

LESSON 11
“He Spake Many Things unto Them in Parables”
Matthew 13

OVERVIEW:

Parable of the Sower, purpose of parables. These parables are also found in Mark 4 and Luke 8 and Luke 13. Matthew has the most details of the three.

There are at least 40 parables. There were only 2 parables in the Old Testament.

(What is a parable? Elder McConckie said: “Parables are a call to investigate the truth; to learn more; to inquire into the spiritual realities, which, through them, are but dimly viewed. Parables start truth seekers out in the direction of further light and knowledge and understanding; they invite men to ponder such truths as they are able to bear in the hope of learning more. Parables are a call to come unto Christ, to believe his doctrines, to live his laws, and to be saved in his kingdom. They teach arithmetic to those who have the capacity to learn calculus in due course. They are the mild milk of the word that prepares our spiritual digestive processes to feast upon the doctrinal meat of the kingdom.” MM 2:245)

Joseph Smith said: Enquire, what was the question which drew out the answer, or cause Jesus to utter the parable?... To ascertain its meaning, we must dig up the root and ascertain what it was that drew the saying out of Jesus. TPJS, p. 276-77.

The Greek word from parable as derived means “to thro beside.” A parable is two stories, the one being told thrown or placed beside the one being taught.

Why did Jesus speak in parables?

1. Parables were part of the world in which Jesus grew up and lived as an adult.
2. To avoid troubles with Scribes, Pharisees, and rabbis who were alert in maintaining a close watch upon his movements and his works. Parable have a double use in communicating messages – they can simultaneously veil or unveil concepts, reveal or conceal meaning, according to each person’s spiritual capacity and ability to receive.
3. To show mercy to his hearers. By teaching in parables, the Lord protects unprepared individuals from more truth than they can live – a merciful way to teach.
4. To help people to remember and reflect on his words. Parables teach by analogies that are not easily forgotten.

The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that the parables of Matthew 13, often called the “kingdom parables” are prophecies, foretelling in a veiled fashion the course that his Church will follow from his own age through the ages to come. Joseph taught that Matthew 13 affords us as clear an understanding upon the important subject of the gathering, as anything recorded in the Bible.

The parable of the sower, the wheat and the tares, the grain of mustard seed, leaven, the hidden treasure, the pearl of great price, the fishing net. These parables taken together deal with the building of the kingdom in the last days.

BIBLE DICTIONARY

PARABLES

Most teachers, especially Oriental teachers, have used some form of parable in their instruction, but none so exclusively as Jesus at one period of his ministry. During part of the Galilean ministry the record states that "without a parable spake he not unto them" (Mark 4: 34). From our Lord's words (Matt. 13: 13-15; Mark 4: 12; Luke 8: 10) we learn the reason for this method. It was to veil the meaning. The parable conveys to the hearer religious truth exactly in proportion to his faith and intelligence; to the dull and uninspired it is a mere story, "seeing they see not," while to the instructed and spiritual it reveals the mysteries or secrets of the kingdom of heaven. Thus it is that the parable exhibits the condition of all true knowledge. Only he who seeks finds.

The word *parable* is Greek in origin, and means a setting side by side, a comparison. In parables divine truth is presented by comparison with material things. The Hebrew word, *mashal*, which *parable* is used to translate, has a wider significance, and is applied to the balanced metrical form in which teaching is conveyed in the poetical books of the Old Testament. See Matt. 13: 35.

Interpretation of parables. It is important to distinguish between the interpretation of a parable and the application of a parable. **The only true interpretation is the meaning the parable conveyed, or was meant to convey, when first spoken. The application of a parable may vary in every age and circumstance.** But if the original meaning is to be grasped, it is important to consider its context and setting. The thought to which it is linked, the connection in which it is placed, the persons to whom it is addressed, all give the clue to the right interpretation. Other rules of interpretation are: (a) Do not force a meaning on subordinate incidents. (b) Do not regard as parallel parables that are connected by superficial likeness of imagery. (c) Bear in mind that the same illustration does not always have the same significance - leaven, e.g., signifies a principle of good as well as a principle of evil. (d) Remember that the comparison in a parable is not complete, does not touch at every point. Thus, the characters of the unjust judge or the unjust steward or the nobleman who went into a far country - possibly referring to the infamous Archelaus - do not concern the interpretation of the parable. The parable draws a picture of life as it is, not as it ought to be, and compares certain points in this picture with heavenly doctrine. (e) Observe the proper proportions of a parable, and do not make the episode more prominent than the main line of teaching.

Classification of parables. The greatest importance should be attached to the grouping of the parables by the writers themselves. In Matthew three main lines of teaching are illustrated by parables: (a) The Church of the future- its planting and growth, internal and external, the enthusiasm for it, the mingling within it of good and evil, the final judgment of it (ch. 13). (b) The Jewish Church and nation, its history, and the causes of its fall (Matt. 21: 18-19, 23 - 22: 14). (c) The ministry of the Church in the parables given on the Mount of Olives, addressed especially to the apostles, on work and watchfulness (Matt. 25: 1-30). The parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matt. 20: 1-16), in answer to a question of the apostles, may be classed under (a).

Mark follows the lines of Matthew in (a) Mark 4: 1-34, and (b) Mark 12: 1-12; but in each division fewer parables are reported, and in (b) one only. In (a), however, occurs the one parable peculiar to this Gospel.

Luke also omits the parables given on the Mount of Olives (c), but compare Luke 12: 35-48, Luke 19: 11-28, and illustrates (a) and (b) less copiously than Matthew. His independent reports, however, are numerous. These may be classified generally as illustrating

Prayer and earnestness in religious life (Luke 11: 5-8; Luke 16: 1-13; Luke 18: 1-8).

Forgiveness and the love of God (Luke 7: 41-43; Luke 15).

Reversal of human judgment, as to just and unjust (Luke 10: 25-27; Luke 12: 16-21; Luke 18: 9-14); rich and poor (Luke 16: 19-31).

John has no true parables, but presents two allegories: the good shepherd (Luke 10: 1-16), and the vine and the branches (Luke 15: 1-7).

Parables peculiar to each Gospel:

Matthew.

1. The tares.
2. The hidden treasure.
3. The pearl of great price.
4. The draw-net.
5. The unmerciful servant.
6. The laborers in the vineyard.
7. The two sons.
8. Marriage of the king's son.
9. The ten virgins.
10. The talents.

Mark.

The seed growing secretly.

Luke.

1. The two debtors.
2. The good Samaritan.
3. The importuned friend.
4. The rich fool.
5. The barren fig tree.
6. The lost piece of silver.
7. The prodigal son.
8. The unjust steward.
9. Dives and Lazarus.
10. The unjust judge.
11. The Pharisee and the Publican.
12. The ten pieces of money.

The parable of the ten pieces of money (*minae*) (Luke 19: 11-27) is an interesting example of historical groundwork in a parable. (The reference is possibly to the journey of Archelaus to Rome.) But probably in other parables similar historical allusions, now lost, must have added vividness to the narrative. Of these the royal marriage feast, the great supper, and the good Samaritan are possible examples.

SCRIPTURES:

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
ST MATTHEW

Chapter 13

Why Jesus taught in parables—He gives the parables of the sower, the wheat and the tares, the grain of mustard seed, the leaven, the treasure hid in the field, the pearl of great price, and the net cast into the sea—A prophet is not honored by his own people.

(How many parables did Jesus teach the Nephites? None, why not? Elder McConkie said: "The principles involved which necessitates the policy of teaching by parables is found in Amulek's statement: "It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of the word which he doth grant unto

the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him.” (Alma 12:9) The difference in receptiveness to the truth of the Jews, among whom our Lord ministered in mortality, and the Nephites to whom he went after his resurrection, is nowhere better shown than in the fact that he gave at least 40 parables to the Jews, but he taught the Nephites not in parables, but in plainness. MD, p. 553. I wonder if there was a spiritual difference between the descendants of Judah and those of Joseph who were the Nephites.)

(Elder Talmage said: “There is plainly shown an element of mercy in the parabolic mode of instruction adopted by our Lord under the conditions prevailing at the time. Had He always taught in explicit declaration, such as required no interpretation, many among His hearers would have come under condemnation, inasmuch as they were too weak in faith and unprepared in heart to break the bonds of traditionalism and the prejudice engendered by sin, so as to accept and obey the saving word. Their inability to comprehend the requirements of the gospel would in righteous measure give Mercy some claim upon them, which had they rejected the truth with full understanding, stern Justice would surely demand their condemnation.” Jesus the Christ, p. 276.)

(Also, a good story would be remembered later, and divine truths might be received at a later time.)

(The parable of the Sower is the first one that Jesus is recorded to have told. He may have told others before this one. **Matthew Chapter 13 contains more parables than any other chapters in the scriptures.**)

- 1 (And it came to pass) THE same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the ^asea side.
- 2 And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.
- 3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; (Elder Talmage calls this the Parable of the Four Kinds of Soil. Jesus the Christ, p. 265 Joseph Smith said: “I shall now proceed to make some remarks from the sayings of the Savior, recorded in the 13th chapter of his gospel according to St. Matthew, which in my mind afford us as clear an understanding upon the important subject of the gathering as anything recorded in the Bible.” Discourse of 7 Apr 1844, recorded by Wilford Woodruff. “This parable was spoken to demonstrate the effects that are produced by the preaching of the word. And we believe that it has an allusion directly to the commencement, or the setting up, of the kingdom in that age.” Messenger and Advocate, December 1835, p. 225.)
- 4 And when he sowed, some *seeds* (The seed is the word of God. Luke 8:11. The good seed are the children of the kingdom. Matthew 13:38.) fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:
- 5 Some fell upon ^astony places (rocky land over which a thin layer of soil spread), where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, ~~because they had no deepness of earth:~~
- 6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched, (because they had no deepness of earth); and because they had no root, they withered away.
- 7 And some fell among ^athorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:
- 8 But other fell into good ground, and ^abrought forth (Gr began to bring forth) fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.
- 9 Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.
- 10 ~~And~~ (Then) the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them (the multitude) in ^aparables?
- 11 He answered and said unto them (the disciples), Because it is given unto you to know the ^amysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them (the multitude) it is not given.
- 12 ^aFor whosoever ~~hath~~ (receiveth), to him shall be ^bgiven, and he shall have more ^cabundance: but

whosoever ~~hath~~ (continueth) not (to receive), from him shall be taken away even that he hath. (We understand from this saying, that those who had been previously looking for a Messiah to come, according to the testimony of the Prophets, and were then, at that time looking for a Messiah, but had not sufficient light, on account of their unbelief, to discern Him to be their Savior; and He being the true Messiah, consequently they must be disappointed, and lose even all the knowledge, or have taken away from them all the light, understanding, and faith which they had upon this subject; therefore he that will not receive the greater light, must have taken away from him all the light which he hath; and if the light which is in you become darkness, behold how great is that darkness! Joseph Smith, DCH 2:265)

13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias (concerning them), which saith, By hearing ye shall ^ahear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

15 For this people's ^aheart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their ^beyes they have ^cclosed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should ^dheal them. (The condemnation which rested upon the multitude that received not His saying, was because they were not willing to see with their eyes, and hear with their ears; not because they could not, and were not privileged to see and hear, but because their hearts were full of iniquity and abominations. Joseph Smith, DHC, 2:266)

16 But blessed *are* your ^aeyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. (And blessed are you because these things are come unto you, that you might understand them.) (Joseph Smith said: "We draw the conclusion, then, that the very reason why the multitude, or the world, as they were designated by the Savior, did not receive an explanation upon his parables was because of unbelief. "To you," he says speaking to his disciples, "it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God." And why? Because of the faith and confidence they had in him." M&A, Dec. 1835, p. 225-26)

17 For (And) verily I say unto you, ~~That many~~ ^aprophets and righteous ~~men~~ (many righteous prophets) have desired to see ~~those things~~ (these days) which ye (you) see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear ~~those things~~ (that) which ye (you) hear, and have not heard *them*. (Mark 4:13 adds: And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? And how then will ye know all parables? Elder Talmage said: "Thus did He indicate the simplicity of this the first of His parables, together with its typical and fundamental character, and at the same time intimate that other parables would follow in the course of His teaching." Jesus the Christ, p. 263)

18 ¶ ^aHear (Gr learn, understand) ye therefore the parable of the sower. (Who is the sower? This parable was spoken to demonstrate the effects that are produced by the preaching of the word; and we believe that it has an allusion directly, to the commencement, or the setting up of the Kingdom in that age. Joseph Smith, DHC, 2:267)

19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and ^aunderstandeth ~~#~~ not, then cometh the wicked *one*, and ^bcatcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. (1 Nephi 8:31 – Feeling their way towards that great and spacious building. "Men who have no principle of righteousness in themselves, and whose hearts are full of iniquity, and who have no desire for the principles of truth, do not understand the word of truth when they hear it. The devil taketh away the word of truth out of their hearts, because there is no desire for righteousness in them. Joseph Smith, M&A, Dec 1835, p. 226. Consider 1 Nephi 8:)

20 But he that received the seed into ^astony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and ~~anon~~ (readily) with joy receiveth it;

21 Yet ~~hath~~ he (hath) not root in himself, but ~~endureth~~ (and endureth but) for a while: for when ^atribulation or ^bpersecution ariseth because of the word, by and by ^che is offended. (Gr he stumbles, falls away) (1 Nephi 8:31-33 – feeling their way to the great and spacious building, many were drowned in the depths of the fountain, wandering in strange places.)

22 He also ~~that~~ (who) received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this

^aworld, and the ^bdeceitfulness of ^criches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. (1 Nephi 8:24-28: - They took hold of the rod of iron, they did press forward, and they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree. And after they had partaken of the fruit of the tree they did cast their eyes about as if they were ashamed.... and fell away into forbidden paths and were lost. Elder McConkie said: “If the seed falls among thorns, it is in good soil, as is evidenced by the growth of the undesirable plants. But the good plant is soon choked and dies because it cannot overcome the influence of the weeds and thistles. So it is with the members of the Church who know the gospel is true, but who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus, who are not affirmatively and courageously striving to further the interests of the Church. So it is of the saints who think more of the honors of men, the educational standards of the world, political preferment, or money and property, than they do of the gospel. They know the Lord’s work has been established on earth, but they let the cares of the world choke the word. And instead of gaining eternal life, they shall be burned with the tares which overcame them. DNTC, 1:289. Elder Talmage said: “Some fell among the thorns sprung up and choked them. Grain sown where thorns and thistles abound is soon killed out by their smothering growth; even so with a human heart set on riches and the allurements of pleasure. Jesus the Christ, p. 284)

23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that ^aheareth the word, and ^bunderstandeth ~~#~~ (and endureth); which also beareth ^cfruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. (These are also like those in 1 Nephi 8:30 – And they came and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press their way forward, continually holding fast to the rod of iron, until they came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree. Alma 32 gives us some additional insights in what must be done to cause the good seed to grow. The growth of a good seed demands steady attention and endless toil – but its fruit is more than worth it. 28 Now, we will compare the word unto a ^aseed. Now, if ye give place, that a ^bseed may be planted in your ^cheart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your ^dunbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to ^eenlighten my ^funderstanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me. The responsibility of the sower is to sow. The harvest is in the hands of God. We must not be too anxious to find the perfect soil before we begin to plant seeds. In fact, it may be most difficult to know by appearances just how the soil of a soul will respond to the message of salvation. Our obligation is to open our mouths and plant the gospel seed. **The sower is each of us.** Ted L. Gibbons, Lesson 11, p.4-5)

24 ¶ Another ^aparable put he forth unto them, saying, The ^bkingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good ^cseed in his field:

25 But while ~~men~~ (he) slept, his enemy came and sowed ^atares among the wheat, and went his way.

26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. (Tares: the weed “bearded darnel.” A widely distributed grass. It is very similar in appearance to wheat before it comes into ear. The roots of the two are often intertwined. Even farmers, who in this country generally weed their fields, do not attempt to separate the one from the other. The taste is bitter, and when eaten causes dizziness. Jesus the Christ, p. 301)

27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? ~~from~~ whence then hath it tares?

28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. (And) The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. (One lesson, patience.)

30 Let both grow together until the ^aharvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together ^bfirst the tares, and bind them in bundles to ^cburn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. (wheat into my barn; and the tares are bound in bundles to be burned.) (Joseph Smith said: “Now we learn by this parable not only the setting up of the kingdom in the days of the Savior, which is

represented by the good seed which produced good fruit, but also the corruptions of the Church, which are represented by the tares which were sown by the enemy, which his disciples would fain have plucked up, or cleansed the Church of, if their views had been favored by the Savior. But he, knowing all things, says, 'Not so,' as much as to say, 'Your views are not correct; the Church is in its infancy, and if you take this rash step, you will destroy the wheat, or the Church, with the tares. Therefore, it is better to let them grow together until the harvest, or the end of the world, which means the destruction of the wicked, which is not yet fulfilled. M&A, Dec 1835, 226. McConckie: "And then with both parable and the interpretation before the world, the Lord still had to give a special revelation in latter-days so that the full meaning of this marvelous parable might sink into the hearts of men." DNTC, 1:284.) (D&C 86:1-7: 1 VERILY, thus saith the Lord unto you my servants, concerning the ^aparable of the ^bwheat and of the tares: 2 Behold, verily I say, the field was the world, and the apostles were the ^asowers of the seed; 3 And after they have fallen asleep the great persecutor of the church, the apostate, the ^awhore, even ^bBabylon, that maketh all nations to drink of her cup, in whose hearts the enemy, even Satan, sitteth to reign—behold he soweth the ^ctares; wherefore, the tares choke the wheat and drive the ^dchurch into the wilderness. 4 But behold, in the ^alast days, even now while the Lord is beginning to bring forth the word, and the blade is springing up and is yet tender— 5 Behold, verily I say unto you, the ^aangels are crying unto the Lord day and night, who are ready and waiting to be sent forth to ^breap down the fields; 6 But the Lord saith unto them, pluck not up the tares while the blade is yet tender (for verily your faith is weak), lest you destroy the wheat also. 7 Therefore, **let the wheat and the ^atares grow together until the harvest is fully ripe; then ye shall first gather out the wheat from among the tares, and after the gathering of the wheat, behold and lo, the tares are bound in bundles**, and the field remaineth to be ^bburned. "The gospel of repentance is a constant reminder that the most righteous are still being tested and may yet fall, and that the most wicked are not yet beyond redemption and may still be saved. Hugh Nibley, Collected Works of High Nibley, Vol. 8, p. 461-2. Wilford Woodruff said: "God has held the angels of destruction for many years, lest they should reap down the wheat with the tares. But I want to tell you now, that those angels have left the portals of heaven, and they stand over this people and this nation now, and are hovering over the earth waiting to pour out the judgments... If you do your duty, and I do my duty, we'll have protection, and shall pass through the afflictions in peace and safety. It's by the power of the Gospel that we shall escape." Collected Discourses, vol. 4, June 24, 1894.)

31 ¶ (And) Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a ^agrain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:

32 Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the ^abirds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. (Joseph Smith: "And again, another parable put he forth unto them, having an allusion to the kingdom which should be set up just previous to or at the time of the harvest. Now we can discover plainly that this figure is given to represent the Church as it shall come forth in the last days. Behold the kingdom of heaven is likened unto it. Now, what is like unto it? Let us take the Book of Mormon, which a man took and hid in his field, securing it by his faith to spring up in the last days, or in due time. Let us behold it coming forth out of the ground which is indeed accounted the least of all seeds. But behold it branching forth, yea, even towering with lofty branches and God-like majesty, until it becomes the greatest of all herbs. And it is truth, and it has sprouted and come forth out of the earth, and righteousness begins to look down from heaven, and God is sending down his powers, gifts, and angels to lodge in the branches thereof." M&A Dec 1835, 227-8. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a mustard seed. Behold, then is not this the Kingdom of heaven that is raising its head in the last days in the majesty of its God, even the Church of the Latter-day Saints, like an impenetrable, immovable rock in the midst of the mighty deep... The above clouds of darkness have long been beating like mountain waves upon the immovable rock of the Church of the Latter-day Saints; and notwithstanding all this, the mustard seed is still towering its lofty branches, higher and higher, and extending itself wider and wider; and the chariot wheels of the

Kingdom are still rolling on, impelled by the mighty arm of Jehovah; and in spite of all opposition, will still roll on, until His words are all fulfilled. Joseph Smith, DHC, 2:268-270.)

33 ¶ Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto ^aleaven, (Gr yeast) which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. (Joseph Smith: “It may be understood that the Church of the Latter-day Saints has taken its rise from a little leaven that was put into three witnesses. Behold how much this is like the parable: it is fast leavening the lump and will soon leaven the whole... Three measures of meal, undergoing the purifying touch by a revelation of Jesus Christ and the ministering of angels, who have already commenced this work in the last days which will answer to the leaven which leavened the whole lump.” M&A Dec 1835, 227-28. It alludes expressly to the last days, when there should be little faith on the earth and it will leaven the whole world. There shall be safety in Zion and Jerusalem and among the remnants whom the Lord shall call. It refers to the priesthood.” Statement of 22 Dec 1842 recorded by Willard Richards.)

34 All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:

35 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in ^aparables; I will utter things which have been kept ^bsecret from the foundation of the world.

36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the ^atares of the field.

37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good ^aseed is the Son of man;

38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the ^atares are the children of the wicked *one*;

39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; ^athe ^bharvest is the end of the world (, or the destruction of the wicked); and the reapers are the angels (or the messengers sent of heaven).

40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the ^aend of this world (or the destruction of the wicked).

41 The Son of man shall send forth his ^aangels, (For in that day, before the Son of Man shall come, he shall send forth his angels and messengers of heaven,) and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that ^boffend, and them which do iniquity;

42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire (among the wicked; and) there shall be ^awailing and ^bgnashing of teeth (, for the world shall be burned with fire).

43 Then shall the ^arighteous ^bshine forth as the ^csun in the kingdom of their Father. (Celestial Glory)
Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

(The next 3 parables “were spoken to the disciples alone, in the house, after the multitude had departed.” Jesus the Christ, p. 272)

44 ¶ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto (a) ^atreasure hid in a field; ~~the which~~ (And) when a man hath found (a treasure which is hid), he ~~hideth, and~~ (secureth it, and, straightway) for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. (“For the work after this pattern, see the Church of the Latter-day Saints selling all that they have and gathering themselves together unto a place that they may purchase for an inheritance, that they may be together and bear each other’s afflictions in the day of calamity.” Joseph Smith, M&A, p. 229)

45 ¶ (And) Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:

46 Who, when he had found one ^apearl of great price, (he) went and sold ^ball that he had, and bought it. (“The pearl of great price is the inheritance prepared for the Saints.” Joseph Smith, Discourse of summer of 1839 recorded by Willard Richards. This parable refers to the establishment of Zion and her stakes in the latter days.) (Notice the price: All that he had. It is the same for everyone, no matter their wealth or poverty.)

47 ¶ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and ^agathered of every kind:

48 Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

49 So shall it be at the ^aend of the world: (and the world is the children of the wicked:) ^bthe angels shall come forth, and ^csever (Gr separate) the wicked from among the ^djust,

50 ^aAnd shall cast them ~~into the furnace of fire~~ (out into the world to be burned): there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. (“For the work in this pattern, behold the seed of Joseph spreading forth the gospel net upon the face of the earth, gathering of every kind, that the good may be saved in vessels prepared for that purpose, and the angels will take care of the bad.” Joseph Smith, M&A, 229)

51 (Then) Jesus sai(d)th unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord. (This is our challenge today, to understand His words. Ours is the responsibility to help gather the wheat from among the tares, to build the kingdom at home. D&C 86:9-10: Ye are lawful heirs, according to the flesh, and have [like the tender blades of wheat] been hid from the world with Christ in God – therefore your life and the priesthood have remained, and must needs remain through you and your lineage until the restoration of all things spoken by the mouths of all the holy prophets since the world began.)

52 Then said he unto them, Therefore every ^ascribe ^bwhich is (well) instructed ~~unto~~ (in the things of) the kingdom of heaven is like unto a ~~man that is an~~ householder, (a man thereof,) which bringeth forth out of his treasure ~~things~~ (that which is) new and old. (For the works of this example, see the Book of Mormon coming forth out of the treasure of the heart. Also the covenants given to the Latter-day Saints, also the translation of the Bible – thus bringing forth out of the heart things new and old. Joseph Smith, DHC, 2:272)

53 ¶ And it came to pass, ~~that~~ when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.

54 And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were ^aastonished, and said, Whence hath this ~~man~~ (Jesus) this ^bwisdom, and ~~these~~ mighty works?

55 Is not this the carpenter's (The word carpenter should have been translated as “craftsman.” In Nazareth was a stone quarry. It is most likely that Jesus worked mostly in stone, but also in wood, metals, and other materials. The Greek word used is *tekton*, meaning “artificer” or “craftsman.”) ^ason? is not his mother called Mary? and his ^bbrethren, James (Jacob), and Joses (Joseph), and Simon, and Judas (Judah)?

56 And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this ~~man~~ all these things?

57 And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without ^ahonour, save in his own country, and in his own house.

58 And he did not many mighty works there because of their ^aunbelief. (Did Jesus' family believe in Him? In a talk given at Education Week in 2004, Jack Marshall had the following comments regarding the Savior's family: You struggle with difficulties, and I don't mean to be insensitive. I don't care how hard or how difficult it is, you'll find it. How unique you may feel. In fact, let's take a look at the Savior's family. Let's go to Mark, Chapter 6. There's at least nine in Jesus' family. And, if you go to Mark, Chapter 6, take a look at verse 3. Jesus is in his home town of Nazareth. In Jesus' day, the historians say probably no more than 400 hundred men, women and children living in Nazareth and as few perhaps as two hundred. Well, he is teaching, in the crowd is his family, the whole village there. And they say this of Jesus. Let's take a look at the Savior's family. Mark 6:3. It says this: “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.” Jesus is the eldest of five boys. There's Jesus, James, Joses or Joseph named after dad, Juda and Simon. And then typical Middle Eastern culture not naming women many times. How many women do you have by name in the Book of Mormon in the Hebrew culture? About 3 or 4. That's plural. He at least has two sisters, there's five boys, mom and dad, there's nine in the family. And it says this, “They were offended at him.” Now the question is to us, it begs the question, who's offended at Jesus? Well, we've got three choices. You've got the village minus the family, you've got the family minus the village, or you've got all of the above. For the answer, take a look at verse 4: “But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and

among his own kin, and in his own house.” Who was offended at Jesus? Everybody, including those in his own house. There was significant problems even in the Savior’s family, brothers and sisters.

In fact, if you read Luke’s account of this, when Jesus teaches in Nazareth the people are so offended at him, they “lead him to a brow of the hill to cast him off headlong.” In other words, his own village people want to kill him. He’ll leave Nazareth and his home then will become a place called Capernaum. But there is no indication at least in the scriptures that his brothers James, Joses, Juda or Simon came to his rescue. Let me ask you a question. The last words Jesus says in mortality to a family member, where is he, what does he say? Woman behold thy son, Son behold thy mother. Jesus is on the cross. Mary, his mother is at the base of the cross. He refers to her as woman. Who is the son? It is John the Beloved. Automatic question is what? Where are James, Joses, Juda and Simon. Right?

Go with me to John 7. Jesus, his brothers are contending with him. Verses 2-4, what does this tell you about the family situation? “Now the Jews’ feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brethren [that’s James, Joses, Juda and Simon] therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world.” Now, brothers and sisters, that doesn’t quite catch the drama that is going on in this dialogue. Let me just read to you a modern English translation from the Greek. Pick it up in verse 3. It says: “Jesus’ brothers urged him to go to Judea for the celebration. Go where more people can see your miracles, they scoffed. You can’t be famous when you hide like this. If you’re so great, prove it to the world.” Now, look at verse 5 of John 7. What does this tell you about the family? “For neither did his brethren believe in him.”)

Another parable: The Good Samaritan: Luke 10:30-37.

The Good Samaritan:

Forgotten Symbols

By John W. Welch

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One of the most influential stories told by Jesus Christ is the parable of the good Samaritan. Jesus recounted this parable to a man who had asked, “Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus responded by asking, “What is written in the law?”

The man answered, referring to [Deuteronomy 6:5](#) and [Leviticus 19:18](#), “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart ... and thy neighbour as thyself.”

When Jesus promised, “This do, and thou shalt live,” the man challengingly replied, “And who is my neighbour?” In answer to this man’s questions, Jesus told the parable of the good Samaritan. (See [Luke 10:25–35](#).)

Deeper Levels of Meaning

The Savior spoke often in parables because each has a deeper meaning understood only by those who have “ears to hear” ([Matthew 13:9](#)). The Prophet Joseph Smith affirmed that unbelievers did not understand the Savior’s parables. “Yet unto His disciples [the Lord] expounded [the parables] plainly,” and we can understand the parables, taught the Prophet, “if we will but open our eyes, and read with

candor.”¹ Knowing this principle invites reflection on the symbolic message of the good Samaritan. In light of the gospel of Jesus Christ, this masterful story brilliantly encapsulates the plan of salvation in ways few modern readers may have noticed.

This parable’s content is clearly practical and dramatic in its obvious meaning, but a time-honored Christian tradition also saw the parable as an impressive allegory of the Fall and Redemption of mankind. This early Christian understanding of the good Samaritan is depicted in a famous eleventh-century cathedral in Chartres, France. One of its beautiful stained-glass windows portrays the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden at the top of the window, and, in parallel, the parable of the good Samaritan at the bottom. This illustrates “a symbolic interpretation of Christ’s parable that was popular in the Middle Ages.”² Seeing this window led me to wonder: what does the Fall of Adam and Eve have to do with the parable of the good Samaritan?

I soon discovered the answer.³ The roots of this allegorical interpretation reach deep into early Christianity. In the second century A.D., Irenaeus in France and Clement of Alexandria both saw the good Samaritan as symbolizing Christ Himself saving the fallen victim, wounded with sin. A few years later, Clement’s pupil Origen stated that this interpretation came down to him from earlier Christians, who had described the allegory as follows:

“The man who was going down is Adam. Jerusalem is paradise, and Jericho is the world. The robbers are hostile powers. The priest is the Law, the Levite is the prophets, and the Samaritan is Christ. The wounds are disobedience, the beast is the Lord’s body, the [inn], which accepts all who wish to enter, is the Church. . . . The manager of the [inn] is the head of the Church, to whom its care has been entrusted. And the fact that the Samaritan promises he will return represents the Savior’s second coming.”⁴

This allegorical reading was taught not only by ancient followers of Jesus, but it was virtually universal throughout early Christianity, being advocated by Irenaeus, Clement, and Origen, and in the fourth and fifth centuries by Chrysostom in Constantinople, Ambrose in Milan, and Augustine in North Africa. This interpretation is found most completely in two other medieval stained-glass windows, in the French cathedrals at Bourges and Sens.

A Type and Shadow of the Plan of Salvation

Readers gain much by pondering the scriptures, especially as these writings testify of Jesus Christ (see [John 5:39](#)). **The parable of the good Samaritan testifies of Christ. It teaches of the plan of salvation, the Savior’s atoning love, and our journey toward inheriting eternal life. It can be read as a story not only about a man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, but also about all who come down from the presence of God to live on earth. This meaning becomes most visible in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ restored through His latter-day prophets.**

Let us examine the story, starting in [Luke 10:30](#).

“A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves . . .”

A certain man. Early Christians compared this man to Adam. This connection may have been more obvious in ancient languages than in modern translations. In Hebrew, the word adam means “man, mankind,” “the plural of men,” as well as “Adam” as a proper name.⁵ Thus, Clement of Alexandria rightly saw the victim in this allegory as representing “all of us.” Indeed, we all have come down as

Adams and Eves, subject to the risks and vicissitudes of mortality: “For as in Adam all die ...” (1 [Corinthians 15:22](#)).

Went down. The early Christian writer Chrysostom saw in this phrase the descent of Adam from the garden into this world—from glory to the mundane, from immortality to mortality. The story in [Luke 10](#) implies that the man went down intentionally, knowing the risks that would be involved in the journey. No one forced him to go down to Jericho. He apparently felt that the journey was worth the well-known risks of such travel on the poorly maintained roads in Jesus’s day.[6](#)

From Jerusalem. (Jerusalem is about 2300 feet above sea level) Jesus depicts the person as going down not from any ordinary place but from Jerusalem. Because of the sanctity of the holy temple-city, early Christians readily saw in this element the idea that this person had come down from the presence of God.

To Jericho. Jericho was readily identified with this world. At more than 825 feet (250 m) below sea level, Jericho is the lowest city on earth. Its mild winter climate made it a hedonistic resort area where Herod had built a sumptuous vacation palace. Yet one should note that the traveler in the parable had not yet arrived in Jericho when the robbers attacked. That person was on the steep way down to Jericho, but he had not yet reached bottom.

Fell. It is easy to see here an allusion to the fallen mortal state and to the plight of individual sinfulness: “Yea, all are fallen and are lost” ([Alma 34:9](#)).

Among thieves. The early Christian writers variously saw the thieves (or robbers) as the devil and his satanic forces, evil spirits, or false teachers. The Greek word for “robbers” used by Luke implies that these thieves were not casual operators. The traveler was assailed by a band of pernicious highwaymen in a scheming, organized society that acted with deliberate and concerted intent.

“... which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.”

Stripped him of his raiment. Early Christians sensed that Jesus spoke of something important here. Origen and Augustine saw the loss of the traveler’s garment as a symbol for mankind’s loss of immortality and incorruptibility. Chrysostom spoke of the loss of “his robe of immortality” or “robe of obedience.” Ambrose spoke of the traveler being “stripped of the covering of spiritual grace which we [all] received [from God].”

The attackers apparently wanted the traveler’s clothing, for no mention is made of any wealth or commodities he might be carrying. For some reason, the robbers seem interested in his garment, something brought down from the holy place and something they envy and want to take away.

Wounded. This term was seen as a similitude of the pains of life, travails of the soul, and afflictions due to diverse sins and vices. Indeed, the enemies of the soul leave wounds (see [Jacob 2:8–9](#)). Transgression has real effects (see [Alma 41:10](#)).

Half dead. The robbers departed, leaving the person precisely “half dead.” We may see in this detail an allusion to the first and second deaths. The person had fallen, had become subject to sin, and had suffered the first death, becoming mortal. But the second death, the permanent separation from God, could still be averted (see [Alma 12:32–36](#)).

“And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.”

By chance. The arrival of the Jewish priest was “by chance,” not the result of a conscious search. His presence there was not by anyone’s plan.

A certain priest ... and likewise a Levite. The early Christian commentators all saw the priest as symbolizing the law of Moses. In their minds the problem was not that bearers of the Old Testament priesthood did not want to help fallen man, but that **the law of Moses did not have the power to save him**. Indeed, the law of Moses was only a type and shadow of the Atonement that was yet to come, not its full efficacy (see Mosiah 3:15–17).

The Levite was seen as representing the Old Testament prophets, whose words the Lord came to fulfill (see Matthew 5:17; 3 Nephi 15:2–5). A lesser class of priests, the Levites did chores in the temple. At least this Levite came close to helping; he “came” and saw. He may have wanted to help, but perhaps he viewed himself as too lowly to help; **he also lacked the power to save the dying person**.

“But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine ...”

Samaritan. The early Christian writers unanimously saw the good Samaritan as a representation of Christ. Chrysostom suggests that a Samaritan is an apt depiction of Christ because “as a Samaritan is not from Judea, so Christ is not of this world.” (Also the Samaritans were despised by the Jews. They were half Jewish and half Gentile. Jesus was half Jewish and half immortal.)

Jesus’s audience in Jerusalem may well have recognized here a reference by the Savior to Himself. Some Jews in Jerusalem rejected Jesus with the insult, “Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan?” (John 8:48). Because Nazareth is across the valley north of Samaria, these two locations could easily be lumped together. And just as the Samaritans were viewed as the least of all humanity, so it was prophesied that the Messiah would be “despised and rejected of men” and “esteemed not” (see Isaiah 53:3).

As he journeyed. It would appear that the Samaritan (representing Christ) was purposely looking for people in need of help. The text does not say that he arrived by happenstance. Origen noted that “he went down intending to rescue and care for the dying man.” The Savior came purposefully with oil and bandages “to bring redemption unto the world” (3 Nephi 9:21).

Compassion. This important word speaks of the pure love of Christ. The Greek word says that the Samaritan’s bowels were moved with deep, inner sympathy. This word is used in the New Testament only when authors wish to describe God’s divine emotions of mercy. It appears prominently in the parables of the unmerciful servant, in which the Lord (representing God) “was moved with compassion” (Matthew 18:27), and of the prodigal son, in which the father (again representing God) saw his son returning and “had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him” (Luke 15:20). Likewise, the Samaritan represents the divinely compassionate Christ, who suffered so “that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people” (Alma 7:12).

Bound up his wounds. Some early Christians said that the bandages represented love, faith, and hope, “ligatures of salvation which cannot be undone.” Others saw the bands as Christ’s teachings, which bind us to righteousness. Latter-day Saints would add that the rescued person is bound to the Lord through covenants (see D&C 35:24; 43:9).

Oil. An olive oil lotion would have been very soothing. While most of the early Christian writers saw here a symbol of Christ’s words of consolation, Chrysostom saw this as a “holy anointing”—which may refer to several priesthood ordinances, the healing of the sick (see James 5:14), the gift of the Holy Ghost (often symbolized by olive oil), or the anointing of a king or a queen.

Wine. The Samaritan also poured wine onto the open wound to cleanse it. Late Christian writers saw this wine as the word of God—something that stings—but the earlier Christian interpretation associated the wine with the blood of Christ, symbolized by the sacrament (see Matthew 26:27–29; 3 Nephi 18:8–11). This wine, the atoning blood, washes away sin and purifies the soul, allowing God’s Spirit to be with us. In addition to rendering physical help, a truly good Samaritan administers the saving principles and ordinances of the gospel as well. The atoning wine may sting at first, but its effects soon bring healing peace.

“... and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.”

Set him on his own beast. Christ, fulfilling prophecy, bears our infirmities (see Isaiah 53:4; Alma 7:11). The Samaritan’s beast was thought to symbolize Christ’s body. Being placed on his beast is to believe that God became flesh, bore our sins, and suffered for us.

Inn. For the early Christians this element readily symbolized the Church. An “inn” was “a public house open to all.” A public shelter is comparable to the Church of Christ in several ways. A wayside inn is not the heavenly destination but a necessary aid in helping travelers reach their eternal home.

Took care of him. The Samaritan stayed with the injured person and cared for him personally the first night. He did not turn the injured person over too quickly to the innkeeper but stayed with him through the dark hours. As Origen commented, Jesus cares for the wounded “not only during the day, but also at night. He devotes all his attention and activity to him.”

“And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.”

On the morrow. Early commentators saw here the idea that Jesus would rise on Resurrection morning. Christ ministered in person to His disciples for a short time. After His Ascension, He left the traveler to be cared for by the Church.

The host. Accordingly, early commentators saw the host, or innkeeper, as Paul or the other Apostles and their successors. If the inn refers to the Church in general, however, the innkeeper and his staff can represent all Church leaders and workers who are entrusted by the Lord to nurture and care for any rescued soul who seeks healing.

When I come again. The Christ-figure openly promises to come again, a ready allusion to the Second Coming of Christ. The Greek word translated “to come again” appears only one other time in the New Testament, in Luke 19:15, referring to the parable of the Lord who would return to judge what the

people had done with the money they had been given. That linkage markedly strengthens this allusion to the Second Coming.

Repay or reward. Finally, the innkeeper is promised that all his costs will be covered: “I will reward you for whatsoever you expend.” Perhaps more than any other element in the story, this promise—in effect giving the innkeeper a blank check—has troubled modern commentators who understand this story simply as a real-life event. Who in his right mind would make such an open-ended commitment to a strange innkeeper? But when the story is understood allegorically, this promise makes sense, for the Samaritan (Christ) and his innkeeper already know and trust each other before this promise is given. (Also, since the atonement was an infinite atonement, there was no price he couldn’t pay.)

An Eternal Imperative

Because of our difficulty in comprehending His infinite nature and divine fulness, God speaks to us in similitudes (see Moses 5:7). Symbols draw our finite minds to sacred truths that are embedded in the mystery of Christ’s incomparable gospel, and an allegorical understanding of the parable of the good Samaritan adds eternal perspectives to its moral imperatives.

In His parables, Jesus taught the essentials of the Father’s plan of salvation. As a type and shadow of this plan, the good Samaritan places our deeds of neighborly kindness here in mortality within the eternal context of where we have come down from, how we have fallen into our present plight, and how the binding ordinances and healing love of the promised Redeemer and the nurture of His Church can rescue us from our present situation, as we serve and live worthy of reward at His Second Coming.

Seeing the parable in this light invites readers to identify with virtually every character in the story. At one level, people can see themselves as the good Samaritan, acting as physical rescuers and as saviors on Mount Zion, aiding in the all-important cause of rescuing lost souls. Jesus told the Pharisee, “Go, and do thou likewise” (Luke 10:37). By doing as the Samaritan, we join with Him in helping to bring to pass the salvation and eternal life of mankind.

Disciples will also want to think of themselves as innkeepers who have been commissioned by Jesus Christ to facilitate the long-term spiritual recovery of injured travelers.

Or again, readers may see themselves as the traveler. As the parable begins, everyone sympathizes and identifies with the lone and weary traveler. We all need to be saved. As the story ends, all travelers can feel safe, having learned that, according to this interpretation, He who “was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves” (Luke 10:36) is none other than the merciful Christ. He is the most exemplary Neighbor.

This realization answers the lawyer’s second question, “And who is my neighbour?” At the same time, it also answers the first, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Eternal life comes by loving God “with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind” (Luke 10:27) and by loving His Son (thy neighbor) as thyself. And that is done by going and doing as the Savior did, in loving our fellow beings, for when we serve them we are only in the service of our God (see Mosiah 2:17).

Symbols from the Parable of the Good Samaritan

Symbol	An Early Christian Interpretation
Good Samaritan	Jesus Christ
Victim	Man wounded with sin
Jerusalem	Paradise
Jericho	World
Priest	Law of Moses
Levite	Prophets
Beast	Christ's body
Inn	Church
Manager of the inn	Head of the Church

Notes

1. History of the Church, 2:266.
2. Malcolm Miller, *Chartres Cathedral* (1985), 68.
3. For a full discussion of and sources for the quotations in this article, see John W. Welch, "The Good Samaritan: A Type and Shadow of the Plan of Salvation," *Brigham Young University Studies*, spring 1999, 51–115. Other Latter-day Saints, including Hugh Nibley, Stephen Robinson, Lisle Brown, and Jill Major, have interpreted parts of the parable of the good Samaritan in similar ways.
4. Origen, Homily 34.3, Joseph T. Lienhard, trans., *Origen: Homilies on Luke, Fragments on Luke* (1996), 138.
5. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (1980), "adam," 1:10.
6. See *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (1992), "Travel and Communication," 6:644–46. Because of the high risk of being attacked by robbers while traveling in the ancient world, people would rarely travel alone, as the characters in the parable do, which is another clue that the account is well understood as a similitude.