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# PARABLES AND MIRACLES OF JESUS

ST. PAUL'S BIBLE COLLEGE – ONLINE LECTURE – LESSON 18

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# LESSON OUTLINE

- I. Basic Introduction to the Parables.
- II. Role of the Parables in the Mission of Jesus.
- III. Parables and the Kingdom of God.
- IV. Parables for Just Society.
- V. Interpreting the Parables Today.
- VI. Background to the Miracles.
- VII. Role of Miracles in the Life and Ministry of Jesus.
- VIII. Study of Some Miracles.
- IX. Interpreting the Miracles Today.



# I. BASIC INTRODUCTION TO THE PARABLES



# I. INTRODUCTION

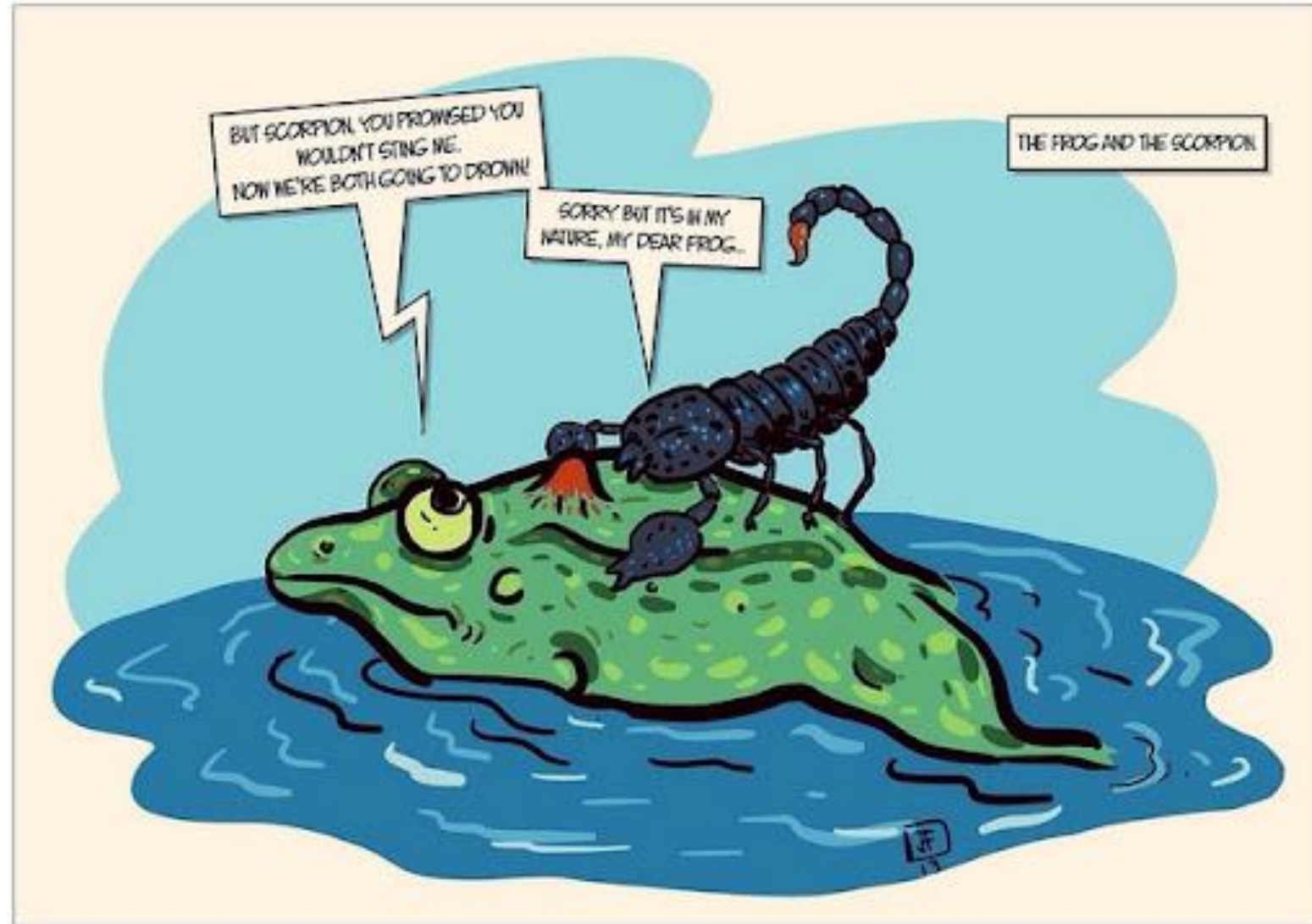
- Figure of speech in a language. E.g., Samson is a lion.
- Stories and fables (cf. Jataka tales, Aesop's fables)
- God as rock; under eagle's wings; rejected lover; seed; leaven; coin (word-pictures)
- Visual metaphors.
- Infographic.
- Semitic mind. Symbolic and picturesque.



















Kill a Cigarette and Save a Life. Yours.

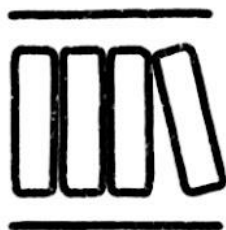


## FREEDOM OF SPEECH

*"I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." —Voltaire (1694-1778)*



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"Word Picture"		Classical Hebrew	
Pictograph	Meaning	Hebrew	Meaning
	Strong Leader		Name for God; "Strength." Used 250 times in the <i>Tanakh</i> .
	Strength (of the) house		Father

## 2. WHAT IS A PARABLE?

### ■ TERMINOLOGY

- Greek, '*parabole*' ('to throw near, along')
- Hebrew, '*mashal*,' ('riddle, saying, story, taunt')
- Parables in the OT (eleven parables, 'the lamb', 2 Sam 12:1-14)
- Parables in the NT (55 parables, 7 Kingdom parables)

### 3. KINDS OF PARABLES

- (a) Introduced with 'as' or 'like'. Taken from daily realities. E.g., The kingdom of God is like a net ..
- (b) Narrative parable or parabolic story. Actions are involved. E.g., Parable of father and two sons.
- (c) Simple saying, but without 'as' or 'like.' E.g., A city that is built on a hill cannot be hid.

## 4. OTHER FIGURES OF SPEECH

- Metaphor. 'Enter through the narrow door.'
- Simile. 'I am sending you out like sheep among wolves.'
- Illustrative story. 'Go and do likewise.'
- Allegory. 'Rocky ground.' (Mk 4:10-20)

## 5. HOW MANY PARABLES?

- No precise number.
- Parables found in all the Synoptic Gospels. 3. E.g., the Sower.
- Common to Matthew and Luke. 9
- Found only in Mark. 2.
- Found only in Matthew. 9.
- Found only in Luke. 18.
- Found only in John. 5.
- 'Allegorical interpretation.' cf. Good Samaritan by Saint Augustine.





## II. ROLE OF THE PARABLES IN THE MISSION OF JESUS



## I. PARABLES CLARIFY THE TEACHING.

- Trust in the providence of God. Cf. Mt 6:26
- Moral instruction. Cf. Story by Nathan. 2 Sam 12:1-15.
- Parable of the wicked tenants. Cf. Mark 12:1-12.

## 2.TWO KINDS OF AUDIENCE

- The Twelve.
- The simple, common folk.

### 3. MISSION MANIFESTO OF JESUS

- Mark's version.
- Matthew's version.
- Luke's version.



### III. PARABLES AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD





## I.THE KINGDOM OF GOD HAS LIFE WITHIN

- Of the 45 parables, 15 begin with, 'The kingdom of heaven / God is like ...' Comparison.
- Parable of seeds; mustard seed (Mk 4:30-32)

## 2. QUALITIES TO INHERIT THE KINGDOM

- Compassion, forgiveness, goodness, generosity. Cf. Lk 15
- Samaritan as model. Cf. Lk 10.
- Unforgiving servant. Cf. Mt 18:23-25.
- Vineyard workers. Cf. Mt 20:1-16

### 3. DEMANDS TO INHERIT THE KINGDOM

- Parable of the treasure, the pearl. Cf. Mt 13:44-45.
- Tower builder and warrior king. Cf. Lk 14:28-32.
- Friend at midnight. Cf. Lk 11:5-8.
- Watchful servants. Cf. Lk 12:35-38.

## 4. CRISIS PARABLES

- Parable of the talents. Cf. Mt 25:14-30.
- Parable of the ten bridesmaids. Cf. Mt 25:1-13.

## 5. THE KINGDOM HERE AND AFTER

- The seed parables.
- The parable of the rich man and Lazarus.



## IV. PARABLES FOR THE JUST SOCIETY



# I. THE NEED FOR A JUST SOCIETY

- Society in the time of Jesus.
- Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. Ruling Palestine.
- Religious groups: Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes, Priests.
- Taxation.
- Unstable economy.
- Purity vs. impurity separation.
- Subalterns: women, children, Gentiles.

## 2. LUKE 15

- Discrimination based on profession.
- Tax-collectors and sinners.
- Purity vs. impurity.





### 3. LUKE 10

- The wounded person.
- Priest, Levite, Samaritan.
- Literary context. Love of God, neighbour.
- Historical context. Jews vs. Samaritans.



## 4.VINEYARD WORKERS (MT 20:1-16)

- The last will be first; and the first will be last.
- Early Christian problem.
- Problem of leadership.





## V. INTERPRETATION OF THE PARABLES



# I. INTERPRETATION THEN

- Church Fathers. Irenaeus, Origen, Tertullian, Augustine. Allegorical interpretation.
- Bible interpreting the Bible.

## 2. INTERPRETATION NOW

- Historical-critical interpretation.
- Narrative analysis.
- Socio-psychological interpretation.
- Subaltern interpretation.



## VI. BACKGROUND TO THE MIRACLES



# I. INTRODUCTION

- Taken literally!
- Yesterday's miracles are today's ordinary events. E.g., Persons flying.
- Two characteristics: (a) It should be an extraordinary event; (b) Natural science is unable to explain it.
- Magic or psychic?
- Cf. Creation event; Exodus event.

## 2. TERMINOLOGY

- Old Testament: supernatural 'sign,' divine 'wonder.' 'Signs and wonders' that the Lord has done.
- New Testament: 'sign,' 'mighty work,' 'powerful deed.'
- Beyond cause and effect, or action and reaction.



### 3. BIBLICAL COSMOLOGY

- Worldview of biblical times. Three layered world: heavens, earth, underworld.
- Genesis, and Job.

## 4. RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

- Hellenistic. Greek mythology. Nature miracles, healing miracles.
- Rabbinic. Pharisees also worked miracles.
- Old Testament. Messianic times and events.

## 5. UNDERSTANDING OF MIRACLES IN CHURCH HISTORY

- Early Church and Middle Ages. Apologetic understanding.
- Positivism. Exaggeration? Natural interpretation. Cf. The parting of the Red Sea.
- Modern times. Demythologization?
- 'Miracles but happen to those who believe in them.'



## VII. ROLE OF MIRACLES IN LIFE & MINISTRY OF JESUS



# I. HISTORICITY OF THE MIRACLES

- Varied details of the miracles in the Synoptic gospels.
- Tendency to multiply the original stock of miracle stories.
- Exaggerating the miraculous character of the story. 'at the point of death.'
- Create new miracles based on one. On the sea, by the sea.
- Popular miracle stories to Jesus. Cf. Elijah story of widow's son.

## 2.THE MIRACLE CONTENT IN THE GOSPELS

- 30 miracles of Jesus.
- Healing miracles.
- Exorcisms.
- Resuscitations.
- Nature miracles.

### 3. CHARACTERISTICS OF MIRACLE STORIES

- They were truly historical.
- They were reasonable.
- They were useful.
- They were worked openly.
- They were worked effortlessly.
- They were worked spontaneously / instantly.
- Worked under different circumstances.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF MIRACLE STORIES (CONTD.)

- Worked on the basis of faith.
- They were free / gratuitous.
- They were free from retaliation. Cf. cursing of the fig tree.
- They were eschatological.



## 4. MIRACLES AS SIGNS OF THE KINGDOM

- Signs of the presence of the kingdom here and now.
- God working in human history.
- Gift of salvation at the present time.

## 5. MIRACLES AS ACTS OF LIBERATION

- Woman in the synagogue. 'Daughter of Abraham'
- Man in the synagogue.
- Lazarus dead.
- Liberation of the poor / of humanity.



## VIII. STUDY OF SOME SIGNIFICANT MIRACLES



# I. EXORCISM

- The Gerasene Demoniac. (Mk 5:1-20)
- Demoniac in the synagogue.



## 2. RESUSCITATION

- 5 stories in the NT.
- Jairus' daughter,
- Nain widow's son,
- Lazarus,
- Tabita,
- Eutychus.
- 3 stories in the OT.
- God's keys: to motherhood, rain, life.





### 3. HEALING

- Healing of the paralytic.



## 4. NATURE MIRACLES

- Jesus walking on the sea.
- Multiplication of loaves.





## IX. INTERPRETATION MIRACLES TODAY





## SIGNIFICANCE FOR US

- Destruction of Satan's rule, or power of death.
- Liberation of the poor.
- Compassion.
- Faith & Revelation. 'Obedience of faith.'

## \* PARABLES AS MIRACLES

- The return of the prodigal son.



## \* MIRACLES AS PARABLES

- Restoration of sight to Bartimaeus





# ASSESSMENT



- 
1. How many parables are there in the OT? A. 12; B. 13; **C. 11.**
  2. Which is the parable about the Pharisees, delivered directly to them? **A. The parable of the wicked tenants;** B. The parable of the prodigal son; C. The parable about the seeds.
  3. The parables in Luke 15 speak about: **A. Forgiveness, mercy, goodness and generosity of God.** B. Word of God. C. Nature of the kingdom.
  4. The parable of the persistent friend (Luke 11:5-8) insists on: A. Friendship. B. Love of neighbour. **C. Constant and strong faith would enable God to concede the request of the faithful.**
  5. The parable of the ten maidens in Matt 25:1-13 insists on: A. Faithfulness provides more blessing. **B. Preparedness versus unpreparedness.** C. Willingness to leave everything for the kingdom.

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6. The Church Fathers interpreted the parable as: A. Simile. **B. Allegory.** C. Metaphor.
7. Name the prophets working miracles in the OT. A. Isaiah and Jeremiah. B. Micah and Amos. **C. Elijah and Elisha.**
8. Miracles in the Gospel are: **A. Signs of the Kingdom.** B. Meritorious deeds of Jesus. C. Worked to boast himself.
9. Which evangelist adds elements to invoke sympathy in miracle stories? **A. Luke.** B. Matthew C. John.
10. How do we call the incident of widow's son at Nain (Luke 7:11-17)? A. Resurrection. B. Rebirth. **C. Resuscitation.**

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## Paragraph Questions

1. Which are your favourite parables?
2. Write the Essential Qualities to Inherit the Kingdom.
3. How do the parables explain the Kingdom 'Here' and the Kingdom 'Hereafter'?
4. What are the characteristics of the miracles of Jesus?
5. How do the miracles present the acts of liberation?
6. Explain the miracles of resuscitation in the NT.

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