Parable of the Talents Book Summary, by Octavia E. Butler
by Allen Cheng


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Full Summary of Parable of the Talents

Overall Summary

Octavia Butler's Parable of the Talents is a work of science fiction and a sequel to her first book, Parable of the Sower. The trilogy follows Lauren Olamina as she tries to find a safe place in post-apocalyptic America. In this second book, Larkin reads her mother's journals after her death to deal with her grief.

In Parable of the Talents, Octavia E. Butler deals with the aftermath of Lauren Olamina's death and how her daughter Larkin copes with it. She believes that her mother was a misguided prophet whose beliefs became so fanatical she neglected her family. It also talks about America in the early twenty-first century when Lauren Olamina was an active religious leader.

America in the early twenty-first century was chaotic. There were many gangs, and violence and chaos spread everywhere. The president at the time had conscripted a fanatical religion called Christian America on all citizens, which caused even more problems. A woman named Olamina decided to start her own community based on God is Change—which means that humans have control over their destinies—and she did just that; but it wasn't easy because there were religious radicals who tried to stop her from doing so. They killed Olamina's husband Taylor and enslaved Olamina herself, forcing her into slavery with other people. Her son Larkin (who was renamed Asha Vere) was taken away by a family of Christians to be raised by them instead of his mother.

The book continues with the author's upbringing, which was far from her mother. She finds an uncle who
is a Christian and connects to him. At the same time, she reads her mother's journals and learns about how she escaped slavery to start a colony in Oregon.

Larkin recounts the story of her mother, Olamina's fall from grace and how it led to their estrangement. Her uncle Marcus lied about reconnecting Larkin with her mother; he did not tell them that they were related. When this truth came out, Larkin was devastated by his lies and rejected him completely for separating her from her own child. When she finally met up with Olamina again, there was a lot of tension between them because Larkin could not forgive her mother for choosing ideology over family ties.

The book ends with Olamina's death and the scattering of her ashes in the stars. Her followers are leaving Earth for another solar system, where they believe they will be free from religious persecution. She stays behind to watch them leave.

Octavia Butler was an African-American science fiction author who won many awards for her work. Her books often deal with power imbalance, dystopian futures, and the alienation of alternative communities. She was heavily inspired by Afrofuturism and the Black Power movement of her young adulthood. She is considered a significant figure in contemporary science fiction writing.