

Mark 4:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?

Analysis

Jesus asks rhetorical question: 'Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?' The 'candle' (λύχνος, lychnosλαμπάς) represents revealed truth, particularly gospel light. The absurdity of lighting lamp only to hide it under bushel (grain measure) or bed illustrates that revelation demands proclamation. Truth isn't given to be concealed but displayed. This applies to disciples: having received kingdom mysteries, they must illuminate others. The rhetorical question expects negative answer—of course lamps aren't hidden! Similarly, disciples must shine gospel light, not hide it. Reformed theology emphasizes believer's witness as salt and light in dark world.

Historical Context

Ancient oil lamps provided modest illumination in small, windowless Palestinian homes. Placing lit lamp under bushel or bed would be dangerous (fire hazard) and foolish (defeating purpose). Lamps sat on stands illuminating whole room. Jesus' audience immediately grasped the metaphor. Early Christians understood themselves as light-bearers in pagan darkness. Church history records faithful witness despite persecution—gospel light couldn't be extinguished. Reformers emphasized priesthood of all believers—every Christian called to shine gospel truth.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How do you hide your spiritual light rather than letting it shine boldly for Christ?
2. What does this passage teach about the purpose of receiving biblical revelation?
3. How can you practically 'set your lamp on a candlestick' in your spheres of influence?

Interlinear Text

Καὶ	ἔλεγεν	αὐτοῖς	Μήτι	ὁ	λύχνος	ἔρχεται	ἵνα	ὑπὸ	
And	he said	unto them	Is	G3588	a candle	brought	to	under	
G2532	G3004	G846	G3385		G3088	G2064	G2443	G5259	
τὸν	μόδιον	τεθῆ	ἢ	ὑπὸ	τὴν	κλίνην	οὐχ	ἵνα	ἐπὶ
G3588	a bushel	be put	or	under	G3588	a bed	and not	to	on
	G3426	G5087	G2228	G5259		G2825	G3756	G2443	G1909
τὴν	λυχνίαν	ἐπιτεθῆ							
G3588	a candlestick	be set							
	G3087	G2007							

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 5:15 (Parallel theme): Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

Luke 11:33 (Parallel theme): No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.

Luke 8:16 (Parallel theme): No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.

1 Corinthians 12:7 (Parallel theme): But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

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