

The Parable of the Photo Studio

Aaron Locker

A certain man named Joshua was painting a wall the color white. It was necessary that this wall be white because it was one of the walls of Joshua's photo studio. Throughout its existence, this wall will have light shining upon it, and being flat white, the wall would be able to absorb the light shone upon it.

Standing alone, Joshua was careful to go up and down the wall being sure to not miss one inch. Finally, Joshua proclaimed, "It is finished!" and stepped back to admire his work. He smiled, being satisfied, and said "It is good!"

As quickly as these words left his mouth, a near-by person named Gowy entered the room and stepped up to observe Joshua's work. Gowy's immediate observation was that Joshua had gotten paint on the floor, which, in Gowy's eyes, was not appropriate. He didn't see how it would help the studio. Now this wasn't just a small spill. The whole room; the walls, the floor, even the ceiling was completely blanketed with flat, white paint. It was blanketed with enough paint so that the original appearance, the very condition of the room, had been changed to pure, spotless white.

When Gowy pointed this out to Joshua, Joshua's smile grew bigger.

"You noticed!" said Joshua. Joshua explained that painting one wall, while it would make a small difference, just wasn't sufficient.

"The light in the studio is not going to shine on only one wall, it is going to shine on every part of the room, and with all things painted white, the perfection of the whole room will be apparent in every picture taken here," explained Joshua. Gowy then understood and left the room.

EXPLANATION

The Characters:

Joshua – This character represents God, and His saving nature.

The Paint – This character represents Jesus; the method by which all things were painted.

The Light of the Studio – This character represents the Holy Spirit which is the new mindset: the gift of God, not the giver.¹

The First Wall – This character represents Israel.

The Photo Studio – This character represents all things. It's important to note the passive nature of the studio. It existed, but could not paint itself. It could not make itself un-receiving of the paint. It was destined to be painted.

Gowy – This character represents the doubting nature of all things.

The Story:

There existed a photo studio that needed to be painted. God is found at the beginning painting one wall of the photo studio the color white. The color “flat white” is important because it has the property of receiving and absorbing light. When a wall is painted with flat white paint, it is given the gift of receiving light, which it would only be able to reflect if it was glossy (the opposite of flat). When all things are saved by God through Jesus, they are given the property of absorbing a new, holy mindset, which they could only otherwise reflect. The ability of all things to take in God's gift of the Holy Spirit is very important, because before then, all things could only “give off the appearance” that they had a holy mindset, but it was never *their* mindset until after they had been painted/saved.

In a photo studio, pictures are taken to show glory. The pictures taken in the photo studio in the story represent the glory of God. All things in the photo studio, being painted, yield a glorious picture taken by Joshua – the photographer and the painter.

In the beginning of the story, Joshua is standing alone. He is the *only* painter just as God is the only one who can save us.

Joshua was sure not to miss one inch of the wall, meaning that the whole wall would be covered.

“The Wall” that Joshua is painting in the beginning is Israel. This is important because it

1. For further study on this distinction see E.W. Bullinger's *Word Studies on the Holy Spirit (The Giver and His Gifts)* Each of the 385 occurrences of pneuma (“spirit”) in the N.T. is examined. Available from StudyShelf.com

shows the fact that Christ was sent to Israel first, but later we discover that God had a larger, universal purpose for Christ.

Before we were even aware, Joshua had painted the whole room, but some of us may have been under the wrong impression that when Joshua said “It is finished” that he had only painted one wall.

The words “It is good” is a reference to Genesis, when God created the earth and saw that it was good, but the words in the story refer to the new creation (II Corinthians 5:17). Once again, it is important to remember that, as Adam did not create himself, nor did he have any say in whether he was created or not, the same is true for the new creation. We do not save ourselves; we are as passive as the dust before it became Adam. We are as passive as the photo studio before it was painted.

Now, at the very second Joshua proclaimed his work to be good, in walked Gowy. Gowy, being our doubting nature, just was not accepting of the words “it is good.” Notice that although the photo studio belonged to Joshua, he did not stop Gowy from coming into it. Joshua allowed Gowy to observe his work, just as God allows our doubting nature to observe His work. As Gowy walked in, he was stunned at the vastness of Joshua’s work, because Gowy was convinced that only one wall would be painted. Gowy, after seeing the whole studio covered in white, points this out to Joshua as if Gowy was catching a mistake that Joshua had made. Gowy did not find it appropriate that Joshua had “gotten paint on the floor” because he did not understand what Joshua understood about the outcome of a pure white studio.

As Gowy mentioned Joshua’s would-be excessive painting to him, Joshua smiled and said “you noticed!” It sure is a smiling matter when a doubting creation sees what God has done.

At the end, Joshua explains why he painted the whole studio. Joshua lets Gowy know that the light is going to come upon every wall, and that will render a perfect, glorious picture every time one is taken. The story ends with Gowy leaving, as will our doubting nature when all knees bow and all tongues confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

THE EXPLANATION OF THE PARABLE OF THE PHOTO STUDIO: *A Look into the Nature and Purpose of Parables*

Webster’s 1828 defines a parable as:

“A fable or allegorical relation or representation of something real in life or nature, from which a moral is drawn for instruction.”

Furthermore, Webster defines “parable” in the verb form as:

“To represent by fiction or fable.”

James Strong defines the Greek word “*parabole*” (Greek Lexicon #3850) as:

“A similitude (‘parable’), *i.e.*, (symbolic) fictitious narrative (of common life conveying a moral), apothegm² or adage”

A big part of my motivation to write this story came from the latter part of Luke 16; the story of the rich man and Lazarus. I often hear people speaking of a terrible place called “hell” where dirty sinners go after they die to suffer in flames for their trespasses during their time on earth. When I ask for Scripture that talks about such a place, I am often sent to the story of the rich man and Lazarus. I feel that it is very important to discuss the nature and purpose of parabolic teaching.

My understanding, as well as Noah Webster’s and James Strong’s, about parables is that they are fictitious stories that are told in order to make a point or teach a lesson. The very make-up of the Greek word *parabole* shows that it means “to throw alongside” (that is; to make a comparison). As they say in the movies “any likeness to actual events is strictly coincidental;” and so it goes for parables. Therefore, they should not be used as a historical reference. The idea of a parabolic teaching is to make a point, and it is not important that the point be made by use of a true and literal story. Take the parable of the trees choosing a king in Judges 9 for an example. Should we believe that the trees in Judges 9 really did feel the need to choose a king and that they spoke amongst themselves? I imagine there are few people who accept that story to be a literal, historical event, and I, personally, have never met anyone who tried to use Judges 9 to prove that trees really do speak.

Interestingly enough, there is more scriptural proof of the absurdity of a literal interpretation of Luke 16 than there is for Judges 9.

Ecclesiastes 9:5 says that the dead know not anything, but apparently, both the rich man and Lazarus were dead, yet they still knew enough to speak. Psalm 146:4 and 104:29 both mention that in death, man’s breath leaves. Psalm 146:1-2 and 115:17 say that there is no praise of the Lord in death but silence, Ecclesiastes 9:10 mentions that there is no knowledge nor wisdom in the grave. If the rich man knew nothing, how was he “*in torments?*” It is simple: the dead know nothing. Everyone in the story was dead, and even the rich man agrees that Lazarus would have to be raised from the dead if he was to leave the place where he then was.

Ecclesiastes 12:7 mentions that when a man dies, his body returns to the dust, and his spirit returns to God who gave it. It does not say that angels come and take the person anywhere, and even if we were to stretch our imagination and say angels take the dead person’s spirit to God, where was God in the story? God was not there, not even for the person that went

2. A remarkable saying; a short, instructive remark. Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828.

to “*Abraham’s bosom.*” Also, if we are to believe that the body returns to dust and only the spirit travels to hell, then not only would we have trouble feeling the flames without nerves, but that would mean that God was in hell because the spirit must go to hell and return to God at the same time.

Consider I Thessalonians 4:15. Who is being resurrected before “*they which are alive and remain*” if everyone, like Lazarus and the rich man, is already in hell or paradise? If the parable of the rich man and Lazarus is literal, who would be “*them which are asleep*” in I Thessalonians 4:15? No one would be asleep; on the contrary, the state of both the rich man and Lazarus was a very “*awake*” one.

Simply put, if you believe the story of the rich man and Lazarus to be literal and believe that those who had died were still thinking and talking, then you must throw out many other verses. Let us not place our beliefs in a war against Scripture, but instead let us have Scripture construct our beliefs. Only then can we be sure to observe God as true and every man a liar.

Taken from the *Bible Student’s Notebook*[™], a weekly Bible study publication available in two formats (electronic and printed)

www.BibleStudentsNotebook.com

Study Shelf, PO Box 265, Windber, PA 15963
1-800-784-6010 / www.StudyShelf.com

B I B L E S T U D E N T ’ S P R E S S [™]
W i n d b e r , P e n n s y l v a n i a

