

Introduction to the Parables of Jesus

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According to Jewish tradition, it was King Solomon who invented the parable. "Until the time of Solomon," comments one Jewish Rabbi, "the Torah could have been compared to a well full of cool refreshing water, but because of its extraordinary depth, no one could get to the bottom.

What was necessary was to find a rope long enough to tie the bucket in order to bring up the water. Solomon made up this rope with parables... and thus enabled everyone to reach to the profoundest depths of the well."

Which is exactly the same thing Jesus did. He was a master teacher and storyteller, and his preferred form of teaching was with parables.

Jesus taught the crowds by telling parables. He even taught the disciples by using parables. In fact, in Mark's Gospel (4:34) we are told expressly that "He did not say anything to them without using a parable."

We hear with our ears, but there is a deeper kind of listening with the mind and heart that is necessary in order to gain spiritual understanding from Jesus' words.

That's where the parables come in - they help sharpen our deeper listening skills - they teach us how to put life together in its proper perspective - they help us see things the way God sees them.

Jesus taught using parables (or short stories) from common everyday situations. The messages were thought provoking and picturesque, not literal and boring.

He used lessons from life and human experience. His message was often clear and easy to understand, not hidden except from those not wanting to learn.

Why Are Parables Important?

Because they show us who God is and how God thinks - they reveal how God works in our lives - they show us who we are as we look inward to discover God's will.

What Is a Parable?

An earthly story with a heavenly meaning is certainly a good definition... but I like to think of parables as *living* messages.

They are a window into the kingdom of God which helps us see the world in which we live from a different point of view. Because Jesus' parables deal with real life, they never become outdated, they never grow old... they are timeless.

Describing Parables:

- 1) They are some sort of lifelike comparison that leaves you scratching your head. As one biblical scholar put it - "they are almost some sort of fictitious story - but they're not - they are stories drawn from everyday life that tease the mind into active thought."
- 2) They are some sort of lifelike comparison that leave you scratching your head, while opening your mind to new ways of thinking about the kingdom of God.
- 3) They are "A Window Into Heaven" given to us by God's Son, to help us live in this broken world of ours with better Christ-like vision.