

# LESSON TWO

## PARABLES

### A. WHY JESUS SPOKE IN PARABLES:

Scriptural References:

*"And the disciples came and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? ...and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them" (Matthew 13:10-17).*

*"All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them...kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 13:34-35).*

*"And he said unto them, Unto you is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables..." (Mark 4:11-12).*

*"And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it" (Mark 4:33).*

#### 1. DEFINITION OF A PARABLE:

Someone has attempted to define a parable by saying, "A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning." Certainly a parable is a story - a created story of something that might have happened. It is a story that has been told for the definite purpose of making some truth clear. Therefore it is an illustration to throw light upon some doctrine. A parable is usually a short story, which is allegorical in nature. An ALLEGORY is the description of one thing under the image of another. An example of this is Bunyan's book, "Pilgrim's Progress."

#### 2. WHY DID JESUS TEACH IN PARABLES?

To be understood a parable must be interpreted. It takes divine revelation to understand the truths brought out in parables. When Jesus taught in parables He gave simple stories that were interesting and would be remembered. By so doing He accomplished two things:

- a. For His disciples and later for the church, truths would be much more clearly understood and would be remembered much longer by the use of these parables.
- b. For the Pharisees and the unsaved the meaning of these parables would remain hidden mysteries. However, they would remember the stories, the meaning of which might later be revealed to them.

#### 3. HOW MANY PARABLES DID JESUS USE?

No one knows the answer to this statement. We simply have the statement, "*And with many such parables spake he the word unto them.*" We are confident that Jesus used many parables that were never recorded. Just how many there were, we do not know.

#### 4. HOW MAY WE UNDERSTAND PARABLES?

Parables are not to be interpreted literally. They have a spiritual meaning, which must be understood by divine revelation. There are two things, which we must be cautioned about:

- a. Doctrines must not be formed on the basis of parables alone. Parables are for illustrating doctrines and making them clear but not for formulating doctrines.
- b. Never make a parable out of a literal, historical story. An example, which we may use here, is the story of the beggar and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31). Jesus never gave the names to characters in parables. Stories such as this must be accepted as a literal, actual account of something that happened.

#### B. MANY PARABLES TAUGHT TRUTHS CONCERNING SALVATION:

Jesus gave a number of parables, which taught truths concerning Salvation. Some of these truths which were brought out in parables are:

1. Jesus is the seeking Savior who came to seek and to save the lost;
2. The importance of repentance to salvation is brought out;
3. The importance of Salvation is taught;
4. In order to receive forgiveness a man must be willing to forgive others;
5. After a man is saved he is expected to be fruitful.

#### C. PARABLES CONCERNING SALVATION:

##### 1. THE GOOD SAMARITAN:

- a. Scriptural Reference: Luke 10:25-37.
- b. The Story: A Jewish man traveled from Jerusalem to Jericho. The elevation of Jerusalem is 2,550 feet above sea level while Jericho, seventeen miles northeast, is situated 825 feet below sea level. This means that a person descends some 3,375 feet in a distance of seventeen miles. The road is down all the way and very dangerous. It was known to be robber infested with the worst kind of bandits.

These robbers attacked this Jewish man and left him robbed, wounded, naked and dying in the ditch. Both a priest and a Levite passed by but would not help. The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, but it was a despised Samaritan who had compassion. This Samaritan went to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in wine and oil, placed him upon his own beast and took him to an inn and paid for his keep.

- c. Truth Taught by the Parable: The direct lesson taught here was to define just who is our neighbor. Our neighbor is any man who is in need of our help.

However, the message of salvation is brought out so beautifully. This Jewish man represents all mankind travelling the downward road away from God.

Jerusalem represented the dwelling place of God upon earth while Jericho was the place that had been cursed. Man has been travelling down, down, down, away from God, and the result is lying in the ditch wounded, naked, robbed and dying. God and the world are at enmity but God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son. Jesus Christ is the Good Samaritan, who had compassion, who came where fallen man is. He pours in the wine and the oil, both of which represented the Holy Spirit. He clothes the sinner with His own righteousness and carries him to the inn. This speaks to us of the church.

Even the two pence has meaning here. A penny is a day's wage and this speaks of providing for the man for two days. A day is with the Lord as a thousand years. Therefore, this parable taught that the church would minister to the sinner for a period of two thousand years.

## 2. THE PRODIGAL SON:

- a. Scriptural Reference: Luke 15:11-32.
- b. The Story: A man had two sons who were quite different in nature and character. The elder son was hard working, faithful, but at the same time very self-righteous. The younger son desired to leave home and see what was in the world. He asked his father for his share of the inheritance that the father gave him. He left home immediately and traveled to a far country. Here he spent everything he had on riotous living. A famine came and the son soon became hungry. Finally he was hired to feed swine. He was so hungry that he felt like eating the feed the pigs were eating. One day he came to himself and decided to return home and confess his wrong doing to his father, and request that he might become a hired servant. However, when he reached home his father embraced him, kissed him, and ordered the fatted calf to be killed that they all might rejoice. The elder brother was very angry because his father had given his brother this warm welcome.
- c. Truth Taught by the Parable: This is possibly the best known of all of our Lord's parables. It taught that God never hinders a person from leaving but that the way is always open to return. The truths taught here are:
  - (1) The backslider must realize his tragic condition and come to a decision. A decision must be reached before the return journey.
  - (2) The return journey is difficult but always possible.
  - (3) True repentance and confession are essential.
  - (4) There can be genuine reconciliation and true restoration.
  - (5) There is great rejoicing in heaven over every sinner who repents.

## 3. THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN:

- a. Scriptural Reference: Luke 18:9-14.
- b. The Story: A Pharisee and a Publican went into the temple to pray. The Pharisee prayed with himself, priding himself with his self-righteousness. The publican stood off by himself and beat upon his breast crying out for mercy.

- c. Truth Taught by the Parable: A man is not justified by his own righteousness and pride. True repentance and confession of sin will always bring justification, forgiveness and peace.

4. THE FOOLISH RICH MAN:

- a. Scriptural Reference: Luke 12:15-21.
- b. The Story: A prosperous farmer had such large harvests that he had no place to store his crops. He decided that he would build greater barns, and then he would have security for his old age. He would then be able to sit back and enjoy life. However, death came his way, an appointment that he could not avoid. Since he had only thought of the treasures of this life, God called him a fool.
- c. Truth Taught by the Parable: This parable teaches us just how worthless are the treasures of this life. It also teaches just how uncertain life is. It is possible to labor and save for security in old age, only to see it all go in a moment's time. Any person who lives only for this world is a fool.

5. THE DEBTOR AND HIS FELLOW SERVANT:

- a. Scriptural Reference: Matthew 18:23-35.
- b. The Story: A king had a servant who owed him a large sum, ten thousand talents or about twelve million dollars. The king ordered him to be sold along with his family and all his possessions. The servant begged for mercy and was fully forgiven.

This same servant had a fellow servant that owed him a debt of one hundred pence, about seventeen dollars. When he demanded payment the second servant begged for mercy but received none. He was thrown into prison. When the king heard this he had the first servant arrested and imprisoned until all was paid.

- c. Truths Taught by the Parable: We are taught here that we can not receive forgiveness if we are unwilling to forgive.

6. THE TWO FORGIVEN DEBTORS: Luke 7:36-50.

## LESSON TWO

### SELF HELP TEST

- A. Define clearly what is meant by a "Parable."
- B. Why did Jesus teach using parables? Quote Scriptures to prove your answer.
- C. Give TWO rules for the interpretation of parables:
1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
- D. Write a paragraph stating fully the truths taught by the Parable of the Good Samaritan.
- E. In the Parable of the "Debtor and His Fellow Servant" answer the following:
1. How much did the servant owe the King?
  2. How much did his fellow servant owe him?
  3. What truths are taught by this parable?