

Lesson Ten

PARABLES, TYPES AND FIGURES OF SPEECH

In order to understand and interpret the Bible correctly, the student of the Bible must be familiar with the various expressions and figures of speech in the Bible. We shall make no attempt to give an exhaustive study of these, but rather just to mention some of the more common ones.

A. **PARABLE:**

A parable teaches a spiritual truth by analogy from a natural situation. The word “parable” implies a “placing along side of” for purposes of comparison. The essential element of a parable is the spiritual lesson to be taught.

A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. It may or may not be a true story. A parable is an extended simile.

Jesus gave us the reason why He taught in parables: *“And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them” (Mark 4:33-34).*

There were two reasons why parables were used: 1) To make truth known to the sincere disciple of our Lord who really does desire to understand; and 2) To hide the truth from the idly curious, the one who really does not desire to understand.

Because of this, we need spiritual wisdom and divine revelation in the interpretation of a parable. It is important to relate the story to the background of social customs of that time. It is necessary to understand how much of the parable was interpreted by the speaker or by the context.

We should not try to establish any doctrine on a parable. However, the parable can throw light on the doctrine. Remember, it was meant to be an illustration of a truth. Also we must be careful

that we do not read into the parable more than what was meant. We should look for the parable to illustrate one main spiritual truth.

B. ALLEGORY:

An allegory is sometimes called a prolonged metaphor. It is often an involved narration of an artificial event or story in which all the details are determined by the realities they point to and the message they are meant to convey. Thus in an allegory there need be no attempt to be true to life, whereas a parable always presents a real familiar life situation.

One of the most famous examples of an allegory is Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." A well known allegory in the Bible is found in the story of the two sons of Abraham representing the two covenants (Galatians 4:22-31).

C. TYPE:

A type is a divinely appointed illustration of some Spiritual truth. A type is a shadow cast on the pages of Old Testament history by a truth whose full embodiment or antitype is found in New Testament revelation.

Our English word "type" is derived from the Greek "tupos" which occurs sixteen times in the New Testament. The Greek word is very striking and has many shades of meaning. It is translated by such words as, "print," "figure," "pattern," etc.

Types may be classified as follows:

- A person—Adam, Isaac, Jonah, etc.
- An event—Deliverance from Egyptian bondage, The wilderness journey, The conquest of Canaan, etc.
- A thing—Veil of the tabernacle, Brazen serpent, etc.
- Rituals—The offerings, The Passover, etc.

Types have these characteristics:

- They are thoroughly rooted in history.
- They are prophetic in nature.
- They are designed as a part of redemptive history.
- They are Christ centered.
- They have spiritual meaning in both dispensations.

A true type must be:

- A true picture of the person or thing in prefigures.
- Of divine appointment.
- A picture which prefigures something future.

A study of types is not easy. It calls for much time, work and prayer. Nevertheless a study of typology is very important for a true understanding of God's Word.

A type must never be used to teach a doctrine, but only to illustrate a doctrine that is clearly taught elsewhere.

D. **ANTITYPE:**

Certain Old Testament items and practices are called types of New Testament truths. The New Testament realities are the antitypes. Thus we can see the relation between type and antitype of the Tabernacle, its priests and its offerings.

E. **SHADOW:**

You can never have a shadow without a body to cast the Shadow. In the Old Testament you have the shadow, but in the New Testament you meet the body which cast the shadow.

F. **SIMILE:**

A Simile is where one thing is likened to another by direct statement. Generally the words "like" or "as" are used.

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water..." (Psalm 1:3).

"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country" (Proverbs 25:25).

"...I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (I Corinthians 13:1).

G. **METAPHOR:**

A metaphor is where one thing is likened to another by implication. Words are taken from their literal meaning and given a new and striking use. *"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20).*
"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1).

Here is a comparison of these two figures of speech: 1) Metaphor—Isaiah 40:6 “flesh is grass,” Psalm 100:3 “sheep of his pasture” and 2) Simile—I Peter 1:24 “flesh is as grass,” Isaiah 53:6 “We like sheep.”

H. **PERSONIFICATION:**

A personification is a figure of speech whereby an inanimate object, an object of nature, an abstract idea are given attributes of life. E.g. Numbers 16:32 “earth opened her mouth.”

I. **APOSTROPHE:**

This word comes from the Greek word meaning, “to turn.” This figure of speech is a turning from the readers or hearers, and addressing that which is absent as present, or addressing the inanimate as living. E.g. *I Corinthians 15:15* “*O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*”

J. **HYPERBOLE:**

This is a rhetorical figure to magnify an object beyond reality. It is an overstatement used for the purpose of deep emphasis with no thought of deception. E.g. John 21:25 “... *I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.*”

SELF HELP TEST

LESSON TEN

1. Write in the correct name following each definition:
 - A. A prolonged metaphor: _____
 - B. Where one thing is likened to another by direct statement: _____
 - C. The New Testament realities of which we have types: _____
 - D. Where an inanimate object is given the attribute of life: _____
 - E. An earthly story with a heavenly meaning: _____
2. Give FIVE examples of types in the Old Testament with the New Testament anti-type.

Bible Introduction