

Parables

And the mysteries of the
Kingdom

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Introduction

Why did Jesus teach in parables? So that the prophecy of Isaiah would be fulfilled - *'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive: for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.'* Matthew 13:14-15

We think the parables were given to make it easy to understand - but the opposite is the truth. In explaining why, Jesus told the disciples it had been given to them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to the multitude it had not been given.

So we understand that the receiving and the perception of the truth is for those who will believe in Jesus - for anyone else it is hidden. We also understand that the parables 'hide' some of the mysteries of heaven. The result is that there is much less understanding of the meaning than there should be as some try to unravel the meaning using only their intellect.

Many of the parables in Matthew are introduced with the statement, 'the kingdom of the heavens is like.' (lit) These parables we will consider first. Each parable describes the situation on the earth so we recognize that the earth is a part of the kingdom of the heavens.

When we come on to the parables in Luke in particular they are much easier to understand. The emphasis has shifted from, 'the kingdom of the heavens is like,' to this is what life in the kingdom is like.

So in Matthew we have this is what the kingdom is like and in Luke we have this is what our lives in the kingdom are to be like, - a big shift in emphasis!

Contents

All quotations are from the New King James version

The Key – to understanding parables

The parables marked * are commonly misunderstood.

Part one – the ‘kingdom’ parables of Matthew.

- 1 Devouring birds
- 2 Weeds
- 3 Little seeds
- 4 * The kingdom of the heavens is like ...
- 5 * Treasure and pearls
- 6 Get the net out
- 7 Got to be forgiving
- 8 Work long, work short
- 9 * Let’s have a feast
- 10 * Virgins abound
- 11 Talents
- 12 Summary of the parables of the kingdom

These parables are addressed – ‘the kingdom of the heavens is like.’ See appendix for a note about ‘the heavens.’ (Note plural heavens)

Part two – other parables in Matthew

Part three – parables in Mark

Part four - parables in Luke

- A Blind leading the blind
- B Two debtors
- C Good Samaritan
- D Friend at midnight
- E Rich fool
- F * The faithful and the evil servant
- G Barren fig tree
- H Take the lower place
- I The great supper
- J Count the cost
- K The lost coin
- L The lost (prodigal) son
- M The unjust steward
- N The rich man and Lazarus
- O Unprofitable servants
- P * The widow and the unjust judge
- Q The Pharisee and the tax collector
- R The minas

Appendix - the kingdom of the heavens

The Key - to understanding parables

Before we look at an actual parable we need to understand the key which helps unlock their meaning.

A parable can be compared to a simile or even a metaphor. The parable uses one thing to express or represent another, saying the kingdom of the heavens is like '.....' So a parable uses one or more things to express or represent one or more element of the eternal truth. The parables represent things which affect and happen on earth, which is part of the kingdom of the heavens.

A parable is laid alongside, parallel to, the truth.

In this respect we must treat the parable as a whole and seek to understand the whole saying. If we think we understand part and then leave out other aspects - then actually we do not understand the parable and will draw wrong conclusions as to its meaning, ending up with wrong doctrine. Our doctrine must agree with the whole counsel of the word of God.

We will illustrate this point as we go along.

Jesus said the parables contain the mysteries, or hidden truths, of the kingdom of the heavens which are given for those who will believe and are hidden from those who won't.

Part 1

The kingdom parables of Matthew

Matthew writes as a Jew to Jews about their Jewish Messiah. The focus of the parables he records is the kingdom of the heavens from this very Jewish background. So we will find that emphasis coming through – to the extent that a couple of the parables are of no importance to the born again believing bride of Christ. (These are specific to Israel in the tribulation period which is after the bride has been taken to heaven.)

Chapter 1

Devouring birds

Everything starts with the word!

'Behold a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth, But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns. And the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop; some one hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.'

Matthew 13:3-8 (also in Mark 4:3-8 and Luke 8:5-8)

Here is the first in the series of parables and its primary subject is the way the word ('logos' in the Greek text #) of the kingdom is received in relation to fruitfulness. We don't have to try to work out the details as Jesus gives a full explanation.

The word# is represented by the seed which is sown by the sower and it falls in various places:

On the wayside. Jesus tells us this represents those who do not understand. It is snatched away by the wicked one.

Stony places. The word is taken hold of with joy but has no depth so when the sun is up – that is the heat of persecution and tribulation because of the word – he stumbles taking offence.

Among thorns. The cares (worries, anxieties) of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word.

'logos' is most often translated 'word' in the English. It is helpful to consider its full meaning. John tells us, '*in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.*' (1:1) A description of Jesus.

Paul tells us. '*For in Him (Jesus) dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*' (Colossians 2:9)

So we can safely conclude that 'logos' represents and expresses the full revelation of the way of truth and life. (Jesus said, '*I am the way, the truth and the life.*' John 14:6)

Fruitfulness

Some fell on good ground. Here the seed brings forth a crop – 30, 60 and 100 fold. This is manifesting the kingdom in various degrees.

Summary

On the wayside - no fruit at all.

On stony places and among thorns - limited fruit,
becoming unfruitful, barren.
Good ground - fruitful.

Comment

My prayer, 'Holy Spirit lead me into all truth, more and more truth,' is very appropriate.

If we liken ourselves to the ground we can consider that, over time, there is much sowing of the seed of the word of God to which we should respond. We can note that our fruitfulness in the kingdom will depend on our response as outlined in the parable.

Chapter 2

Weeds

'The kingdom of the heavens is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while the man slept. His enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, "Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?" He said to them, "An enemy has done this." The servants said to him, "Do you want us to go and gather them up?" But he said, "No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, first gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

Matthew 13:24-30

Again Jesus explains the parable:

The man who sowed represents Him – the Son of Man. The field is the world. The good seeds are the sons of the kingdom and the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed the tares is the devil. For the moment the wheat and the tares co-exist in the world.

The harvest is the end, or the consummation, of the age when the angels (reapers) will gather together the evil doers, to be cast into the fire, whilst the sons of the kingdom will 'shine forth as the sun.'

To appreciate the meaning of the parables a good understanding of the full counsel of the word of God is needed, otherwise wrong conclusions can be drawn. This is a case in point. The gospel of Matthew is written by a Jew, to Jews, about a Jew – the King of the Jews. So we find in the gospel of Matthew some things which do not apply to the church. Here, in this parable, we see that one element of the whole truth, applying to the church, is not mentioned: the rapture of the bride which precedes the coming tribulation.

Matthew 24 has the teaching for the Jews about the end, the consummation of the age. (End or consummation is the translation of '*suntelia*' in Greek. Its full meaning is the gathering together of what needs to be done so that the end, *telios*, or termination can take place.)

Matthew 24 warns of the coming great tribulation - see verse 15-28. This is followed by the coming of the Son of Man.

Jesus gives two signs for them to watch for. The first is the fig tree - when you see its branch putting forth leaves you know summer is near - likewise when you see Israel re-established and prospering you know My return is near - at the door. (32-35)

The second refers to something that will have taken place in front of them. Like in the days of Noah when the righteous were lifted up and out of the flood so unbelievers will witness the righteous believers having been taken away - at the rapture of the bride, up and away from the tribulation. (36-44)

So back to the parable. At the end of the age, after the tribulation, the angels will gather together the evil doers and dispose of them whilst those who have come to believe during the tribulation are welcomed through into the kingdom of Jesus Christ on earth as sons of the kingdom. (29-31) Nothing to do with the church which is now in glorified, immortal bodies - as Jesus bride. As the parables flow on from one to the next we saw in the first the way the word is received and understood for bringing forth fruit.

Now, in the second, we see that the devil has sown into the world tares.

(Tares is the translation of '*zizanian*,' which is a species of darnel. The commonest form grows as tall as wheat and barley and looks similar to wheat. But unlike wheat the seeds are poisonous to man and to herbivorous animals. It was customary, in Israel, to leave both growing together until harvest, and then to separate them out.)

This parable tells us that in the kingdom of the heavens poisonous weeds (untruths) have been sown by the devil, growing alongside the good seed. We are alerted to the need for both a good understanding of the whole counsel of God and being able to discern between truth and lie.

Discernment is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. As we walk more and more in the Spirit and as we are led more and more into truth by Him and by study of the written word, so our discernment will become stronger and stronger.

Chapter 3

Little seeds

'The kingdom of the heavens is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which is indeed the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.'

Matthew 13:31-32 (also in Mark 4:30-32 and Luke 13:19)

'sinapi,' a mustard seed. It is an annual plant which grows very quickly in good soil, up to 10-12 feet, from a very small seed. (it is not a herb.)
(so we get the proverb, 'a grain of mustard,' meaning the smallest particle.)

Understanding the parable: the kingdom of the heavens is like this – a very small seed is sown. In good soil that seed will grow bringing forth a harvest of 30, 60 and 100 fold. It grows very well (in good soil). The kingdom of the heavens expands and develops but the birds of the air lodge, or nest, in its branches.

This is not a picture of lovely little birds, such as we might see in our gardens. We have already met birds of the air in the first parable, where they are agents of the evil one sent to snatch away the word.

This and the previous parables are making it clear that in the kingdom of the heavens good seed and weeds grow together, whilst the birds of the air will devour the good seed. On earth we see exactly that - it is the case. Don't be misled.

The Lord sows good seed to bring forth a good crop.
The enemy does his best to infiltrate to rob, damage
and destroy.

Chapter 4

The kingdom of the heavens is like.

'The kingdom of heaven is like, leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.'

Matthew 13:33 (also in Luke 13:21)

We have three elements to this parable:

Leaven – Leaven is symbolic of corruption. Leaven was forbidden at Passover and in all offerings to the Lord by fire. Leaven symbolizes the pervasive nature of evil, breeding corruption and spreading through the mass in which it is mixed.

A woman – In view of the nature and effect of leaven it is easy to identify this woman as representing Eve who was deceived into introducing disobedience and sin into the world by the serpent.

Three measures of meal. – there are three parts to the human being, body, soul and spirit. The whole being requires preservation, as we read Paul saying to the Thessalonians in his second letter chapter 5 and verse 23 *'Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.'*

So now we have the meaning - this is what the kingdom of the heavens is like - a woman took leaven and introduced it into mankind and the whole lot was contaminated with sin.

As taught by Paul, *'All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.'* Romans 3:23

Confirm leaven represents sin from Galatians 5: 7-9
'You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump.' The Galatians had gone into error.

Gone wrong

So let's see how some have gone wrong by thinking the kingdom is likened to leaven itself, rather than to the effect of the introduction of leaven into it through disobedience.

First misunderstanding - the translation in our bibles puts a comma in an unfortunate place - punctuation marks are not in the Greek - by saying *the kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took* etc. (Instead the comma should go after 'like,' the kingdom of the heavens is like, leaven which a woman etc) This caused some to think, erroneously, that the leaven represents the Holy Spirit. But that cannot be so for two important reasons; a) Nowhere does scripture support the concept that a woman introduces the Holy Spirit, b) It verges on the ridiculous to suggest that leaven, which has represented sin in the scripture so far, suddenly represents the holy Holy Spirit.

Second misunderstanding - thinking the leaven represents the Holy Spirit makes nonsense of the woman. She cannot possibly be responsible for introducing the Holy Spirit. Scripture is very clear it is Jesus who sends the Holy Spirit. John 16:7

Third misunderstanding - thinking the Holy Spirit will make the world wonderful (through the church of course.) Again scripture is clear that things will go from worse to worse. 2 Timothy 3:1-9

So this parable - shows how evil entered and prospers because of the corruption of sin (leaven) - hence we need a Saviour!

Chapter 5

Treasure and pearls

'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.'

Matthew 13:44

'The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he has found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.'

Matthew 13:45-6

These two parables have been put together because they paint one complete picture.

The language in the English can be a bit confusing so we refer to the Greek and Hebrew where it is helpful to do so.

It is also very helpful to have a good grasp of the overall picture of the mysteries of heaven.

These parables are often mis-represented by saying they represent the treasure and the pearl as being the kingdom. That would then teach that we can somehow buy our way into the kingdom which is clearly quite wrong.

The treasure in the field - cost to the Father.

Mystery - 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.'

Ephesians 1:3-4

Here we understand that the Lord God, who knows the end from the beginning, saw us, whom He has chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world. Some backdrop is needed in order to understand what is happening:

We need to go back to the beginning – *‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was (became) without form and void, and darkness covered the deep’*

We have tended to interpret this first verse as if God first created the heavens and earth in this state of being waste and void and in darkness. However, when one thinks about it, this is most unlikely – it seems contrary to the very nature of God. So let’s consider a literal translation:

‘In the beginning of God’s preparing the heavens and the earth – the earth had existed waste and void, and darkness on the face of the deep.’

Young’s literal translation sees the earth already in existence and having become waste and void. Bullinger’s academic work on figures of speech used in scripture, agrees entirely. God’s ‘creation’ was ‘putting the earth into a happier position.’ According to Wilson’s Lexicon this is an equally valid use of the Hebrew word ‘bara’ as shown in Psalm 51:10 *‘create in me a clean heart.’*

In addition we note that God told Job that when He laid the foundations of the earth, *‘the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy.’* Job 38:7.

Other parts of scripture will confirm that in the first instance the earth was created by God for Lucifer. (Ezekiel 28:11-1) And that Lucifer rebelled against God (Isaiah 14:12-13.) And that Lucifer (the light bearer) was thrown out becoming satan and darkness. It is no surprise then that his domain, earth, is then found in waste, void, and in darkness.

Now we can understand what the Lord God was doing. He wanted to restore earth from its degradation and at the same time to remove it from satan's control. So He created man in His own image and gave him dominion over the earth and everything in it.

In His foreknowledge He sees us before the foundation of the world and He prepares the world, in which we were to be 'hidden.' In great joy He sees ahead - the people He can tabernacle (dwell) with in love and light - that is believing mankind. To achieve His objective He has to make an exchange.

Here is where the English can be confusing. The translation of the two words 'sell' and 'buy, is appropriate to the parable. But when we consider what the parable represents we need to look into their deeper meaning.

'*poleo*' is translated 'sell.' In the three Greek - English lexicons, which I use, it has 'to exchange or trade away, or barter, from which sell is derived.

'*agorazo*' is translated 'buy.' In the lexicons we get the fuller meaning of 'frequentering or being in the market place' where exchanges and buying and selling take place.

Now we can consider what the parable is saying to us. God, the Father, sees the treasure (those who will believe and form the people with whom He can tabernacle) in the field (represents the earth here) and leaves it hidden. Then He exchanges all that He has - the presence of His only begotten Son, Jesus - sending Him in human form to the field so that it can be redeemed. He exchanges the presence of His Son with Him in complete glory for the great joy of the coming dwelling with mankind in eternity.

It cost the Father His only begotten Son - it cost Him everything!

The merchant and the pearl - cost to the Son

In this parable we see the merchant seeking excellent pearls. As we consider this parable, we can remember that a man who seeks a wife seeks a good thing. (Proverbs 18:22) And that a virtuous wife (a wife of valor - excellent in all things) is of great worth to her husband. (Proverbs 31:1)

With this backdrop we see the merchant, representing Jesus, seeking excellent pearls. Here the pearls are representing those 'bits of grit' taken out of the sea and covered with layer after layer of a beautiful lustrous coating of aragonite and calcite.

We can easily relate the process of the oyster dealing with the irritants in the grit, to the work of the Holy Spirit beautifying us as we deal with the irritants in life in His grace.

So the merchant finds one pearl of great price - one worthy to become His wife. This one has been beautified and made ready by the working of the Holy Spirit. But the price is very high!

For this beautiful pearl is found to be under judgement because of sin - she is imprisoned in the slave market of sin.

The merchant, Jesus, has to redeem her to be able to claim her as His bride. *'He redeemed us from every lawless deed.'* Titus 2:14

The redemption price is His own human life - it cost Him everything!

So the two parables together tell us the account of what was necessary in order to fulfil the desire of the Father and of the Son.

It was, from the beginning, the Father's desire to dwell with man in love and in light - that required man to have free will, for love cannot exist without free-will. In their free-will Adam and Eve introduced sin into the world and a plan of redemption became necessary. For the Father it meant giving up His Son and for the Son it meant giving up His human life. For both it was all they had!

Chapter 6

Get the net out.

'Again the kingdom of the heavens is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind. Which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away.'

Matthew 13:47-48

Jesus gives us the meaning, *'So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.'* (49-50)

There are three 'nets' in Matthew. 4:18 has the round net that fishermen cast by hand often from the shore. 4:20-21 has the general word for nets. Here in 13:47 we have the very large type of net dragged drawn to the shore scooping up everything in its path – a dragnet.

We remind ourselves that Matthew has particular emphasis for Israel and the Jews. Here we see this parable is teaching about the end of the age. Matthew records more information in chapter 24.

The end of the age has many troubles and problems culminating in the great tribulation. Those who are in Judea are warned to flee to the mountains when they see the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place (in the rebuilt temple.)

Jesus advises, *'pray your flight not be in the winter or on the Sabbath, for then there will be great tribulation.'*

Verse 31 confirms that at the end of this tribulation period the angels gather together His elect.

Again we see that the Christian church, that is those believers born again before the tribulation, are not involved in this parable. John 21 teaches about another net used to 'fish' us out of the world and to take us Jesus.

John records the time after the resurrection when the disciples have gone back to fishing. All night catching nothing. The man on the shore tells them to cast their net on the other side and they catch 153 large fish.

The net full of fish is dragged to shore to the man they now recognize as the risen Lord Jesus. The event is full of prophetic meaning. The fish represent the believers who are lifted out of the sea, representing the world, and taken to Jesus in a net that does not break.

Paul confirms that we are transformed in the twinkling of an eye. This is the rapture of the church - unbelievers are not involved. This parable is about a different event altogether - at the end of the tribulation when those who have come to believe during the tribulation will be sorted out from the wicked who are discarded. That leaves only the righteous to re-populate the earth for the Millennium.

See also the parable of the lost sheep below - whilst not introduced as 'the kingdom of the heavens is like,' it was taught by Jesus in response to the disciples asking who is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens.

Chapter 7

Got to be forgiving

'The Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall I forgive my brother?' Jesus answered with a parable: 'the kingdom of the heavens is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun settling accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.

The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'

Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe.'

So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him saying, 'Have patience with me , and I will pay you all.'

And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay all the debt.

So when the fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.

Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?'

And his master was very angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

So My heavenly Father also will do to each of you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.' Matthew 18:21-35.

This parable is really self explanatory and it deals with the most important principle of forgiveness.

The master represents the Lord God who does require an accounting from every human being. We, the servants, all fall dreadfully short of His glory and holiness. When we call on the name of Jesus He grants us forgiveness.

Then He expects that we will become like Him and be forgiving of those who cross us. In the parable the forgiven servant does not forgive his fellow servant and is handed to the torturers, the tormentors.

From this we can take the warning – if we are unforgiving we can expect to experience torment in this life, not loss of eternal salvation. Only when we forgive everyone, including ourselves, can we expect to experience the peace and joy of the Holy Spirit.

A pointer to the jubilee cycle.

Before giving the parable Jesus was answering Peter's question, *'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?'*

Jesus answer was, *'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.'*

The jubilee, spelt out in the Old Testament, (Leviticus 25) was a year all about forgiveness. The jubilee, which was a 50th year, started half way through the 49th year finishing half way through the first year of the next cycle. 70 x 7 is 490 which is 10 jubilee cycles.

So in His answer Jesus was drawing their attention to something they knew all about and understood. Forgiveness is a vital kingdom principle.

See the booklet 'The story of time,' or 'The way of the moon and the way of the sun.' for much more about the jubilee cycle which plays a big role in the understanding of biblical chronology.

Chapter 8

Work long, work short

'For the kingdom of the heavens is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with his labourers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market place, and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right, I will give you.' So they went.

Again he went out about the sixth, and the ninth, and did likewise.

And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been here standing idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard and whatever is right you will receive.'

So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the labourers and give them their wages, starting with the last to the first.'

And when those came, who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received a denarius.

And when they received it they complained against the landowner, saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.

But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way.

I wish to give this last man the same as you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things?

Or is your eye evil because I am good? So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.
Matthew 20:1-16

Here we are to learn that the reward of the kingdom is the same for everyone who is called. (In chapter 11 we will see about roles in the kingdom.)

In Hebrews 11:6 we are told, *'But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.'* Here the word rewarder has the meaning of *'payer in full of wages.'*

The reward for doing the work of God is identical for every one who does it. But what is the work of God? Jesus supplies the answer, *'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.'* John 6:29

Everyone who believes in Jesus receives the same reward, whether they believe early in the day or late in the day, early in life or late in life. The reward is eternal life - this is the way we are paid our *'wages'* in full!

Eternal life is the reward for the bride, for those who believed in the Messiah to come, for those who came to believe during the tribulation and for those who come to believe in the millennium. There will be different roles - only the born again, Spirit indwelt believers of the church age are Jesus bride.

Chapter 9

We are now close to the climax of Jesus ministry – just a few days from the crucifixion. The Jewish leaders have rejected Jesus and are seeking to kill Him. This parable and the two that follow were spoken very specifically against the Jewish leaders who recognised that was so.

Let's have a feast

'The kingdom of the heavens is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come.

Again, he sent out other servants saying, 'Tell those who are invited, See I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.'

But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully and killed them.

But when the king heard about it he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murders, and burned up their city.

Then he said to his servants, The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.'
So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.

But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come to be here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

Then the king said to his servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away and cast him into outer darkness: there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called but few are chosen.'

Matthew 22:1-14

This is about the wedding feast spoken of in Revelation 19 – *'blessed are those who are called to the wedding supper,'* which is held on earth when the bride returns with Jesus (19:9 and 14) Israel were the intended guests. They were invited down through the ages by the servants the Lord sent - that is His prophets. But the Old Testament shows us that the prophets were frequently ignored and much worse as the parable portrays. So Israel will experience the Lord's wrath as the parable foretells. We know that period of time as the tribulation and Matthew goes on to describe and warn in chapter 24.

The invited guests won't come hence the reference to servants searching the highways shows the Spirit searching out whom could be found.

The guests are all assembled. The king comes in and finds a man without a wedding garment. (It was common in Israel for wedding guests to be provided with a special garment.)

Here we see that those who can come to the wedding must be properly clothed with the garment provided by the king. We also see that the alternative to being at the wedding is to be in outer darkness.

The garment provided by the King for the wedding is righteousness. Only those who came to believe in the tribulation period have it.

In Revelation 19 we find that the bride has made herself ready in heaven. *'Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His wife has made herself ready.'*

Then the statement that those who are invited to the wedding supper are blessed.

Next we see His wife dressed in white and now described as the armies in heaven coming with Jesus to earth where He is going to take up His rule.

So now we come to the last two of the kingdom parables

Chapter 10

Virgins abound

'Then the kingdom of the heavens shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him.'

Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil for our lamps are going out.'

But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went into the wedding feast; and the door was shut.

Afterward the other virgins came also saying, 'Lord, Lord open to us.' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly I say to you, I do not know you.'

Watch therefore for you do not know the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.'

Matthew 25:1-13

To understand this parable, which is greatly misrepresented, we need to place it where Matthew places it - after the great tribulation. We also need to note that the bride is not mentioned - we have already seen she is coming with Jesus, from heaven, for the wedding supper which takes place on earth.

What then is the parable teaching?

The 'kingdom of the heavens' parables are tracing the development of God's plan of rulership. Now it has reached the stage where the rulership will become the personal rule of Jesus on earth.

The virgins are 'religious' people, of whom, there will be many at the end of the tribulation. Those with oil are those who have come to believe during the tribulation and have thus been born again. Those without oil have not.

As we saw in the last parable, the invitations to the wedding feast went out and the guests were gathered to wait the coming of the bridegroom. The foolish virgins can be likened to the man who did not have the wedding garment given by the Holy Spirit. (represented by oil.) They had no oil.

It is too late for the unbelievers - they seek oil when it is too late and try to gain entrance, but are refused. There is no mention that they returned with oil - because there would be none to be found!

Oil represents the Holy Spirit. For born again believers of every generation the Holy Spirit brings their human spirit back to life - hence the term 'born again.' From Jesus resurrection onwards the born again believers receive the Holy Spirit to indwell them. The command 'Receive the Holy Spirit,' now given by Jesus - up to that point no one had received the Holy Spirit. (See John 7:39 and 20:22)

In the Old Testament we read about the Holy Spirit coming upon people for a purpose.

In the parable the Holy Spirit came upon the wise virgins dressing them for the wedding banquet.

As we saw in the parable of the feast, the bride comes to the wedding banquet accompanying Jesus, her husband.

Chapter 11

Talents

'For the kingdom of the heavens is like a man travelling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them.

And to one he gave five talents, to another two and to another one, to each according to his ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also.

But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money.

After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents saying, 'Lord you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five other talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look there, you have what is yours.' But his lord answered and said, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed.'

So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. Therefore take the talent from him and give it to him who has ten talents.

For to everyone who has more will be given, and he will have abundance; but to him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 25:14-30.

Here, the last of the parables completes the story of the kingdom of the heavens. Now the master has returned having been away and wedded His bride. It is time to settle accounts with those who are on earth at the time.

We find that those who were invited to the wedding feast in the last parable were all believers - they had oil. And that those who were shut out were unbelievers - no oil. Both had the 'talent' of human life. The believers had the additional talent of spiritual rebirth and more.

Now the accounting for the servants:

The believers five and two talents multiply to ten and four - well done good and faithful servants - enter into the joy of your Lord where I will make you rulers over more.

The unbelievers one talent is buried. What a waste, wicked servant. Go into outer darkness.

We note that the bride is not mentioned, she was taken at the rapture and was then preparing herself in her Father's house before returning for the wedding feast.

Chapter 12

Summary of the parables of the kingdom of the heavens.

Following the order they appear in Matthew we have the unfolding story -

1 *Sower* - To understand one has to have ears to hear or the message is stolen away. Then the fruit it will produce depends on how it is received.

2 *Wheat and tares* - But the enemy sows evil which co-exists with the good.

3 *Mustard seed* - The kingdom starts with the smallest of seeds but grows large.

4 *Leaven* - Beware sin - it spreads throughout .

5 *Hidden treasure* - The Father gives up His son in order to recover the situation.

6 *Pearl of great price* - The Son gives up His life to redeem for Himself a bride out of the world.

7 *Dragnet* - There will be a great accounting at the end - good and bad will be gathered and the bad discarded.

8 *Unforgiving servant* - A key feature of the kingdom is forgiveness. You are forgiven therefore forgive others.

9 *Workers in the vineyard* - The critical thing is that you are chosen to be in the kingdom by faith and not how long you have believed. The reward of eternal life is the same for all who believe.

10 *Invited to the wedding feast* - but who will come? Israel largely refuse, so others who come to believe, in the tribulation period after the bride has been taken to heaven at the rapture, are invited.

11 *Virgins* - There will be a new beginning when the Son brings His bride with Him from heaven to the marriage supper.

12 *Talents* - indicate roles in the new kingdom when the Master has returned.

So we can now confirm that the parables of the kingdom of the heavens are describing key features of the kingdom over time - including the end of the age and the beginning of the millennium.

As we bear in mind that Matthew has special reference to Israel. We are able to interpret his message accordingly - particularly 6 and 9 to 12 above are very specific to Israel.

Part two

Other parables in Matthew

Jesus taught many parables. Others Matthew records:

Wise and foolish builders.

'Therefore whoever hears these sayings of mine and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

But everyone who hears these sayings of mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.'

Matthew 7:24-27 (also in Luke 6: 47-49)

The sound foundation for life is in hearing and believing and applying what Jesus has to teach, to our individual lives.. We call that trust or faith. When we believe and apply the teachings of the New Covenant we will have a sound foundation for life no matter what comes against us. When we don't apply the truth the problems of life can overwhelm us.

A divided house cannot stand

'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If satan casts out satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?'

And If I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man's house a plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does gather with Me scatters abroad.'

Matthew 12:25-30 (also Mark 3:23-7)

Either you are with Me or against Me. You won't be able to stand if you are of two minds because your life is 'divided.'

The lost sheep

'What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety nine and go to the mountain to seek the one that is straying?

And if he should find it, assuredly I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.'

Matthew 18:12-14 (also in Luke 15:4-7)

This parable is given in the context of the disciples asking '*who is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens.*' The difference between the Matthew (special reference to Israel) and the Luke versions is quite instructive. Where Matthew states the Father does not want any to perish, Luke has the statement, '*there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety nine just persons who need no repentance.*'

We know that the Law was insufficient to bring salvation – salvation being **only** by faith in Jesus.

Defilement from within

'Hear and understand: Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.'
Matthew 15:1-20 (Mark 7:15-23)

The context – Pharisees were challenging Jesus, *'why do your disciples transgress the traditions of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.'*

Jesus response was to point out that their traditions transgressed the commandment of God – making it of no effect by their tradition.

Jesus uses the parable to demonstrate that what goes into the mouth goes into the stomach and is then eliminated. Whereas what comes out of the mouth comes from the heart, the innermost being, and when that consists of evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witness and blasphemies, these are what defiles a man.

(See also James 3)

The withered fig tree

'Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, 'Let no fruit grow on you ever again.' Immediately the fig tree withered away.

And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, 'How did the fig tree wither away so soon?'

So Jesus answered and said to them, 'Assuredly I say to you, 'If you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' it will be done. And whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.'

Matthew 21:18-22 (also in Mark 11:13-14 and 20:24)

It is well understood that the fig tree represents Israel. With Jesus rejection by the Jewish leaders it is time for judgement to begin. Peter, writing his first letter, says in chapter 4 verse 17, to the diaspora, (the believing Jews scattered from Israel,) *'For the time has come for judgement to begin at the house of God.'*

This event, and the teaching from it, is demonstrating that judgement has come upon Israel – now condemned to barrenness or fruitfulness. It is time for a new order to emerge.

The two sons

Very specific to Israel and given towards the end of Jesus ministry.

'But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son , go work today in my vineyard.' He answered and said, 'I will not.' But afterward he regretted it and went.

Then he came to the second and said likewise, 'And he answered and said, 'I go, but he did not go.' Which of the two did the will of his father.'

They said to Him, 'The first.' Jesus answered to them, 'Assuredly I say to you, that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you.

For John came to you I the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it you did not afterward relent and believe him.'

Matthew 18:28-32

Context Context! Jesus is speaking to the chief priests and elders of the Jews. When John was preaching he was pointing the way to Jesus – the chief priests and elders did not accept John's words whilst tax collectors and harlots did.

Even when the chief priests and elders saw it, unlike the son in the parable, they did not relent and believe.

Indeed Jesus goes on with the next parable which caused the chief priests and Pharisees to want to lay hands on Jesus – but they feared the multitude.

The wicked vinedressers

Very specific to the leaders of the Jews who recognized that to be so. (21:45)

'Hear another parable; There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard, and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower.

And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now when vintage time drew near; he sent his servants to the vinedresser, that they may receive its fruit.

And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one and stoned another.

Again he sent other servants, more that the first, and they did likewise to them.

Then last of all he sent his son to then saying , 'They will respect my son.'

But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir, Come let us kill him and seize his inheritance.'

So they took and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to these vinedressers?

'They said to Him, ' He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers, who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.'

Matthew 21:33-41 (Mark 12:1-12 Luke 20:9-19)

Jesus goes on to say, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. The chief priests and Pharisees knew He was talking about them. When you read this, and the previous parable, there can be no shadow of doubt but that they knew Jesus came as the Messiah – and they sought to kill Him.

(Note. Here Jesus says, the 'kingdom of God' rather than the 'kingdom of the heavens.' This is showing the difference between the two expressions. We have already described the 'kingdom of the heavens' as the developing picture over time, whereas the 'kingdom of God' is more specific, as being where God is now ruling – as Jesus will be in the Millennium and was whilst walking the earth.)

Fig tree becomes tender

*'Now learn this parable from the fig tree; when its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see **all these things**, know that it is near, at the doors.'*

All these things are:

The re-establishment of Israel.

The abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel standing in the Holy Place in the temple. (This will be preceded by the emergence of antichrist – Daniel 9:26-27)

These signs will be seen by Israel and the world. We are observing the re-establishment of Israel and the proliferation of other trees (nations). The believing church, in whom is the restraining force of the Holy Spirit (2 Thessalonians 2:6), has been raptured before the abomination of desolation is seen in the Holy Place.

The believing church and all the world will see these signs which lead up to the above:

Many will come saying, I am the Christ.'

There will be wars and rumours of war.

Famines.

Pestilences.

Earthquakes

.. all enumerated in Matthew 24:3-28.

To which we can add from Joel 1 and 2:

Fire and fires go before the Day of the Lord.

Summary

When we considered the parables of the kingdom of the heavens we saw heaven and earth developing over time. In the other parables, in Matthew, more details of kingdom attributes have been filled in for us:

Wisdom - the wise and foolish builders - build wisely and without division for the divided house cannot stand. The two sons show wisdom is doing the father's will.

God's care - seeking the lost sheep.

Watch what you say - defilement of the man comes from within, not from what you eat.

Beware rebellion - the withered fig tree shows no fruit will be borne and the wicked vinedressers shows the outcome for the rebellious.

Watch and look and take note of the signs of the times - when Israel is back in the land and prospering. This generation will see all come to pass including the return of the Son of Man to rule on earth.

Part three – parables in Mark

Compared to Matthew Mark has few parables and most are duplications:

The sower, the mustard seed, the divided house, defilement from within, the withered fig tree, the wicked vinedressers and the tender fig tree have all been considered above so are not repeated here.

The wineskins

'No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins, or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.' Mark 2:21-22 (Luke 5:36-9)

This is the first parable in Mark. Jesus is immediately setting the scene for His ministry – the new way.

Jesus is using this parable to ascertain that something new has come and that it requires a new understanding and a new framework. The writer to the Hebrews teaches about the new priesthood and the annulling of the law in chapter 7. Paul criticizes converted Jews for trying to go back to the 'old wineskin,' of the law. Jesus came to set us free - the born again believers are the new wineskin; not to be bound by the law.

The growing seed

'The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how.'

For the earth yields crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.' Mark 4:26-29

The kingdom of God has life in itself. On earth where the seed is scattered, there will be growth. We know from other parables that the good and the wicked grow together until the harvest. At the conclusion, when all is fully ripe there will be the harvest and the separation of the righteous from the wicked. Both have eternal life – the righteous with Jesus for eternity and the wicked in the lake of fire of revelation 20 verse 15.

Each one his work

'Take heed watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to keep watch. Watch therefore for you do not know when the master of the house is coming – in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster or in the morning - and lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all; watch.'
Mark 13:33-37

This parable follows teaching about the coming of the great tribulation and the return of Jesus in chapter 13 verses 14-27. (It is not about the rapture of the church, who are not destined for the wrath of the tribulation, and have been taken to Jesus beforehand – see 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 5:4)

It is about the return of Jesus at the end of the tribulation – which had been shortened by an unspecified period - see 13:20. Hence no one knows the day or the hour of His coming.

Those who have come to believe during the tribulation period are urged to keep doing the work allocated to them, all the time praying and watching for His return.

Summary of the parables in Mark

Wineskins - you don't put new wine in old wineskins

No division - a house divided against itself cannot stand.

3 parables about the word - the sower sows, the very small, mustard seed, is a living seed with life in itself and grows large.

The old way is withered away – the fig tree has no fruit.

The vinedressers were wicked and killed the son.

Watch the fig tree – when it prospers the return of Jesus is near.

Each one will have his allotted task – in the new kingdom.

Part four

The parables in Luke

There are more parables in Luke than in any other gospel. His emphasis is more to do with practical living in the kingdom. Again we will have already dealt with some; the sower, the mustard seed, the wicked vinedressers and the tender fig tree appear in all the gospels except John. Leaven, wise and foolish builders and the faithful and the evil servant are in Matthew. Old and new wineskins is in Mark. Here are the further parables in Luke:

A The blind leading the blind

'Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother let me remove the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the plank in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brothers eye.' Luke 6:39-42

Paul put it like this, *'For I say through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each man a measure of faith.'* Romans 12:3

This alerts us to be careful who we listen to – there are many false and inadequate teachers in the world and in the church.

Be careful and check with the response from your own spirit and check against the bible. Who is leading you, are they blind or partially sighted?

We could call this the beginning of wisdom concerning day to day life. In Proverbs we are told that as a man thinks in his heart so he is. (Proverbs 23:7)

Our thinking is therefore vitally important. We are urged to think on whatever things are noble, whatever things are just .. are pure .. are lovely .. are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things. (Philippians 4:8)

The message is be careful and do not be led by worldly wisdom. *'Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.'* Colossians 2:8

B The two debtors

'There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed 500 denarii and the other 50. And when they had nothing with which to pay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me therefore, which of them will love him more? Luke 7:41-42

Simon's answer was, *'I suppose the one he forgave more.'* He had judged correctly. One often hears unbelievers say that they have lived a good life and haven't done anything really bad; surely they will be all right. But this misses the reality of the human condition.

We all sinned in Adam who could only pass on to us a human spirit dwelling in the realm of darkness and death.

We all need forgiveness and to be born again into light and eternal life, whether our sins seem small or large.

A great help to the Christian life is to become more and more in love with Jesus – the Holy Spirit answers this my frequent prayer. ‘Holy Spirit fill me with more and more love for Jesus.’

C The good Samaritan

This parable is in response to the question ‘who is my neighbour.’

‘A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

Now by chance a certain priest came down that road.

And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion.

So he went to him, bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again I will repay you.’

So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among thieves? And he (the lawyer testing Jesus) said, ‘He who showed mercy on him.’ Then Jesus said, ‘Go and do likewise.’ Luke 10:30-37

Lawyers have a bit of a reputation for being too clever for their own good and a bit tricky. This lawyer was being clever seeking self justification. He had asked Jesus what he had to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus answer was love the Lord you God and your neighbor as yourself. Well – who is my neighbor? Hence this very well known parable in response.

From it we understand that being merciful is expected in the Kingdom of God. Because, of course, the Lord is abundantly merciful to us.

(The Priest and the Levite represent the Law which is unable to do anything to help and is therefore insufficient. The 2 denarii demonstrate that there is sufficient provision for the 2,000 years of care to the rapture for believers provided by the Samaritan - representing Jesus.)

The parables are building a picture of living in the kingdom of God:

First Get our thinking straight.

Then Receive forgiveness and love the Lord

Then Be merciful in life.

D The friend at midnight

'And He said to them, 'Which of you shall have a friend and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him; ' and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you.'

I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.’ Luke 11:5-8

Jesus uses this parable to teach them and us to be persistent in prayer – that is to ask and to seek and to knock. The heavenly Father is better than any earthly father, He will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask.

Here is the message – in the parable persistence results in the friend receiving as much as he needed. Likewise ask and keep asking – you will receive the Holy Spirit in abundance.

Lesson - in life you will need the Holy Spirit, ask, ask ask.

E The rich fool

‘The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops? So he said, ‘I will do this, I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul you have many goods, laid up for many years:

take your ease; eat, drink and be merry.’

But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided? So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.’

Luke 12: 16-21

Context - Jesus was being asked by one in the crowd to tell his brother to share the inheritance with him. Jesus said to him, *'beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.'*

Our lesson is to put the Lord first and foremost above all - that is the meaning of being rich toward God. In the previous parable we were urged to seek the Holy Spirit for it is the Holy Spirit who will lead and enable us to put the Lord first.

The rich fool was focused only on himself. He had no thought for anyone or anything else, even though he was in a position to be very generous.

In the parable of the sower we were warned that the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches would render us unfruitful.

Put the Lord first and be generous.

F The faithful and the evil servants

'Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.'

But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready. For the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

'Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you he will make him ruler over all he has .

But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his position with the unbelievers. And that servant who knew his master's will and did not prepare himself or do according to his will shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed these things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.'

Luke 12: 35-48

This parable is difficult to understand without a clear understanding of the outline of the things to come. The context of this parable is, 'Do not worry about your life, for the Lord knows what you need. Seek first the kingdom of God. Do not fear, little flock, it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.'

In the parable of the 10 virgins in Matthew we saw the wedding banquet – and we understood that the bride comes to the feast with the bridegroom.

So now we are ready to understand this parable. The key message is watch for the master's return and be faithful while you wait.

The message is for those who are waiting for the master's return for the wedding (when he comes with his bride.) The parable is pertinent to those who have come to believe during the tribulation period and are waiting, in difficult circumstances, for Jesus return.

The message of watchfulness and faithfulness has always been pertinent. It was for Israel, regarding the coming of the Messiah. It is for the bride who are waiting for that glorious moment when we rise to meet Jesus in the air. It is for the future people during the tribulation.

The severe result of not watching - being cut in two and appointed a position with unbelievers is not for any born again Christian and certainly does not apply to the bride.

G The barren fig tree

'A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of the vineyard, ' Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and have found none. Cut it down, why does it use up the ground.' But he answered and said to him, 'Sir let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. If not, after that you can cut it down.' Luke 13:6-9

This parable speaks of Jesus ministry. He came for His own - that is the people of Israel. The fig tree represents the nation of Israel. Jesus has found no fruit. Although Israel were the chosen nation and although they had the promises of God, nevertheless they bore no fruit.

Without being fruitful the tree should not use up the ground.

In the same sense, without fruit Israel could not use up the space. Paul makes this clear in Romans 11. Here we see the Olive Tree, the root of which is the favour and the fatness of God. Israel were 'natural' branches - but unbelief led to their being cut off.

Believing Gentiles are grafted in.

By God's grace Israel is currently being given the chance to be restored and grafted again into God's favour - having been cut down from its place of favour.

On a personal level, the Lord God is looking for fruitfulness. As Jesus said, *'I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, will bear much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing.'*

H Take the lower place

'So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honourable than you be invited by him; and he who invited you and him come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place.'

But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher.' Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.' Luke 14:7-11

Jesus teaches another principle feature of the kingdom – humility. Don't think highly of yourself – whatever we have is from the Lord by grace.

Humility is opposite to arrogance and pride. We know that the Lord resists the proud.

'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble,' is from Proverbs 3:34 and is quoted by both James (4:6) and Peter (1 Peter 5:5).

Looking at the original Greek will help us to understand the weight of Jesus saying. Resist is in Greek *'antitasso,'* a military term – *'to set oneself in battle array against.'*

Therefore we can see that pride, for the born again children of God, is dangerous for us indeed.

I The great supper

'A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.'

And another said, 'I have bought 5 yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.. Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out into the quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed, and the lame and the blind. And the servant said, 'Master it is done as you commanded, and there is still room.' Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in that my house may be filled.' For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.' Luke 14:16-24

This parable is similar to the one we saw at Matthew 22:1-14 but not the same. The focus in Matthew was the wedding feast of Jesus held at the beginning of His millennial reign.

This parable, whilst similar, has a different focus. Here the focus is about priorities in the kingdom. That which the Lord prepares for each one of us is far more important than anything else. Here the message is put the Lord first above all things.

It encompasses our very calling. In Ephesians 2:10 we are told that the Lord has prepared good works for us to walk in them.

The parable also teaches that what we are or what we do does not qualify us in the kingdom – indeed it could be a stumbling block. Rather we come as the weak and the poor, we come as the blind and the lame - but when we come into the house, the kingdom, we are treated to a glorious feast.

J Count the cost

'Whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it, lest after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'this man began to build and was unable to finish.'

Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether, he is able with 10,000 men to meet him who come against him with 20,000? Or else while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.' Luke 14:27-33

Disciple means pupil, follower, one who learns from the teacher. So this parable is teaching us that one cannot be learning from Jesus the master unless one has put one's own desires to the cross.

To take up one's cross is to put to death one's own desires. After the cross comes resurrection. Having put to death our own desires we are raised into the desires and the plans the Lord has for us - much better!

This parable is really about exercising our will. That is subjecting our own will to the will of the Father. Only then will we be fruitful in the kingdom.

K The lost coin

'What woman, having 10 silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?'

And when she finds it she calls her friends and neighbours together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!' Likewise I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.'

Luke 15:8-10

This is one of three parables on a common theme – joy in heaven over those who repent. They represent three different scenarios.

Repent means to change one's mind. We saw the parable of the lost sheep in Matthew where the joy in heaven was over the one lost sheep which, in context, needed repentance, than over 99 that did not.

Scenario - The lost sheep had just wandered off and the shepherd went after it.

Scenario - Here the lost coin represents something that was mislaid and the joy in heaven is when it is found again.

In these two parables we have what we would call inadvertent missing of the mark (sin). In the third parable, that of the prodigal (lost) son the scenario is quite different:

L The lost (prodigal) son

'A certain man had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give to me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal (wasteful) living.

But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land and he began to be in want.

Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough to spare, and I perish with hunger.! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'

And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.

But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.

Now the older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.

So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.

But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him.

So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him. And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.' Luke 15:11-32

In the first two parables we had inadvertent loss, here we have deliberate disobedience.

In the first two parables there is a search made for the lost, here the father waits patiently for the lost son to come to his senses and repent.

In both cases there is great joy in the outcome.

We have a quick and easy way back to the Father when we sin - whether it be inadvertent or deliberate - *'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'* 1 John 1:8-9

So our key message from these parables is this - there is joy in heaven when we turn and repent from all our sinful ways, whether inadvertent or deliberate. (not an excuse to continue though.)

M The unjust steward

'There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. So he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship. For you can no longer be steward.'

Then the steward said within himself, 'What shall I do? For my master is taking away the stewardship from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.'

So he called every one of his master's debtors to him.

And said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'

And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' So he said to him, 'take your bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.'

Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?'

So he said 'A hundred measures of wheat.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill and write eighty.'

So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.

And I say to you, 'make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own. No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.'

Luke 16:1-13

This parable, which follows immediately after the prodigal son, is about wisdom in dealing with the world's goods. The key message is, 'One cannot serve God and Mammon.'

Consider Nebuchadnezzar, he had all the world could offer; but he was unfruitful. When Daniel interpreted the dream - the one in which Nebuchadnezzar is seen as a mighty tree cut down - he said to him, 'O King, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity. There was no lengthening - it didn't happen until 7 years later, by which time Nebuchadnezzar had become a believer.

The parable tells us that in the world people use the world's goods for their own purposes. It is saying to believers, as you are not your own, as you were bought with a price and the Lord God is your master, subject your stewardship of your worldly goods to the kingdom of God.

The parable is not saying believers should approve of worldly methods or copy the worldly thinking in the parable. It is saying people in the world are astute - learn to be astute with matters of the world but in the context of righteousness.

In the kingdom of God He will by the Holy Spirit lead us in all things.

The Lord God is merciful and generous. His kingdom is to reflect these attributes. We, His people on earth, are to be like Him, being merciful and generous with the worldly assets He gives us - the complete opposite of the prodigal son in the previous parable.

N The rich man and Lazarus

'There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen who fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom.

The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

Then he cried and said, ' Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.

But Abraham said, ' Son, remember that in your life time you received good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.

And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.

Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.

Abraham said to him, ' They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, 'No father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.

But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rises from the dead.'

Luke 16:19-31

Key message - Eternal destiny. The parable spells out the fact that everyone, made in the image of God, is in fact eternal.

The only clue it gives to how one can influence one's destiny is in the phrase, 'be persuaded by the One who has risen from the dead.'

At the time the parable was given the truth of the need for salvation and for a Saviour was found in Moses and the prophets – it was there for all with eyes to see and ears to hear.

For it is in the word of God we will find all we need to know about the need for salvation and about Jesus our Saviour. Whether we 'listen' or not is up to us.

It would be quite wrong to assume, either that the wealthy are destined for Hades or that the poor are destined for heaven.

We have the opportunity to become certain of our eternal destiny by accepting the way of salvation provided by Father – faith in Jesus.

O Unprofitable servants

'Which of you having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat.'

But will he not rather say, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink.'

Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded of him? I think not.

So, likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'we are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'

This parable is all about putting the Lord God first and foremost – above everything else, and very definitely above one’s own provision.

We balance the teaching with what we read in other parables and other sayings of Jesus. So we know we serve a very loving Father who is Jehovah Jireh to us. (The Lord my provider)

*‘Let us not grow weary while doing good.’ Galatians 6: 9
‘I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God., which is your reasonable service.’ Romans 12:1*

So the parable is about having this attitude – that the Lord God is first and foremost in my life. He has given me things to do. As a servant I do not seek to make my own way but to diligently follow Him and do those things he has prepared for me to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

P The widow and the unjust judge

‘Then He spoke a parable to them that men ought always to pray and not loose heart, saying;

‘There was in a certain city a judge, who did not fear God, nor regard man.

Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, ‘Get justice for me from my adversary.’ And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, ‘Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

Then the Lord said, ' Hear what the unjust judge said, ' And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night, though He bears long with them?

'I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?' Luke 18:1-8

The characters -

The unjust judge - who has no regard for God or man. So that only leaves him representing the devil or a principality or power, or ruler in darkness, or one of the hosts of wickedness described in Ephesians 6:12. He is In a position of power to affect the situation of the widow. Cannot possibly represent the Lord God as God is fundamentally just.

The widow. She has no husband present with her to support her case. She represents us, the believers of today. We are betrothed to Christ but He is seated at the right hand of the Father right now.

God and the Son of man are mentioned also.

Reading the parable we can establish that the widow does two things -

- 1) She demands her rights from the unjust judge – verse 3
- 2) She also cries out to the Lord God – verse 7

We know that the original text was written in Greek – so we read a translation.

Generally that is fine but here and there, when we look at the underlying text, we can find things we might want to express with closer reference to the meaning of the Greek words.

This is especially the case with this parable as we will now discover.

The very purpose of the parable is more strongly expressed in the Greek - *'Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart.'*

The Greek word for 'pray' here is *proseuchomai*. The literal meaning is simply to speak out loud towards. Here the widow is speaking out loud towards the unjust judge.

The Greek word 'lose heart' is *ekkakeo* which literally means to turn coward, to lose one's courage.

So we could express Jesus words like this, *'Then He spoke a parable to them that they should always speak out loud and not become cowardly or not to lose courage.'*

Now the purpose of the parable is clearer - pray and don't be faint hearted. Don't lose courage.

Let's look at another verse - *'yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'*

Again we will look at the Greek -

'troubles' - *kopos* - means a beating.

'weary' – *hupopiazō* – means to give a blow under the eyes, to beat the face black and blue.

So now we can see that the effect the widow was having on the unjust judge was much stronger than indicated by the translation.

The parable more literally

'Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to speak out loud and not lose courage and be faint hearted, saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man.

"Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.'

"And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, 'yet because this widow beats me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she beat me black and blue.'"

Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said.

*** 'and God in no way will execute the avenging of the elect of Him, those crying to Him day and night, and being patient over them. But Jesus says - "I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"*

Luke 18:1-8

*** [Note: the phrase used by the unjust judge is here rendered word for word literally from the Greek – which clarifies the meaning – the unjust judge is saying God won't help! But Jesus responds that He will indeed do it.]*

Now the meaning of the parable is becoming much clearer.

The meaning of the parable

Now we can extract the full meaning of the parable.

The widow was being robbed of something that was rightly hers. She does two things - she demands justice from the ruling power and she cries out to the Lord. Her demanding of justice from the evil ruling power results in that power giving way.

As he gives way the unjust judge throws out an accusation - *'and God in no way will execute the avenging of the elect of Him, those crying to Him day and night , and being patient over them.*

But now Jesus speaks - *'I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?'*

The meaning for us

We are likened to the widow. We shouldn't just sit back and take what the enemy throws at us. We should come against him, speaking out loud, demanding that he gives up - keeping on until he does. (Bear in mind verse 4 - *'he would not for a while.'*)

But do we?

This is a question for us all. Do we just accept every bad thing that comes our way - *'well that's just life!'* Or do we take note of Jesus warning - the thief comes only to steal and to kill and to destroy. (John 10:10)

When things come against us, we should be considering whether the event is just natural, or the work of another human being, or is our enemy behind it. When we discern that the enemy is there stirring the pot, creating problems - then it is time to apply the truth we have learned from this parable.

We have the power and the authority. He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world. (1 John 4:4)

Q The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

'Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus, 'God I thank You that I am not like other men – extortioners, unjust, adulterers or even this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all I possess.'

And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.'

Luke 18:9-14

The parable is addressed to some who trusted in themselves. They had the wrong approach to life! The Pharisee was trusting in his own actions. He fasted twice week. He paid tithes. Surely therefore he was fully justified.

We are not justified by fasting and our finances are not secured, justified, by tithing.

We are justified by recognizing that we needed to be delivered from sin – that God is indeed merciful to us, by allowing us to know His Son and to partake in His sacrifice.

And so the message is one of humility. Keep in mind that Jesus is all in all to us. Avoid thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought as Paul said to the Romans in chapter 12 verse 3.

R The minas (Luke 19:11-27)

This parable is very similar to the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30 so I do not intend to repeat it here.

However, there is one phrase used here which is very helpful. Jesus told His servants, 'Do business till I come.' It is a very good reminder to us to faithfully continue in all that He has called us to be and to do - right until He comes.

Summary of the parables in Luke

The key messages:

- A Blind leading the blind
Be careful who you are being led by and apply right thinking which is the beginning of wisdom
- B Two debtors
We have been forgiven a great deal so it is right to love the Lord extravagantly.
- C Good Samaritan
Mercy to those we come across who are in need.
- D Friend at midnight
Persistence
- E Rich fool
Be wise with money and resources – focus on the kingdom.
- F * The faithful and the evil servant
Be aware of the times and faithful in what you do until Jesus comes.
- G Barren fig tree
Don't let unfruitful 'works' take up your time. In secular work – be fruitful where you are by prayer and witness.
- H Take the lower place
Humility

- I The great supper
Be aware we do not need to qualify to be invited into the kingdom. It is God's grace to us who have nothing good enough to offer.
- J Count the cost
Consider how you exercise your will - be prayerful.
- K The lost coin
Joy in heaven over those 'found.'
- L The lost (prodigal) son
Joy in heaven over those who repent of unrighteous ways.
- M The unjust steward
Wisdom in dealing with the world's goods.
Faithfulness.
- N The rich man and Lazarus
Eternal destiny is by faith - worldly position is irrelevant.
- O Unprofitable servants
Putting the Lord first above everything else.
- P * The widow and the unjust judge
Persist in resisting the enemy - he will give up.

- Q The Pharisee and the tax collector
Humility - God is not impressed by any sign of self satisfaction with our own actions.
- R The minas
Do business till I come - see also 'The Talents' in Matthew. God will give more to His own.

Where Matthew's parables focus mainly on telling us what the kingdom of the heavens on earth looks like and is fashioned by, the parables of Luke focus on our behavior and attitudes. There is, of course, some overlapping.

Appendix – the kingdom of the heavens

The disciples were asking Jesus, *'why do you speak them (the multitudes) in parables?'*

Jesus said to them, *'it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, but to them it has not been given.'* Matthew 13:10-11

So we can ask ourselves, what is meant by 'the kingdom of the heavens?'

When we consider the parables of the kingdom of the heavens in Matthew we see a developing picture. The kingdom during various ages. Kingdom meaning the 'royal rule.'

We see God's purpose and royal rulership developing – from the sowing of the word, the contamination of sin, the picking out of the bride for Jesus, culminating in the marriage feast and the rewards.

So we can see the kingdom being and to be introduced by the Messiah. Jesus said, 'the kingdom of the heavens is at hand.' Matthew 4:17

But the ruling authorities of the Jews rejected the Messiah and the coming kingdom went into abeyance as we see in the parable of the minas – in abeyance until His return when it will become the kingdom of the Son of Man.

The kingdom of the heavens will be fully introduced by Jesus on His return, becoming the kingdom of the Son of Man, when God's will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven.

What is different about the expressions the 'kingdom of the heavens and the 'kingdom of God?'

The expression 'the kingdom of God' is the place where God is actively ruling. Temporarily it was here when Jesus walked on the earth.

The final fulfillment of the kingdom of God is at the end of the Millennium when Jesus delivers the kingdom to the Father. (1 Corinthians 15:24-28)

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