

NEW TESTAMENT 1

UNIT FOUR: THE VICTORY OF THE KINGDOM

The Parables of Jesus

- Mark records fewer of Jesus' parables than Matthew or Luke.
- A parable can be defined as:
 - a figurative saying in which a comparison is drawn from nature or daily life in order to make some point of spiritual truth.

Why Jesus Taught In Parables

- Parables have been referred to as earthly stories with heavenly meanings.
- It has been suggested that parables were like illustrations in a modern sermon, to help people understand.
- Many parables, however, confuse and raise questions.
- Jesus explains by making a distinction between two kinds of hearers (Mk 4:10-12).
- Some are interested and are beginning to gain a glimpse of who Jesus is, others listen but have no commitment.

- Outsiders are taught in parables to prevent them understanding.
- It is important to understand the concept of mystery or secret.
- In Biblical language, a mystery is something that couldn't be known by men unless God reveals it.
- The mystery has now been revealed in Christ and proclaimed so that those with ears to hear might hear it.
- The mystery here is that God's rule has drawn near in the person, words and works of Jesus.
- Jesus' followers understand, but only because it has been revealed to them.
- God has made it known by revelation.
- Jesus often explained the parables to his disciples privately (4:34).
- A person can not know God unless God reveals himself.
- Jesus tells men what God is doing in a way that is unintelligible unless God reveals its meaning.
- Those unbelievers to whom God will not reveal himself are confirmed in their unbelief.

Understanding the Parables

- Historically there have been three approaches to understanding the parables.
- ALLEGORIZE THEM: every detail had a meaning, so the parable must be deciphered at every point.
- MORALIZE THEM: each parable had one main point, usually moral or ethical.
- HISTORICO-GRAMMATICAL APPROACH: discover the original meaning and apply that meaning to today.
- We must ask questions about what Jesus meant when he spoke the parable and how it applies to us today.

- YESTERDAY'S QUESTIONS
 - Setting in Jesus' ministry.
 - Meaning of the words.
 - To whom it was spoken.
 - Why it was spoken.
 - Context in the Gospel.
 - Customs and cultural factors.

- TODAY'S QUESTIONS
 - The fuller revelation of the New Testament.
 - The situation of the reader.
 - The attitudes and experiences of the modern reader which are touched by the thrust of the parable.

Understanding the Parables

- THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER
 - When the gospel is preached it meets with different responses.
 - God's word achieves what God wants is to achieve.
 - The gospel will change and save those whom God wishes it to change and save.
 - It will take root in the people God chooses.
- THE PARABLE OF THE LAMP
 - Just as a lamp is not intended to be hidden away, neither is Jesus.
 - Jesus shouldn't be dismissed because he appears to be weak: because of what the future holds, a person hearing the word should respond with faith.
- THE PARABLE OF SEEDTIME AND HARVEST
 - The sowing of the seed is followed by the harvest.
 - The present weakness and ambiguity of God's kingdom will just as surely be followed by its glorious fulfilment.
- THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED
 - The reign of God may appear small now, but the day is coming when it will be seen to be the greatest thing on earth.
- In these parables Jesus contrasts his ministry now with its fulfilment in the kingdom of God.