

## THE PARABLES OF CHRIST

by William E. Paul

Jesus used *parables* (“a placing of one thing beside another” with a view to comparison, W.E. Vine) for illustrating truth to His hearers. (Matt. 13:1-15, 33-35). Keep in mind the cultural settings in which the parables were given. Some parables were simply examples of His teaching, needing no explanation. Others required detailed application of the parable so, if His disciples were present, Jesus usually explained its meaning to them privately at a later time (Mark 4:33-34; 7:17ff; Matt. 13:36).

His reasons for using such vague, veiled illustrations of His teaching, which often tended to conceal His meaning, were, (1) They prevented those hostile to His message from mounting opposition to what they may have perceived as anti-government teaching. (2) Those lacking a genuine interest in the spiritual nature of His teaching or a desire for receiving the truth were weeded out. (3) They allowed the truth to penetrate the possible resistance of His hearers, thus disarming in advance their rejection of the teaching. (4) Parables provided a useful vehicle for remembering the truth they illustrated.

Those few who were truly interested in Jesus’ message and actively seeking the truth (i.e., His disciples) usually inquired and then were later given detailed explanations of their meaning. (See also Mark 4:1-12; Luke 8:4-10).

Care should be taken *not* to build dogmatic doctrine on Jesus’ parables alone, much less to use parabolic reasoning for teaching or interpreting personal experiences or truth today.

Parable	Matthew	Mark	Luke	Lesson
The Lamp Under a Basket	5:14-16	4:21-22	8:16-17	Value of a good example
Houses on Rock and Sand	7:24-27		6:47-49	Acting on profession
New Cloth on Old Garment	9:16	2:21	5:36	New doctrine & old prejudices
New Wine in Old Bottles	9:17	2:22	5:37-39	New spirit in unconverted heart
The Sower, Seed and Soil	13:3-9; 18-23	4:3-9; 13-20	8:4-8; 11-15	Different responses to Gospel
Weeds Among Good Seed	13:24-30; 36-43			People sorted out at judgment
The Mustard Seed	13:31-32	4:30-32	13:18-19	Growth of the Kingdom
Leaven in the Flour	13:33		13:20	The power of influence
The Hidden Treasure	13:44			The value of the Kingdom
The Pearl of Great Value	13:45-46			The value of the Kingdom
Fishing with a Dragnet	13:47-50			People sorted out at Judgment
Owner of a House	13:52			Value of old and new lessons
The Lost Sheep	18:12-14		15:3-7	Joy over repentance
The Unmerciful Slave	18:23-35			Forgiveness and ingratitude
Laborers in the Vineyard	20:1-16			Rewards for service
The Father with Two Sons	21:28-32			Insincerity and repentance

Landowner & Vine-growers	21:33-43	12:1-9	20:9-16	Christ rejected by evil people
Wedding Feast of King's Son	22:1-14			Only righteous are acceptable
The Fig Tree and Its Leaves	24:32-35	13:28-32	21:29-33	Signs of Jesus' second coming
The Faithful and Wise Slave	24:45-51		12:42-48	Rewards for faithful service
The Ten Virgins	25:1-12			Need for watchful preparation
The Talents	25:14-30			Proper use of abilities
The Sheep and Goats	25:31-46			People sorted out at judgment
The Growing Seed		4:26-29		The marvel of spiritual growth
The Watchful Slave		13:33-37	12:35-40	Readiness for Jesus' return
Blind Leading the Blind			6:39	Need for enlightenment
Good and Bad Fruit Trees			6:43-45	Lives produce good or bad
The Two Debtors			7:40-50	Gratitude for forgiveness
The Good Samaritan			10:30-37	Active mercy and benevolence
The Persistent Friend			11:5-13	Perseverance in asking
The Rich Fool			12:16-21	Trusting in uncertain riches
The Unfruitful Fig Tree			13:6-9	God's patience
The Closed Door			13:24-30	Evildoers barred from Kingdom
The Slighted Dinner Invitation			14:16-24	Accepting opportunities
The Unfinished Building			14:28-30	Counting the cost
The Undermanned Army			14:31-33	Counting the cost
The Lost Coin			15:8-10	Joy over repentance
The Prodigal Son			15:11-32	Reclaimed opportunities / God's wonderful forgiveness
The Shrewd Property Manager			16:1-13	Using sensible forethought
The Rich Man and Lazarus			16:19-31	The finality of God's judgment
The Master and Servant			17:7-10	Responsibility for serving
The Persistent Widow			18:1-8	Persistence in prayer
The Pharisee and the Publican			18:9-14	Self-righteousness and humility
Faithful and Unfaithful Slaves			19:11-27	The reward for diligence

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The Good Shepherd	John 10:1-18	Jesus gave His life for people
The Vine and the Branches	John 15:1-6	The importance of fruit-bearing