

Jesus' Parables in Chronological Order

Parable #1 — Matthew 9:16 — New Cloth Patch on an Old Coat

¹⁶“No one sews a patch of unshrunk [new] cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse.”

Parable #2 — Matthew 9:17 — New Wine in Old Wineskins

¹⁷“Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.”

Parable #3 — Matthew 5:14-15 — Lamp on a Stand

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.”

Parable #4 — Luke 6:46-49 — Wise and Foolish Builders

⁴⁶“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? ⁴⁷I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. ⁴⁸He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. ⁴⁹But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”

Parables #1 & #2 — Matthew 9:16-17

1. These are the first of Jesus' parables. They are among the few that are in all three synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). Jesus told them around the same time as the sermon on the mount and the calling of his first apostles. What is the point he is making with a story about an old coat and an old wineskin?
2. The people in Jesus' audience were some disciples of John the Baptist (and perhaps some Pharisees). The parable had a special meaning for them. What was it? And what is the message for us today?
3. In what ways does following Christ require us to replace old habits with new ones? Why do we resist making these changes?

Parable #3 — Matthew 5:14-15 — Lamp on a Stand

1. Jesus often refers to himself (or is referred to) as the "light of the world" (John 8:12, 9:5, 1:9, 3:19, 12:35). What does he mean, then, by saying to mere men in this verse, "you are the light of the world"?
2. Jesus uses two illustrations in this short parable (city on a hill and light in a house). How might these apply to us? (Matthew 5:16)

Parable #4 — Luke 6:46-49 — Wise and Foolish Builders

1. This parable is the end of the sermon on the mount. What is Jesus' final message which he illustrates with the parable of building a house (Luke 6:46-47)?
2. Jesus says we are to do what he says. What did he just finish saying that we should do?
3. How does the parable illustrate what Jesus says we should do?
4. What is the rock or the foundation upon which you should build your house? (1 Corinthians 3:11)
5. What is the main message in this parable? How can you apply it to your life today?

Parables #1 & #2 — Matthew 9:16-17 — Notes to Leader

1. The metaphors were drawn from contemporary culture in the time of Jesus. Wineskins would stretch with new wine being put in as it continues to ferment, and then they would harden. If new wine was put into a hardened wineskin, the continued fermentation risked bursting the skin. Similarly, new cloth would be expected to shrink considerably, so using it to patch already-shrunken cloth would be asking for problems.

2-3. None of us likes to give up something familiar or comfortable. This is even more true when this “something” has been the controlling point for our view of reality, morality, and religion. So we have a tendency to plug in something we like in a new experience or religion into our old religious context and make it fit. Jesus’ point here is that what he brings cannot be made to fit in the old order and old forms of religion with which the Jews were familiar. To do that would be destructive to both the old and the new. What Jesus brings is new, fresh, and transformational. It will rip apart anything that tries to force it into another way of doing, perceiving and experiencing. Becoming a Christian is a whole new life, not just another religion to be thrown into the world mix of faiths. This is as true today as it was 2,000 years ago.

Jesus is saying he was the start of a new religion separate from Judaism, and even from that of John the Baptist. You have to be careful of taking this too far, as some Christians have used it to propose new ways of being Christian or even entirely new forms of Christianity.

4. One must interpret this as meaning that Jesus’ disciples, including us today, shine with His light by virtue of His spirit dwelling in them (and us). We must never forget where the light comes from. It doesn't come from you. You are not the source. You are not the generator. You are merely a mirror, a reflector. You are like the moon. As you all know, the moon has no light of its own. It merely reflects the light of the sun. In the same way, you have no light of your own. You are to merely reflect the light of Jesus. This means that you need to stay close to Jesus in order to reflect His light. You need to read the Bible and meditate upon the Word and pray and sing the Lord's praises. That's the only way to stay close to the Light. That's the only way to reflect the Light.

Parable #3 — Matthew 5:14-15 — Lamp on a Stand

2. Many Judean cities were founded on the summits or sides of mountains, and travelers could see them from afar. Perhaps Jesus pointed to such a city, telling His disciples that they were like it. The city built on an important location can be seen by many eyes over a wide area, representing a disciple’s far-ranging and

widespread exposure to others.

Jesus' illustration of a shining lamp illuminating the home suggests a disciple's more intimate influence. A Christian's actions cannot be hidden from the eyes of either our families or the world at large. This being the case, one should live a righteous, holy, humble, and pure life, letting "your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

Parable #4 — Luke 6:47-49 — Wise and Foolish Builders

1. Here's the Lord speaking to the most religious people possible, the people in the right religion, Judaism. Jesus says, "The problem is you call me Lord but you don't do what I say." That's the problem. I'm not looking for your curiosity, I'm not looking for your fascination. I'm not looking for your admiration. I'm telling you what it is to be a true follower. But He says it doesn't mean anything if you don't do what I say.

2. What Jesus says is, you have to recognize your sin, see that you are prisoners, blind and oppressed, that you are the poor, that you are the hungry, that you are starving spiritually, that you are the sad over whose lives there should be endless mourning because of your alienation from God. He says, "I'm telling you, you've got to look at yourself and see yourself as a sinner, then you've got to look at me and see me as your Lord and cry out to God for mercy."

3. Jesus gives an illustration that is unforgettable. "The one who comes to Me hears My words and acts upon them," that's obedience, "I'll show you whom he's like. He's like a man building a house who dug deep," that's kind of the idea of repentance, getting really down to the realities of my own life and down also deep into the truth of God, "and laid a foundation upon the rock."

4. Rock is an Old Testament term for God, isn't it? And foundation is a New Testament term for Christ used a number of times, e.g., 1 Corinthians 3:11.

So what you have here is the message of Christ which is about God as the rock, about Christ as the foundation, and the gospel. So whoever builds his life on the gospel, on the great cornerstone of the gospel from Matthew 16, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." That's the rock bed, cornerstone foundation. When you go down and you build your life on God in Christ and the gospel, storms of judgment can never move your house. That's somebody who just doesn't admire Jesus, but who embraces Him as Lord and Savior.

5. The key thing here is not to admire Christ, it's to obey Christ.