

The Good Samaritan

Explanation

One of the most influential parables is that of the good Samaritan (Lk 10:30–35). People all over the world speak of being a good Samaritan, of helping people who are in need. Jesus told this parable to a lawyer who asked, “Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” As dramatic and crucial as this parable’s plain practical content clearly is, a time-honored but now almost forgotten tradition sees this story also as an impressive allegory of the fall and redemption of all mankind. The roots of this interpretation reach deep into early Christian literature. Writing in the late second century A.D., Origen stated that this interpretation came down to him from “one of the elders”:

The man who was going down is Adam. Jerusalem is paradise, and Jericho is the world. The robbers are hostile powers. The priest is the law, the Levite is the prophets, and the Samaritan is Christ. The wounds are disobedience, the beast is the Lord’s body, the inn, which accepts all who wish to enter, is the Church. And further, the two coins mean the Father and the Son. The manager of the inn is the head of the Church, to whom its care has been entrusted. And the fact that the Samaritan promises he will return represents the Savior’s second coming.

Indeed, to a listener who understands the plan of salvation, each element in this allegory can be seen as corresponding significantly with an important step in the journey of all mankind toward eternal life. Understood in this way, this parable is not only about a man who went down to Jericho but also about every person who comes down to walk upon this earth.

Reference

John W. Welch, “The Good Samaritan: A Type and Shadow of the Plan of Salvation,” *BYU Studies* 38/2 (1999): 50–115.

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LUKE 10	LDS TYPES AND SHADOWS
a man	all mankind
went down	left premortal existence
from Jerusalem	presence of God
to Jericho	a telestial world
fell	fallen state, sins
among robbers	Satan, expected trials
stripped him	stripping authority, garment
wounded him	blows of mortality
departed	required to depart
left him half dead	two deaths
by chance	not by the original divine plan
priest and Levite	those with partial authority
passed by	lacked higher power to save
Samaritan	Christ, most humble, despised
saw	knowing him and seeing all
had compassion	pure love of Christ
went to him	succoring him in need
bound his wounds	binding, covenant
pouring in	gushing forth and filling up
oil	healing, anointing, Holy Spirit
wine	atonement blood
on his own beast	with helper, triumphal rescue
inn	church, but not a final destination
took care	Jesus personally cares for all
on the morrow	dawning of new day, born again
two denaria	two days, annual temple tax
the innkeeper	any church leader
when I come again	second coming of Christ
repay	cover all costs, reward well

