

The Parables of Jesus Christ

Mark 4:33-34

Introduction

- a. Parables were a common method of teaching amongst the people of the East, especially amongst the children of Israel. In Judges 9, we see a parable mentioned in the Old Testament by Jotham.
 - Jotham, who was the youngest of Gideon's seventy sons, escaped when the rest were put to death by the order of his half-brother Abimelech. Abimelech wanted to be King. Jotham used the picture of a tree as a Parable to express the utter foolishness of Shechem for having chosen Abimelech as their king.
 - There are many other parables used in the Old Testament by the prophets of God. However, in this series we are going to look at the parables in the New Testament given by our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - b. By the way of introduction to the course, we will consider three things:
 1. The MEANING of a Parable
 2. The MEASURE of a Parable
 3. The MISSION of a Parable
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A. The Meaning of a Parable

- a. Parables are analogies and comparisons that are given in story form to illustrate divine truth.
 - A Parable is an Earthly Picture with an Eternal Perspective.
 - A Parable could also be defined as a proverb.

- b. The word parable comes from the idea of “to set alongside.” Jesus used parables to set an earthly story to portray a Heavenly truth.
 - ❖ Someone stated that a parable was like a doorway. *“Jesus’ listeners stood at the doorway and heard Him. If they were not interested, they stayed on the outside. But if they were interested, they could walk through the doorway, and think more about the truth behind the parable and what it meant to their life.”*
 - However, the parable needed a key to unlock the meaning, and only the one telling the parable can reveal the truth behind the story.

B. The Measure of a Parable

- a. There are 37 Parables in the N/T Gospels.
 - There no Parables recorded in the Gospel of John.
- b. There is usually ONE central truth to a parable.
 - When reading parables we must not get sidetracked by trying explain every detail in the parable that has no significate meaning.
- c. Example: The Prodigal Son
 - The significant meaning behind the parable is to point out the “love of the Father” by forgiving his wayward son.
 - All the other details within the story are understood in the light of that one central truth.

Warren Wiersbe: “Sometimes a parable contains a certain amount of “window dressing” to provide a setting for the truth that it is intended to convey. Much foolish exegesis has resulted from trying to force a meaning on every item in a parable.”

- d. Not all the parables are explained.

Question: How do we interpret the unexplained parables?

1. Context

- a. Sometimes Jesus precedes a parable with a statement that gives context.
 - About six times in Matthew 13 alone the statement is made, **“The kingdom of heaven is like...”**

Matthew 13:31 “Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, **The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed...**”

Matthew 13:33 “Another parable spake he unto them; **The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven...**”

Matthew 13:44 “Again, **the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field..**”

Matthew 13:45 “Again, **the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:**”

Matthew 13:47 “Again, **the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:**”

Matthew 13:52 “Then said he unto them, **Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder...**”

b. Example of the “Self-Righteous man” in Luke 18:9

Luke 18:9 “And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:”

c. Example of “The Rich Fool” in Luke 12:15-16

Luke 12:15-16 “And he said unto them, **Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. (16) And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:**”

2. Comparisons

a. Compare Scripture with Scripture.

- Parables should be in complete harmony with the other doctrines of the Bible.

Warren Wiersbe: “Any Interpretation of a parable must be consistent with what is taught elsewhere in the Bible. Moreover, a knowledge of everyday

life in Bible times is often needed, along with a knowledge of God's dispensational dealings with the human race and an acquaintance with the Holy Spirit's use of symbolic language, if one is to understand properly the Lord's parabolic teaching... We must keep three Strands of truth from becoming tangled in our minds when we study the Lord's parables: salvation truth, church truth, and kingdom truth. Failure to discern the differences between these differing truths leads to error. Many of the wrong teachings current today are based by a wrong Interpretation of a parable.

b. Compare Parables with Parables.

- Compare the Parable of the Four Soils and Wheat/Tares with the Parable of the Mustard Seed.

Parable of the 4 Soils & Wheat/Tares	Parable of the Mustard Seed
Luke 8:11 – Seed = The Word of God Matthew 13:4,19 – Fowls = Wicked one	Matthew 13:31 – Seed = Man = Field =
Matthew 13:37 – Sower = Jesus Matthew 13:38 – Field = World	Matthew 13:32 – Tree = Birds =

e. Is the story of “the Rich man and Lazarus” a parable?

- **Answer:** Luke 16:19-31 has been the attention of much debate. Some have taken the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus to be a true, historical event, and others have considered it to be just a parable.

f. Some reasons why the story is not considered to be a parable.

- 1) The story is never called a parable.
 - Some of the stories Jesus told are stated as parables.
- 2) The story uses actual names of people.
 - In other parables the characters are not named.
- 3) The story does not seem to fit the definition of a parable, which is a presentation of a spiritual truth using an earthly illustration.
 - The story presents a direct spiritual truth with no earthly comparison or metaphor.
 - Let's just say it was a parable, what is Jesus trying to convey?

C. The Mission of a Parable

Note: The parables in the Bible have a specific purpose.

1. To CONCEAL

- a. A parable is used to conceal the truth from one group of people, and to reveal the truth to another group of people.

Matthew 13:10-11 “And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? (11) He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.”

- **Mysteries** = Things that are concealed. (A Secret)
- **Given unto you** = Believers (Jews and Gentiles)
- **To them it is not given** = Unbelieving Jews (As a Nation)

1) **Mysteries** = Things that are concealed. (A Secret)

Note: A Mystery is something that is concealed in the O/T and revealed in the N/T.

- The Mystery of the kingdom in Matthew 13 refers to the church age. The O/T makes no mention of the Church.
- The O/T prophecies of the Kingdom point to the sufferings of Christ and the reign of Christ in the Millennium.

Note: Nothing is mentioned in O/T prophecy regarding the period of time between the CROSS and the reign of CHRIST.

- The only reference that is mentioned is “Isaiah’s prophecy” regarding Israel's blindness. Isaiah 6:9-12

Isaiah 6:9-11 “And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. (10) Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. (11) Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate,”



- Isaiah's message to Israel was to be God's instrument for hiding the truth from an unreceptive people.

Vine writes: *“The people had so persistently perverted their ways that they had gone beyond the possibility of conversion and healing. A man may so harden himself in evil as to render his condition irremediable, and this by God's retributive judgment upon him.”*

- The first mention to the beginning of the fulfillment of this prophecy is found in Matthew 12:14-21.

Matthew 12:14-21 *“Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. (15) But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all; (16) And charged them that they should not make him known: (17) That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, (18) Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. (19) He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. (20) A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. (21) And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.”*

Note: The age of Israel's blindness is the same time period as the Church age. The “Church age” is from Pentecost to the Rapture.

- During this time period the natural branch (Israel) is “broken off” the olive tree and the “wild olive” branch (Gentiles) is grafted into their place.

Romans 11:17 *“And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;”*

- **Some of the branches** = There were only some removed as God always preserved a believing remnant.

William McDonald: *“The branches that were broken off picture the unbelieving portion of the twelve tribes of Israel. Because of their rejection of the Messiah, they were removed from their place of privilege as God's chosen people. But only some of the branches were removed. A remnant of the nation, including Paul himself, had received the Lord.”*

2) **Given unto you** = Believers (Made up of Jews and Gentiles)

Romans 1:16 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

Warren Wiersbe: “In the New Testament, a “mystery” is a spiritual truth understood only by divine revelation. It is a “sacred secret” known only to those “on the inside” who learn from the Lord and obey Him.”

Psalm 25:14 “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.”

Romans 16:25-26 “Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, (26) But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:”

3) **To them it is not given** = Unbelieving Jews (As a Nation)

- **Note:** Jesus spoke in parables to fulfil the Scriptures.

Matthew 13:12-15 “For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. (13) Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. (14) And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: (15) For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.”

- **Matthew 1-10**, Jesus presented himself as the promised Messiah and King.
- **Matthew 11-12**, Jesus was publicly rejected by the Jewish leaders.

- **Matthew 11:28-30**, Jesus gave an open invitation to come unto Him (ALL)
- **Matthew 13**, Because of Israel's rejection of the Messiah, Jesus turns to the Gentiles and reveals the "Mystery" of the Kingdom through parables.

Note: Parables are a form of precious pearls not to be cast at the feet of swine.

Matthew 7:6 "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."

2. To CONVEY

Note: A parable presents an analogy that conveys the truth in a very powerful way.

HERBERT LOCKER: "Parables are the choicest examples of figure of speech employed to express and enforce Divine truth."

Matthew 13:16-17 "But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. (17) For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

3. To COMPEL

Note: A parable presents a picture/story that compels the listener to think intently on an eternal truth.

Albert Barnes: "To teach a spiritual truth so as to arrest the attention of ignorant people, making an appeal to them through "senses".

4. To CONFRONT

Note: A parable presents a story that confronts the listener in a personal way and exposes their heart.

- a. King David's sin was exposed by a parable delivered by Nathan the Prophet. 2 Samuel 12:1-7, 13

2 Samuel 12:1-7 "And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And

he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. (2) The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: (3) But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. (4) And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. (5) And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: (6) And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. (7) And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;

2 Samuel 12:13 *“And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.”*

- b. A similar method of a parabolic story was used by Jesus to convict the heart of the Pharisees.
- Some parables were understood to a certain extent by Jesus' enemies.

Matthew 21:33-45 *“Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: (34) And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. (35) And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. (36) Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. (37) But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. (38) But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. (39) And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. (40) When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? (41) They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked*

men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. (42) Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? (43) Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. (44) And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. (45) And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them."

- **Question:** How did the Pharisees understand that Jesus was talking about them?
- Because the parable exposed what they were already planning and plotting to do in their hearts.
- Instead of saying "We must repent," they become the fulfilment of the parable.

***Matthew 21:46** "But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet."*

Note: In reality, how a person responds to the Word of God will make all the difference.

- **1 Thessalonians 2:13:16**
- **1 Corinthians 2:7-8**

Conclusion

Note: Notice what Jesus says after he finishes telling the parable.

***Mark 4:9** "And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."*

Memory Verse:

***Mark 4:8-9** "And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred. (9) And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."*