



A parable is a maxim or proverb using something common or ordinary to explain or express truth about something extraordinary. - Pastor Del

Kingdom of Heaven Parables

Eternal teaching lessons

The Messiah's ministry represented in the New Testament offers two distinct styles of instruction. In the first year of ministry, the Messiah's instruction style was open and direct, often utilizing Torah passages to affirm His premise. The celebrated "*Sermon on the Mount*" illustrates this type of instruction. In the fifth chapter of Matthew, the sermon begins with a series of blessings that openly compare teaching principles passed down from generations of Jews, offering instruction influenced by the Torah and prophetic authors to guide the people chosen by God to be an example and witness to others. The passages that follow the well-known "beatitudes" offer compelling expansions of truth on every day topics that include anger, lust, oaths, divorce, retaliation, forgiveness, and loving your enemy.

In the prelude to addressing the ordinary, everyday subjects, the Messiah expressed the need to fulfill *or to make full* the commandments given to them by revealing the truth beneath the surface on matters they did not fully understand. His objective statement confirmed that He did not come to destroy the law presented by the forefathers and prophets but to fulfill the truth concerning the law. (Matthew 5:17)

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Other examples of the open style of instruction are found in His defense arguments responding to questions about His claim to be the Messiah. In the response about the origin of His authority, He explained how His work reflected the work of the Father, expressing that they worked in unison as one. (John 5:19-21). He declared His identity openly, instructing anyone with questions to search the scriptures (Torah) to find affirmation about Him. (John 5:36-39)

A final example of direct, open instruction is captured in the early portion of His second year in ministry. The teaching lesson resulted from the great miracle of fish and loaves that fed five thousand men and their families. Directly comparing Himself to the manna provided to the Hebrews traveling through the wilderness, the Rabbi instructor exclaimed that His audience would be required to devour His body and blood in the manner that physical bread and manna were consumed. The consumption, of course, was focused on the Rabbi's words and not His physical body; His audience was expected to entirely consume the words He embodied and spoke to give them life. (John 6:48-58)

Direct instruction presented a fixed thesis to contrast the practiced religious norms to the factual truth God intended for His people to follow. Parabolic instruction does not offer direct, linear teaching.

The truth is intentionally deflected and symbolized using familiar, ordinary illustrations to reference an extraordinary higher truth. Parables require the listener to unpack the hidden truth while bypassing their natural senses and receptors to surrender to God's spirit's unnatural, unseen influence.

After hearing the first parable presented, the disciples noticed the difference in the instructional method. They came to the Master with the question, "*Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?*"

The first series of parables was influenced by recent events. The first influential event was the brief inquisition between the Rabbis and John the Baptist. John's question about the authenticity of the Messiah's identity added to the conversations of unbelief that riled through the minds of religious leaders and other followers who were not entirely convinced.

It was disturbing for the Son of God to learn that the man who introduced him to the Judean community as the Messiah was now uncertain of his identity. John's questions caused the Messiah to speak out and question the integrity of the multitude that followed Him. He asked their motives and criticisms raised against Himself and the Baptizer. (Matthew 11:1-19) Chastising the multitude in response to John's query strongly suggests that the Rabbi did not believe John had lost faith in the Messiah's identity but raised a question about the authenticity of those who followed him. John perhaps verbalized through his

question the concerns he heard from other followers who were uncertain about the Rabbi's claim to be the Messiah. Knowing that his death was apparent, the man who introduced the Messiah to others wanted to force the discussion about who else could be the "one."

The reply that the Rabbi returns to the disciples John sent to Him becomes a revival to refresh His ministry: "Go and shew John again those things which you do hear and see." (Matthew 11:5)

A direct link can be made to the Rabbi's reply to John and his teaching method, which would change in the second year of his ministry, drawing attention to what men hear and see. John was beheaded days after receiving the affirmative response to his query. John's death influenced the Rabbi-Messiah's decline from public view, retreating to find relief from His grief and the widespread rejection by other followers.

The second event that influenced a change in the Rabbi's teaching style is connected to the response that followed the miracle of feeding five thousand men and their families. After hearing the Rabbi instructs His audience to devour His body and blood, meaning to consume the words He had spoken to them; hundreds and perhaps thousands walked away and followed Him no more. (John 6:66)

John's death and the loss of His followers caused the Rabbi to retreat from public view. When the Rabbi returned to public ministry after mourning John's death, He chose a less direct method of instruction using the parables. The revised teaching method would attract earnest ears to hear the word, setting them apart from careless listeners. The sincere inquirer has ears to hear; the other has not. The truth would be hidden within the truth spoken, like a seed found in the center of a piece of fruit. To those that would hear and receive, more truth would be given. Those who would continue to question His veracity and eventually reject Him would lose the grasp of the truth presented to them.