

WHY PARABLES?

Mark 4: 10-12 Jesus quotes a passage from Isaiah while teaching "the twelve" concerning parables. This passage is quoted by Jesus in Matthew and John's gospels, and as Paul's final words in the book of Acts with two interesting changes: John, in the word "turn" and Mark in the word "forgive."

First, we'll look at the Greek and Hebrew, then we'll determine what the passage means in light of Mark 4's lessons on parables.

The following are the five passages:

Isaiah 6:9 And he said, "Go and say to this people: "Keep listening, but do not comprehend; keep looking, but do not understand.' **10** Make the mind of this people dull, and stop their ears, and shut their eyes, so that they may not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and comprehend with their minds, and **turn** and be **healed**."

Matthew 13:14 With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that says: "You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive. **15** For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and **turn**— and I would **heal** them.'

***Mark 4:12** in order that "they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand; so that they may not **turn** again and **be forgiven**.' "

John 12:40 "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, so that they might not look with their eyes, and understand with their heart and **turn**— and I would **heal** them."

Acts 28:27 For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and **turn**— and I would **heal** them.'

Some Greek nuggets: two interesting changes: John, in the word "turn" and Mark in the word "forgive."

Isaiah:

(שׁוּב , shub) to turn back, return

(רָפָא , rapha) to heal

Matthew:

(ἐπιστρέφω , epistrephó) to turn, to return;

(ἰάομαι , iaomai) to heal

Mark:

(ἐπιστρέφω , epistrephó) to turn, to return

(ἀφίημι , aphíemi) to send away, leave alone, permit*

John:

(στρέφω , strephó) to turn, to change**

(ἰάομαι , iaomai) to heal

Acts:

(ἐπιστρέφω , epistrephó) to turn, to return

(ἰάομαι , iaomai) to heal

***FORGIVEN:** (*Mark 4:12*) (ἀφίημι , aphíemi) to send away, leave alone, permit. Translated both as send away, give leave, permit (let), but least of all "*forgive*." Mark is the only writer of these five passages to use this Greek word in place of (ἰάομαι , iaomai) to heal

****TURN:** (ἐπιστρέφω , epistrephó) to turn, to return. John's Gospel uses στρέφω , (strephó) a variant of ἐπιστρέφω , (epistrephó) which translates to turn or to change.

Note: the King James Bible sometimes translates the words "turn" or "return" as REPENT, but the literal meaning is to turn back, return, or change one's mind.

PRESCRIPTIVE OR DESCRIPTIVE?

When looking at a passage from scripture, one needs to distinguish between the prescriptive or descriptive manner of the text.

Is this text saying that God is *prescribing* a divine action to deliberately make our minds dull, and stop our ears, and shut our eyes?

Does God desire that for God's people?

Of course not. Could it be God is giving a *description* of the consequences of ignoring what God is saying?