Parables of Jesus : notes

The word *parable* comes from the Greek παραβολή (*parabolē*), meaning "comparison, illustration, analogy." Parables are an old well known form of literature used in Old Testament times.

Jesus spoke in parables
- to **conceal** the secrets of the kingdom of God from those who did not seek the truth
- to **reveal** truth to genuine believers.

See Matthew 13 verses 10 to 13 and Mark 4 verses 10 to 12.

The parables of Jesus
- are found in the New Testament in Matthew, Mark, Luke (and John)
- are spoken illustrations to draw the listener in
- often have an unexpected ending which catches people off guard (like the end of a good joke)
- call for a response from the people who hear them

What the parables are	*What the parables are not*
- *are* open to much misinterpretation - *are* often told to make one central point - *were* originally *told* to a specific audience to immediately communicate to *them*	- *not* allegorical mysteries where there is some spiritual truth in every little detail - the *written down* text does *not* provide all the needed points of reference for *us* to immediately understand

Parables of Jesus can be divided into **three main types**:

1. **similitude**
   The parable uses illustrations from everyday life which everyone would immediately identify with. They are usually told in the present tense. These are the easiest parables to understand and are powerful because they start from familiar objects or tasks (loosing a coin, sowing a seed) which most listeners would personally have experienced. For example:-
   "God's kingdom is like . . . yeast / a fishing net / treasure / a mustard seed / a king "
   "Which of you . . . " "What woman . . . "

2. **true parable**
   These parables are stories with a definite beginning, middle and end. More detailed than a similitude. *"There once was a . . . these detailed things happened . . . and this is how it finished."* Usually told in the past tense. The story is fictitious but remains true to life.
   For example:-
   "Once there was a rich man." "There was a man who had two sons." "There was a judge . . "

3. **example story**
   These parables use a specific example very close to the message being illustrated. Told in the past tense. Jesus told four parables like this:-
   "Good Samaritan", "Rich man foolishly builds bigger barns", "Rich man and Lazarus" and "Pharisee and tax collector"

A recurring theme of the parables is "the kingdom of God". This refers to the influence of God through Jesus and in his followers today. The kingdom of God is two-fold. It is first the beginning of God's rule and reign today in the hearts and lives of those who choose to submit to him. It is also the final rule and reign of God over the world when he returns in the person of Jesus, saving the earth and restoring mankind. It could be said the kingdom is "here now, but not yet".

Parables help reveal:-
- what the *kingdom* is like (does the parable refer to the kingdom now *or* the future kingdom?)
- the nature of the *king*
- characteristics of the *king's subjects*.