

Parables and Paradox continued

The attraction of mystery, Matthew ch.13

I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden since the foundation of the world. Matt.13:35 (quoting Psalm 78:2)

The beginning of the kingdom focus

- The actions of Jesus to this point
 - Baptism and temptation. _____
 - Preaching, teaching, miracles and healing. _____
- The results of these actions
 - Visibility: large crowds, Pharisees, questions, criticisms, and confusion. _____
 - A following: but more because of the miracles and novelty of his presence. They were there for the “magic show,” and the celebrity attraction. _____
 - Disciples: those who believed in him and had left their former lives to follow him. _____
- Time for a shift of focus
 - Although the life of Jesus is the foundation of the gospel message and the focus of our faith, he himself saw the mission: building the kingdom of heaven. _____
 - His reputation established, he now changed his strategy and message. _____

It is far easier to grasp the purpose and point of the parables by beginning with an understanding of human nature and learning. It seems epidemic in humans to reject advice regardless of its truth and value, and the more applicable a literary or teaching parallel the more difficult it is to grasp.

Making the kingdom desirable by making it inaccessible

- To Judah and Israel: The Isaiah prophecy of v.14-15.
 - Hearing and seeing without understanding and perceiving.

- Dull hearts, which impede hearing and seeing. _____
- A history of resisting God. _____
- To the disciples: v.16-17
 - *Blessed are your eyes:* yet the disciples were also confused.

Making the kingdom desirable by making it mysterious

- Jesus said to the disciples *Many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see. (v.17)*
 - The universal inquiry to the wise man: “what is the meaning of _____?” _____
- *I will utter things hidden since the foundation of the world, v.35.*
 - Things not necessarily spoken here, but alluded to by the parables. _____

Moving the parallel forward: what do we learn about ourselves from what Jesus taught regarding Judah and Israel?

- Are we different from them? _____
- Are we also dull? _____
- Jews and Gentiles alike
 - Its more often resistance than stupidity that keeps us from moving when prodded. _____
 - “Mirror, mirror . . .” Always look for that which exonerates and also glorifies ourselves. _____
 - Seeking “enlightenment” in order to avoid confession and repentance. _____

Humanity is still negotiating the terms of God’s surrender

As C.S. Lewis described in “God in the Dock,” humanity and even much of organized Christianity has put God on trial. The history of Israel demonstrates a pattern of habitual negotiation with God in order to gain his compliance rather than theirs, and Jesus’ contemporaries were attempting that with him. Consequently, he took a step back from them and raised the bar on admittance into his kingdom. *If you can’t accept the direct truth, then I will draw you in parallels and paradox, cloaking the simple truth in mystery.*