

PARABLES AND THE KINGDOM

Matthew 13:1-53; Mark 4:1-34; Luke 8:4-18 / Yeshua
§64

Why do professional baseball pitchers cover their mouths with their gloves when talking on the mound to their catcher or infielders?

To hide their strategy from people who would counter it if they knew.

On the day of rejection, the nation of Israel officially rejected Jesus as their Messiah. Many things changed in Jesus' ministry after the day of rejection. He, too, began to hide the truth from people who didn't want it. He didn't use a baseball glove; He used something much more effective.

As we observe Matthew 13:1-17, we discover that on the day of rejection, Jesus shifted His teaching methodology from speaking plainly to speaking in parables.

Part 1.	The Coming of the King
Part 2.	The Authentication of the King
Part 3.	The Controversy over the King → <i>Parables and the Kingdom</i>
Part 4.	The Training of the Twelve by the King
Part 5.	The Opposition to the King:
Part 6.	The Preparation of the Disciples by the King
Part 7.	The Official Presentation of the King
Part 8.	The Preparation for the Death of the King
Part 9.	The Trial of the King:
Part 10.	The Death of the King
Part 11.	The Resurrection and the Ascension of the King
Part 12.	The Sequels

JESUS BEGINS TO TEACH IN PARABLES

MATTHEW 13:1-17 (ESV)

1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. 2 And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. 3 And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. 5 Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, 6 but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. 7 Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. 8 Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9 He who has ears, let him hear."

10 Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" 11 And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:

" 'You will indeed hear but never understand,
and you will indeed see but never perceive."

15 For this people's heart has grown dull,
and with their ears they can barely hear,
and their eyes they have closed,
lest they should see with their eyes
and hear with their ears
and understand with their heart
and turn, and I would heal them.'

16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. 17 For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

Notice in verse one that these things happened on “that same day.” What day? It was the *day of rejection* (12:22-32). It was the day the nation of Israel, led by her spiritual leaders, rejected Jesus as her Messiah, blasphemed the Holy Spirit and committed the unpardonable sin.

In verse ten, the disciples asked Jesus, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” Prior to the day of rejection, Jesus did not teach in parables; He taught the crowds plainly. Following the day of rejection, Jesus changed His teaching methodology and began teaching in parables.

Notice Matthew’s comment in verses 34 & 35:

MATTHEW 13:34-35 (ESV)

34 All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable.

35 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet:

“I will open my mouth in parables;

I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.”¹

This was a major shift in Jesus’ ministry: He no longer taught the crowds plainly, but in parables.

WHAT IS A PARABLE AND WHY DID JESUS SWITCH TO TEACHING PARABLES?

What is a parable?

□ WHAT IS A PARABLE?

A parable is an analogy taken from everyday life that teaches an ethical, moral or spiritual truth.

When the Apostle Peter asked a question about forgiving a frequent offender, Jesus answered with a story parable about a servant who, though himself forgiven a huge debt, refused to forgive the modest debt of his fellow servant (Matt. 18:21-35). The point of the parable is that when we choose to receive forgiveness, we obligate ourselves to practice forgiveness.

Jesus took everyday life experiences and used them to reveal new truth and to effectively illustrate spiritual principles.

There are four types of parables:

□ FOUR TYPES OF PARABLES

Simile I’m sending you out as sheep among wolves.

Metaphor I am the door.

Similitude A woman putting leaven in dough.

¹ This is an example of a rabbinic interpretation of the Old Testament text by the inspired New Testament author. This form is *Drash*, which means *exposition*. The text is Psalms 78:2 written by Asaph. The fulfillment of Psalm 78:2 is in the sense that just as Asaph spoke in parables to his audience, so also, Messiah spoke in parables to His audience.

Story It can be a true story or made up, but always true to life. No names are used, but the story teaches a truth – like the *Good Samaritan*.

As we see in our passage, on the day of rejection, Jesus switched from teaching plainly to teaching in parables.

Why?

Why did Jesus switch to teaching parables?

There were three reasons Jesus switched to parables:

□ THREE REASONS JESUS TAUGHT IN PARABLES AFTER THE DAY OF REJECTION

1. To teach and illustrate truth to His disciples to whom He explained the parables.
2. To hide the truth from those in the crowd who had rejected the truth already given them.
3. To fulfill prophecy that at some point Messiah will begin speaking in parables.

HOW DO WE ACCURATELY INTERPRET PARABLES?

Gary Inrig, in his book, *The Parables: Understanding What Jesus Meant*, gives us three general principles to follow:

*First, the parables are not isolated stories. They were nearly always told to **answer a question or address a particular situation**. It is therefore very important to **study the context** in which the biblical authors place them. Second, the Lord's stories are parables, not allegories. Although details may have symbolic significance, more commonly **a parable is intended to teach one main point**. Therefore, we need to seek to grasp that truth firmly and not wander in the lush forest of speculation, trying to assign "meaning" to secondary details. Third, as we read these stories, we need **consciously to leave our twentieth-century Western world**. Jesus' stories draw on the common daily life of first-century Palestine. To hear Him properly, we need to smell the aroma of Jewish villages and feel the dust of Galilean roads.²*

As we see in Matthew 13:1-17, on the day of rejection, Jesus not only began teaching in parables, but He taught parables about "the secrets of the kingdom of heaven".

"To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.

On the day of rejection, Jesus taught nine parables about "the secrets of the kingdom of heaven". There is a reason for this. Remember, a parable either answers a question or explains a certain situation. In this case, these nine parables begin to answer the question that arose from the day of rejection.

□ THE QUESTION ANSWERED BY THE PARABLES JESUS TAUGHT ON THE DAY OF REJECTION

² Inrig, pp. 7-8.

What form will the kingdom of heaven take now that Israel has rejected the messianic kingdom?

Jesus told the disciples the parables would make known to them “the secrets of the kingdom of heaven”. Your translation may read, “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven”. A “mystery” is the revealing of a truth by a New Testament speaker or author which was not revealed in the Old Testament. It is the revealing of a truth unknown prior to that moment in history. In other words, the form the kingdom of heaven has taken since the day of rejection, was not revealed in the Old Testament. God revealed the Messianic Kingdom to the Hebrew prophets. God did not reveal to them this present form of the kingdom that exists between the first and second comings of Jesus. That is why it is called the mystery form of the kingdom. The mystery form of the kingdom was not seen in the Old Testament. Jesus is the first prophet to reveal the mystery form of the kingdom.

Perhaps it will help to understand that there are five facets to God’s Kingdom Program.

THE FIVE FACETS OF GOD’S KINGDOM PROGRAM

The Eternal, Universal Kingdom

This refers to God’s timeless, sovereign rule over all things that exist.

The Spiritual Kingdom

This refers to God’s rule in the hearts of believers throughout all human history.

The Theocratic Kingdom

This refers to God’s rule by means of and through a theocracy over the nation of Israel from Moses to the last Davidic King, Zedekiah.

The Messianic Kingdom

This refers to the Messiah’s rule over Israel and over the world from Jerusalem and from the throne of David.

The Mystery Kingdom

This is best described by the term “Christendom” and refers to people anywhere in the world who claim loyalty to Jesus – both false or true loyalty.

The Mystery Kingdom began with Israel’s rejection of Jesus as her Messiah. The Mystery Kingdom will end when the Tribulation generation of Israel accepts Jesus as Messiah. Jesus will return, rescue the Jews from the Antichrist and establish the Messianic Kingdom.

To summarize what we’ve learned today; in response to Israel’s rejection, Jesus switched from teaching the crowds plainly to teaching them in parables. The parables hid the truth from the unbelieving crowd, but revealed truth to Jesus’ disciples. On the day of rejection, Jesus taught nine parables that revealed various aspects of the Mystery Kingdom in light of Israel’s rejection of the Messianic Kingdom. The Mystery Kingdom began on the day of rejection and will end on the day the Tribulation generation of Israel accepts Jesus as Messiah and receives the Messianic Kingdom.

The Mystery Kingdom can best be described as Christendom because it includes true believers that constitute the Church (the wheat), but it also includes those who falsely claim loyalty to Jesus (the tares). The Mystery Kingdom does not replace Israel in God's Kingdom program; Israel will receive the Messianic Kingdom which God has unconditionally promised her.