

Lessons from the Parables

During His earthly ministry, Jesus used a unique teaching method called "parables" to reveal other spiritual truths about the Kingdom. A parable is a story which uses an example from the natural world to illustrate a spiritual truth. The actual meaning of the word "parable" is to lay beside to compare. In parables, Jesus used a natural example and compared it to a spiritual truth. A parable is an earthly story with a Heavenly meaning. That which is natural is something you can observe with your spiritual senses. In analyzing the parables, we discover the King's personal view of His Kingdom through His church. *And the disciples came and said to Him, Why do You speak to them in parables? He answered and said to them, Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.*(MAT13:10-11) Knowledge of the spiritual truths of the Kingdom was given to disciples because they had spiritual minds. Those without spiritual minds heard the parables and failed to understand them because spiritual truths can only be understood by a spiritual mind.(1 COR2:14) *therefore "blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears, for they hear"* The main subject of the parables of Jesus was the Kingdom of God.

The parables concern the offer made by Jesus of the Kingdom of God: The Patched Garment: Matthew 9:16; The Wine Bottles: Matthew 9:17; These two parables teach that Jesus offered a Kingdom that was new and unique. It could not be confined to the old patterns of religious tradition. It is not possible to understand the Kingdom of God by trying to fit it into old thought patterns and lifestyles. Here Jesus is contrasting the old law with the new covenant as foretold by the prophets and revealed in the New Testament. The Good Shepherd: John 10:1-16, King Jesus is compared to a shepherd. He would lead His sheep out of religious bondage and bring them into the liberty of His Kingdom. His sheep would know His voice and respond to His offer of the Kingdom. The Lost Sheep: Matthew 18:12-14; The Lost Coin: Luke 15:8-10; The Lost Son: Luke 15:11-32; These parables illustrate how the Father seeks lost sheep for the Kingdom, how His followers should seek the lost, and how repentance is the key to becoming an heir to the Kingdom. The Wedding Banquet: Matthew 22:1-14; The Great Banquet: Luke 14:16-24; Through these parables, Jesus invited the present generation to enter the Kingdom. The original announcement was sent to a special group of people, the nation of Israel. Not all those chosen responded, so another invitation was extended to the Gentile nations. The Two Builders: Matthew 7:24-27; In this parable Jesus taught that the Kingdom was built on Him. He compared Himself to a rock on which a person may build their life. A house built on such a secure foundation will stand through every storm. Jesus offered men the opportunity to build their lives on the eternal foundation of the Kingdom of God. The Two Gates: Matthew 7:13-14; Only one gate leads to the Kingdom. That gate is the Lord Jesus.

The parables concern the rejection of the King: The Murderous Husbandmen: Matthew 21:33-44; Jesus used parables to reveal that the nation of Israel would reject Him as Messiah and King. God sent prophets to earth with the offer of the Kingdom but Israel killed the prophets. Then God sent His own Son. He, too, was rejected and killed. The Barren Fig Tree: Luke 13:6-9; The fig tree is a symbol of the nation of Israel. God raised up Israel as the nation through which He could reveal the Kingdom to the world. Time and time again God tried to get the "tree" of Israel to bring forth "fruit" among heathen nations by sharing their knowledge of the true God, but Israel remained barren and unfruitful. The Wedding: Matthew 22:2-14 to illustrate His rejection. Servants were sent to call people to the wedding but the people killed the servants and rejected the invitation. This revealed how the offer of the Kingdom was to be rejected.

The parables concern the postponement of the Kingdom: The Talents: Matthew 25:14-30; The Man on a long Journey: Mark 13:34-37; The Servants: Matthew 24:43-51; The Watching Servants: Luke 12:36-38; Jesus told several parables which revealed the Kingdom of God would be established in its final form in the future. The Kingdom would not come at the present time because Israel rejected Jesus as King. These parables also revealed Jesus would be absent for a time from the realm in which the Kingdom would finally be instituted. They stressed that His followers should be faithful over the task given them, using their talents and abilities to extend the Kingdom of God. The Fig Tree: Matthew 24:32-34; Jesus told a parable about a fig tree which revealed the approximate timing for the final establish of God's Kingdom. He said one can tell when summer is near, the fig tree puts out growth in leaves and blossoms. Jesus revealing that when Israel was restored to her own land and began to blossom again as a nation, the time of the return of the King near. Note, the state of Israel was founded, people re-gathered from the four corners of the earth.

The parables concern the value of the Kingdom: Jesus used parables to illustrate the great value of the Kingdom of God. The Pearl Of Great Price: Matthew 13:45-46; The Hidden Treasure: Matthew 13:44; These parables show that the Kingdom of God is of such great value that nothing else compares with it. It is more valuable than any possession of man. If you must give up everything you possess in order to obtain the Kingdom, it is worth the sacrifice. The Householder: Matthew 13:52; In this parable Jesus compared Himself to the custodian of a storehouse who brings forth items needed by the residents of the Kingdom of God. Jesus asked His disciples, "Have you understood all these things?" That they understood made it possible for Jesus to conclude with the responsibility of the disciples as scribes in the church, instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven under the authority of Jesus Christ. The church Jesus would build upon the large rock would bring forth a treasure of knowledge and understanding, things new and old.

The parables concern the growth of the Kingdom - 2 -

Jesus told parables which illustrated how the Kingdom of God would extend throughout the world. The Talents: Matthew 25:14-30; This parable reveals that the Kingdom will be spread by wise use of the spiritual talents and abilities God has given believers. The Sower (also known as the Parable of the Four Soils): Matthew 13:3-8; The Gospel of the Kingdom will be spread by the sowing of the seed of the Word of God. Sower who scatters seed which falls on four different types of ground. The hard ground or "by the way side" represents someone who is hardened by sin; he hears but does not understand the Word, keeping the heart dull and Satan plucks the message away. The rocky ground pictures a man who professes delight with the Word; however, he has no root in himself, but endures for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because, eventually he falls away. The thorny ground depicts one who seems to receive the Word, but the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. The good ground portrays the one who hears, understands, receives the Word and produces much fruit—and then allows the Word to accomplish its result in his life. A man's reception of God's Word is determined by the condition of his heart. To this sowing there will be varied responses, depending on the attitude of the hearers. The fruit depends not on the sower but on the life that is in the seed itself and the condition of the soil (man's heart). Salvation is more than a hearing of the gospel. The Tares And Wheat: Matthew 13:24-30; Satan will try to defeat the spread of the Kingdom by sowing people described as "weeds" among the good seed of God's Kingdom. The weeds Satan sows resemble good wheat. At the time of harvest wheat can be identified by the grain it produces. The Drag Net: Matthew 13:47-50, The Kingdom is also compared to a net thrown into the sea. All kinds of fish are caught, but when the net is drawn to shore the good fish are separated from the bad. The Kingdom will draw in men and women from all nations. Prior to the final establishing of the Kingdom, there will be judgment to determine those who must be excluded. The Mustard Seed: Matthew 13:31-32; The Kingdom of God will grow like a mustard seed. The seed is very small and has small beginning, but dynamic growth of the church even while adversaries confront it. The Leaven: Matthew 13:33; Like leaven the Kingdom of God will spread throughout the whole "lump" of the world. The progress of the church is against and despite the contagious outspread of sin.

The following parables concern life in the Kingdom: Many parables Jesus told illustrated principles of Kingdom living. The Two Sons: Matthew 21:28-32; Jesus taught that obedience is the test of son-ship within the Kingdom family. The Good Samaritan: Luke 10:30-37; The Kingdom principle of love to all is taught in this parable. Our neighbor is anyone in need, whose need we know, and whose need we are able to meet. The Two Debtors: Luke 7:41-43; This parable teaches that love will be shown by the one who has experienced the love of the Kingdom. The Pharisee And The Publican: Luke 18:10-14; The Pharisee approached God on the basis of his own righteousness. The tax collector recognized there was nothing in himself worthy to stand before the Lord. In this parable Jesus taught how people should approach God to offer worship, praise, thanksgiving, petition, and intercession in the Kingdom. It also taught humility in prayer and warned of the sin of self-righteousness. The Persistent Widow: Luke 18:1-8; The Persistent Friend: Luke 11:5-10; These two parables illustrate the importance of persistence in prayer. The Faithful Manager: Matthew 25:14-30; This parable stresses the importance of wise and righteous stewardship of Kingdom treasures which God entrusts to believers. Seats at the Wedding Feast: Luke 14:7-11; This parable illustrates the importance of humility and that promotion in God's Kingdom comes from the Lord. The Vine and the Branches: John 15:1-6; This parable describes the relationship of Jesus to the Church. The Laborers in the Vineyard: Matthew 20:1-16; This parable teaches that eternal rewards are not made on the basis of worldly standards. The Servant's office: Luke 17:7-10 This parable teaches that it is our responsibility to serve and do those things commanded by the King. The King going to War: Luke 14:31-33; The Man building a Tower: Luke 14:28-30; These parables emphasize the importance of proper understanding of commitment to the Kingdom. The Wedding Garment: Matthew 22:10-14; This parable emphasizes necessity of being clothed in righteousness to remain in the Kingdom. It is through Jesus' righteousness, not self-righteousness, that this is achieved. The rich man's Meditation: Luke 12:16-21 This story illustrates the folly of relying on temporal material wealth. The priority of life is the eternal Kingdom of God. The Mote and the Beam: Matthew 7:1-5; This parable teaches that we should judge ourselves rather than others. The Harvest: Matthew 9:37-38; It was the story of a harvest, ripe and ready to gather, which Jesus used to focus the attention of His disciples on the need for extending the Kingdom. Jesus referred to the many souls needing to be brought to repentance and faith as a harvest waiting. It was the vision conveyed by this parable that changed them from "fishermen" to "fishers of men."

The parables concern Kingdom Judgment: The Ten Virgins: Matthew 25:1-12, The Sheep and The Goats: Matthew 25:31-46; Jesus told several parables concerning future judgment in the Kingdom. At the time of judgment, those who are sheep of the true shepherd, Jesus Christ, will be accepted. All others will be denied entrance into the Kingdom. The Son of Man now sits on His throne judging all the nations. As exalted King the Messiah now exercises judgment, separating the sheep from the goats. The righteous are invited to share in the blessings of the kingdom that has been prepared for them from the beginning by the Father's design, while the wicked are sent to join their father, the devil.

In this parable Jesus revealed that kingdom of God is mysterious and rebellious nature.(MAT.13:24-30,36-43) One field, Two sowers. One sows good seed and the other sows weeds. Jesus explains that the field is the world. The frequent phrase "kingdom of heaven" denotes Christ's work through His church, to announce the good news of the coming Kingdom of God. The landowner tells servants not to pull up weeds in the field, but to leave them until end of the age.

In the explanation of parable, Christ declares that He Himself is the sower. He spreads His redeemed seed in the field of the world. By His grace, these Christians bear the fruit of the Spirit. Their presence on earth is the reason like the field of the world. When the kingdom of heaven comes to its fruition, kingdom will be a reality and there will be no "weeds" among the "wheat." But for now, both good and bad seeds mature in the world. The enemy in the parable is Satan. In opposition to Jesus Christ, the devil tries to destroy Christ's work by placing false Christ, prophets, teachers in the world who lead many astray. Satan's malicious intention in sowing tares among the wheat is to cause problems and confusion. *if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth? Before your eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as dying on the cross?(GAL1:9:3:1)* The landowner in this parable wisely waited until the harvest. After harvesting the whole field, the tares could be separated and burned. The wheat would be saved in the barn.

The parable contains two warnings that are important to how we deal with possible tares within God's church. First, we need to be aware that tares are a reality. Counterfeit members do exist and are at work. In addition tares could also be false ministers even false apostles.(MAT24:24) False church leaders, teaching false doctrines that spread spiritual disorder, are a dire threat. Tares in the church spread destructive attitudes and ideas that can influence true brethren toward negativity, and doubt. Jesus warns us of such deception. Knowing that tares are in the church, we must be vigilant, clinging to the truth lest we be deceived. Second, Christ's parable warns us not only to take care to avoid the false doctrine and attitudes of the tares, but also to be mindful about how we treat young, immature "wheat" that we may mistake for tares. God knows who belongs to Him and who does not, and He allows both to grow together. The tares in the parable were likely appears as wheat. The interaction between wheat and tares, true and false, provides a constant test: *"Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!"(JAM5:9)* In order to endure to the end, we must develop patient attitude. We must not easily offend in our dealings with wheat or tares, never taking insults, offend personally. When we deal, we all must be long-sufferings patient, having a great deal of love. God is refining us into the mature wheat that He wants to reap at His harvest.

Jesus Christ provides the perfect example of how to treat and interact with a tare. He had to deal with a tare close to Him throughout His ministry. In John 6:70-71, "Jesus answered [His disciples], 'Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?' He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve." How Christ dealt with Judas sets the example for how we ought to deal with recognized tares. Jesus knew Judas; He knew his character and heart after traveling with him throughout His ministry. Yet, Judas was allowed responsibilities and given duties just as the other disciples were. Judas was appearing just as religious as the other eleven, but not in character. However, Jesus never revealed to the other disciples that Judas was a tare. He only mentions the presence of a tare, forcing the disciples to look inward and evaluate their own hearts. At final Passover, the disciples had no idea who would betray the Master. Each of them began to say to Christ, "Lord, is it I?"(MAT26:22) It is clear disciples were unaware of Judas' corrupt character. Instead of singling out Judas and treating Him poorly, Jesus showed love and kindness to him. Jesus knew that if He revealed Judas' character, He would risk uprooting some of His other disciples. Christ would not risk losing one of them on account of Judas, who betrayed with a kiss.

As we Christians, we must judge our own lives, recognizing the sin within ourselves. But when we recognize sin in others, and even correctly identify a tare in the church, we must still show love and kindness. For we don't know if immature and innocent believers might be injured by our efforts, the responsibility of separating true believers from false, a task reserved for God alone. He has not even given us the job of exposing who they may be. Christ allows them to remain until His return. At that time, angels will separate saints from wicked one. God, in wisdom infinitely greater than our own, will separate the wheat from the tares. As wheat, our responsibility is to grow in kindness, patience, and godly love, producing healthy and good fruit. This requires an attitude of meek, humble, and godly service. Most importantly, we have the responsibility to grow into the perfect image of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ will one day establish true righteousness. After He raptures the true church out of this world, God will pour out His wrath on the world. During tribulation, He will draw others to saving faith in Jesus Christ. At the end of the tribulation, all unbelievers will be judged for their sin and unbelief. During the final judgment, the angels will separate the "sons of the evil one"(the tares or weeds) from the "sons of the kingdom"(the wheat). Then, the tares will be removed from God's presence and cast them into the furnace of fire. True followers of Christ will reign with Him. *Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe"* The Lord will return for the harvest to signify the gathering of the righteous by the mercy of God. What a glorious hope for the "wheat"!