

Jesus' Teaching on the Kingdom of God

Lessons through Parables

Lesson 8

Introduction

In the first century, everyone had his or her place in society. But Jesus refused to think of people in terms of "us" and "them" and reached out to everyone, showing each individual God's unconditional love. As a result, wherever He went Jesus drew huge crowds. To reach the people with God's truths, Jesus used the style of the rabbis called "*aggadah*," better known as "*parables*." These were stories taken from everyday events in the lives of the audience to illustrate a lesson. Like the other rabbis, Jesus' parables revealed the character of God but unlike theirs, Jesus' parables were always specifically about the Kingdom of God.

Parable 1: The Midnight Friend - Luke 11:5-8

1. To understand parables correctly, always begin with the context. From Luke 11:1-4:
 - To whom was Jesus speaking?
 - What was the topic of discussion?
2. Now, read through the parable in Luke 11:5-8.
 - Who were the two main characters in this parable?
 - What was the problem that needed assistance from the "friend"?
 - How did the "friend" inside answer the request?
 - Was the problem finally resolved, and if so how?
 - What was the lesson Jesus was teaching through this parable? (Luke 11:9, 10)

3. Jesus explained further in Luke 11:11 - 13. What was Jesus teaching about the Kingdom of God?

Parable 2: The Corrupt Judge - Luke 18:1-8

When an important point was to be made, Jesus often repeated it twice. This was the "twin" parable of The Persistent Friend.

4. To whom was Jesus speaking?
5. What was the topic of discussion?
6. In this parable, a widow in desperate need went to the only one who could help, the judge. How was the character of this judge described?
7. What was the widow's problem that needed the judge's help?
8. How was the problem finally resolved?
9. What was Jesus teaching about the nature of God and the Kingdom?

Parable 3: The Two Lost Sons - Luke 15:11-32

One of the most loved parables of Jesus is called "The Prodigal Son." Before studying that parable, we must first look at the context. The Prodigal Son is part of three parables; "The Lost Sheep," "The Lost Coin" and the third would be more correctly named "The Lost Sons."

10. To whom was Jesus speaking? (Luke 15:1)
11. What was Jesus teaching about God and His Kingdom through the first two parables? (Luke 15:7 & 10)

Because this was so important, Jesus told a third parable. Take the time to read it through focusing on how Jesus' audience would have heard it.

12. How would you describe each of the three main characters?

- The father:

- The younger son:

- The older son:

13. After leaving home, what was the situation in which the younger son found himself?

14. What did he think would be the solution?

15. How did the father respond to the younger son's return?

16. What was the surprising response of the older son to his brother's return and his father's joy?

17. In light of all three parables, what was Jesus teaching about God and His kingdom?

Reflect

18. As you look back over these parables of Jesus, what do you learn about the character and nature of God?
19. What did you learn about the Kingdom of God in contrast to the earthly kingdoms?
20. By looking at the audience and context, did anything surprise or help clarify your understanding?

Putting Feet to Parables

Now it is your turn to look at a parable and discover what Jesus was teaching. Choose from the following list, or your favorite parable.

| Parable | Verses |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| The speck and the log | Luke 6:37 - 42 |
| The farmer scattering seeds | Luke 8:1 - 14 |
| The pearl of great price | Luke 8:1 - 14 |
| Patched cloth and new wineskin | Luke 5:36 - 39 |
| The good Samaritan | Luke 10:30 - 37 |
| The good shepherd | John 10:1 - 16 |
| Laborers in the vineyard | Matthew 20:1 - 16 |
| The ten virgins | Matthew 25:1-13 |

21. Answer the following questions regarding the parable you chose:
- What was the context in which Jesus taught this parable?

- Who was His audience?
- Who were the main characters?
- What was the problem?
- What was the solution?
- What was Jesus teaching about the character of God and the Kingdom of God?