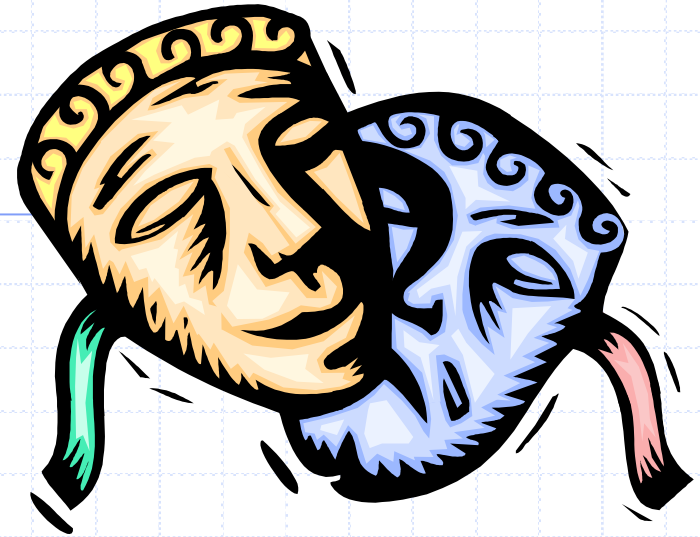


Spiritual Drama



Acting Out Biblical Truths

Robert C. Newman



Parables as Spiritual Drama

- ◆ Most of us are familiar with Jesus' parables.
- ◆ In most of the parables Jesus told, a spiritual truth is taught by an earthly story.
- ◆ Some examples of Jesus' parables:
 - Prodigal Son (Luke 15)
 - The Sower (Matthew 13)
 - The Hidden Treasure (Matthew 13)



The Sower (Matt 13, Mark 4, Luke 8)

- ◆ A sower scatters seed.
 - The message of the Kingdom
- ◆ It falls on various kinds of soil.
 - Different responses to the Gospel
 - Pathway – doesn't sink in
 - Thin soil – doesn't form good roots
 - Thorny soil – stifled by competition
 - Good soil – produces, but various yields
- ◆ It does produce an abundant crop.



Acted Parables

- ◆ Not so well known as spoken parables
- ◆ We have several of these in the OT:
 - Jeremiah & the clay pot (Jeremiah 19)
 - Hosea & wife Gomer (Hosea 1-3)
- ◆ Jesus, too, acted out parables:
 - Cursing the fig tree (Matthew 21)
 - Cleansing the temple (Matthew 21)



Hosea & Gomer (Hosea 1-3)

- ◆ Hosea marries an adulterous wife.
 - God chooses sinful, unfaithful Israel.
- ◆ They have children, or Gomer does!
 - Israel's offspring don't look like God's.
- ◆ Gomer runs off.
 - Israel departs into idolatry.
- ◆ Gomer is bought back by Hosea.
 - Israel redeemed by God.



Cursing the Fig Tree (Mt 21)

- ◆ Jesus sees a fig tree in leaf, implying fruit.
 - Israel professes to be God's people.
- ◆ When examined more closely, it has no fruit.
 - Israel's behavior contradicts its profession.
- ◆ Jesus pronounces a curse on the tree.
 - God pronounces a curse on the nation.



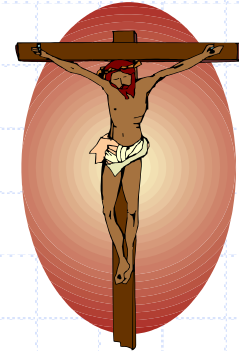
Liturgy as Acted Parable



Liturgy as Acted Parable

- ◆ It appears that the liturgical practices of both OT and NT are acted parables.
- ◆ Take sacrifice:
 - An innocent animal is killed to pay for the sin of the guilty.
 - The animal must be without physical blemish.
 - The person offering the sacrifice confesses his/her sins over the animal before its throat is cut.
 - The animal is then burned up in the altar fire.

Sacrifice as Parable



- ◆ An innocent animal dies for the sin of the guilty.
 - Jesus dies for sinners.
- ◆ The animal must be without physical blemish.
 - Jesus had no spiritual blemish.
- ◆ The sacrificer confesses sin over the animal before its throat is cut.
 - Those who trust in Jesus lay their sins on Him.
- ◆ The animal is burned up in the altar fire.
 - Jesus takes the punishment of hell we deserve.

The Tabernacle/ Temple Service



- ◆ The tabernacle/temple is God's house.
- ◆ Access is restricted for sinful humans.
- ◆ The closer to the inner part, the more restriction.
- ◆ Only with sacrifice may one come near.
- ◆ Only one suitably holy may enter the most holy place.
- ◆ The glory of God is a consuming fire.

Circumcision: the Action

- ◆ Removal of flesh from the male sexual organ
- ◆ Done on the eighth day for newborns
- ◆ Any male not circumcised is to be cut off from God's people.
- ◆ Is this an acted parable?



Circumcision: its Meaning?

- ◆ Removal of flesh from male organ
 - Removal of sinful flesh?
 - Cutting off of the promised seed?
- ◆ Done on the eighth day
 - Jesus rises on the eighth day, showing that God accepted his atoning death.
- ◆ Any male not circumcised is cut off.
 - No one comes to the Father but by Me.

New Testament Liturgy

- ◆ The NT is less liturgical than the OT.
- ◆ Perhaps this is due to the non-localized nature of God's people, after the Gospel goes out to the Gentiles.
- ◆ Still, there are at least two liturgical actions:
 - Baptism
 - The Lord's Supper

Baptism: the Action

- ◆ A new convert is cleansed by washing.
- ◆ This follows his/her confession of Christ.
- ◆ Among immersionists, the convert is buried in water.
- ◆ Among affusionists, the convert is covered with poured water.
- ◆ Among aspersionists, the convert is sprinkled with water.



Baptism: its Meaning

- ◆ The washing signifies cleansing (by the Spirit) due to our identification with Christ.
 - Immersion – death, burial & resurrection
 - Affusion – Holy Spirit is poured out
 - Aspersio – recalls OT sprinkling ceremonies
- ◆ The ceremony is a picture of the believer's being born again to a new life.



The Lord's Supper: the Action

- ◆ Believers gather for a symbolic meal.
- ◆ There are two elements:
 - Bread, often unleavened
 - Fruit of the vine, sometimes wine, sometimes juice
- ◆ The elements are eaten/drunk along with words of explanation and thanksgiving.



The Lord's Supper: Meaning

- ◆ The meal:
 - Looks back to Last Supper & Crucifixion
 - Looks forward to Messianic Banquet
- ◆ The elements:
 - The bread (sustenance) = Jesus' body broken.
 - The wine (joy) pictures Jesus' blood poured out.
- ◆ The quantity:
 - Just a taste; this is not the real thing!
 - Wait till you see what God has in store for us!



The End (of this talk)

But why don't we begin to think about what God is telling us in these things?