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A Study Of



The Parables Of Jesus

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# An Introduction to the Parables

The parables comprise more than one-third of the recorded teachings of Jesus. While they contain some of the most profound lessons taught by Him, at the same time they comprise some of His simplest, most easily understood lessons.

The writers of the New Testament, while using allegories and similitudes, do not use the story parable as Jesus did though it is found occasionally in the Old Testament such as the parabolic story of a vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-7 and the parable Nathan spoke to David (2 Samuel 12:1-7). In the New Testament, though, its use seemed to be unique to Jesus which was a fulfillment of prophecy (Compare Matthew 13:34-35 with Psalm 78:2 and Matthew 13:13-14 with Isaiah 6:9-10).

By the time of His ministry which is recorded in Matthew 12 and 13, Jesus' form of public instruction had become principally parabolic. Why? Their leaders and the people as a whole had hardened their hearts against Him and His message because they were filled with prejudice, moral hardness, blindness, and willful ignorance. As opposition to Him grew in intensity, so did His parables in their force, solemnity, and number. His purpose in them reflected the conditions which prompted Him to teach in such a way.

## Parable Defined

- A. Many people define a parable as "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning," but such a definition is not broad enough to include all the parables.
  1. Luke 4:23, by the above definition, would have to be called a proverb.
  2. Mark 7:15-17, by the above definition, would be a kind of riddle that would prompt the hearer to ask, "What is there that comes out of me that is more important than what I take in?"
- B. "Literally denotes a placing beside, (akin to *paraballo*, to throw or lay beside, to compare). It signifies a placing of one thing beside another with a view to comparison." (W.E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, p. 840)
- C. It is derived from the Greek word "*parabole*" that comes from two other Greek words.
  1. "*Ballo*" (verb): "to throw or cast."
  2. "*Para*" (preposition): "alongside of."
  3. "That which is thrown alongside of," thus resulting in a comparison.
- D. Generally speaking, a parable is a comparison or analogy drawn from nature or human circumstances, the object of which is to set forth a spiritual lesson. In the parables of Jesus there are comparisons of spiritual realities and natural occurrences.
- E. A parable is not the same thing as an allegory.
  1. In ancient and medieval times it was customary to treat the parables of Jesus as allegories. Some still treat them that way today.
  2. Allegory defined.
    - a. "An allegory in the Gk. came to signify 'to speak so that the facts stated are applied to illustrate principles.'" (Vine, 49)
    - b. "The veiled presentation, in a figurative story, of a meaning metaphorically implied but not expressly stated. That which figuratively stands for something else." (*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*)

3. An allegory is like a parable in that it is a story told to make a comparison but their difference lies in the fact that every detail in an allegory has an inner meaning while in a parable the details are not necessarily significant but are often there only to add color to the story.
4. An illustration of the use of allegories is found in Galatians 4:24-31.
  - a. Hagar and Sarah are used to contrast the old and new covenants.
  - b. Every detail in this allegory corresponds to something.

### **The Purposes of Parables**

- A. While the New Testament does not state, in so many words, the exact purpose of the parabolic teaching of Jesus, it implies it in Matthew 13:10-13: "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. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.'" (New King James Version)
- B. The four goals of parables.
  1. **The revelation of truth.**
    - a. Parables often reveal more truth than a plain statement would.
    - b. Those who, with a proper attitude, were seeking truth would be able to understand more (Matthew 13:11-12) because they had seeing eyes and hearing ears. (Matthew 13:16)
    - c. Christ revealed deep spiritual truths in a way easy for His disciples to understand.
  2. **The concealment of truth.** (Matthew 13:11-14)
    - a. The use of parables did not make Jesus' teaching plain to all who heard it because, having no appreciation for it, some of His hearers would not seek to understand it for they loved darkness more than light. (John 3:19-21)
    - b. The concealment of truth is not inconsistent with God. Consider Romans 1:28 and 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12.
  3. **The preservation of truth.**
    - a. Parables are set forth in a vivid, striking form which commands attention and impresses the memory thus making them easy to recall.
    - b. Their use is especially beneficial to those who are just beginning to study spiritual things because it enables them to feed upon simpler things and to retain the stories more easily than just plain facts.
  4. **The elicitation of truth from those otherwise reluctant to acknowledge it.**
    - a. Nathan's parable to David caused David to condemn himself. (2 Samuel 12:1-7)
    - b. The parable of the wicked husbandmen spoken by Jesus to the Jews caused the Jews, in effect, to admit that God would be just in destroying them for their wickedness. (Matthew 21:23-46)

### **Understanding Parables**

- A. It is impossible to lay down strict rules for understanding parables.
  1. For example, in some parables small details have significance while in others details are not important.

2. "The primary lesson or lessons of a parable must be grasped but not each and every detail is always to be forced to yield a distinct lesson. Parables are like pictures, in that they require details to make up the general picture but without each detail having of necessity a special and separate lesson. It may or may not be so." (G.H. Lang, *The Parabolic Teaching of Scripture*, p. 17)
- B. In general, a parable has one central meaning.
1. In most cases, the details or incidents of the parable are merely "drapery," i.e., they serve as the background for the main thought or lesson.
  2. Some incidents, though, have meanings which are given by Jesus Himself.
- C. "In understanding the parables of Jesus, there are at least six points that we need to remember. (1) 'The material of parables may be real or fictitious.' (2) 'The material of parables may be borrowed from nature or from human life.' (3) 'The purely fanciful details of a parable may correspond accurately to the men who are instructed, and to their doings.' (4) 'Parts or the whole of a parable may be prophecy.' (5) 'The essential lesson taught is the main matter; details may or may not have separate significance.' (6) 'Application of details not explained must be on the lines of explanations given; then they will be sober and valuable, not fanciful or idle. Then also they will harmonize naturally with the whole picture, will add to its completeness, heighten its effect, and will not be foreign to it or irrelevant to the main lesson.'" (Lang, 17-18)

### **Conclusion**

A very careful reading and study of the parables of Jesus will prove to be a great blessing to you. Giving serious consideration to their lessons will allow you to gain much knowledge and wisdom.

# Lesson One: The Parable of the Sower

**Lesson Text: Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-8,13-20; Luke 8:4-8,11-15**

Matthew 13:1-16

1 The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.

2 And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;

4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:

6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

8 But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

9 Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. (KJV)

1. In what part of Palestine was this parable spoken? Do you think that would have any particular significance in relation to the content of the parable? Explain your answer.
2. What four types of soil are referred to in the parable?
3. What resulted when the seed fell on each type of soil?
4. What were the various reactions to this parable?
5. Why was Jesus speaking in parables?
6. What does the "seed" represent? Why, in your estimation, is this such an appropriate figure?
7. What does the "way side" soil represent?
8. What does the "stony" soil represent?
9. What does the "thorny" soil represent?
10. What does the "good" soil represent?
11. What do you believe is the main lesson to be learned from this parable?

# Lesson Two: The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

## Matthew 18:21-35

Matthew 18:21-35

21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

29 And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

31 So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?

34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. (KJV)

1. What prompted Jesus to speak this parable?
2. What does it mean “to reckon” (v. 24)?
3. Why did the king forgive the servant?
4. How does the amount owed by the fellow-servant to the unmerciful servant compare to the amount forgiven by the king to the unmerciful servant?
5. Contrast the attitude of the unmerciful servant toward his fellow-servant to the attitude of the king toward the unmerciful servant.
6. Were the fellow-servants of verse 31 wrong in informing their master of the actions of the unmerciful servant? Explain your answer.
7. What is the central meaning of this parable?
8. Cite other passages of Scripture which teach the same idea as this parable.

# Lesson Three: The Parable of the Two Sons

## Lesson Text: Matthew 21:28-32

Matthew 21:28-32

28 But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard.

29 He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.

30 And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.

31 Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him. (KJV)

### Notes

1. Where did this teaching take place?
2. What events caused Jesus to teach this parable?
3. What did the father command his sons to do?
4. What was the first son's initial response to the command of his father? What did he ultimately do?
5. What was the second son's initial response to the command of his father? What did he ultimately do?
6. What is the crucial difference between the response of the two sons?
7. How did the audience which was listening to Jesus fit the description of the two sons?
8. Could the two sons represent anyone other than the audience of Jesus? Explain.
9. What is the main lesson of this parable?
10. What purpose of parabolic teaching did Jesus accomplish with this parable? Explain.
11. How does this parable relate to authority?
12. Cite, if you can, some secondary lessons that might be learned from this parable.



# Lesson Four: The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen

Lesson Text: **Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-18**

Matthew 21:33-46

33 Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

34 And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

44 And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

45 And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.

46 But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet. (KJV)

1. What is a husbandman?
2. What improvements did the householder make to his property for the husbandmen?
3. What did the husbandmen do to the servants of the householder who were sent to them? Why?
4. Why was the householder's son sent to the husbandmen? What did they do to him? Why?
5. What did the chief priests and elders of the Jews who were present say that the householder would do to the husbandmen?
6. What application did Jesus make of the answer of the chief priests and elders?
7. What did the chief priests and Pharisees want to do with Jesus? Why did they not do it?
8. What do the following figures represent?
  - a. The husbandmen.
  - b. The householder.
  - c. The vineyard.
  - d. The son.
9. What is the main lesson of the parable?
10. What secondary lessons could be drawn from this parable?

# Lesson Five: The Parable of the Unjust Steward

## Lesson Text: Luke 16:1-14

Luke 16:1-14

1 And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.

4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?

6 And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.

8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

10 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

14 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. (KJV)

1. Why did the master call his steward before him?
2. What is a steward? What was a steward's task? What authority did a steward have?
3. Upon learning that his stewardship would soon be terminated, what alternatives did the steward consider? Why did he reject each of these?
4. What was the steward's ultimate course of action? How would it solve his problems?
5. Why did the master commend him even though the steward was still cheating him?
6. How do you reconcile Jesus telling His followers to be like an unjust man?
7. In what way(s) are we to be like the steward?
8. What is the "unrighteous mammon?"
9. What are "true riches?"
10. Why is it impossible to serve two masters?

# Lesson Six: Parables Teaching Persistence in Prayer

**Lesson Text: Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-8**

Luke 11:5-13

5 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;

6 For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?

7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

9 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

11 If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?

12 Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Luke 18:1-8

1 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:

3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;

5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? (KJV)

## **The Parable of the Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:1-13)**

1. What request did the disciples make of Jesus that prompted this parable?
2. Why did the man go to his friend's house? What, do you suppose, made his need so urgent that he would go to his friend's house at such a late hour?
3. Why did the friend not answer the door at first?
4. Why was his friend at first reluctant to give him what he wanted? What finally moved him to give him what he requested?
5. What is the main lesson of this parable?

## **The Parable of the Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1-8)**

6. What was the setting of this parable? What future event prompted its teaching?
7. Describe the judge found in the parable.
8. Why did the woman come to the judge?
9. Who or what do you think the following figures might represent?
  - a. The judge.
  - b. The woman.
10. What is the main lesson of this parable?

# Lesson Seven: The Good Samaritan

**Text: Luke 10:25-37**

Luke 10:25-37

25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

30 And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise. (KJV)

1. What prompted Jesus to teach this parable?
2. Why did the lawyer ask Jesus to tell him who his “neighbor” was?
3. Was there anything significant about the road from Jerusalem to Jericho?
4. Why would you expect a priest to help the man who had been beaten and robbed?
5. Why would you expect a Levite to help the man who had been beaten and robbed?
6. What was a “Samaritan?” What was the attitude that the Jews of Jesus’ day had toward Samaritans?
7. Why was the Samaritan such a fitting character to serve Jesus’ purpose in the parable?
8. What error(s) do you think Jesus was combating by teaching this parable?
9. What do you think is the central lesson of the parable?
10. What other lessons can be learned from this parable?
11. What bearing, if any, does the teaching of Matthew 7:12 have on this parable?
12. How can we imitate the Samaritan today? Be specific.

# Lesson Eight: The Parable of the Rich Fool

**Text: Luke 12:13-21**

Luke 12:13-21

13 And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.

14 And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. (KJV)

## Notes

1. What caused Jesus to teach this parable?
2. What is covetousness?
3. Why is “the abundance of the things” one possesses not a valid measure of the worth and value of ones life? What is a valid one? Why?
4. Was Jesus teaching that it is wrong to be rich? Explain.
5. Was Jesus teaching that it is wrong to be at ease or to enjoy leisure activities? Explain.
6. Was Jesus teaching that it is wrong to save and provide financial security for oneself and his family? Explain.
7. Why did Jesus call the farmer in the parable a “fool?”
8. How does one “lay up treasure for himself?” Where is one to “lay up treasures?” How does one do it?
9. What does it mean to be “rich toward God?”
10. What is the central lesson of this parable?
11. How do verses 22 through 34 of this chapter apply to what Jesus taught in this parable?
12. What application(s) can be made of this parable today?

# Lesson Nine: The Parables of Luke Fifteen

Text: Luke 15:1-32

Luke 15:1-32

1 Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.  
2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.  
3 And he spake this parable unto them, saying,  
4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wildemess, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?  
5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.  
6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.  
7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.  
8 Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?  
9 And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.  
10 Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.  
11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:  
12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.  
13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.  
14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.  
15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.  
16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.  
17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and

to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,  
19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.  
20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.  
21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.  
22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:  
23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:  
24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.  
25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.  
26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.  
27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.  
28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.  
29 And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:  
30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.  
31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.  
32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.  
(KJV)

1. What charge did the Pharisees and scribes level at Jesus? What bearing did it have on the parables found in this chapter?
2. Briefly summarize the parable found in verses four through seven.
3. What is the main lesson to be learned from the above parable?
4. Briefly summarize the parable found in verses eight through ten.
5. What is the main lesson to be learned from the above parable?
6. Briefly summarize the parable found in verses 11 through 32.
7. What is the main lesson to be learned from the above parable?
8. Who do the following characters seem to represent? Why?
  - a. The son who left home.
  - b. The father.
  - c. The son who remained at home?
9. What is meant by the statement of the father to his son who had remained home that his brother who “was dead... is alive again” seeing that it is apparent that the son who had left home had not died? Does the statement have any impact on man today?
10. How does each parable in this chapter compare to the other two?
11. How does each parable in this chapter differ from the other two?
12. What common lesson can be learned from all three parables in this chapter?

# Lesson Ten: The Parables of Matthew Twenty-Five

## Lesson Text: Matthew 25:1-46

Matthew 25:1-46

1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bride-groom. 2 And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. 3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: 4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. 6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. 7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. 9 But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. 10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. 11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. 12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. 13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. 14 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. 15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. 16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. 17 And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. 18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. 19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. 20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. 21 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. 23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: 25 And I was

afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. 26 His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: 27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. 28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. 29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. 30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: 32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: 33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. 41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: 43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. 44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? 45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. 46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

(KJV)



1. Where was Jesus when He taught these parables?
2. What question had been asked of Jesus? Do these parables in any way relate to that question? Explain.
3. Where were the five foolish virgins when the bridegroom arrived? What was told them when they finally returned?
4. Who do you think is represented by:
  - a. The five foolish virgins?
  - b. The five wise virgins?
  - c. The bridegroom?
5. What is the main lesson of the parable?
6. What was a "talent?" Why did the master distribute the talents to his servants as he did?
7. Why was the master angry at the man who had been given one talent? Was he justified in his anger? Explain.
8. Who or what do you think is represented by:
  - a. The master?
  - b. The servants?
  - c. The talents?
9. What is the main lesson of this parable?
10. How does the parable of the talents relate to the parable of the virgins?
11. Does the parable of the virgins relate to the teaching of Jesus in verses 31 through 46 of this chapter? Explain.
12. Does the parable of the talents relate to the teaching of Jesus in verses 31 through 46 of this chapter? Explain.

# Lesson Eleven: The Parable of the Two Debtors

**Text: Luke 7:36-50**

Luke 7:36-50

36 And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.

37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,

38 And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.

40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

49 And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace. (KJV)

1. What prompted Jesus to teach this parable?
2. Who was Simon? What was his religious background?
3. What was Simon's reaction when he saw a sinful woman washing and anointing the feet of Jesus?
4. What do you think was the basis of Simon's reaction?
5. Why do you think Jesus spent so much time associating with sinners? Explain your answer in the light of His statement found in Luke 19:10.
6. What differences exist between the way God looks upon people and man looks upon them? (cf. 1 Samuel 16:7)
7. In terms of the two debtors, should one have been more grateful to the moneylender than the other? If so, which one and why?
8. What is meant by the statement in verse 47, "But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little?"
9. What, in your own terms, is the main lesson to be learned from this parable?
10. What are some of the ways Christians should express their gratitude to God for the forgiveness of sins He has granted to them?

# Lesson Twelve: The Parable of the Tares

**Text: Matthew 13:24-30**

Matthew 13:24-30

24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.  
(KJV)

## Notes

1. Briefly summarize the story of this parable.
2. What does the sower of the good seed represent?
3. What does the "field" represent? Explain.
4. Who does the "enemy" represent?
5. What is represented by:
  - a. The wheat?
  - b. The tares?
6. Why did the householder not allow his servants to gather up the tares? What do you think it represents?
7. When did the householder say the tares should be gathered? What is represented by "the harvest?"
8. What application, if any, can be made of this parable today?

# Lesson Thirteen: The Mystery of the Seed Growing

**Text: Mark 4:26-29**

Mark 4:26-29

26 And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground;

27 And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

28 For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

29 But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. (KJV)

## Notes

1. Briefly summarize this parable.
2. List other parables of Jesus which used "seed" to teach their lesson. Tell the meaning of each.
3. What does the "seed" represent in this parable?
4. In what way does man not know how a seed grows?
5. In what way is it true that "the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself" (NKJV: "yields crops by itself")?
6. What do the following figures represent?
  - a. The sower.
  - b. The earth.
  - c. The harvest.
7. What is the main lesson of this parable?
8. What applications can be made of this parable today?

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