

Parables and Miracles

Jesus made Himself known in memorable ways, impressing upon His hearers and followers the need to pay attention and follow the evidence. Two of the avenues of teaching and demonstrating His identity came through

parables and miracles. Both of these left people contemplating their meanings, and both effectively showed the nature of His kingdom. Let's briefly consider these.

Parables

"Why do you speak to them in parables?" The disciples of Jesus asked this question, unclear about why Jesus would not be so direct at that time (Matt. 13:10). Jesus' response shows that parables were meant to be understood by those who really wanted to listen to the teaching of Jesus (vv. 11-17). As Luke records, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand" (Luke 8:10). Parables separated those who desired to know from those who didn't.

A "parable" (meaning, placing side by side) is a way of figuratively comparing the earthly with the spiritual. It's a brief story in which something spiritual is taught through physical comparisons.



The parables of the sower, the tares, or the mustard seed were not really about these physical items (seeds and weeds), but about the spiritual lessons that may be drawn from these by analogy. For instance, Jesus

pointed out from the parable of the sower, "the seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). In order to understand the teaching, one must understand the point of the analogy.

The parables of Jesus illustrated truth about His kingdom. He began many of his parables with, "The kingdom of heaven is like..." This shows a comparison between the kingdom and the matter he was about to use for the analogy. They used something that was familiar (sower, seed, tares, pearls, dragnets, lamps, etc.) to illustrate truth about something unfamiliar (spiritual). It was a brilliant way of illustrating truth.

The parables have a beauty about them which aids us in our understanding of God's kingdom. They bring the lofty teachings about the kingdom into a common, familiar, and practical level. Jesus "concentrated on the commonly familiar and the practical that is forever part and parcel of human life in the realm of the natural to project man's life in the realm beyond this life" (Zodhiates, *Complete Word Study Dictionary*, 1098).

In a parable, there is usually one primary lesson, and this can be understood through the context which prompted the teaching. Study them well, and we will have a greater appreciation for the kingdom of God.

Miracles

Jesus both taught and established His identity through the miracles He performed. Peter said to Cornelius, “You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him” (Acts 10:38). Earlier, in preaching on Pentecost, Peter said, “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know...” (Acts 2:22). The preaching of the miracles of Jesus is an integral part of the message of Christ.

The miracles of Jesus had purpose to them. For example, His healing of the paralyzed man was a demonstration of His authority to forgive sins (Mark 2:1-12). Ultimately, the import is that they demonstrated that He was truly the Son of God—God manifested in the flesh. Nicodemus came to Jesus and confessed, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God, as a teacher, for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him” (John 3:2). Jesus pointed to His works to establish His identity: “the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that

the Father has sent Me” (John 5:36).

When John was in prison, he sent disciples to ask Jesus if He was the Expected One, to which Jesus replied: “Go and report to John what you hear and see; the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them” (Matt 11:4-5). These miracles demonstrated that Jesus was the Messiah. Peter confessed, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God” (John 6:68-69).

The miracles of Jesus help us develop faith in Him. “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31).

By reading and studying both parables and miracles, our faith will be strengthened and our understanding of Jesus will be greatly enhanced.

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