

Parables

'Listen, O My people, to My teaching; incline your ears to the words of My mouth. I will open My mouth in a parable; I will utter sayings of old' (Psalm 78:1 & 2).

'Ah, Lord God! They are saying of Me; does He not speak in parables?' (Ezekiel 20:49).

'I have spoken to the prophets and I have multiplied visions, and by the ministry of the prophets, I have used parables' (Hosea 12:10).

'Jesus spoke all these things in parables; and without a parable, He did not speak to them so that the scripture might be fulfilled that was spoken by the prophet, saying, "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things that have been hidden since the foundation of the world" (Matthew 13:34 & 35).

If we read Psalm 78:1 & 2 again, including the fullness of the meaning which we will place in brackets, it reads; 'Listen, O My people (pay attention My believers), to My teaching (to the words of Jesus); incline your ears (listen intently) to the words of My mouth (to what Jesus is telling us). I will open My mouth in a parable (I will speak that which is an instruction by numerous examples); I will utter sayings of old (things that have been hidden since the foundation of the world that hide important truth).

The nature and purpose of parables are to provide truth that can be seen in the natural world, and as humans we are tied to our five senses. Parables are vocal illustrations that provide imaginary pictures. For most people, the only things that are real to them are what we can see, hear, touch, smell and taste. We learn by using our five physical senses, but our spiritual lives are far more important than our physical worldly life. 'So we fix our eyes, not on what is seen but on what is unseen; for what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal' (2 Corinthians 4:18). That is a paradox for the natural mind. What we learn through our senses is temporary; not permanent; it is transient. But what is unseen is eternal. It is that which is truly real. 'We walk by faith, not by sight' (2 Corinthians 5:7).

We do not apprehend the spiritual realm by our eyesight; we apprehend the eternal by faith. This raises an important question: How can we fix our eyes on what we cannot see? Obviously there is a deliberate paradox so how do we do that? The answer is: by faith. One way that the Bible helps us to do this is through parables, and in the teachings of Jesus, He used many parables. Jesus loved to use parables because He realised the problem mankind has in being able to understand the spiritual realm, and by speaking in parables, it was one way He helped people understand the spiritual world, which is just as real as our physical world, except we cannot see it unless God opens our spiritual eyes.

In a parable, the physical world becomes a kind of mirror reflecting the spiritual world. Jesus always spoke about things that were very familiar to His hearers. In a parable, there is a definite corresponding theme. This is the way Jesus led His hearers from the known and familiar, to the unknown and the unfamiliar. Not everyone was impressed with Jesus' parables though. 'When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was talking about them, and although they were trying to arrest Him they feared the throngs because they regarded Him as a prophet' (Matthew 21:45 & 46).

We can see where Jesus used parables in the same way we use analogies, but He also used them to mask the whole truth from unbelievers, and only those who accepted Him could understand the gist of what He was teaching them. In these examples, Jesus fulfilled

ancient prophecies in two areas; He taught the crowds by using the natural world examples to teach spiritual truths, and He used the parables to keep the mysteries of God hidden from the non-believers.

Jesus taught a crowd about the parable of a sower, then later the disciples asked Jesus why He spoke in parables, to which Jesus answered, "To you (the disciples) it has been given to know the secrets and the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them (the non-believers) it has not been given. For whoever has spiritual knowledge, to him will more be given and he will be furnished richly so that he will have abundance; but from him who has not the spiritual knowledge, even what he has will be taken away. This is the reason that I speak to them in parables; because having the power of sight, they do not see; and having the power of hearing, they do not hear, nor do they understand. In them (the non-believers) indeed is the process of fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah which says: 'You shall indeed hear but never understand and you shall indeed look but never see'" (Matthew 13:1 to 53 and Isaiah 6:9). After this, Jesus went on to explain the parable of the sower so the disciples could understand.

In order to fully understand all the parables written in the Bible, we need an open heart and spiritual sight which comes with being baptised in the Holy Spirit.

Amen and God bless you.

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