

## Lesson Eight: The Parables

There are few portions of Scripture as exciting and relevant for preaching as the parables. Along with apocalyptic, they have been among the most written about yet hermeneutically abused portions of Scripture (Osborne, p. 291).

- I. What Are Parables?
  - A. Simple, Real Life Stories
    1. The nature of a parable is that it uses real life, ordinary or very familiar, events to teach spiritual principles.
    2. If something does not fit this description, then it is not a parable (cf. Luke 16:19-31).
  - B. With A Spiritual Meaning
    1. The word “parable” literally means, “*a placing of one thing by the side of another, juxtaposition.*”<sup>1</sup>
    2. Jesus told stories that He placed “side-by-side” with a spiritual principle.
- II. The Use of Parables
  - A. The importance of parables is evident when we realize that fully a third of Jesus’ teaching in the Synoptic Gospels comes in parabolic form (Osborne, p. 291).
  - B. In the use of parables:
    1. There is a central idea being taught by the parable and the various elements of the parable must be kept in harmony with that central idea.
    2. While the central idea is of primary concern, there is also meaning to be found in the various elements of the parable.
    3. Care must be taken not to press the meaning of the parable or its various elements beyond the central point.
- III. The Purpose of Parables
  - A. To those who *want* to be taught (Mark 4:10-12; Matt. 13:13).
    1. Isaiah 6:9-10
    2. In short, Mark 4:10–12 and Matthew 13:13–15 clearly indicate that Jesus chose the parable form to symbolize God’s judgment on his opponents and on an unbelieving people (Osborne, p. 295).
  - B. The Purposes of the Parables (Conley, pp. 280-285)
    1. Parables serve the purpose of setting forth the truth in an attractive and memorable form.
    2. Although parables were often rebukes targeted at certain ones, they were often more effective and disarming than straightforward language.
    3. Cf. 2 Thess. 2:10-12
  - C. The Characteristics of Parables (Osborne, pp. 296-302)
    1. Earthiness
    2. Conciseness
    3. Major and minor points (cf. Luke 15:11-32).

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (New York: Harper & Brothers., 1889), 479.

4. Repetition (cf. Luke 15:21; Matt. 25:21, 23).
5. Conclusion at the end (cf. Luke 12:21; 7:42; 10:36).
6. Listener-relatedness
7. Reversal of expectation (cf. Luke 18:9-14; 10:30-37; 15:11-32; 16:1-13).
8. Kingdom-centered
9. Kingdom ethics (Matt. 5:13-16; 6:19-24; 7:1-5, 24-27).
10. God and salvation in the parables.
  - a. King, Father, Landowner, Employer, Judge
  - b. In each of these figures He graciously offers mercy and forgiveness.