

An Interview with Gerald M. Bilkes about his book *Glory Veiled and Unveiled: A Heart-Searching Look at Christ's Parables*. Reformation Heritage Books, 2012, 229 pp., paperback.

Interviewed by Brian G. Najapfour

Thank you so much for your willingness to be interviewed about your Christ-centered book which I enjoyed reading. I especially liked your writing style—clear, concise, and practical.

Here are some of my questions for you about your work:

- 1. Can you please briefly define the word *parable*? And, what is the unique contribution of your book to the study of Christ's parables?**

A parable is a shorter or longer word-picture to zero in on a certain truth and affect hearts with it. The prophet Nathan told the parable of the rich man who took a poor man's only lamb to uncover David to his adultery with Bathsheba. In my book I am looking not only at *what* the parables of Christ mean, but *how* they search our hearts.

- 2. You say that “[i]n the parables, Christ is intentionally veiling or concealing His glory and the glory of His kingdom” (p. 10). Can you please explain more to us what you mean by this thought-provoking assertion?**

When the disciples asked Christ why he taught in parables, Christ made clear that he had a dual aim in his parables. For example, in Matthew 13:10-17 he showed that people will respond to the parables either in a way that shows that they have faith, and thus understand (at least in principle) the significance of the parable; others, however, will not truly receive the parable, because of unbelief. It is not just so that this is an *unfortunate result* of the parables, but the *intended purpose* of the parable.

Many people have difficulty with this idea that God would actually hide his truth from someone. Some scholars have done some theological gymnastics to get around this point. There is a problem if we decide upfront that the parables are different than what Christ has said that they are. Should it surprise us that the parables of the *kingdom* should be spoken in a way that has all the hallmarks of glorious *sovereignty*?

I give the example in my book of a force infiltrating enemy territory like the allied forces did at the end of World War II in Western Europe. They dropped messages “in-code” in order to communicate with their allies and win over others, all the while concealing their true purposes to their enemies. This may help us understand why the parables are like messages “in-code,” both concealing and revealing.

- 3. I like what you mention near the end of your book: “a true student of the parables will find Calvary in the parables and see the parables leading to Calvary” (p. 225). Can you please give us some practical tips on how to read the parables through the lens of Calvary?**

Many people have been trained to think that the parables teach a moral lesson or two, and at times that is certainly in view. However, it should not surprise us that the parables of the kingdom have, as it were, the watermark of the King on them, and that the most important part of his work, his death and resurrection, are never far away from the teaching of the parable. In my book, I intentionally pursue how Christ shows himself in each parable. To give one example, in the parable of the great supper (Luke 14:15-24), we can only understand this great supper filled with the poor, maimed, halt, and blind as the great gospel provision that Christ brings through his mediatorial work, dying that sinners might have life and that abundantly.

- 4. What books can you recommend to readers who would like to learn more about the parables of Christ?**

There is no shortage of books on the parables, and many are helpful. Allow me to mention a recent scholarly book, filled with lots of information, by Klyne Snodgrass (*Stories with Intent* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010]). For a more popular, and yet very helpful volume is from Terry L. Johnson (*The Parables of Jesus* [Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2007]).

- 5. What projects are you currently working on?**

I am working on a companion volume on the Miracles of Jesus, as well as a study of the message of Galatians. I also have one or two things I would like to publish relating to the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, as well as the Bible’s teaching on Apostasy.