



The Good News

July 30th, 2017

Volume 17, Issue 31

Old Testament Parables

By Michael McCleary

When we consider the term “**parable**” the mind will most often conjure up thoughts of Jesus as He taught many people throughout the four Gospels by way of stories that contain spiritual applications. The term “**parable**” means “*a short allegorical story designed to illustrate or teach some truth, religious principle, or moral lesson*”. In the Greek, the term “**parabole**” means “*to lay beside, to compare*”. We find throughout the Gospels that Jesus compares real life situations or circumstances to spiritual aspects of service to God. However, Jesus was not the first in the Bible to use parables as a means of teaching truth. We can find several examples in the Old Testament of parables being used as well, mainly as a means of trying to establish some sense of justice and righteousness in minds of people that were distracted or otherwise not open to hearing the wisdom and truth of God. Today, we will be studying two such parables as we seek to take applications from them to help us in our lives.

The Parable of Jotham – In Judges 9:7-15 we read a curious parable spoken by Gideon’s son Jotham. He speaks concerning four types of trees, three of which are profitable and fruitful to God and one that is good for nothing. As we study in further detail, we find that Jotham is encouraging the people of Shechem to think more clearly concerning their appointment of Abimelech as king over them. Abimelech had killed all the other sons of Gideon in his quest and ambition to become king, and Jotham tried to remind the people that God is pleased by those who fulfill their role and are content, not seeking power or elevation over others. As with all parables, there is a lesson to be had, specifically regarding the dangers of ambition and seeking elevation over our brethren. Jesus expressly teaches on numerous occasions by word and example that Christians are to be servants of one another, not lords or masters over one another. One other lesson that can be gained is that we should always strive to be content to serve in

whatever capacity we are able, whether we are an olive tree, a fig tree, or a vine. The church needs those who will willingly serve as a mouth, a foot, an eye, or a hand.

The Parable of Nathan – In II Sam. 12:1-14 we read of the events following David’s sin with Bathsheba and his subsequent killing of Uriah the Hittite. David doesn’t appear to have come to terms with the fact that he had sinned against God. Nathan is sent to David with a parable concerning a rich man, a poor man, a little lamb, and a traveler. As we read through the account, we find that the rich man takes the little lamb that belonged to the poor man and feeds it to the traveler. David seems to think this was an actual account, and demands the identity of the rich man be made known, prompting Nathan’s famous statement, “*Thou art the man!*” There are numerous lessons to be learned in this account, but focusing on just one such lesson would be the fact that David never stopped to think how his actions might negatively affect those under his rule and their perception of him as king. Our application is that we must be careful to think carefully how our words and deeds can negatively, or positively, impact our brethren and others around us.

Let us look more closely at these two parables, consider the wisdom that is found in them, and apply the lessons to our lives.