

# The Parables of Jesus: FOR DISCIPLES ONLY

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***The theme for the first group of 10 parables is the Kingdom of God. The first six parables were given to the people but explained only to the disciples. Here, we examine the remaining four parables given to the disciples only, which deal with important doctrinal points concerning the Kingdom.***

Jesus had addressed the first six parables in this series directly to the people who were standing on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. But because of their spiritual blindness He did not explain the meaning to them. It was only to the disciples that He later revealed the meaning.

“All these things spake Jesus *unto the multitude* in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them” (Matt. 13:34). The people at the time never really realized what they had been told! Actually Christ had given them precious information that had been kept secret since the world was formed, but it was *hidden* in the parables (verse 35).

“Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him” (Matt. 13:36).

Now the setting had changed. Jesus was no longer sitting in the boat on the Sea of Galilee. He was in a house (His own or perhaps Peter’s). The disciples asked for an explanation of the parable of the tares (verse 36). Jesus explained not only that parable but all the parables He had given to the people (Mark 4:34).

Following the explanation of the parables given to the people, Jesus then *added* four more parables that pertained directly to the work of the future apostles. These were not given to the people at that time, but to the disciples only. The meaning was not hidden – there was no need. In fact, the meaning of each of these four last parables is self-explanatory.

Jesus continued with the same theme, that of the Kingdom of God, but He spoke of things that had to do with the ministry of the apostles. The disciples were still *not converted* at this point. They were not yet fully resolved to carry out their apostolic commissions. You will recall that following Christ’s crucifixion Peter had said, “I go a fishing” (John 21:3).

And, following Peter's example, the others said the same thing. But Christ had intended that they should become fishers of *men!*

These four parables were designed to show the disciples the incredible value and pricelessness of their apostolic calling. They were intended to illustrate the true worth of the knowledge of the Kingdom of God. And the last of these parables indicated how they were to preach and teach others about the Kingdom of God.

Let's examine them one at a time.

### **The hidden treasure**

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field (Matt. 13:44).”

Here we see a person who stumbles unexpectedly upon a valuable treasure in a field through which he is passing. He is not seeking it. He just happens upon it. But in so doing he immediately recognizes its tremendous value and takes steps to acquire the field – even at the cost of selling all his earthly possessions.

We may learn *two* lessons from this brief parable. One: Not everyone who is called is *seeking* the truth of God. Most are just going about their lives unconcerned about life's meaning. Their whole goal in life is self-perpetuation and perhaps material success. Then, quite unexpectedly, God intervenes in their lives and calls them to His Kingdom (John 6:44).

The second lesson: A wise person will immediately recognize the value and meaning of that high calling. He will take steps to see that from that time forth, nothing jeopardizes his efforts to pursue eternal life. He will abandon his material goals and “seek first the kingdom of God” (Matt. 6:33).

He will not care what the cost is – although he should soberly count that cost before he sets about becoming a real Christian: “For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?... So likewise, *whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple*” (Luke 14:28, 33).

Jesus was pointing the disciples to the importance of their calling as apostles. But the principle applies to all who are called of God to His Kingdom.

What are you willing to give up to achieve salvation?

### **The pearl of great price**

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it” (Matt. 13:45-46).

Notice the difference between this and the previous parable. The merchant was *seeking* “goodly pearls.” Since the pearl of great price represents the Kingdom, we must conclude that describes a person searching for spiritual truth.

There are many such people in the world. Not everyone stumbles upon the truth; some are actually seeking knowledge of God and His Kingdom.

Consider the moving example of a man named Simeon: “And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, *waiting for the consolation of Israel*: and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.

“And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation” (Luke 2:25-30).

Simeon had *yearned* for God’s Kingdom and His Christ! And God rewarded him by allowing him to see the Messiah before his death and indeed to prophesy concerning Him!

God has not yet given us the privilege of seeing Christ as Simeon did. But we have been offered that pearl of great price – we know of the Kingdom of God and how to achieve salvation.

If we are patient and endure to the very end – if we have really been willing to forsake everything and have given God’s Kingdom top priority in our lives – we too will someday gaze upon the face of the living Christ, this time in all its brilliance and glory as the returning Creator God.

Notice what the scripture says: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

Whether you were searching for the truth of God or not, will you now recognize the *value* of what you have within your grasp?

### **The net cast into the sea**

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good

into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 13:47-50).

As Peter and the others went out as “fishers of men,” there was no guarantee that every person they caught would be of top spiritual quality. The Gospel message attracts all kinds of people. Not everyone is truly converted and headed for the Kingdom. Simon Magus, in Acts the eighth chapter, is a good example of a person who was attracted by the power of the apostles (he was even baptized), but his motives were wrong.

There are those who fellowship with true brethren of the body of Christ. They eat with them, attend services with them and pay lip service to righteousness, but they are *not* children of the Kingdom!

Jude spoke of such as “spots in your feasts of charity, *when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear*” (Jude 12). Such people do not truly have the fear and respect of God that a genuinely converted person must have. They appear as Christians and teachers outwardly, but inwardly they are hypocrites and spiritually unclean.

Peter also warned of such individuals. He wrote: “But there were false prophets also *among the people*, even as there shall be false teachers *among you*, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Pet. 2:1).

These are not outsiders – they are insiders among the people of the Church of God. They are caught in the net along with those who are headed for the Kingdom of God. But at the return of Christ, such people will be separated – God’s angels will “sever the wicked *from among the just.*”

Upon completion of this parable Jesus asked them, “Have ye understood all these things?” They answered in the affirmative (Matt. 13:51). He then gave them one last parable, which could only apply to the ministry of Christ.

### **The householder’s treasure**

“Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old” (Matt. 13:52).

Here was an obvious reference to the disciples, who had been “instructed unto the kingdom of heaven” by the previous parables! They had learned some entirely new things – as Jesus had said in verse 35: “That it might be fulfilled... I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.”

But they also would preach some “old” things – things from the Old Testament prophets and writers, as well as the new truths that Christ had personally given to them.

The Jewish people to whom the apostles preached were familiar with many of the Old Testament teachings used by the apostles in the preaching of the Gospel. In addition, they heard many new truths that were given directly to the disciples by Christ.

The complete message of the New Testament combines the words and lessons of the Old Testament with the revelation of Jesus Christ. Therefore some things are new, and some are old. This is amply demonstrated by the fact that the New Testament writers included some 850 references to the Old Testament in their writings – 280 of which are direct quotes!

This completes the first set of Galilean parables. “And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence” (Matt. 13:53).