

The Parables of Matthew 13

A *parable* is a comparison of similitude, any saying or narration in which something is expressed in terms of something else. Jesus did an excellent job of defining parables in **Mark 4:30**. A parable is simply comparison of one thing to something else.

- I. Jesus explains here why He uses parables, and it is exactly opposite from what many, if not most, people believe.
 - A. Jesus is asked a question in **Matthew 13:10** and His answer (**vs.11-15**) is very important, for it illustrates how important it is for us to understand the parables in this chapter.
 - B. These parables are comparisons given to tell us something about the nature of the kingdom of heaven, which is the local church.
 - C. Note that in **v.15**, there is a distinct connection between understanding these parables and being converted
 1. A conversion to Jesus Christ involves entering the kingdom of God. They go together – understanding the doctrine of Jesus Christ and understanding the kingdom of God.
 2. Entering the kingdom of God is becoming a church member.
 - a. In **Acts 8:12** Phillip is carrying on the evangelistic work at Samaria, and it says that when the people heard him preach they were baptized.
 - b. **Acts 28:22&23** the Jews were asking Paul about the kingdom of God and he preaches it to them.
 - D. If one doesn't understand the nature of the kingdom of God, there is a good chance that they are going to miss it, or fall into the traps that the Lord warns us about in these parables; this is why understanding these passages is of the highest importance, or what the Lord says in **Matthew 13:17** may befall us.
 - E. The seven parables of **Matthew 13** called by our Lord “**the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,**” taken together, describe the result of the presence of the gospel in the world during the present age; from the time of the “seed sowing” of our Lord’s personal ministry and ending with the “harvest.”
- II. The 1st Parable is “the sower”,
 - A. It is very fundamental because when the disciples ask the Lord about it, Jesus tells them in **Mark 4:13**) that if they can't figure out this parable, they certainly won't be able to understand the rest of them.
 - B. This first parable runs **vs.3-9**. The last verse is a declaration by Jesus that if anyone has ears to hear, let him hear (understand.)
 1. This is more than just an implication that there are people there that are not going to be able to understand what the parable meant, and therefore they are going miss the kingdom of heaven.
 2. In **vs.18-23**, the Lord gives the interpretation of the parable. (This parable also occurs in **Mark 4:1-10** and is explained in **vs. 14-20**. It is also told in **Luke 8:4-9** and is explained in **vs.11-15**.) In the account given in **Luke**, the Lord calls the seed “**the word of God**” and here He refers to it as the “**word of the kingdom**”, proving that they are one and the same. This first passage is talking about the

preaching of the word of God. The “sower” is a preacher “sowing” or preaching the word of God.

- a. When somebody “by the wayside” hears the word and doesn’t understand it, Satan comes and plucks it away.
- b. When someone with a “stony heart” receives it, they “anon” (immediately) take it with joy and gladness (**Mark**), There are people that when they hear the word of God accept it and actually believe and give the appearance of conversion. However, the Lord says “they dureth for awhile”. When tribulation arises because of the word, or they are confronted with a situation where they have to choose between family and doctrine, or some other similar situation, “they are offended.”

1. **1John 2:19** - people that were in the church but were not true believers and they left. These people were not rooted and grounded in the faith.

- c. When someone receives the Word, but is caught up in the “deceitfulness of riches” and worldly pleasures will have their seed “choked out” by these thorns. When someone receives the word into the “good ground” which is described in **Luke 8:15** as an “honest and good heart” They hear the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience; they stand steadfast in their faith even when under pressure.

C. Here there are described four different types of hearers: the “wayside”, the “stony ground”, the “thorns”, and the “good ground”. Observe that among these four classes, only the last class is spoken of as having a “good and honest heart”, even though the teaching acknowledges that some of them have heard and even received the word; even with joy! This tells us that not everybody that looks like they’re converted to Christianity really is converted. In the other hearers, there is no real evidence that they ever really had a change of heart.

D. Also notice – it is not the work of the “seed” to change the nature of the “ground.” The “seed” does not *produce* “good ground!” There are many people that it is the purpose of the word of God to change man’s nature. That is not what it’s for. You must have “good ground” already there. It has to already be there or the seed will not bring forth the fruit. A regenerate heart must be present, for an unregenerate heart is “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” (**Jeremiah 17:9**) The good heart that this is referring to is what the Bible calls a “new heart.” (**Ezekiel 18:31; 36:26**) It is a regenerate heart and that is the kind that brings forth fruit to perfection - with patience. One enters the kingdom of God and becomes part from hearing the word of God.

1. Post-mils believe that the “kingdom of God” refers to a time when this earth will be Christianized. This parable shows exactly what most men are and will be like – unconverted. If there is a percentage to be found here, it would only be about 25% (or less) that stick with their faith.

III. 2nd Parable (**Matthew 13:24**) is “the wheat and the tares.”

- A. In this parable, the “seed” is different than the seed in the first parable.
 1. Here, the “seed” refers to the children of God, sowed by the Son of man – Jesus Christ.
 2. The tares are the children of the devil, who is referred to as “the enemy”, and they are sowed among the children of God.

3. The rest of the parable further illustrates that until the end of this world there will always be a commingling of righteous and wicked in the kingdom of God.

4. Notice though, that these tares were sowed, “while men slept” – when they’re unaware.

a. Paul writes about “false brethren” in **Galatians 2:4**. This same idea is found in **Jude v.4**, where it speaks of these un-Godly men who have “crept in unawares”.

B. This entire passage of the parable speaks to the difficulty of distinguishing between the “wheat” and the “tares.”

C. This parable is very much like the first in that it does not paint a picture of a world that will be “Christianized” at the end. There are many people that are devoting their lives to Christianizing the world, trying to make the world a better place to live or bringing in some kind of a kingdom. They spend their lives chasing that kind of a cause and end up missing what is really the kingdom.

IV. The 3rd Parable is that of the “Mustard Seed,” (**Matthew 13:31**, **Mark 4:30-32**, **Luke 13:18&19**)

A. The kingdom of heaven starts out very small, as a mustard seed does, but ends up growing very large.

1. **Acts 1:15** shows that the number of people at this time were only about 120 – a small band of believers.

2. On the day of Pentecost, in **Acts 2:31**, it says that on that day about 3,000 were added to that number.

3. **Acts 4:4** shows yet another exponential growth.

4. **Acts 5:14** simply says “multitudes” were added unto the Lord, both men and women, and even more disciples are added in **Acts 6:7**.

5. Yet another passage in **Acts 9:31** shows that the churches were multiplying

6. **Acts 14:1** speaks of a “great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed”.

7. **Acts 16:5** says that “the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily”.

8. Another multitude of Greeks is referred to in **Acts 17:4&12**.

9. There were so many converts in Jerusalem that it says in **Acts 21:20** that there were “thousands” of Jews that believed.

10. Christianity grew so fast and so large that it says about Paul and Silas in **Acts 17:6** that these men had “turned the world upside down”.

11. The word of God grew mightily and prevailed - **Acts 19:20**,

V. The 4th Parable deals with church corruption (**Matthew 13:33**)

A. There are many thousands of Baptist churches in the world today, but many are corrupted.

B. Recall that in scriptural terms, leaven always refers to corruption; leaven changes things – it makes the bread rise, changing the nature of it.

1. The Lord makes this warning very plain in **Matthew 16:6-12**. This same thing is stated in **Mark 8:15**, and there is a very interesting statement found in **Luke 12:1**, where the Lord says that the leaven of the Pharisees is “hypocrisy”.

a. There is a matter of lax church discipline found in **1Corinthians 5**, where they were tolerating the presence of a fornicator – corruption in practice, and

Paul tells them to “purge out therefore the old leaven”, after quoting the Lord.

b. Paul quotes this same passage of the Lord’s again in **Galatians 5:9**.

C. The Bible has these verses that show that “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump”. There is corruption in the teaching, the doctrine, and the practice

1. This is what the Lord is referring to; a woman who hides leaven in three measures of meal and the whole lump is leavened.

a. This is seen in these times by observing most Baptist churches all over the world that are corrupted both in doctrine and in practice,

b. The Lord told us to expect widespread corruption in the kingdom of heaven.

1. Paul says in **Acts 20:29&30** that there will be people that rise up in the church and draw disciples away, and he says much the same thing in **1Timothy 4:1**.

c. **2Peter 2:1&2** – False prophets and teachers, and many shall follow.

D. It is noteworthy that in this parable, the woman “hid” the leaven. This, when lined up with the passage in **2Peter 2:1**, where it says that the false teachers will “privily” bring in their heresies. They creep in unawares, bringing their false doctrines – hidden among “three measures of meal”.

E. **Luke 18:8** – “Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”

VI. The 5th Parable, **Matthew 13:44**,

A. This describes the kingdom of heaven as something hidden and yet so valuable that a person must forgo all they have in order to get it.

1. It is hidden that must be found.

a. It is hidden so well that the Lord said in **John 3:1-5** that unless a man should be born again, of the water and the spirit, that he wouldn’t be able to enter or even see the kingdom of God.

b. **Romans 14:17** shows that the kingdom is hidden in the Spirit; it is of spiritual concern, “not of meat and drink.” The Lord says about the Spirit in **John 14:17** that the world can not receive Him, because they can not see Him.

c. The reason that people can’t see the church is because it is hidden in the Spirit of God. In order to enter the kingdom of God, it takes the working of the Holy Spirit to even see it but there is also a key that unlocks the door. In **Luke 11:52**, the Lord tells the lawyers that they “have taken away the key of knowledge”, that others may not get in. The parallel verse is **Matthew 23:13** and it explains what they couldn’t enter without the key.

VII. The 6th Parable. (**Matthew 13:45**)

A. This has the same idea as the previous parable, but the thing to note here is that the man is *seeking* the treasure.

1. He finds the kingdom of heaven, which here is described as a great pearl, because he is actively searching for it. One reason that many don’t find the kingdom of God is because they’re not looking for it. Jesus said in **Matthew 6:33** to “seek ye first the kingdom of righteousness”. When this man found it, he sold all that he had and bought it.

2. Compare with **Matthew 19:16-23**

VIII. The 7th Parable **Matthew 13:47**.

A. Just like the parable of the sower, this one refers to the commingling of good and evil right up until the final judgment, using the analogy of a net drawing both and then separating them.

IX. Conclusion

A. The Lord asks His disciples if they have understood and they reply, “Yea, Lord”.

B. In **Matthew 13:52**, Jesus says that every scribe (pastor) instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like a householder, bringing out new and old things out of his treasure. The scribes have treasure that they are bringing out.

C. Paul said in **Eph. 3:8** that he preached the “unsearchable riches of Christ”.

D. Pastors/Scribes bring out treasure new and old; just as Jesus did. He taught things that they were familiar with – farmers sowing seeds in fields, or tares getting sown in among the wheat, or a man gathering in fish, or a woman adding leaven into meal, and He used those things to teach new ones; the kingdom of God.