

PARABLES, “THROUGH PEASANTS EYES!”

Study 4, Introduction, Part IV.

THE PROBLEM OF THE ONE and THE MANY

1. In the past parables were pulled apart to examine every very part and interpret every part with some form of mystical meaning, (Me too!). P interpretation can become very confusing. We must affirm that no theological doctrine can ever be based solely on P! With allegory, one can read anything into any parable.
2. There are some scholars who say that there is really only one main teaching in each p. This author believes that there can be more than one theme in each parable and this doesn't destroy the unity of the p.
3. Let's take a look at Nathan and David. (See II Samuel 12:1-6). Can someone retell it. Are you familiar with it?
The rich man symbolizes David.
The poor man symbolizes Uriah
The lamb symbolizes Bathsheba.
4. We must note the set of symbols. Remember, a symbol represents something else! These are symbols not allegorizations. A symbol represents something else and an allegory is something else and has no other existence (Ansel, "The Chronicles of Narnia.") These three symbols are presented so the original audience can understand. We could add more symbols, the flock, the traveler, the morsel and assign them meanings of one kind and another, and eventually make it into whatever we want. The Theologian Moule compares a p to a political cartoon that the reader has to understand, as it has symbols. The cartoonist makes symbolic representation that only the reader can interpret correctly. Likewise P have symbolic meaning. **THE SYMBOLS TO LOOK FOR ARE THE ONES THE ORIGINAL TELLER PUTS IN THE STORY FOR THE PURPOSE OF COMMUNICATING WITH THE ORIGINAL AUDIENCE.**

5. The symbols are used to press the listener to make a decision/response. David is pressed to say, "I AM THE MAN!" In that response the unity of the p is found.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME?

6. We are 3000 years from David and his world. What can this p mean to me as I'm not an Oriental King? The meaning is found at the theological cluster of motives the work together to make a single response/decision. Nathan is using a number of theological themes and combining them into the story to lead David to make that move. How does it move to you?
7. Here are some possible answers.
 - a. David is not above the law, it's God's law, not his, God is offended.
 - b. The law gives special rights for the "The stranger within the gates." Uriah is a Hittite, David needed to give Uriah that right.
 - c. Unlike Egypt or Babylon, the women are not for the king's choosing like grapes on a vine.
 - d. David had many wives, Uriah has only one, justice is violated!
8. Even though we are not an Oriental King who did this sin, the p leaps centuries forward and applies to all of us. Once we know the theological cluster, we know that it's for all people, of all places and all time. The lesson in Nathan's P is more than "Don't steal your neighbor's wife." Primarily it answers that ageless question-the king is not above the law.
9. In this study we will identify the original listener and understand what Jesus was trying to get them to understand and do!
10. We will then see what the text says to us!

SUMMARY:

11. In order to understand the parables of Jesus and to discern their message for today, the interpreter needs to go through 8 basic steps. These can be carried out by the Non-specialist and in greater detail by the Specialist.

STEP 1: Determine the audience. Is Jesus talking to the Scribes and Pharisees, to the crowds or to the disciples?

STEP 2: Examine carefully the setting/interpretation provided by the Evangelist or their source.

STEP 3: Identify the "Play within the play!" Look at the parable according to these two levels.

STEP 4: Discern the cultural presupposition of the story, keep in mind that the people are Palestinian Peasants.

STEP 5: See if the parable will break down into a series of scenes and see if the themes within the different scenes reap in any discernable pattern.

STEP 6: Try to discern what symbols the original audience would have instinctively identified in the parable.

STEP 7: Determine what single decision/response the original audience is pressed to make in the original telling of the story.

STEP 8: Discern the cluster of Theological motifs that the parable affirms and/or presupposes, and determine what the parable is saying about these motifs.

12. For the rest of this study, we will apply this above method to the 10 p in Luke with the earnest hope that what is written here will assist the reader. If ever so slightly, one can recover something of the impact of the p in their original Palestinian setting and that in doing so, "The decisive pay offs of the material," the "vitality and the dynamic of the text" will speak afresh to us in our day

First parable, "The Parable of the Two Debtors." (Luke 7:36-50)