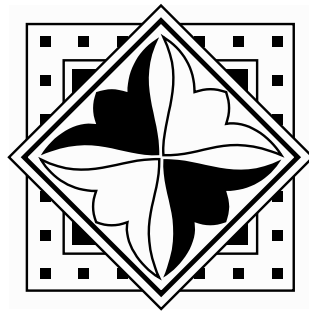


PARABLES

Of Jesus

as found in the Gospels



Ron Adams

PARABLES Of Jesus

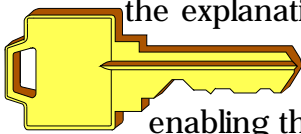
PARABLE

[Greek: parabole, par-ab-ol-ay'] lit. denotes a placing beside (akin to parabolō, to throw or lay aside, to compare). It signifies a placing one thing beside another with a view to comparison. It is a lesson that is of value; the hearer must catch the analogy if he is to be instructed. Such a narrative or saying, dealing with earthly things what a spiritual meaning, is distinct from a fable, which attributes to things what does not belong to them in nature.

—Vines Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words

KEY TO UNDERSTANDING PARABLES

In knowing how some parables are explained, we gain the knowledge of how all parables are to be understood. In Mark 4:13ff, Jesus told the disciples two parables and gave them the explanations. He told them some more parables and asked them, “Do you understand all these things?” And they replied, “Yes.”



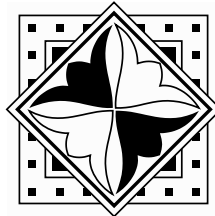
Jesus presented spiritual truths in “natural” settings, thereby enabling the human mind to grasp the profound truths.

METHOD OF UNDERSTANDING PARABLES

- Refer to all places the parable is recorded (if found in more than one book).
- Note the setting: people, place, subject under discussion.
- Determine if there are any clues in the context.
- Ascertain how much is already explained in the passage.
- Draw out the central truth.
- Compare the central truth with other passages (to see if it harmonizes).
- Look at the other points contained in the parable.

MAIN MESSAGE

Each parable has a main message, however, other lessons can be drawn from them.



PARABLES OF OUR LORD

What is a PARABLE?

Lit., a placing beside. It signifies the placing of one thing beside another with a view to comparison (Vines)

1. Generally a somewhat lengthy utterance or narrative drawn from nature or human circumstances with the object being to set forth a spiritual lesson.

2. It is the lesson that is of value. The hearer must catch the analogy if he is to be instructed.

The distinction between parables and proverbs is not clearly defined. They are basically the same method of teaching. One generally is more drawn out than the other. A proverb could easily be drawn out to make a parable. I.e., "If a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into the pit." Mat. 15:14b.

Because of varying opinions as to what constitutes a parable or a proverb, the number of parables is listed as 30, 32, 33, 37, 39, 59, 71, 79

METHODS OF TEACHING

PROVERB: A wayside saying, a byword, a maxim. (cf. 2Pe.2:22, and the book of Proverbs)

ALLEGORY: A setting forth of one thing in the image of another, the principle subject being inferred from the figure rather than by direct statement. (cf. Gal.4:22-31)

FABLE: a narrative in which animals and inanimate objects of nature are made to act and speak like human beings. (Aesop's fables)

MYTH: a great tale, in which there is a blending of the deeper meaning with an outward symbol. (Greek myths about gods and goddesses)

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To sum up all the PARABLE differs

from the fable by moving in a spiritual world, and never transgressing the actual order of natural things.

from the MYTH because in that there is an unconscious blending of the deeper meaning with the outward symbol, the two remaining separate in the parable.

from the PROVERB in as much as it is longer carried out, and not merely accidentally but necessarily figurative.

from the ALLEGORY by comparing one thing with another, and not transferring, as the allegory, the properties of one thing to another.\*

\*From Notes on the Parables of Our Lord, R.C. Trench

# WHY PARABLES?

Answer: Matthew 13:10-13ff

The Jewish leaders

- had not repented
- had refused the invitation to come to Him [the Christ]
- had criticized His miracles, teachings, life
- were seeking to destroy Him
- had attributed His power as coming from Beelzebub
- were demanding signs

Jesus disciples would benefit from hearing the parables. The parables would help them increase their understanding of the kingdom of God (spiritual matters).

Others, who were not disciples, would lose what they had heard . . . its meaning escaping their notice.

:11 “to grant unto you to know the mysteries” [believers]  
“to them not to be granted” [non-believers]

:12 “for whoever has [believers], more given”  
“for whoever has not [non-believers], what he has will be taken away”  
The non-believer had an opportunity to learn and know; now the opportunity is taken away. He will not be able to know and learn until he believes.

:13 “for seeing . . . they do not see”  
The non-believers saw the miracles, but didn't see the power of God. (They watched in order to criticize.)  
“for in hearing. . . they do not hear”  
They heard the message, but didn't hear the Word of God. (They listened in order to find fault.)

:14-15 [A quotation from Isaiah casting light on the current situation.]

:16 Jesus clothed spiritual truths with “natural” circumstances, thereby enabling his disciples (then and now) to grasp the truths.

Jesus' disciples (learners and followers) would benefit from hearing the parables. The parables would help them increase their understanding of the kingdom of God. Others, who were not disciples, would lose what they had heard, its meaning escaping their notice.

## What Was the Lesson in Each Parable?

I heard an evangelist had seven lessons based on one verse: John 3:16. That's quite an accomplishment. And many have plumbed the depths of the parables in numerous articles. And that is well and good. But the parable main lesson is what's important. It's possible to look too closely at the trees [words] and not clearly see the forest [main point and the context].

It would do us good to “hear” the parables as one who was there at the time and place under the same circumstances. What was the lesson Jesus wanted His hearers to understand?

My take away (the main point) of each parable is briefly stated on the following pages.

# ❖ PARABLES ❖

## NATURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE KINGDOM

- SOWER** . . . . . Mat.13:3-8, Mar.4:3-8, Luk.8:5-8  
The varied effects of the Word upon different hearts.
- TARES** . . . . . Mat.13:24-30  
The separation of good and evil people is reserved for the future.
- MUSTARD SEED** . . . . . Mat.13:31-32, Mar.4:30-32, Luk.13:18-19  
The small beginning and great growth of the kingdom.
- LEAVEN**. . . . . Mat.13:33, Luk.13:20-21  
The Gospel, injected into the world, will have its influence on mankind.
- HIDDEN TREASURE**. . . . . Mat.13:44  
Realizing the value of the kingdom; giving up all to have a part in it.
- PEARL OF GREAT PRICE** . . . . . Mat.13:45-46  
Willingness to pay the price of discipleship.
- DRAG NET**. . . . . Mat.13:47-50  
The careful, final separation of good and evil at the end of the world.
- BLADE, EAR AND FULL CORN** . . . . . Mar.4:26-29  
The Lord relies upon the power of His Word and the condition of men's hearts to produce salvation.
- RICH MAN AND LAZARUS**. . . . . Luk.16:19-31  
If the revelation of God's will by inspired men doesn't produce repentance in those who serve mammon, then nothing will.

## SERVICE AND REWARDS

- LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD**. . . . . Mat.20:1-16  
Those who work long and suffer much will received what was promised. They will not receive more just because others, who worked less, receive the same.
- TALENTS** . . . . . Mat.25:14-30  
God will not require more than we are able to do; He will not accept any excuses for inactivity. Do what you can with the ability you have.
- POUNDS**. . . . . Luk.19:11-27  
We are to serve the Lord now. However, rewards come later.
- UNWORTHY SERVANT** . . . . . Luk.17:7-10  
When we have done all, we are still unworthy servants. Salvation is God's gift.

## PRAYER

FRIEND AT MIDNIGHT . . . . . Luk.11:5-8  
The need to be earnest and persistent in prayer.

UNJUST JUDGE. . . . . Luk.18:1-8  
We ought to pray always and not lose heart.

## HUMILITY

LOWEST SEAT AT THE FEAST . . . . . Luk.14:7-11  
Selfish ambition condemned.

PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN. . . . . Luk.18:9-14  
Self-righteousness denounced.

## WORLDLY WEALTH

UNJUST STEWARD . . . . . Luk.16:1-9  
Disciples to act wisely and prudently.

RICH FOOL . . . . . Luk.12:16-21  
It's foolish to rely on riches. Living isn't about having. It's about sharing.

GREAT SUPPER . . . . . Luk.14:15-24  
Some things, though not wrong in themselves, can keep one from having a part in the Kingdom of God. We must be careful in setting priorities.

## GRATITUDE

TWO DEBTORS . . . . . Luk.7:41-43  
Love in proportion to grace received. "He who is forgiven little, loves little."

## WATCHFULNESS

TEN VIRGINS. . . . . Mat.25:1-13  
Be watchful, the Lord may come later than expected.

FAITHFUL AND UNFAITHFUL SERVANTS . . . . . Mat.24:25-31; Luk.12:42-48  
Be watchful, the Lord may come earlier than expected.

WATCHFUL PORTER . . . . . Mar.13:34-37  
Be busy, be prepared, be watchful.

## LOVE OF NEIGHBOR

GOOD SAMARITAN. . . . . Luk.10:30-37  
Practical application of the Lord's teachings are a must. "Do" is the key word.  
Faith is "proved" by one's actions.

## GOD'S LOVE FOR THE LOST

LOST SHEEP . . . . . Mat.18:12-14; Luk.15:3-7  
Portrays the seeking love of God for sinners. No soul is unimportant.

LOST COIN . . . . . Luk.15:8-10  
Portrays the searching love of God. All souls are valuable.

LOST SON . . . . . Luk.15:11-32  
God, a merciful and forgiving father. We are to be merciful and forgiving when one returns and is forgiven by God.

## JUDGMENT

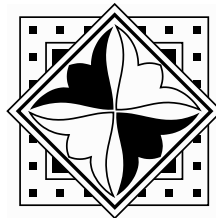
TWO SONS . . . . . Mat.21:28-32  
A sinner who repents and does the Father's will have part in the kingdom; but an unrepentant self-righteous man will not.

WICKED HUSBANDMAN . . . . . Mat.21:33-44; Mar.12:1-12; Luk.20:9-18  
The self-righteous reject the Son, just as their forefathers rejected the prophets.

BARREN FIG TREE . . . . . Luk.13:6-9  
God comes in judgment against those who refuse to repent.

MARRIAGE FEAST OF THE KING'S SON . . . . . Mat. 22:1-14  
Many are called to have a part in the kingdom, few accept the invitation.

UNFORGIVING SERVANT . . . . . Mat.18:23-35  
There is no limit to forgiveness—received or given.



(Revised 11/05/19)