

Jesus Spoke In Parables

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

'Ah, Lord God! They are saying of Me, He speaks 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 to the multitudes in parables and without a parable, He did not speak to them so the scripture might be fulfilled that was spoken by the prophet saying, "I will open My mouth in parables. I will utter things 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 (pay attention) to My teaching (to the words of Jesus) My people (believers). 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 giving examples). I will utter ancient sayings (things that have been hidden since the foundation of the world that reveal important truth).

The nature and purpose of parables are to reveal 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 real to them are what can be seen, heard, touched, smelled and tasted. We learn by using our five physical senses, but our spiritual lives are far more important than our physical worldly life. 'We do not focus 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). 'We walk by faith, not by sight' (2 Corinthians 5:7). What we learn through our senses is temporary not permanent. It is transient, but what is unseen is spiritual and eternal and is truly real.

We do not apprehend the spiritual realm by our eyesight, we apprehend the eternal by faith. This raises an important question: How can we focus on what we cannot see? Obviously there is a deliberate paradox for our natural mind so how do we do that? The answer is: by faith. One way the Bible helps us to do this is through parables, and as Jesus taught people 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 more real than 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 realised He was talking about them, and although they were trying to arrest Him they feared the multitudes because they regarded Him a prophet' (Matthew 21:45 & 46).

First century Jewish people were well used to parables. Parables were used to illustrate life around them. Jesus used thirty-one different parables. 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 of people 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 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 I speak to them in parables, because having (natural) sight, they do not see (spiritually), and having (natural) hearing, they do not hear (spiritually), nor do they understand (spiritual matters). In them (the non-believers) is the process of fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah which says, "You will hear but never understand and you will look but never see"' (Matthew 13:3 to 53 & Isaiah 6:9). Jesus explained the parables so the disciples could understand what He was saying to them.

Jesus spoke to His Jewish followers, who all lived within the Jewish culture and spoke in the Hebrew language. Each of Jesus' parables attests to His Jewishness. It is critical modern Bible believers understand His Jewish identity and the context in which He taught. During His earthly ministry, Jesus did not once leave Israel or its immediate surrounds. The Romans may have been the government of the day but that did not in

any way diminish the Jewish culture or language in which Jesus lived and taught. Most of what Jesus said was in Hebrew. Because the Bible has been translated and transliterated from Hebrew to Greek then into modern languages, some of what was taught has been confused. The best way to understand the Bible is to read the Hebrew writings or find a translation from Hebrew into whatever modern language one speaks. An example of the confusion is the statement of the jot and tittle. 'I say to you, till heaven and earth are destroyed, not one jot or one tittle will in no way pass from the law, till all is fulfilled' (Matthew 5:18)

The 'jot' and 'tittle' are definitely not punctuation marks in the English language. Jesus spoke Hebrew and was referring to two letters in the Hebrew alphabet. A 'jot' in the Hebrew language is translated as a 'yod' and is written like an upside down, capital 'L' and is the smallest of all the Hebrew letters. The 'tittle' is a tiny curve at the top of a letter and is little more than a tiny stroke of a pen. The tittle was called the 'thorn' of the yod. What Jesus was saying was, "Not the tiniest letter or the notch on a letter, will disappear from the law until everything has been completed according to the will and purposes of God."

To try to explain in another way what Jesus was saying, we can read these verses, 'He will not multiply horses to himself ... and he will not multiply wives to himself ... neither will he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold' (Deuteronomy 17:16 & 17). King Solomon ignored these commandments from God and did what he was told not to do. He took for himself many horses, wives and much wealth, effectively doing away with the word 'not', as though God was commanding the opposite of what He said. As much as many people might like to ignore God's commands in the way Solomon did, we can never do away with one 'jot' of them. We must live our lives according to God's will and not according to our own will. We cannot do away with the word 'not' and we cannot do away with one jot or tittle of the law (God's commandments to mankind), until all things are accomplished. Jesus was saying we all have to obey God's rules until the end of this age when He returns to earth, and our righteousness has to be more than the scribes and Pharisees, or in our day, our righteousness has to be more than pious church-going ministers who refuse to be born-again.

Parables transcend the passage of time. The reinterpretation of the parables spoken by Jesus from Hebrew into other languages often loses the intensity of the deeper meanings. His verbal illustrations within a different language changes the context and distorts the authenticity. As a result, misunderstandings of some scriptures have undermined His teachings. In order to fully understand all the parables written in the Bible, we need an open heart and Spiritual insight that only comes with being baptised in the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit it is impossible to fully understand the spiritual truths hidden within the Bible. God is Spirit (John 4:24). The Bible is His Word written for us and is a Spiritual Book for Spirit-filled people (2 Timothy 3:16 & 17). Unsaved spiritually blinded people can read the Bible and they may understand it as a history book, but it is very clear they cannot understand it as the vibrant, living entity it is. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit we have wisdom, spiritual understanding, spiritual knowledge and a knowledge of what God requires us to do so we can serve Him best. God said, "I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, understanding, knowledge and in all manner of workmanship" (Exodus 31:3).

Amen and God bless you.

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