



*"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths... and walk therein"*

(Jeremiah 6:16)

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## WHY JESUS TAUGHT IN PARABLES

Roger D. Campbell

**N**o one ever taught like Jesus did (John 7:46)! When He taught people, He often employed parables. By doing so, He fulfilled Old Testament prophecy (Psalm 78:2; 49:4). Jesus was neither the first nor last person in history to teach via parables, but He used them in an unparalleled, masterful way. Depending on how one classifies the stories told by Jesus, the New Testament records some thirty to forty of His parables. They truly were an important aspect of His teaching. God wants us to be blessed by them.

The main Greek word from which we get our English word "parable" is *parabole*, which means: "a placing of one thing by the side of another, juxtaposition, as of ships in battle... metaphorically a comparing, comparison of one thing with another, likeness, similitude" [*Thayer*; word #385].

A parable was a story, an earthly story. But it was different from a common story in that within the parable/story there was a spiritual meaning. In His parables, the Christ took a well-known or common occurrence, or at least one which could have happened, and placed beside it a spiritual meaning. It is clear, then, that parables were symbolic language. But why?

Why did the Master teach in parables? We are not the first to wonder about that. His disciples once asked Him, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables" (Matt. 13:10)?

At times, **Jesus used parables to answer questions.** For instance, one man who tried to justify himself

asked the Christ, "Who is my neighbor" (Luke 10:29). In response to that inquiry, Jesus told him a story that we call the *Parable of the Good Samaritan* (Luke 10:30-37). Jesus used that story to open the man's eyes to the need to love and show compassion to all people.

**Jesus spoke in parables to reveal the truth, to make the truth plain to those who really sought to find and follow it.** As part of Jesus' answer to the disciples' question about why He taught in parables, He told them, "*But blessed [are] your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous [men] have desired to see [those things] which ye see, and have not seen [them]; and to hear [those things] which ye hear, and have not heard [them]*" (Matt. 13:16,17). We recall that Jesus taught that one who hungers and thirsts for righteousness will be filled (Matt. 5:6). Jesus plainly set forth the value of God's kingdom in the *Parable of the Hidden Treasure* and the *Pearl of Great Price* (Matt. 13:44-46).

It is also true that **Jesus used parables in order to conceal the truth from the hard-hearted or those who would abuse it.** When Isaiah proclaimed God's word, he faced people with a prejudiced/dishonest heart. The same thing happened with the Christ when He taught: "*And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see,*

*and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and [their] ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with [their] eyes and hear with [their] ears, and should understand with [their] heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them*" (Matt. 13:14,15). God wants all to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4), and because of His marvelous love, Jesus came to save the sinful world (Luke 19:10). Yet, the reality is, many people do not have a love for the truth (2 Thess. 2:10-12). Remember that some loved the Christ, but others hated Him and His message. Thus, because of their rebellious spirit, what some possessed would be taken away from them (Matt. 7:6; 13:12).

Furthermore, **Jesus used parables to help His listeners remember the lessons taught.** If they could remember the story, they ought to be able to remember the truth that was taught in it. Who could forget the *Parable of the Lost/Prodigal Son* (Luke 15:11-32)? And, who could forget the *Parable of the Talents* (Matt. 25:14-30)? Stories which painted such a vivid picture could be recalled more easily.

Another practical reason for our Lord's use of parables was this: **He spoke parables to cause His listeners to understand and admit a truth or principle before they realized how it applied to them.** Parables caused people to admit the

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**Jesus Taught in Parables...**



# UNITY IN DIVERSITY ERROR

Ivie Powell

Since the introduction of the melodeon at Midway, Kentucky in 1859, false teachers have, "...by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:18). Compromise and tolerance are key factors that are characteristic of those determined to destroy the precious church of our Lord. Slowly, and with great determination, advocates of various errors have worked tirelessly to promote their insidious false doctrines. As the Sadducees and Pharisees (who were bitter enemies), banned together to accomplish their ultimate goal (the death of Christ), so false teachers today from various camps have banned together to digress from the old paths and completely turn the Lord's church into a denomination.

Brethren, there are more false doctrines being taught today from pulpits of those who wear the name "church of Christ" than at any other time. Some of these false doctrines include: faith only, grace only, the direct operation of the Holy Spirit, false views on marriage, divorce and remarriage, mechanical instruments of music in worship and women elders, deacons and preachers. Shocking as it is, love for Christ and His glorious body, the church, have been replaced with pride, the praise of men, power and money! It is easy to become very discouraged, but we need to remember the words of Paul, "...let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9). False teachers and those who tolerate their doctrines will reap what they have sown (Gal. 6:7-8)!

The deep, fervent prayer of our Lord for His followers is clearly recorded in John 17:20-21: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." The division in Corinth was strongly condemned by Paul (1 Cor. 1:10). The only reason why unity cannot be achieved in the religious world is because of man-made doctrines!

As long as men are not willing to lay aside their creeds, manuals, disciplines and catechisms, there will never be true, biblical unity! The one and only standard for religious unity both in the Lord's church as well as the religious world is the inspired word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Peter 4:11; Col. 3:17)!

Of course, there is such a thing as being united in error. However, because people agree to set aside God's word and work together does not mean God accepts them! On the contrary, He does not! One can shout from the roof top how much they love the Lord, but if they are not willing to follow the Scriptures, it is evident they do not love Him (Matt. 7:21-23; John 14:15)!

As a matter of fact, God does not accept any denominational church as His! That, my friend, is not about

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truth first, and then they had to consider what it had to do with them personally. The prophet Nathan used such an approach in telling a story to help King David see his guilt in his dealings with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:1-6). One clear case in Jesus' teaching is when He told the *Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers/Husbandmen* (Matt. 21:33-46). After hearing this story, the Jewish leaders properly stated what should be done with the people in that story who had done wrongly. After their admission of that truth (which actually pointed to their own punishment), they had an "Oh, no" moment: "...When the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them" (Matt. 21:45).

Jesus' parables were amazing. Rather than fear them, let us see their great value in helping us understand the will of God for mankind. Those who study them with an open mind and desire to learn the truth will be blessed immensely.

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right, that is absolutely right! While such a frank, bold declaration may offend and go against the grain of many of my soft, compromising, worldly, unconverted, lukewarm brethren, it nevertheless is the truth! Furthermore, this is where I stand, until proved from Scripture, and will not be moved, be it by flesh and blood or close friends!

If there was ever a time when the Lord needs men who truly love Him, it is now!

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