



THE KING AND HIS KINGDOM

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PART 7: THE KING'S PARABLES (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

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

symbolism rich in meaning. Parables required more explanation, and at one point in his ministry, Jesus began to teach using parables exclusively.

I. UNDERSTANDING PARABLES

A. What is a parable?

1. Definition: A parable is a made-up story that teaches a _____

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

D. Three pitfalls to avoid

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



II. USING THE O-I-A METHOD 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. See the parts in light of the whole.
3. Do not get bogged down in the secondary parts.
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 you personally 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	
The seeds	
The soil	
Soil along the path (prideful heart)	
Rocky soil (passive heart)	
Thorny soil (preoccupied heart)	
Good soil (pure heart)	
APPLICATION: What is the main point of this parable, and how can it be applied to you today?	

IV. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways did Jesus' parable prevent the Pharisees from finding fault with him?
 2. Who do you think understood Jesus' parable the most and why?
 3. In what ways were parables effective ways to teach people about God's kingdom?
 4. Leader's question(s)-optional