CH 12. THE PARABLES - PART 1



SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

☐ The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are referred to as the synoptic Gospels because they include many of the

same stories, often in a similar sequence and in similar or sometimes

identical wording. 1

☐ They stand in contrast to John, whose content is largely distinct. ¹

Mark/Matthew 94% of Mark 55% of Matthew

Matthew

20% unique to Matthew

Mark

3% unique to Mark

Matches: 76% of Mark 45% of Matthew 23% of Luke

Matthew/Luke 70% of Matthew 64% of Luke Mark/Luke 79% of Mark 42% of Luke

Luke

35% unique to Luke

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synoptic_Gospels

STORY TELLING

□ Storytelling is an ancient art of communicating ethics, values and social norms. Storytelling paints pictures which listeners relate to and will remember. Parables are stories with hidden messages.

☐ Jesus' parables are recorded in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) which is about one third of what Jesus taught; therefore, they are very important to us.

☐ There are no parables in the book of John; however, there are allegories. An allegory is a story in which ideas are symbolized as people.

STORY TELLING

- ☐ What was the purpose of Jesus' parables:
 - 1. To teach heavenly truths using earthly stories people could relate to. They understood stories about farming, fishing, commerce, kings and servants.
 - 2. To provoke the imagination and to see God's truth from a new perspective.
 - 3. To hide these truths from his enemies who were listening.

PARABLES

- Jesus explained that his use of parables had a two-fold purpose: to reveal the truth to those who wanted to know it, and to conceal the truth from those who were indifferent. This was a prophetic fulfilment, which fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy of a hardhearted, spiritually blind people, so that only those that believe will understand, and those that reject Jesus will not understand.
 - Matt 13:10-12 (NIV) The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" He replied, "Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them."

PARABLES

- Matt 13:13-14 This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving."
- ☐ Isn't that unfair? Does this means that God chooses who will be saved and who will be damned (like Calvinists teach)?

PARABLES

- ☐ No. Their hearts were calloused (hard).
 - Matt 13:15 (NIV) For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'
- God didn't close their eyes. Jesus said they "have closed their eyes". He says that if they would have seen with their eyes, heard with their ears, understood with their hearts and turned (repented) he would have healed them.
- ☐ Giving them an opportunity to further reject more truth would simply increase their judgement.

INTERPRETING PARABLES

- 1) Context
- □ Sometimes, a parable is preceded by some introductory words that provide a context. For example, often Jesus preceded a parable with the words "this is what the kingdom of heaven is like" (7 times in Matthew 13 alone). Also, before the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, we read this:
 - Luke 18:9 (NLT) Then Jesus told this story to some who had great self-confidence and scorned everyone else.
- ☐ This introduction reveals the subject matter being illustrated (self-righteousness and spiritual pride).

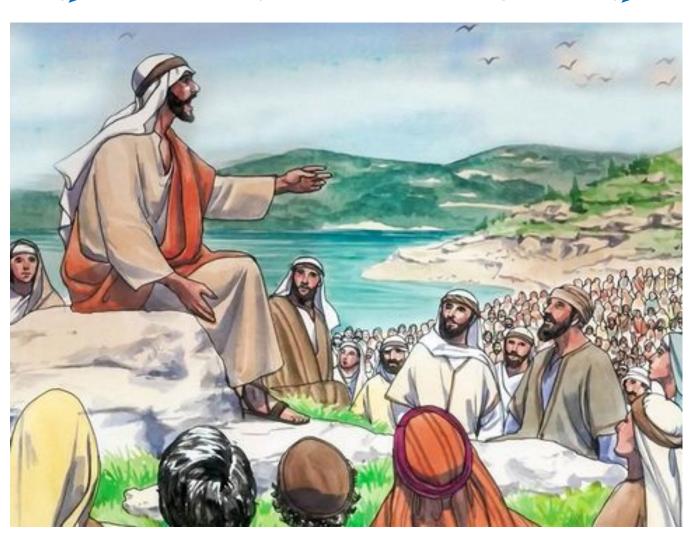
INTERPRETING PARABLES

- 2. Compare the interpretation with other Scripture. Jesus' parables will never contradict the rest of the Word of God. The parables are meant to illustrate doctrine.
- 3. Be consistent in interpretation. E.g. if a landowner represents God in one parable, don't make it represent Satan in the next parable.
- 4. Where possible, use Jesus' interpretation of his own parables as a basis for further interpretation.

INTERPRETING PARABLES

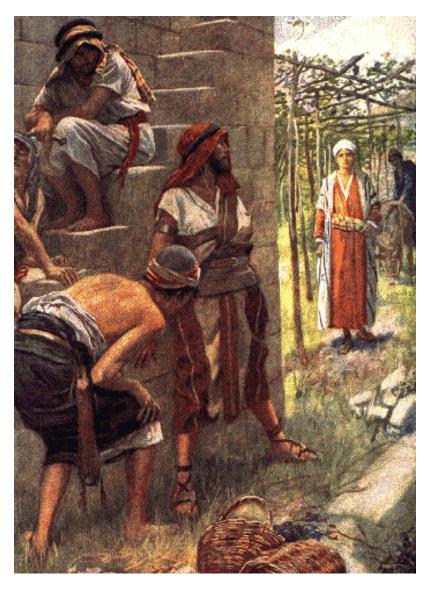
- ☐ Some parables Jesus explains. E.g.: The Heart of Man
 - Matt 15:10-11 (NASB) After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, "Hear and understand. It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man."...
 - v10-11 Peter said to Him, "Explain the parable to us." Jesus said, "Are you still lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated? But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man."

CH 12. THE PARABLES - PART 2



THE KINGDOM REJECTED

☐ What were these parables about?



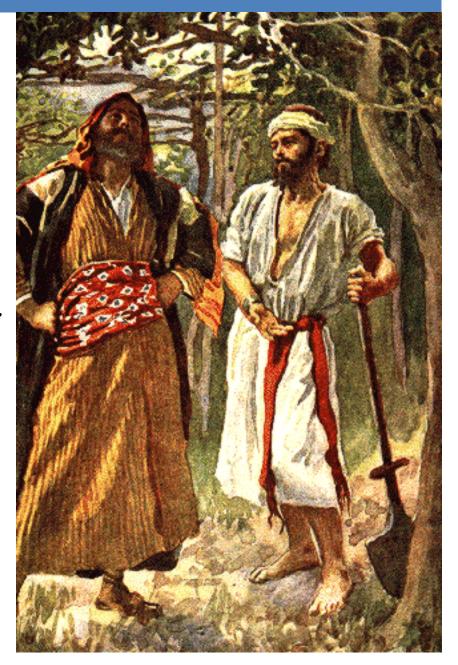
- 1. The Two Sons -Matt 21: 28-32
- 2. The Tenant Farmers- Matt 21:33-45



3. Marriage Feast or Great Banquet - Matt 22:1-14

THE KINGDOM REJECTED

- 4. The unfruitful tree Luke 13:6-9
- □ Remember that we saw in our previous study that these parables were all about how the kingdom was offered to the Jews, but rejected. So the kingdom was given to the Gentiles in what became known as the Church age.



<<GROUP WORK>>

- ☐ GROUP 1:
 - The speck and the log Matt 7:1-5 (context is in Matt 7:1-2)
- ☐ GROUP 2:
 - > The lost sheep Luke 15:1-7
- ☐ GROUP 3:
 - > The ten virgins Matt 25:1-13 (context is in Matt 24:1-3)
- ☐ GROUP 4:
 - > Ten talents Matt 25:14-30 (context is in Matt 24:1-3)

<<GROUP WORK>>

- □ Discussion. When presenting:
- A. First, give the name of the parable and the scripture.
- B. Secondly, read the parable (state Bible version)
- C. Answer the following questions about each parable.
 - 1. What is the context (setting)?
 - 2. Who is the parable directed at?
 - 3. Who do the different people / animals represent (e.g. sheep, king, landowner, servant, son)?
 - 4. What do the different things (e.g. money, vineyard) represent?
 - 5. What is the parable teaching?



THE 7 KINGDOM PARABLES

- ☐ In Matthew 13, Jesus tells 7 consecutive parables about the kingdom of heaven.
- □ The parables, if understood, reveal the secrets of "the kingdom of heaven".
 - Matt 13:10-11 (NIV) The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them."
 - 1. The sower

5. The hidden treasure

2. The tares

- 6. The pearl of great price
- 3. The mustard seed
- 7. The dragnet

4. The leaven

THE 7 KINGDOM PARABLES

- □ VIDEO: Bible Project: https://www.youtube.com/watch ?time_continue=6&v=XX-aAq4_U2Q&feature=emb_logo
- 1. Context: The theme of Matthew 13 is about the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus mentions the Kingdom in all the seven parables listed here.
- 2. We will compare the interpretation with other Scripture. They should be in harmony.
- 3. We will use Jesus' interpretation of his own parables as a basis for further interpretation. As Jesus explains the first 2 parables these will help us understand the other parables in this chapter.
- 4. We will be consistent in interpretation. In the kingdom parables of Matthew 13, we will keep the same symbolism throughout all seven parables.

THE 7 KINGDOM PARABLES

1	Sower	The kingdom is sown and experiences rapid growth – the enemy seeks to steal the seed or destroy the crop through persecution.
2	Tares	The enemy sows a counterfeit seed. Persecution intensifies.
3	Mustard Seed	Exponential growth of the kingdom, but the enemy infiltrates from within.
4	Leaven	Widespread corruption spreads throughout the kingdom.
5	Hidden Treasure	A treasure is found.
6	Pearl of Great Price	The treasure is acquired.
7	Dragnet	The harvest and separation of the good and bad elements of the kingdom.

THE 7 CHURCH AGES

☐ The 7 parables refer to 7 church ages.

No.	PARABLE	+/- PERIOD	CHURCH AGE
1	Sower	AD 30 - 100	Apostolic Church
2	Tares	AD 100 – 300	Persecuted Church
3	Mustard Seed	AD 300 – 600	State Church (Constantine)
4	Leaven	AD 600 – 1500	Papal Church (Roman Catholic)
5	Hidden Treasure	AD 1500 – 1700	Reformation Church (Protestant)
6	Pearl of Great Price	AD 1700 – 1900	Missionary Church
7	The Dragnet	AD 1900 -	Apostate Church

Matt 13:3-8 (NIV) Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun



came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

☐ Jesus explains the symbols in this parable.

Sower	Jesus World	When explaining the parable of the weeds - Matt 13:37-38 He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world"
Seed	Word of God	Luke 8:11 The seed is the word of God.
Birds	Satan	Luke 8:5 some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up 12 Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts

Rocky ground	Shallow heart	Matt 13:20-21 (NIV) The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.
Thorns	Cares of life	Luke 8:14 (NIV) The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.
Good soil	Sons of the kingdom	Luke 8:15 But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

- ☐ This parable indicates the 4 different responses to the gospel. Only good seed is sown in this parable (unlike the Tares parable), but the different soil (the heart of the recipient) determines the response and resultant crop.
 - 1) The seed that fell on the path. This represents those who do not understand the gospel. Jesus explains that the birds represent the enemy (Satan) who steals this seed before it can take root.
 - 2) The seed that fell on rocky places. This represents the shallow person (with no root) who hears the word, receives it with joy, but quickly falls away when trouble or persecution comes because of the word.

- 3) The seed that fell among the thorns. This represents the man who hears the word but is unfruitful (i.e. not a soul-winner) because the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the seed.
- 4) The seed that fell on good soil. This represents the person who not only hears the word, but understands it and is fruitful (i.e. a soul-winner) producing a crop many times what was sown.

- □ While this parable is about the different responses to the gospel, in the context of the 7 kingdom parables, Jesus was also referring to the initial church age. This parable marks the inception of the Christian era ever since our Lord began sowing the children of the kingdom while he was on earth. The sowing continues even until today (i.e. the Church Ages overlap).
- ☐ From the parable we see that in the first Church age there will be persecution.
 - "When trouble or persecution comes because of the word..." (Matt 13:21)
 - > In the 1st century the apostolic church was initially persecuted by the Jews and only later by the Romans.

2) THE TARES

Matt 13:24-30 (NIV) ... "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat



sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

2) THE TARES

- → "An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' "'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn."
- In the first parable (the Sower) only good seed is sown but it falls on different types of ground which illustrate the different responses to the gospel. In this second parable, a bad 'counterfeit' seed is now sown.

☐ Jesus also explains this parable.

Sower Field	Jesus World	Matt 13:37-38 (NIV) "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of
i i c iu	VVOITG	Man. The field is the world
Good seed	Sons of the kingdom	v38 and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds
Weeds	Sons of the evil one	are the sons of the evil one.
Enemy	Satan	v39 and the enemy who sows them is the devil.
Harvest	The end of	v39 The harvest is the end of the
	the age	age
Harvesters	Angels	v39 and the harvesters are angels.
The fire	The fiery	v42 They will throw them into the fiery
	furnace	furnace, where there will be weeping
		and gnashing of teeth.

2) THE TARES

- ☐ As the seed in the first parable represents "the word of God" it must be consistently interpreted here. It produces "the sons of the kingdom". Thus the false seed is the opposite of God's Word i.e. false doctrine or heresy which produces "the sons of the evil one".
- ☐ Tares are difficult to distinguish from genuine wheat (until harvest time), so the heresy is often subtle. However, as we have noted, they are poisonous and can cause sickness or death.
- ☐ Although the true sower (Jesus) and his servants (angels) are aware of this counterfeit seed, this condition is permitted to continue until the end of the age (the harvest). Thus these church ages are not strictly consecutive, but overlapping.

2) THE TARES

- □ Based on Jesus' prophetic parable, this age (2nd to 3rd century) is characterized by the enemy (Satan) countersowing bad seed.
 - > In addition to continued and intensified persecution, where Satan tries to destroy the church, we now see a proliferation of heresy in this period.
 - > While persecution poses danger from without the church, heresies pose a danger from within.

3) THE MUSTARD SEED

Matt 13:3-32 (NIV) He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field.





Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches."

3) THE MUSTARD SEED

- ☐ Jesus never explained this parable. However we must remember to interpret Scripture with Scripture.
- ☐ This same 'tree' analogy is used before in Daniel where it represented the world power of Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar.
 - Daniel 4:10-12 (NIV) I looked, and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous. The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth. ... and the birds of the air lived in its branches...
- Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar, "You, O king, are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth." (Dan 4:22)

Sower Field	Jesus World	This parable is not explained, but in the previous parables the sower and the field have already been identified.
Mustard seed	Insignificant beginnings but exponential growth	The smallness of the mustard seed represents the minute and insignificant beginnings of Christianity.
Tree	World power	This same 'tree' analogy is used before in Scripture (Daniel 4:10-12) and it represents the world kingdom of Babylon. The Church now becomes a world power.
Birds	Satan	In the parable of the sower, the birds represent Satan. Thus Satan infiltrates this kingdom which has now spread exponentially.

4) THE LEAVEN



Matt 13:33-34 (NIV)
He told them still
another parable: "The
kingdom of heaven is
like yeast that a woman
took and mixed into
about sixty pounds of
flour until it worked all
through the dough."

Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable.

□ NOTES: Here we see that if we allow the Word into our lives, it will go into every area of our lives causing growth and bringing change.

4) THE LEAVEN

- DISAGREE: Leaven always has a negative connotation in the Bible, and it definitely does not represent the spread of the gospel. Leaven in the Scriptures is always used to represent evil, sin and false doctrine.
- □ Some Postmillennialists and Dominionists have tried to interpret this as the spreading of the gospel until the whole world has been evangelized!
- ☐ However we must interpret Scripture with Scripture! A parable that likened God's Kingdom to leaven would have startled any Jewish audience.
 - Ex 13:7 (NIV) Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven days; and nothing leavened shall be seen among you, nor shall any leaven be seen among you in all your borders.

4) THE LEAVEN

☐ It was used by Jesus and Paul to symbolize the doctrine of men being mixed with the doctrine of God, thereby corrupting it. Interpreting Scripture with Scripture, what does leaven represent?

1. Hypocrisy

Luke 12:12 (NIV) Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying: "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

2. False teaching

Matt 16:11-12... But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

4) THE LEAVEN

3. Sin.

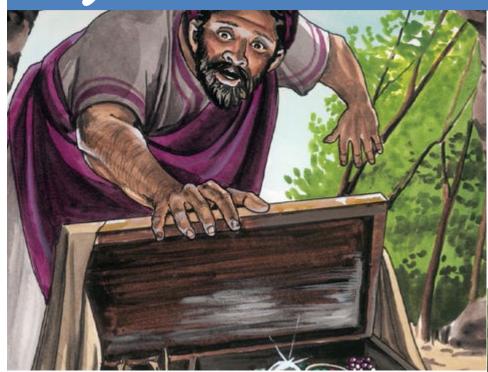
Speaking of the sinner in the Corinthian church, Paul writes:

> 1 Cor 5:1-8 (NIV) It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?... Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?... Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

□ The 7 churches in Revelation 2-3 correspond to the 7 church ages. The corresponding church age for the Leaven is the church in Thyatira. The church in Thyatira is reprimanded for tolerating a false prophetess!

No.	PARABLE	CHURCH AGE	Rev 2-3
1	Sower	Apostolic Church	Ephesus
2	Tares	Persecuted Church	Smyrna
3	Mustard Seed	State Church (Constantine)	Pergamos
4	Leaven	Papal Church (Catholic)	Thyatira
5	Hidden Treasure	Reformation Church (Protestant)	Sardis
6	Pearl of Great Price	Missionary Church	Philadelphia
7	Dragnet	Apostate Church	Laodicea

5) THE HIDDEN TREASURE



he had and bought that field.

■ NOTES: When we truly accept the Word in our lives we will give up everything for Jesus.

Matt 13:44 (NIV) "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all



□ DISAGREE: Contrary to popular opinion the treasure in this parable is not Jesus and we are not the man. We must interpret Scripture with Scripture.

Field	The world	In these kingdom parables the field has always been the world. Matt 13:37 "The field is the world"
Man	Jesus	The man in all the other kingdom parables has been Jesus. The parable is about a man who sold all he had to purchase the field (the world) so that he could possess a treasure. DID WE SELL ALL WE HAD TO PURCHASE THE WORLD, OR DID JESUS? Rev 5:9 with your blood you purchased men for God
true		What was the 'treasure' he bought? Acts 20:28 Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

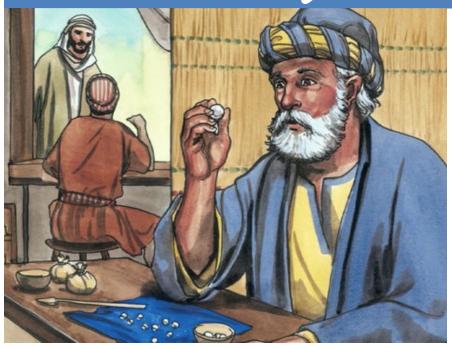
5) THE HIDDEN TREASURE

- ☐ We are the 'treasure' that Jesus found in the world. Like the man in the parable, He left the treasure in the world:
 - > John 17:11 (NIV) I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you.
- Again like the man in the parable Jesus purchased the entire world in order to obtain the treasure in the world. Although Jesus potentially saved the world, only those who believe (the true church) will be His treasure.
 - > 1 John 2:2 (NIV) He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

5) THE HIDDEN TREASURE

- ☐ How did Jesus purchase his treasure?
 - Rev 5:9 (NIV) "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.
- ☐ Was this something Jesus did grudgingly or joyfully?
 - When the man found the treasure "he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."
 - Heb 12:2 (NIV) Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

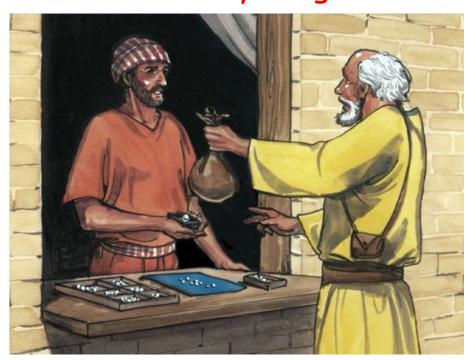
6) THE PEARL



had and bought it."

□ NOTES: This is the same as the Parable of the Hidden Treasure. When we truly accept the Word in our lives, we will give up everything for Jesus.

Matt 13:45-46 (NIV)
"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls.
When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he



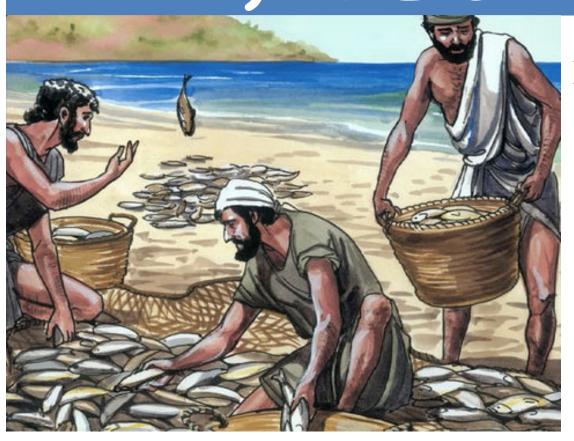
6) THE PEARL

- □ DISAGREE: Like the hidden treasure, the 'Pearl of Great Price' has often been incorrectly linked to Jesus.
- ☐ The merchant is not a lost man seeking salvation. In harmony with the other parables in this discourse, the man in this parable is Jesus.
- The man "sold everything he had and bought" the pearl. We have seen how grace, faith and salvation are God's gift. We did not earn or buy them. In contrast we are taught in 1 Cor 6:20 "You are not your own; you were bought at a price."

6) THE PEARL

Merchant	Jesus	The man in all the other kingdom parables has been Jesus. The parable is about a man who sold all he had to purchase a precious pearl. DID WE SELL ALL WE HAD TO PURCHASE JESUS, OR DID JESUS SELL ALL HE HAD TO PURCHASE US?
		1 Cor 6:20 (NIV) "You are not your own; you were bought at a price."
Pearl	The true Jer 31:3 (NIV) I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.	

7) THE DRAGNET



Matt 13:47-50 (NIV)
Once again, the
kingdom of heaven is
like a net that was let
down into the lake and
caught all kinds of
fish. When it was full,
the fishermen pulled
it up on the shore.
Then they sat down

and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at **the end of the age**. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

7) THE DRAGNET

☐ This will be the church that sees the "end of the age". There will be both wicked and righteous at the end of the age. The age will end with the removal of the wicked by the angels and their subsequent punishment.

Good fish	The righteous	Matt 13:48 Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but	
Bad fish	The wicked	threw the bad away.	
Fishermen	Angels	v49 This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous.	
Fiery furnace	Lake of fire	v50 and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.	

<<GROUP WORK>>

- ☐ GROUP 1:
 - > Labourers in the Vineyard Matt 20:1-16
- ☐ GROUP 2:
 - ➤ New Cloth on Old Garment Matt 9:16-17 (context Matt 9:14-15)
- ☐ GROUP 3:
 - The Divided Kingdom Matt 12:25 AND The Strong Man - Matt 12:29 (full context Matt 12:22-30)
- ☐ GROUP 4:
 - > The Unforgiving Servant Matt 18:23-35 (context Matt 18:21-22)

<<GROUP WORK>>

- □ Discussion. When presenting:
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