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## Parable, Illustration, or Type?

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- A parable...
  - ...is a story or that *could be true* but the truth of the story is not the point.
  - ...has a truth about the work of God that is *hidden* from view and requires interpretation.
- An illustration is a picture of a *stated* truth.
  - Example: Matthew 7:24-27.
  - A metaphor or figure is an illustration (Mt. 5:13-16).
- A type is an historical person or even that *mirrors* a future event.
  - Key: every detail must match.
  - Example: Moses strikes the rock.
  - Example: Job represents the Jewish remnant of the end times.
- Because of confusion of terminology and interpretation, no two lists of “the parables of Jesus” are identical.

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## Mistakes made in interpreting parables

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- Making a parable where one does not exist.
  - From Wikipedia: “A parable is a succinct, didactic story, in prose or verse that illustrates one or more instructive lessons or principles.”<sup>1</sup>
  - Note that this definition makes a *parable* to be a type of *illustration* but a parable shared *hidden truth* and an illustration highlights *stated truth*.
  - When you make a parable into an illustration...
    - ...you begin to find hidden meanings that are not actually there.
    - ...you remove the potential of *reality* that is not required in parables (for example: the story of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32) or the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37)).
- Making a parable into a type, thus finding meaning in details where the details are not relevant.
  - For example, using the parable of the lost sheep (Lk. 15:3-7) to make meaning out of the use of sheep for followers of Christ.
- Making a parable apply to irrelevant issues.
  - If a parable is about the Kingdom, it is not about the church, or the family, or the current administration, etc.
  - A parable is a *juxtaposition* of two things.
    - The Greek παραβολή [parabolē] is a combination of *para* (along-side) and *ballo* (to throw), thus “to throw alongside.” In a parable, two things are being thrown alongside one another for comparison or contrast.
    - Oxford English Dictionary: *Juxtaposition*: “The action of placing two or more things close together or side by side, or one thing with or beside another”
    - A juxtaposition requires comparison or contrast. Two irrelevant things will destroy the *parable* or *juxtaposition*.
    - For example, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like...” where Kingdom is set beside the matter within the parable.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parable>

## Methods of Classification

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- A chronological view is difficult because many lack chronological certainty.
- A subject-matter view is helpful but requires necessary interpretation prior to study.
- For our purposes, therefore, we will go with the order in which the parables are found in Scripture. We will use Matthew as our starting point, considering the synoptic Gospels when there is repetition, and consider Mark and Luke where they have unique parables.

## The Chief Subject of Parables | Matthew 13:10-17

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- It may come as a surprise to many that parables are very limited in subject matter, and that subject is the Kingdom of God.
- This truth is clearly stated in the summary of the first parable found in the New Testament: Matthew 13:10-17.
  - Verse 10 – Though the question is only definitively related to this particular parable, the question is related to parables (plural) in general. We must therefore take the answer to be conclusive of all Jesus' parables, unless otherwise stated.
  - Verse 11 – the purpose of parables is to reveal **the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven**. Those who take parables for every mystery known to man, or every practical application needed for today, will invariably miss the **mysteries** that are actually revealed.
  - Verse 12 – this verse is a total mystery to those who do not take it in context.
    - The words are explained more fully in the parallel passage, Mark 4:24-25, where we are told that it is **unto you that hear shall more be given**.
    - What is taken away from them that do not have? *Their hearing, understanding, and knowledge* of mysteries related to the Kingdom.
  - Verse 13 – Parables are given when there is an *enemy in the midst*, as there was with Jesus. Parables are not meant to easily display information but to *conceal* information from those who will not take the time to study (compare John 3:19-20).
  - Verses 14-15 - Jesus quotes from Isaiah 6:9-10, the context of which is in a time of Tribulation (compare v. 11).
    - Matthew 13 is about the days of the Tribulation (that is, the days approaching the arrival of the Kingdom of God).
    - KJV note: the word **gross** meant *fat* or *big* in 1611, related to the word when it is used of quantity (a gross=12x12=144).
  - Verse 16 – Jesus honored those who did see and hear. This comment was directed to **the disciples** (v. 10) rather than to the **great multitude** (v. 2).
  - Verse 17 – The **prophets and righteous men** wanted to **see those things which ye see**. Jesus used a word for see which is *to perceive*. The matters which they wanted to see and hear were the mysteries of the kingdom, which will only now be revealed in the parables.