

Teaching in Parables

Lesson * 1: (COL 17-27; Mt. 13:10-13; Mk. 4:11-12; Lk. 8:9-10)

Today we begin a series of lessons where we will be studying fifty parables of Jesus. Though our trek will take us a year, we will find, in the end, that the investment of time has paid generous dividends to our spiritual life.

In order to get the most out of the lessons, it will be necessary for you prepare them in advance. Please don't simply fill in the blanks. Reflect upon your answers and internalize them, that is to say, make them a part of your daily life. There are great gems in the parables of Jesus. Ellen White has recommended: "Hang in memory's hall the precious words of Christ. They are to be valued far above silver or gold." (The Faith I Live By, p. 9)

Parables to be Studied

1. The Pearl of Great Price (Mt. 13:45, 46)
2. The Lost Sheep (Mt. 18:12-14; Lk. 15:3-7)
3. The Lost Coin (Lk. 15:8-10)
4. The Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11-32)
5. The Barren Fig Tree (Lk. 13:6-9; Mt. 21:18-20; Mk. 11:14-14, 20-21)
6. The Mustard Seed (Mt. 13:31, 32; Mk. 4:30-32; Lk. 13:18, 19)
7. The Tares and the Wheat (Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43)
8. The Wicked Husbandmen (Mt. 21:33-43; Mk. 12:1-12; Lk. 20:9-19)
9. The Sower (Mt. 13:3-9, 18-23; Mk. 4:3-20; Lk. 8:5-15)
10. The Great Banquet (Lk. 14:16-24)
11. The Hidden Treasure (Mt. 13:44)
12. New Cloth and New Wine (Mt. 9:16, 17; Mk. 2:21, 22; Lk. 5:36-39)
13. The Two Debtors (Lk. 7:41-43)
14. Building a Tower; A King Going to War (Lk. 14:28-33)
15. The Seven Unclean Spirits (Mt. 12:43-45)
16. The Two Sons (Mt. 21:28-32)
17. Building on the Rock and on the Sand (Mt. 7:24-27; Lk. 6:47-49)
18. The Rich Fool (Lk. 12:16-21)
19. The Growing Seed (Mk. 4:26-29)
20. The Leaven (Mt. 13:33; Lk. 13:20, 21)
21. The Wedding Garment (Mt. 22:2-14)
22. The Friend Calling at Midnight (Lk. 11:5-13)
23. The Insistent Widow (Lk. 18:1-8)
24. Choosing Places of Honor (Lk. 14:7-11)
25. The Pharisee and the Publican (Lk. 18:9-14)
26. The Nobleman and the Pounds (Lk. 19:11-27)
27. The Talents (Mt. 25:14-30)
28. The Dishonest Steward (Lk. 16:1-9)

29. The Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19-31)
30. The Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:30-37)
31. The Unforgiving Servant (Mt. 18:21-35)
32. Treasures Old and New (Mt. 13:52)
33. The Faithful Steward (Lk. 12:42-48)
34. The Ten Virgins (Mt. 25:1-13)
35. The Watchful Servant (Mk. 13:34-37)
36. The Watchful Servant and Vigilant Homeowner (Lk. 12:35-40)
37. Laborers of the Vineyard (Mt. 20:1-16)
38. The Unprofitable Servants (Lk. 17:7-10)
39. The Sheep and the Goats (Mt. 25:31-46)
40. The Dragnet (Mt. 13:47-50)
41. The Living Manna (Jn. 6)
42. The Living Water (Jn. 3:5; 4:10, 13-14; 7:37-39)
43. Light and Darkness (Mt. 5:13-16; 6:22-23; Jn. 1:8, 9; 3:19; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35, 36)
44. Healing Paralytics (Jn. 5; Mt. 9:1-8; Mk. 2:1-12)
45. Healing Lepers (Mt. 8:1-4; Lk. 5:12-15)
46. The Man Born Blind (Jn. 9)
47. Tempests on the Lake (Mt. 8:23-27; 14:22-33)
48. The Salt of the Earth (Mt. 5:13; Mk. 9:49, 50; Lk. 14:34)
49. Lambs Among Wolves (Mt. 7:15; 10:16)
50. The Vine and the Branches (Jn. 15)

Study Methods and Characteristics of Jesus' Parables

1. The Greek word *parabole* means "putting things side by side." In other words, it means "to compare one thing with another." A parable is a symbolic story whose purpose is to convey one central lesson. The individual details of a parable are important but only insofar as they point to the central truth.
2. Many of Jesus' parables were not original with Him. The rabbis of Christ's day were actually prolific parable tellers. We shall find that Jesus occasionally employed the rabbis' stories but gave them an unusual and unexpected twist.
3. Most of the parables of Jesus are multidimensional. That is to say, his parables have a local personal dimension and a broader universal dimension. Two good examples of this dual meaning of parables can be seen in the story of the Good Samaritan and the parable of the Lost Sheep.
4. It is important to remember that Jesus employed three types of parables: 1) **Verbal** parables, 2) **Acted** parables (such as the cursing of the fig tree), and 3) **Miracles**. It is frequently overlooked that the miracles of Jesus were not only performed to relieve physical suffering but also to teach deep spiritual truth. This can be seen, for example, in the healing of lepers, blind people and paralytics. It can also be seen in the feeding of the five thousand,

miraculous fishing expeditions and the calming of storms. The woman who touched Jesus' robe is a prime example of a physical healing with deep spiritual implications.

5. Bear in mind that some of Jesus' parables are found in more than one Gospel. In order to get the full picture, it is necessary to study the parable each time it appears.
6. It would be well to remember also that each parable has a very important historical and textual context. It is imperative to carefully study the events which transpired before each parable was told.
7. Don't forget that Jesus not only referred to events, people and things which surrounded Him but He also frequently picked up on themes which are found in the Old Testament. We must therefore include the Old Testament in our examination of the parables.

Jesus' Use of Parables

1. In which way was Christ's parable teaching similar to His own mission? "Christ took our _____ and dwelt among us. Divinity was revealed in humanity; the invisible _____ in the visible human form. Men could learn of the _____ through the _____; heavenly things were revealed through the _____. . . . So it was in Christ's _____. . . ." (COL 17)
2. Which Old Testament prophecy predicted that Jesus would speak in parables? _____ (Read Mk. 13:34-35 and then check the marginal reference in your Bible. Be sure to study the entire background chapter in the Old Testament)
3. What link existed between the written Word of God and the parables of Jesus? "Natural things were the _____ for the spiritual; the things of nature and the life-experience of His hearers were _____ with the truths of the written word. Leading thus from the natural to the _____ kingdom. . . ." (COL 17)
4. Why could Jesus employ the lessons of nature so effectively? In His teaching from nature, Christ was speaking of the things which His own _____ had made, and which had qualities and powers that He Himself had _____." (COL 18)
5. What was the original purpose of the created order? "In their original perfection all created things were an expression of the _____ of God." (COL 18)
6. What striking difference did the people see between Jesus' teaching and that of the Scribes and Pharisees? "And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were _____ at His teaching, for He taught them as one having _____, and not as the scribes." (Mt. 7:28, 29)

Sin's Effect on Nature

1. How did the entrance of sin into the world affect the lessons of nature? “As soon as the holy pair transgressed the law of the Most High, the _____ from the _____ of God departed from the face of nature.” (COL 19)

Note: In other words, the **transmitter** was damaged. Nature now spoke imperfectly about God. While it still revealed a God of love, it also revealed the contrary principle of evil.

2. Were the lessons of nature totally obliterated as a result of sin? “The earth is now _____ and defiled by sin. Yet even in its _____ state much that is beautiful remains. God’s object lessons are not _____; rightly understood, nature speaks of her Creator.” (COL 18)

Note: This is the reason the Psalmist could still exclaim: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.” (Psalm 19:1)

3. What happened with the mind of man as a result of sin? “In the days of Christ these lessons [from nature] had been lost _____ of. Men had well-nigh ceased to _____ God in His works.” Paul says that men “became _____ in their _____, and their foolish heart was _____.” (COL 18; Rom. 1:21)

Note: Not only was the transmitter damaged; the **receiver** was also damaged. Man’s unaided mind could not longer read God’s lessons in nature correctly.

4. How is the veil of sin removed from nature and from humanity? “Christ sought to remove that which _____ the truth. The veil that sin cast over the face of _____, He came to draw aside, bringing to view the spiritual glory that all things were created to _____.” (COL 18-19)

5. What two books are to be used side by side in the science of education? “The book of _____ is a great lesson book, which in connection with the _____ we are to use in teaching others of His character, and guiding lost _____ back to God.” (COL 24)

The Purpose for Parables

1. What was Jesus’ intended purpose in using parables? “The veil that sin had cast over the face of _____, He came to draw aside, bringing to view the _____ glory that all things were created to reflect. His words placed the teachings of _____ as well as of the _____ in a new aspect, and made them a new revelation.” (COL 18-19)
2. Why did Jesus choose parables as his preferred method of teaching? “By connecting His teaching with the scenes of _____, experience or _____, He secured their

_____ and impressed their hearts. _____ as they looked upon the objects that illustrated His lessons, they recalled the words of the divine Teacher.” (COL 21)

Note: Jesus employed a living power point presentation. He knew that a picture is worth a thousand words!

3. Why did Jesus employ illustrations? “By using a _____ of illustrations, He not only presented truth in its different _____, but appealed to the different _____.” (COL 21)
4. What process did Jesus frequently follow as He told His parables? In the parable of the lilies of the field, Jesus **first** “_____ the beautiful lily. . . . **Then** followed the sweet _____ and the important _____.” **Finally**, He spread His hands and made a call to the multitude, uttering the well known words found in _____.

Note: It is obvious that the parables of Jesus were not only meant to inform. Their main purpose was to lead the people to make a decision in favor of His kingdom.

Concealing and Revealing

2. Why were the parables of Jesus meant to conceal as well as to reveal? “He presented truth in such a way that they could find nothing by which to bring His case before the Sanhedrin. In parables He _____ the hypocrisy and wicked works of those who occupied high positions, and in _____ language clothed truth of so cutting a character that had it been spoken in _____ denunciation, they would not have listened to His words, and would speedily have put an end to His ministry.” (COL 22)
3. What does Matthew 13:11 tell us about the revealing and concealing functions of the parables? “Because it is given unto you to know the _____ of the kingdom of heaven but to them it is not _____.”
4. Since when had these mysteries of the kingdom been concealed? Jesus stated that these mysteries which He came to utter, had been kept _____ from the foundation of the world. (Mt. 13:35)

Note: Several passages indicate that these mysteries were directly related to the earthly ministry and mission of Jesus. Revelation 13:8 explains that Jesus is the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world.

5. From whom did Jesus conceal the mysteries of the kingdom and to whom did He reveal them? The mysteries were revealed to the _____ but were hidden from the _____ and _____. (Mt. 11:25; see also Mt. 13:11; 21:16; Lk. 10:21; Ps. 8:2)

6. What did the apostle Paul have to say about these mysteries? The mysteries hidden from the foundation of the world are identified by the apostle Paul as “the _____ of Jesus Christ. . . . which was kept _____ since the world _____.” (Rom. 16:25; see also, Eph. 1:4, 9; 3:3; 6:19; Col. 1:26, 27; Rev. 10:7)

Nature and the Parables

1. In which three ways did Jesus seek to teach the people about God? “He taught them to behold Him as manifested in His _____, in His _____, and by His _____.” (COL 23)
2. In what environment can truth best be taught and exemplified? “Christ taught His disciples by the _____, on the _____, in the _____ and _____, where they could look upon the things of _____ by which He illustrated His teachings.” (COL 24)
3. What error is frequently committed by teachers and how can it be corrected? “Too often the minds of _____ are occupied with _____ theories and speculations, falsely called science and philosophy. They need to be brought into _____ contact with nature. Let them learn that creation and Christianity have _____ God. Let them be taught to see the _____ of the natural with the spiritual. Let _____ which their eyes see or their hands handle be made a lesson in character building.” (COL 25)
4. What link exists between the teaching function of the nature and the Sabbath? “On the holy rest day, _____ all other days, we should study the messages that God ha written for us in _____.” (COL 26)

Note: The Sabbath, in a special sense, reminds us that God is the creator of the heavens and the earth (Ex. 20:11). The Sabbath and nature are closely bound. In fact, the Sabbath should be a special day for the contemplation of God through nature.

5. How did Jesus connect the teachings of nature with the common labors of everyday life? “In the plowing and sowing, the tilling and the reaping, He teaches us to see an _____ of His work of _____ in the heart. So in every line of useful labor and every association of life, He desires us to find a lesson of _____ truth.” (COL 26)