

## Book Study – Matthew 21:28 - 22:14

*Parable of the Two Sons – Parable of the Tenants – Parable of the Wedding Banquet*

### Before We Begin Our Journey...

1. What is the best illustration you've ever seen of the old saying, "Actions speak louder than words"?
2. What do you like or dislike about weddings?

### Do Some Digging and Pre-planning...

3. How did the first son respond to his father's words? What about his actions? ([21:29](#))
4. What did the second son actually do? ([21:30](#))
5. What solution did the landowner finally decide on? ([21:37](#))
6. How did the tenants react to the landowner's choice? ([21:38-39](#))
7. What end did Jesus predict for the wicked tenants of the parable? ([21:40-41](#))
8. How did people respond to the king's first and second invitation? ([22:3-6](#))
9. Why did the king throw out the unwelcome wedding guest? ([22:13-14](#))

### Sort, Organize, Gain Understanding...

10. Why doesn't religious knowledge or information guarantee that we'll be godly?
11. If, as Jesus claimed, many "unrighteous" people will enter the kingdom of God, and many "righteous" people won't, what does that say to you about God's system of justice?
12. When is it too late to do the right thing?
13. Who do the tenants, servants, and the son of the parable symbolize?
14. What will happen to those who either reject Christ or try to enter His kingdom on their own terms?
15. what area(s) of your life have you been putting off a response to what God has asked you to do?



### Application for the Journey...

16. What step can you take this week toward correcting a mistake you have made or keeping/fulfilling a promise that you made to Christ?
17. Today or tomorrow, how can you show God your appreciation for His goodness toward you?
18. What response should you give to God's invitation this week?



### Direction Finder...



"Thoughts from everyone on God's system of justice..."

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I will... \_\_\_\_\_

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*A prayer for your journey... "Lord Jesus, as I walk through this coming week, help me prepare for my journey by reading my Bible more regularly, seeking help as I need it from my Christian friends and focusing on the needs of others instead of myself. Help me to demonstrate my faith by stepping into the unknown, untried, and untested areas of my life."* -Amen

## Introduction to the Parables

### ***The Purpose of Parables:***

Parables are told so that only those who really care will come to know the truth. Not so much because they understand the parable, but because they care enough to ask what it means after the story is finished and hang around long enough to have it explained to them. The others don't really care and leave. Remember, the disciples didn't understand the parables, but they asked what Jesus meant after the crowds left. They had a soft and open heart. Understanding is an issue of the heart. Those who have a hard heart, also have closed eyes and closed ears and they don't understand.

Another purpose for parables was to reveal truths about the kingdom of God. Matt 13:10-13 says:

10 The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?” 11 He replied, “*The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.* 12 Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.

So, whenever you read a parable, you need to ask yourself, “What does this tell me about the kingdom of God?” What do I mean by kingdom of God? We will come back to this a little later.

Also, notice Matt 13:12. It says, “Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.” This is very important for understanding the rest of Matthew and the parables.

Matt 21:43 also talks about this. Matt 21:43 “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it.”

What nation is Matthew talking about in 21:43? The church. The word “nation” is in the singular and therefore does not refer to the Gentiles. 1 Peter 2:9 refers to the church as a “Holy Nation.”

The message of Mat 21:43 is repeated over and over again in the parables. What will they lose because of their unbelief? They will lose the kingdom. They had the responsibility of being the custodian of God's message of the kingdom, but missed the Messiah when He came.

### ***Steps in interpreting the Parables:***

#### **The Passage**

What is the passage? Is this found in only one gospel or is there a parallel account? The reason we check this out is because we need to decide which passage we will use as our main passage (usually the longest). We also need to be aware of the others so we can compare the different accounts. If we see any differences, we have to ask why that detail was left out or included? What does it tell me about the author's intent, the intended audience, the main point of the parable, etc.

I prefer a literary approach which looks at the differences between accounts as clues to each gospel writer's theme. I want to understand the point he is trying to make with this story, miracle, etc. Some prefer to try to recreate the historical event and take all the parts and meld them into one story.

#### **The Problem**

What is the problem that prompted the parable? When Jesus told a parable, He was dealing with either a Question or an Attitude - Often both at the same time. The question might be spoken or unspoken, after all, He could read their minds. Or He might be dealing with a bad attitude. We have to examine the context to see if a question was asked or implied. And we need to see if there is an attitude that needs to be dealt with, etc.

For example: In the parables of the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost sons of Luke 15, the context (15:1-2) reveals that the Pharisees were upset with Jesus for receiving and eating with sinners and taxgatherers. The problem dealt with in the parables that follow are these: The unasked question is: What is God's attitude towards sinners?

The bad attitude is the Pharisees self righteousness and condemnation of others. If you don't understand the question, you can't come up with the right answer.

#### **The Point**

Parables are told to make a point. They answer a question, deal with a problem, etc. What is the central truth or truths taught? Craig Blomberg has written a book on the parables and he says that the parable has as many points as it has characters. So, the Good Samaritan would have a main point that we learn from the actions of the Robbers, a main point we learn from the actions of the Religious (priest and Levite) and a main point that we learn from the actions of the Righteous (Samaritan).

## The Program of God

How does the parable relate to the *kingdom* program of God? Remember, that we said the parables were told to reveal truths about the kingdom. What kingdom are we talking about? There is much debate about this between and among Reformed and Dispensational theologians. Some say the kingdom is already here. Some say that there is no kingdom program in effect now but that it is all in the millenium kingdom of the future. Others say there is a spiritual aspect of the kingdom in effect now and the aspect of the kingdom program that involves the physical earthly reign of Christ is definitely going to happen in the future. They opt for a both and approach.

Without telling you who is correct in this debate, we will just ask the following types of questions as we study each parable:

- What does this parable reveal about what God is doing to establish his kingdom (either here on earth now and/or in the future?)
- What does it say about who will be in the kingdom?
- about how they will get there?
- about what those who are there or are going to be there look like?

## The Particulars

What secondary details of the story need to be understood? How do they relate to the main point or central truth? For example, maybe it would help to know how much a talent is worth in the parable about the talents? Do you need to understand hiring practices in the Middle East to fully understand the parable we mentioned earlier about the man who hired people at 6, 9, 12, etc? It definitely helps to understand marriage feast and banquet customs of that day when we come to the parable of the great banquet.

Some say that a parable is not designed to walk on all fours. In other words, every detail in the story doesn't have to have an analogy. That is probably true. *Every* detail does not, but as I study the parables, I am amazed at how many details do have significance and do have an analogy.

E.g. The Prodigal son was said to have gone to work for a Gentile feeding pigs. Is that just an incidental detail not important to the story? I think it says more than that he was sinning. It links the whole parable back to the first two verses of the chapter. The Pharisees were condemning Jesus for eating with sinners and taxgatherers. Taxgatherers worked for Gentiles and the mention of the prodigal working for a Gentile shows that Jesus is dealing with their attitudes about the taxgatherers.

## The Principles

Of course when all this analysis is done, the most important thing to ask is “How can we apply this?”

## ***There are three types of Parables***

- Similitudes - “The kingdom of heaven is like...” (These are all in Matt 13:)
- Parabolic sayings - these are the one-liners found in Luke 4-7
- Full parables - a story told to make a point.

From: [www.Bible.org](http://www.Bible.org)



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