

ML107 Without a Parable

Jesus sits in a ship while teaching a multitude [Mt-13:1-2]. Matthew used the word “*parable*” to identify His first four lessons [V3, 24, 31, and 33]; then He used “*like*” to identify the next four lessons [V44, 45, 47 and 52].

Read the four “*likes*” and notice that these are also parables. Thus, the words “*parable*” and “*like*” are sometimes interchangeable. Verse-53 confirms this: “*And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.*”

Not only this, Jesus spoke only parables when speaking to the multitudes: “*All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them*” [Mt. 13:34].

You can use this rule as a tool to help determine when Jesus is speaking plainly and when He’s speaking figuratively. The eight parables above are exceptions; most texts don’t say which mode of speech He’s using.

Although not expressed as clearly as the rule concerning multitudes, Jesus always used parables when any of the four religious leaders were present — Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes and Lawyers. So then, any time Jesus is addressing a multitude or a group that includes these religious leaders, we know that everything He says is figurative — again, this is true even when there are no words to identify which kind of speech He’s using.

Now, we need to consider another situation concerning His 12 disciples: “*But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples*” [Mr. 4:34]. Jesus waited until He and the disciples were alone before explaining the parables He had spoken to the multitudes and religious leaders.

Even so, Mr. 4:34 doesn’t rule out figurative speech when Jesus is alone with His 12 disciples. There’s ample proof that He spoke to them both plainly and figuratively.

In summary, Jesus spoke only parables when addressing the multitudes; He spoke only parables when religious leaders were in His audience, and He spoke parables and plain speech when alone with His disciples. Now let’s examine some texts relative to these situations.

Speaking to the Multitudes

The Beatitudes in Mt. 5:3-11 seem to show Jesus using plain speech when speaking to a multitude. However, the rule in Mt. 13:34 “*cannot be broken*” [Joh. 10:35]. So then, the Beatitudes are figurative. Notice how the rule of Jesus speaking only parables to multitudes forces us to interpret

words that we might think are plain speech.

Now, skip down to Mt. 5:21 and notice something extraordinary. Jesus takes some commandments which we know are plain speech and uses them as parables. “*Thou shalt not kill*” [do no murder] is plain speech — it means what it says. However, Jesus used this commandment as a parable to teach that undue anger is equivalent to murder.

Plain Speech and Parables to the Disciples

When Jesus was alone with His 12 disciples, He explained the meanings of the parables He had spoken to the multitudes. In Mark 4:1-9, Jesus spoke the parable of “The Sower” to a great multitude. Then, after explaining why He spoke only parables to the multitudes, He interpreted “The Sower Parable” [Mr 4:10-20].

Now turn to John 11:1-14 and read a text in which Jesus uses a parable to speak to His 12 disciples. Read the full text, then focus on 11:9-11 where Jesus uses several symbols. These include walking, stumbling, day, light, night and sleep. It’s difficult to know how many of the disciples understood these, but after having said plainly “Lazarus is dead” in V14, one would think they should have understood what Jesus was saying.

Using the Tool

Jonah and the Whale — Mt. 12:38-40

Please read this text in your Bible. Verse-40 contains a mystery that has baffled Theologians for centuries. They have contemplated double Sabbaths and other scriptural gimmicks, but none have been able to correlate the time Jesus spent in the tomb with the time Jonah was in the whale’s belly.

Jonah was in the whale for three days and nights. Jesus was in the tomb one day and two nights. So, how could Jesus “*liken*” His time in the tomb to Jonah’s time in the whale? [Notice that “*liken*” is “*equate*.”]

They buried Jesus after the ninth hour [3PM - Mt. 27:46] on a Friday afternoon. Jesus arose the following Sunday morning before daybreak [Joh. 20:1]. And He was in the tomb for only one day and two nights.

You only need to read Mt. 12:38-39 to discover the long sought-after answer. His audience includes Scribes and Pharisees — men to whom Jesus spoke only parables. This means that His statement concerning His time in the heart of the earth is a parable.

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Let's repeat the facts: Jonah's time in the whale's belly was 3-days and 3-nights; Jesus' time in the earth was 1-day and 2 nights. The math does not show these equal.

Old Testament theology includes a parable called a "Three days' Journey" [see Ge. 30:36, Ex. 3:18, 5:3, 8:27, Nu. 10:33, 33:8, and Joh. 3:3]. In Ge. 1:5, God called the light "Day" and the darkness "Night." In 2Co. 4:6, Paul interprets light as knowledge. Because light represents knowledge, darkness represents ignorance.

When someone says, "Now, I see the light," they mean that they understand something they had been ignorant of before. This can be a riddle, a joke— anything. Whatever this something is, you can call it light, which is one day according to Ge 1:5.

Thus, a "Three days' Journey" represents three concepts of knowledge. For example, the knowledge of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus is "three lights" which are equal to one "Three days' Journey."

Death represents repentance; burial represents water

baptism and rising from the water represents resurrection. So then, all who repent of their sins and are baptized in water take a "Three days' Journey."

As you can see, Jonah went on a literal journey and Jesus went on a figurative journey. So then, the knowledge that Jesus spoke figuratively solves the mystery of the time that Christ's spent in the tomb.

For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth [Mt. 12:40].

D1: Jonah cast overboard — Jesus on His Cross.

D2: Jonah in the whale — Jesus in the tomb.

D3: Jonah on the beach — Jesus resurrected.

Finally, this interpretation explains two additional mysteries. Jesus arose the 3rd figurative day [Mt. 17:2]. And He raised the temple of His body in three figurative days [Joh. 2:19].