

Introduction to the Kingdom Parables

by T. J. Smith

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A GAIN, YOU HAVE TURNED the page, as Bob Seger sang, and here I am!

After studying preterism for the past 25 years, it has certainly become evident that most others who have shared this journey are far more studied than the typical futurists who harangue us. But be that as it is...

I wanted to share some studies on the parables of the Kingdom that I compiled in my first book “Kingdom Come: Messiah’s Methodical Manifesto Hidden in the Parables.” I see more believers questioning the futurist doctrine, and they are open to understanding prophecy as fulfilled. Though most of you already grasp the parables, this might be for the newer students still turning over rocks of truth. In upcoming issues, I will share some chapters from this book. You can order a paper copy of the e-book from my website, www.tjsmithministries.org, if you would like to share a copy or read it for yourself. (It’s \$5 for the e-book or a little more for the paperback.) I used the Gospel of Mark in my studies.

Before we “jump in the pool,” it is a good idea to familiarize ourselves with a few basic principles for interpreting parables. These concepts were taken from Bernard Ramm.¹ He writes:

(1) “Determine the exact nature and details of the customs, practices and elements that form the material.” TJ: Parables drew upon the contrasts between natural life and spiritual life using the environment and customs of that culture. Life during Jesus’ time on earth was all about agriculture; therefore, Jesus used that aspect of daily life to deliver His message.

(2) “Determine the one central truth.” TJ: The original reason for even telling the parable was to convey a single truth, not multi-layered truths. Over the centuries, interpreters have drifted from this concept and created multitudinous meanings that Yeshua never addressed.

(3) “Determine how much of the parable is interpreted by Yeshua Himself.” TJ: Using this principle helps tremendously as it removes any room for error when ascertaining the one central truth. If Jesus says, “Here is the meaning...,” then we need not seek another. God Himself has just interpreted for us. Enough said!

(4) *“Determine if there are any clues in the context as to the parable’s meaning.”* TJ: If Jesus is walking through a field of grain and begins telling a parable, that should be a clue to the context.

(5) *“Don’t make the parable walk on all fours.”* TJ: This is very important to help us find the central truth and then move on. Parables were typically wrapped up in descriptive “bark” or drapery to help paint the picture. That does not mean that the reader should try to find a meaning for every little detail. If the sower goes to sleep after sowing, it’s not important for us to determine what “sleep” meant. Jesus could have said that the man went to town, went fishing, or went to eat. The central truth is that the seed grew outside of the man’s efforts. Avoid assigning meaning to every jot and tittle.

(6) *“Be careful of the doctrinal use of parables...parables do teach doctrine and the claim they do not is an overstatement. Care must be taken not to unceremoniously intrude arguments about Calvinism, Arminianism, discipline, and the like into parables.”* TJ: Sadly, churches have built entire doctrines on parabolic teaching.

(7) *“A clear understanding of the time-period that the parables are intended for is necessary for their full interpretation. The parables are for that period between the two advents during which the King has gone into a far country to receive a kingdom.”* TJ: Ramm is explaining that the two advents were the birth of Jesus and His Second Coming in judgment against Jerusalem in AD 70.

These two events are key to understanding the progression of the parables!

If you can begin to “filter” the parables through these two advents, your understanding of the parables will fall into place.

Another Biblical scholar to study is Alfred Edersheim. In his book, *“The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah,”* Edersheim writes concerning parables:²

“Perhaps no other mode of teaching was as common among the Jews as that by Parables. Only in their case, they were almost entirely illustrations of what had been said or taught; while, in the case of Christ, they served as the foundation for His teaching...parables bear reference to well-known scenes, such as those of daily life; or to events, either real, or such as everyone would expect in given circumstances...”

Although I don’t agree with Edersheim in his futuristic interpretations of parables put forth, he is recognized as a very influential force in the understanding of parables and demands respect in that field of study.

Since this book is about the parables of the Kingdom, we won't be discussing others that Jesus told which did not reference the Kingdom.

Side note: You might have noticed that I have used "Jesus" and "Yeshua," and I will continue to do so. This is purposeful since the name He was called was not pronounced "Jee-zus" but rather "Yeah-shoe-wuh." I'm not trying to be legalistic, but I just wanted to introduce the real Hebraic name of Jesus. Feel free to call Him by either name.

Finally, several times in the book it may appear that I follow some long, boring "rabbit trail" to explain some seemingly minute detail. I assure you that my "guided tours through the swamplands of minutia" will equip you to understand the point of that parable. There are many words, phrases, principles and concepts that have been misunderstood, yet absorbed into our belief systems. Without stopping to dissect these issues, it's likely that we will continue to overlay our template of previous misunderstandings. I compare it to those times in life when you need to unravel a basket of tangled yarn – slowly and gently.

Ok, so in the next issue, we will start on that first parable. Stay tuned! ✝

1. Bernard Ramm, "*Protestant Biblical Interpretation*," 179-183. Ramm's quotes are in italicized font.
2. Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* [Vol. 1, Chapter XXIII], 580.