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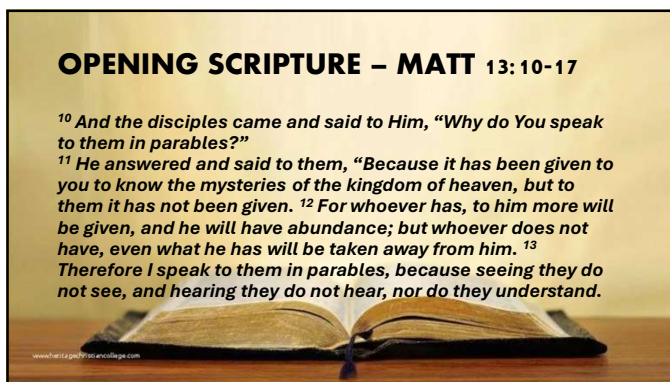
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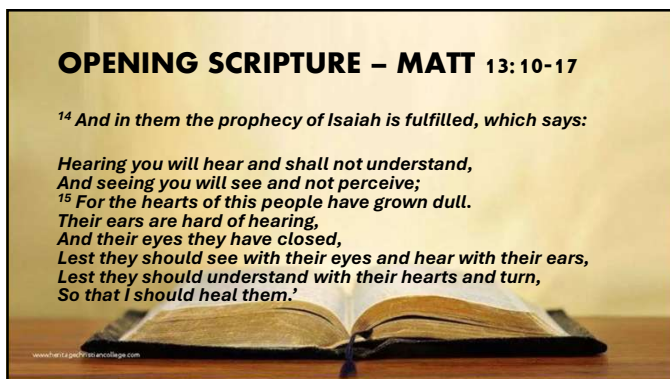
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OPENING SCRIPTURE – MATT 13:10-17

*16 But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; 17 for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.*



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INTERPRETING PARABLES

- DEFINING PARABLES
- THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES
- LANGUAGE: PARABLES ARE NOT ALLEGORIES
- OCCASION
- OUTSIDE
- KEYS
- APPLICATION and PREACHING QUESTIONS



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DEFINING PARABLES



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## DEFINING PARABLES

*"The word parable is derived from the Greek word παραβάλλω, to throw or to place by the side of, and carries the idea of placing one thing by the side of another for the purpose of comparison." - Milton Terry*

Terry, Milton S. *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments*. (1974. Academic Books, Grand Rapids). 276.

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## DEFINING PARABLES

*"the parable is a fictional literary form. This literary form consists of two parts: the picture part, or the story proper, and a reality part, or the comparison to which it is likened." - Robert Stein*

Stein, Robert. *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules*. (1994. Baker Books, Grand Rapids). 137.

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## DEFINING PARABLES

- Simon Kistemaker makes the distinction between "true parables" and "story parables."
- True parables are taken from daily life, and truth communicated by the parable is easily understandable to all who hear.
- A story parable uses a story, usually set in the past, to communicate truth.

Kistemaker, Simon. *The Parables: Understanding the Stories Jesus Told*. (1980. Baker Books, Grand Rapids). 9-10.

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## DEFINING PARABLES

- Kistemaker has a third category called the illustrative story which defines in the following way.

*“These illustrations differ from the story parables in design. Whereas the story parable is an analogy, illustrations exhibit examples to be either imitated or avoided. They focus directly on the character and the conduct of an individual; the story parable does this only indirectly.”*

Kistemaker, Simon. *The Parables: Understanding the Stories Jesus Told*. (1980, Baker Books). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House Company.

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## DEFINING PARABLES

- A parable is a story of varying length and style meant to communicate a spiritual truth by way of comparison to fictitious, real world events.
- While this is a solid definition of a parable, it still does not answer another fundamental question. Why teach in parables?

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## THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

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## THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

Matthew 13:10-13 (LSB)

<sup>10</sup> And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" <sup>11</sup> And Jesus answered and said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. <sup>12</sup> For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. <sup>13</sup> Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

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## THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

- Parables do not seem to be an incredibly efficient way to make a point or communicate a truth.
- Perhaps, this is why the disciples ask Jesus why He uses them. But Jesus, is not trying to be efficient. He is trying to be impactful.
- The point of using a parable is to make the hearer think. The hearer must work for the meaning. This comes through in Jesus's response to their question.

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## THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

- Jesus's answer indicates the dual nature of the parable – to reveal and to conceal.
- The first audience are those who will "know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven."
- The second audience are those to whom "it has not been given" to know the mysteries of heaven.
- The mysteries are revealed to the first and concealed from the second.

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## THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

Milton Terry states:

"With those disposed to know and accept the truth the words of a parable served to announce attention and to excite inquiry. If they did not apprehend the meaning, they would come, like the disciples to the Master (Matt. xii, 36; Mark iv,30), and inquire of him, assured that all who asked, searched, or knocked (Matt. vii,7) at the door of Divine Wisdom should certainly obtain their desire. ...

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## THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

Even those who at first are dull of apprehension may be attracted and captivated by the outer form of the parable, and by honest inquiry come to master the laws of interpretation until they "know all parable" (Mark iv,13). But the perverse and fleshly mind shows its real character by making no inquiry and evincing no desire to understand the mysteries of the kingdom. Such a mind treats those mysteries as a species of folly (1 Cor. i,18)."

Terry, 280.

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## THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

- To further illustrate the separation of those who hear and those who do not, Jesus quotes from the prophet Isaiah 6:9-10

<sup>14</sup> *And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says:  
Hearing you will hear and shall not understand,*

*And seeing you will see and not perceive;*

<sup>15</sup> *For the hearts of this people have grown dull.*

*Their ears are hard of hearing,*

*And their eyes they have closed,*

*Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears,*

*Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn,*

*So that I should heal them.'*

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## THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

- The original context is Isaiah's call. Matthew Henry describes the situation this way.

*God takes Isaiah at his word, and here sends him on a strange errand - to foretell the ruin of his people and even to ripen them for that ruin - to preach that which, by their abuse of it, would be to them a savour of death unto death. And this was to be a type and figure of the state of the Jewish church in the days of the Messiah, when they should obstinately reject the gospel, and should thereupon be rejected of God.*

- Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible. New Modern Edition Complete and Unabridged in Six Volumes.* Olive Tree Bible Software. Isaiah 6 Verses 9-13.

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## THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

- Matthew Henry calls the inability to hear "judicial blindness."
- In Isaiah's day this was a form of judgment on a rebellious people. They would hear the warnings from God, but not heed them. This was Isaiah's task.
- As similar situation happens in Jesus's day as the Sadducees and Pharisees reject Jesus unto judgment upon themselves. Jesus gives further explanation regarding the purpose of parables further on in Matthew 13:34-35.
- Henry, Matthew 13 Verses 1-23.

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## THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

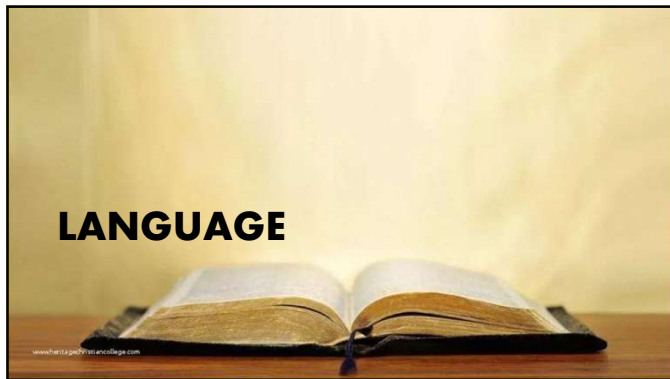
- Once again Matthew Henry is helpful.

*Another reason given why Christ preached by parables, v. 34, 35. All these things he spoke in parables, because the time was not yet come for the more clear and plain discoveries of the mysteries of the kingdom.*

- Henry, Matthew 13 Verses 24-43.

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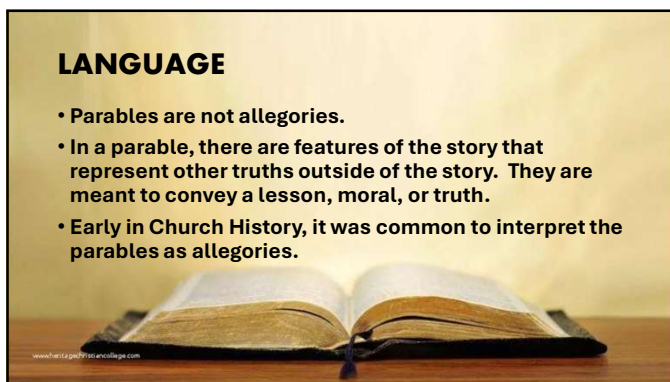
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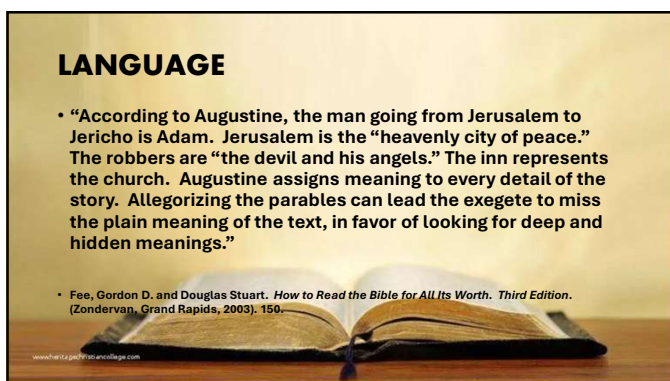
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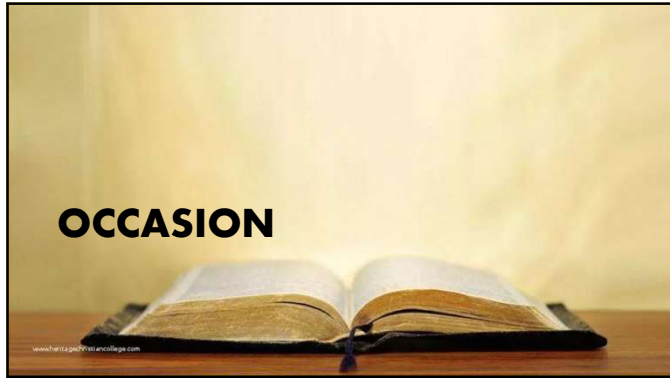
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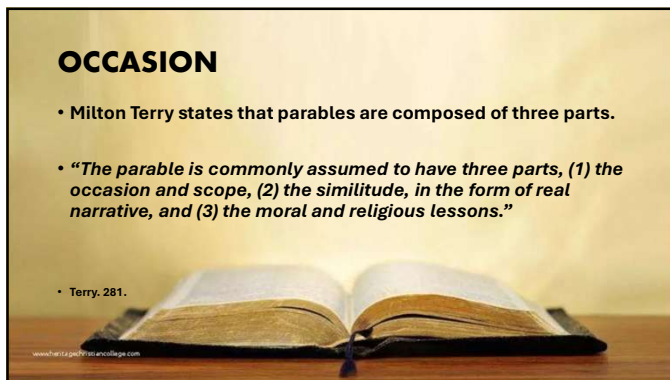
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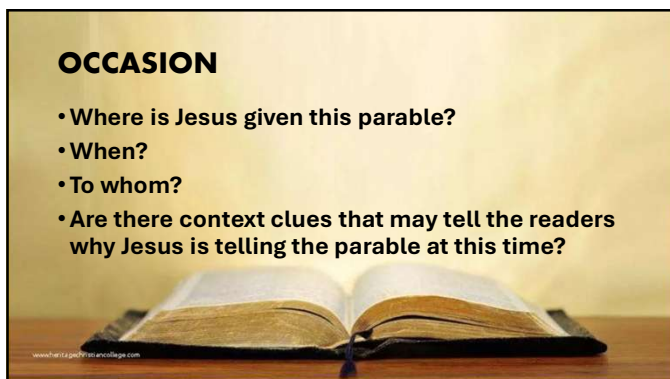
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## OCCASION

*"But with that exception, all the parables in the Synoptic evangelists are connected with occasions of an historical kind, very often also are preceded by a direct address; and then the principle couched in the address, or which the historical occasion served to bring out, is resumed, and for all times thrown into the form of an attractive and striking parable."* – Patrick Fairborn

• Fairborn, Patrick. *Hermeneutical Manual*. Monergism apud. Section Ninth.

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## OUTSIDE

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## OUTSIDE

- While it may be tempting to harmonize similar parables from other gospels, allow each parable to speak within its giving context.
- The Gospel authors places them where and how they are with intention. Even though it may be a similar parable, they could be speaking to different issues in different gospels.
- This is where context becomes important.

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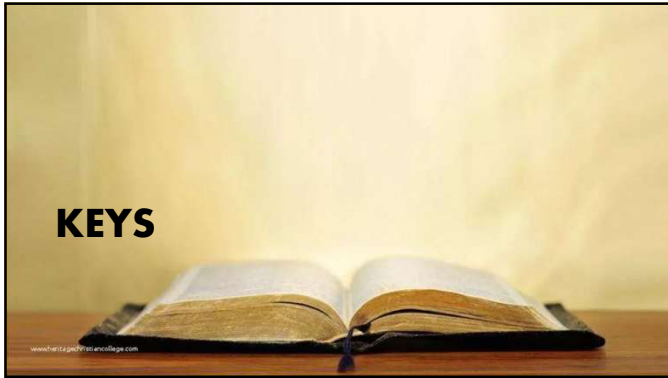
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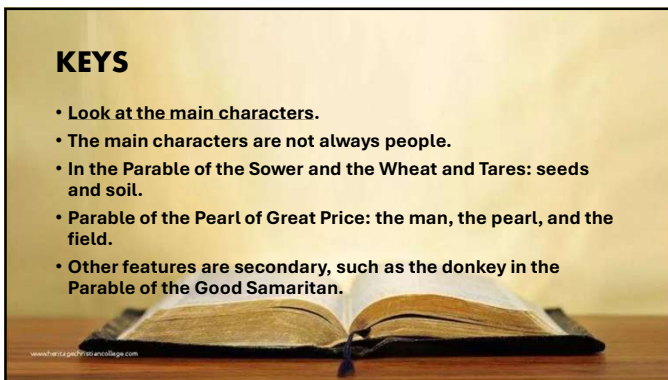
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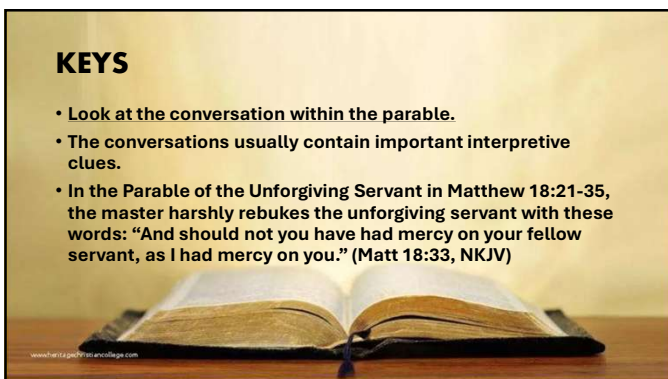
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## KEYS

- Look for the Center of Attention.
- What is the focal point of the parable?
- For the parable of the sower, it is the soil.
- For the parable of the wheat and the tares, it is the plants.



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## KEYS

- Look at the Big Picture, and not small details.
- When reading the parable of the treasure found in the field (Matthew 13:44), the big picture is the finding a treasure of great worth.
- The field and why the treasure is in the field are irrelevant. Some have tried to give meaning to the field.



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## KEYS

- Matthew Henry does this saying, *“The gospel is the field in which this treasure is hid: it is hid in the word of the gospel, both the Old-Testament and the New-Testament gospel.”*
- Matthew Henry makes the assumption that this is referring to someone who is actively looking for the truth. This however seems to be more in line with the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price.

1. Henry, Matthew. Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible. Matthew 13:44-52. I.2. Olive Tree Bible Software Edition.



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## KEYS

- Look at the **END**. Robert Klein calls this “rule of end-stress.” Klein notes that the parable of the laborers in the field (Matt 20:1-16) reveals its meaning in the end with the grumbling first hired men. As Klein says,
- *Even a good comedian does not give away the punchline of a joke until the very end and a good mystery does not give away the solution until the end, so a good story builds up and concentrates the attention of the hearers on the final conclusion.*
- Klein, 147
- Ibid.

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## KEYS

- Look for **One Point**.
- The parables are meant to be simple. Jesus used parables to communicate a single, spiritual truth.
- Therefore, the interpreter need not look for layers upon layers of meaning.
- This leads to the allegorical approach which ends with an interpretation that is far from Jesus's intended meaning.

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## APPLICATION and PREACHING QUESTIONS

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## APPLICATION

- What would the original audience have heard? The disciples? Christ's opponents?
- How does the exegete make that relevant to their audience?
- *One way to explain and illustrate is to retell a parable, or part of a parable, as a paraphrase and/or with a relevant and accessible story from today.*

• Douglas Ryan O'Donnell and Leland Ryken, How to Preach the Parables. Crossway.org, September 09, 2022. <https://www.crossway.org/articles/how-to-preach-parables/>

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## APPLICATION

- *(D)on't shy away from some shock therapy! ... I favor that shock therapy analogy because, while there is a concealed but explosive element to Jesus's prophetic parabolic punches, shock therapy, as used by psychiatric professionals, can have positive results. We don't want our people blown to pieces by our preaching! But we do want to let God's provocative word shock their spiritual sensibilities. Related, and continuing with a medical analogy, seek to shock both the head and heart. Shock therapy aims for the head; a defibrillator aims for the heart. ... Don't be afraid to deliver the lifesaving shock found in many of the Bible's parables.*

• O'Donald and Ryken.

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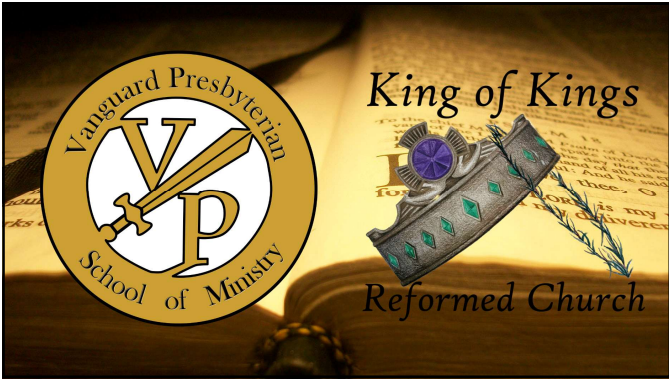
## Assignment: Matthew 25: 1-13

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

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