

Why Did Jesus Teach in Parables?

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[Scripture quotations taken from the NASB](#)

After Jesus had given His teaching in the Parable of the Sower to the crowds who had gathered to hear Him (Matthew 13:1-9), His disciples asked Him why He spoke to the people in parables (Matthew 13:10). Jesus’ parables used metaphors and analogies to convey spiritual truths, and they were often not easily understood.

His disciples were likely curious as to why He chose to use this method in His teaching, and why He did not communicate to the crowds in terms that they could more readily understand. Jesus explained why He spoke to the people in parables when He answered His disciples, saying: “...*To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.*” (Matthew 13:11).

Jesus’ reply is very revealing, and it is in complete agreement with several Scriptures that we have considered before regarding God’s sovereign choice of those to whom He shows mercy, while others are left in their sins. The ability to come to Christ and to understand God’s word is given only to God’s elect, to those whom the Father gave to Jesus (John 6:37).

God’s elect are those whom He foreknew from before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:3-11). In His time, God calls all of His elect to faith in Christ, He justifies them, and will ultimately glorify them (Romans 8:29-30). For all the rest, Jesus taught that it has not been granted to them to understand the Gospel message and the word of God as revealed in the Scriptures, which He referred to as “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven”.

Continuing in Matthew 13, after Jesus answered His disciples as to why He spoke to the people in parables, He then quoted from a passage in Isaiah 6:9-10, which speaks of God's hardening of some individuals. Though they hear the words of the Gospel message, they do not understand, and though they see, they do not perceive. This is the condition of those to whom it has not been granted to hear and understand the word of God as it is given in the Scriptures (Matthew 13:9,11, 23). These are the same individuals Paul mentioned in Romans 9:18; God has willed not to show mercy to them, but to harden them.

Those whom God has decided to harden are not among the ones who have been appointed to eternal life (Acts 13:48). Rather, they are among those who have been appointed to disobey the Gospel message, as Peter taught (1 Peter 2:8). Their own will, desire, or decision in the matter has nothing at all to do with their salvation (John 1:13, Romans 9:16). They do not believe because God has not granted to them to come to faith in Christ (John 6:65). As Jesus said, it has not been granted to them to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 13:11).