

"The stamps of minds are different. All do not understand expressions and statements alike. Some understand the statements of the Scriptures to suit their own particular minds and cases. Preconceptions, prejudices, and passions have a strong influence to darken the understanding and confuse the mind even in reading the words of Holy Writ. . . .

"The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers.

"It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God. . . .

"The Lord speaks to human beings in imperfect speech, in order that the degenerate senses, the dull, earthly perception, of earthly beings may comprehend His words. Thus is shown God's condescension. He meets fallen human beings where they are. The Bible, perfect as it is in its simplicity, does not answer to the great ideas of God; for infinite ideas cannot be perfectly embodied in finite vehicles of thought. Instead of the expressions of the Bible being exaggerated, as many people suppose, the strong expressions break down before the magnificence of the thought, though the penman selected the most expressive language through which to convey the truths of higher education. Sinful beings can only bear to look upon a shadow of the brightness of heaven's glory." *Selected Messages* 1:20.3–22.3.

The Parables

The parables in which Christ imparted spiritual truths also show how the treasure is embodied within an earthen vessel. In this we clearly see the process of revelation, which is the mystery of God.

A parable uses an earthen vessel which humanity is acquainted with, it is a story taken from daily life. And it was in stories like these that Jesus laid a treasure—a lesson—which was intended to be imparted through the parable.

"In Christ's parable teaching the same principle is seen as in His own mission to the world. That we might become acquainted with His

divine character and life, Christ took our nature and dwelt among us. Divinity was revealed in humanity; the invisible glory in the visible human form. Men could learn of the unknown through the known; heavenly things were revealed through the earthly; God was made manifest in the likeness of men. So it was in Christ's teaching: the unknown was illustrated by the known; divine truths by earthly things with which the people were most familiar.

"... Natural things were the medium for the spiritual; the things of nature and the life-experience of His hearers were connected with the truths of the written word. Leading thus from the natural to the spiritual kingdom, Christ's parables are links in the chain of truth that unites man with God and earth with heaven." *Christ's Object Lessons*, 17.1, 2.

A parable is merely an earthen vessel, and therefore it is weak and imperfect. Jesus commented on this weakness in the following words: "To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it?" *Mark* 4:30. With these words Jesus intimated that no earthly comparison can represent the glory and perfection of the kingdom of God.

The imperfection of the earthen vessel is very apparent in the parable where the righteous God is compared with the unrighteous judge. "Then the Lord said, 'Hear what the unjust judge said.'" *Luke* 18:6. If we were to concentrate on the vessel without seeing that there is a treasure hidden within it, we would immediately come to the conclusion that the Lord of heaven is an unjust judge. Perhaps we would also question as to whether this parable came from Christ at all, because He would surely not compare His Father with an unrighteous judge!

However, if we understand the mystery of God, we will search for, and find, the treasure in this vessel. And indeed, God's character is clearly depicted in this parable. The unjust judge finally helped the widow who brought her request to him, just as God helps us, although He is of course not unjust. Of Him we read, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." *James* 1:17. How much more then, will our sympathizing Father help His children who bring Him their requests! The comparison given is by contrast, not by similarity. What confidence this parable gives to the children of God! "And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" *Luke* 18:7, 8.

Some other examples of "contrasting parables" which clearly elucidate the principle of the treasure in an earthly vessel are the parable