

The image shows the back of a person in a dark, textured suit, likely The Riddler. The suit is covered in numerous small, glowing question marks. A large, prominent question mark is centered on the back, with a glowing green circle below it. The person's hands are clasped in front of them. The background is a dark, textured green with horizontal bands.

JESUS

THE RIDDLER

"RIDDLE ME THIS"

The power of ambiguity in the gospels

"Tom Thatcher, PhD"

Solid Rock A.M.E. Zion Church

Rev. Karim L. Currey

Jesus the Riddler

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41 Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: **42** “What do you think of the Messiah?^[c] Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David.” **43** He said to them, “How is it then that David by the Spirit^[d] calls him Lord, saying,

44 ‘The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at my right hand,
until I put your enemies under your feet”’?

45 If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?” **46** No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Matthew 22

John 16:25

25 “I have said these things to you in riddles. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in riddles, but will tell you plainly of the Father.

Mark 1:22 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

22 They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Mark 6:2 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

2 On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, “Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands!

Mark 8:21 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

21 Then he said to them, “Do you not yet understand?”

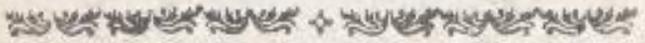
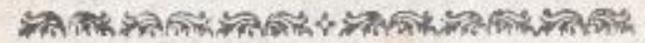
Proverbs 1:6 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

6 to understand a proverb and a figure,
the words of the wise and their riddles.

A NEW
RIDDLE BOOK;
OR, A
WHETSTONE
FOR
DULL WITS.



*Of Merry Books this is the Chief,
'Tis as a Purging PILL;
To carry off all heavy Grief,
And make you laugh your Fill.*



Printed at Lichfield, for the Benefit of the Travelling
Stationers.

1790

12. 6. 1790

Riddling Warm-up

- A New Riddle Book; or a Whetstone for Dull wits.
- Published in 1790

Riddling Warm-up

*I am within as white as snow,
without as green as herbs that grow;
I am higher than a house,
and yet am lesser than a mouse.*

*Old Mother Twitchett had but one eye,
And a long tail which she let fly;
And every time she went over a gap,
She left a bit of her tail in a trap.*

Riddling Warm-up

*Though of great age,
I'm kept in a cage,
Having a long tail and one ear,
My mouth it is round,
And when joys do abound,
O, then I sing wonderful clear.*

*I have a cock on yonder hill,
I keep him for a wonder,
And every time the cock do crow,
It lightens, hails and thunders.*

Riddling Warm-up

*Often I must war with the waves, fight with the wind –
strive with both at the same time – when I depart to seek
the earth beneath the waters; to me my home is an alien place.
I am strong in the struggle if I hold still –
if I slip, even slightly, they are stronger than I
and, wrenching me loose, soon force me to flee;
will carry away the thing I must keep safe.
I can avoid this so long as my tail endures,
and the stones against my strength have power
to keep firm. Guess what I'm called.*

- *The Exeter Book Riddles, no. 16, trans. Gillian Spraggs*



Reminder on Jesus' use of riddles in the Gospels

- Jesus used riddles to:
 - Establish his authority as a teacher
 - Communicate his message
- Understanding Jesus' use of riddles
 - Helps us understand the way his contemporaries thought about him
 - Helps us understand the way Jesus thought about the **Kingdom of God**
- Purpose of this Bible Study series will be:
 - To explore riddling in the Bible
 - Deepen our understanding of the literary form used in antiquity
 - Gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of Jesus' language

Identifying a Riddle in the Gospel

- “Whoever has ears, let them hear.” Mark’s identification (3)
- “What do you think?” – Matthew’s identification
- “Do you not yet understand?”
- Ambiguous statements, expecting a response

Examining the riddle of Mark 4:21-23

²¹ He said to them, “Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bushel basket, or under the bed, and not on the lampstand? ²² For there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is anything secret, except to come to light. ²³ Let anyone [whoever] with [has] ears to hear listen!”

After the Parable of the sower/seeds/soil, Jesus proceeds to ask a rhetorical question about putting a lamp under a bed.

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- Ambiguity (verbal puzzles)
 - Lamp under the bed
 - Hidden things revealed [disclosed]

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- Common sense says, “people light a lamp so that it should be put on a lampstand.”
- On the surface this is not profound, but common.
- “Don’t people put on their socks before they put on their shoes?”

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- Hidden things revealed – could this mean...
 - Hidden sins will be found out?
 - Good will reward us for the things that are done in secret [hidden]?
- The key is in verse 23 to indicate how this passage should be understood.

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- The real meaning of this text is:
 - Once you understand the Sower, the Lamp, the Growing Seed, and the Mustard seed, then here lies the understanding of Kingdom of God.

How did we get to Mark 4:21-23

Mark 4:11(NASB) And He was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God; but those who are outside get everything in parables... [and riddles]

- His followers are given this knowledge. *Outsiders, non-believers will get riddles and not the revelation.* He's drawing a clear distinction between those on the *inside* and those on the *outside*. To those who are "in," He's revealing and unveiling the mystery. All can get it, if your mind has been transformed/renewed to be in Christ.

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- God hasn't revealed to them these magnificent truths about Himself in order for them to hide them. He wants all to see.
- Just as natural light illumines the darkness and enables one to see visually, so the *light of Christ* shines in the hearts of believers and enables us to see the heavenly reality of God's kingdom. We being light bearers in this dark world, are supposed to shine for everyone to see. Are you dimming or shining your light? Is your lamp underneath?

How did we get to Mark 4:21-23

Other texts to further illustrate:

- Matthew 5:14 (NASB) "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.
- John 1:4-5 (NASB) In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.
- Revelation 21:23 (NASB) And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

How did we get to Mark 4:21-23

Other texts to further illustrate:

- John 12:46 (NASB) "I have come as light into the world, that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness.
- Jesus reveals that the reason why he is here is not to be hidden but to light up the world.
- Matthew 5:16 (NASB) "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

How did we get to Mark 4:21-23

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- Matthew 5:16 (NASB) "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.
- The Kingdom of God is non-physical, only seen by those who are in the inner circle.

How did we get to Mark 4:21-23

- You may say that is not fair!
- Why do some people get it and others do not?
- Do you have ears to hear?
 - To some the Bible is just a moral book or a historical book.. (outsiders)
 - The words are there, but there is no revelation.
 - To believers “God uses the foolishness of preaching to confound the wise.”
- The Kingdom of God or reign and rule of God, was to be received and accepted like that of a child (Mark 10:13-16).

What does Mark 4:21-23 say about the Kingdom?

- Daniel (Dan. 7:10-14) and Isaiah (Isaiah 9:6-7).
- ¹⁰ A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.¹¹ I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.

What does Mark 4:21-23 say about the Kingdom?

- Daniel (Dan. 7:10-14) and Isaiah (Isaiah 9:6-7).
- ¹² As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time. ¹³ I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. ¹⁴ And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

What does Mark 4:21-23 say about the Kingdom?

- Daniel (Dan. 7:10-14) and Isaiah (Isaiah 9:6-7).
- Isaiah 9:6-7 ⁶ For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.
- ⁷ Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

What does Mark 4:21-23 say about the Kingdom?

- Daniel (Dan. 7:10-14) and Isaiah (Isaiah 9:6-7).
- *“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:15 ESV).*
- Jesus was ushering in God’s Kingdom, and that he embodied the Kingdom of God. Jesus demonstrated his authority as the King over nature (Mar 4:35-41), over Satan and Demons (Mark 1:13-14; Mark 5), and over sickness and death (Mark 5). Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God through parables and riddles (Mark 4:1-34), and showed the way of the Kingdom through sacrifice, suffering and servant-hood (Mark 8:31, 34-35; Mark 10:42-45).

What does Mark 4:21-23 say about the Kingdom?

- The Kingdom of God is embodied in Jesus Christ.
- Philippians 3:10- That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;
- Realized eschatology – says that the Kingdom was ushered in during Christ's physical reign on earth
- Those of use who are disciples of Christ, continue to usher in His Kingdom. We would go down the same path as him through suffering, scorn, and martyrdom symbolized by carrying our cross. Those that rejected Jesus message of the Kingdom, Jesus would reject them before his Heavenly Father when He comes back to establish his physical eternal kingdom on the earth (Mark 8:33-38).

Next week: The day when they tried to 'riddle' Jesus

- Matthew 22:15-17
- 15 Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. 16 So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. 17 Tell us, then, **what you think**. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?”
 - The Pharisees are about to engage in a riddling contest with Jesus.