**WESTMINSTER BIBLE SCHOOL; THE PARABLES AND METAPHORS OF OUR LORD - THE TEACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**4. PARABOLIC ILLUSTRATIONS IN THE MANIFESTO (3)**

 *… Matthew Chapters 6 and 7*

AGAIN we take illustrations used by our Lord on three subjects; first, that of two gates and two ways; secondly, that of wolves in sheep's clothing, and fruits; and thirdly, that of rock and sand.

In these final words of application, it would seem as though our Lord employed a crescendo, and reached a climax of illustration. Taking the first, the figure of two gates and two ways, He was speaking generally of life, and life as a pilgrimage. The distinct ethical teaching now being finished, He had reached the realm of application. There are two gates through which we may enter upon an experience of life. He was bringing His hearers back to the starting-point, to the beginning of life. In order to travel upon these ways, men must pass through these gates, the narrow or the wide. The narrow gate "leadeth unto life." The wide gate "leadeth to destruction." We have a plan of pilgrimage in these figures of speech.

There is a way of life into which man can pass through a wide gate. It is easy of entrance, and there is a broad way stretching out before us. But there is another gateway, leading to another way; a narrow gateway, and a straitened way.

The wide gate "leadeth to destruction," and the word literally and simply means narrowing limitation, confinement, imprisonment; until everything is brought to an end under crushing pressure.

On the other hand is the narrow gate. As we pass through it we begin to walk a straitened way, but it "leadeth unto life," in all its fulness. There are many things which have to be left outside if we pass through this gate. It is a narrow gate and a straitened way; none of the breadth of license, but the straitness of law. But go on, and walk along it, and we find all the way it is widening, broadening, expanding with new breadth and glory and view, until at last it reaches unto life. When Jesus said "life" He did not mean mere existence. He meant eternal life, deep life, high life, broad life, full life.

Two ways of life are thus presented. Any man reading that Sermon on the Mount has to hide himself as he stands in the light of His appalling measurements. A man can live by high devotion of his own life to the awful law of purity, and reach the glorious clear shining of health and holiness; but he must begin at the narrow gate. Thus the two ways of life's pilgrimage are illustrated by the use of the gates and ways, to be interpreted in that way, and none other.

Our Lord did not say that the way of evil is broad and easy and natural, and that it would work out rightly. "Destruction" is the last word. He did not say the narrow way would mean narrowness constantly, the cutting out of everything worth while. No, it is the finding of everything worth while; and at last it is life in all its breadth and length and beauty. The narrow and straitened way leads to breadth, to life. The wide and broad way leads to narrowness, and issues in destruction.

In close connection He used the next figure of speech. If in the first He took His hearers to the point of beginning, the narrow and wide gates, and foretold the issue, He now brought them face to face with one of the gravest perils that would threaten them. "Beware of false prophets." In order to beware of them they must be tested. The subject illustrated was the testing of the prophets. This particular subject has its supreme application to those who are called of God to prophetic work, though our Lord's first application was not for them, but for those who wait upon their ministry and teaching.

What a description of the false prophets. They come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. Our Lord was dealing here with life, not with what we call orthodoxy or heterodoxy. These men are not those teaching a false doctrine. They may be teaching a perfectly correct doctrine, but if in their own lives they are wrong, beware of them. This is orthodoxy, dressed in sheep's clothing, proceeding from one who in life is a ravening wolf. It is a perilous thing to follow such. He is now following those who have passed through the narrow gate along the road of progress, when they will need teachers, and guidance. He warns such to be careful to whom they give attention and allegiance. The prophets who destroy men's lives are those who may be dressed in sheep's clothing, but if they are evil, their influence is destructive.

In the next saying of Jesus the figures seem to mix, but they do not; they merge. "By their fruits ye shall know them." That is twice repeated, and in between He emphasized the statement with a question, "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." Mark the drastic note of His declaration, "A good tree cannot bring evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." The prophet may be in sheep's clothing. There may be the outward appearance, but He warned those who have entered upon the highway, through the gateway that is narrow, to take heed how they hear. They are to be careful lest they be beguiled, all unknowingly, by those Who are false prophets.

Our Lord then antedated the ultimate. He looked on to the day when all life should come to consummation and manifestation and judgment. He put Himself as Judge at the close. "In that day many will say to Me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy Name?" They had done many wonderful works in the Name, but He will have say, "I never knew you." The peril of this halts us, and drives us not to discussion, but to heart-searching. I may prophesy in the Name. I may cast out demons in His Name. I may do many things His Name; but if I do not know Him; and He does not know me personally, the last word is, "I never knew you."

The final word is, "He that doeth the will of My Father." That is the final test of everything. He antedates in this figure of speech the hour when He shall appraise the life of those who are presented to Him. There will be those who have done everything except the one thing, the will of God. As He said on another occasion, Who is My mother, who are My brethren and sisters? They that do the will of My Father Who is in heaven. So He warns us to beware of false leaders, false prophets; who are to be tested by the fruit they bear.

The last of these illustrations in the Manifesto is characterized by the same attitude of majesty. He took two figures, rock and sand, and the subject He was illustrating was the importance of foundation in building life. It has reference to the whole Manifesto and to all the teaching that had preceded it. "Every one therefore which heareth these words of Mine." He had uttered the whole scheme of law in the Kingdom of God to those disciples. Others had heard Him. Now He declared that men who built on His words were building on rock foundation.

Look at this carefully. Every man is building something. He is building something into which he can go and live, that will create for him a refuge, a place of rest, a home for his soul. The materials of the building may be correct, and as two houses go up, one cannot see any difference between them. Everything seems correct in both cases. Summer suns are shining, and they look beautiful, and no difference can be detected. But summer suns do not shine for ever. There come days of storm and stress, of sweeping winds, and whistling howling rains, days of tempest. Look at those two houses, what is happening? One of them, under the pressure of the storm, is crumbling, falling, and the man is rendered homeless. The other is standing erect, firm, and strong. What makes the difference? Foundations. One man built on the sand; the other upon rock.

The figure of speech is so simple that a child can understand it. Christ says there are two foundations upon which we can build. If we want to build more stately mansions for the soul, watch the foundations. Notice carefully the words of august majesty. He that heareth and doeth, builds on rock. He that heareth and doeth not, builds on sand. It is not a comparison between a man who hears, and another who has never heard. Those who have heard and have not obeyed, have gone on with their building, neglecting the teaching; when the storms strike, the building is destroyed. Those who have heard, and have obeyed, and kept it, no storm that blows can destroy the house of such as have built on the teachings of Jesus. August in majesty, and final to His Manifesto is that figure of building on sand or on rock.

All these illustrations were employed to emphasize ethical teaching, and illustrate moral standards in the Kingdom of God. According to these illustrations, it is immoral to live in this world, and not exert the influence of salt and light. We are not moral Christians if we are living without influencing others. It is immoral to live an earth-centred life, with supreme care for things that moth and rust destroy and thieves steal. We are searched by this teaching of Jesus. It is immoral to attempt to live a double-governed life. The eye which is the lamp of the body must be single. It is immoral to worry over necessary things. What an immoral crowd we are! So wrote Fay Inchfawn in a little poem, which has a touch of humour, but it has searching power:

"Well, I am done, my nerves were on the rack;

I've laid them down to-day.

It was the last straw broke the camel's back;

I've laid that down to-day.

And I'll not fume, nor fret, nor fuss, nor fight;

I'll walk by faith a bit, and not by sight;

I think the Universe will work all right;

I've laid it down to-day:

So, here and now, the overweight - the worry!

I'll lay it down to-day.

The all-too-anxious heart, the tearing hurry;

I'll lay these down to-day.

O eager hands! O feet, so prone to run!

I think that He, Who made the stars and sun,

Can mind the things you've had to leave undone;

Do lay them down to-day!"

In the illustration Jesus gave of the birds and lilies, we see that worrying is a form of immorality. It is immoral to exercise judgment wrongly, to cast out the mote in my brother's eye, when the beam is in my own eye; or to take the precious things and cast them to dogs and swine. It is immoral to neglect prayer. Our Father gives the best. If we do not seek, knock, our life is immoral. Of course it is immoral to travel on the wrong road, to take the wide gate and the broad way. It is immoral to listen to false prophets. It is immoral to build a dwelling for the soul on sand, when the rock of His teaching is at our disposal. These things all wonderfully illustrate the great ethical standards of Jesus.