

should not be surprised to find mystery used as a device to gain the hearer's judgment for a matter before he realizes he is judging himself. In each of these cases, neither David nor Ahab realized how the story related to himself until the storyteller provided the interpretation. Jones sees something of this sort happening in the Unmerciful Servant (29), the Good Samaritan (46), and the Rich Man and Lazarus (60), where the application is sprung on the listener in the final verse after previously obtaining his "approving interest."<sup>23</sup> To these we can add the Two Sons (31) and the Two Debtors (45), and probably the Wicked Tenants (32) and the Rejected Stone (33), though by this point the Jewish leaders had begun to realize that Jesus was referring to them (Matt 21:45).

If our suggestion on Mark 4 (above) has any merit, another reason for mystery might be the concealment of future events from those whose actions could otherwise interfere with their fulfilment. Paul twice speaks of the ignorance of the leaders in opposing Christ, saying of himself, "I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief" (1 Tim 1:13), and of others "if they had [understood], they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor 2:8). The latter of these two statements occurs in a discussion of God's secrets which are known only by revelation. Such a reason for mystery has an OT precedent, for example, in the book of Daniel, which contains a number of cryptic allegorical visions, plus the command to seal up the book until the end (Dan 12:4). This would explain the mysterious reference to the bridegroom being taken away in (11), to the slain son in (32), and to the rejected stone in (33), all referring in Jesus' death.

In a somewhat similar vein, the whole matter of Jesus' two comings with an interval between could not be broached before the crucifixion, yet the recognition that Jesus taught this mysteriously in his parables would be a great comfort to his disciples later. This would explain the cryptic nature of the parables of the kingdom (17-23), dealing with the interval between the two comings. It might also explain what some of the "new things" are that the householder would bring out of his treasury in (24), i.e., further understanding of these parables by his disciples in the light of later developments. The departure of the nobleman to a distant land to receive a kingdom and return (64) would also fit in this category. Naturally, those who deny supernatural prediction will not be enthusiastic about such proposals.

Most of the parables also have little mysteries about them, not the least of which is whether and how far to press the details. For instance, what are we to make of the "discard" and "trampling" of the tasteless salt (3)? Is this merely pictorial or also to be interpreted? What of the "last cent" in the Defendant (5)? The expression "both destroyed" with reference to the wine and wineskins (13)? Is the leaven (20) good or evil? What are the "plants" in Plants Uprooted (26)? The "wedding garments" of the King's Wedding Feast (34)? The "oil" of the Ten Virgins (39)? The "bankers" of the Talents (40)? For that matter, what does it mean to be "salted with fire" (43)? Perhaps Raymond Brown is right in suggesting that the parables are designed to leave "enough doubt to challenge the hearers into active thought and inquiry,"<sup>24</sup> an activity that might eventually succeed in