

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

*The History and Theology of  
the Parables of Jesus*

**A Journey Faith & Life Seminar**

**September 24 & 25, 2019**

## **Journey Purpose Statement**

The Journey exists to give the people of Metro New York City  
the best opportunity to become fully  
developing followers of Jesus by

Inviting them to an intimate relationship with God,

Connecting them in healthy relationships with other Christians,

Guiding them toward an authentic commitment to God,

Involving them in life-changing ministry and mission in our city and  
the world that they may

Honor God completely.

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At The Journey we fulfill the Purpose Statement through 2 types of meetings:

- Large Group (Sunday Service)
- Small Group (Growth Group)

*"(They met) day after day, in the **Temple courts** and from **house to house**."*  
– Acts 5:42

\*The Journey Faith & Life Center enhances the Sunday Service & Growth Groups.

### **WARNING: This is a Dangerous Class!**

This is a very dangerous class. More information about the God does not necessarily lead to a closer relationship with God. Knowledge alone can lead to arrogance and immaturity. The word Jesus used for such people is “hypocrite.”

*“Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.”* – 1 Corinthians 8:1

- More Information + No Application = \_\_\_\_\_
- More Information + More Application = \_\_\_\_\_

# History and Theology of the Parables of Jesus

## GOALS FOR THIS SEMINAR:

*We want you to walk away from this seminar with...*

- A greater understanding of WHY Jesus taught using parables.
- A clearer understanding of WHAT a parable is and is not.
- A better approach to HOW to read, understand and apply the parables.
- A deeper understanding of the meaning of each parable.
- A stronger desire to study the parables and apply them to your life.

## ADDITIONAL PERSONAL GOALS:

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- 
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- 
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# Biblical Context & Important Facts about the Parables of Jesus

- **What is a parable?**

- A parable is not a \_\_\_\_\_.

- A parable is not a \_\_\_\_\_.

- A parable is not an \_\_\_\_\_.

- A parable is not a \_\_\_\_\_.

- A parable is an \_\_\_\_\_ with a \_\_\_\_\_.

*\*Remember – the parables, as Jesus used them, were \_\_\_\_\_, not \_\_\_\_\_.*

# PARABLE

## Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology Online

The range of meaning of the term "parable" (Gk. *parabole* [*parabolhv*]) in the New Testament closely parallels that of the Hebrew *masal* [*l;v'm*] in the Old Testament and related Hebrew literature. As well as referring to narrative parables, the term identifies similitudes ( [Matt 13:33](#) ; B. Pes. 49a), allegories ( [Ezek 17:2](#) ; [24:3](#) ; [Matthew 13:18](#) [Matthew 13:24](#) [Matthew 13:36](#) ), proverbs ( [Proverbs 1:1](#) [Proverbs 1:6](#) ; [Mark 3:23](#) ), riddles ( [Psalm 78:2](#) ; [Mark 7:17](#) ), and symbols or types ( [Heb 9:9](#) ; B. Sanh. 92b ). "Parable" is a general term for a figurative saying.

The conceptual background for the concept of parable in the New Testament was Semitic, not Aristotelian Greek. This single insight could have saved the history of interpretation of the parables of Jesus from several key misconceptions. From Jülicher on, based on the Aristotelian Greek idea of parable as "pure comparison" conveying only a single point, there has been a significant school of interpretation that has regarded all allegorical traits as foreign to the parables of Jesus and has insisted that each parable has only one point. This narrow definition of parable has led interpreters to regard the allegorical interpretations of parables in the Gospels (e.g., [Mark 4:14-20](#) ) as later misinterpretations, even though the earliest written gospels have the highest percentage of allegorical elements, and the latest, the Gospel of Thomas, has the least. It has also led to a seemingly endless series of variations of exactly just what was the "one point" of each parable. A study of the many interpretations shows a wide range of views of just what that one point must have been. For many parables, such as the prodigal son, limiting the interpretation to "one point" has proved to be a procrustean bed.

Many of Jesus' parables elicit a judgment that invites repentance, such as the good Samaritan. **His parables lead us to a new way of seeing life and invite us to adopt a whole new perspective that changes how we live.**

*Jesus' narrative parables are probably best understood as extended metaphors. The story (the image) is a window through which a larger reality (the referent) is depicted. Understanding the message of a parable is more than identifying its "point," though many parables do have a focal point that is reinforced by the parable as a whole. Thus, it is crucial both to understand the story as it would have been understood by Jesus' original hearers, and to understand the referent, the wider reality about which it gives insight.*

Typically the referent is some aspect of the kingdom of God, the reign of God in people's hearts, or the realm of God's sovereignty.

In order to let the parable have its full impact, we need to see the referent in a new way through the parable story.

To understand a parable we first need to listen to the story. We need to appreciate how its various details support the focus of the whole. For instance, the words describing the fate of each of the seeds that did not bear fruit - devoured, scorched, choked have terrifying overtones. This is a story about the reception of seed in various soils. The three examples of multiplied fruitfulness balance the former three examples of fruitlessness. By their concluding position the multiplied fruitfulness of the good soil offers hope in contrast to the devastation where the Word does not take root. The interpretation in each of the Synoptics fits the story perfectly: a person's destiny depends on his or her response to the Word. It both offers hope and warns of devastation to those who will not accept the message. Such a combination of cursing and blessing seems to have been typical of Jesus' contrast parables: eschatological blessing for those who respond properly to God's invitation, but cursing for those who do not.

Of Jesus' fifty-two recorded narrative parables, twenty seem to depict him in imagery that in the Old Testament metaphorical use typically referred to God. The frequency with which this occurs indicates that Jesus regularly depicted himself in images that were particularly appropriate for depicting God. Such self-portrayal appears to be unique to Jesus. In the vast corpus of rabbinic parables there seems to be none in which a rabbi depicted himself. This distinctiveness, like the distinctive artistry of Jesus' parables, is further evidence that the parables recorded in the Gospels are authentic to Jesus.

The imagery that Jesus used to depict himself is an integral and often necessary part of the parables in which they occur. For instance, take the "father" out of the prodigal son, the "bridegroom" out of the bridegroom, the "shepherd" out of the lost sheep, or the "rock" out of the two houses and the parable disintegrates.

Not only do these parables depict Jesus as performing the work of God; they implicitly apply various titles of God to Jesus: the Sower, the Rock, the Shepherd, the Bridegroom, the Father, the Lord, and the King. Each of these parables adds to the overall impression that Jesus implicitly claimed to be God. Most parable studies that deal with the sort of implicit claim Jesus was making through the parables assume that it is a messianic claim, but most of this imagery was not used in the Old Testament to depict the Messiah. Even those symbols that were occasionally also used of the Messiah in the Old Testament (shepherd, king, stone) in Jesus' parables refer more naturally to God.

However, could Jesus' use of these symbols for God mean simply that he saw himself, as all of the prophets did, as doing God's work and speaking God's word?

A few of these parables, like the two houses and the two sons, with their particular focus on obedience to Jesus' word, could be interpreted in this way. But three points support the view that Jesus was in fact presenting himself as God:

1. None of the prophets applied symbols for God to himself in the way that Jesus did so consistently in his parables.
2. None of the prophets claimed that they were doing or would do what the Scriptures specifically say that God will do. Yet it is precisely these things that Jesus so often depicted himself as doing in the parables: forgiving sin, sowing the kingdom, sowing his word in men's hearts, graciously welcoming undeserving sinners into the kingdom, seeking out and rescuing his lost sheep, directing the harvest of the great judgment, and dividing between those who will and those who will not enter the kingdom.
3. Many of the images through which Jesus refers to himself focus not so much on his activity as on who he is: the bridegroom of the kingdom, the good shepherd, the one who will return as king, the one with authority as vineyard owner and lord to do what he wishes with what is his, the one with authority to forgive sins, and the lord with authority to give or refuse entry into the kingdom and to reward the faithful.

This is of vital relevance to the current debate on the deity of Jesus. Did he really understand himself to be deity? Here in the parables, the most assuredly authentic of all the traditions about Jesus, is a clear, implicit affirmation of Jesus' self-understanding as deity. His sense of identification with God was so deep that to depict himself he consistently gravitated to imagery and symbols that in the Old Testament depicted God.

Jesus' parables depict many aspects of the kingdom of God. God's reign requires total devotion to him and a life exemplifying repentance, trust, love, and obedience. The forgiving quality of God's love and his merciful invitation to the kingdom inspire trust, the rejection of prejudice, and love for our neighbors.

Philip Barton Payne

[www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/parable.html](http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/parable.html)

- **Why did Jesus teach using parables?**

*“<sup>10</sup> Jesus’ disciples came and asked him, ‘Why do you use parables when you talk to the people?’ <sup>11</sup> He replied, ‘You are permitted to understand the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but others are not. <sup>12</sup> To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them. <sup>13</sup> That is why I use these parables.’*

...

*’<sup>34</sup> Jesus always used stories and illustrations like these when speaking to the crowds. In fact, he never spoke to them without using such parables. <sup>35</sup> This fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet: ‘I will speak to you in parables. I will explain things hidden since the creation of the world.’”*

- Matthew 13:10-13, 34-35

- To \_\_\_\_\_ from those who \_\_\_\_\_.
- To \_\_\_\_\_ to those who \_\_\_\_\_.
- To make God’s \_\_\_\_\_.
- To gain and hold \_\_\_\_\_.
- To encourage people to \_\_\_\_\_.

- **How many parables are there?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **Where do we find the Parables of Jesus?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **What language did Jesus use to teach the parables?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **What language did gospel authors use to write the parables?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **In every parable there are:**
  - A \_\_\_\_\_
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - A \_\_\_\_\_
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - A \_\_\_\_\_

- **In every parable . . .**

- there is an actor representing \_\_\_\_\_.

- there is an actor representing \_\_\_\_\_.

- there is a deeper \_\_\_\_\_.

- **Jesus' most common parable topic was \_\_\_\_\_.**

**JESUS' FAVORITE PARABLE TOPICS:**

- 
- Prayer
- 
- God's love
- God's Kingdom
- Eternity/Heaven & Hell
- 
- Wisdom

## Parables in the Gospels

Parable	Matthew	Mark	Luke
1 A Lamp on a Stand	Matt. 5:14-16	Mark 4:21-22	Luke 8:16-17; 11:33-36
2 The Wise and Foolish Builders	Matt. 7:24-27		Luke 6:47-49
3 New Cloth on an Old Garment	Matt. 9:16	Mark 2:21	Luke 5:36
4 New Wine in Old Wineskins	Matt. 9:17	Mark 2:22	Luke 5:37-38
5 The Sower	Matt. 13:3-9	Mark 4:2-9	Luke 8:4-8
6 The Weeds	Matt. 13:24-30		
7 The Mustard Seed	Matt. 13:31-32	Mark 4:30-32	Luke 13:18-19
8 The Yeast	Matt. 13:33		Luke 13:20-21
9 The Hidden Treasure	Matt. 13:44		
10 The Pearl	Matt. 13:45-46		
11 The Net	Matt. 13:47-50		
12 The Lost Sheep	Matt. 18:12-14		Luke 15:3-7
13 The Unmerciful Servant	Matt. 18:23-35		
14 The Workers in the Vineyard	Matt. 20:1-16		
15 The Two Sons	Matt. 21:28-32		
16 The Tenants	Matt. 21:33-45	Mark 12:1-12	Luke 20:9-19
17 The Wedding Banquet	Matt. 22:2-14		
18 The Ten Virgins	Matt. 25:1-13		
19 The Talents	Matt. 25:14-30		
20 The Growing Seed		Mark 4:26-29	
21 The Absent Householder		Mark 13:34-37	
22 The Creditor and the Two Debtors			Luke 7:41-43
23 The Good Samaritan			Luke 10:30-37
24 A Friend in Need			Luke 11:5-13
25 The Rich Fool			Luke 12:16-21
26 The Watchful Servants			Luke 12:35-40
27 The Faithful Servant	Matt. 24:45-51		Luke 12:42-48
28 The Barren Fig Tree			Luke 13:6-9
29 The Place of Honor			Luke 14:7-11
30 The Great Banquet			Luke 14:16-24
31 The Cost of Being a Disciple			Luke 14:25-35
32 The Lost Coin			Luke 15:8-10
33 The Prodigal Son			Luke 15:11-32
34 The Shrewd Steward			Luke 16:1-13
35 The Rich Man and Lazarus			Luke 16:19-31
36 The Obedient Servant			Luke 17:7-10
37 The Persistent Widow			Luke 18:1-8
38 The Pharisee and the Tax Collector			Luke 18:9-14
39 The Ten Minas			Luke 19:11-27
Total Parables in each Gospel	20	8	27
Unique Parables in each Gospel	10	2	17

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### THE JOURNEY – UPPER EAST

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1538 3rd Avenue  
(3rd Ave btwn 86th & 87th St.)  
4 5 6 Q M 6

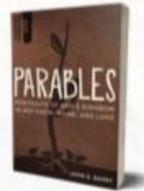
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## **PARABLES DURING THE GREATEST STORIES EVER TOLD:**

- **The Parable of the Wheat & the Weeds – Matthew 13:24-30**
- The Parable of the Fishing Net – Matthew 13:47-50
- The Parable of the Mustard Seed – Matthew 13:31-32
- **The Parable of the Prodigal Son – Luke 15:11-24**
- **The Parable of the Talents – Matthew 25:14-30**
- The Parable of the Rich Fool – Luke 12:20-21
- **The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant – Matthew 18:23-35**
- **The Parable of the Pharisee & the Tax Collector – Luke 18:9-14**
- The Parable of the Friend at Night – Luke 11:5-8
- **The Parable of the Good Samaritan – Luke 10:29-37**
- **The Parable of the Wise & Foolish Builder – Matthew 7:24-27**
- The Parable of the Shrewd Manager – Luke 16:1-8
- **The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids – Matthew 25:1-13**
- The Parable of the Rich Man & Lazarus – Luke 16:19-31
- The Parable of the Pearl of Great Value – Matthew 13:45-46

## **The Parable of Sower** **(Mark 4:1-20)**

## **THE ACTORS:**

*“1 Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water’s edge. 2 He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said:*

*3 ‘Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed.*

*4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.*

*5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.*

*7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain.*

*8 Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times.’ 9 Then Jesus said, ‘Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.’*

*10 When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. 11 He told them, ‘The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables 12 so that, “they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!”’*

*13 Then Jesus said to them, ‘Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?’*

*14 The farmer sows the word.*

*15 Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them.*

*16 Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. 17 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.*

*18 Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 19 but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.*

*20 Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop - some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.'''*

(\*See pages 12-13 in your "Parables" Growth Group book)

## **THE ACTION:**

## **The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16)**

(Jesus) *"1 For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. 2 He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.*

*3 About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. 4 He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' 5 So they went. He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. 6 About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?' 7 'Because no one has hired us,' they answered. He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.'*

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*8 When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.' 9 The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. 10 So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. 11 When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner.*

*12 'These who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.' 13 But he answered one of them, 'I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? 14 Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. 15 Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?' 16 So the last will be first, and the first will be last."*

(\*See pages 56-57 in your "Parables" Growth Group book)

**THE ACTORS:**

**THE ACTION:**

## The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-24)

### THE ACTORS:

*“11 Jesus told them this story: ‘A man had two sons. 12 The younger son told his father, “I want my share of your estate now before you die.” So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.*

*13 A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. 14 About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. 15 He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. 16 The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything.*

*17 When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, “At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! 18 I will go home to my father and say, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, 19 and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.’”*

*20 So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. 21 His son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.” 22 But his father said to the servants, “Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. 23 And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, 24 for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.” So the party began.’”*

### THE ACTION:

(\*See pages 62-63 in your “Parables” Growth Group book)

## **Next Steps:**

- Engage fully with the Journey's Fall Spiritual Growth campaign - *The Greatest Stories Ever Told: The Parables of Jesus.***
  
- Attend each week of *The Greatest Stories Ever Told* series.**
  
- Join a Parables of Jesus Growth Group.**
  
- Work through your Growth Group book – *Parables.***
  
- Read the Parables of Jesus Daily Devotions this Fall.**
  
- Attend your next Journey Members Spiritual Growth Class this Fall – Class 101, 201, 301 or 401.**

# Bibliography

*More Parables from the Back Side – Volume 2* by J. Ellsworth Kalas

*Parables from the Back Side – Volume 1* by J. Ellsworth Kalas

*The Parables of Jesus* by James Montgomery Boice

*The Parables of Jesus: A Guide to Understanding and Applying the Stories Jesus Told* by R.T. Kendall

*Parables: The Greatest Stories Ever Told* (Life Guide Bible Studies) by John White

*Windows on the Parables: See How the Stories of Jesus Connect Heaven with Earth* by Warren W. Wiersbe

## Other Resources:

*Parable* – Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology Online  
[www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/parable.html](http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/parable.html)