

VII. Biblical Allegories

- A. An allegory is an account told to bring light to another matter that in most cases is not identified. An allegory is a double meaning device. It may be a factual matter or one of fiction although these are limited in the bible---but see Judges 9:7-17. The allegory cannot be taken at face value...it must be viewed in the light of what it is characterizing.
- B. The prophets often use allegory to talk of God's work with His people. See Isaiah 5, Ezekiel 17, etc. One must be careful in this for allegorizing is a popularizing medium and there is a tendency to give every thing a second meaning for the sake of common interest. The allegory should be apparent, perhaps through contradictory language (calling Nebuchadnezzar an eagle, for instance, or, in the New Testament, calling Herod a fox) or an impossible imagery (Judges9).
- C. Some theologians make allegory the standard interpretation. We think literal is the standard and allegory is used when a hidden or covered message is necessary. It is a hot issue in Biblical study at all times and was a favorite idea of many of the church fathers since it allowed them to explain things they otherwise did not comprehend. You simply said it is an allegory and it means this....something that might be only marginally attached to the text of their study.
- D. But there is enough allegory in the Bible to make a strong case for its usage. However, to understand the Bible do not begin with allegory....take it when it is demanded and stick with the issue it is describing. Allegory is to be the servant, not the master.

VIII. On Parables and Metaphors

- A. The parable is a stated comparison (identified with the use of "like" or "as"...or compatible expressions. The point it is making is what must determine. Do not try to identify and apply all parts. If the text identifies some or all...that is another matter. And even when the parts are identified, the key is the point to be made in the comparison.
- B. A metaphor is an implied comparison and therefore a short form of allegory.