

The Forgotten Jesus Podcast

S4E21

Why does Jesus teach in Parables? - (Matthew 13:1-3)

Description – Join us today as we examine the major shift in Jesus’s ministry and ask the question, Why does Jesus teach in parables?

Today we’re looking at the shift in the ministry of Jesus, where he moves from teaching the masses to teaching just His disciples.

So why does Jesus devote his attention to the disciples and not the nation of Israel as a whole?

From a practical standpoint, he knows he won’t be with his disciples forever, so he wants to equip them to be ready when he’s not there.

The most important principle to have in a discipleship relationship is the ability to be teachable. The disciples are teachable, the nation is not. Jesus has just cast out a demon from a man who cannot speak, which the crowds knew was a Messianic Miracle. Yet instead of praising God and recognizing Jesus, the people and religious leaders say that it’s by Satan that Jesus is doing these things.

Now Jesus shifts his ministry from the crowd to the few.

Matthew 13:1-3

On that day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. ²Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, while the whole crowd stood on the shore. ³Then he told them many things in parables, saying, “Consider the sower who went out to sow.

So now Jesus is teaching in parables. In order to understand how to interpret parables, you have to know that they always have one main point.

They shouldn’t be interpreted allegorically, there’s only one main driving theme. Lots of application points, but just one main theme.

Also, to understand the parables, you have to understand the first parable. It helps you know how to interpret all the other parables.

So why teach in parables? Scholars have two major views.

1. Jesus spoke in parables because that’s how Rabbi’s at the time taught.

Jesus would give people a picture to ponder instead of a truth to memorize.

Everytime Jesus teaches a parable it's not some out of the sky, random parable pulled from the sky. Every time he's teaching he's right there seeing someone do this action / act.

The object lesson for the moment was live right in front of him. When we read the Bible, it's not just to learn and know, but to hear and ponder.

Two hallmarks of a Rabbi:

1. They asked good questions. They'd always answer a question with a question.
2. They always told good stories.

The second scholarly view on why Jesus taught in parables:

2. Jesus spoke in parables to conceal the message from those who wouldn't accept it and in doing so fulfills prophecy.

Matthew 13:10-14

¹⁰ Then the disciples came up and asked him, "Why are you speaking to them in parables?" ¹¹ He answered, "Because the secrets of the kingdom of heaven have been given for you to know, but it has not been given to them. ¹² For whoever has, more will be given to him, and he will have more than enough; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. ¹³ That is why I speak to them in parables, because looking they do not see, and hearing they do not listen or understand.

Two reasons Jesus taught in parables:

1. To conceal the message, to shroud the message.
2. To fulfill prophecy
 - a. Matthew 13:34-35
 - b. ³⁴ Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables, and he did not tell them anything without a parable, ³⁵ so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled: I will open my mouth in parables; I will declare things kept secret from the foundation of the world.
 - c. Psalm 78:1-2
 - d. ¹ My people, hear my instruction; listen to the words from my mouth. ² I will declare wise sayings; I will speak mysteries from the past—

Sidenote:

So why does Jesus tell some people to go and tell everyone about their healing He's done for them, and for others he orders to be quiet and not tell anyone?

The simple answer is geographic. When he's in Israel, (Judea & Galilee) (Luke 5, Mark 1), he warns them not to tell anyone. But if he's in the Decapolis (Mark 5) or in Samaria (John 4) he knows there won't be jewish kickback with an observation, investigation, interrogation stage so he allows the gentiles he heals to go and tell everyone.