

following Jesus are warned that they are in for a tougher time than they expect. The foolish builder who does not count the cost and therefore cannot finish the tower represents the audience's perspective, while Jesus recommends prudence and foresight in view of the troubles (persecution?) ahead. In the Unmerciful Servant (29), Jesus rebukes Peter's desire to withhold forgiveness. Peter's view is represented by the servant forgiven ten thousand talents who refuses to forgive another a mere hundred denarii. God's view of the matter is represented by the king. Other examples of explicit audience criticism occur in (7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18?, 25, 27, 30, 39, 48, 51, 52, 55, 61, 63 and 64).

Implicit Audience Criticism

Implicit audience criticism occurs in those cases where the perspective of the audience does not find explicit pictorial representation in the parable. Cases (56) and (57) were mentioned above, in both of which Jesus criticises his opponents' non-evangelistic perspective. Another example is the Strong Man Spoiled (15), where Jesus argues his exorcisms correspond to a soldier (?) plundering a strong man's household. The Pharisaic view -- that Jesus' exorcisms are more like a stage-play -- does not appear.

Jesus also uses implicit audience criticism with the crowds and his disciples. To the crowds Jesus presents the Barren Fig Tree (50) as God's justification for bringing destruction on Israel (with a more general application to sinful mankind). The gardener's request to spare the tree for another year is the reason why all have not perished as yet. No sample of the audience's perspective (say, fruitful fig trees) appears. To his disciples Jesus' parable of the Friend at Midnight (47) pictures the importance of persistence in prayer, but their inclination to give up does not find expression.

Besides the examples mentioned above, parables (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 16, 17, 21?, 22?, 26, 28, 31, 32, 33, 34, 38, 45, 46, 53, 59, 60 and 62) appear to be cases of implicit criticism of the audience perspective.

In other cases, parables appear to be either illustrations of spiritual truths or advance protection against false perspectives that will arise in some situation still future to Jesus' earthly ministry. The Fan in Hand (2), for instance, appears to be a vivid illustration of the judgement to come, which the average Israelite or Pharisee of the time would presumably find in agreement with his own theology. The controversial aspect here would be John's teaching regarding who is in danger of this judgment. The same can be said for the Dragnet (23) and possibly the Sheep and the Goats (41). Other parables which are probably basically illustrative are (19, 20 and 24).

On the other hand, the exhortations to watchfulness and faithfulness found in the Householder and Thief (37), the Waiting Porter (44) and the Waiting Servants (49) appear to be advance warnings for each generation of believers to live in the light of the Lord's sudden return. Each parable attacks in advance those false perspectives which deny a miraculous return or final judgment. Naturally, those who prefer such perspectives will tend