

PARABLES, FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Part II

The Use of, the Extent of, the Purpose for...

By Arlen L. Chitwood

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters.

Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.

And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another (Dan. 7:1-3).

The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the seaside.

And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

And he spake many things unto them in parables... (Matt. 13:1-3a).

A scattering of parables can be found in the Old Testament (*e.g.*, Judges 9:7-15; II Sam. 12:1-4; Isa. 5:1-7), but parables are seen in their fuller use in the gospel accounts of the New Testament, during the latter part of Christ's earthly ministry. And parables appear at this point in Christ's ministry for a revealed reason and purpose.

Events in Matthew Chapter Twelve

Christ began to use parables extensively during His earthly ministry *only after* Israel had rejected the offer of the kingdom of the heavens. Parables, in this respect, were first used after the events recorded in Matthew chapter twelve, having to do with the blasphemous act of the Scribes and Pharisees against the Holy Spirit.

In this chapter, the fundamental religious leaders in Israel, the Scribes and Pharisees (vv. 14, 24, 38) — the largest of the religious sects in Israel, who, because of their very numbers, controlled the religious life of the people — attributed the source of Christ's power, through which He performed miraculous works, to Satan.

These miraculous works were *supernatural signs performed for the Jewish people, having to do with the proffered kingdom*. They were being performed, not through Christ's Own power, but through the power of the Spirit; and, accordingly, Christ looked upon this blasphemous act by these religious leaders as something directed against the Spirit of God more so than against Himself.

And, through committing an act of this nature, these religious leaders had gone too far. They, in their rejection of the King and the kingdom, had acted after a fashion which necessitated Christ announcing that this sin would not be forgiven them (which would also include the nation at large, for they controlled the religious life of the people), "neither in this world ['this age'], neither in the world to come ['the one (the age) to come']" (vv. 31, 32).

(Note that Christ was performing miraculous works through the power of the Spirit, though He Himself was in full possession of His Deity [*cf.* Matt. 16:21; Luke 22:61; John 1:48; 2:18-21; 18:5-8; Acts 20:28], *being very God of very God and omnipotent*. Why was Christ performing these miraculous works through the power of the Spirit when He Himself possessed the power to perform them?)

The answer can be seen in Gen. 1:2b ff, through the Father having previously performed works in relation to the Spirit after the same fashion, at the beginning, showing the manner in which actions of the triune Godhead are brought to pass. This forms a first-mention principle within the types; and *the Son, at a later time, would not — He could not — act after a different fashion than the Father in this respect*.

Thus, though Christ was fully capable of performing miraculous works within His Own power, He *couldn't* act after this fashion and remain within the confines of the manner in which Scripture is structured. His actions had to be in complete keeping with that set forth and established at the beginning, in Genesis. The unchangeable pattern had been set 4,000 years prior to that time, and the Son could only act in complete accord with this established pattern.)

Christ's statement relative to Israel not being forgiven throughout two ages for the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit would encompass time covered by both the present age and the Messianic Era. This would include time covered in the anti-type of the whole of the seven days in the opening two chapters of Genesis — Man's 6,000-year Day (one age, covered by the six days), and the 1,000-year Lord's Day (a subsequent age, covered by the seventh day).

And, for all practical purposes, this was the point in Scripture where the proffered kingdom was taken from Israel, though the announcement was not made until near the end of Christ's earthly ministry (Matt. 21:43).

According to Matt. 12:31, 32; 21:33-45, Israel, throughout time covered by any part of the six and seven days, the six and seven thousand years, would be estranged from having any part in realizing that seen in the proffered kingdom of the heavens. This portion of the kingdom would be "given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof," a nation which would, during the seventh day, the seventh one-thousand-year period, realize heavenly promises and blessings.

(Note that the kingdom taken from Israel was that part of the kingdom [having *both heavenly and earthly spheres*] which had been offered to Israel — “the kingdom of the heavens” [*the heavenly sphere*], not the kingdom covenanted to David [the earthly sphere, which can never be taken from Israel].)

This, of course, has nothing to do with the widespread, erroneous teaching within Christendom today that the Church has replaced Israel. Rather, it has to do with one facet of the kingdom [*the heavenly*] which was offered to, rejected by, and taken from Israel.

And it has to do with *an entirely new entity subsequently called into existence to be the recipient of this heavenly sphere of the kingdom.*

All of God’s promises to Israel, aside from the nation one day realizing regal positions in the heavenly sphere of the kingdom, *remain intact and can never change.* In fact, apart from Israel continuing in existence in this respect, the new entity, now in possession of heavenly promises and blessings, *could not only have never been called into existence but those forming this new entity could never realize these promises and blessings.*

And the reason for that is very simple. God has decreed that all spiritual blessings must flow through Israel, which is why the new entity must be “Abraham’s seed” in order to realize these *promises and blessings* [Gal. 3:26-29].)

Events in Matthew Chapter Thirteen and Beyond

Once the kingdom had been taken from Israel, there was then a need for the extensive use of parables in Christ’s earthly ministry, something which would have been out of place prior to that time.

And an introduction and use of parables immediately following Israel’s climactic rejection of the King and the kingdom, followed by Christ’s removal of the kingdom from Israel, is exactly what occurred. Immediately after the events of Matthew chapter twelve, Christ departed from the house, went down by the seaside, and began to speak to the multitudes in parables.

Note Matt. 13:1 in this respect:

“The same day [referring to the time of the events back in ch. 12] went Jesus *out of the house*, and sat *by the seaside.*”

The symbolism, the figurative expressions — in keeping with that which had occurred in chapter twelve and that which is stated in Matt. 21:43 — is essentially *prophetic* in nature and has to do with Christ departing from Israel (departing from “the house,” having to do with *Israel*) and going to “a nation” which was not Jewish, but mainly of Gentile origin (going down by “the seaside,” foreshadowing His going to *the Gentiles* [cf. Acts 15:14; Rom. 11:25]). And that which had been offered to Israel — the kingdom of the heavens — after having been taken from Israel was to be offered to this other nation (cf. Matt. 21:43; I Peter 2:9).

The parables given by the seaside following Christ’s departure from the house are to be understood in this light, as are the subsequent parables in His ministry. They all have to do, essentially, with some facet of the message surrounding the kingdom of the heavens; and the different facets of this message within the parables center mainly around the Church (future) rather than around Israel (past or present).

Note the preceding in the very first of the parables, the parable of the Sower in Matt. 13:3-9. This parable has to do with four types of saved individuals sown out in the world, with a view to their bringing forth *fruit for the kingdom.*

And in the interpretation (vv. 18-23), this whole overall message is specifically called “the word of the kingdom” (v. 19) — having to do with “the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens” (v. 11) — which would be associated with “the gospel of the glory of Christ” in II Cor. 4:4 (ASV; cf. Acts 20:25, 32), not with “the gospel of the grace of God” in Eph. 2:8, 9 (cf. Acts 20:24, 28).

(In the parable of the Sower, for a correct understanding of that which is in view, translate the words “received seed,” or “received the seed,” in vv. 19, 20, 22, 23 [KJV] as “was sown.” That is, “This is he which was sown...”

In each case, the Lord sows [places] a saved individual at some point in the world, with a view to that individual bringing forth fruit in relation to the proffered kingdom [cf. vv. 3, 37, 38; ref. ASV].)

And, at this point in Christ’s earthly ministry, Israel could no longer bring forth fruit relative to the kingdom of the heavens. *Only the Church, which was about to be called into existence, could do this (a completely new entity which would be mainly of Gentile origin.*

With Christ’s departure from the house and His going down by the seaside — *symbolizing His departure from Israel (the house) and His going to the Gentiles (the seaside)* — the backdrop is set for this beginning parable. This parable can only have to do with *the Church in relation to the kingdom of the heavens and fruit-bearing*, not with Israel in relation to either one.

Then, the reason for parables, in response to the disciples’ question, is given immediately following the parable of the Sower, prior to the interpretation of the parable (vv. 10-17). Parables were given to further explain previously revealed truths; but whether or not the hearer understood the additional truths brought out by the parables was contingent upon whether or not that person had accepted the previously revealed truths.

The latter was completely dependent on the former, which is why two classes of individuals were singled out in the Lord’s stated reason concerning why He spoke in parables at this time (those who understood, and those who didn’t understand).

(Note that the last three parables in Matthew chapter thirteen were given back inside the house, showing that Israel, regardless of circumstances, could not be removed from the overall picture [13:36, 44-50; cf. Rom. 11:11-26].)

But, in relation to the kingdom of the heavens, Israel could only be as *the fruitless fig tree* in Matt. 21:18, 19. Israel could not now bring forth fruit in relation to this facet of the kingdom.)

The Lamp Broadcast, Inc.
225 S. Cottonwood Ranch Road
Cottonwood, AZ 86326
www.lampbroadcast.org