

Parables: *Secrets of the Kingdom*



Matthew 13:1-17 (NKJV)

2

The Parable of the Sower

13 On the same day Jesus went **out of the house** and sat by the sea. **2** And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

3 **Then He spoke many things to them in parables,** saying: “Behold, a sower went out to sow. **4** And as he sowed, some *seed* fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. **5** Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. **6** But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. **7** And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. **8** But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. **9** He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

The Purpose of Parables

10 And the disciples came and said to Him, **“Why do You speak to them in parables?”** **11** He answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries (secrets) of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. **12** For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. **13** Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. **14** And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says:

Matthew 13:1-17 (NKJV)

‘Hearing you will hear and shall not understand,
And seeing you will see and not perceive;
¹⁵ For the hearts of this people have grown dull.
Their ears are hard of hearing,
And their eyes they have closed,
Lest they should see with *their eyes* and hear with *their ears*,
Lest they should understand with *their hearts* and turn,
So that I should heal them.’



¹⁶ **But blessed *are* your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear;** ¹⁷ for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous *men* desired to see what you see, and did not see *it*, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear *it*.

Overview

- What are Parables?
- Parables in the Gospels
- Purpose of Parables: “Why do You speak in parables?”
- Meaning of Parables: Dispensational Key
- Parables of Proclamation and Rejection: Matthew 13
- Conclusion and resources

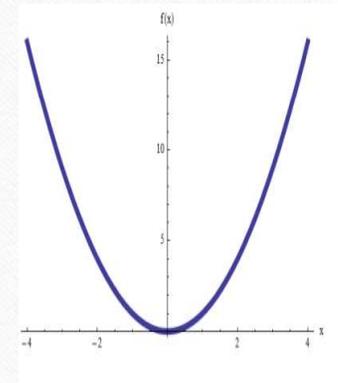
What are Parables?

- Conventional wisdom: “A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning”?
- Other views: - Allegory (Saint Augustine)
 - Makes one main point (Julicher)
- Old Testament: *mashal* (Strong’s Hebrew No. 4912) – a proverb, figurative saying, parable, allegory used too reveal a truth or arrest attention
- Examples: Psalm 78:2; 2 Sam. 12:1-10; Isaiah 5:1-7



Parables in the Gospels

- *Parabole* (Strong's Greek No. 3850) – *para* – “beside”, *bole* – “I cast” or “throw”; to cast or place one thing beside another.
- Teaching aids placed alongside the truth being taught (Strong's)
- Comparisons ie. similes, metaphors or analogies
- Stories from everyday life in C.1st Palestine used to convey spiritual truths or morals eg. new cloth on an old garment; lost sheep; wicked tenants
- Parables hide secrets (Matt. 13:11)



Parables in the Gospels

- Synoptic Gospels: *Parabole*. Around 38 parables. Majority in Matthew and Luke. Most in Matthew are repeated in Mark. Luke has many which are unique.
- John: *Paroimia* (Strong's Greek No.) (5 times) Corresponds to the OT. Hebrew word *mashal* which is the general term for figures of speech eg. The Good Shephard (Ch.10); The Vine and the Vineyard (Ch.15)



Parables in the Gospels: A Definition



Illustrations from everyday life used by Christ during his earthly ministry as a means of instruction to reveal or conceal the secrets of the Kingdom of God to His listeners.

Purpose of Parables

9

“Why do You speak to them in parables?” (Matthew 13:10)

1. Christ’s main method of instruction in the Gospels

- “Relatable” – Everyday life: widows, stewards, farmers, eg. The Sower (Matt. 13:1-9)
- Memorable eg. The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)
- Used to shock and subvert eg. The Vineyard Owner (Mark 12: 1-12)
- Uses hyperbole and paradox eg. The Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:23-35)



Purpose of Parables

10

“Why do You speak to them in parables?” (Matthew 13:10)

2. To reveal and conceal the secrets of the kingdom:

Two main groups:

1. **Revealed to the spiritually “seeing”** ie. those who listened, the insiders, the initiated eg. the Disciples
2. **Concealed to the spiritually “blind”** ie., those who refused to listen and hardened their hearts, the outsiders, the indifferent and oppositional eg. Jewish leaders



Meaning of Parables

Dispensational Key: Isaiah 6:9-10

Matthew 13:10-16 (NKJV)

¹⁰ “Why do You speak to them in parables?”

¹¹ He answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the ^[a]mysteries (secrets) of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. ¹² For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. ¹³ Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴ And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says:

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And their eyes they have closed,
Lest they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears,
Lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn,
So that I ^[b]should heal them.’*

- Primary meaning of parables is **dispensational**: to **reveal** the secrets of the kingdom concerning Israel to the disciples and **conceal** it from others
- Original context: Isaiah's prophetic **judgement** on Judah and Israel
- NT: Quoted 7 times! A **judgment** on national Israel. Mathew 13:14; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40; Acts 28:26-28; Romans 11:3
- A **key dispensational marker**: secrets **concealed** from Israel's leaders foreshadowing later national blinding
- Marks the transition in Gospels from proclamation to **rejection** phase of the Kingdom and the King

Parables of Proclamation and Rejection in Matthew 13

“Then they went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him...” (Matthew 12:14)

Context

- Terms “parable”, “mystery”/“secret” used for the first time
- Matthew’s Gospel is about the **proclamation** and **rejection** of the King and the Kingdom (Bullinger)
- Ch.1-16 **Proclamation**. “From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, ‘Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’” (4:17)
- Ch.12 **Rejection**: Christ’s Messianic claims are demonstrated but they reject him and plot to kill Him.
- Ch.13 **Proclamation** and **rejection**. 8 parables concerning the secrets of the kingdom (Ch.12-13).
- End Ch.13 **Rejection** in Nazareth. (13:54-58)

Parables of Proclamation and Rejection: 8 Parables of Matthew 13: Structure

4 Parables: “Outside the house” (13:1) to a large crowd, publicly. Meaning is hidden: Kept “secret” (13:25)

- **The Sower**

- **The Tares**
- **The Mustard Seed**
- **The Leaven**

4 Parables: “Inside the house” (13:36) to the disciples, privately. Meaning is revealed: They “understood” (13:51)

- **The Treasure**
- **The Pearl**
- **The Dragnet**
- **The Householder/Scribe**

-- Adapted from C. H. Welch, *Parable, Sign and Miracle*. p.41

Do you know this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? (Mark 4:13) 14

1. The Parable of the Sower: Meaning

Matthew 13:18-23 (NKJV)

¹⁸ “Therefore **hear** the parable of the sower: ¹⁹ When anyone **hears the word of the kingdom**, and does not understand *it*, then the wicked *one* comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by **the wayside**. ²⁰ But he who received the seed on **stony places**, this is he who **hears the word** and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹ yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. ²² Now he who received seed among **the thorns** is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. ²³ But he who received seed on the **good ground** is he who hears the word and understands *it*, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”



Do you know this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? (Mark 4:13) **15**

1. The Parable of the Sower: Meaning

- **Paradigm parable** (Mark 4:13)
- Found in all three Synoptics (Matt.13:1-9); Mark (4:1-9) and Luke 8:48)
- Meaning:
 - Christ's interpretation (Matt. 13:18-23)
 - Traditional views
 - Primary interpretation is dispensational



Context of Matthew Ch.13

16

“It shall greatly help to understand the Scriptures if you mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom and to whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goes before and what follows after.”

— Miles Coverdale (1488-1569)

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- **By Whom?** Originally spoken by Christ and later recorded by Matthew
 - **To Whom? When?** Mainly Jewish audience in C.1st Palestine
 - **What?** The **proclamation** of the King (the Messiah) and Kingdom of Heaven to Israel and their **rejection** of both
 - **Why?** Purpose is explicitly stated: To **reveal** the secrets of the kingdom of heaven to the Disciples and **conceal** them from the rest (13:11)
 - **What circumstances?** Despite Christ having proven His Messianic claims (Ch.1-12), is despised rejected, and, finally, crucified (Ch.12, 13; Ch 16-27)

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“The kingdom of heaven is like...”

2. The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares

Matthew 13:24-30

²⁴ Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; ²⁵ but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. ²⁶ But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. ²⁷ So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ ²⁸ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ ²⁹ But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.” ’ ”



Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 Parable of the Wheat & Tares

“The kingdom of heaven is like...”

2. The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares

Matthew 13:36-43: Meaning

³⁶Then Jesus sent the multitude away and **went into the house**. And His disciples came to Him, saying, “**Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.**”

³⁷He answered and said to them: “He who sows **the good seed is the Son of Man**. ³⁸The field is **the world**, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but **the tares** are the sons of the wicked *one*. ³⁹The enemy who sowed them is **the devil**, **the harvest** is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. ⁴⁰Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, ⁴²and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!



Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 Parable of the Wheat & Tares

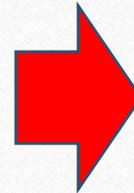
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Meaning

The “good seed” is contaminated by Satan. This delays the setting up of the Kingdom until the the end of the age when there will be reward and punishment

“The kingdom of heaven is like...”
3. The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Matthew 13:31-32

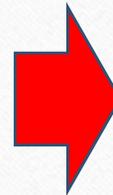
³¹ Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, ³² which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.”



“The kingdom of heaven is like...”
3. The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Matthew 13:31-32

³¹ Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, ³² which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.”



Meaning

Another reason for delay, the tiny seed of Israel should have flourished and filled the earth with fruit but Satan and his agents corrupted it.

“The kingdom of heaven is like...”

4. The Parable of the Leaven

Matthew 13:33

³³ Another parable He spoke to them: “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.”

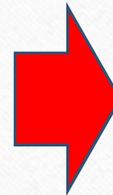


“The kingdom of heaven is like...”

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Meaning

Another reason for delay.
The leaven of evil has completely corrupted the meal of God's truth

Parables of Proclamation and Rejection: 8 Parables of Matthew 13

Structure:

4 Parables paired: “Outside the house” (13:1) to a large crowd, publicly. Meaning is hidden, kept “secret” (13:25). **Outward failure** of Israel. **Past and Future. Reason for delay** in setting up the Kingdom.

- **The Sower**
- **The Tares**
- **The Mustard Seed**
- **The Leaven**

4 Parables: “Inside the house” Past and Future (13:36) to the disciples, privately. Meaning is **revealed**: They “understood” (13:51). **A remnant** will ultimately fulfil God’s purposes.

- **The Treasure**
- **The Pearl**
- **The Dragnet**
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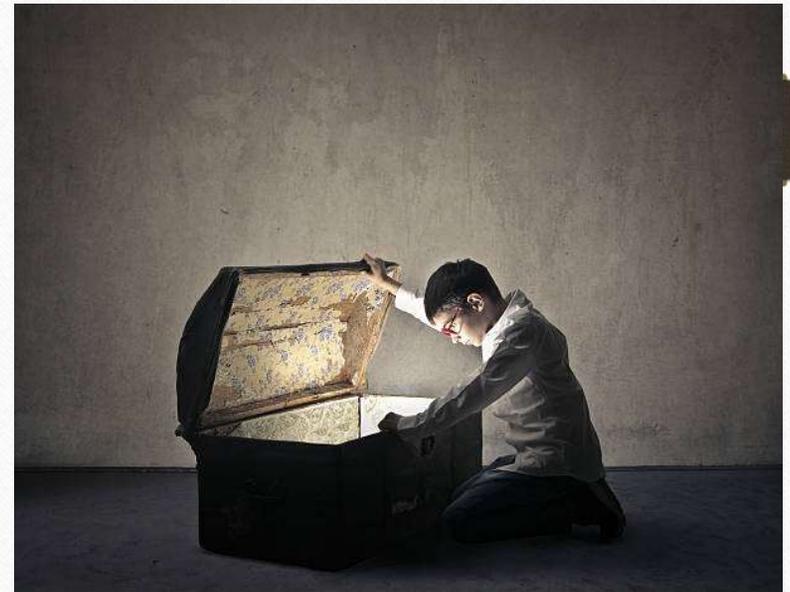
“The kingdom of heaven is like...”

5,6. The Parable of Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

Matthew 13:44-45

⁴⁴ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

⁴⁵ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, ⁴⁶ who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.



“The kingdom of heaven is like...”

5,6. The Parable of Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

Matthew 13:44-46

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Meaning

Israel is an elect nation, God’s “special treasure” (Ex. 19:5-6) which was hidden but will be redeemed to become his Holy people

“The kingdom of heaven is like...”
**5,6. The Parable of Hidden Treasure and
the Pearl of Great Price**

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Meaning
Israel is an elect nation, God’s “special treasure” (Ex. 19:5-6) which was hidden but will be redeemed to become his Holy people



The pearl represents an elect remnant chosen out of Israel who have been redeemed and will be rewarded

“The kingdom of heaven is like...”

7. The Parable of the Dragnet

Matthew 13:47-51

⁴⁷ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, ⁴⁸ which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. ⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, ⁵⁰ and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

⁵¹ Jesus said to them, **“Have you understood all these things?”**

They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.



“The kingdom of heaven is like...”

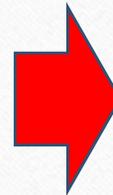
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⁵¹ [Q] Jesus said to them, **“Have you understood all these things?”**

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Meaning

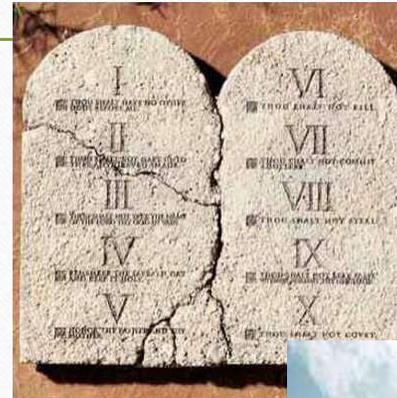
The gathering of the nations at the end of the age when they will be judged, rewarded and punished according to their treatment of Israel

“The kingdom of heaven is like...”

8. The Parable of the Householder/Scribe

The Parable of the Householder/Scribe

⁵² Then He said to them, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure *things* new and old.”

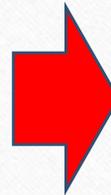


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Meaning

The householder or scribe represents Israel and its role in instructing and disciplining the nations with both the “new” and the “old” treasures.

Parables of Proclamation and Rejection: 8 Parables of Matthew 13 33

“Outside the house” (13:1) to a large crowd: External meaning. Apparent failure of the Kingdom

- **The Sower** – Sowing of the seed in four types of soils. They (Israel) did not understand. Delay
- **The Tares** - Good and bad together. Separated at the harvest at the end of the age. Delay.
- **The Mustard Seed** – One Tree (Israel). Grows from small seed but Satan’s “birds” nest its branches. Delay
- **The Leaven** – Hidden in three measures of meal. Leaven of evil corrupts the Kingdom “meal”. Delay

“Inside the house” (13:36) to the disciples: Internal hidden meaning. Glorious future of the Kingdom

- **The Treasure** – Hidden in a field. The nation of Israel as distinct from the nations
- **The Pearl** – One Pearl. The remnant of Israel as distinct from the nation
- **The Dragnet** – Good and bad together. The Gentile nations as distinct from Israel. Separated at the end of the age.

Disciples understand

- **The Householder/Scribe** – The treasures of Israel opened to those in the house. Old and new treasures revealed.

-- Adapted from C. H. Welch, *Parable, Sign and Miracle*. p.41

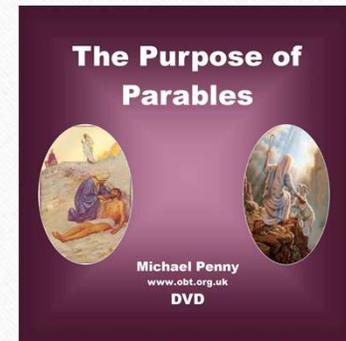
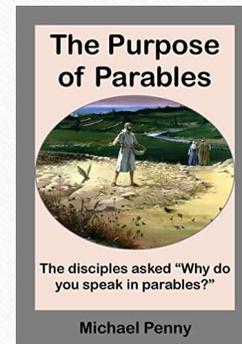
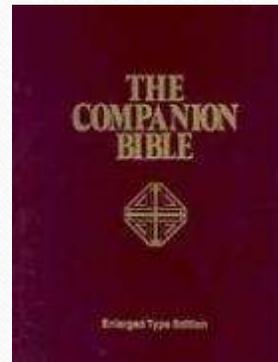
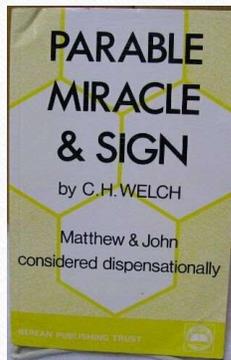
Conclusion

“Blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear...”



- Parables in the Gospels are **comparisons or illustrations**
- Their purpose is to **instruct** the Disciples about **the secrets of Kingdom**
- They **reveal** and/or **conceal** the those secrets
- Some **“hear”** and believe and others **reject** or oppose
- Matthew 13 parables are concerned with **the King and the Kingdom**
- They are primarily **dispensational** in character
- They are a **blessing** to those who are given understanding

Useful Resources



Appendices 140, 145