

THE WORDS AND WORKS OF KING JESUS

PART 10: SECRETS OF THE KINGDOM

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MATTHEW CHAPTER 13

An understanding of parables is essential if one is to understand the teaching of Jesus, since the parables make up approximately 35 percent of his recorded sayings. At no point are the vitality, relevance, and appropriateness of his teaching as clear as they are in his parables. While the parable form is not unique to Jesus, he was certainly a master at using parables as a way of teaching.¹

The Lord Jesus frequently used parables as a means of illustrating profound, divine truths. Stories such as these are easily remembered, the characters bold, and the symbolism rich in meaning. Parables required more explanation, and at one point in his ministry, Jesus began to teach using parables exclusively.

¹ Elwell, Walter A., and Barry J. Beitzel. *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* 1988: p. 1606. Logos Bible Software

I. COMMENTS

A. What is a parable?

1. Definition: A parable is a made-up story that teaches a **heavenly principle**.
2. The term for parable is from the Greek word *paraballo*. The term means to place "by the side of something."

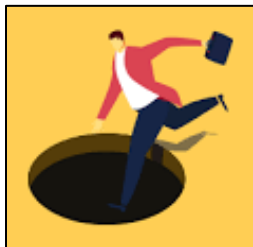
B. How do parables help me?

1. They give me visual images that are easy to remember.
2. They grab my attention in a special way.
3. They stimulate my thinking about biblical truths.
4. They were intended to evoke a response.

C. Why did Jesus speak in parables?

1. To **reveal** truths (secrets) only to his followers (Matt. 13:10-11, 16).
2. To **conceal** truths from his adversaries (Matt. 13:10-11, 13-15).

D. Three pitfalls to avoid



1. Pitfall No. 1: Eisegesis: Interpreting parables out of context and reading into it what you want it to say.
2. Pitfall No. 2: Over-analyzing: Seeking to find some spiritual truth in every little parable detail.
3. Pitfall No. 3: Passiveness: Not responding to the invited response of the parable (See Jas. 1:23-24).

II. HOW TO UNDERSTAND PARABLES

A. OBSERVATION (What does it say?)

1. What is the context of the parable?
2. What are the main elements of the parable?

B. INTERPRETATION (What does it mean?)

1. Look for explanations given in the text.

² Augustine's Commentary on the Good Samaritan <<https://soundfaith.com/sermons/47795-augustine-s-commentary-on-the-good-samaritan>>. Accessed February 10, 2017.

2. See the parts in light of the whole.
3. Do not get bogged down in the secondary props.
4. Discover the main point of the parable.
5. Give your interpretation the DIMS test (does-it-make-sense?).

C. APPLICATION (How does it affect my life?)

1. What response did Jesus invite from the parable?
2. What specific actions can I take in response to the parable?

III. EXERCISE: THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Fill in the table below:

OBSERVATION What are the elements? (13:3-9)	INTERPRETATION What do they mean? (13:18-23)
The sower	(Hint: see v. 37) Jesus
The seeds	Words/teachings (λόγος) about the Kingdom of heaven (v. 24). Also, God's Word in general.
The soil	A person's heart³ (3:15) ...openness to Jesus' teachings.
Soil along the path (prideful heart)	Hears words, hardened, Satan takes it away; e.g., Pharisees, scribes (v. 19). "Hard hearted" toward Jesus
Rocky soil (passive heart)	Hears words, receive it with joy, but with no root is short lived, falls away when trouble comes (Vv. 20-21).
Thorny soil (preoccupied heart)	Hears Jesus' words but worries of life, wealth, other interests choke out spiritual growth (v. 22).
Good soil (pure heart)	Hears the word, understands it, produces a crop yielding x100, x60, x30 what was sown (V. 23)
What is the main point of this parable? A person's response to God's Word (seed) is determined by the condition of his heart (soil) and manifested by the absence or presence of "fruit"	
APPLICATION What response does Jesus invite? How can I respond?	

³ Heart: the innermost self, the source and seat of functions of soul and spirit in the emotional life, the volitional life, the rational life. (BibleWorks, LLC, Version 10).

I am to keep Jesus Christ, and his word, as the most important thing in my life so that I may produce good works that glorify him. See John 15:1-5 (vine and branch).

IV. CHALLENGE FOR NEXT WEEK

Read Matthew Chapter 14. What was the underlying cause of Peter's fear in verse 30? How could his fear have been prevented? How could this apply to your own life?