MISUNDERSTANDING OF PARABLES

Due to Jesus' comment in Luke 8:9-10, people have assumed that Parables are difficult to understand and that's why people have resorted to allegorizing them. (An allegory is a story where each point in the story represents something quite foreign to the story itself.)

It is important to distinguish between an allegory and allegorizing. In allegorizing, a simple historical narrative or parable is made to teach something entirely different from that intended by the original writer. In allegorizing, the interpreter ignores what the original writer meant and looks instead for hidden meanings. By this method, the parable of Jesus and many of the stories of the Old and New Testament have been much abused.

THE NATURE OF PARABLES

There are three types of Parables:
1. True Parable
2. Similitude
3. Parabolic sayings

A **TRUE PARABLE** is a story with a beginning, an ending, and a plot.
Examples of True Parables:
- The Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37
- The Three Lost Parables in Luke 15 ~ The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin and The Prodigal Son
- The Great Supper in Luke 14:15-24
- The Laborer's in the Vineyard, Matt. 20:1-16
- The Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31
- The Ten Virgins in Matt. 25:1-13

A **SIMILITUDE** is when they take an illustration from everyday life to make a point.
Examples of Similitude:
- The Leaven in Luke 13:20-21
- The Mustard Seed in Luke 13:18-19
- The Sower and the Seed in Mark 4

PARABOLIC SAYINGS are really more like metaphors or similes.
Examples of Parabolic Sayings:
- You are the salt of the earth, You are the light of the world.

Sometimes Parables approach being allegories because many details represent something else, but in an allegory every detail stands for something quite different than what one would think. (a true allegory is in Galatians 4:21-31)

HOW PARABLES FUNCTION

The purpose of Parables is not to give a teaching with pictures, even though they do. Nor is it to reveal truth, though they do.

The Function of a Parable is to:
1. Call forth a response on the part of the hearer. They are heart sifters. They reveal our attitudes:
   * How we are a little taken with our self-righteousness as in the "Pharisee and the Publican."
   * How we are unforgiving as in the "Prodigal Son"
   * How we are angry at God's Grace and would rather Him to be fair instead of merciful as in the "Laborer's and the Vineyard".
2. Parables catch the listener (reader) by surprise. They are like a political cartoon compared to an editorial.
3. Parables call for a response to Jesus' ministry.

INTERPRETATION OF PARABLES
A. Two things are important in interpreting Parables:
1. The knowledge of the "points of reference" or the parts of the story that one identifies with as the story is being told and thus what leads up to the unexpected turn in the story.
2. Seeing the unexpected in the story.

Example: Luke 7:36-50   Jesus is having dinner at a Pharisee's house.

There are three points of reference:
Creditor ~ God
2 Debtors ~ Simon (the Pharisee)
             Woman of the city (sinner)
Unexpected turn: Creditor forgives both
Attitude revealed: sinner not deserving of mercy.
Response to Jesus: mercy is for all, and those forgiven much have more to be grateful for.