

WHY PARABLES?

Jon Macon

Psalm 78:2 says, "I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old." This is actually a prophecy concerning the method Jesus Christ would use to teach the people. It was prophesied that Jesus would speak in parables. Matthew 13:34-35 quotes Psalm 78:2 and shows how Jesus fulfilled it: "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world." Studying *why* Christ taught in parables teaches us important lessons about how God works and also about our responsibilities towards our Creator.

Christ's reason for speaking in parables

Many people believe that Jesus spoke in parables so that the people would be able to better understand his teachings, but that is not the case. In fact, Jesus spoke in parables for the exact opposite reason. In Matthew 13:10, the disciples asked Jesus, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" "He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but *to them it is not given*. For whosoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he has. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand" (Matt 13:11-13). Jesus revealed the parables to his disciples so that they would understand, but until he explained the parables to them they did not understand them at all (Matt 13:10-23,34-43). The other people to whom Jesus did not give the explanation could not understand the parables. Why did Christ not plainly reveal his teachings to *everyone*?

God's goals and man's choices

God desires that every man would seek Him, repent, and obey Him so that they would be saved (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9; Ezek 18:23,32; 33:11; John 3:16-17). But God gives every man the choice to believe and obey Him or not (John 3:16-21; Mark 16:15-16; Deut 30:19; Josh 24:15; Psa 25:12; Prov 1:29; 3:31; Heb 11:24-25). Through the creation, God has made His existence known to every person (Psa 19:1; 75:1; 100:3; 104:24; Rom 1:18-20), as there can be nothing made without a maker

WHY PARABLES?

(continued)

(Heb 3:4). No man has an excuse because all men know that there is a God, whether they admit it or not (Rom 1:20). This knowledge that all men have gives everyone the responsibility to seek their Creator, to learn His will and obey it, to serve only Him (Matt 4:10; Luke 4:8; Acts 17:24-29; Rom 1:20-25; Eph 2:10; Eccl 12:13). God has taken the first step by revealing Himself to all men. Then every man has the opportunity, responsibility and choice to either serve their Creator or not. God will ensure that all who seek will find Him (Matt 7:7-8; Acts 17:26-27; Heb 6:11; Jas 4:8). But God will send a strong delusion to those who reject Him so that they will be damned (John 12:37-40; Rom 1:24-32; 2 Cor 4:4; 2 Thes 2:10-12). Otherwise, there would be universal salvation.

The “wise and prudent” and the “babes”

Jesus spoke in Luke 10:21 about God’s two possible responses to man’s choices: “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.” The “wise and prudent” are ones that do not have a will to do God’s will, and once they have made that choice, it is not God’s will for them to understand. These are the ones Jesus spoke to in parables. These people were not arbitrarily denied the opportunity to understand, because God does not respect faces (Acts 10:34; Rom 2:11; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25; 1 Pet 1:17). It was their own fault that they did not understand. These people “rejected the counsel of God against themselves” (Luke 7:30). Later, if they began to sincerely seek God, the Lord would change his response to them (2 Cor 3:16). The “babes” are those with a will to do God’s will and it is God’s will for them to understand (John 7:17). These are the ones Jesus explained the parables to. Anyone who sincerely wanted to know God’s will would be given the opportunity to understand the parables, but for those who had rejected God, speaking in parables would keep God’s will a mystery. Mark 4:33-34 says, “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: and when they were alone, *he expounded all things to his disciples*.” May we all draw near to God, so that He will draw near to us!