

Jesus Explained Why He Taught in Parables

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to experience a life that is full of joy. That will happen as their lives bear much fruit because they are abiding in Christ. In this topic, we are going to see that Jesus explained to the disciples why He spoke in parables.

The disciples asked Jesus why He spoke to the crowds in parables. Matthew 13:10-12 says, “And the disciples came and said to Him, ‘Why do You speak to them in parables?’ He answered and said to them, ‘Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.’” One of the key things that Jesus wanted the disciples to understand was “why they did what they did”. It is also important for us to understand “Why we do what we do.” In these verses, we see that the disciples asked Jesus, later that day, why He spoke to the people in parables. It is important to help our children understand the answer Jesus gave His disciples.

In this verse, the word translated “it is given” is the same word that is used in James 1:5, where we read, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” In this verse, we see that wisdom is given by God. In contrast, the natural man cannot receive wisdom and understanding of spiritual things. 1 Corinthians 2:7 says, “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages for our glory.” Then, 1 Corinthians 2:14 adds, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” Jesus said that spiritual understanding regarding the kingdom of God was being given to the disciples but it was not being given to those who lacked spiritual life.

Jesus said that those who have been given spiritual understanding will receive more spiritual understanding. In contrast, those who lack spiritual understanding will have the understanding that they may seem to have taken away from them. Jesus repeated this same thought when He was talking about the kingdom, in Matthew 25, shortly before His arrest and crucifixion. Matthew 25:29 says, “For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.” The Old Testament gives us many illustrations of the fact that God gives more wisdom and understanding to those who seek Him and meditate on His Word. Joshua was told in Joshua 1:8, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” Psalm 119:97-100 says, “Oh, how I love Your law! It *is* my meditation all the day. You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they *are* ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies *are* my meditation. I

understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts.” The Lord will give understanding to those who seek Him.

Jesus went on to explain that the lack of understanding for those who do not seek God had been predicted by Isaiah. Matthew 13:13-15 says, “Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: “Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.”” This quotation regarding their lack of understanding came from Isaiah 6:9-10.

Jesus pointed out three characteristics of the people of His day and then showed that the people were fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah. First, Jesus said, “Seeing they do not see.” We saw in our previous topic that Jesus had compared the hearts of the people to four kinds of soil. The first three kinds of soil never brought forth any fruit. The people saw Jesus do miracles, but those miracles did not transform their lives. The day after Jesus fed the five thousand, we see that the people came to Jesus again. John 6:26-27 says, “Jesus answered them and said, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.’” Jesus told the people that all they wanted was another free meal instead of seeking for the spiritual food that would give everlasting life.

Second, Jesus said, “Hearing they do not hear.” The people had heard the parable about the four kinds of soil and were entertained by the parable. However, they did not hear what Jesus was teaching them about spiritual life. Many people today read the Bible and can tell you about the history of the Jews, or even the life of Christ, but they do not come to Christ in repentance and faith so that they can receive spiritual life. As a result, they know the Bible as history, but they have no understanding of spiritual life. Like the scribes and Pharisees in the time of Jesus, they hear or read the Bible, and to them, it is just a book about Jewish history.

Third, Jesus said, “Nor do they understand.” In 1 Corinthians 2:14, we read, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” Only those who have come to Jesus in repentance and faith are promised understanding. 1 Corinthians 2:10 says, “But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” Here, we see that only God reveals spiritual truth.

Then, Jesus explained from the prophecy of Isaiah that the reason the people could not understand was due to the fact that their hearts had grown dull. The word translated “*grown dull*” means to *make thick, to make dull, or to make stupid*. Paul quoted these same verses from Isaiah when he spoke to the Jewish leaders in the city of Rome in Acts 28. When Paul concluded quoting these verses from Isaiah, Acts 28:28 says that Paul then said to the Jews, “Therefore let it be known to

you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!” In addition to hearts that were dull of hearing, the people had ears that had become hard of hearing and eyes that were closed. By quoting this prophecy from Isaiah and saying that it was fulfilled, Jesus made it clear to the disciples that most of the people would not accept Him or His message.

Jesus then pointed out the things that would cause people to come to Him in true repentance and faith. Jesus said that people need to see with their eyes. They need to hear with their ears. They need to understand with their hearts. Then, they need to turn and He would heal them. The word translated “turn” means *to turn oneself about or to turn to the worship of the true God*. This word is used in 1 Thessalonians 1:9, which says, “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” This verse gives us a definition of the true meaning of repentance.

After telling the disciples why He spoke to the multitudes in parables, Jesus went on to give the disciples a wonderful promise. Matthew 13:16-17 says, “But blessed *are* your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous *men* desired to see what you see, and did not see *it*, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear *it*.” Jesus told the disciples that they were blessed. Their eyes were blessed because they had the opportunity to see Jesus and the signs which He performed. Their ears were blessed because they had the privilege of hearing the things that Jesus taught. At that very moment, they were having the opportunity to hear Jesus explain the meaning of some of the parables that Jesus had just given to the multitudes. We are also receiving that privilege because we are able to read what Jesus taught the disciples about these parables.

Jesus also said that many prophets and righteous men desired to see and hear what the disciples were seeing and hearing. Peter was one of those who heard Jesus speak that day. Later, he wrote in 1 Peter 1:10-12, “Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace *that would come* to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.” Many of the things that the Old Testament prophets wrote they did not understand, especially when they wrote about the salvation that Christ would provide through His sufferings, death, resurrection and exaltation by the Father.

We have been given the Holy Spirit to help us understand the things that Jesus taught and did. Romans 12:2 says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” We also want to help our physical and spiritual children come to an understanding of these things as they grow in their spiritual maturity. May the Lord richly bless you as you teach and explain the teachings of Jesus to your children.