1375 Sh, 316).

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