Dr. Robert C. Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Session 6, Parables
Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Session 6, Parables, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture from Dr. Robert C. Newman's Synoptic Gospels course explores the interpretation of Jesus' parables. It begins by defining what parables, similes, and allegories are, highlighting differences between literary definitions and New Testament usage. **The lecture emphasizes that parables are stories, often employing literary devices like the rule of two and three, and binary opposition.** It explains that parables function as analogies, with an earthly story (vehicle) conveying a heavenly meaning (tenor). **The lecture then categorizes and examines various parables found in the Synoptic Gospels and John based on their content, such as Christological parables, those about loss and forgiveness, and parables concerning the kingdom of God and the Second Coming.** Finally, it touches on acted parables, where Jesus' actions convey meaning.

2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Session 6 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Gospels → Synoptic Gospels).

Newman_Synoptics _Session06.mp3

3. Briefing Document: Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Session 6, Parables

Okay, here is a briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpt of Dr. Robert C. Newman's lecture on "Exegeting Jesus' Parables":

Briefing Document: Exegeting Jesus' Parables

Main Themes:

- **Defining Parables:** The lecture starts by clarifying the definition of a parable, distinguishing it from both literary definitions and common misconceptions arising from past scholarship.

- **Parables as Stories:** It highlights the artistic and structural elements of parables as short stories, utilizing literary devices to engage the audience and convey meaning.

- **Parables as Analogies:** The lecture emphasizes that parables function as analogies, drawing parallels between earthly stories and heavenly meanings (the tenor and the vehicle).

- **Categorizing Parables:** The lecture provides a comprehensive overview of different types of parables found in the Synoptic Gospels (and briefly in John), categorized by content (Christological, Lost and Found, Forgiveness and Mercy, Prayer, Transformation, Stewardship, Invitation and Rejection, Second Coming, Warning and Judgment, the Kingdom, Illustrative, and Acted parables).

- **Importance of Context and Interpretation:** The lecture implicitly stresses the importance of careful interpretation of parables, considering their literary structure, intended audience, and overall message.

Key Ideas and Facts:

- **Problem with Julicher's Claim:** Newman points out that "New Testament parable studies have been messed up for about a century because commentators unwisely followed Julicher's claim that parables were quite different from allegories and always only made a single point." This has led to a misunderstanding of the breadth and depth of parables.

- **Literary vs. New Testament Definition:** The lecture differentiates between the literary definition of a parable (extended simile) and the New Testament usage, which encompasses allegory, similitude, and other figurative genres.

- **Simile vs. Metaphor:** A simile is an explicit comparison using "as" or "like" (e.g., "God is *like* a king"), while a metaphor is an implicit comparison (e.g., "God *is* a king"). A parable is a simile expanded into a story.

- **Allegory Defined:** "An allegory is a story picturing concepts and such by means of persons or elements in the story named for each concept." *Pilgrim's Progress* is given as a classic example.

- **Similitude Defined:** "The similitude is something that's longer than a single simile but not really long enough to be a story." The example given is the woman putting leaven in the dough or the mustard seed.

- **Sample Parable Defined:** A sample parable illustrates a spiritual truth by giving a sample of it rather than by giving an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. The Good Samaritan is an example.

- **Characteristics of Parables as Stories:** Includes brevity, unity, limited actors, direct discourse, serial development, "rule of three" (limiting elements to three for memorability), repetition, binary opposition, end stress (often a resolution by reversal), and two levels (earthly story, heavenly meaning).

- **Parables as Analogies (Tenor and Vehicle):** Drawing from John Sider's work, parables create analogies between the earthly story (vehicle) and the heavenly meaning (tenor). The points of resemblance are the specific analogies made between the two.

- **Analogy of Equation:** Most of Jesus' parables are analogies of equation, where "this is to this equals this is to this." An example from Shakespeare's *King Lear* is given: "As flies are to wanton boys, so are we to the gods. They kill us for their sport."

- **Example of Wheat and the Weeds Parable:** The owner is to the enemy as God is to Satan. Just as the owner sows good seed in his field, so God puts sons of the kingdom in the world. Just as the enemy puts weed seeds in the field, so Satan puts his people into the same world situation.

- **Christological Parables:** Parables mainly about who Jesus is (e.g., "the strong man was defeated," "the rejected stone," "the door of the sheep," "the good shepherd," "the father of the vinedresser").

- **Parables of Lost and Found:** The lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son, all conveying the idea that "God is seeking the lost, and when he finds it, he'd like you to rejoice with him instead of complaining about it."

- **Parables of Forgiveness and Mercy:** The unmerciful servant, the day laborers, the two debtors, the unprofitable servants.

- **Parables on Prayer:** The Son asking bread, the friend at midnight, the unjust judge, illustrating that "God gives us the gifts that we really need" and that God rewards persistence in prayer.

- **Parables of Transformation:** New patch on the old garment, new wine in the old wineskins.

- **Parables of Stewardship:** The lamp and the bushel, the crooked business manager, parables of talent and of pounds.

- **Parables of Invitation and Rejection:** Children in the marketplace, the two sons, the great supper and the marriage of the king's son.

- **Parables of the Second Coming:** The vultures in the carcass, the fig tree heralds summer, the householder and the thief, the porter, the waiting servants, the wise and foolish virgins.

- **Parables of Warning and Judgment:** The axe at the roots, the guy coming to winnow the grain, tasteless salt, parables of fire, salt, and peace, advice to settle out of court, the eye as the light of the body, blind leading the blind, taking the speck out of the eye, the wise and foolish builders, the empty house, the barren fig tree, the tower builder, the king going to war, the wicked tenant farmers, the sheep and the goats.

- **Parables of the Kingdom:** The Sower, the tares, the growing seed, the mustard seed, the leaven, the treasure, the pearls, the dragnet, the old and new treasures.

- **Illustrative Parables:** The Good Samaritan, the Rich Fool, the lowest seats in the banquet, the dinner invitations, who you invite to your banquet, the rich man and Lazarus, the Pharisee and tax collector.

- **Acted Parables:** Jesus cursing the fig tree, cleansing the Temple, Jesus at 12 in the Temple, Jesus' baptism, healing on the Sabbath, healing with clay, writing on the ground, triumphal entry, anointing of Jesus, foot washing.

- **Example of Healing with Clay:** Newman proposes that Jesus making clay to heal someone's eyes is an allusion to the making of Adam in Genesis.

- **The anointing of Jesus:** He's the anointed one, so these people anoint him, though they're not even thinking about that.

Next Steps:

The lecture will continue with a detailed analysis of the parable of the marriage banquet in Matthew 22:1-14.

4. Study Guide: Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Session 6, Parables

Understanding Jesus' Parables: A Study Guide

Quiz: Short Answer Questions

1. How does the English dictionary definition of a "parable" differ from the New Testament usage of the term?

2. According to the lecture, what is the primary problem with Julicher's claim about parables?

3. Explain the difference between a simile and a metaphor. Give one example of each.

4. Describe what Newman calls a "sample parable" and give an example from the Gospels.

5. List three storytelling devices often used in parables, according to Amos Wilder.

6. Explain what the "rule of three" is in relation to parables and why it is used.

7. What does John Sider say parables do? Explain the concept of "tenor" and "vehicle" in the context of parables.

8. In the parable of The Wheat and the Weeds, what is the analogy being made? Give two of Newman's examples.

9. Give an example of a Christological parable and briefly explain its meaning.

10. Provide an example of an "acted parable," as explained in the lecture, and what it signifies.

Quiz Answer Key

1. The English dictionary definition of a parable is a short fictitious story that illustrates a moral or religious principle, while the New Testament usage is much broader. The New Testament use includes allegories, similitudes, proverbs, and paradoxes.

2. Julicher claimed that parables were different from allegories and always made a single point. The problem is that New Testament parables can be allegorical and have multiple points.

3. A simile is an explicit comparison using "as" or "like," such as "God is like a king." A metaphor is an implicit comparison without using "as" or "like," such as "God is a king."

4. A "sample parable" illustrates a spiritual truth by giving a sample of it rather than by giving an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. The Good Samaritan is a "sample parable" that gives a sample of what it means to be a neighbor.

5. Three storytelling devices often used in parables are brevity, a unified plot, and the "rule of two" (chiefly two principal actors).

6. The "rule of three" suggests that parables typically don't go beyond three items to avoid over-complication. This helps make the story memorable and prevents it from becoming too complex.

7. John Sider says that a parable makes an analogy between an earthly story and its heavenly meaning. The "tenor" is the heavenly meaning of the parable, while the "vehicle" is the earthly story used to convey that meaning.

8. In the parable of The Wheat and the Weeds, an analogy is being made between the owner and his enemy and God and Satan. Just as the owner sows good seed, God puts sons of the kingdom in the world. Just as the enemy puts weed seeds in the field, Satan puts his people into the world.

9. The strong man defeated in Matthew 12 and Mark 3 is a Christological parable that shows how just as a strong man can only be defeated by a stronger man, so Satan can only be defeated by someone stronger than him, implying Jesus.

10. Jesus cleansing the temple is an acted parable of God's attitude toward not only Israel's misuse of the Temple but their misuse of their privileges.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the different types of parables mentioned in the lecture (parable, allegory, similitude, sample parable, proverb, paradox). Provide examples of each and explain how they function to convey meaning.

2. Explain John Sider's analogy theory of interpreting parables. How does the understanding of "tenor" and "vehicle" help in deciphering the meaning of a parable? Use at least two parables as examples in your explanation.

3. Analyze the use of storytelling devices in Jesus' parables. How do devices like direct discourse, serial development, and binary opposition contribute to the effectiveness of the parables? Provide specific examples.

4. Choose three categories of parables (e.g., parables of lost and found, parables of forgiveness and mercy, parables of the second coming) and discuss the common themes and messages conveyed in each category.

5. Discuss the significance of "acted parables" in Jesus' ministry. How do these non-verbal actions communicate spiritual truths, and what is their impact on the audience? Provide at least three examples from the Gospels.

Glossary of Key Terms

-   **Parable:** A short story that illustrates a moral attitude or a religious principle; in the New Testament, a broader genre including allegories, similitudes, proverbs, and paradoxes.

-   **Allegory:** A story in which people and events represent abstract ideas or moral qualities.

-   **Similitude:** Something that is longer than a single simile but not really long enough to be a story.

-   **Sample Parable:** A story that illustrates some spiritual truth by giving a sample of it rather than by giving an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

-   **Simile:** An explicit comparison employing words like "as" or "like."

-   **Metaphor:** An implicit comparison not employing words like "as" or "like."

-   **Tenor:** In analogy theory, the underlying meaning or subject of a parable; the heavenly meaning.

-   **Vehicle:** In analogy theory, the means by which the tenor is conveyed; the earthly story.

-   **Binary Opposition:** A strong distinction between characters, events, or things in a story, often presenting them as very good versus very bad.

-   **Christological Parable:** A parable mainly about who Jesus is.

-   **Acted Parable:** A parable where the person, instead of saying anything, might give a hint or two, and then does something unusual.

5. FAQs on Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Session 6, Parables, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Jesus' Parables

1. What is a parable, and how does the New Testament definition differ from the common English definition?

A parable, in common English, is a short, fictitious story illustrating a moral attitude or religious principle. However, the New Testament usage of the word "parable" encompasses a much broader range of figurative genres, including parables in the narrow sense, allegories, similitudes, sample parables, proverbs, and paradoxes. It's important to note that whether a parable is fictitious or not does not impact biblical inerrancy.

2. How do parables function as analogies, and what are the key components of this analogy?

Parables function as analogies between an earthly story and a heavenly meaning. The "tenor" is the heavenly meaning being conveyed, while the "vehicle" is the earthly story that carries the tenor. The key to understanding a parable lies in identifying one or more "points of resemblance" or analogies between the elements of the earthly story and the corresponding aspects of the heavenly meaning. Many of Jesus' parables operate as analogies of equation, demonstrating a parallel relationship between the earthly and heavenly realms.

3. What are some common characteristics of parables as stories, and what techniques do they often employ?

Parables often possess several key characteristics of effective storytelling. They are typically brief and unified, focusing on a limited number of actors, often following a "rule of two" with two principal characters. They frequently use direct discourse to make the story vivid and develop serially, moving from beginning to end without unnecessary diversions. The "rule of three" is also common, limiting the number of items or characters to maintain clarity. Repetition, binary opposition (e.g., good vs. bad), and an end stress or resolution, often with a reversal, are also frequently used.

4. What are some of the different categories of parables, and what themes do they commonly address?

Parables can be categorized based on their content and focus. Some key categories include:

- **Christological Parables:** Focus on who Jesus is.

- **Parables of Lost and Found:** Illustrate God's concern for the lost.

- **Parables of Forgiveness and Mercy:** Highlight the importance of forgiveness.

- **Parables on Prayer:** Emphasize persistence and God's provision.

- **Parables of Transformation:** Show the newness of the Gospel.

- **Parables of Stewardship:** Highlight our responsibility to use entrusted wealth wisely.

- **Parables of Invitation and Rejection:** Depict the offer of the Gospel.

- **Parables of the Second Coming:** Warn of the need to be ready for Christ's return.

- **Parables of Warning and Judgment:** Call for repentance.

- **Parables of the Kingdom:** Reveal the nature and progress of Jesus' kingdom.

- **Illustrative Parables:** Illustrate a spiritual truth.

- **Acted Parables:** Unusual acts that symbolically represent a spiritual truth.

5. What is the significance of "acted parables," and what are some examples?

Acted parables are instances where Jesus performs an unusual action, often without explicit explanation, to convey a spiritual truth. Examples include cursing the fig tree (representing God's reaction to Israel's lack of righteousness), cleansing the Temple (expressing anger at the misuse of the Temple), Jesus at 12 in the Temple, Jesus' baptism, and healing on the Sabbath. These actions are intended to make people think and consider their deeper meaning.

6. What is the difference between simile, metaphor, parable, and allegory?

A simile is an explicit comparison using words like "as" or "like" (e.g., "God is like a king"). A metaphor is an implicit comparison without using "as" or "like" (e.g., "God is a king"). A parable is an extended simile developed into a story. An allegory is a story where persons or elements represent concepts (e.g., John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*).

7. What is the "rule of three" as it relates to parables?

The "rule of three" refers to the common characteristic in parables to avoid complicating the story by limiting certain elements (characters, events, items) to three. This helps make the parable more memorable and easier to understand. An example is the parable of the pounds, where three servants out of ten are focused on.

8. Why might Jesus use parables to teach?

Parables were designed to be interesting and use a number of storytelling techniques. They were also used to present analogies that would help the audience understand a heavenly principle in light of an earthly story. The hope is that people would hear the story, and consider it. Then, the listeners would connect the dots and realize the meaning behind the story.