

Message #110 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*
"Symbolism"

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. In case you're a new listener to our program, I'd like you to know that our program, *Scripture Beneath The Surface*, is a program that emphasizes the underlying principles and symbolisms of scripture. The Bible is full of symbolism, including parables and allegories. Parables, are generally fictional stories which represent and help to explain a central theme or concept, and allegories are generally a figurative description which, like the parable, describes a hidden or deeper meaning from a spiritual perspective. Symbolism is used extensively throughout the Bible in order to give a deeper understanding of the ways of God, and in scripture, symbolism is often found in parables or allegories. But, much of scripture contains symbolism which is presented within the boundaries of actual historical events. A simple example of this is the historical record of the temple for the Israelites. The Old Testament accurately describes the architectural plans of the temple and its construction by the Israelites. Although the temple itself is a physical structure, and historical events are centered around it, it is also a very descriptive symbolic pattern of heavenly things which are not physical in nature at all. In this sense the historical events throughout the Bible are presented for our learning, but only if we look a little bit deeper than just the surface. This is what our program is for. We like to take a closer look at scripture and see the underlying principle that God has given us for our advantage. And probably, the most distinct advantage of understanding the symbolic meanings of scripture is that it helps us to understand the Bible's warning messages. It is the warning messages of scripture which help Christians to avoid the pitfalls of this world.

However, in order to see the underlying principles of Bible symbolism it is necessary to have the Holy Spirit of God indwelling you. Without the Holy Spirit we cannot understand scripture to any great extent. History is full of secular scholars who have corrupted the gospel with their logical interpretations of scripture rather than relying on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As it says in John 16:13-14, "But when he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth: for he will not speak of himself; but whatever he hears, that he will speak: and he will show you things to come. 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you."

Of course, having the Holy Spirit does not mean that we understand everything the Bible says. If we did, Earth, as we know it, could not exist. For as Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 3:10-11, "I have seen the travail, which God has given to the sons of men to be exercised in it. 11 He has made every thing beautiful in his time: also he has set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end."

From this portion of scripture we can see the concept that much of God's word is hidden from us because we live in a physical universe. We are flesh and blood human beings who live in a physical world, subject to physical laws, and generally perceive things in a physical way. Yet, the spiritual concept of God, and the knowledge of an eternal hope, is revealed to a man when the Holy Spirit of God is allowed access into that man's heart. If you have been born again in spirit, then you have received the Holy Spirit, which will guide you in your quest for understanding God's word.

When we Christians either read scripture, or listen to others who attempt to explain the scriptures to us, the Holy Spirit works within us to give us understanding. The Holy Spirit is a necessary part of understanding God's truth, but the first step in understanding God is to hear God's own testimony, that testimony which God gives of himself. This initial witness that God gives is our basis for believing. It is the foundation of God's word, and it initially establishes the principle of truth and righteousness. The second step we take in understanding God's word is in seeing the outward demonstration of God's word. Jesus Christ gave the outward demonstration of God's word, and this was an added testimony to God's own testimony that his word was true. When we hear of, or read of, the life of Jesus Christ, we add this testimony to that initial testimony of God's own, and together these two testimonies convince us of the goodness of God.

Yet, there is another witness that we receive from God in addition to God's own testimony and the testimony of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit, of course, is that third witness, and testifies to us that God's word is indeed true. The testimony of the Holy Spirit is not by a written or spoken word directly from God, neither is the Holy Spirit an outward demonstration of a holy life, as Jesus demonstrated. The Holy Spirit works in a different way to testify of God, and that is by inspiration. The works of power and guidance that come from God are the inspiration that moves things. The understanding of God's word is revealed by the Holy Spirit which moves us in the way God's word would have us move. God's word, in this fashion, is outwardly revealed to humans, and also revealed through humans. Jesus said that the miracles he did were by the Holy Spirit. The power of God was proven to be mighty through these miracles, and it was the

Holy Spirit which was the conduit for God's power. To more fully comprehend the work of the Holy Spirit, you can look at it this way. The Holy Spirit is the liaison which acts as the connecting link between God, who is spiritual, and humans, who are flesh and blood. God communicates with humans via the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit takes the thoughts, beliefs, and convictions of God's heart and reveals them to humans, just as Jesus Christ, in his earthly human form, received communication and direction from God. As a Christian, you also receive from God by his Holy Spirit because you are in Christ.

In order to understand the deep things of God's heart, we must have two things. We must have the word of God dwelling within us, and we must also have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. If we have the Holy Spirit, but no word of God, then we have nothing that the Holy Spirit can reveal to us. If we have the word of God, but have no Holy Spirit, then the word of God cannot be revealed to us. We must have both, the word of God, and his Holy Spirit, and that's why Jesus said that we must be born both of water and of the Spirit. Water birth is the birth that comes from the word of God. It is the knowledge of the truth of God. When humans hear the gospel, and recognize that the word of God is true, this does not automatically make them into Christians. Now, hold on a minute. Don't jump to conclusions. Salvation is a two stage process of being born again by the water of the word, and by being born also in spirit. If the only requirement for salvation was to acknowledge God's word as true, then many people who have wicked hearts could go to heaven. If a person only needed to recognize that God's word was true, then they could act any way they wanted and still attain eternal life. But no eternal life is forthcoming to those who only believe God's word to be true, but refuse to obey that word. And to obey the word of God can only be accomplished perfectly by receiving God in spirit. When you receive God in spirit, your spirit comes into one accord with God. It is then no longer just a mind concept, but a heart concept. When you acknowledge God's word as being true, that is the first stage of believing. But to believe with your spirit means that your spirit is receptive to God's Spirit. When the Holy Spirit finds a place to dwell in you it is because you have not only acknowledged God's word as truth, but you have also demonstrated that you love the spirit of that word as well.

To enter into the spirit of God's word is an absolute requirement. To enter into God's word in principle is good, but without entering into God's word in spirit is like entering into sports competition without spirit. Everyone knows that sporting contests are not won just by strength and ability. If a sports player lacks spirit for the sport, that player will never be successful. Also, in the same sense, if you enter into employment without having any spirit for it, your production will suffer and you will end up hating your job. You always fail when you have no spirit for the endeavor. The same principle applies to the worship of God. If you have no spirit for worshiping God, your worship is just vain words that have no depth to them. Come on now, you've seen this in the church many times, people who are worshiping, but act like they'd like to be anywhere else but in church. If you're not moved toward the spiritual things of God, then you are not being inspired by the Holy Spirit. You may be subject to the influence of spirits, but if you're not moved by the things of God, then the spirit moving you is an evil spirit.

God has formed mankind to be flesh and blood. But we have also been given a spirit. How successful we will be concerning a life in Christ is dependent on which spirit we allow to dwell within us. When a spirit comes around you, whether that spirit is the Holy Spirit of God, or if it is an evil spirit of Satan, it will stay if it finds suitable housing. Spirits only dwell within a person if the person's heart accommodates them. If you have no spirit for the things of God, God's spirit will not find residence within you. And, on the other hand, if your heart is established with desires for physical things of earth, then the only spirit that will find your heart to be suitable as a dwelling place will be an evil spirit. Spirits, whether God's Spirit or Satan's spirit, dwell where they are received. Unless you are born again in Christ by the word of God to the extent that your heart is moved by the holy things of God, then you have no salvation. God's Holy Spirit resides in all of God's children. If it has no place to dwell in you, then you aren't God's child. The word of God and the Holy Spirit go together. You can't have one without the other. The Holy Spirit must find a place within you that is agreeable to the things of God, or it will not stay.

This concept is symbolically referred to in the historical record of the flood. When the ark had come to rest on Mount Ararat, and Noah released the dove for the first time, the dove returned to Noah because, as the Bible says, "the dove found no place for the sole of it's foot." In this symbolic representation of scripture, the dove symbolizes the Holy Spirit, just as it did at the baptism of Jesus. And just as the dove found no place on the earth to dwell because of the waters, the Holy Spirit can find no place to dwell within our heart when the waters of Satan's lies and deceptions cover the solid ground of God's word. This is symbolic form, but that which represents the understanding of God's word. God's Holy Spirit cannot dwell where there is no solid ground. God's Holy Spirit must have the solid ground of Jesus the solid rock. If we have the waters of Satan's lies in our hearts, then our spiritual ground will become miry clay. If there are enough lies present within us, there will not be enough spiritual solid ground on which to place our feet.

Yes, I know that what I'm saying is difficult to follow, because I am speaking partially with symbolism. However, symbolism of scripture is given to us in order for us to come to a more complete comprehension of God. The waters that flow fresh and pure are the waters of God's pure word. But, the waters that are contaminated, that are muddied and miry, that are undrinkable, are Satan's waters. These undrinkable waters are used all through scripture to help us understand the difference between truth and lies. God's word is truth, and it is therefore represented in scripture by water that is pure, water that a human being can drink without becoming sick. The waters of God are symbolic of God's word which, like the pure water of the heavens, the springs of living waters, and the pure melting snows of the high mountains will quench the thirsting of mankind. It only remains that mankind must drink of the pure living waters of God in order to be saved, and the pure living waters represent God's true word. But, the muddy waters, are to be resisted, and the place of our feet need to be on solid ground and not in miry clay. If we are to be led by the Holy Spirit, then we will find that the Holy Spirit will lead us to solid ground, and not down to the waters of Satan's sea of lies.

You must be open to the Holy Spirit of God if the Holy Spirit of God is to dwell within you. The Holy Spirit does not come in and dwell within you if your heart is established with wicked intent. People who hear the gospel and receive it gladly have demonstrated by their gladness that they receive the word of God in spirit. When people hear the word of God and then enter into the word of God with joy and fervency of spirit, then, and only then, can it finally be said that they are worshiping God in truth and in spirit.

There is a fervency of spirit within those who truly do love God. Those who say they love God, but have no real fervency, no real heat, for the things of God, are deceived. And this doesn't mean that emotion is an automatic sign of a Christian. Emotion is heat, but all emotion is not of God. You can get fervent about a lot of things. But the only physical things on this planet that align themselves with God's Holy Spirit are the spiritual things of God's word and those things which God's word has sanctified. All the rest is, as King Solomon said, vanity. All the rest of the things of this world have no eternal value. And in this regard, I sometimes find myself asking the rhetorical question, "Why do Christians place so much emphasis on the entertainments of this world?" Of course, I know the answer to that question, and probably, you do too.

Now, I'd like to leave you today with an example of Bible symbolism which comes through actual historical events. It may help you to see how symbolism occupies an important place in scripture. Let's take a look at the book of Daniel. In chapter six, we read of Daniel's experience of being thrown into the lions' den because he petitioned God three times a day. I won't read the chapter, but I'd like to give an overview of the story. It goes like this.

First, the ruler in charge set Daniel up as the chief prince of the 120 princes who were to rule over the kingdom of Babylon. Then the other princes and presidents were jealous, and they devised a plan to have Daniel killed. The essence of the plan was that no one could petition any man or any god for 30 days, and if they did, that person should be cast into the lions' den. Of course, they knew that Daniel prayed three times a day with his face toward Jerusalem. And of course, their plan was to kill Daniel so that their own positions of leadership would not be threatened. The current ruler went along with the plan of the wicked princes and it was not long before Daniel was arrested and brought before the king. The decree had to be upheld by the king because he had signed the law and it could not be changed. He wanted to save Daniel from being killed, but the other rulers of the kingdom insisted upon the ruler upholding the law as it had been decreed. Eventually the king gave in to the wishes of the other ruling princes and Daniel was thrown into the lion's den. However, God protected Daniel, and shut the lion's mouths so that in the morning Daniel was retrieved from the lion's den without harm.

Now, in order to understand the principle of a historical event also being a symbolic representation of future Biblical events, let's compare this story of Daniel with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Notice the similarities. Daniel was arrested for seeking the will of God. So was Jesus. The rulers of the time of Daniel were jealous of him. So were the current religious rulers in Jerusalem jealous of Jesus. The arrest of Daniel was after he knelt and prayed three times a day with his face toward Jerusalem. Jesus was arrested after kneeling and

praying three times on the Mount of Olives, which was over against Jerusalem on the east. The chief ruler in Daniel's day tried to prevent Daniel's death, and so did Pilot try to prevent the death of Jesus. The princes of Babylon insisted on the law being observed and that death must be decreed, and so did the religious leaders in Jerusalem. The king caved in to the princes demands, and Pilot, the Roman governor, also caved in to the demands of the religious leaders of Jerusalem. Daniel was thrown to the lions, and Jesus was thrown to Satan, who, as a roaring lion seeks whom he may devour. A stone was put over the mouth of the lion's den after Daniel was thrown in, and a stone was put over the mouth of the tomb of Jesus. The night passed. In the morning, Daniel came out of the lion's den alive. And, on the morning of the first day of the week, Jesus came out of the tomb, also alive. The scenario is the same for Daniel and for Jesus, but with one significant difference. Jesus is alive forevermore, and therefore we are also inheritors of that eternal life. Daniel was just the symbol. Jesus was the actual fulfillment of promise.

You know, the Bible is full of symbols which point to future fulfillment, and also to current fulfillment in our present time. There are many examples in scripture besides Daniel which help give insight into our own lives. The warning messages of scripture are placed all through the Bible, and not just in the outwardly evident instances. It just takes a desire on our parts to look a little deeper than the surface of things. If we will look carefully, and pray fervently, God will reveal more and more to us. It tells us in Isaiah 28:9 & 10 that those who graduate past the milk of the word will come to understanding in the form of line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little. God wants us to come to know him intimately, but we can't know him without adding to our understanding more and more and more. It doesn't come all at once when you first get saved. It comes a little bit at a time as we learn a little, and then apply it to our lives, and then learn a little more, and apply that also. We must continue to seek God for the understanding he wants us to have. And most importantly we must realize that the understanding of God's word is not always stated in an obvious fashion. Jesus explained to his disciples that he spoke in parables in order that the wise would understand, but that the wicked would not understand.

It is the wise that God wants to understand, for he doesn't want the wicked to see and comprehend, for then they would repent and he would have to forgive them, and he would then have to heal their land. God doesn't want the wicked to understand. Therefore he created a mystery, and has put the world into the hearts of men in order that the wicked would not find out. But then, the wicked will find out eventually, but of course, by the time they do, it'll be too late for them. However, it's not too late for you, - - - - I hope.

Thanks for being with us.