

“Without A Parable He Did Not Speak To Them”

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. During His ministry, Jesus frequently used parables - Matt. 13:3, 34-35
 - 1. “It has been estimated that at least one-third of Jesus’ recorded teaching is found in parables.” (Warren Wiersbe “Windows On The Parables” p. 15)
 - 2. Many of the most memorable of Jesus sayings are in His parables
- B. We will consider
 - 1. It is proper for disciples today to study the parables
 - 2. The nature of parables
 - 3. Lessons from the parables
 - 4. Why parables were used
 - 5. How parables should be interpreted

I. DEFINITION OF PARABLE

- A. Parable is a transliteration of the Greek “parabole” meaning “to place beside, to cast alongside.”
 - 1. Defined by Vine's Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words, it “signifies a placing of one thing beside another with a view to comparison.”
 - 2. Wiersbe's description of a parable is “a story that places one thing beside another for the purpose of teaching. It puts the known next to the unknown so that we may learn.”
 - 3. A parable can usually be identified by the use of the word “like.”
 - a. Matt. 13:31, 33
- B. As used in the New Testament, a parable is usually a story or narrative drawn from nature or human circumstances, from which spiritual lessons can be made by comparison.
 - 1. A common definition of a parable is “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.”

II. PURPOSE OF THE PARABLES OF JESUS

- A. The primary purpose was to conceal.
 - 1. Jesus began speaking in parables because of the hardness of many people's hearts - Matt. 13:10-17
 - a. The disciples’ attitude was such that they considered themselves blessed to learn the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.
 - 1) Matt. 13:10-12, 16-17
 - b. But because of the hard hearts of many in the multitude, who considered the teachings of Christ to be a burden beneath them, Jesus spoke to them in parables - Matt. 13:13-15; Mark 4:10-12
 - c. He would then explain the parables in private to His disciples, who wanted to know all He had to say - Mark 4:33-34
 - 2. By resorting to parables, Jesus effectively separated the determined truth-seekers from the merely curious and casually interested.
 - a. Those seeking the truth would say, “Explain to us the parable.”

- 1) Matt. 13:36
- b. Whereas the simply curious could easily be sent away.
3. Jesus used parables to communicate Divine judgment - Matt. 13:12

III. SUBJECT MATTER OF THE PARABLES OF JESUS

- A. The general theme is the kingdom of heaven - Matt. 13:11
 1. Illustrated by several parables, which all start with "The kingdom of heaven is like" - Matt 13:24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47
 2. The kingdom of heaven was the theme of:
 - a. Jesus' ministry - Matt. 4:17, 23
 - b. The sermon on the mount - Matt. 5:3, 10, 19-20, 6:10, 33, 7:21
- B. Three secondary themes in the parables:
 1. The nature of the kingdom,
 - a. The Parable of the Mustard Seed
 - b. The Parable of the Leaven
 - c. The Parable of the Hidden Treasure
 - d. The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price
 2. The nature of the king,
 - a. The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard
 - b. The Parable of the Lost Son
 3. The nature of the citizens in the kingdom.
 - a. The Parable of the Good Samaritan
 - b. The Parable of the Persistent Widow

IV. INTERPRETING THE PARABLES OF JESUS

- A. Extremes to avoid:
 1. Seeking to find some spiritual truth in every little detail.
 2. Seeking only one spiritual truth in each parable.
- B. Guidelines for interpretation:
 1. Learn from the explanations Jesus gave in the parables.
 - a. Understanding the parable of the sower helps us to understand other parables - Mark 4:13
 2. Look for the central truth of the parable, making sure that any other truths gleaned from the parable are in harmony with it.
 3. Consider carefully the context of Jesus words, looking for an introduction or an application which may give insight.
 4. Don't use the parables to formulate new doctrine.
 - a. Remember, parables were originally expressed to conceal, so they are not always that clear in their meaning.
 - b. Therefore, don't try to build a case for a doctrine based solely on a parable.

Conclusion:

- A. Matt. 13:16-17
 1. What we are about to study in the parables concern things which Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and many others looked forward to, but did not fully understand in their lifetime.
 2. Rom. 16:25-26