

Mark 4:34

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

Analysis

Mark explains: 'But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.' Public teaching used parables exclusively; private instruction provided explanation. 'Without a parable spake he not' (χωρὶς παραβολῆς οὐκ ἐλάλει) indicates consistent method during this period. 'When alone' (κατ' ἰδίαν) Jesus 'expounded' (ἐπέλυνεν—interpreted, explained) to disciples. This two-tier instruction—public parables, private explanation—characterized Jesus' pedagogy. It fulfilled Isaiah 6:9-10 (revealing to some, concealing from others) while preparing apostles for post-resurrection ministry. Disciples' privileged access entailed responsibility: receive explanation → proclaim truth.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern teachers often gave public addresses followed by private clarification to inner circle. This established hierarchy of understanding: casual hearers received stories; committed disciples received interpretation. Jesus' method prepared apostles to become authoritative teachers after Pentecost. Their understanding, preserved in New Testament, authoritatively interprets Jesus' teaching for church. Early church maintained catechetical instruction—public evangelism, deeper teaching for believers. Church history distinguishes exoteric (public) and esoteric (private) instruction, though this distinction can be abused if suggesting secret knowledge unavailable through Scripture.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' private instruction to disciples demonstrate the value of intensive discipleship and mentoring?
2. What responsibility accompanies privileged understanding of biblical truth?
3. How can the church balance public accessibility with deeper instruction for committed disciples?

Interlinear Text

χωρίς	δὲ	παραβολῆς	οὐκ	ἐλάλει	αὐτοῦ	κατ'
without	But	a parable	he not	spake	unto them	G2596
G5565	G1161	G3850	G3756	G2980	G846	
ἰδίαν	δὲ	τοῖς	μαθηταῖς	αὐτοῦ	ἐπέλυεν	
when they were alone	But	G3588	disciples	unto them	he expounded	
G2398	G1161		G3101	G846	G1956	
πάντα						
all things						
G3956						

Additional Cross-References

John 16:25 (Parallel theme): These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.

Mark 4:10 (Parallel theme): And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.

Luke 24:27 (Parallel theme): And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

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