

"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" (Matthew 13:34-35)

Parables and Paradoxes -- Meanings Hidden, Yet Obvious

By Eleazar, 1999

Ultimately, one understands that there is nothing that is secret, nor is there anything that God hides from us. Truth is always here, in the present moment, and is obvious to all who have eyes to see it right in front of them. But, it is man's own carnal nature that keeps him from seeing the obvious. Man must rightfully blame himself for his failure to see that which he does not. This is part of the meaning of Isaiah's condemning words & *"Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not"* (Isaiah 6:9).

When Jesus was asked by his disciples why he spoke in parables, he replied *"Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."* (Matthew 13: 10-13) Many erroneously take this reply literally and think that Jesus taught in parables when in public, but in plain words to his disciples. However, one might notice that when Jesus was asked privately by his disciples about his return to earth, the answer was cryptic (cf Matthew 24). That is, this reply to the disciples in private came in a series of parables and metaphors that were obviously not to be taken literally. Dear reader, there is something important here that is hopefully not lost in you! When the disciples asked Jesus why he spoke in parables, Jesus answered them with another parable.

One might ask what it is that allowed the disciples to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven? The answer is revealed in the symbolism in the second and third sentences of Jesus' reply which come in the form of a series of paradoxes. To understand the deeper meanings, we must first begin to realize that there is nothing hidden in Jesus' teachings that we do not hide from ourselves. As written above, Isaiah describes those that hear (carnally), yet understand not (spiritually), and see (carnally) and perceive not (spiritually). Jesus' words are a restatement of that very thing. Carnal man, in his vanity, erroneously thinks that he possesses the truth when in reality he knows nothing of holy things. In this state of thinking, he condemns himself from receiving more. He is said to "have not" and it is in this state of being that he is incapable of receiving that which is right in front of him. Using other words, a man that thinks that he knows everything cannot be taught anything.

Thus, it is (carnal) man's own nature that makes him unable to receive more. But, there is a way out. Eventually carnal man will lose what he has (his pride and vanity). The nature of carnality is that it never endures. There is enmity (dissatisfaction) that God places between Lucifer and the seed of the woman. The path of carnal man will ultimately lead him to be (come) dissatisfied and when that happens, he will become one that is teachable. The ultimate path of all men is to become spiritual.

Why is it that God teaches us in parables? One might notice that parables are a fountain of wisdom from which all may drink, from spiritual neophyte to sage and adept. An individual may discover a great truth in a parable that serves him well, then uncover another as he progresses, then more deeper and profound meanings as he progresses even further. In a way, a parable acts as an inexhaustible store of wisdom and knowledge from which to draw. Like God, parables are not respecters of persons. All are served according to their needs and desires. All who will, may quench their thirst at the fountain of spiritual truths within parables and allegories. It is truly a marvelous thing.

But there is much more. Embedded within what may be called the "hidden" teachings within parables and allegories, there is often a very obvious call to carnal man to wake from his slumber. These often come in the form of a paradox. A paradox is an idea which appears to be in contradiction on the surface, but in harmony at deeper levels of understanding. Most are familiar with such paradoxes as *"& whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life & shall find it."* (Matthew 16:25) In a paradox, there is an obvious and apparent contradiction that is difficult to ignore, even for the most profane of individuals. The contradiction is like a voice calling one to wake up. It is meant to get one to exclaim like Nicodemus of old: *"How can these things be?"*

Thus, carnal man cannot rightfully claim that he missed the deeper symbolic teachings that lie behind the parables or allegories. The apparent contradictions of paradoxical statements are more than sufficient to call to those who, as word-worshippers, never look past the literal in anything. Inasmuch as it is impossible to reconcile paradoxes without resorting to the deeper symbolical meanings, one cannot rightfully remain in a (false) state of profane literalism. Yes, nothing is hidden from us, but that which we hide from ourselves.

It is paradoxical in itself that language has great limitations, yet great power. Like the proverbial two-edged sword, language can be like a trap which we often use to snare ourselves, yet it also can be the very thing that frees us. In reality, words are merely symbols to convey thoughts. To understand what is being communicated, it is necessary for both parties to agree on a definition. A great irony is that carnal man, in his attempt to improve communication by trying to define everything in precise terms, depreciates it. The reality is that the full power of words are not in their literal definitions, but rather in the ability to encompass complex thoughts in them. When carnal man loses his vanity and is able to see far beyond the literal, then he finds great treasures which only need to be uncovered.

One might notice that there is a great curse built into scriptural teachings that come in the form of parables and paradoxes. Yet, this curse is also a great blessing. Carnal man, who filters everything through the outward senses, rarely looks beyond the literal meanings. Outward meanings are often erroneous and are said to be carnal, sensual (of the worldly senses), or profane. However, one eventually understands that these too are a great blessing, just as the ground was cursed for the sake (*i.e.* a blessing) of Adam. One reason is because these profane understandings provide the enmity (dissatisfaction) that ultimately lead one to search for things deeper. If one could find satisfaction in the profane, then one would never seek the spiritual.

Although Jesus spoke to all in parables, he often expounded the meanings of the parables privately unto his disciples. This by itself is another parable. It is symbolic of the Spirit (Christ) within each of us that gives the individual the key to all mysteries.

When one begins to realize that words are symbols, and symbols are higher communication, then one begins to emerge from the state of mind that holds him in bondage. Eventually, he even sees beyond words as language and ultimately realizes that all truth is symbolized in the very creation that surrounds us. Ultimately, one realizes the source of all and comprehends all mysteries. Yet, they are only mysteries because we don't understand the obvious.

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