

## Lesson Two: A Conversation of Parables

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*And He taught them many things by parables. ~Mark 4:2*

**Introduction** God has not cast away His chosen people. God is not done with Israel. But for the time being, God's major attention is on the Church and bringing many to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

**Prayer Requests for Israel** 1. God will fight for Israel and enable the nation to defeat Hamas and restore peace in the land; 2. Israel's leadership; 3. Israel Defense Forces; 4. Jewish people; 5. Those affected by this surprise attack; 6. This conflict will not only open the eyes of Jewish people but also people worldwide for their need of Messiah Jesus.

**Scripture:** Mark 1:14-22

**Messiah Jesus was a man of Galilee.** He spent **60-70 percent** of His ministry in the region of Galilee, particularly around the Sea of Galilee, a place in the Roman district under Herod Antipas. It's where the Lord Jesus preached and healed for three and a half years.

**The Sea of Galilee** Jesus ministry in Galilee evolved around the Sea of Galilee—**700 feet** below sea level and about **70 miles north of Jerusalem**. It's about **13 miles long** and **7.5 miles wide** and **150 feet deep**. The Sea resembles the shape of a harp. It's also called the **Sea of Tiberius** (John 6) or **Sea of Gennesaret** (Luke 5). The Sea has not changed since Jesus' day—the scenery, the smell, the sound of the water is exactly the same.

**The Fish of the Sea** At least **twenty-five native species** have been identified in the lake. Ordinary people of Israel seldom ate meat. Fish was their staple diet. Usually the fish was salted. The most important fish in the Sea was **sardines**. **Catfish** was number two and **Tilapia** number three.

**Harbor at Magdala** *And He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and came to the region of Magdala. ~Matthew 15:39*

Along its shores, over **sixteen ancient harbors** have been discovered to provide safe mooring during the sudden storms that blow up on the lake. **There were many fishermen in Galilee**. In Jesus' day, **330 fishing boats** sailed the waters of the lake.

**The "Jesus" Boat** *Leaving the crowd behind, they took Him along, just as He was, in the boat. There were also other boats with Him.* ~Mark 4:36. In 1986, a severe drought lowered the water level several feet below normal. And there was the outline of a wooden boat, conclusively dated to the first century. **The boat could have been Peter's**, accommodating a crew of fifteen. This type of boat would have transported Jesus from one side of the Sea to the other. It is now on display in an exhibition hall at **Kibbutz Ginossar**.

**Dragnets and Castnets** *The kingdom of heaven is like a net which was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind; when it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into vessels but threw away the bad.* ~Matthew 13:47-48: This verse is an exact description of **dragnet fishing** on the lake. When Jesus told **the parable of the fishnet**, the disciples understood every nuance of the parable.

**Jesus Chooses the First Disciples** *And while He was walking along the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon, casting about their net, for they were fishermen.* ~Mark 1: 16 **John the Baptizer** identified Messiah to two of his disciples, **John and Andrew**, with the words: "*Behold the Lamb of God.*" ~John 1:36. Peter had also gone to the Jordan to hear John's message. He met the Messiah, who had given him the name "**Peter**," which means "rock." Jesus had several contacts with some of the disciples before His final call to leave everything and follow Him. (See John 1:35-44.)

**Fishers of Men** *And Jesus said unto them, "Follow Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men"* ~Mark 1:17. "Follow me"—an invitation from a Rabbi to a disciple. It was not merely "*Follow Me*" but "*Follow with Me.*" He welcomes them to enjoy His companionship. **Disciple means a follower and "learner" of Jesus.** His twelve were specifically chosen by Jesus to be with Him for training and to be sent out to preach. As such, they were called "**apostles**" meaning "*sent forth.*"

**Phillip & Nathanael (Bartholomew)** *The next day, Yeshua decided to go to the Galilee. He finds Phillip and says to him, "Follow Me!"* **Philip recruited Nathanael:** "*We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.*" (John 1:45). "*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*" (John 1:46). Although Nathanael himself was a fellow Galilean, he held a low view of people from Nazareth.

**Nazareth** At the time of Jesus, only a few dozen families lived in Nazareth who knew each other. Nazareth would be considered a "Podunk village," made up of country bumpkins.

Nathanael found it hard to imagine someone great coming from a place that is small or remote or insignificant.

**Jesus was not offended but paid Nathanael a compliment.** ~John 1: 47-51

*"Surely here is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."* Jesus was making a contrast between this Israelite and Jacob, the first person to be called Israel. *"How do you know me?"* *"Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you,"* said Jesus. What was Nathanael doing under the fig tree? Memorizing Scripture and meditating on it. **The rabbis said that the best place to meditate upon Scripture was under a fig tree.** And Nathanael realized that Jesus knew the exact passage of Scripture upon which he had been meditating. **Therefore, Jesus had to be the Messianic King.** *"Rabbi, you are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel."*

**Capernaum: Jesus Home Town** *Leaving Nazareth, He went and lived in Capernaum.*

~Matthew 4:13: **Nazareth and Capernaum are vastly different places.** Capernaum was located strategically down the international highway, the **Via Maris**, the most heavily traveled road of the ancient world, linking travel between Africa, Asia, and Europe. Jesus was not hiding out in a remote location. He chose Capernaum, so His message would reach as many as possible around the world.

**Peter's House in Capernaum** *When He returned to Capernaum after some days, it was heard that He was **at the house.*** ~Mark 2:1 Many substantial archaeological excavations have verified the location of Peter's home in Capernaum, a home where Jesus also lived.

**The Call of Matthew:** *As He was passing by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. He said to him, 'Follow Me.'* *And he got up and followed Him.* ~Mark 2:14 **As Jesus passed by, He sees Levi, Matthew, sitting at the tollgate on the Via Maris.** Capernaum must have been the place where import and export taxes were collected. **Tax collectors were hated.** So the Lord Jesus wanted the man no one else wanted. He offered His friendship to the man whom all others would have scorned. **Matthew did not leave behind his pen.** The first book of the New Testament was written by Matthew, which embodies one of the most important books of the Bible.

**The Twelve Disciples** **Peter & Andrew**, sons of John. (The lists always place Peter at the top.); **John & James**, sons of Salome, "Sons of Thunder"; **Philip; Nathanael** (Bartholomew); **Thomas; Matthew; James & Judas** (Thaddaeus), sons of Alphaeus; **Simon the Zealot; Judas Iscariot:** Judas is always placed at the bottom because of his betrayal.

So many of Jesus' conversations involved these disciples with whom He had intimate conversations. He knew the importance of relationships. And He believed they should be in a relationship with one another. He chose the disciples "that they might be with Him" at all times" ~Mark 3:14. **We need each other, too.** That's what Jesus was saying as He spent time with His friends—as He talked with them for mutual encouragement and joy. We need friends because *a friend loves at all times. The sweetness of a friend comes from her earnest counsel.*

**The Parables** *A large crowd gathered around Him, so He got into a boat on the sea and sat down. And the crowd was by the sea on the land. He began teaching them many things by parables.* ~Mark 4:1-2

**Why Parables?** *When Jesus was at last alone, the twelve disciples, along with some others, came and asked Him, 'Why are You speaking in parables to them? And what does the parable mean?'"* Matthew 13: 10-23; Mark 4: 10-20

Jesus' parables method of teaching began on the same day that the national rejection of Messiah Jesus had occurred and the unpardonable sin was committed. Jesus' parables were to explain the course of God's kingdom program in light of Israel's rejection of the Messiah and His Messianic kingdom. People today cannot commit the unpardonable sin in the same way the Jewish leaders did when Jesus was ministering on earth. The only sin today that God cannot forgive is rejection of His Son.

**What is the Kingdom of God Like?** **The Parable of the Sower: Mark 4:1-20**

**It's like a sower who went out to sow.** And some seed fell: 1. **Along the path;** 2. **On rocky places;** 3. **Among thorns;** 4. **And on good soil.**

From the Gospel accounts, it appears that the interpretation of parables took place in the private circle of the disciples. It was for their benefit. The Lord Jesus' parables are open to His disciples but shut to the Pharisees with their hostile minds.

**Interpretation** The seed represents **God's Word** and the sower is the **servant**. There is the **hearer** who fails to think things out. There is the **hearer** who has so many interests that often the most important things get crowded out. Then there is the **hearer** who is like good ground in his or her reception of the Word.

**November Lesson: A Conversation of Provision** Locations: Tabgha; Mt. of Beatitudes; Synagogue at Capernaum; Bethlehem; Shepherds' Field and Cave