

CHAPTER 13

KINGDOM PARABLES



Day 1: (Read Lk 13:1-9). “Called to Repentance”

13:1 Now ¹ there were some present on that occasion who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

² **13:2** He ³ answered them, “Do you think these Galileans were worse sinners ⁴ than all the other Galileans, because they suffered these things? **13:3** No, I tell you! But unless you repent, ⁵ you will all perish as well! ⁶ **13:4** Or those eighteen who were killed ⁷ when the tower in Siloam fell on them, ⁸ do you think they were worse offenders than all the others who live in Jerusalem? ⁹ **13:5** No, I tell you! But unless you repent ¹⁰ you will all perish as well!” ¹¹ **13:6** Then ¹² Jesus ¹³ told this parable: “A man had a fig tree ¹⁴ planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. **13:7** So ¹⁵ he said to the worker who tended the vineyard, ‘For ¹⁶ three years ¹⁷ now, I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and each time I inspect it ¹⁸ I find none. Cut ¹⁹ it down! Why ²⁰ should it continue to deplete ²¹ the soil?’ **13:8** But the worker ²² answered him, ‘Sir, leave it alone this year too, until I dig around it and put fertilizer ²³ on it. **13:9** Then if ²⁴ it bears fruit next year, ²⁵ very well, ²⁶ but if ²⁷ not, you can cut it down.’”

(Lk 13:1-5) The Jews looked at tragedies and concluded that the victims must have deserved it. But what lesson did Jesus want them to learn from the sudden deaths?

2. (Lk 13:6-9) what does this passage about the fig tree tell us about Jesus’ mission?

3. What does the passage tell us about the response God expects of His people?



Luke gives us more of Jesus’ parables than any other Gospel – (16 parables). For the most part, Jesus used parables to explain to his followers the Kingdom of God and the type of faith needed to enter the Kingdom.

What is a "Parable"?

Definition: At its simplest a parable is a *metaphor or simile* drawn from *nature or common life* arresting the hearer by its *vividness or strangeness* and engaging the listener into active thought. It conveys a lesson or moral. "*It is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.*"

Implications of this definition: The meaning of most parables is *not* so obvious, or at least it shouldn't be. If we *assume* we know what Jesus is talking about, we are probably missing the main point; if we are too familiar with the story (having heard it so often before), we might not think carefully enough about its real meaning.

Most parables contain some element that is strange or unusual. They should cause you to say, "Wait a minute! That's not how farmers do their work! That's not what kings usually do! That's not what normally happens in nature!" And this strange element should cause you to think!



Parables do not *define* things precisely, but rather use *comparisons* to describe some aspect of how God acts or interacts with human beings. 2/3 of Jesus' Parables center on the Kingdom of God.

Jesus, the Greatest Parable: In Chapter 13 Luke sets the scene for the greatest parable of all, Jesus. Jesus, the carpenter and itinerant preacher is amazingly revealed as the Messiah who will inaugurate the Reign of God by his death and resurrection. The main players in the "Great Parable" are presented: Pontius Pilate, King Herod, the Pharisees and scribes, the apostles, the crowd and Jesus the Savior.

Unfortunately the religious leaders reject Jesus as the One Sent by God. This will not deter Jesus from his mission to usher in a new creation, a new era, a spirit filled anointing—the Reign of God.

Call to Repentance: Luke 13: 1-5.

With urgency Jesus calls for his people, the Jewish nation to reform their lives and accept God's word. He draws upon two current tragedies trying to move the people to repentance.

1. **Galileans killed by Pilate:** Although Jesus was a Galilean himself and Pilate was a hard-hearted Roman official he uses the sensational tragedy to call his people to repentance. Jesus insists that the Galilean victims did not suffer the sacrilegious death because they were greater sinners than others. However, their sudden

deaths challenge those who remain to reform their lives while there is still time. Yet the time is quickly running out. His death and resurrection is swiftly approaching. Pilate will play his role.

2. **Jews who were killed by fallen tower:** Now in an accidental tragedy in which 18 countrymen from Jerusalem were killed Jesus emphasizes the consequences for those who do not reform and accept the Kingdom of God.



The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree: Luke 13:6-9.

Jesus compares individuals and the nation of Israel to a barren fig tree. The fig tree was a common symbol for the Jewish nation. Jesus has labored for three years to produce the fruit of repentance and acceptance. Little time remains for his people. Like the fig tree, the nation will be removed expressly because of its inactivity and unproductiveness in God's mission. This is the "greater sin." This is a message that applies for all ages.

Luke placed this story after the parable of the fig tree to show how the tree of Israel was responding to its last chance before being cut.

Day 2: Read Lk 13:10-17. "Cure on the Sabbath"

13:10 Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues ²⁸ on the Sabbath, **13:11** and a woman was there ²⁹ who had been disabled by a spirit ³⁰ for eighteen years. She ³¹ was bent over and could not straighten herself up completely. ³² **13:12** When ³³ Jesus saw her, he called her to him ³⁴ and said, "Woman, ³⁵ you are freed ³⁶ from your infirmity." ³⁷ **13:13** Then ³⁸ he placed his hands on her, and immediately ³⁹ she straightened up and praised God. **13:14** But the president of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the crowd, "There are six days on which work ⁴⁰ should be done! ⁴¹ So come ⁴² and be healed on those days, and not on the Sabbath day." **13:15** Then the Lord answered him, ⁴³ "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from its stall, ⁴⁴ and lead it to water? ⁴⁵ **13:16** Then ⁴⁶ shouldn't ⁴⁷ this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan ⁴⁸ bound for eighteen long ⁴⁹ years, be released from this imprisonment ⁵⁰ on the Sabbath day?" **13:17** When ⁵¹ he said this all his adversaries were humiliated, ⁵² but ⁵³ the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things ⁵⁴ he was doing. ⁵⁵

1. What do you think the woman could symbolize in this healing story?

2. What has held you down or held you back in the past?

3. What did Jesus reveal about the spirit of the synagogue leader?

Cure on the Sabbath: Luke 13:10-17.

Luke placed this healing account after the parable of the fig tree to show how the nation of Israel was refusing to repent and accept Jesus' proclamation of salvation. Likewise, this is Jesus' last appearance in a Jewish synagogue as a teacher. He will be completely rejected by the religious authorities. Yet by Jesus healing the woman not only in the **synagogue** but also on the **Sabbath** it demonstrates boldly and clearly that he is the true authority.

The woman represents the Jewish faithful who have been held down by the empty application of their leaders' ways. They have norms and regulations but lack the spirit to give them meaning. She has been in bondage for 18 long years. Setting her free on the Sabbath and in the synagogue shows that Jesus has the spirit and power to save Israel.

Jesus emphatically points out that it is precisely on the Sabbath that the woman should have been released from bondage. This is the action of God to save and free His sons and daughters. Likewise, Jesus holds up the dignity of the woman. The religious leaders treated their beasts of burden better than this daughter of Abraham. She deserves far greater and has received it.

PARABLES OF THE REIGN OF GOD

In Luke's Gospel Jesus is the Kingdom preacher- par excellence. Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God is one of an event that is about to break into human history. It is not a lecture on the nature of God's kingship or kingdom. Rather he prepares the world for his Father's power and presence in the lives of all who will receive Him. The Reign of God is about to enter humanity through Jesus' death and resurrection.



Day 3: Read Lk 13:18-21. "Parables"

13:18 Thus Jesus ⁵⁶ asked, ⁵⁷ "What is the kingdom of God ⁵⁸ like? ⁵⁹ To ⁶⁰ what should I compare it? **13:19** It is like a mustard seed ⁶¹ that a man took and

sowed ⁶² in his garden. It ⁶³ grew and became a tree, ⁶⁴ and the wild birds ⁶⁵ nested in its branches.” ⁶⁶ **13:20** Again ⁶⁷ he said, “To what should I compare the kingdom of God? ⁶⁸ **13:21** It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with ⁶⁹ three measures ⁷⁰ of flour until all the dough had risen.”⁷¹

1. How is the Kingdom of God like a mustard seed?

2. How is the Kingdom of God like yeast?

Parable of the Mustard Seed: Luke 13:18-19.



This first parable of the Kingdom draws its illustration from a common plant known to the inhabitants of Palestine. This parable evokes to mind:

1. How from a small beginning the Kingdom of God grows inevitably into a great phenomenon in human history.
2. That God’s divine plan is active in our lives as the growth of a mustard tree. Jesus’ challenge: Are humans ready to build their “nests” in the Kingdom of God.

Parable of the Yeast: Luke 13:20-21. The parable compares the Kingdom of God with leaven and its unseen power to infuse the whole mass of dough into which it is mixed. Flour is important for bread, but without leaven there is no real bread! The forming power of leaven is needed above all. God’s Reign will infuse and raise humanity to its true purpose and identity.

These first two parables are paired together. They present the in breaking of Kingdom as an inevitable growth and as an active power restoring humanity. The Kingdom of God is an event that will develop and renew our lives. It embraces all humanity, men and women. The first parable presents a man participating in the emergence of the Kingdom. The second parable presents a woman who cooperates with the power of the Kingdom of God.

Day 4: Lk 13:22-30. “The door to the Kingdom”

13:22 Then ⁷² Jesus ⁷³ traveled throughout ⁷⁴ towns ⁷⁵ and villages, teaching and making his way toward ⁷⁶ Jerusalem. ⁷⁷ **13:23** Someone ⁷⁸ asked ⁷⁹ him, “Lord, will only a few ⁸⁰ be saved?” So ⁸¹ he said to them, **13:24** “Exert every effort ⁸² to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. **13:25** Once ⁸³ the head of the house ⁸⁴ gets up ⁸⁵ and shuts the door, then you will stand outside and start to knock on the door

and beg him, ‘Lord, ⁸⁶ let us in!’ ⁸⁷ But he will answer you, ⁸⁸ ‘I don’t know where you come from.’ ⁸⁹ **13:26** Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.’ ⁹⁰ **13:27** But ⁹¹ he will reply, ⁹² ‘I don’t know where you come from!’ ⁹³ Go away from me, all you evildoers!’ ⁹⁴ **13:28** There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth ⁹⁵ when you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, ⁹⁶ and all the prophets in the kingdom of God ⁹⁷ but you yourselves thrown out. ⁹⁸ **13:29** Then ⁹⁹ people ¹⁰⁰ will come from east and west, and from north and south, and take their places at the banquet table ¹⁰¹ in the kingdom of God. ¹⁰² **13:30** But ¹⁰³ indeed, ¹⁰⁴ some are last ¹⁰⁵ who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”

<p>1. In what sense is the door to the Kingdom narrow? (Lk 13:25-27).</p> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>2. In what sense is the door to the Kingdom wide? (Lk 13:28-30).</p> <hr/> <hr/>

THE DOOR TO THE KINGDOM: Luke 13:22-30.



Jesus follows up the two parables about the Kingdom with two teachings about the Kingdom. Both use the image of a door.

1. **The narrow door:** The Jewish belief held that the whole nation of Israel would be saved. Jesus introduces the image of a narrow door. The entrance to the Kingdom is not made for crowds. Each person is responsible to the call of grace. Jesus personally urges his listeners to strive (put full effort) into entering God’s Reign. Our cooperation with the grace of God is essential.
2. **The master’s door:** Entrance into the kingdom also, depends upon the master of the house. The master is indirectly identified with Jesus himself who personally knows those who have made the effort to participate. The entrance is to the joyous banquet of the Kingdom that God abundantly opens to all who truly seek Him, Gentile as well as Jew. In fact the last to arrive in salvation history, the Gentiles will become the first to fully embrace Jesus and enter.

Day 5: Lk 13:31-35. “Prophets die in Jerusalem?”

13:31 At that time, ¹⁰⁶ some Pharisees ¹⁰⁷ came up and said to Jesus, ¹⁰⁸ “Get away from here, ¹⁰⁹ because Herod ¹¹⁰ wants to kill you.” **13:32** But ¹¹¹ he said to them, “Go ¹¹² and tell that fox, ¹¹³ ‘Look, I am casting out demons and performing healings today and tomorrow, and on the third day ¹¹⁴ I will complete my work. ¹¹⁵ **13:33** Nevertheless I must ¹¹⁶ go on



my way today and tomorrow and the next day, because it is impossible ¹¹⁷ that a prophet should be killed ¹¹⁸ outside Jerusalem.’ ¹¹⁹ **13:34** O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, ¹²⁰ you who kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you! ¹²¹ How often I have longed ¹²² to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but ¹²³ you would have none of it! ¹²⁴ **13:35** Look, your house is forsaken! ¹²⁵ And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!’” ¹²⁶

1. What was Jesus’ attitude toward Herod?

2. Jesus called his people to repentance. He warned them about their stubbornness. He performed signs and they rejected him. Yet how did Jesus feel about his rebellious people?

PROPHETS DIE IN JERUSALEM: Luke 13:31-35.

King Herod the Fox: Luke 13:31-33.

Herod was a political puppet of the Roman Empire. He was one of the Jewish kings that Rome placed in power. Herod has already murdered John the Baptist (Lk. 3:19-20). Jesus knows that he desires to kill him also. The Pharisees warn Jesus about Herod only because they want Jesus to leave their territory. Jesus shows disdain for Herod and definitely has no fear of him. In fact most of the Jewish nation despised Herod as weak and treacherous. Jesus nicknamed him “fox”. In Jewish thought, the fox was considered cunning but base. Jesus does not leave the area because of Herod’s threats. Instead he foretells that Herod will not cause his death. Rather the Judean powers in Jerusalem will bring about his death. Like the prophets before him, Jesus will die in Jerusalem.

The lament over Jerusalem: Luke 13:34-35. Jesus foresaw that his people’s stubbornness would bring about their destruction. God’s presence was already absent from the Temple. In 70 AD, less than 40 years after Jesus’ death and resurrection the magnificent Temple in Jerusalem was totally demolished and never rebuilt.

Yet this passage shows what is in his heart for his nation. In comparing himself to a mother-bird, Jesus uses a widely understood image to express his own love and concern for his contemporaries. He reveals what is in his Father’s heart for the chosen people. But Jerusalem will not seek its security in the protective wings on the heaven-sent bearer of God’s wisdom. So it will be left like a helpless fledging, its house will be left abandoned.

However, Jesus will bless Jerusalem when he enters it for the last time to embrace the cross. Then they will proclaim, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”