

# Parables of Jesus - The Overarching Theme

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The parables of Jesus teach many beautiful truths about God's kingdom, but what many haven't realized is that there is one overarching theme about God's kingdom that is revealed through all of His parables. It is the truth about His government - and about how reality in His kingdom works - and **that truth is that God's law is [design law](#)**.

Through His parables, Jesus consistently exposed that God's kingdom is not like the kingdoms of this world, which make up rules and then enforce those rules by inflicted punishments. Jesus revealed that God's kingdom is the kingdom of reality, built upon laws that life operates upon. These are constants that never change, like the laws of health, physics, and the moral laws. Jesus' amazing parables reveal that deviations from God's design laws cause death - that death is not an infliction from His Father. Further, His parables reveal that God is love and that He continually seeks to heal all who trust Him, restoring them back to harmony with His design law for life.

Below is a review of His many parables highlighting the overarching theme of God's design law.

## **The Lamp** | Matthew 5:14-16

- If one lights a lamp and allows it to do what it does naturally, it shines and illuminates. What kind of law is revealed in this parable? God's truth and love will always shine out through the lives of

those who possess it, brightening the world around them. And if one tries to hide the light, they are working against how reality operates.

### **The Speck and The Log** | Matthew 7:1-5

- What is the natural result of a larger object in one's eye? Greater visual obstruction. This parable teaches the reality that falsehood, bias, error, and prejudice obstruct our ability to discern, comprehend, and understand reality. The more lies we believe, the greater the blindness. So if we want to be effective in helping others, we must first remove the distortions from our own minds. What kind of law is being described here? Again: design law, how reality works.

### **New Cloth on Old Garment** | Matthew 9:16, 17

- What happens when new cloth is sewn onto an old garment? The new cloth tears the old fabric. Why? Does a ruling authority inspect the garment and issue a decree that is enforced by government agents, who tear a bigger hole? Or is it design law – how reality works? This is the same lesson taught in the story of the new wine in old skins, which [one of our class members wrote an excellent blog about](#). The good news about God – the gospel – cannot be sewn onto the old garment of legal religiosity; it requires a new heart for the new truth.

### **The Divided Kingdom** | Matthew 12:24-30

- A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand; why? For what reason? It is the natural result of warring against oneself: the system collapses. What kind of law causes the collapse of a kingdom at war against itself? God's kingdom can never achieve its goals of healing hearts and minds if we use the methods of the world – imposed law. Thus, we cannot use human governments to achieve our godly goals. We are called to come out of the world and be separate.

### **The Sower** | Matthew 13:1-23

- Why do the same species of seeds grow differently? Is it because God uses His power to miraculously make the seeds grow differently? Or are the seeds equally healthy when planted and receive equal amounts of sunlight and rain, but the soil in which the seeds are planted is different? Which represents what? The hearts of people into which the seeds of truth are planted; again, what kind of law is involved?

### **The Weeds Among the Wheat** | Matthew 13:24-30

- Why do weeds grow in fields? Are they planted, or do they come up naturally? What happens when you pull weeds growing next to wheat? Does some of the wheat get pulled up? In the church, the unconverted grow up next to the converted; if we try to root out the unconverted, we will also pull out of the church the converted to whom the unconverted are connected. Thus, we are instructed to wait until the harvest, the second coming, to separate the wheat and the tares. And what determines which group one is placed into? Reality! Wheat is wheat, and weeds are weeds – they are separated based on what they actually are. So too, in the end, those saved are those who have had their hearts and minds set right with God (reborn), while the lost are those who have never had their hearts changed, despite many of them claiming a legal right of salvation via the blood payment of Jesus. What kind of law is involved?

### **The Mustard Seed** | Matthew 13:31, 32

- What does a mustard seed do when it is planted in a garden, watered, and nurtured? It does what it was designed to do; it grows and becomes a place of shade for others. The mustard seed represents the gospel, which grows in the heart of those who accept it and brings forth the fruits of a righteous character. Those who have a righteous character create atmospheres of love, grace, and mercy, giving shade from the scorching heat of this world's sin and selfishness. What kind of law is involved?

### **The Leaven** | Matthew 13:33, 34

- What is the lesson of leaven? How does leaven work? Is it that God inspects the flour and, if the flour contains leaven, then God uses miraculous power to make it rise, but for those who don't use leaven, God refuses to perform the miracle so that their bread doesn't rise? No – it is a natural result of design law at work, how these various substances function in harmony with the laws that God built life to operate upon. It is the kingdom of God's reality.

### **Hidden Treasure** | Matthew 13:44 – Pearl of Great Price | Matthew 13:45, 46

- What is the natural result when our hearts value something? And when we value that thing more than anything else, what do we do? What law is being described? Is some external force or threat being applied to force the person to pursue their treasure?

### **The Net** | Matthew 13:47-50

- What determines which fish are kept and which are discarded? It is the condition of the fish themselves – there is no jury, no prosecutor, no defense lawyer, no judge. It is all based on the actual condition of the fish. So too, in the end of time, people will be separated by their condition of heart: having accepted Jesus and been renewed in love – or rejected Jesus and been hardened in selfishness. This is design law and not a penal/legal issue at all!

### **What Comes Out of the Mouth** | Matthew 15:10-20

- Why is it that what goes into a person's mouth does not determine his cleanliness, but rather what comes out of his mouth? What kind of law is involved? Is the person who speaks evil unclean because someone hears what they say, reports it to authorities, which causes a judicial review and a legal ruling that declares them unclean? Or do the words and actions of a person reveal the actual unclean nature of their character?

### **The Lost Sheep** | Matthew 18:10-14

- This parable reveals the reality of God's heart and attitude and shows how love works. Love seeks without inducement, without payment, without counting the cost. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16). The lost sheep did not have to do anything to get the shepherd to come looking for it. Instead, "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8 NIV84). God's action to save us is the natural action to take when love rules the heart. Again, the parable teaches the reality that God is love and that His kingdom is the kingdom of love. No legal process in a courtroom is necessary.

## **The Unforgiving Servant** | Matthew 18:23-35

- What causes the servant with the great debt to ultimately be lost? The servant experienced grace in having his debt forgiven – but that grace did not change his heart. That servant went out and demanded payment from one who owed him a much smaller debt – and, yes, it was his legal right to do so. In other words, the unforgiving servant followed what was legal. Then why was he lost? Because salvation is not a legal issue; it is an issue of character. Despite being legal in his actions, he remained selfish. The unforgiving servant did not experience a change of heart despite the grace given him. Again, Jesus reveals how reality works; God's kingdom is not based on imposed law. Those who cling to that method, legal rules, and have no heart change are like this lost servant – legally right but terminally selfish.

## **Laborers in the Vineyard** | Matthew 20:1-16

- This is a great parable because it powerfully exposes the fallacy of imposed law – the lie of penal (legal) salvation. The workers who worked one hour got the same pay as those who worked all day. What did those who worked all day think? What do you initially think when you hear this story? What if we added to the story that those who worked all day were people of color while those who worked only one hour were white – and they all got the same pay? Is that fair? It is totally unfair *if we have an imposed-law view*, but if we have a design-law view and understand how reality works, we immediately see just how fair God's kingdom is. The payment is eternal life; this is the reward. The field is the earth, where we work with Jesus to save souls. Those who worked all day had salvation early in their lives and the privilege of working with God and, therefore, coming to know Him and His truths more fully and growing in character and skill in God's methods. They applied His methods early in their lives and became more skilled in laboring for Him and applying His principles, which means they became more mature than those who worked only an hour. The thief on the cross came at the last hour and got the same pay (eternal life), but he did not have a lifetime of growing with God. But if one holds the human-law model, the penal lie, then this parable appears unfair. This is why the Pharisees hated what Jesus taught!

## **The Two Sons** | Matthew 21:28-32

- One son says he will work in his father's field but then doesn't; the other son says he will not work in his father's field but then does. What is the lesson? That actions speak louder than words. It is what we ultimately do with our lives that matters, not what we initially say. How many are being duped today because they go merely on the words people say and don't look at their actions? Lies are words; truth is how reality works. Thus, the parable is another example of the application of design law revealing the truth in spite of the words spoken.

## **The Tenant Farmers** | Matthew 21:33-45

- This parable reveals the actual condition of people's hearts and the actions they take when selfishness rules their hearts. They are lost in the end because they hardened their own hearts despite all of the pleas from the landowner (God) to repent – no legal issue, no jury trials, but the reality of their heart condition.

## **Marriage Feast or Great Banquet** | Matthew 22:1-14

- Who was invited? *Everyone*. But who came? Those thought to be undeserving by the world – in

other words, those who couldn't earn or merit a place by their own effort. And who decided who actually attended? What is the lesson? Is this a legal process of recording the bad deeds committed and then getting those records expunged by the application of some payment? Or is it a process of accepting the invitation and partaking of the resources provided – e.g., the clothing given, which represent the remedy of Christ's righteousness that heals us. Those without a robe are those who have not had their hearts transformed. Again, Jesus teaches us reality, not legality.

### **The Ten Virgins | Matthew 25:1-13**

- What makes the difference between the wise and foolish virgins? Why don't lamps give light without oil? Is it that God performs a miracle for those who have oil but refuses to perform a miracle for those who don't? Or is it how reality works – that lamps do not burn without fuel? Can any human have the light of God's character shine forth from their life without the oil of the Holy Spirit in their hearts? We can have the Bible (lamp) without the oil (Spirit), but we cannot have light (godly character) without the oil. So who decides who are the wise and who are foolish? Who has the oil – and who doesn't? What law is involved?

### **Ten Talents or Gold Coins | Matthew 25:14-30**

- This parable beautifully describes the law of exertion! What happens if you don't use the talents you possess – if you don't use it, you lose it. But if you apply yourself, you gain more abilities. No jury, no presentation of evidence, no judge passing sentence – it is the reality of the outcome of our choices.

### **The Good Samaritan | Luke 10:29-37**

- In this parable, which person is right with God: the priest, Levite, or Samaritan? What determined who was right with God? How many Sabbaths did the Samaritan keep? How many sacrifices did he make at the temple? How much tithe did he pay? How many kosher meals did he eat? Do you see what mattered was not a list of rules – but having God's love in the heart. What law is this?

### **The Rich Fool | Luke 12:13-21**

- What is revealed? What determines his eternal end? It doesn't matter how much wealth one accrues, because wealth will not cure the heart from sin. What law is involved?

### **The Beaten Servant | Luke 12:47, 48**

- The servant who knows his master's will but doesn't do it receives many stripes, but the servant who doesn't know his master's will receives few stripes. Is this, as the penal/legal adherents claim, proof positive that God's law is imposed and functions like human law, with God inflicting different amounts of punishment upon sinners? Not at all! Jesus did not say that the servants were beaten by the master – only that they would receive differing amounts of blows, or stripes or pain or suffering, depending on how much they actually knew. Jesus is again describing how reality works – we actually experience differing amounts of guilt, shame, regret, and sin-damage to our hearts and minds depending on how much truth we know and choose to reject. It is simply how reality works and how I paraphrase it in *The Remedy*: “The aide who understands the Master – his design, the problem being addressed, and how to apply the Remedy – and either doesn't heed his instructions or applies a false remedy will suffer many blows: a guilty conscience, warped

character, damaged reason, broken relationships and ultimately, a destroyed soul. But the one who doesn't know about the Remedy or how to apply it and therefore doesn't share it, or applies a false remedy will suffer few blows – regret, disappointment, and grief.”

### **The Lost Coin** | Luke 15:8-10

- As with the lost sheep, this parable reveals the heart of God to seek that which is lost. God actively searches for His lost children because that's what love naturally does. What is the difference between the lost coin, sheep, and son?
  - The lost coin didn't know it was lost; the owner searched for it and found it in the home.
  - The lost sheep knew it was lost but didn't know how to get home; the owner searched for it, found it, and brought it home.
  - The lost son knew he was lost and knew the way home; therefore, the father waited for the son to make the choice to come home.
- In all three, what does the father/owner reveal about himself? What kind of law is involved?

### **The Prodigal Son** | Luke 15:11-32

- Why did the father leave the son in dire straits? What would have happened had the father continued to send money to this son? Why did the father accept him back – what were the terms or condition? Did the father require a payment? Was a lawyer necessary to argue the legal right of the son to return? Is there any judicial process at all – or is the only requirement a change of heart in the son? Why did the older son get upset? What did the older son value? What law is involved?

### **The Rich Man and Lazarus** | Luke 16:19-31

- A simple lesson of reality: If people won't accept truth when it is presented then miracles, including someone coming back from the dead, won't change them. This was proven true when, shortly thereafter, a man named Lazarus came back from the dead but the religious leaders were not converted.

In all of these parables, Jesus revealed that the kingdom of God is based upon the laws that our Creator built into the fabric of reality – and that these are an expression of His character of love. Jesus never taught penal/legal theology! God's law originates in His being, and emanates from Him. All creation is sustained by Him. It is Satan's lie that God's law functions like human law: imposed rules that require imposed punishments.

At this time in Earth's history, God is calling for His people to come out of the confusing systems of religiosity based on imposed rules and inflicted punishments. So reject the penal/legal lie and worship Him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and fountains of water.

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