

Horne's Nine Rules to Guide in the Interpretation of Parables
By
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It has been said often that “a picture is worth a thousand words.” The truth of this maxim can not be denied. A parable in Scripture is a ‘word-painting,’ a picture that reveals a spiritual principle or truth. It may be a “figure,” a “narrative,” a “similitude,” a “short story,” or a “comparison.”

Joseph Angus, D.D., said

“When [an] allegory is written in the style of history, and is confined to occurrences that may have taken place, it is called a Parable. When the allegory contains statements of occurrences, which, from their very nature could not have happened, it is called a Fable. (Judges ix. 6-21: 2 Kings xiv. 9: 2 Chron. xxv. 18.) When the resemblances on which an allegory is founded are remote and abstruse, it is called a Riddle. Nothing, however, need be said of Scripture riddles, as their hidden meaning is always explained. (Judges xiv. 14: Prov. xxx. 15-21.)”¹

A ‘word-painting’ or parable, presented with a ‘few’ words, would consume many pages of descriptive and interpretive discourse in order to present the literal as well as the spiritual truth(s) revealed. It is a concise picture with great depth since Truth is like a deep ocean (Psalm 36:6, 1 Corinthians 2:10).

“A parable, according to Angus-Green “denotes a narrative constructed for the sake of conveying important truth...”²

The *Way of Life Encyclopedia* defines a parable by quoting Dr. Bruce Lackey, former beloved teacher of ‘preacher boys’ at Tennessee Temple Bible School where he was Dean. Dr. Lackey said that a parable is:

“a comparison between material and spiritual truth, designed to teach doctrine and obedience. It may be given in the form of a narrative, a proverb, or a reference to an event or institution.” (Bruce Lackey).

¹ Joseph Angus, D.D., *The Bible Handbook: An Introduction to the Study of Sacred Scripture* (Nelson and Phillips, NY, second revised edition, 1873, reprint by the University of Michigan Library, (n.d.) 175

² J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come, A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Academie Books, Grand Rapids, MI, First Printing, 1964, 1993 printing) 55

“Parable” means to lay something alongside another. It means to compare two things. The word parable in Greek is also translated “comparison” (Mark 4:30) and “figure” (Heb. 9:9).³

A parable in the Bible has been called:

“an earthly story with a heavenly meaning...The primary law of interpreting parables: A parable is given to teach ONE central truth.”⁴ Herbert Lockyer says, “The safest way to handle a parable is to search out the leading thought or principle idea round which as center the subordinate parts must group themselves.”⁵

Sometimes a parable may be like a multicolored brush stroke across the artist’s canvas. Thomas H. Horne describes a parable as:

“...denoting a proverb, or short saying, a thing darkly, or figuratively expressed, and a similitude, or comparison. Strictly speaking, a parable is a similitude taken from things natural, in order to instruct us in things spiritual. This mode of instruction is of great antiquity, and an admirable means of conveying moral lessons: “by laying hold on the imagination, parable insinuates itself into the affections, and, by the intercommunication of the faculties, the understanding is made to apprehend the truth which was proposed to the fancy.”⁶

The Lord indicates that He has spoken to us in similitudes, which includes parables, from the beginning, saying:

I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets. Hosea 12:10

Jesus intentionally used parables (Matthew 13:3). He used them for three prominent and pertinent reasons: (1) to obscure the “mysteries” of heaven (Matthew 13:11, 35) to unbelievers, (2) to keep unbelievers from understanding (Matthew 13:13, Ephesians 4:18, 30) and (3) to fulfill prophecy (Matthew 13:35). Truth concealed in parables is special revelation to them who have the Spirit and therefore, can understand (Ezekiel 36:27, John 14:7, 1 Corinthians 1:18, Ephesians 4:30, 1 John 2:27).

³ David W. Cloud, *Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible and Christianity* (Way of Life Literature, Port Huron, MI, 4th Edition, 2002) 398-399

⁴ Ibid. 399

⁵ Ibid. 399

⁶ Thomas Hartwell Horne, *A Compendious Introduction to the Study of the Bible, Being an Analysis of ‘An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, in Four Volumes* (Carlton and Porter, NY, The University of Michigan Historical Reprint Series, (n.d.) 136-137

With these thoughts as background, the principles that Thomas H. Horne outlines are apropos for interpretation of parables.

A Parable's Image Is Well Known

Principle 1

The first excellence of a parable is, that it turns upon an image well known and applicable to the subject, the meaning of which is clear and definite. For this circumstance will give it that perspicuity which is essential to every species of allegory.

Biblical parables are based upon “usual and common” pictures of daily life for an agrarian and fishing culture. The scenes the Lord Jesus Christ uses are interesting to the populace and hold one’s attention. For example, the parables of: the ten virgins,

“which is a plain allusion to those things which were common at the Jewish marriages in those days. In like manner, the parables of the lamp, (Luke viii:16,) of the sower and the seed, of the tares, of the mustard seed, of the leaven, of the net cast into the sea, all of which are related in Matt. Xiii. As well as of the householder that planted a vineyard, and let it out to husbandmen, (Matt. Xvi. 33) are all representations of usual and common occurrences, and such as the generality of our Saviour’s hearers were daily conversant with, and they were therefore selected by him as being the most interesting and affecting.”⁷

The occurrences in a person’s life are meaningful to him, and the use of stories associated with the events in his life cause him to think, ponder, recall, and understand the word pictures painted by the scenes that reveal truth and its application. However, understanding a spiritual truth and applying it to daily life beyond the surface picture painted by the parable is dependent upon the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Another thought which will be expanded in the principles below is the designation of “allegory.” Some interpreters in ages past, such as Origen, Philo, and Augustine, have triumphed allegorical interpretation of Scripture as their hermeneutical approach. This is

⁷ Ibid. 137 (Horne).

not the meaning of allegory by Horne in this principle. He means that some passages in Scripture are allegories such as parables, metaphors, symbols, etc.

David L. Cooper's well known quote from *The God Of Israel* guides us to the correct approach to passages in Scripture saying:

“When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.”⁸

We must be careful that we do not fall into the trap of considering every word in a parable an allegory. William Barclay points to this travesty, as Dr Horne does in his other principles to follow, saying:

“C. H. Dodd quotes Augustine's interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan. *A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho*; Adam is meant; *Jerusalem* is the heavenly city of peace from the blessedness of which Adam fell; *Jericho* means the moon, and signifies our mortality, because it is born, waxes, wanes, and dies, *Thieves* are the devil and his angels. *Who stripped him*, namely, of his immortality; *and beat him*, by persuading him to sin; *and left him half dead*, because in so far as man can understand and know God, he lives, but in so far as he is washed and oppressed by sin, he is dead; he is therefore called *half dead*...”⁹

A Parable Paints a Clear and Precise Word ‘Picture’

Principle Two

The image, however, must not only be apt and familiar, but must also be elegant and beautiful in itself, and all its parts must be perspicuous and pertinent; since it is the purpose of a parable, and especially of a poetic parable, not only to explain more perfectly some proposition, but frequently to give it animation and splendour.

A picture is like a painting which catches a moment in time. If the ‘picture’ does its job, one can sense the moments before “the snap-shot” and the probable moments to follow the scene. A word-picture or parable does the same thing. The central truth of the parable captures the ‘moments’ that led up to the snap shot in time, and the ‘moments’

⁸ Dwight J. Pentecost, op. cit., 42 (T to C)

⁹ William Barclay, *The Parables of Jesus* (Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, KY, 1970, Republished 1999) 15

that will follow. Recently, this author took some pictures of the fall leaf colors. The pictures reveal the suggested moments that led up the snap-shot, such as the shorting of daylight hours, the change in average temperature, or the end of growing season, and the ‘moments’ that will follow, such as leaves falling, obscured objects revealed by open leafless branches, or the raking of leaves. A Biblical parable does the same type of thing. It paints a scene that is in motion, and truly, often with “splendour.” However, if the parable or word-picture is interpreted as “to details which are quite inconsistent with the obvious scope and force of the narrative,”¹⁰ the purpose is missed.

“We have the right interpretation when all the main circumstances are explained.”¹¹

We have the wrong interpretation when the ‘moments’ intended by the word picture are presented incorrectly. For example, in the ‘snap-shots’ of the fall leaves, we would not interpret them as indicating that “summer is around the corner” or “newness of life,” but rather “winter is coming soon” or “the progression of time or age.” In the parable of the prodigal son, the central meaning is “that God welcomes the return of the vilest of his children, and all are important.”¹² The “splendor” and movement in the parable is destroyed by calling inordinate attention to the finer details of the word-picture by calling the fatted calf, Jesus Christ, or the music the older brother heard was the preaching of the gospel. Plainly, and simply, the fatted calf that was killed and the music that was played were indications of the joy experienced by the father of the return of his prodigal son.

The Three Parts of a Parable

Principle 3

¹⁰ Joseph Angus, D.D., op. cit., 317.

¹¹ Ibid. 317 (Angus).

¹² Ibid. 317 (Angus).

Every parable is composed of three parts: 1. The *sensible similitude*...the bark...2. The *explanation* or *mystic sense*...the sap or fruit...3. The *root* or scope to which it tends.

This clearly delineates the parts of a word-picture or parable. However, this author takes exception to the use of “mystical” in these last days because of the change in meaning in the modern society. Mystical currently can refer to mediums such as shaman, witch doctors, or magicians, or to concepts such as transcendentalism, spiritism, or new ageism. A better word presently would be “spiritual.” Putting that aside, the three parts explain the approach by the exegete to a parable.

Dr. Horne explains in his “compendious introduction” that a parable has

“two senses, the LITERAL, or external, and the MYSTICAL [Spiritual], or internal sense; the literal sense must be first explained, in order that the correspondence between it and the mystical sense may be the more readily perceived.”¹³ [HDW, my addition]

There is a significant caution presented by most writers who address parables. Although a parable may be broken into 3 parts, the sub-parts expounded and illustrated by the exegete must be consistent with the plain meaning. Many expositors have let their imaginations run amuck. However, the Scriptures counter this tendency by many interpreters of parables by giving the appropriate interpretation. Again we turn to Dr. Angus, who said:

“From the inspired interpretation of parables given us in Scriptures, we may gather that we are to avoid both the extreme of supposing that only the design of the whole should be regarded, and the extreme of insisting upon every clause as having a double meaning.”¹⁴

The principles to follow in this work concern the tendency by some expositors to allegorize parables of Scripture; giving meaning where it is not intended, or a “scope” far beyond the context of the passage.

¹³ Thomas Hartwell Horne, op. cit., 137.

¹⁴ Joseph Angus, D.D., op. cit., 318.

The Explanation and Application of Parables Depend on Scope and Design

Principle 4

For the right explanation and application of parables, their general scope and design must be ascertained.

Another word of caution is apropos. Doctrine is not established by parables. Any hermeneutical truth extracted from a parable must be: (1) consistent with the greater body of Truth in the whole Bible, and even if a doctrine(s) is in agreement with a parable, no final conclusion or addition to a doctrine is to be drawn exclusively from the parable, (2) a parable is not to be used as the source of a doctrine. Angus says:

“It is important that neither types nor parables be made the first or sole source of Scripture doctrine. Doctrines otherwise proved may be further illustrated or confirmed by them, but we are not to gather doctrine exclusively or primarily from their representations.”¹⁵

Bernard Ramm has outlined the principles of interpretation of parables, and concludes that

“the exact nature and details of the customs, practices, and elements that form the material or natural part of the parable...[are important to] determine the one central truth the parable is attempting to teach.”¹⁶ [HDW, my addition]

In other words, we cannot add anachronisms or modern scientific understanding to a parable to exegete its intended moral or doctrinal application. The interpretation must rest upon the Words given by God. For example, the literal interpretation of parables cannot be used to counter creation by the modernistic false scientific theory of evolution (e.g. the parable of leaven is not about the evolution of nature demonstrated by the

¹⁵ Ibid. 318 (Angus).

¹⁶ Dwight J. Pentecost, *op. cit.*, 56.

multiplication of yeast in bread until eventually the “evolution” of the “kingdom” produced different kinds of fish that could be gathered in a net.)

Dr. Louis Berkhof makes a similar declaration as Bernard Ramm in his discussion of principles useful in interpreting figurative language. He relates:

*“It is of the greatest importance that the interpreters have a clear conception of the things on which the figures are based, or from which they are borrowed, since the topical use of words is founded on certain resemblances or relations. The figurative language of the Bible is derived especially from (1) the physical features of the Holy land, (2) the religious institutions of Israel, (3) the history of God’s ancient people, and (4) the daily life and customs of the various peoples that occupy a prominent place in the Bible.”*¹⁷ [HDW, not my emphasis]

Ambiguity May Be Present But Jesus Intended One Sense

Principle 5

Wherever the words of Jesus seem to be capable of different senses, we may with certainty conclude that to be the true one which lies most level to the apprehension of his auditors.

The hermeneutic principle, seek the literal sense, in this statement of Dr. Horne is the classic approach to Scriptures. The principle is particularly important for parables spoken by our Lord because many exegetes become flamboyant in their interpretations, particularly the parables spoken by Jesus while He was walking the earth.

Dr. Angus gives us clear instructions for interpreting any passage, and applying the following principle to parables will cause the exegete to “stick to the message.”

*“The most comprehensive rule of interpretation yet remains. Compare Scripture with Scripture; “things spiritual with spiritual,” 1 Cor. ii. 13. It is by the observance of this rule alone that we become sure of the true meaning of particular passages. And, above all, it is by this rule alone that we ascertain the doctrines of Scripture on questions of faith and practice.”*¹⁸

Without a doubt Scripture “was written “for our learning,” and by “inspiration of God,” and yet it is confessed that its general clearness is obscured by “things hard to be

¹⁷ Louis Berkhof, op. cit., 85-86.

¹⁸ Joseph Angus, D.D., op. cit., 200.

understood.”¹⁹ We must be diligent in our studies; and we must resist the tendency to abandon the sacredness, inspiration, and spirituality of every word in every part of Scripture in order to be “a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.”

Interpretation of Parables Demands an Orderly Approach

Principle 6

As every parable has two senses, the literal or external, and the mystical [spiritual] or internal sense, the literal sense must be first explained, in order that the correspondence between it and the mystical [spiritual] sense may be the more readily perceived. [HDW, my addition for clarity]

An orderly approach to any task is to be desired. So, the orderly approach to a parable is important to extract the sense which the Lord wants us to understand. Certainly, if the literal word-picture painted by the parable is not understood, then the depth of the spiritual sense will be missed. For example, if one does not understand the literal progression of the parables in Matthew thirteen, then the progression of the Gospel, which is the good news that brings man into the kingdom of heaven, will be missed.

The secret to unraveling many parables is the explanation offered by our Lord Jesus Christ to his disciples after their presentation to the public. Scripture interprets Scripture is the adage well known; and applied in a particular passage, the literal is presented first, followed by the explanation of the meaning and the spiritual concept. (e.g. Matthew 13:3-30)

Many Words in Parables Are Ornamental

Principle 7

¹⁹ Ibid. 387 (Angus).

It is not necessary, in the interpretation of parables, that we should anxiously insist upon every single word; nor ought we to expect too curious an adaptation or accommodation of it in every part to the spiritual meaning inculcated by it; for many circumstances are introduced into parables which are merely ornamental, and designed to make the similitude more pleasing and interesting.

One must be careful with this principle that someone does not miss the word “*interpretation*.” Every Word of God is important, “there being no mere verbiage;”²⁰ we must never miss this theological mandate (Matthew 4:4). But, the proper *interpretation* of parables hinges on the picture painted by the congruous words describing a scene, which carries *one* primary spiritual truth. If every word in the parable is given equal *interpretive* weight, then the message will be missed; and as we shall see below, often parables in Scripture are twisted and called lies by those who have attacked the religion of faith in Jesus Christ. They expect the word-picture to be a “real” or true story of people and situations.

Dr. Horne continues his good discussion of this point (not anxiously insisting on all the words in parables that are used as “ornaments” for ridiculous application) in his “*Compendious Introduction*,” saying:

“Inattention to this obvious rule has led many expositors into the most fanciful explanations: resemblances have been accumulated, which are for the most part futile, or at best, of little use, and manifestly not included in the scope of the parable. In the application of this rule, the two following points are to be considered, viz.: (1.) Persons are not to be compared with persons, but things with things; part is not to be compared with part, but the whole of the parable with itself. Thus the similitude in Matt. Xiii. 24, 25, is, not with the men there mentioned, but with the seed and the pearl: and the construction is to be the same as in verses 31 and 33, where the progress of the Gospel is compared to the grain of mustard seed, and to leaven. (2.) In parables, it is not necessary that all the actions of men, mentioned in them, should be just actions, that is to say, morally just and honest: for instance, the unjust steward (Luke xvi. 1 – 8,) is not proposed either to justify his dishonesty, or as an example to us in cheating his lord, (for that is merely ornamental, and introduced to fill up the story;) but as an example of his care and prudence in providing for the future.”²¹

²⁰ Arthur W. Pink, *Interpretation of the Scriptures* (Baker book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 3rd Printing, Paperback Edition, 1990) 73

²¹ Ibid. 138 (Angus).

Inordinate attention to the ornamental words will cause an interpreter to prove the maxim that states: “He missed the forest for the trees.” The great reformation scholar at Geneva, Francis Turretin, while discussing the doctrines that are the objects of faith, said:

“There is a difference between deriving a doctrine from nature, and illustrating in a certain manner a doctrine already known; or to seize from the opportunity of teaching. The latter we recognize in the parables of our Lord, but not the former. For he did not expressly prove his mysteries by parables, but only illustrated them that under these representations they might be more easily understood.”²² [HDW, my emphasis]

Parables are to teach a doctrine or truth, and if the parable is understood properly, invariably they teach an application. The literal sense of the word-picture always carries one truth, but application to many situations in a believer’s life. We must not get lost in the ‘ornaments,’ or trees, and miss the one sense of the parable, which has application(s).

“Such also is the sense of the parables employed by our Lord in which we must always keep in mind his intention. Nor is that only to be considered the literal sense, which signifies the thing brought into comparison, but also denotes the application [to many situations in life.] Hence there is always only one sense and that literal by which (through such a comparison) any truth is set forth.”²³ [HDW, my addition for clarity]

Some have expected from a parable “too curious an adaptation or accommodation of it in every part to the spiritual meaning inculcated by it; for many circumstances are introduced into parables which are merely ornamental” (from Horne’s principle 7) to the point that some people call them lies in Scripture. Turretin said:

“Parables are falsely brought forward in support of lies. A parable is not introduced to signify that which is said, but to signify that which is represented by what is said...It differs therefore in many ways from a lie. (1) As to origin, because every lie proceeds either from an evil mind or deviates from good to evil; a parable, however, from a good mind persisting in good. (2) As to form, because a lie has an intrinsic contrariety to the mind of the speaker; a parable has not. (3) As to end, because a lie is told to deceive; a parable to teach. (4) As to effects, because by a lie a false notion is produced in the mind of the hearer; by a parable, on the contrary, a true one.”²⁴

²² Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Phillipsburg, NJ, 1696, Republished 1992, Vol. 1 of 3) 26

²³ Ibid. Vol 1, 150 (Turretin).

²⁴ Ibid. Vol. 2, 133 (Turretin).

Most of us will be incensed that a parable in Scripture could be twisted to the point of calling a parable a lie, but that is what unbelievers have on occasion done. They get lost in the trees, instead of seeing the “big picture.”

Arthur Pink had this to say about the misinterpretation of Parables:

“...it is commonly supposed that the parables are more easily understood than any other form of scriptural instruction, when the fact is that probably more erroneous teaching has been given out through misapprehending the force of some of their details than is the case with anything else in the Word. Great care needs to be taken with them: especially is it important to ascertain and then keep in mind the scope or leading design of each one...The children’s definition that “a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning” expresses the general idea...Parables are virtually *word pictures*.”²⁵

Parables are word-pictures that should not, can not, and will not be pushed to the extremes of absurdity by the careful exegete. This calls for at least two examples. *First*, some who are unsound in the doctrine of the atonement have argued that the parable of the prodigal son teaches

“God pardons absolutely, out of pure compassion. But that is a manifest wresting of the parable, for it is not as a Father but as the righteous Governor that God requires a satisfaction to His justice.”²⁶

In the *second* example, the parable of the laborers is said by some to teach salvation by works. However, the parable is in answer to Peter’s legitimate question, “Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore?” (Matthew 19:22-27).

“Since there be no room to doubt that the parable of the laborers in the vineyard was designed to illustrate the words in Matthew 19:30, and 20:16, it is clear that it was never intended to teach the way of salvation—to interpret it so is entirely to miss its scope. The Lord’s object was manifestly to impress upon His disciples that, unless they mortified the same (the heart), the evils of the heart were of such a character as to rob the earliest and most prolonged external devotion of all value, and that the latest and briefest service unto Him would, by reason of the absence of self-assertion, be deemed worthy in His sight of receiving reward equal to the former.”²⁷

²⁵ Arthur W. Pink, op. cit., 72.

²⁶ Ibid. 73 (Pink).

²⁷ Ibid. 74 (Pink).

These examples also demonstrate the importance of “scope” mentioned by Horne in principles three and four.

Knowing History, Nature, and the Culture of Biblical Times Contribute to Interpretation

Principle 8

Attention to Historical Circumstance, as well as an acquaintance with the nature and properties of the things whence the similitudes are taken, will essentially contribute to the interpretation of the parables.

This is an important concept that is missed in the interpretation of parables and in the inadequate translations or ‘versions’ of the Bible being thrust on man. Many of the modern dynamic equivalent translations use anachronisms in their translations. For example they use the word clock when no clock existed in Biblical times.

“Under no circumstances shall an anachronism be used in translating. It is wrong to refer to an item that did not exist in the Biblical times. It will not be true to the culture and historical setting (e.g. the New Living Bible (NLB) wrongly uses a modern term “clock.” (Isaiah 60:11, NLB, *Your gates will stay open around the clock to receive the wealth of many lands...*The clock did not exist in Biblical times.”²⁸

Permissiveness with the Scriptures in this fashion distorts the interpretation when applied to figures of speech; and so, parables and allegory are often misunderstood. For example, the parable of the ten virgins would be greatly distorted if the concept of a modern marriage ceremony is applied to a parable concerning the Jewish marriage rite (e.g. Matthew 22 and 25; Revelation 19:7), such as understanding of the interval of time between the marriage and the consummation of the marriage for the Biblical Jewish ceremony.²⁹

²⁸ H. D. Williams, *Word-For-Word Translating the Received Texts, Verbal Plenary Translating* (Bible For Today Press, Collingswood, NJ, 2006) 51

²⁹ Benjamin Keach, *Exposition of the Parables, Vol. 1 and 2* (Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI, Written in the 17th century, First published 1865, Reissued 1991) The ‘marriage’ parables are discussed throughout these volumes and they highlight the *historical* importance of the Jewish marriage feast.

One must understand the nature of pottery, the making of pottery, and breaking of pottery (ostraca, potsherd³⁰) by inhabitants of the Biblical nations. Their customs are important to the interpretation of parables. The parable of the potter found in Jeremiah 18:1-6 is amplified if one understands the potter's wheel, etc. (e.g. see Job 2:8, Prov. 26:23, Isaiah 45:9).

Alfred Edersheim, the author who best delineates the customs, the history, the people, and the places during the times of the Lord Jesus Christ, makes the case for this principle saying:

"We **must** remember the time, the education, and the general standpoint of that period as compared with our own."³¹ [HDW, my emphasis]

Consider That Parables Should Convey Some Important Moral Precepts

Principle 9

Lastly, although in many of his parables Jesus Christ has delineated the future state of the church, yet he intended that they should convey some important moral precepts, of which we should never lose sight in interpreting parables.

Almost every parable contains a moral aspect. For example, the parable that Nathan told David conveys the moral travesty of Uriah being sent to his death so that King David could have Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11 and 12).

"That was a parable used to open the King's eyes."³²

The twelfth chapter of 2 Samuel captures the "arrow" that pierced David's heart when David declared, "*As* the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this *thing* shall surely die: And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." (2 Samuel 12:5-6). And Nathan answered him, "Thou *art* the man." (verse 7).

³⁰ Definition: "ostraca, potsherds: broken pieces of clay pottery used in the Near East and Egypt for writing brief messages and receipts." <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1O94-ostraca.html> The pieces were also used for scraping sores or wounds.

³¹ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Hendrickson Publishers, 5th printing, 1999) xvii

³² William Barclay, *The Parables of Jesus* (Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, KY, 1970) 10

The question of any believer after “hearing” a parable is, “What wilt thou have me to do?” in answer to the moral issues raised. Consider, “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:” (Romans 1:20) Parables help us understand spiritual truth which guides our ways. Consider the following parables: (1) the wise and foolish builders (Matthew 7:24-27), (2) The parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7), (3) the parable of the persistent widow (Luke 18:1-8), and (4) the similitude of the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13).

In the entire realm of literature there is no book so rich in its parabolic and allegoric material as the Bible.”³³

We would do well to pay particular attention to parables in the Words of Life, following the principles and suggestions of great men of God who have laboured over the Words day and night.

Amen!!

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³³ Dr. Herbert Lockyer, *All the Parables of the Bible* (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 23rd printing, 1981) 9