

Parables

We know that the Bible is the Word of God. It is full of stories that tell us about God and show us how to live according to His teachings. God wants us to learn how to live a good life and be kind to others because He wants us to be happy. But the main reason the Bible is the Word of God is because its teachings are unlimited - it has deeper and deeper meanings which can help us.

Have you ever heard of a “parable”? A parable is a story that has a deeper meaning, a story with a hidden message. Jesus often used parables to teach people about how to live. In the book of Matthew 13:34 it states: *“All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them.”* In a way, the whole Bible is written like parables because every single story tells us something important about God’s truth:

“The disciples said to Jesus, ‘Why do you speak to them in parables?’ And He said to them.... because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.’”

(Matthew 13:10-13)

The Lord really does want us to understand His Word. The stories are not simply about the people who are in

them, but about you and me and the entire human race. Through these stories we learn about ourselves, about the angels and heaven, and about God and His kingdom. We can learn how to live in this world and be prepared for eternal life in heaven.

Inner Meanings

The wonderful thing is that many of the stories in the Bible are explained in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. The Lord showed him what many stories mean, and even what individual words mean. The story of the Children of Israel leaving Egypt and coming to a “promised land”, for example, is about us leaving the slavery of evil and finding heaven. Every part of that story teaches us about ourselves and how God leads us. The manna, or bread, which was provided daily, is goodness from the Lord, and the water that flowed from the rock Moses struck with his rod is truth. Jesus said, *“I am the bread of life”*, and to the Samaritan woman at the well He said, *“Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give will never thirst.”*

So we can see that by “bread” in the Bible is meant goodness, and by “water” is meant truth. And this gives us a picture - our hearts and minds are fed spiritual food in the same way that our bodies are fed natural food. Our bodies cannot live without both food and water, and our spirits cannot live without both goodness and truth.

What did Jesus mean when He said, *“You are the salt of the earth”*? By salt is meant longing for what is good, and when we think about how salt is used, we learn something about this love. Salt is used for flavor and to keep food from going bad; see how wonderfully this makes sense when we think of salt as “longing for what is good”! It is the love in a person’s heart that really matters - what we love is who we are and affects everything we do. God wants us to act from love, and whatever we love stays with us forever.

Notice the use of both oil and wine in the story of the Good Samaritan when he takes care of the traveler’s wounds:

“But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where the hurt man was. And when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine....” (Luke 10:33-34)

By “oil” is meant love and by “wine” is meant truth; so through this story we learn something about healing - God heals us by means of both His love and His truth.





Everything in the Bible is significant. For instance, women generally stand for “love” or affection” and men generally stand for “wisdom” or “understanding.” Think about this in relation to the Christmas story - the angel comes first to Mary to tell her that Jesus will be born, and then to Joseph. This shows us something about how God comes to each one of us - first He is born in our heartfelt desire to learn what is true, and then we come to understand Him. When we love God’s Word, we become wise, and as we become wise, we love to do what is right.

The entire Bible is like this! As the inner meanings of words and stories unfold, we learn about the beautiful ways God leads us, we learn about His teachings and His promises about heavenly happiness.

The Lord talks to us through His Word. The Bible contains all of the secrets about spiritual things, and through the Writings of the New Church, the Bible comes alive like never before. Come and learn about the New Church and the Bible will be opened to you!

“If you abide in My Word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
(John 8:31-32)



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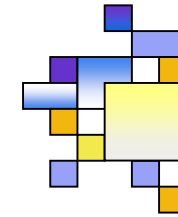
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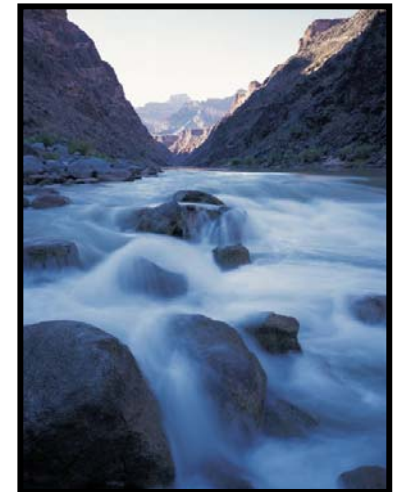
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The Bible's Deeper Meaning



**Building the Lord's Church in People's
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