

PARABLES OF JESUS

INTRODUCTION TO PARABLES

A. Types of parables

1. A stated likeness identified by use of *like* or *as*, Matthew 10:16, *Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.*
2. An implied likeness, John 10:7, *So Jesus again said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.*
3. An idea transferred from common knowledge, Matthew 13:33, *He told them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."*
4. A story transferring truth from a specific incident of an individual, Luke 18:2, *He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man.*

B. Notes concerning parables

1. They communicate an idea from the speaker to the hearer.
2. Information is transferred from the known to the unknown.
3. A parable is designed to teach one essential truth.
4. Details may be merely incidental.
5. Study the parable in the context of the culture, customs, and daily life of Palestine since truth is transferred from the known to the unknown.
6. Jesus began using parables when the religious leaders of Israel rejected Jesus' offer to establish the kingdom of heaven. They said that His teaching and miracles came not by the power of God but by the power of Satan.

C. Rules for the interpretation of parables

1. Jesus' parables concern the *kingdom of heaven*, that sphere over which the sovereign God rules.
2. Observe the immediate context of the parable
 - a. In answer to questions, Matthew 9:14, *Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?"*
 - b. In answer to requests, Luke 12:13, *Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."*
 - c. In answer to complaints, Luke 15:2, *And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."*
 - d. Parables given with a stated purpose, Luke 18:1, *And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.*
 - e. Following an exhortation or principle, Mark 13:33, *Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come.*
3. Study the parable itself to determine what is the point at issue: in the persistent widow, emphasis is not on the character of the judge but the persistence of the widow.
4. Study the parable in the context of the culture, customs, and daily life of Palestine since truth is transferred from the known to the unknown.

D. Jesus' use of parables

1. About one-third of Jesus' teaching as recorded in the Gospels was in the form of parables.
2. Jesus used the story parable most to teach truth to His hearers.
3. Jesus explains why he used parables in His teaching: to reveal truth to some but to hide truth from others, Matthew 13:10-17, *Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" 11 And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. 15 For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them. 16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. 17 For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.*

- E. Jesus explained why He used parables in His teaching in Matthew 13:10-17,
1. The disciples asked Jesus why He spoke in parables (10), Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?"
 2. Reasons for using parables (11-13)
 - a. So disciples can understand kingdom truth (11a), *And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven,*
 - b. So unbelievers will not understand kingdom truth (11b-13), *but to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.*
 - 1) Those who rejected the person of Christ will not be granted insight into the work of Christ.
 - 2) Louis Barbieri, *By using parables in public, Jesus could preach to as many individuals as before, but He could then draw the disciples aside and explain to them fully the meaning of His words.*
 - c. So the Old Testament would be fulfilled (14-15), Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: *You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.*
 - 1) Jesus quoted Isaiah 6:9-10 to show that hardened hearts in the Old Testament would continue.
 - 2) This condition will continue until their hearts are softened at the Second Coming of Christ.
- F. Setting of Jesus' first parables in Matthew
1. Characteristics of a righteous person (Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7)
 - a. God demands a righteousness of the heart that is evidenced by outward acts of righteousness, Ezekiel 36:26, *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*
 - b. The Pharisees redefined righteousness in terms of a set of external standards., Matthew 23:23, *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.*
 2. The Golden Rule concludes the content of Jesus' teaching section, Matthew 7:12, *So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*
- G. Kingdom truth from the parables of Jesus.
1. The progress of the Kingdom
 - a. The Two Builders (Matthew 7:24-27)
 - b. The Soils (Matthew 13:1-23)
 - c. The Weeds (Matthew 13:24-30)
 - d. The Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-32)
 - e. The Leaven (Matthew 13:33)
 - f. The Net (Matthew 13:47-50)
 - g. A Kingdom Divided Against Itself (Mark 22-30)
 - h. The Patched Garment and the Wineskins (Luke 5:36-39)
 2. Entrance into the Kingdom
 - a. The Two Paths (Matthew 7:13-14)
 - b. The Two Trees (Matthew 7:15-20)
 - c. The Two Claims (Matthew 7:21-23)
 - d. The Barren Fig Tree (Luke 13:1-9)
 - e. The Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:1-32)
 3. Conduct in the Kingdom
 - a. The Hidden Treasure (Matthew 13:44)
 - b. The Pearl of Great Price (Matthew 13:45-46)
 - c. The Homeowner (Matthew 13:52)
 - d. The Laborers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16)
 - e. The Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-32)
 - f. The Two Debtors (Luke 7:36-50)
 - g. The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:15-37)

- h. The Wedding Feast and the Great Banquet (Luke 14:1-14)
 - i. The Cost of Discipleship (Luke 14:25-35)
 - j. The Shrewd Manager (Luke 16:1-15)
 - k. Two Parables on Prayer, Luke 18:1-14
4. Judgment in the Kingdom
- a. The Tenants (Matthew 21:33-44)
 - b. The Wedding Feast (Matthew 22:1-14)
 - c. The Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)
 - d. The Talents (Matthew 25:14-30)
 - e. The Barren Fig Tree (Luke 13:19)
 - f. The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)

H. Lessons in *Parables of Jesus*

1. *Introduction*
2. Matthew 7:13-29, *Parables by Twos*
3. Matthew 13:1-23, *The Parable of the Sower*
4. Matthew 13:24-43, *The Parable of the Weeds, The Mustard Seed and the Leaven*
5. Matthew 13:44-52, *The Parables of the Hidden Treasure, the Pearl of Great Price and the Net*
6. Matthew 20:1-16, *Laborers in the Vineyard*
7. Matthew 21:28-44, *The Parable of the Tenants*
8. Matthew 22:1-14, *The Parable of the Wedding Feast*
9. Matthew 25:1-13, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins*
10. Mark 3:20-35, *A Kingdom Divided Against Itself*
11. Luke 5:27-39, *The Patched Garment and the Wineskins*
12. Matthew 25:14-30, *The Parable of the Talents*
13. Luke 7:36-50, *Creditor and Debtors*
14. Luke 10:25-37, *The Parable of the Good Samaritan*
15. Luke 13:1-9, *Repentance and the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree*
16. Luke 14:25-35, *The Cost of Discipleship*
17. Luke 15:1-32, *The Parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Prodigal Son*
18. Luke 16:1-15, *The Parable of the Dishonest Manager*
19. Luke 16:19-31, *The Rich Man and Lazarus*
20. Luke 18:1-14, *Two Parables on Prayer*
21. John 10:1-18, *The Good Shepherd*
22. John 15:1-21, *The True Vine*