

Introduction to the Kingdom Parables Discourse

Presenter: Dr. Brendon Witte

“Equipping kingdom citizens one person
at a time until all have heard.”

Structure of Today's Sermon

We are going to examine the three elements of “Kingdom Parables Discourse” individually:

1. The Purpose of the Discourses
2. The Priority of the Kingdom
3. The Point of Parables

The Purpose of the Discourses

The Gospel of Matthew can be broken down into **six narratives** and **five discourses**.

- “Narrative” refers simply to the story portions of the Gospel. In the narratives, Matthew tells the story of salvation history through an account of the birth, life, death, and Resurrection of King Jesus.
- The “discourses” are the teaching blocks in the Gospel. These discourses are five sermons that Matthew uses to break the flow of the narrative into “acts.” Teachings of Jesus are recorded in the narrative sections as well; yet, the core of Jesus’ instruction to his disciples is found in the five sermons of Matthew.

The Purpose of the Discourses

These **six narratives** and **five discourses** are arranged by Matthew in a chiasmic structure.

- Chiasms are common to Ancient Near Eastern poetry and wisdom literature. But they can appear in other genres of literature, including Ancient Bios.
- A “chiasm” or “chiasmus” is a rhetorical device in which a series of ideas is presented once, then, presented again in reverse order.

Narrative: Chapters 1-4

Discourse: Chapters 5-7 (Sermon on the Mount)

Narrative: Chapters 8-9

Discourse: Chapters 10 (Discipleship/Mission Discourse)

Narrative: Chapters 11-12

Discourse: Chapters 13 (Kingdom Parables Discourse)

Narrative: Chapters 14-17

Discourse: Chapters 18 (Church Discourse)

Narrative: Chapters 19-22

Discourse: Chapters 23-25 (Olivet/Eschatological Discourse)

Narrative: Chapters 26-28

Narrative: Chapters 1-4

Discourse: Chapters 5-7 (Sermon on the Mount)

Narrative: Chapters 8-9

Discourse: Chapters 10 (Discipleship/Mission Discourse)

Narrative: Chapters 11-12

Discourse: Chapters 13 (Kingdom Parables Discourse)

Narrative: Chapters 14-17

Discourse: Chapters 18 (Church Discourse)

Narrative: Chapters 19-22

Discourse: Chapters 23-25 (Olivet/Eschatological Discourse)

Narrative: Chapters 26-28

“Since the message at the center of a chiasm is being highlighted by the author, the **Kingdom Parables** must be critical to unlocking Matthew’s understanding of the person and ministry of Jesus, as well as the identity and mission of his followers.”

The Priority of the Kingdom

The kingdom concept was central to the Gospel proclamations of John, Jesus, and the disciples:

- John proclaimed in the wilderness of Judea: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2)
- When John was placed in prison, Jesus arrived on the scene preaching the same message: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17).
- Jesus gathered the Twelve and sent them out before him to the cities of Galilee, commanding them to announce: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 10:7).

The Priority of the Kingdom

Although the proclamation of the kingdom message was a priority to John, Jesus, and the disciples, the meaning of the word “kingdom” is difficult to establish. There are two primary questions that divide scholars, the first focuses on **the nature of the kingdom**, whereas the second concerns **the nearness of the kingdom**:

1. “Does ‘kingdom’ refer to the reign or realm of God?”
2. “Is the kingdom a present or future reality?”

Kingdom: Reign or Realm?

Renown pastor and theologian, John Piper argues that “kingdom” in the Gospels refers to the reign, rather than realm, of God:

“[T]he basic meaning of the word ‘kingdom’ in the Bible is God’s reign...not realm or people. The kingdom creates a realm, the kingdom creates a people, but the kingdom of God is not synonymous with its realm or its people....The basic meaning of the word ‘kingdom’ in the Bible is God’s kingly rule — his reign, his action, his lordship, his sovereign governance.”

Kingdom: Reign or Realm?

Meanwhile, at the opposite end of the interpretive spectrum, Dispensationalists like John Walvoord and Charles Ryrie argue that the kingdom is solely a realm in which the reign of the Messiah is expressed.

Ryrie stated his opinion simply and concisely: the kingdom is “the Messianic, Davidic kingdom on this earth,” which is “physical, glorious and powerful.”

Kingdom: Reign or Realm?

Kingdom as Reign

Is “kingdom”...

- Abstract
- Dynamic
- Conceptual

Kingdom as Realm

Is “kingdom”...

- Concrete
- Static
- Geographical

“It is unwise to ignore the fact that the concepts of reign and realm—kingship and kingdom—cannot be divorced from one another. Every use of ‘kingdom’ in the Gospels alludes simultaneously to God’s reign and the realm of his rule. Confusion concerning the nature of the kingdom stems from confusion over the nearness of the kingdom.”

Kingdom: Already or Not Yet?

The kingdom is already here because the King has come and his reign has begun:

- “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (**engiken**)” may mean, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has arrived.” The Greek verb, **engiken**, is in the Perfect tense, which denotes an action that has already been completed, though the consequences of the action are felt presently.
- When the Pharisees challenged Jesus’ source of power to exorcise demons, Jesus claimed, “if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matthew 12:28).

Kingdom: Already or Not Yet?

But while the kingdom has been inaugurated, it has not been consummated. We still await the fullness of the kingdom to arrive, a point when all will be made new, and God's rule will be known and felt by all humankind. That is why Jesus told his disciples to pray:

“Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

(Matthew 6:10)

“In summary, the kingdom is already and not yet here. *Abstractly and dynamically*, the kingdom is expressed in the authority King Jesus exercises over the lives of those who call him Master and Lord. *Concretely and statically*, the kingdom as a realm has not yet arrived in its fullness. That is why we must pray for the kingdom to come. And one day it shall.”

The Point of Parables

After Jesus shared the Parable of the Sower with the crowds, the disciples approached Jesus and asked:

“‘Why do you speak to them in parables?’ And he [Jesus] answered them, ‘To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.’”

The Point of Parables

“Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: ‘You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’”

“But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it” (Matthew 13:10-17).

The Point of Parables

Why does Jesus use complicated, ambiguous parables to share the hidden mysteries of the kingdom?

- Parables Promote Thought
- Parables Punish the Hard-hearted
- Parables Reward the Righteous

TAPs: Take-Away Points

What should we take away from this sermon and apply to our lives?

- The reign of the King and the realm of the kingdom are already-not-yet present. Let us pray with fervency for the kingdom to come.
- Let us rejoice that the mysteries of the kingdom, which were hidden from wise men and prophets of old, have been revealed to us who believe in King Jesus.