

The Parable of the Lamp Under a Basket

Here's a **Full Breakdown** of:

● **Mark 4:21–25** and ● **Luke 8:16–18** The Parable of the Lamp Under a Basket

◆ TEXT COMPARISON CHART

| Element | ● Mark 4:21–25 | ● Luke 8:16–18 |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Context | Following the Parable of the Sower (Mk 4:1–20) | Also follows the Parable of the Sower (Lk 8:4–15) |
| Opening Question | “Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed?” | “No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed” |
| Key Phrase | “For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest...” | “Nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest...” |
| Command | “Pay attention to what you hear...” | “Take care then how you hear...” |
| Measure Principle | “With the measure you use, it will be measured to you...” | Omitted |
| Added/Removed Principle | “...more will be added to you... the one who has...” | Similar phrasing: “...to the one who has, more will be given” |
| Purpose of Parable | Encourages careful hearing and responsiveness | Stresses visibility and responsibility with what is heard |



CONTEXT AND STRUCTURE

Narrative Flow

This parable directly follows the **Parable of the Sower** in both Gospels. After Jesus describes how the word is received differently depending on the condition of the heart, He adds this short parable to emphasize the **purpose of revelation** — not to hide truth, but to **illuminate** it.



Literary Structure

This is a **wisdom saying**, using common imagery from daily life (lamps, jars, baskets, measuring tools) to illustrate spiritual truths.



CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

| Element | Explanation |
|-------------------|---|
| Oil Lamps | Small clay lamps were lit with a wick and olive oil. They were essential for indoor light at night and placed on lampstands to illuminate rooms. |
| Baskets and Beds | A <i>basket</i> (Greek: modios) was a grain-measuring container; placing a lamp under one would snuff out the flame or render it useless. A bed (<i>klinē</i>) was a low platform — putting a lamp under it was both dangerous and foolish. |
| Measurement Idiom | “With the measure you use...” was a proverbial Jewish saying about fairness, reciprocity, and spiritual receptivity (see also Mt 7:2). |

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GREEK WORD STUDY

| Greek Word | Translation | Meaning |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| λύχνος (lychnos) | Lamp | A small portable oil lamp |
| μόδιος (modios) | Basket / measuring bowl | A dry measure (about 9 liters) |
| ἀποκαλυφθῆ (apokalypthē) | "be revealed" | Root of the word "apocalypse," meaning to unveil |
| μετρέω (metreō) | "measure" | Used both literally and figuratively for judgment, fairness, and expectation |
| προσέχετε (prosechete) | "Pay attention" or "Beware" | A strong imperative urging spiritual attentiveness |



THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

| Theme | Explanation |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Revelation is meant to be seen | Jesus' teachings are not esoteric secrets but are meant to illuminate hearts — like a lamp that gives light. |
| Disciples are bearers of light | Just as lamps are placed high for maximum effect, disciples should publicly live out and share the message they've received. |
| Responsibility in receiving truth | Those who receive truth and respond will receive more. Those who reject or ignore it will lose what little understanding they have. |
| Accountability of hearing | The way one hears and responds to Jesus determines their spiritual fruitfulness (connects to the Sower parable). |



CONNECTION TO OTHER PASSAGES

| Passage | Connection |
|-------------------|--|
| Matthew 5:14–16 | Also uses lamp imagery: "You are the light of the world... Let your light shine." |
| Luke 11:33–36 | Jesus again speaks of lamps and eyes being the lamp of the body. |
| John 3:19–21 | Emphasizes that light has come into the world, but some love darkness rather than light. |
| Isaiah 42:6, 49:6 | Prophecies that the Servant of the LORD would be a light to the nations — fulfilled in Jesus and extended to His disciples. |

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SYMBOLIC INTERPRETATION

| Symbol | Represents |
|------------|--|
| Lamp | The revelation of God , especially the word of Christ and the truth about the kingdom |
| Basket/Bed | Obstacles that suppress or obscure the light (fear, secrecy, shame, disobedience) |
| Lampstand | A visible, elevated position — a life lived openly, without hypocrisy |
| Measuring | The standard of reception we use to accept or reject truth — with consequences for growth or loss |



REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

- 💡 **Am I hiding the light I've received?** Are fear, pride, or complacency keeping me from sharing what I know about Christ?
- 🎧 **How am I listening?** Am I attentive, humble, and responsive to God's Word?
- 📈 **What measure am I using?** Am I giving generously — of time, faith, and obedience — so that I may receive more insight and blessing?
- 🔄 **Do I expect reciprocity from God?** Jesus suggests that spiritual openness **multiplies**, but spiritual apathy **diminishes**.



SUMMARY

The Parable of the Lamp Under a Basket reinforces the message of the Sower: **revelation must lead to response**. Just as good soil receives seed and bears fruit, those who receive the word must **shine** — not hide — and **hear with attention**, lest even what they think they have be lost.

- 🟢 “With the measure you use it will be measured to you — and even more will be added to you.”
- 🔴 “Take care, then, how you hear.”