

Chapter Nine: Revealed vs Hidden 1- Parables

Lesson Eight

Introduction: As it has been stated, when seeking the meaning of a passage three questions should be asked, The three questions are...

- A. Is this a New Covenant or Old Covenant passage?
- B. Is this passage Doctrinal in nature or is it historical revelation?
- C. Are these symbols (illustrations) or parables?

In this lesson we will look at the important difference between symbols (illustrations) and parables. The reason this is important is that, while most students and speakers make no differentiation between the two God most certainly does and a very important one at that.

I. Symbols, Illustrations and Proverbs

A. All are characterized as doctrinal in nature

1. All are used as teaching
2. All can be known by regenerated believers
 - a. Symbol - HEB 9:8 & 9 The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed, while the outer tabernacle is still standing, which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience,
 - b. Illustration - LUK 20:24 & 25 "Show Me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" And they said, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."
 - c. Proverb - PRO 1:1- 6 The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, To discern the sayings of understanding, To receive instruction in wise behavior, Righteousness, justice and equity; To give prudence to the naive, To the youth knowledge and discretion, A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel, understand a proverb and a figure, The words of the wise and their riddles.

B. Symbols and illustrations

1. The Word of God contains many symbols or illustrations in the doctrinal teachings of the scripture. These occur in both the Old and New Covenants and throughout the books of the New Testament. Some illustrations are...
 - a. Psalm 23:1 "The Lord is my shepherd"
 - b. Matthew 5:16 "Let your light shine"
 - c. II Corinthians 2:15 "For we are a fragrance of Christ"
 - d. James 1:23 "he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;"
 - e. I Peter 1:7 "being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire"
 - f. I John 1:7 "but if we walk in the light"
2. Symbols and illustrations are used to create word pictures to make a point.
 - a. They bring to light and help to clarify doctrine. They are used frequently throughout scripture.
 - b. They are divinely inspired and chosen by God. They are not one of many illustrations that might have been chosen, they are the illustration which was chosen.
 - c. We approach them like we would any doctrinal passage
 - 1.) Many times they explained right in the passage
 - 2.) Otherwise their meaning is clear

- 3.) They are not secret, they are not mystical, they do not contain divine meanings which are revealed only to a few. They are the clear, revealed truth of God which belong to man and all his generations.
- 4.) Deuteronomy 29:29 "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.

C. Proverbs

1. Proverbs are a form of Doctrinal teaching. They use truths and illustrations from everyday life to bring home God's Word.
2. As with all forms of teachings, proverbs exist inside and outside of the Word of God. Prophecy exists inside and outside the Word of God, Poetry exist inside and outside the Word of God, Illustrations exist inside and outside of the Word of God, rhetorical questions exist inside and outside the Word of God, and the list goes on.
3. The fact that Proverbs which exist outside the Word of God are truisms and not absolute, in no way affects the absolute doctrinal authority of Biblical proverbs in the same way that poetry, which exists outside the Word of God and is in most cases simply artistic expressions of deeply held emotions and not absolute, in no way affects the absolute doctrinal authority of the Psalms.
4. The book of Proverbs makes it very clear that these are simply not truisms of life but rather the Wisdom of God
 - a. PRO 1:3 To receive instruction in wise behavior, Righteousness, justice and equity;
 - b. PRO 1:7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

D. Parables

1. Parables on the other hand are different in that their meaning can only be known if they are divinely revealed. In this respect they share a commonality with prophecy.
 - a. In fact, parables and prophecy are sometimes linked in the Word of God.
 - 1.) *Ezekiel 20:49 Then I said, "Ah Lord God! They are saying of me, 'Is he not just speaking parables?'"*
 - 2.) *Hosea 12:10 "I have also spoken to the prophets, And I gave numerous visions; And through the prophets I gave parables."*
 - 3.) Both prophecy and parable seem, on the surface to be symbolic or illustrative. If one just studies hard enough, just turns the passage around and looks at it at enough angles, just meditates long enough, then the meaning will come to him.
 - b. Unfortunately, nothing could be further from the truth. The Bible clearly states...
 - 1.) Prophecy - II Peter 1:21 "for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."
 - 2.) Parable - Matthew 13:13 "Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand."
2. Parables are clearly identified as such by God the Holy Spirit.
 - a. Sometimes by Jesus directly in the teaching...

Matthew 13:18 "Hear then the parable of the sower.

Matthew 21:33 ¶ "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey.

Matthew 24:32 ¶ "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near;

- c. And sometimes by their identification by God the Holy Spirit

Matthew 22:1 And Jesus answered and spoke to them again in parables, saying,

Mark 3:23 And He called them to Himself and began speaking to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan?"

Mark 12:1 And He began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard, and put a wall around it, and dug a vat under the wine press, and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey.

- d. When so identified, Parables belong in that class of "higher things" and "secret things".
- e. They belong to God and the only thing we know about parables is that which God has chosen to reveal to us.

3. Jesus' teachings on His parables

a. Secret

1.) The mysterious nature of parables has long been established in the Word of God

- a.) Psalm 78:2 I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old,
- b.) Ezekiel 17:2 "Son of man, propound a riddle, and speak a parable to the house of Israel,
- c.) Ezekiel 24:3 "And speak a parable to the rebellious house, and say to them, "Thus says the Lord God," Put on the pot, put it on, and also pour water in it;

2.) This practice continued in the ministry of God the Son, Jesus. The use of parables was common in Jesus' ministry

Matthew 13:34 All these things Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable,

Matthew 13:3 And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow;

Matthew 13:35 so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden since the foundation of the world."

Mark 4:2 And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching,

Mark 4:33 And with many such parables He was speaking the word to them as they were able to hear it;

Matthew 13:34 All these things Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable,

Mark 4:34 and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.

Luke 8:4 And when a great multitude were coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, He spoke by way of a parable:

- b. Sign of judgment – conventional wisdom tells us that Jesus spoke in parables to make difficult truth simple through the use of illustrations. Nothing could be further from the truth. Parables were in fact used as a form of judgement on the listeners and through the eternal Word of God, all mankind. Because of our fallen finite minds, we cannot comprehend what is clear to God.
 - 1.) Jesus clearly taught His disciples that the reason parables were explained to them, while kept from the masses, was to fulfill prophetic judgment upon them.

Matthew 13:10 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"

Matthew 13:11 And He answered and said to them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.

Matthew 13:12 "For whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.

Matthew 13:13 "Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Matthew 13:14 "And in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; And you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive;

Matthew 13:15 For the heart of this people has become dull, And with their ears they scarcely hear, And they have closed their eyes Lest they should see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart and return, And I should heal them.'

Matthew 13:16 "But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.

Matthew 13:17 "For truly 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.

Mark 4:11 And He was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God; but those who are outside get everything in parables,

2.) Then Jesus proceeds to explain the parable of the sower to them, while the masses are left in the dark.

Matthew 13:18 "Hear then the parable of the sower.

3.) This principle of the nature of parables as prophetic judgment is repeated numerous times in Jesus' teachings

Luke 8:10 And He said, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, in order that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.

- c. As New Covenant disciples, some parables are revealed to us by The Word of God. Jesus evidently explained many if not all of His parables to His disciples.

Mark 4:10 And as soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables.

Matthew 13:36 Then He left the multitudes, and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field."

Matthew 15:15 And Peter answered and said to Him, "Explain the parable to us."

Mark 7:17 And when leaving the multitude, He had entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable.

Luke 8:9 And His disciples began questioning Him as to what this parable might be.

- d. However, no all of these explanations are given to us by God. Some parables are given to us without explanation. In this case, as in the case of prophecy without explanation, we are left with the judgement of God upon our finite mind. These truths become higher truths and we are left to that time when we see clearly, with our perfect minds, for their full understanding.
- e. In this class of parable, some are partially revealed. We may be given the topic of a parable without it's explanation included. These parables are not fully revealed unless specifically done so by the Word of God and when teaching them we should recognize this face.

Matthew 13:24 He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.

Matthew 13:31 He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field;

Matthew 13:33 He spoke another parable to them, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three pecks of meal, until it was all leavened."

Mark 4:30 And He said, "How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it?"

f. Other parables are keyed by the Holy Spirit, rather than by Jesus' teachings. Again, if only the topic of the parable is given but not the full explanation, our teaching on the parable should recognize this fact.

Luke 18:1 Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart,

Luke 14:7 And He began speaking a parable to the invited guests when He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table; saying to them,

Luke 18:9 And He also told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt:

Luke 19:11 And while they were listening to these things, He went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately.

g. The Holy Spirit reveals an interesting fact about parables. The gist of a parable can be caught without it being fully understood. We may recognize the overall direction of a parable, but are not free to go into great detail of explanation, if the Word of God does not take us there.

Matthew 21:45 And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them.

Mark 12:12 And they were seeking to seize Him; and yet they feared the multitude; for they understood that He spoke the parable against them. And so they left Him, and went away.

Luke 20:19 And the scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him that very hour, and they feared the people; for they understood that He spoke this parable against them.

- h. Parables are a unique form of judgment by God. Although prophetic mysteries continued after Jesus Parables did not, they ceased with Jesus earthly ministry. As a result, as teachers, we should recognize the unique place parables have in the revelation of God the Holy Spirit. That they are a form of judgment upon mankind. That the reason they cannot be understood is that they were given for this very purpose, to hi-lite the fallen sinful nature of man's mind by his inability to comprehend parables.

- 1.) While this curse of incomprehensibility lies upon all unregenerate men as it pertains to the Word of God.

I Corinthians 2:14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

II Corinthians 4:4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

- 2.) This curse is uniquely applied to parables, as it extends beyond natural man, to all men. Parables are not understood unless explained by God.

C. As a result there are certain “rules of interpretation” which should be followed in teaching a parable.

1. Where the Word of God speaks, we are free to speak
 - a. If the passage is an illustration, we are free to exposit the illustration as we would any passage of scripture.
 - b. If however the passage is clearly identified as a parable, then we are limited in the scope of our interpretation to the revelation of God the Holy Spirit.
2. Where the Word of God speaks only partially, we should as well speak only partially.
3. Where the Word of God is silent, we must be silent.
4. Where the topic of a parable is given, but not the explanation, it is fine to give devotional thoughts concerning this topic. Like the Pharisees, you may recognize the gist of a parable and it’s broad implications. This should be prefaced with the fact that these are indeed your devotional thoughts and not the explanation of God the Holy Spirit.
5. Where the parable is not explained at all, the teaching on the parable should be limited to the teaching of the parables use as a form of judgment.

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD*JEREMIAH 15:16***THEME: Parable vs. Symbol****PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Deuteronomy 29:29****How does this passage relate to the theme?****When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?
Explain why:****How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?****PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Isaiah 55:8 & 9****How does this passage relate to the theme?****When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?
Explain why:****How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?****PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: II Peter 1:20 & 21****How does this passage relate to the theme?****When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?
Explain why:****How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?**

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD*JEREMIAH 15:16***THEME: Parable vs. Symbol****PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Matthew 13:10 - 15****How does this passage relate to the theme?****When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?
Explain why:****How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?****PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Matthew 13:16 & 17****How does this passage relate to the theme?****When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?
Explain why:****How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?****PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Mark 4:11****How does this passage relate to the theme?****When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?
Explain why:****How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?**



Parables

Matthew 13:53 ¶ And it came about that when Jesus had finished these parables, He departed from there.

Mark 4:13 And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? And how will you understand all the parables?"

Mark 13:28 ¶ "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near.

Luke 5:36 And He was also telling them a parable: "No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old.

Luke 6:39 ¶ And He also spoke a parable to them: "A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit?"

Luke 8:11 "Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God.

Luke 12:16 And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a certain rich man was very productive.

Luke 12:41 ¶ And Peter said, "Lord, are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone else as well?"

Luke 13:6 ¶ And He began telling this parable: "A certain man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it, and did not find any.

Luke 15:3 ¶ And He told them this parable, saying,

Luke 20:9 ¶ And He began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey for a long time.

Luke 21:29 ¶ And He told them a parable: "Behold the fig tree and all the trees;