

Bible Stories for Adults

Parables of the Kingdom

Matthew 13

Opening

Gathering: What is your favorite parable and why?

Today's Focus: Jesus used parables to reveal truths about God's heavenly kingdom through earthly stories.

Key Verses: *Jesus spoke ... to the crowd in parables; He did not say anything to them without using a parable. So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world." Matthew 13:34-35*

Every teacher ... who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old. Matthew 13:52

Opening Prayer

Lesson

Jesus' First Year Approach (*Matthew 4:23-25*)

How did Jesus reveal Himself and His Kingdom early in His ministry?

Matthew 4:23-25

How difficult was it for Him to get permission to teach in the synagogues?

Luke 4:15-16

How was He received by Jewish leaders early in His ministry?

John 3:1-2

The Reception Changes (*Matthew 12:14*)

How did this reception change by His second year?

Matthew 12:1-2, 9-10, 13-14

How did they explain the great miracles, healings and exorcisms Jesus performed?

Matthew 12:22-24

How did Jesus show He was giving up on trying to reach the Jewish leaders?

Matthew 12:38-39 (25-39)

Jesus Changes His Approach (*Matthew 13:1-3, 10-15, 34-35*)

No longer invited to preach in many synagogues, where did Jesus now focus His teaching efforts?

Matthew 13:1-2

How did His style change to reveal His Kingdom to believers but not to those who rejected Him?

Matthew 13:3a

Is this really the reason He spoke in parables?

Matthew 13:10-12

Was Jesus purposely hiding the secrets of the kingdom of heaven from those who rejected Him?

Matthew 13:13-15

How dramatic of a change did Jesus make in His teaching style at this time?

Matthew 13:34-35 (Psalm 78:2)

How did He make sure His inner circle of apostles understood these secret truths?

Mark 4:33-34

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Understanding Jesus' Parables (*Matthew 13:16-17*)

As Christians, is it a simple matter for us to understand these parables?

Matthew 13:16-17

Did the disciples understand the parables when Jesus told them?

Matthew 13:36

Did they understand them after He explained them?

Matthew 13:51

How can we hope to understand Jesus' parables while others could not?

1 Corinthians 2:7-10a

What should we do to better understand God's great mysteries?

Ephesians 1:17-18

What parable did Jesus give to tell us what to do with the understandings God gives us?

Matthew 13:52

Six Points on Parables from Barclay

Parables make truth concrete

Matthew 23:27-28

Parables use here and now to get there and then

Revelation 21:18-19a, 21

Parables compel interest

Luke 6:46-49

Parables compel the hearer to discover truth for himself

Matthew 21:28-31

Parables conceal truth from those who don't want it

John 2:18-21

Matthew 26:59-61

Parables were spoken

Luke 14:31-33

The Parable of the Kingdom Sower (*Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23*)

What well-known parable does Jesus begin with that begins to explain the kingdom of heaven?

Matthew 13:3-8

How did Jesus conclude this parable that pointed the people toward its meaning?

Matthew 13:9

How did Jesus make sure the people understood the connection?

Matthew 13:18-23

Was Jesus describing a political kingdom that would be founded by the promised Messiah?

Luke 17:20-21

What key point was Jesus making about the kingdom of heaven in this parable?

Matthew 22:14

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The Parable of the Weeds (*Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43*)

How did Jesus build on this theme to describe the lives of those in this kingdom?

Matthew 13:24-30

Jesus didn't explain this parable to the crowd. Was it because the message was so obvious?

Matthew 13:36

What was Jesus trying to say about the kingdom of heaven?

Matthew 13:37-43

How did these parables respond to Jesus' encounters with Pharisees earlier that day?

Matthew 12:33-37

Are we to work to uproot weeds of false Christians by shooting holes in their positions?

Matthew 13:29

How are we to keep false Christianity from damaging Christians and their faith?

Matthew 13:7

The Parable of the Mustard Seed (*Matthew 13:31-32*)

What short parable did Jesus give next without any explanation?

Matthew 13:31-32

Though not the smallest, Jews referred to the mustard seed when describing something small

Khardah - Mustard plant grew into a tree-like shrub up to 10-20 ft tall

Wide fan-like branches were strong enough for birds to roost in fall

What is the common explanation of the mustard seed parable?

Acts 1:15; 2:41, 47b

What is the understanding of the birds in this explanation?

Ezekiel 17:22-23 (31:6)

What is another explanation of the meaning behind the mustard seed?

1 Peter 2:2

The Parable of the Mustard Weed (*Matthew 13:31-32*)

How do some scholars explain this parable in the context of weeds in the wheat?

2 Corinthians 11:2-4

Shouldn't we accept everyone who wants to become a member?

Acts 8:9, 18-21

Why should we be careful about how the church grows?

Revelation 3:15-16

What is the purpose of mentioning the birds under this explanation?

Matthew 13:4, 19

The Parable of the Leaven (*Matthew 13:33*)

What other short parable did Jesus then give to further His lesson on the Kingdom of Heaven?

Matthew 13:33

What is the common interpretation of this parable?

1 Thessalonians 5:23

With all other Biblical references to leaven denoting evil, how do some explain this parable?

1 Corinthians 5:6-8

Matthew 16:5-7, 11-12

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The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and Pearl (*Matthew 13:44-46*)

What parables did Jesus give to describe the unmatched value of the Kingdom of Heaven?

Matthew 13:44-46

What is one view of the meaning behind these parables?

Colossians 2:2-3

Matthew 6:19-21

What other interpretation is also given?

Luke 19:10

What strengthens this explanation?

Revelation 5:9

The Parable of the Net (*Matthew 13:47-50*)

What parable did Jesus give to finish this lesson on the Kingdom of Heaven?

Matthew 13:47-48

How did He make sure this lesson wouldn't be lost by the Bible scholars?

Matthew 13:49-50

The Parable of the Householder (*Matthew 13:51-52*)

Should we be concerned about differing understandings and insights of Jesus' parables?

Matthew 13:51-52

How do we know if what we reveal is God's good intention?

Luke 6:43-45

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. How often and sincerely do I ask God to help me understand His truths?
(*Matthew 13:36; Psalm 25:4-5; Proverbs 1:7; John 14:26; 16:12-16; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; Ephesians 1:17-18*)
2. When has my heart been hard like the path in the Parable of the Sower?
(*Matthew 13:4, 13-15, 19; Exodus 9:34-35; Psalm 95:8-11; Proverbs 28:14; John 12:37-41; Romans 11:7-10; Hebrews 3:7-19*)
3. When have I responded quickly but temporarily to God's Word like the seed on the rocky soil?
(*Matthew 13:5-6, 20-21; 14:25-31; Galatians 1:6-9; 5:1-4; 1 Timothy 4:1, 14-16; Hebrews 10:23; Jude 24-25*)
4. When has my faith been choked by the worries of this life or by the deceit of wealth like the seed that fell among the thorns?
(*Matthew 13:7, 22; 6:19-34; 19:20-26; Luke 10:38-42; 12:11-12; 12:16-21*)
5. What crops have I produced in response to hearing and receiving God's Word?
(*Matthew 13:8-9, 23; 9:37-38; John 4:35-38; 1 Corinthians 3:5-9; 2 Corinthians 9:6-15; Galatians 6:7-10*)