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"THE PARABLES OF JESUS"

Introduction To The Parables (Mt 13:1-3,10-17)

INTRODUCTION

1. During His earthly ministry, as Jesus went about preaching and

teaching, He frequently used parables - cf. **Mt 13:1-3,**

13:34-35

a. It has been estimated that at least one-third of Jesus' recorded

teaching is found in the parables (Wiersbe, "Windows On The

Parables", p. 15)

b. Certainly many of the most often remembered sayings of Jesus are

His parables

2. It is therefore proper for disciples today to ask such questions as:

a. What is a "parable"?

b. Why did Jesus teach in parables?

c. What are they about?

d. How should we interpret them?

3. With this lesson, we begin a study on "**The Parables Of Jesus**"...

a. This first lesson will serve as an introduction to the parables

in general

b. Succeeding lessons will examine the parables in particular

[Let's begin this "**Introduction To The Parables**" by noticing...]

I. THE DEFINITION OF "PARABLE"

A. THE WORD "PARABLE"...

1. Is a transliteration of the Greek "**parabole**" (para-bow-LAY)

2. Means "to place beside, to cast alongside"

3. As defined by Vine's Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words, it

"signifies a placing of one thing beside another
with a view
to comparison"
4. Wiersbe's description of a parable...
a. As "a story that places one thing beside another
for the
purpose of teaching"
b. "It puts the known next to the unknown so that we
may
learn"
5. A parable can usually be identified by the use of
the word
"like" - cf. Mt 13:31,33

B. AS USED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, A PARABLE...

1. Is usually a story or narrative drawn from nature or
human
circumstances
2. From which spiritual lessons can be made by
comparison
-- A common definition of a parable is "an earthly
story with a
heavenly meaning"

[The next question often raised is "Why did Jesus teach in
parables?"

In other words, why did he not simply speak straightforward
when He was
teaching? To understand why, consider...]

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE PARABLES OF JESUS

A. THE PRIMARY PURPOSE WAS TO "CONCEAL"...

1. Jesus began speaking in parables because of the
hardness of
many people's hearts - cf. Mt 13:10-17
a. The disciples' attitude was such that they were
blessed to
learn "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" -
Mt 13:
10-12,16-17
b. But because of the hard hearts of many in the
multitude,
Jesus began speaking to them in parables - Mt
13:13-15;
cf. Mk 4:10-12
c. He would then explain the parables in private to
His
disciples - Mk 4:33-34
2. By resorting to parables, Jesus effectively
separated the
truth-seekers from the curiosity-seekers!
a. Those seeking the truth would say "Explain to us
the
parable..." - Mt 13:36
b. Whereas the simply curious could easily be sent
away

3. Indeed, Jesus used parables to carry out Divine judgement...
- cf. Mt 13:12
 - a. "For whoever has (a good heart, listening ears), to him more will be given, and he will have abundance (by virtue of the parable being explained)"
 - b. "But whoever does not have (a good heart, listening ears), even what he has will be taken away from him (by virtue of being sent away with the multitude)"

B. BUT ANOTHER PURPOSE WAS TO "REVEAL"...

1. Even though the primary purpose in telling parables was to conceal the "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" from the multitude!
 - a. For once the disciples understood the basic meaning of the parables...
 - b. ...the comparison of the "known" (earthly) truths with the "unknown" (heavenly) truths would shed further light on the unknown
2. Therefore, with the help of the Lord's explanation of His parables we can learn more about "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" - cf. Mt 13:34-35

[This leads us to the next question, "What are the parables about?"
Mt 13:11 certainly gives us a clue...]

III. THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE PARABLES OF JESUS

A. THE GENERAL THEME IS "THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN"...

1. As suggested by Mt 13:11
2. As illustrated with several parables, which all start with "The kingdom of heaven is like..." - Mt 13:24,31,33,44,45,47
3. Indeed, "the kingdom of heaven" was the theme of...
 - a. Jesus' itinerant ministry - Mt 4:17,23
 - b. His sermon on the mount - Mt 5:3,10,19-20; 6:10,33; 7:21

B. THREE "SUB-THEMES" ARE STRESSED IN THE PARABLES...

1. The character of the KINGDOM - for example...
 - a. The Parable of the Mustard Seed
 - b. The Parable of the Leaven
 - c. The Parable of the Hidden Treasure
 - d. The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price

2. **The character of the KING** - for example...
 - a. The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard
 - b. The Parable of the Lost Son
3. **The character of the KING'S SUBJECTS** - for example...
 - a. The Parable of the Good Samaritan
 - b. The Parable of the Persistent Widow

[Of course, the sub-themes often overlap in some parables, but they clearly demonstrate that the overall theme of the parables was **"the kingdom of heaven."**

Finally, a few thoughts in answer to the question, **"How do we interpret the parables?"**]

IV. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PARABLES OF JESUS

A. THERE ARE TWO EXTREMES TO AVOID...

1. Seeking to find some spiritual truth in every little detail
2. Saying that there is only ONE spiritual truth in each parable

B. SOME GUIDELINES FOR PROPER INTERPRETATION...

1. Learn from the explanations Jesus gave in those parables He explained
 - a. Understanding the parable of the sower helps us to understand other parables - **Mk 4:13**
 - b. Jesus therefore went on to explain that parable...
 2. Look for the CENTRAL truth of the parable, making sure that any other truths gleaned from the parable are in harmony with it
 3. Consider carefully the CONTEXT of Jesus words...
 - a. Looking for an introduction or an application which may give insight
 - b. As supplied by either the Lord Himself, or His inspired writers
 4. Don't use the parables to formulate new doctrine
 - a. Remember, parables were originally told to conceal, so they are not always that clear in their meaning
 - b. Therefore don't try to build a case for a doctrine based solely on a parable

CONCLUSION

1. Following these sensible guidelines to interpreting the Parables of

Jesus, we can look forward to the joy of understanding more fully

"the mysteries" or revealed truths of the kingdom of heaven

2. As we get into the parables themselves, I hope that we will

appreciate how blessed we are to live in an age when people who have

a desire to learn about the kingdom can do so:

"But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they

hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous

men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear

what you hear, and did not hear it." - Mt 13:16-17

3. What we are about to study in these parables concern things which

Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and many

others looked forward to, but did not fully understand in their

lifetime!

4. Yet these **"mysteries of the kingdom of heaven"** (Mt 13:11), containing **"things kept secret from the foundation of the world"**

(Mt 13:35), are now being made known through the preaching of the gospel of Christ:

"Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and

the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the

mystery kept secret since the world began"

"but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures

has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment

of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith;"

Ro 16:25-26

Dear friend, have you yet rendered obedience to the faith by responding

to the call of the gospel of Christ? - cf. Mk 16:15-16

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