

# Parables E2 Final

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## Jesus and the Parables of the Prophets

Podcast Date: March 23, 2020

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## Jesus and the Parables of the Prophets

Jon: Hey, this is Jon at the BibleProject. Today on the podcast we're going to continue our conversation on how to read the parables of Jesus. This is Part 2. Last week, we began to talk about the parables and discuss how they're not simply moralistic tales. Parables of Jesus were a way to reframe how to think about the entire cosmos. The parables are also about what Jesus saw himself doing as the culmination of the entire story of the Bible. Today, we're going to continue talking about parables, and we're going to notice how telling parables wasn't a novel thing that Jesus invented. It was a practice that linked him to a long line of Israel's prophets.

Tim: Jesus, through the parables, is presenting himself as repeating and renewing both the warnings of judgment and the warnings of hope from the Hebrew prophets. That's another primary contact. And here particularly, it's his role as the minority prophet going to a new Pharaoh that is the leaders of Israel, and his message is cryptic parables that harden as much as they illuminate. That's how Jesus understood his role to Israel.

Jon: Today we'll also begin to cover a few practical tips on how to appreciate the meaning of Jesus's parables.

Tim: The basic narrative structure of all of the parables basically there's three times. There's one main character parables, there's two main character parables, and then there's three character parables.

Jon: That's all ahead. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.

Talking about how to read parables. It's short, fictitious stories that Jesus tells all throughout the Gospels, mainly in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, but sometimes in John. There are some in John?

Tim: They're very short one in John.

Jon: When traditionally think of a parable are Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Tim: Yeah. It's anywhere from one or two verses or sentences to many paragraphs.

Jon: They're a great part of the Bible for many reasons. They're short. They're easy to remember. They create a sense of wonder.

Tim: They're characteristic of Jesus' teaching. I mean, the gospels are packed with them.

Jon: And so what's a great way to read these? What's the best way?

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Tim: The most wise.

Jon: Yeah, the most wise way to process these stories of Jesus.

Tim: In other words, how do I know I'm getting from them what I'm supposed to get from them, not just what I happen to think is an interesting way to read them.

Jon: And that can be true to the whole How to Read series.

Tim: That's exactly right.

Jon: Specifically with these parables, how do I get what I'm supposed to get from these? We talked about in the first episode of this conversation that the parables aren't merely moral lessons. I think the way I would frame it, process what we talked about, is I'd say first, the parables are not theological lessons in that I'm supposed to abstract out theology to kind of fill out this framework of what can I know for sure about God, about how I get to heaven, about how salvation works...?

Tim: God's sovereignty and human free will.

Jon: Right. All these theological puzzles.

Tim: In that understanding, here's God, and here's people, and these are all these questions that we have, you know, Jesus is a teacher for he's going to tell stories to help me clear a bunch of that up.

Jon: It makes perfect sense.

Tim: All these parables, here they are.

Jon: Perfect.

Tim: Theology lessons in story form or moral lessons in story form.

Jon: And while they do talk about the nature of God and the nature of being human and the nature of what it is that God's doing in the world, that isn't the main purpose.

Tim: It isn't their purpose to offer explainer stories about some other things, some questions that we have about God. Jesus had a different purpose for the parables.

Jon: The other thing that we tend to do is think of the parables as moral lessons. That there is a right way to live in the world and the parables are helping me figure out with those right ways are. And that's very intuitive too because we have all sorts of these types of stories

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Tim: Parables about forgiveness, about generosity and loving your neighbor, and that kind of thing.

Jon: And they really do help you decide to live in a more wise, just way because they don't just give you the answers, they make you kind of work for the answer, and then realize the importance of that answer more than if it was just given to you. And while Jesus' parables do this, that isn't the main feature of them either - the reason why they exist.

The reason Jesus told these parables was because he wanted people around him to think about and try to appreciate what he was doing, what he was up to. That he saw himself as somehow beginning God's kingdom, which meant something very specific. If you are 1st Century Galilean, you were waiting for a time where you were free of foreign occupation, your nation was free, and you could worship God freely, there was abundance, and then the whole world saw that the God of Israel was the true God of all creation.

Tim: And you care about that because that's what God promised to do in the scriptures in the story and in the prophets of their hope for the future.

Jon: So here comes this guy cruising through towns saying that this was happening and he was at the center of it.

Tim: The kingdom of God has drawn near.

Jon: The parables were one way that he wanted people to appreciate what that meant that he was bringing the kingdom.

Tim: Yeah. Because he had a unique take on how the kingdom of God would arrive - the mode of its arrival and the nature of its arrival.

Jon: And this is an important first thing to realize about the parables because we need to start by reading them with why Jesus was telling them in the first place.

Tim: That's right. Or even just more simply in context. They are placed very strategically within stories. And the narrative context of the parables is the guide given to us by the authors of the Gospels as to what they mean.

Jon: And when you do that, you will still find that there's a moral element to parables and that they do speak to the nature of God and kind of address theological ideas, but not in the way that you may have at first wanted it to.

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Tim: Yeah, not in an abstract way, but in the way that the whole Bible talks about these things, which is within the context of a cosmic narrative. So Jesus announcing the kingdom of God, one part of the kingdom of God hope in the prophets is that God's unfaithful covenant people would have their hearts transformed and renewed to be his faithful representatives among the nations. Huge theme in the Torah, in the Prophets. God chooses the people and they're unfaithful. That's the storyline.

And so the Prophet said, one day, he will make us into His faithful covenant people that embody a whole new value set to the nations. And Jesus is saying, "Here it is. This is it. That's what's happening. That's what I'm creating." And the parables that we call moral or morality parables are about the new renewed human heart of the kingdom of God people. So it's taking that moral idea but putting it in the biblical storyline. That's one whole section of parables.

Jon: Cool.

Tim: And then the other ones are actually about the narrative drama itself about the arrival of God's kingdom to often get turned into theology lessons about some theological subject matter Jesus is teaching about. Yeah, what you're saying is they are symbolic stories unpacking the significance of who Jesus is and what he's saying in the very moment of saying it.

Jon: Cool.

Tim: That's it. That's the first main perspective shift we're offering on purpose.

Jon: Okay, great.

[00:08:58]

Tim: The second perspective shift on the parables for this conversation is that they are speaking in the language and imagery of the biblical story itself. In other words, the whole announcement of Jesus' mission to bring the kingdom of God, that's a claim to bring the whole story of God in Israel and the nations to a climax. Where do I find that story? In the Hebrew Scriptures.

This is part of our "the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus". The parables fit into that unified story at one specific slot in the drama. They don't float above the drama, and teach about theology, apart from they fit within the Jesus moment. The Jesus of Nazareth moment of the drama is what the parables are about. So we're not limiting their potential to speak to us we're just reading them in them where they occur.

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So they are both bringing the biblical story to its fulfillment and they regularly do so by borrowing the language and imagery of the prophets. If you try and go read the prophets, you'll notice that they're constantly telling parables, regularly spinning out these little short symbolic poems. Should we read one?

Jon: Sure.

Tim: The point is as Jesus would come across to somebody hearing him tell parables like the Jewish farmer, he would come across as like, "Ah, that guy talks like Isaiah. He talks like Jeremiah and Ezekiel. He's the kingdom of God prophet who speaks like the prophets." This is the longest one. I'll let you read it.

Jon: The first one that came to mind was the melon field in Isaiah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: It's kind of little parable, right?

Tim: It is. That's a short one. This is from Isaiah 5:1-6.

Jon: Okay. Any context for this or anything?

Tim: Well, Isaiah in his day, the kingdom split, the tribes of Israel split and parted ways about 200 years before Isaiah. So they have in the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom of Judah and Jerusalem. The northern kingdom has built an alternate temple and is worshipping all kinds of gods. And so Isaiah says that God is going to allow Assyria to come and take out the northern tribes. And because of also the unfaithfulness of the kings of Jerusalem, he's going to come take out Jerusalem too. That's what this poem is about.

Jon: Okay. "Let me sing now for my well-beloved, a song of my beloved concerning His vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill. He dug it all around, removed its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. And He built a tower in the middle of it. And also hewed out a wine vat in it..." What does wine vat look like?

Tim: Oh, you're hewing out a cylinder-like hole in stone and stomp grapes in it.

Jon: Oh, cool. "Then He expected it (the field) to produce good grapes, but it produced only worthless ones. "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah..." These are the two different nations?

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Tim: No, this is just a people of Jerusalem. That's a city. And then people of Judah, the country around the city.

Jon: "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah. Judge between Me and My vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it? Why when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless ones? So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed..." By, like, the wild animals. Is that what a hedge was for?

Tim: Yeah, keep animals out.

Jon: "I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground. I will lay it waste; it will not be pruned or hoed, but briars and thorns will come up. I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it."

Tim: Let's pause right there. A guy plants a garden and put the choice vine in the garden, and then produces this incredible secure environment for it.

Jon: A tower, and he dug around it. Digging around it, that's to build the walls or something?

Tim: Yeah, that's right. He removed all the stones so the roots just have pure soiled spread out in. Yeah, to dig around create a border around it, remove the stones, build a wall and then tower.

Jon: And he planted the best vine.

Tim: The whole point. have all the details...

Jon: Set up for success?

Tim: ...there's very few excuses for this vineyard. It's given the ultimate perfect setup in the garden. Then, of course, it produces worthless, stinky grapes. Beushim in Hebrew. Stinky grapes

Jon: Is that what it means stinky?

Tim: Yeah. Beushim (stinky).

Jon: That's lost in translation.

Tim: Notice the question there. Then the prophet addresses the hearers and says, "Hey, okay, now, you tell me, what would any reasonable vineyard owner do?" Notice he's involving the audience. Like, "You guys tell me. You heard the story. You make the call." And so when you get to the announcement of judgment on the vineyard, the assumption is the

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audience is going like, "Yeah, that's reasonable. It's a reasonable thing to do. This is just a bad vine. It just needs to be..."

Jon: Start from scratch.

Tim: Yeah, start over again. And then the punch line: the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah is the delightful plant. He looked for justice (mishpat), but behold mispach (bloodshed). He looked for tzedakah (righteousness), but behold only zeaqah (cries of distress). It gets a little rhyme on the end. Don't you just feel like this could be one of Jesus's parables?

Jon: It was one of Jesus' parables.

Tim: It was. That's right.

Jon: Wow. I didn't realize that.

Tim: The parables that Jesus tells of the bad vineyard managers who killed the servants...

Jon: The one you mentioned in the last episode?

Tim: Yeah. And then they kill the son sent to them.

Jon: Jesus has a new addition to this one.

Tim: Yeah, exactly.

Jon: Instead of destroying the vineyard, he sends his son to go tell them like, "Hey, guys. Let's shape it up." And then they kill him.

Tim: Then they kill the son. And then the master comes and destroys it. So just such a perfect example, where Jesus, through the parables, is presenting himself as repeating and renewing both the warnings of judgment and the warnings of hope from the Hebrew prophets. That's another primary context for them.

First step, our last conversation, they are about him and what he was doing. That's what the parables are offering commentary on. Second layer of depth, they are also adopted from the tradition of the Hebrew prophets, and Jesus sees himself bringing that biblical story to its climax, which is why he talks in these parables. The net result of this is that most of Jesus' parables are loaded with Hebrew Bible hyperlinks, which unveils a whole new kind of depth of meaning and significance to them. This is such a great example. It's a perfect example.



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So the prophets wrote mostly prophetic poetry. I mean, we did a whole video on metaphor and images in biblical poetry. I guess we did it as much about the Psalms as about the Prophets. So Jesus is following in the tradition here, so to speak.

Jon: Yeah.

[00:18:02]

Tim: So think from the big picture how the biblical story works with me. You start with humanity in the garden set up for success in every possible way, and they're God's image his royal priests to represent him to creation. They blow it and are exiled, leading to the flood and then the scattering of Babylon. Babylon. Then out of Babylon God calls Abraham - just begins the Israel movement, and says, "You're going to be my blessing to the nations."

Jon: He gives them everything they need to succeed.

Tim: Everything they need, brings them into the promised land as a liberated people, as his covenant representatives, priests to the nations, and they replay that garden rebellion and failure of Adam and Eve in the garden. We've talked about these parallel storylines at many levels.

Notice how when Jesus marches into Jerusalem and he starts telling parables about vineyard managers who have squandered the vineyard that they've been given, and about how the master's returning to come back and to bring down the vineyard, and Jesus is telling this as he enters into Jerusalem and turns over the money changers tables and pronounces that the city will be destroyed. The whole biblical story is rushing together in Passion Week.

Think of this as a different kind of category. We've talked about parables where Jesus is exploring the value system of the kingdom of God, the upside-down values system, we've talked and read some parables about to what can I compare the kingdom of God, and talks about seeds and mustard seeds and plants and so on. This is another kind of parable that Jesus regularly tells. And you could just call them parables of warning.

Though these parables where there's an authority figure giving somebody a responsibility, and usually there's two subordinate figures, one good, one bad, or just only bad, and then something terrible happens to the bad ones, that's the substructure of...

Jon: Those one sounds like...

Tim: Totally.

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Jon: ...about the parables.

Tim: Yeah, exactly. So here it's the vineyard owner and some managers. But then remember the parable of the talents that we looked at.

Jon: Same idea.

Tim: Same idea. You have a king who goes away on a long journey and gives this kingdom over to be managed by these guys, and some of them say, "Oh, we don't want him to be king anymore." And when he comes back, he brings the pain.

There's all these parables that have this...you could almost call it a triangle structure of an authority figure who goes away and comes back. What are these all about? And why does Jesus tell almost all as he's arriving in Jerusalem? That's another way Jesus's parables are both offering commentary on the kingdom of God that he's bringing about but they're also overlaid with the whole story of Israel coming to its climax in this moment too, which is why he starts pulling from the prophets, especially in the parables of warning and judgment. Do you want to see some more examples?

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Okay.

Jon: Would you say that the shrewd manager one is in the same morning parables? It seems like it's the same setup, but it has a different payoff.

Tim: It does. You're referring to the parable at the beginning of Luke 16. That parable is really interesting. You want to talk about it? It's an interesting parable.

Jon: Yeah. I think it's the one that I am always confused by. We don't have to talk about now but...

Tim: Let's get there. Let's kind of work around some categories more. That'll be good for...

Jon: You're saying there's a specific type of parable Jesus seemed to tell and retell that all had similar elements which was some sort of owner giving over the management through his fields to someone, being gone coming back, saying they were mismanaged and then bringing the pain?

Tim: Yeah, totally. This was pointed out to me, I think this is Craig Blomberg has an excellent and comprehensive guide to interpreting the parables called "Interpreting the Parable."

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Jon: He was cryptic about that.

Tim: It's very clear. It's a non-parabolic title. He has this really handy way of breaking down the basic narrative structure of all of the parables just based on like how many main characters there are. And basically, there's three types. There's one main character parables. There's two main character parables, and then there's three-character parables. And even if there's more actual characters, there's three main types. And here they are.

"In three-character parables, there's always an authority figure. And just think through. A king, a father, a master, a landowner, a vineyard owner, a lender. And usually there's a positive subordinate - a slave, a peasant subject, a debtor, a manager, a son. And then in contrast to that positive subordinate is a negative subordinate. Sometimes you only get the authority figure and the negative subordinate. Sometimes you get an authority figure, and then two contrasting characters. The ones who multiply their talents and the one who buries him in the ground. That kind of thing."

And so that's basically the substructure of like half of Jesus' parables. So you just have to stop and say, "What's he doing? Why do all of these have kind of the same vibe?" And why when you start counting, does Jesus really start telling these types of parables the closer he gets to Jerusalem? That's the thing we're sniffing out here. Once again, this is a way of Jesus offering commentary on what he's actually doing in the moment. And those parables in particular, as well as some others, tend to be higher density in hyperlinks to the Hebrew prophets. It's very interesting.

That poem in Isaiah is important. What I want to do is sample another couple passages in the book of Isaiah, little parables in Isaiah, and then we'll look at ways that Jesus draws upon them to kind of flesh this out. Again, the larger point is, the parables at this stage of the conversation are part of the way that Jesus is bringing and showing how the biblical story of God in Israel is coming to its climax.

You just read from Isaiah 5. The next chapter of Isaiah is Isaiah 6, which is a well-known chapter in the book of Isaiah. He wakes up in a dream and he's standing in the heavenly temple, where he should not be. At least he doesn't think he should be there. I often make the joke that he would not have sung the song better is one day in your court than a thousand elsewhere."

Jon: He'd be like, "Get me out of here before I die."

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Tim: "Better is no days in your courts because I'm going to get fried in here." And he does get fried. He gets burned to a crisp. He gets a holy coal from the altar that touches is his lips. And as it sears him, it purifies him instead of destroying him. And then he becomes the nucleus of the new covenant people of the new Israel, and then God commissions him. This is where we'll pick up.

"I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?' and I said, 'Here I am. Send me.' And he said, 'Go tell these people, here's the message.' 'Hey, everybody, keep on listening, but don't understand; keep on looking, but don't comprehend.'" Then God speaks to Isaiah. "Make the hearts of these people fat - dense. Make their ears heavy, and their eyes dim - meaning difficult to see with. Otherwise, they might see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and turn back and find healing." Isaiah says, "Then I said, 'Well, Lord, how long do I have to do that?'"

Jon: That's a bad strategy. How long is this going to go for?

Tim: And the Lord answered: "Until cities are devastated without any inhabitants, houses without people, the land desolate, until the Lord has removed people far away and the forsaken places are many in the land." Exile. Exile. Let's pause.

He just woke up in the heavenly temple, he says, "Me and my people were impure and unfaithful." God says, "Yeah, I know." But Isaiah is humble and repentant, and so God's purifying fire doesn't destroy him. It transforms him. And then he becomes a mouthpiece and a symbol of the new people that God is going to create through purifying fire. So go tell everybody that the end of Israel is here. The end has arrived for Israel. Exile. We've reached the point of no return, basically. So you can see that, go tell them this, keep on listening, but don't understand.

Jon: Why would he go and say that?

Tim: Within the narrative of the book, the whole point is that we are now centuries into the failed project and Israel has reached the point of no return. And they've already rejected all these prophets before Isaiah and they've already rejected Isaiah. He's already been rejected in the course of the book so far. The whole point is God has to meltdown and destroy his people in order to create a new people who will actually be the family of Abraham to do the thing that he meant them to be.

Jon: So he's saying, go and tell the people time's up?

Tim: Yeah. Or game's over.

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- Jon: Game Over. This is the endgame.
- Tim: Yeah. Here's the thing is they're gonna think Isaiah is nuts and crazy and stupid and they think they're fine.
- Jon: So go on thinking that it's fine.
- Tim: Yeah, go on in your unbelief and you're...Like, in Jeremiah, you know, he says the prophets are telling the kings, "Peace. Peace." And Jeremiah says, "But there is no peace. God's allowing Babylon to come here and nobody believes me. I'm the only one. Everyone else is saying God will protect us. We're the family of Abraham. He's with us."
- So Isaiah's message is paradoxical because he's going to keep proclaiming the message, but it will have the paradoxical effect of actually hardening. Just like the ten times Moses said, "Let my people go" to Pharaoh, it actually did the opposite. It made Pharaoh more ticked off.
- Jon: But Moses didn't go to Pharaoh and be like, "Pharaoh, you're not going to let the people go. I'm going to try..."
- Tim: There are a couple of times where Pharaohs says, "Pray for me. I'm sorry" after a plague comes, and Moses is like, "No, no, you already went back on plague number five. I'm not going to do this again." Pharaoh says, "Please, please." We're in that scenario. These are prophetic words to people who have already consistently rejected the prophetic word.
- Jon: Got it. It's an interesting rhetorical approach in that what's the use of telling someone, "You don't have to listen to me anymore?"
- Tim: Especially if they've already written you off.
- Jon: They've already written you off?
- Tim: Yeah.
- Jon: And then on top of that, as you're telling them, "Well, you don't have to listen to me anymore," to like rub it in and be like, "Because if you did, you'd turn around and you would be healed." It's like, well, what's the point of saying that? The whole thing feels kind of like...I don't know.
- Tim: But, again, this is the role of the prophets in the Hebrew Bible. They're speaking to the people that's already chosen to destroy themselves. And so the role that they play now is the role of witness. They bear witness to the truth of God's covenant loyalty even as the ship is going down in flames.

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Jon: This chapter was preached a lot and talked a lot in my tradition. Especially the like "Who will go?" became this like missionary rallying cry. And then the like, "Here I am, send me" is the missionary like, "I'm going." And that's beautiful.

Tim: Totally.

Jon: Who will go? Someone needs to go.

Tim: People who go share the good news about Jesus around the world are amazing.

Jon: They're heroes. But then this missionary, his marching orders are like, "Go," and then tell these people games over.

Tim: That's right.

[00:31:30]

Tim: However, we didn't read the last sentence of the chapter. "Go to these people who haven't listened to me for centuries, not going to listen to you and know that your message is actually just going to make them more hardened and obstinate." "For how long?" "Well, until the land is depopulated. Until the exile." "However," vs. 13, "there will be one-tenth left in it - in the land." A little bit left in the land.

Jon: Small fraction.

Tim: "But even that will be subject to being burned again." Oh, bummer. So you have a little portion left and then it's subject to burning.

Jon: What does that mean subject to burning?

Tim: Think in the image of the chapter. Isaiah got burned and then he becomes like the remnant leftover of the new thing.

Jon: Oh, this isn't about the vineyard anymore, but the idea of the vineyard being tossed up?

Tim: The land gets emptied. That's the immediate context. So he removes people far away, forsaken places are many in the land, but there'll be a little bit left.

Jon: And they're going to be burned as well.

Tim: Even that will get burned. Who was the last person burned in this chapter? Isaiah. And then notice, just like a terebinth tree or maybe an oak tree, whose stump remains when it is chopped down, the Holy seed

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is its stump. So the land gets cleared, there's a little 10th left and then it's burned. And then I get a little parable about, you know how like when a tree gets chopped down and there's just a stump there, but then there's a little seed sprouting up. You know, the holy seed is the stump. It's the picture of an exiled land that's scorched, but there's a little stump left that is somehow this holy seed.

Jon: Is the image that the stump is the seed or there's a seed coming out of a stump?

Tim: Oh, well, the image is going to develop in the course of the book to the beginning of Isaiah 11, where there's a new shoot coming out of the stump of Jesse. That's where I've combined those two images.

Jon: Got it.

Tim: Right here, there's just a stump left but it's called seed. And what seed does is grow.

Jon: It produces.

Tim: Just like Isaiah gets burned, but then he becomes the image of a new kind of people after the burning so the whole land, the whole people is going to get burned in exile.

Jon: If you will remain like a stump.

Tim: Yeah, like a stump leftover. We'll just do a couple more Isaiah texts because Jesus loved the book of Isaiah because his parables are all about it. Isaiah 55. This is a poem about a capstone poem to the announcement of how after the exile, God's going to send messengers of good news. Isaiah 40, "Send good news, heralds of good news design. Behold, your God comes, coming reigning with power." We had the poems about how God's exalted servant, who will suffer for Israel sins but then be exalted and vindicated.

So the crown chapter of that whole unit from 40 to 55 in Isaiah, there's this little poem right here. Isaiah 55:10. "Just like the rain and the snow come down out of heaven" - notice it's a parable - "and don't return back without watering the earth and making it give birth and sprout, and that provides seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so God says, 'My word that goes forth from my mouth will not return to be empty without accomplishing what I purposed, without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.'" So God's word that he sends out about the hope is...

Jon: Is like water.

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Tim: Yeah, it's like water that gives birth to seed that can go plant new seeds and sprouts. That's a little parable. Vs. 12 "For you all will go out with joy. You'll be led forth with shalom. The mountains and the hills will break into shouts of joy before you, the trees of the field will clap their hands." Let's pause. You will go out and be led forth.

Jon: This is just getting out of the exile?

Tim: Yes.

[crosstalk 00:36:04]

Tim: And creation responding just like the waters responded in the sea as they crossed the sea, here now the mountains and the hills...

Jon: Are shouting for joy.

Tim: ...like a choir lining up clapping for the returnees from exile. Instead of the thorn bush, you know how the garden got turned into the thorns, the Garden of Eden but also the Garden of the Promised Land, instead of a thorn bush, the Cypress. You know what, the temple was made out of a lot of Cypress in the temple. "Instead of the nettle, the myrtle will rise up..."

Jon: Is that a tree?

Tim: A myrtle tree. Yeah. "...as a memorial to the Lord and everlasting sign." So what we're waiting for on the other side of exile as we await the new Exodus, is a new word from the Lord that will plant seeds that sprout to create the new life and the new garden and the new Exodus people who will go out to inhabit the new Promised Land. You can just see where this is going. Jesus' parables are filled with this imagery.

Jon: With seed and with trees.

Tim: Specifically the word a message being seed that sprout new kinds of people.

Jon: A message being seed.

Tim: Yes. Yes.

Jon: Now, that's such a interesting word picture. I don't know if I've really fully kind of settled in with it, and I appreciate it. And it must be riffing off of Genesis 1 language.

Tim: Totally. This is totally Genesis 1.



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- Jon: So God spoke his word, creates life.
- Tim: What is it that calls out the seed-bearing plants from the dry land of day three?
- Jon: Yeah, his word.
- Tim: God spoke.
- Jon: His word, it goes out and it creates order and it creates beauty and creates goodness. And in this parable and Isaiah, he's like, "Think about the rain, how it comes down, saturates everything, and then all this life is produced out of it. God's word is like that." Which kind of then begs the question, what does that mean God's Word? What is it about word? Why does Genesis 1 begin with word? What is this in Hebrew thought that's so important - your word?
- Tim: Yeah, your word. Well, it's that your words are an expression of a mind and a purpose. That's why the whole thing is the word goes out and does what I purposed and what I desire. And God's purpose and desire is for life - to create life. But then also once is creation rebels and creates death, he has to hand that over to death so that he can bring about that new thing. If creation required God's Word, then the new creation will also be the result of God's new word that gives birth to a new creation.
- Jon: Or you could use, instead of word, his work or like his, you know, his arm stretched out and created or something.
- Tim: I hear that. The whole book of Isaiah, one of the red threads is seed imagery. It goes back to that stump there in Isaiah 6.
- Jon: The stump is the seed then.
- Tim: The seed is the stump. So there's a remainder of people left through whom God will grow as a new holy seed. And then Isaiah seven through 11 fills this out. And then there's a new branch coming out of the stump of Jesse.
- Jon: The seed I guess I'm more comfortable in that.
- Tim: But the word. You're saying the word.
- Jon: And they're connected. It's interesting they're connected even in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. But yes, seed, it multiplies, it's more and it grows. That all make sense. And then...
- Tim: I see. You're back just on the core metaphorical scheme of God's word as seed.

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Jon: I guess so. Yeah.

Tim: That's what you're pondering.

Jon: It seems important here, and then in the parables of Jesus.

Tim: That's right.

Jon: And I'm just realizing I don't really understand that metaphorical scheme.

Tim: I see. God's words in Genesis 1 are these like commands.

Jon: God's word, is that a theme?

Tim: Oh, that's huge.

Jon: We don't have that on our list.

Tim: The word of God?

Jon: The word of God.

Tim: We probably ought to. It's right there from Genesis 1. Jesus is the word. He becomes flesh giving a word about the kingdom that's like seed. And yeah, okay, all right, make the case.

Jon: Is that new creation?

Tim: When Jesus says, " I'm the Alpha and the Omega," the first and last letters of the alphabet, the beginning and the end...

Jon: Of all words.

Tim: No. God and the lamb are the creator and king in Revelation. It could work. But the prophetic word, this is the huge major theme of the Hebrew Bible how God's word is, well, it gets developed in lots of images.

[00:42:10]

Tim: With all that said, I thought we could perform a reading and meditation together on Matthew 13, which is Jesus' first parable in the gospel of Matthew. And it's the parable that he tells about the parables. In other words, it's a parable about why he speaks in parables.

Jon: It's a meta.

Tim: It's a meta parable. So this conversation, we're just reading the Bible a lot together, which is great.

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Jon: It's great. This is a meta meta conversation.

Tim: Right. Again, the whole umbrella is here. Jesus' parables are packed with imagery from the Hebrew prophets. Why? Because he's claiming that's the story that the prophets are all about is reaching its climax in him, which is why he talks about it in parables.

Matthew 13. "So that day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea." This is actually a great narrative scene. He's down by the Lake of Galilee. All these crowds gathering around him. Crucial context. Matthews chapters 4 through 9, Jesus announced and taught the kingdom of God - the sermon on the Mount. He brought the kingdom of God in power in 10 acts of healing in signs and wonders in chapters 8 and 9. Chapter 10, he sent out the 12 to go do what he was doing and chapters 4 through 9. Chapters 11 and 12 is all the diverse responses to Jesus. Some people hate him. Some people reject him. Some people think he's a fraud. Some people aren't sure. Some people are fans. A whole diverse response to Jesus.

Then he goes out and this crowd gathers around on the beach and he goes out into a boat - creates a little natural amphitheater - and he spoke to the many things in parable saying - this is the famous parable - "Behold the sower went out to sow seed. And as he did, some seed fell on the side of the road and the birds came and ate it up. Others fell in rocky places, they didn't have much soil, and immediately they sprang up because they had no depth of soil, and so when the sun rose, they were scorched because they didn't have deep roots and they withered.

Others fell among thorns, so thorns came up and choke them out, but others yet fell on good soil and yielded a crop. Some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. How many of you have ears? You should hear." So remember our little parable that I created?

Jon: Moshe?

Tim: Yeah. Imagine you're Moshe and you've come back to hear Jesus like a second time and you're like, "Huh."

Jon: "It's about seed and fields again."

Tim: Yeah, seeds and fields? About how the same seed yields different results. Same seed is going out, but it doesn't all produce fruit.

Jon: Depends on the quality of the soil.

Tim: The condition of the soil will determine the productivity of the fruit. So this fruit works in partnership with the soil just like the fruit seed. The

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seed won't overpower the environment. It has to work with a friendly environment to produce what it's designed to make.

Jon: And when those two things line up, you get a lot of fruit.

Tim: You get exponential. A lot like that big tree from the mustard seed that I heard him talk about.

Jon: What does that mean a hundredfold in agriculture terms? Like I was supposed to get one tomato and I got a hundred? Or I planted one seed and I get a hundred seeds out of it?

Tim: I see. Well, you talk to me like I'm an ancient farmer. I think there probably is something more specific at work, but just the principle of one seed can produce a vine that has a hundred blossoms of whatever.

Jon: I guess what I'm wondering is a hundredfold, would the farmers out there being on like, "Whoa, a hundredfold? That's incredible." Or would they be like, "That's a good season."

Tim: Oh, I see. Well, it's surely a hundred is better in contrast to sixty or thirty.

Jon: So thirty is like a good season, sixty is like you killed it, and a hundred is like, are you serious? A hundred? No one does a hundred.

Tim: I'm sure we look up ancient. I'll start my head, I don't know ancient agricultural terminology. But a hundred to one's pretty sweet.

Jon: It's pretty great.

Tim: But again, an year of grain or think of corn, you put one kernel in the ground, you get a stock with like five years of corn on it. That's like hundreds...

Jon: That's like a thousand one.

Tim: okay. There you go.

Jon: Okay, sorry.

Tim: No, don't be sorry. All right. The next thing in the narrative Matthew's place before us is the disciples come up and say, "What are you doing? You have a great opportunity. All these people are here to hear you announce the kingdom of God. Do the sermon on the Mount again. That was awesome when you did that. What are you doing?"

Jon: "Try some other material."

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Tim: "I know the Pharisees are really angry at you now because of what happened in chapter 11, and there's a bunch of people that want to hurt you, but there are some people that are friendly towards you. What are you doing?" So notice the story is registering that Jesus isn't being very clear. What are you doing? Why are you telling parables?

Jon: Then he explains it to them.

Tim: Jesus says, "To you, I'll be happy to tell you because you are like advanced versions of Moshe, our farmer who you eventually become convinced. "This isn't just like little fancy tails. This guy really means that the kingdom of God is here. And I think I'm going to take work off tomorrow and just go listen to him all day and maybe ask him some questions." And the disciples are Moshe, a few steps forward where they've given up everything to follow him. So Jesus says, "To you all who have chosen to buy in to the kingdom of God, to you it's granted to know the open secret of the kingdom of the heavens. The Greek word is *musterion*. The Greek word "*musterion*" actually means almost the opposite of our English word mystery.

Jon: We did talk about that.

Tim: Even though it gets translated as mystery.

Jon: And it sounds like the word mystery.

Tim: Because it's the root of our English word mystery. Because I think in English mystery means "I don't know."

Jon: "I understand."

Tim: "I'll never know. I don't know." Whereas in Greek it means "you do know, but it's just been revealed." *Musterion* is a secret that has been revealed.

Jon: It's like an epiphany or it's like a...

Tim: That's why Lesslie Newbigin, a missionary and new Testament scholar translates "*musterion*" as the open secret.

Jon: Wait, do we have our term? Do we have a word? Something that you just now understood. A revelation.

Tim: Yeah. Actually, apocalypse is a synonym to it. Totally. *Apokalupsis*, again, the Greek word, not meaning the end of the world but revealing.

Jon: So it means that?

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Tim: Yeah. I'm just going to read from the Bauer, Danker, Arndt & Gingrich standard Greek dictionary. "A secret teaching applied in the Greco Roman world mostly to religious movements with secret teachings."

Jon: That's a musterion?

Tim: Were often called the mystery religions. Because to the public at large, it's like, what are they? But if you're in the group...

Jon: Then you know what it means.

Tim: ...then you know the mystery. That's how the words used outside. And then the secret plans and thoughts of gods that are revealed in and through the prophets and so on.

Jon: It's more like a riddle in a way. A mystery in English is like nobody knows. It's a mystery. A riddle, it's like some people know, some people don't.

Tim: And it remains a mystery until it's revealed to you. And the whole point is that in the arrival of the kingdom of God, God's mysterious purpose for waiting this long with Israel and exile is finally...

Jon: It seems a riddle, right? It's still a riddle after it's revealed to you, but now you're in on it.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. The whole point is to you, it's been granted to know the open secret about the kingdom of the heaven. And as he says to all of them, he's in narratively referring back to this group that is the group of chapters 11 and 12, most of whom are either apathetic or hostile to him.

So Jesus is working with a very mixed audience, and the thing that's happening with God's kingdom is not actually going to make sense to most of these people. For whoever has to that one, more will be given. Like you guys have some insight, and you've pursued me and follow the kingdom and so you're going to get more and more understanding and have an abundance. But whoever doesn't have, like these who are not accepting me or don't know what to think yet, even what they has will be taken away.

"This is why I speak in parables," he goes on, "because while seeing they do not see and hearing, they do not hear, nor do they understand. You know, that thing that Isaiah said, that's what's happening right now." And then he quotes those words from Isaiah that really bothered you. "Keep on hearing, don't understand. Keep on seeing..."

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What we should first do is see Jesus is intentionally saying this moment that we're in is exactly like the moment that all of the prophets have been in. God's sending a message to His people who have turned away from Him. They think they're just fine and they don't recognize that the prophetic word he's speaking to them. But notice for Jesus, then he also says, "To the one who has, you'll get more. He's referring to them. Who's them? Israelites, who like Isaiah, you know they've humbled themselves, and they're pursuing Jesus and they're asking questions here. They are asking questions.

And so it's as if the parables have this double function. They both invite people in into the inquisitive and the open. They'll get more. Like Moshe, "I'm going to, I'm going to sit at Jesus' feet all day tomorrow." I think he's onto something. But for others who are convinced their way of being Israel is right, the parables just convince them that this guy is crazy, and we should write him off. It's like both. They do both. And so he says, "Blessed are your eyes because they do see, and your ears because they hear." Let's pause. Do you have any reflections at the moment?

Jon: Well, the fact that they have that feature to them that they do both those things, is that one of the reasons Jesus uses them then?

Tim: Yeah. I think they're like a sifting mechanism.

Jon: I mean cause there's all sorts of features that we've talked about. They're easy to remember. They shape your imagination. But they also have the sifting quality to them that seems like it's important to Jesus that they do that.

Tim: That's right. It's almost as if Jesus can't trust the crowds. He's just got a crowd here and we know in that crowd are people with all kinds of different opinions about him and so he doesn't entrust his direct and clear teaching to the crowds. To them, they get parables and to the one who has, they'll get more. But to the one who does not have even what they have will be taken.

This is a portrait of Jesus that is actually uncomfortable for a lot of people because we think, "Oh, he's here as God's representative to do for us what we can't do and to tell us what we need to know so we can be saved. And this Jesus is coming to Israel, and based on your response to him, it's like he will leave you. He's really putting the initiative in the listener's court, so to speak here. That's what the parable is about. The condition of the soil determines whether or not the seed will grow fruit.

Jon: You don't see religious leaders, especially kind of modern ones operating that way. It's more like how do I get as many people as possible to

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clearly understand what it is that they need to know. And instead, you have Jesus purposefully being cryptic. And that is very uncomfortable.

Tim: It is. That's right. Again, it's uncomfortable if we see him.

Jon: It's a feature, not a bug.

Tim: ...on analogy to like a pastor in a contemporary church who's just beckoning to the culture to turn to God. But that's not...

Jon: But there you can kind of get there because I really like it when a communicator makes you work for it.

Tim: I see. Yeah, yeah.

Jon: Where you listen to a sermon or lesson or something and you're like, "I think I'm getting it." But there's so much more here and you want to re-listen to it and you want to dwell on it. There's something really powerful about that. But it seems like that element of how a parable continues to shape you as you listen to it, that's one feature. But there's another feature, which is that Jesus actually just wants people who don't care to not even try to care.

Tim: Correct. He's actually trying to turn some people off to him.

Jon: That's strange.

Tim: That's right. That's right. Here I think we need to reckon with the unique historical moment of Jesus bringing the kingdom of God in the 1st Century. That first of all isn't about me; it's about him. I mean, Jesus was trying to stir up trouble. He was attempting to give a message to Israel that he knew would result in his being rejected and killed. And it's as if the parables are actually almost like a way of cryptically buying time. Sort of being clear, but not so clear and also dividing...

Jon: That's interesting.

Tim: Remember what Gabriel says to Mary in the gospel of Luke. "Your son will pierce like a sword. People will rise and fall in Israel on account of your son. And a sword will pierce your own heart also Mary." It's as if Jesus just like Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and all the prophets were divisive figures between the old Israel that rejected their God and the new covenant Israel. And so Jesus, he's communicating in a way to be kind of clear enough...

Jon: The parables are a way for him to rally the right people around him and to prepare the right people while buying time so that he doesn't cause



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too much controversy too fast. Again, this is a quote from N. T. Wright from his book "Jesus and the Victory of God". He has a number of really wonderful, illuminating sections on the parables here.

He says, "If someone had asked Jesus why he spoke so cryptically, he might well have replied with the famous and otherwise puzzling words from Isaiah 6. 'So that they may look and look, but never see here, hear and hear but never understand.' If they really were to see and understand there might be a riot."

Jon: That's not what God says in Isaiah.

Tim: No, no. He's committing on Jesus specifically, and it's because it's true. When Jesus often was direct and clear, religious leaders wanted to kill him.

Jon: Even when he was just less indirect.

Tim: That's right. Wright goes on. "Those who have ears to hear will hear, and for the moment it is just as well that those who do not will not. Jesus' Nazareth manifesto in Luke chapter 4 where he read from the scroll, the spirit of the Lord is on me, announce good news to the poor, that whole thing ends with them trying to kill him, drive him out of town. Perhaps that was a bit too clear. It almost got him killed. If the prophets is not to perish away from Jerusalem..."

Jon: Oh, before he gets to Jerusalem?

Tim: That's right. In other words, if he, the prophet, is supposed to die in Jerusalem...

Jon: Let's not cut it short.

Tim: "...his subversive message must be closed in disguise which only the seeing eye will penetrate. Jesus' parables then are reworking and re-appropriating Israel's prophetic traditions. They're the ideal vehicle for the paradoxical and dangerous campaign that Jesus is undertaking, expressing the very heart of his message.

The parables belong substantially within the specific period of his public career in ministry as a prophet announcing judgment and renewal for Israel."

Jon: The ideal vehicle for paradoxical and dangerous teachings, that's helpful. That makes a lot of sense. If you're going to go out and say something you know could cause a riot, you're going to be careful in how you say it. And the ideal vehicle for that would be a parable.

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Tim: Correct.

Jon: The cryptic nature of it is a feature, not a bug.

Tim: Oh, it's a feature, not a bug. That's good. Did you say that earlier?

Jon: Yeah, real quick.

Tim: Somehow that's just landing with me. That's good. That's right. The puzzling odd nature of the parables is a feature, not a bug. And his explanation of why he tells parables is a feature and not an odd theological puzzle. It's actually the prophets going to a hardened Israel, so that Isaiah 6, their message hardens the heart, within the Hebrew Bible, that's all a developed design pattern on analogy to Moses and Pharaoh. Because Moses is the first prophet to confront a king who hardened his heart through repeated appeals - to turn 10 chances. And then paradoxically, Moses' petition "let my people go" now actually has the opposite effect of hardening Pharaoh's heart. And it's precisely through God's using Pharaoh's abstinence to let evil destroy itself.

Jon: He used it so much that at one point in the story, it even says that God hardens his heart.

Tim: Correct. Yes, exactly.

Jon: God becomes so immersed with any chance.

Tim: But what's the vehicle? What's the mechanism for God's hardening? It's sending Moses another time. "Let my people go." Moses' words become the way that Pharaoh gets more stubborn and abstinence.

Jon: And so then in the prophetic tradition, like Isaiah, he goes, brings the word and it creates an abstinence. Jesus is doing it here, but he's actually taking an extra step of being even more cryptic, right?

Tim: That's what he says. To those on the outside, they get images and parables, which if it's someone who has, more will be given to them. Like the disciples and the big crew of disciples he formed around himself. But for the crowds and the masses, he remained an obscure, cryptic teacher.

Jon: Can we go back to the parable then? Because you wanted to connect the dots between seed and...

Tim: That's right.

Jon: And maybe that's all. You just want to show, "Look, Isaiah and the prophets, they use language that's basic to literature in the Bible. These are design patterns and Jesus is using those. That's an important thing to

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realize. And when you do that and you connect, "Okay, so Jesus is talking about seed and he's talking about seed-producing," I don't want to just think about that parable abstracted from anything. I want to think about it in terms of this design pattern, this motif of seed, and God's word and how people respond to it throughout the whole biblical story.

Tim: Correct. I'm going to answer it through going right to the next thing Jesus says in Matthew 15. I think we'll address what you're saying.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: After quoting from Isaiah 6, Jesus says, "Okay, you want an explanation? Here's the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word about the kingdom and does not understand..." and then he goes on to give explanations of the four conditions of the soil. The birds that snatch are like the principalities and powers of evil worldviews and values and allegiances that are given to false gods that will make the word fruitless.

The rocky place is the one who hears immediately and responds with joy, but it has no root. And when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, he falls away. The word for rocky places is "petrodes". It's the word "Peter". And many people have seen here that Peter's character is a narrative realization of the rocky soil. Because he receives the word enthusiastically. And who has more gusto than Peter in the gospel?

Jon: And then who wins out faster?

Tim: But then when affliction or persecution threatens, he falls away. That's Peter.

Jon: I was also thinking about how in Isaiah - was it 5? - how in that parable, the owner of the vineyard takes out all the stone.

Tim: That's true. That's a good point. That's right.

[crosstalk 01:05:03]

Tim: The seed among the thorns is the one among whom the worries of the world and deceitfulness of wealth choke the word. And then the seed on good soil is the one who hears the word. So whole point is the word of the kingdom is the seed.

Jon: How do you receive the word of the kingdom?

Tim: How do you receive the word of the kingdom?

[01:06:15]

## Jesus and the Parables of the Prophets

Tim: I appreciate we're coming around it. I want to crystallize this point. The first point, we talked about last episode, the parables are commentary on Jesus's announcement and bringing God's kingdom.

Jon: But he was bringing God's kingdom.

Tim: They are about him and what he was doing. Second, they are about how what he was doing was bringing the whole biblical story, especially of God and Israel to its climax. That's why so many of his parables, especially of warning are packed with hyperlinks to the prophets. And the word and the seed is a famous example. Here it is.

He sees himself through the parables as being like one of Israel's prophets who sent to a hard-hearted people that only a few are going to accept his message. It's that double role of the parables. Cryptic.

Jon: My first reaction to Jesus explaining the parable I was like, "Why didn't we get this for every parable?"

Why didn't he give us the symbolism glossary for every parable? It's really helpful."

But then I was also just thinking, "You know, having read Isaiah 5..."

Tim: You kind of have it.

Jon: You kind of have it. You can come back to this and go, "Oh I know what this is about." You wouldn't know the details of the bird is like the principalities. I wouldn't have gotten that. Maybe I could have gotten that somewhere else, I don't know, but the whole idea of the seed being God's word and how that's received and the rocky places, that would have landed. Anyways, I do wish that more of the parables had this little cheat sheet.

Tim: He unpacks about three if I remember correctly. Where somebody says, "Hey, what was that about?" And he explains. It's as if the apostles want to give us enough examples of them explained to then...

Jon: So you don't lose hope?

Tim: Well, and then so that you, the reader can ponder. They're trying to recreate for you what it would be like to hear him teach. If you have a red-letter Bible, that's why there's so much red letters. They're passing on to you the teachings as they remembered and are recounting them so that you can experience through these texts what it was like to hear him teach. There you go.

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Jon: So first, parables are commentary on what Jesus was doing - announcing the kingdom of God. Secondly, the parables are riffing off of the design patterns and images all throughout Hebrew scripture because what Jesus saw him doing was fulfilling the story of Hebrew scripture - what God was doing with Israel and the world.

Tim: That's the second part of our conversation. And so that's cool. It's repeating and these part of the pattern, what does that mean? What it means is he's facing an obstinate, mostly negative audience just like the prophets that he's imitating as he tells parables.

Jon: It always bugged me that - like for example, what gospel is it? John, right? Where Nicodemus comes to Jesus. What gospel is that?

Tim: That's John. Nicodemus.

Jon: Nicodemus is just like, "I want to know what's going on."

Tim: He's so cryptic.

Jon: He's so cryptic. And it's just like, Jesus, just tell him you came to die for the world and you need them to believe...

Tim: He does. John 3:16 is in that conversation.

Jon: Then he's like, "You need to be born from above again, and the spirit..." It's just like, "Whoa, why are you being so cryptic?" These parables are so cryptic. And it's like part of his deal was he was really capable.

Tim: I have often thought that there are some stories about Jesus that I'm just like, "Man, I would love to spend the rest of my life hanging out with him." And the parables are ones that make me think like, "I think it would be hard to be around Jesus."

But inevitably what he's doing is he putting the ball in your court. It's like people are trying to ask him questions, but really they're trying to get angles on him and he just has a way of just turning it all around so that now you're under the microscope and he's just told you a story about it or asked you a question. That was just apparently how he was to see the effect he had on people.

And here particularly it's his role as the minority prophet going to a new Pharaoh that is the leaders of Israel and his message is cryptic parables that harden as much as they illuminate. That's how Jesus understood his role to Israel.

Jon: Hopefully, if you sit down with Jesus, he's not going to see you that way.

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Tim: Well, that was a unique moment in the covenant story of God and Israel. We're in a different moment now in the story. That part of the moment was unique, what he was doing in Galilee and in Jerusalem. The book of Acts is not like this.

Jon: But you can take that same idea though and apply it in that maybe God still works with people that way. Well, there may be moments where indirect communication about the nature of God's kingdom or the good news is actually the most effective time. Actually, I think that's the next step of our conversation is pondering a little more this indirect cryptic nature of teachings of Jesus through the parables.

Jon: Cool.

Thank you for listening to this episode of the BibleProject podcast. Next week we'll continue our discussion on Jesus' parables and look at something really fascinating, that the parables were actually meant to be subversive.

Tim: Direct communication is important for conveying information, but learning is more than information intake. People entrenched in their current understanding set their defenses against direct communication and end up conforming the message into the channels of their current understanding of reality. But indirect communication finds a way in through the back window to confront a person's view of reality. A parable's ultimate aim is to draw in the listener, to awaken insight, to stimulate the conscience, and to move to action.

Jesus' parables are prophetic instruments used to get God's people to stop, reconsider their way of viewing reality, and change behavior.

Jon: If you want to check out our video we made about how to read the parables, it's out and ready for you to check out. It's on [youtube.com/thebibleproject](https://www.youtube.com/thebibleproject) or on our website [bibleproject.com](https://www.bibleproject.com). Today's show was produced by Dan Gummel. Our theme music comes from the band Tents. We're a crowdfunded nonprofit in Portland, Oregon, and all of our resources are free because of the generous support of many, many people just like you. So thank you for being a part of this with us.

Nathaniel: Hi, this is Nathaniel Vanderploeg, and I'm from Kelso, Washington.

Katie: And this is Katie Vanderploeg from Kelso, Washington too. I first heard about the BibleProject from Nathaniel and it paired really well with the class that I was taking called Basic Beliefs. So that was pretty cool.

Nathaniel: I use the BibleProject in all kinds of situations. I'm a youth pastor so I use it in youth group all the time. I'm teaching an intergenerational

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class through the heaven and earth workbook, and that's been super, super fruitful.

Katie: My favorite thing about the BibleProject is learning about the Bible as a whole story. And the context that goes within that story as well is really like informative and puts the Bible in perspective that is a lot easier to understand. We believe the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus.

Nathaniel: We're a crowdfunded project by people like me.

Katie: Find free videos, study notes, and podcasts, and more at the [bibleproject.com](http://bibleproject.com).