

# HE SPAKE TO THEM MANY THINGS IN PARABLES

## *Why Did Jesus Use Parables?*

### I. INTRODUCTION.

#### A. Why Parables?

1. This lesson will not cover the meaning of various parables, but rather the purpose behind Jesus' use of parables. Why did Jesus use parables (Mt. 13:10)?
2. Parables comprise approximately one-third of Jesus' recorded teachings.
3. There are over forty parables of Jesus recorded in the gospels.
4. Jesus' use of parables was in fulfillment of Psalm 78:2 (Mt. 13:34-35).

#### B. What Is A Parable?

1. "Parable" is transliterated from the Gr. παραβολή (*parabole* or *para-bow-lay*) = from *para* (alongside, close beside) and *ballo* (to cast or throw); to cast along side; to place beside; hence, to place one thing beside another for the purpose of comparison. The Greek word is transliterated (English letters corresponding to the Greek letters) "parable" in most places except in the book of Hebrews where it is translated "figure" (Heb. 9:9; 11:19).
2. A parable is a story that illustrates, by comparison or analogy, a spiritual truth. It is a teaching aid (illustration) that is cast alongside the truth being taught. The known (a familiar story) is placed beside the unknown (a spiritual truth), so that the unknown can become known.
3. Some Bible students have described a parable as "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning". Parables are real stories that illustrate spiritual lessons. They are not fables, myths, or proverbs. A few parables are even found in the OT: Isa. 5:1-7; 2 Sam. 12:1-4.
4. Jesus would sometimes say, "The kingdom of heaven is like..." (Mt. 13:31, 33, 44, 45, 47, 52: 20:1; see Lk. 8:1, 4). Jesus' main point in his parables concerns the kingdom of heaven (the king = God; the king's son = Jesus; the kingdom law = the gospel; the kingdom citizens = disciples; etc.).
5. "Parable" (the various forms of παραβολή) is found in the following 48 NT passages: Mt. 13:3, 10, 13, 18, 24, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 53; 15:15; 21:33, 45; 22:1; 24:32; Mk. 3:23; 4:2, 10, 11, 13, 30, 33, 34; 7:17; 12:1, 12; 13:28; Lk. 4:23; 5:36; 6:39; 8:4, 9, 10, 11; 12:16, 41; 13:6; 14:7; 15:3; 18:1, 9; 19:11; 20:9, 19; 21:29; Heb. 9:9; 11:19.

### II. MATTHEW 13:1-23 (MK. 4:1-20; LK. 8:1-15).

- A. Jesus teaches mixed multitudes in parables (Mt. 13:1-3).
- B. The parable of the Sower focuses on the heart's reception or rejection of the word of God (Mt. 13:4-8; see Mk. 4:13).
- C. Jesus warns about one's ears – giving heed to (understanding and obeying) God's word (Mt. 13:9; see also Mt. 11:15; 14:35).
- D. The disciples' question: Why? (Mt. 13:10; see Mk. 4:10).
- E. Jesus' answer indicates two reasons for parables (Mt. 13:11-17; see Lk. 8:10).

1. There are the “haves”: “you”, the believing disciples (not just the 12); and the “have-nots”: “them”, the unbelieving multitudes (Mt. 13:11; see Mk. 4:11).
  2. God’s law of addition and subtraction: the “haves” will “have abundance” (more truth) and the “have-nots” will have theirs “taken away” (less truth) (Mt. 13:12). See also Matthew 25:29 and Luke 19:26.
  3. Some in the multitude do not want to hear and understand: seeing (opportunities), they see not (do not respond); hearing (audible sounds), they hear not (do not respond) (Mt. 13:13).
  4. This unfortunate situation fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah 6:9-10 (Mt. 13:14-15).
  5. “But” marks a contrast. Unlike the unbelieving multitudes (Mt. 13:13-15), the believing disciples will be blessed because they want to know more truth (Mt. 13:16-17).
- F. The believing disciples are now given more truth (Mt. 13:18-23; see Mk. 4:13).
- G. The parables separate the multitudes: the truth-seekers from the curiosity-seekers! Those who seek truth will ask for more truth (Mt. 13:36; 15:15; Lk. 7:17). Those who don’t will simply walk away. See Mark 4:33-34 and Luke 8:10.

### III. WHY PARABLES?

- A. To Reveal Truth.
1. Parables reveal truth to those with a proper attitude; those who are sincere, earnest truth-seekers; those who want more; those who have open minds and hearts. These people hear the parables and ask Jesus for more truth.
- B. To Conceal Truth.
1. Parables conceal truth from those who do not want to understand and obey truth; those who are hardened, willfully ignorant, indifferent, rebellious, antagonistic; those who do not love truth or believe they already have the truth, etc. These people hear a silly story in the parables and walk away unimpressed and unchanged.
- C. To Preserve Truth.
1. Parables are set forth in a vivid, striking form which commands attention and makes them memorable.
- D. To Admit Truth.
1. Parables cause some listeners to admit truth that they would otherwise be reluctant to acknowledge (Mk. 12:1, 12).

### IV. LESSONS FOR TODAY.

- A. Attitude: Do Your Ears Really Hear? Is Your Heart Hardened?
1. This is not a reference to physical hearing and physical hearts, but to understanding and obeying. The local churches are to “hear” what the Spirit says (Rev. 2-3; 13:9).
  2. Isaiah 6:9-10 is quoted in Matthew 13:14-15, John 12:40, and Acts 28:26-27 and applied to unbelieving Jews. Does it apply to you today?
- B. An Open-Minded, Truth-Seeking Attitude Must Be Cultivated.
1. Are you a “have” (“Give me the Bible”)?
  2. Or, a “have-not” (“I don’t get anything out of the sermon, the Bible class, or gospel meetings”)?