

Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Session 11, John and Parables Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 11, John and Parables, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Mathewson's lecture focuses on the Gospel of John and the parables of Jesus. The lecture highlights the distinctive characteristics of John compared to the synoptic gospels, including its emphasis on Jesus's deity, its use of the term "logos," and its focus on eternal life. It explores key passages and unique elements like the "I Am" statements. The lecture transitions into a discussion of parables, analyzing their historical interpretation and offering a contemporary approach. It argues that parables, while allegorical, should be interpreted by focusing on the major characters and their meaning within the context of Jesus's teachings, rather than assigning spiritual meanings to every detail.

**2. 14 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 11 – Double click icon
to play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Daniel).**



**Mathewson_NTLit_S
ession 11.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 11, John and Parables

Okay, here is a briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture excerpts:

Briefing Document: Dr. Dave Mathewson on John and the Parables

Overall Themes:

- The distinctiveness of the Gospel of John compared to the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke).
- An exploration of the unique features and emphases within John's Gospel.
- A discussion on how to interpret Jesus' parables.

Key Ideas and Facts:

I. The Gospel of John: Distinctive Features and Emphases

- **Distinct from the Synoptics:** John is considered different, even "more spiritual" or "more theological," although Mathewson cautions against overstating this difference. A lot of the material in John does not occur in the synoptics and the vocabulary is different too.
- **Authorship:** The author is anonymous, only hinted at as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" or "the beloved disciple." Traditional view attributes it to John, Jesus' Apostle.
- **Purpose:** John explicitly states his purpose: "these things are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and that through believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:30-31). The goal is to engender or strengthen faith in Jesus as the Messiah and to obtain eternal life.
- **Prologue (John 1:1-18):** This prologue is crucial for understanding John's perspective. It introduces Jesus as "the Word" (logos), emphasizing Jesus as the revealer of God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). The Word becomes flesh (John 1:14).
- **Jesus as Revealer of God:** Because Jesus is both God and human, He is uniquely suited to reveal God to humanity. "No one has ever seen the Father...except the one and only begotten...who makes him known" (John 1:18). Jesus bridges the gap between God and humanity.

- **Key Passages Highlighted:** **John 3:** Nicodemus, including John 3:16 ("For God so loved the world...").
- **John 4:** The Samaritan woman at the well.
- **John 14-17:** The "Upper Room Discourse," Jesus' final instructions to his disciples.
- **John 21:** Resurrection appearance, Peter's reinstatement (asked three times if he loves Jesus to counteract his three denials).
- **"I Am" Statements:** A unique feature where Jesus equates himself with metaphors, often drawing from Old Testament attributes of God. Examples include:
 - "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35)
 - "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12)
 - "I am the door" (John 10:9)
 - "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11)
 - "I am the resurrection and the life"
 - "I am the way, the truth, and the life"
 - "I am the true vine"
- **Emphasis on the Deity of Christ:** John overtly identifies Jesus as God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).
- **"Logos" (Word):** A title for Jesus, possibly chosen for its resonance in both Jewish (God's speech) and Greco-Roman (animating principle) contexts.
- **Eternal Life:** John emphasizes "eternal life" as what Jesus offers, in contrast to the Synoptics' focus on the "Kingdom of God."
- **The Holy Spirit:** Particularly in chapters 14-17, the Holy Spirit is promised to take Jesus' place and be his continuing presence with his followers.
- **Dualism:** Stark opposites like above/below, light/darkness, life/death run throughout the Gospel, possibly reflecting a sectarian audience.
- **Reasons for Differences from the Synoptics:** Later date of writing, addressing a different situation/audience, possible assumption of knowledge of the Synoptics,

and John's own summary and style using his own vocabulary when presenting Jesus' teachings.

II. Interpreting the Parables

- **Parables were not unique to Jesus:** Rabbis commonly used them as teaching tools.
- **Historical Interpretation (Allegorical):** Traditionally, parables were treated as detailed allegories, with every detail having a deeper spiritual meaning. Augustine's interpretation of the Good Samaritan is used as an example.
- **Modern Interpretation (One Main Point):** Adolf Jülicher argued parables communicate only one main point, and interpreters should focus on identifying that point. This has become the dominant approach.
- **Emerging Mediating Position:** Parables are brief allegorical narratives, but *not* every detail has allegorical meaning. Only the major characters and events have allegorical significance, and the meaning must be consistent with Jesus' teaching in context.
- **Example: Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15):** Father = God
- Younger Son = Sinner who repents
- Older Son = Those who should rejoice at God's forgiveness of sinners.

Exam Preparation:

- Focus on comparing and contrasting the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).
- Understand what's distinct about each Gospel's themes, structure, and portrayal of Jesus.
- Focus on remembering the *chapters* where key events and teachings are found (not necessarily specific verses).
- Be able to identify the main chapters associated with key sections in John.

4. Study Guide: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 11, John and Parables

John and the Parables: A Study Guide

I. Quiz: Short Answer Questions

1. **What is one of the primary ways that John differs from the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke)?** John's Gospel is more theological and spiritual in nature, and he overtly and clearly identifies Jesus as God.
2. **What is the stated purpose of John in writing his Gospel?** John states that he wrote his Gospel so that readers may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing, they may have life in his name.
3. **What is the significance of the prologue (John 1:1-18) in understanding John's Gospel?** The prologue introduces Jesus as the Word (Logos), who is both God and became flesh, bridging the gap between God and humanity and revealing God to humanity.
4. **What is the importance of the "I AM" statements in the Gospel of John?** The "I AM" statements are statements of Jesus' deity that equate Jesus with images of God from the Old Testament.
5. **How does John's Gospel portray Jesus in relation to the Synoptic Gospels?** While the Synoptics emphasize the Kingdom of God, John emphasizes the deity of Christ, portraying Him as the Word (Logos), who is fully God and fully man.
6. **Describe the discourse between Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3.** In John 3, Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night and questions him about what is required for entrance into God's kingdom. This results in Jesus' teaching about being born again and the famous John 3:16 verse.
7. **What is the significance of the Samaritan woman encounter with Jesus in John 4?** Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at a well and she responds in faith to him.
8. **What is the main point that Adolf Jülicher communicated concerning the interpretation of the parables?** The main point Jülicher tried to communicate was that parables communicated only one main point and no more than that.
9. **According to the lecture, what is a good method for interpreting the parables?** The suggestion is to identify the main characters in a parable and try to interpret the allegorical meaning of only them, depending on the text in question.

10. **What is the significance of John 21, the chapter following the stated purpose of John's Gospel?** This chapter recounts Jesus' resurrection appearance to his disciples and, uniquely, the reinstatement of Peter, where Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves him.

II. Answer Key to Quiz

1. John's Gospel is more theological and spiritual in nature, and he overtly and clearly identifies Jesus as God.
2. John states that he wrote his Gospel so that readers may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing, they may have life in his name.
3. The prologue introduces Jesus as the Word (Logos), who is both God and became flesh, bridging the gap between God and humanity and revealing God to humanity.
4. The "I AM" statements are statements of Jesus' deity that equate Jesus with images of God from the Old Testament.
5. While the Synoptics emphasize the Kingdom of God, John emphasizes the deity of Christ, portraying Him as the Word (Logos), who is fully God and fully man.
6. In John 3, Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night and questions him about what is required for entrance into God's kingdom. This results in Jesus' teaching about being born again and the famous John 3:16 verse.
7. Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at a well and she responds in faith to him.
8. The main point Jülicher tried to communicate was that parables communicated only one main point and no more than that.
9. The suggestion is to identify the main characters in a parable and try to interpret the allegorical meaning of only them, depending on the text in question.
10. This chapter recounts Jesus' resurrection appearance to his disciples and, uniquely, the reinstatement of Peter, where Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves him.

III. Essay Questions

1. Discuss the distinctiveness of John's Gospel in comparison to the Synoptic Gospels, highlighting key themes and unique passages.
2. Analyze the significance of the "I AM" statements in John's Gospel and their implications for understanding Jesus' identity and mission.
3. Compare and contrast the portrayal of the Holy Spirit in John's Gospel with its portrayal in the Synoptic Gospels.
4. Explore the historical development of parable interpretation, from allegorical readings to modern approaches that emphasize a single main point, and the mediating position that understands allegorical significance in only major characters and events.
5. Examine the dualistic themes (light/dark, above/below) in John's Gospel and discuss potential reasons for their prominence, considering the socio-historical context of John's audience.

IV. Glossary of Key Terms

- **Synoptic Gospels:** The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, so called because they share a similar perspective and contain many of the same stories, allowing them to be "seen together."
- **Beloved Disciple:** A term used in the Gospel of John to refer to an unnamed disciple who is often traditionally identified with John the Apostle.
- **Logos (Word):** A Greek term used in the Gospel of John to refer to Jesus Christ, emphasizing his role as the divine self-revelation of God.
- **Eternal Life:** A concept in John's Gospel referring to the life of the new creation and the life that God's people would enjoy when God establishes his reign.
- **I AM Statements:** A series of declarations made by Jesus in the Gospel of John, in which he identifies himself with divine attributes and metaphors.
- **Upper Room Discourse:** The lengthy teaching that Jesus gives to his disciples in the upper room on the night before his crucifixion (John 14-17).
- **Parable:** A short, allegorical story used by Jesus to teach a moral or spiritual lesson.
- **Allegory:** A story in which the characters and events represent abstract ideas or moral qualities.
- **Dualism:** The division of something conceptually into two opposed or contrasted aspects.
- **Kingdom of God:** God's reign and rule.

5. FAQs on Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 11, John and Parables, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on the Gospel of John and Parables

- **How does the Gospel of John differ from the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke)?**
- John's Gospel exhibits distinct differences from the Synoptic Gospels. It's often considered more spiritual or theological. Much of the material in John doesn't appear in the Synoptics, and the vocabulary and Jesus' manner of speaking are noticeably different. John explicitly states his purpose for writing which is to convince readers that Jesus is the Messiah and that belief in Him leads to eternal life. John emphasizes Jesus' deity and uses the term "logos" (Word) to describe Jesus as God's self-revelation. The Synoptics tend to emphasize the "Kingdom of God", but John emphasizes "eternal life."
- **Who wrote the Gospel of John, and what is its purpose?**
- The Gospel of John is anonymous, but tradition attributes it to John, the Apostle. The author identifies himself indirectly as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (the Beloved Disciple). According to John 20:30-31, the purpose is to convince readers that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing, they may have eternal life in His name, as well as to strengthen the faith of believers. Some scholars theorize the gospel may also have had an evangelistic purpose to persuade non-believing Jews to convert to Christianity.
- **What is the significance of the Prologue (John 1:1-18) in understanding the Gospel of John?**
- The Prologue is crucial for understanding John's Gospel. It introduces Jesus as the "Word" (Logos), who was with God and was God. The Word became flesh (Jesus) and revealed God to humanity. Jesus functions as the bridge between God and humanity, being both fully God and fully human. The Prologue also lays out the possible responses to Jesus: acceptance (leading to becoming children of God) and rejection.

- **What are some key passages or unique features in the Gospel of John?**
- Key passages include:
 - **John 3:** The encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus, containing the famous verse John 3:16 ("For God so loved the world...").
 - **John 4:** The story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well.
 - **John 14-17:** Jesus' lengthy "Upper Room Discourse," offering final instructions to His disciples.
 - **John 21:** The resurrection appearance of Jesus and the reinstatement of Peter.
- **The "I Am" Statements:** Jesus identifies Himself with metaphors like "I am the bread of life," "I am the light of the world," "I am the good shepherd," "I am the way, the truth, and the life" and "I am the true vine."
- **What are the "I Am" statements in the Gospel of John, and what do they signify?**
- The "I Am" statements are unique to John's Gospel and are metaphorical declarations where Jesus equates Himself with images that often have Old Testament connections to God. Examples include "I am the bread of life," "I am the light of the world," "I am the door," "I am the good shepherd," "I am the resurrection and the life," "I am the way, the truth, and the life," and "I am the true vine." These statements are often interpreted as declarations of Jesus' deity, as He claims attributes that were traditionally associated with God.
- **What are some of the major themes found in the Gospel of John?**
- Major themes in John include:
 - **The Deity of Christ:** John emphasizes Jesus as God, more explicitly than the Synoptics.
 - **Jesus as the Logos (Word):** Jesus is portrayed as God's self-revelation.
 - **Eternal Life:** John focuses on eternal life as the gift Jesus offers.
 - **The Holy Spirit:** Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to continue His presence with believers after His departure.
 - **Dualism:** The Gospel presents stark opposites like light and darkness, above and below, and life and death.

- **What are parables, and how were they traditionally interpreted?**
- Parables are short stories used by Jesus (and other rabbis) to teach moral or spiritual lessons. Traditionally, parables were often interpreted as detailed allegories, where every element of the story was thought to have a deeper spiritual meaning or correspondence. This approach involved finding symbolic connections between the parable's details and other parts of the Bible or church tradition.
- **How should we interpret parables today, according to modern scholarship?**
- Modern scholarship generally rejects the overly allegorical approach to parables. The dominant approach is to find the central message. A modern approach acknowledges that parables are indeed allegorical fictional narratives, but not every little detail has an allegorical meaning, but instead that only the major characters and events of the parables that have an allegorical meaning. The meaning must be consistent with Jesus' teaching in context.