

THE PURPOSE FOR THE PARABLES AS
FOUND IN MATTHEW 13:10-17

by

Terry E. Glidden

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Author: Terry E. Glidden
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Advisers: Ivan H. French and Homer A. Kent, Jr.

There is little question as to the uniqueness of Matthew 13 and the chapter's emphasis upon the parabolic ministry of Christ. However, there is the controversy over the purpose for which Christ used parables so extensively at this particular point. The scholars are divided as to whether they were for the purpose of revealing truth to the multitude or whether they were spoken with a twofold emphasis, of both revealing truth to the disciples and concealing truth from the multitude. The present writer supports this latter view by discussing the significant background to this introduction of the parables and why parables were spoken to the disciples and the multitude.

The material in Matthew 13:10-17 is appropriately divided with a twofold emphasis. The first division is Matthew 13:10-12, which gives the direct question of the disciples and the reply of Christ, directed immediately to the disciples rather than the multitude. The unique use of the personal pronouns and the structure of the verses makes this obvious. However, Christ will again address the disciples in Matthew 13:16-17 in relationship to the parables, with particular emphasis upon the responsiveness of the disciples to his teaching.

The second emphasis of Matthew 13:10-17 is found in the intervening verses (Matt. 13:13-15). Within these verses Christ answers the original question (Matt. 13:10) and indicates a twofold element to his answer. The major controversy is Matthew's use of the ὅτι (Matt. 13:13), rather than the ἵνα found in the other Synoptics. It is concluded that this is a causal ὅτι, and that Christ's first element in his reply is the cause for his speaking in parables. The second element of his reply is to indicate the aim of the parables for the multitude (Matt. 13:14-15). Thus, it is concluded that in this section of verses Christ states both the cause and the purpose of the parables for the multitude. The emphasis then of Christ is twofold. For those who are without, what truth they do have will be taken from them. But for those disciples, their knowledge will abound.

Accepted by the Faculty of Grace Theological Seminary
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Master of Theology

Homer A. Kent, Jr.
Adviser

Joan H. French
Adviser

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BAGD	W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament
ExpTim	Expository Times
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
KJV	King James Version
LSJ	Liddell-Scott-Jones, Greek-English Lexicon
NovT	Novum Testamentum
TNDT	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.), Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

INTRODUCTION

The Uniqueness of the Gospel by Matthew

The record of the life of Christ given by Matthew has many unique features. Matthew presents both the Sermon on the Mount and the Olivet Discourse in rather extended form. He preserves material that is not to be found elsewhere in the New Testament.

This same unique feature by Matthew is also seen in his presentation of the parables of Christ. Only in Matthew is there such an extensive listing of the parables and of the purpose for the parables.¹ Many have turned to Mark for a discussion of the purpose of parables because of his brevity and the early date of his record.² However, since there is this unique feature to Matthew, it seems to be the natural place for a discussion of the controversy.

This extended discussion of the purpose of the parables will give more information and insight into

¹William Hendriksen, Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), pp. 549-50.

²W. Manson, "The Purpose of the Parables: A Re-Examination of St. Mark 4:10-12," ExpTim 68 (February 1957):132-33.

the parallel accounts. It will also demonstrate the unity of the plan of God in the recording and preservation of this information about the purpose of the parables.

The Controversy Relating to the Purpose
of the Parables

Two basic views present themselves in relationship to this issue. An interpretation which is supported by scholars of many different persuasions is that the parables were to reveal truth rather than conceal it. G. Campbell Morgan spells out this view.

The parables therefore constituted a lamp, a lamp shining. It was not in order to hide things, but that the hidden things might be brought to light. These people could not, because of the attitude they had assumed, receive the mysteries, the profound things of the Kingdom of God. The purpose of the story, the picture, was to lure them to think, in order that they might find their way into the highest mystery.¹

In direct contrast to this previous view, is the suggestion that the purpose for Christ's speaking in parables was twofold. The truth would be more clearly revealed for the faithful followers, but for those without, this was a judgmental act by God for the concealing of the truth. Alva J. McClain effectively states this position.

Here we should recall that ordinarily the use of such similes and comparisons was intended to aid in the understanding of something (cf. Luke 6:39). But the parables about the mysteries of the Kingdom were not primarily so intended. On the contrary, we are informed by the Lord Himself, their purpose was

¹G. Campbell Morgan, The Parables and Metaphors of Our Lord (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1943), pp. 15-16.

to hide rather than to reveal. . . . all this does not deny that these parables of the Kingdom had a beneficent purpose. As a matter of fact, for those who had already accepted the simple facts about the Kingdom, these parables would give further enlightenment.¹

The contention between the two views is quite obvious. It will be the intent of this study to examine the evidence of Matthew 13:10-17 in relationship to this issue. There will be particular emphasis upon the structure of these verses and how it supports the latter view.

The Approach of this Study

Not all the issues can be addressed in this paper. Therefore, the major emphasis will be upon the structure of this particular portion of Matthew. This format of Matthew gives an abundance of material in support of a twofold purpose for the parables.

This thesis will present the material in Matthew 13:10-17 under five particular chapters. In the first chapter the basic background which relates to Matthew 13:10-17 will be discussed, and the importance of this material will be highlighted. From this basic background, the purpose of the parables for the disciples will be discussed in chapter two, as it is found in Matthew 13:10-12. Chapter three will discuss the purpose

¹Alva J. McClain, The Greatness of the Kingdom (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959), pp. 322-23.

of the parables for the multitude, as revealed in Matthew 13:13-15. In chapter four there will be an emphasis upon the reply of Christ to his disciples as recorded in Matthew 13:16-17. The final chapter will be a conclusion to this major controversy.

The extended record in Matthew has major contributions to make in regard to the controversy of the purpose of parables. After the material is examined in Matthew 13:10-17 it will be concluded that there is a twofold purpose for the parables. They were for the enlightenment of those who had accepted the Messiah, and for those who had rejected the Messiah, they concealed the truth.

CHAPTER I

SIGNIFICANT OBSERVATIONS

The Use of Parables in Matthew 13

Matthew thirteen states that Christ spoke many things to the multitude in parables. Never in the previous ministry of Christ had there been such a presentation of truth. The chapter is filled with this unique preaching and teaching method of Christ.

It should be noted that this was not the first occasion in the ministry of Christ that parables were used. William Hendriksen suggests that parables were also in use prior to this time and makes reference to the seventh and eighth chapters of Matthew.¹ Dr. A. T. Robertson also notes as many as nine other parables used before this time.²

Thus, the uniqueness of Matthew thirteen is not that Christ began to speak in parables, but it was at this particular point that he began to extensively

¹Hendriksen, Gospel According to Matthew, p. 552.

²Archibald T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, 5 vols. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), 1:100.

use this method of teaching. Dr. A. T. Robertson highlights this observation very effectively.

It was not the first time that Jesus had used parables, but the first time that he had spoken so many and some of such length. It is not certain how many he spoke on this occasion. Matthew mentions eight in this chapter. Mark adds the Parable of the Lamp (4:21=Luke 8:16), the Parable of the Seed Growing of Itself (4:26-29), making ten of which we know. But both Mark (4:33) and Matthew (13:34) imply that there were many others.¹

The term for parable is used eleven times in Matthew thirteen, and seventeen times in the Gospel.² However, the word "parable" is not used prior to Matthew thirteen. Only in Mark and Luke does it appear before the occasion spoken of in Matthew.

This special use of parables by Christ at this point in his ministry is of great importance. Particular events in Christ's ministry had produced this extensive use of this method. An examination of the previous chapters in Matthew will reveal why Christ spoke extensively in parables, and also contribute to the explanation for why he used parables.

The Conflicts Prior to Matthew 13

The hostility toward Christ had been mounting over the previous months of his ministry. One of the first accounts of this hostility is found in the ninth chapter of Matthew's Gospel. After having healed a man,

¹Ibid., 1:100-01

²BAGD, pp. 617-18.

certain of the scribes said within themselves that Christ had blasphemed (Matt. 9:3). In reply to this act, Christ confronts the scribes with what they had thought in their hearts (Matt. 9:4). This is quite similar to that which takes place in Matthew twelve.

This type of hostility continues, and again in Matthew 9:34 the Pharisees say that he casts out demons by the prince of demons. This also is seen as a climactic element in Matthew twelve and this hostility continued until the day of Christ's death. However, the fame of Christ continued to grow (Matt. 9:31), and he performed more and even greater miracles.

In chapter eleven the hostility toward Christ's ministry is again witnessed. This time it is through the subtle rejection of the mighty works which the Messiah had done (Matt. 11:3, 16, 20). Even John the Baptist sent men to inquire of Christ's authenticity.

All of this rejection and hostility to the work and message of Christ climaxed in chapter twelve. The Pharisees attribute to Christ the power of Satan for the working of his miracles. The popularity had increased (Matt. 12:23) to the point that this climactic attack of hostility was expressed by the religious leaders (Matt. 12:24).

Thus, Matthew twelve is the climax of the reactions of the religious leaders and religious masses to the

authenticating ministry of Christ.¹ They reject the Messiah and attribute to Christ the power of Satan. Because of this, Christ will respond to these multitudes in a particular way in the following days of his ministry.

The Importance of Matthew 13

It becomes quite obvious that this thirteenth chapter is a key chapter in Matthew's Gospel.² All of this hostility and rejection has preceded this extensive ministry in parables. Christ will appear before the multitudes again, but this time he will be teaching with parables, rather than authenticating by miracles.

This is an important observation to note. Christ changes his method in the presentation of himself and his Kingdom. To this point the miracles had taken the prominent position in his ministry, but now the parables will replace these miracles.³

¹McClain, The Greatness of the Kingdom, pp. 304-20. Dr. McClain has a thorough study of this building animosity to the ministry of Christ and places a special emphasis upon Matthew twelve (pp. 313-19).

²A key work on the structure of Matthew's Gospel has been done by Jack Kingsbury. In his work, he strongly emphasizes the focal point of Matthew thirteen. Jack Kingsbury, The Parables of Jesus in Matthew 13 (St. Louis: Clayton Publishing House, 1969). Frederick W. Danker takes a strong position against the work done by Kingsbury. Frederick W. Danker, "Fresh Perspective on Matthean Theology," CTM 41 (September 1970):478-90.

³T. A. Burkill, "The Cryptology of Parables in St. Mark's Gospel," NöVT 1 (October 1956):254.

In brief, chapter twelve saw the response of the religious leaders and followers to the miracles of Christ. For one group the response was hostility; for the other group it was marvel (Matt. 12:23, 24). However, in chapter thirteen the response of Christ is directed to the reaction of his followers. Since there had only been hostility and marvel rather than acceptance, Christ would now respond to them in parables rather than miracles.

This basic historical background is essential if one is to understand what happens at this point in Christ's ministry. It becomes obvious that the parabolic ministry of Christ begins at this climactic point in his ministry, when great animosity is being shown to him. Now as one examines the contents of Matthew thirteen, he cannot but keep in mind this multitude of individuals who have not responded. It will be to this group, and to his faithful followers, that he will address his parables.

The Disciples and the Multitude

One of the key features of Matthew thirteen in relationship to the parables is the audience to whom Christ addressed his answer in verse eleven. Matthew states that the disciples came to him and asked about the reason for his speaking in parables. This automatically makes one wonder who these disciples were.

If this group can be identified, it can make a major contribution to the answer which Christ gave.

A brief comparison of the Synoptics will reveal that there seem to be two groups of people before Christ at this point. Mark states in his fourth chapter, in verse ten, that there was a group surrounding Christ, along with the Twelve. It was from this gathering of people that the question came.¹

A simple glance at the second verse of Matthew thirteen reveals that the audience has changed from what it was prior to this point. The second verse speaks of the great multitude by the sea. But now the change is to a small group of people, gathered possibly by the house, who are with Christ in private.²

This has caused some to see an insertion into the chronological order of the text.³ Hendriksen suggests

¹For an excellent analysis of the audience of the parables see: J. A. Baird, "A Pragmatic Approach to the Parable Exegesis: Some New Evidence on Mark 4:11, 33-34," JBL 76 (September 1957):201-07.

²There is a controversy over the locality of this interaction. Alford suggests it occurred in the privacy of the boat. Henry Alford, The Greek Testament, 4 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), 1:138. Hendriksen suggests they are back at the house (Matt. 13:36). Hendriksen, Gospel According to Matthew, p. 552. Richard C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1943), p. 510.

³Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel, p. 510.

several reasons for the departure from the chronological order.

Probable answer: a. because verses 18-23, in which the very parable (The Sower) is explained which the evangelist has just now recorded is so closely connected with Christ's answer that it might be considered part of that answer; and b. because the thrust of Christ's immediate answer (verses 11-17), to the effect (see II Cor. 2:16) that the gospel is either 'a savor of death unto death' (verses 13-15) or 'a savor of life unto life' (verses 16, 17), harmonizes beautifully with the central lesson taught in that parable (verses 4-7 contrasted with verse 8).¹

Thus, this departure from the chronological order seems evident, since the individuals of verse ten are different from those in verse two.

This distinction between the two groups can be observed by the way they are identified in the text. There are those who are designated as disciples (μαθηταί) and there is the mass of people who are designated as the multitude (ὄχλοι). The personal pronoun most frequently used of the multitude is the third person plural (αὐτοῖς).² However, when Christ refers to his disciples, he consistently refers to them with the second person pronoun (ὑμῖν).

The significant observation is that Christ speaks to the multitude in verses two through nine. For the above reasons given by Hendriksen, Matthew inserts an

¹Hendriksen, Gospel According to Matthew, p. 552.

²Kingsbury, The Parables of Jesus in Matthew 13, p. 47. Danker, "Fresh Perspective on Matthean Theology," pp. 488-90.

explanation for the purpose of the parables, and the meaning of one of the parables, in verses ten through twenty-three. It is interesting to note that in verse twenty-four Matthew again makes reference to the phrase, "another parable put he forth to them (αὐτοῖς) saying." This brings Matthew back to his chronological order, and the audience of verse two.

Matthew then continues to present a chronological order which ceases with the dismissal of the multitude (ὄχλους) in verse thirty-six. At this particular point Matthew again comes back to the audience of his disciples (μαθηταί), and the disciples are again interested in knowing the meaning of the parable.¹

Throughout this passage Matthew changes from one audience to another. First, there is the great multitude (Matt. 13:1-9), and then the inquiry of the disciples (Matt. 13:10-23). After this Matthew returns to the chronological order, and reveals the parables spoken at that time (Matt. 13:24-35). Then Matthew concludes with another emphasis upon the disciples (Matt. 13:36).

It is not the thrust of this paper to debate this insertion (Matt. 13:10-23). It is the point of this paper to draw significant observations from this interruption, which will help to explain the purpose of the parables.

¹Hendriksen, Gospel According to Matthew, p. 570.

It is obvious that two groups of people are designated throughout the chapter. The conclusion drawn from this is that it would be natural to find, in the answer from Christ, a twofold purpose for the parables.

The Disciples and the Twelve Apostles

It has been shown that the multitude was marveling at the works of Christ, but there has also been the animosity and rejection of Christ. Among this hostility there was a group of disciples who were accepting the truth from the Messiah. It is this group to whom Matthew makes reference to in verse ten.

The general meaning of the term μαθητής is that of one who learns or is learning from someone.¹ The term is directly related to μαρθάνω and indicates that a disciple was one who was desiring to learn. This particular meaning acknowledges the reason why these individuals were coming. They were coming and following as those who intended to learn.

The term disciple in the New Testament is used of four particular groups: disciples of John the Baptist (Mark 2:18), of the Pharisees (Matt. 22:16), of Moses (John 9:28), and of Jesus Christ.² It is evident that these disciples were followers of Christ, because Luke

¹BAGD, pp. 486-487.

²W. E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words with Their Precise Meanings for English Readers (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1940), p. 316.

speaks of them as his disciples (οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ). The difficulty relates to whether this is a designation for the specific Twelve, or for those in the group, plus the Twelve.

Since Mark distinguishes between the two groups (Mark 4:10), it is natural to suppose that the term disciple can be applied to different kinds of followers of Christ. Within the usages found in the New Testament, the followers of Christ are designated as uncommitted Jews who become adherents of Jesus (John 6:66), of the Twelve (John 19:38), and of those who manifested commitment (John 8:31; 13:35).¹

The fact that the disciples are often distinguished from the Twelve is emphasized by D. Müller in the following:

hoi mathetai are not simply the equivalent of hoi dodeka, the Twelve. This identification can be observed only in some parts of the tradition. The circle of the Twelve was both a symbolic representation of the twelve tribes of Israel, and thus of the larger circle of disciples which Jesus summoned to discipleship from a still wider group of adherents.²

Thus, the basic conclusion is that the disciples can refer to a group of followers distinct from the Twelve.

¹Ibid., p. 316.

²New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, s.v. "μαθητής," by D. Müller, 1:489. TDNT, s.v. "οἱ μαθηταί, οἱ δώδεκα, οἱ ἀπόστολοι," by K. H. Rengstorff, 4:450-55.

These disciples followed Christ because they were desirous to learn. It was this particular group that is emphasized in Matthew thirteen, along with the twelve Apostles (Mark 4:10).

Summary

The structure of Matthew thirteen reveals that two particular groups of individuals are in view. First, there is the great multitude (Matt. 13:2, 24) which had rejected the Messiah under the influence of the hostile religious leaders. Then there is the group of disciples, to whom Mark makes reference as disciples, and among them are the Twelve. It is from this second group that the question comes concerning the parables.

Having seen these two distinct groups, it becomes natural and obvious for Christ to address both groups in his reply. The question comes from the disciples in relationship to the multitude. The reply from Christ is directed not only to the multitude, (Matt. 13:13-15) but also to the disciples (Matt. 13:11-12, 16-17).

In conclusion, these two audiences are very important because the purposes for the parables, given by Christ, will be directed to both groups. For those who follow Christ for the sake of learning, the parables will give more insight. However, for the

multitude the parables were spoken to conceal the truth from them. With an examination of Matthew 13:10-17 the twofold purpose of the parables will become more obvious in relationship to these two groups of people.

CHAPTER II

THE PURPOSE OF THE PARABLES FOR THE DISCIPLES

The Inquiry of the Disciples

It has been demonstrated that two particular groups are having interaction with Christ. It is the disciples who now come to Christ with the inquiry about the parables. As they ask their question, two significant elements surface which are relevant to the purpose of the parables. The first significant element is the form of the question that the disciples ask. The second significant element is the individuals about whom the disciples are concerned. In the following pages these two particular elements will be discussed, and their significance will be given as it relates to the parable controversy.

The Significance of the Question

The disciples approach Christ by asking him why (Διὰ τί) he spoke in parables. The major controversy over this question relates to whether these disciples were asking for the purpose or the reason of the parables. Lenski suggests that since Matthew did not use ἵνατί,

and since he did use *διὰ τῆς*, that the disciples were asking for the reason of the parables and not the purpose.¹ Thus, the major concern of the disciples was not the purpose of the parables, but an explanation of the parables. The aim of the parables became secondary. The key concern was an explanation of this method, or the parable itself.

However, the question cannot simply be limited to one particular emphasis as is indicated by Lenski.

The disciples even ask for the reason (*διὰ τῆς*; not the purpose or aim, which would be *ἕνεκα*) that Jesus is using parables. The question was really a double one. They wanted to know why Jesus was using parables and what this first parable meant (Luke 8:9), likewise the second.²

Lenski is suggesting that the question was very general in its intent and the reply of Christ could both incorporate an explanation of the parables as well as the reason for them, but not the aim of the parables.

In response to this conclusion about the question, Alfred Plummer suggests that the question of the disciples did actually direct itself to the aim or purpose of the parables, but in a general way.³

¹Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel, p. 510.

²Ibid.

³Alfred Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 188.

The disciples' question is given differently by the Evangelists. Mk. says that they 'asked Him the parables.' Lk. understands this as signifying that they asked the meaning of this particular parable. Mt. gives it the much wider signification of a question as to the purpose of the parables generally. This involves a change in Christ's reply from ἵνα μὴ to ὅτι οὐ. Christ could not be said to aim at preventing all His hearers from understanding.¹

This suggests that the disciples were asking a question in reference to the purpose of the parables, but also with reference to the meaning of the parables. In this sense it is a general question, but with particular emphasis upon the purpose of the parables. This suggestion is different from what Lenski has said, in that the purpose of the parables is being emphasized in the question. The fact is that ἵνατί is not relevant, since purpose is implied by the use of διὰ τί.

A solution to this controversy is found by examining the possible meanings of διὰ when it is linked with the interrogative pronoun (τίς). Liddell and Scott give three significant usages, which are cause, occasion or purpose.² Blass and Debrunner also link διὰ τί, ἵνα τί and τί ὅτι in parallel meanings.³ Thus, the grammarians agree that διὰ τί may have the same meaning as ἵνα τί.

¹Ibid.

²LSJ, p. 389.

³Friedrich W. Blass and A. Debrunner, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, trans. and revised Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 156.

This particular conclusion reveals that the disciples themselves were concerned about the aim of what Christ was doing in the use of this type of teaching method. However, from the parallel accounts and the extended account in Matthew, it becomes obvious that much more was implied by the question, since both the purpose and the explanation of the parable were given. Christ not only gave the purpose of the parables, but also an explanation of one particular parable. This becomes quite obvious in the structure of the thirteenth chapter. In verses eleven through seventeen Christ directs his reply to the purpose of the parables. However, in verses eighteen through twenty-three he gives the meaning of the parable. This question is twofold in emphasis. The disciples are concerned about the purpose of, and explanation of the parable.

In summary, the question which the disciples asked did relate to the aim of the parables. However, in the reply of Christ both the purpose and explanation is given. This reveals that what will follow (Matt. 13:11-17) is directly related to the purpose of the parables.

The Individuals Under Consideration

The question from the disciples not only related to the purpose of the parables but also to a particular group of people (*αὐτοῖς*). The disciples' major concern was directed to the multitude rather than themselves.

However, in the reply of Christ, he will first direct his attention to the disciples rather than the multitude.

Matthew uses the third person plural personal pronoun in the question which is asked by the disciples. The disciples had asked why do you speak to them (αὐτοῖς) in parables. Their attention has been directed to the multitude. However, in the reply from Christ, Matthew effectively changes the form of the personal pronoun to second person plural (ὑμῖν), rather than third person plural (αὐτοῖς). This immediately took the attention off the multitude and directed it to the disciples. More will be stated about this later in the paper. The important point is that the disciples were concerned about the multitude but Christ was concerned about the disciples.

Summary

The question which the disciples asked was related to both the purpose and the explanation of the parables. They had directed the question to Christ with particular emphasis upon the multitude. However, the reply of Christ was directed to the disciples. This indicates that there was a twofold purpose for the parables. They had asked about the multitude but Christ replied with particular emphasis upon the disciples. The implication is that there is a purpose for you also.

Thus, the twofold purpose of the parables is easily seen in the question which the disciples asked.

The Answer of Christ

The answer that Christ gave to the question is twofold. He is asked about the purpose for the parables in relationship to the multitude, but gives an answer to both the disciples and the multitude. In direct contrast to the question asked by the disciples, Christ refers his answer to the disciples (Matt. 13:11-12) and then to the multitude (Matt. 13:13-15). The answer he gives to the disciples gives the first purpose of the parables.

The Recipients of the Answer

The next major discussion of Matthew thirteen relates to the answer (Matt. 13:11-12) that Christ gave to the disciples. It has been revealed that the audience of Christ's reply was a group of people consisting of the twelve Apostles and the faithful followers. In the reply of Christ it becomes obvious that these disciples are foremost in the mind of Christ. Thus, the specific applications of verses eleven and twelve are directed to the disciples.

The first of several reasons for these verses directly relating to the disciples is that there is a particular use of the pronouns in the verses. In verse ten the disciples asked Christ why he spoke to them

(αὐτοῖς) in parables. However, in Christ's reply, he changes his emphasis by stating that he is speaking to the disciples (ὑμῖν). Christ does not speak of the multitude (αὐτοῖς) until verse thirteen. Thus, it seems as though Christ deliberately directed the attention of the disciples away from the multitude and directed it to the disciples themselves, by the use of these particular pronouns.¹

It should also be noted that as Christ speaks of the multitude (αὐτοῖς) in verse thirteen, he will continue to refer to them with the third person plural personal pronoun until verse sixteen. At verse sixteen Christ will again speak to the disciples. Kingsbury effectively summarizes these observations.

In contradistinction to the blessing that Jesus pronounces upon the disciples (vv. 16f.) stand the oft-repeated references to the Jewish crowds throughout the whole of 13:1-35 as "them" (αὐτοῖς; vv. 3, 10, 13, 24, 31, 33, 34). By providing for this, Matthew, as we previously mentioned, effectively makes of αὐτοῖς a terminus technicus designating the Jews.⁹⁰ As the antonym of "you", which denotes the disciples (cf. vv. 11, 16, 17, 18), and the synonym of ἐκεῖνος (cf. vv. 10b, 13a, to v. 11c), αὐτοῖς possesses the connotation of "apartness" or "alienation".²

A second reason for concluding that Christ spoke to his disciples is the distinct reference to those who

¹Heinrich A. W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Gospel of Matthew, trans. Frederick Crombre and William Stewart (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884), pp. 255-6.

²Kingsbury, The Parables of Jesus in Matthew 13, p. 47.

who are without (ἐκείνος). The observations of Alford at this particular point are significant.

These are only revealed to the humble diligent hearers, ὑμῖν: to those who were immediately around the Lord with the twelve; not ἐκείνος = τοῖς λαοποῖς Luke, = ἐκείνος τοῖς ἔξω Mark.¹

Alford is correct in concluding that the ἐκείνος of Matthew 13:11 is equal to those who are without, as recorded in Mark, and the others as recorded in Luke. Kingsbury also notes that this demonstrative pronoun does imply alienation or apartness.² Thus, within the reference of Christ to his disciples he incorporates a contrast (δέ) with another group to whom he will address himself in verse thirteen. To emphasize the purpose of the parables for these disciples Christ will contrast it with his purpose of the parables for those who are without (Mark 4:10).

Several explanations have been given to this particular reference to those who are without. Cranfield gives several possibilities of meaning.

Contrasted with the disciples to whom God has given the secret are 'those that are without'. This expression has been held to support the theory of the influence of ideas connected with the mystery cults. It is possible that the phrase may mean

¹Alford, The Greek Testament, 1:138.

²Kingsbury, The Parables of Jesus in Matthew 13, p. 47.

quite literally 'those outside' (the house in which the disciples are at the moment). Or it may mean 'those outside the number of the disciples'.¹

The fact that the first and second suggestions are both speculative, the third interpretation is most appropriate. Thus, those who are without (ἐκείνος) is in reference to the multitude. And it is the multitude which Christ is now contrasting with the disciples. The disciples were being addressed in the parables for a particular purpose just as the multitude was. Each group was being addressed for a particular purpose.

A third important reason for the disciples being in view in verses eleven and twelve is the special use of the ὅτι. The major controversy over the use of ὅτι will be discussed at a later time. The reason for mentioning it is to point to the parallel construction. Both replies given by Christ in relationship to the purpose of the parables are introduced by the use of ὅτι (Matt. 13:10, 13). This indicates the twofold reply of Christ and the two particular groups addressed in each reply.

The fourth reason for the disciples being the focal point of verses eleven and twelve is the repetition of the statement of the question asked in verse thirteen. In verse ten the disciples had asked Christ why he spoke

¹C. E. B. Cranfield, The Gospel According to Saint Mark (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), p. 154.

in parables (Διὰ τί ἐν παραβολαῖς λαλοῖς αὐτοῖς)¹

The direct reply to this question is not given until verse thirteen. In verse thirteen Christ will restate the question for the sake of emphasizing that he will now address the original question (διὰ τοῦτο ἐν παραβολαῖς αὐτοῖς λαλῶ).² This repetition of the question indicates that Christ had not addressed the original question in relationship to the multitude. He had not addressed the purpose of the parables for the multitude in verses eleven and twelve. Instead, he gave the purpose of the parables for the disciples, and now in verse thirteen he will give the purpose of the parables for the multitude. All this is indicated by the repetition of the original question in verse thirteen.

These previous observations reveal that the original question of the disciples is avoided for the moment. Instead, Christ will address the disciples and give a specific purpose for the parables being spoken to them. Christ will not answer the disciples' original question until he explains to them the purpose for the parables being spoken to them. After Christ gives this explanation of purpose, then he will address himself to

¹It may be for variety, but it is significant to note that in the reply of Christ in verse eleven, Matthew uses εἶπεν rather than λαλῶ. If there is a difference in meaning, it would have been obvious to the disciples.

²Kingsbury, The Parables of Jesus in Matthew 13, p. 48.

the original question about the purpose for the parables in relationship to the multitude.

The Significant Reply of Christ

The reply that Christ now gives directs itself, with particular emphasis, to the disciples. However the answer does give significant information about the multitude. In his answer, Christ presents several significant points which relate to the purpose of the parables for the disciples, and mentions the basic premise of the purpose of the parables for the multitude (καὶ ὃ ἔχει ἀρθίσεται ἀπ' αὐτοῦ).

In verse eleven Christ indicates that the disciples have something that the multitude does not have. This possession is a knowledge of the mystery of the Kingdom. Matthew emphatically states this in verse eleven by omitting the infinitival form of *γινώσκω* in connection with those who are without. Lenski effectively explains the situation as revealed in verse eleven.

When Jesus now tells the disciples that to them the great grace has been given "to know the mysteries" while to the others, the Pharisees and the multitudes, this privilege "to know the mysteries" (the aorist *γινῶνται* to indicate actual inner grasp and appropriation) has not been given, he is speaking of the present condition of the disciples and of the

others. Due to something that transpired in the past, the one group now has this gift to know, the other has it not.¹

The fact that the disciples had this knowledge, and that the multitude did not, has been interpreted in two ways. G. C. Morgan has stated that since the disciples knew and the multitude did not know, there was a necessity to speak to the multitude in parables so they might know as the disciples did.²

To those receiving Him were given the mysteries of the Kingdom. To those rejecting Him these messages could not be given, and they were in danger of losing the real value of all that they had gained through their early religious training. Now with these men to whom are denied the secrets of the Kingdom, because of their disloyalty to the king, Jesus adopts a new method. He will give them pictures to lure them toward the truth.³

This suggestion given by G. C. Morgan fails to recognize an important element in verse twelve. The key element is that those who do not have, shall have what they do have taken away from them (ἀρθησεται). G. C. Morgan fails to recognize this important point. If verse eleven stood alone one might be tempted to come to this conclusion. However, the fact is that Christ emphatically states that what little they have

¹Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel, p. 511.

²G. Campbell Morgan, The Gospel According to Matthew (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1929), p. 141.

³Ibid., pp. 141-2.

will be taken from them. This does not indicate allurement but judgment.

Because of this previous observation in relationship to verse twelve, another interpretation is given to the fact that the disciples knew and the multitude did not. This second interpretation states that the failure on the part of the multitude was not an enticement for Christ to lure them closer, but to use parables in the sense of judgment. The disciples had a knowledge of the Kingdom and therefore the purpose of the parables for them was to increase their knowledge of the Kingdom. This suggestion has the parables being revealed to the disciples rather than the multitude.

In verse twelve the true significance of the purpose of the parables for the disciples is given, and the major premise for the purpose for the multitude is also given. For the disciples who had this knowledge of the Kingdom, these parables would cause them to increase (περὶ σοφίας) in knowledge that they had already obtained. But for the multitude who did not have this knowledge, what little they had will be taken away. Alford summarizes the impact of this verse in the following:

In this saying of the Lord is summed up the double force--the revealing and concealing properties of the parables. By it, he who hath, --he who not only hears with the ear, but understands with the heart, has more given to him; and it is for this main purpose undoubtedly that the Lord spoke

parables: to be to His Church revelations of the truth and mysteries of His Kingdom. But His present purpose in speaking them, as further explained below, was the quality possessed by them, and declared in the latter part of this verse, of hiding their meaning from the hard-hearted and sensual. By them, he who hath not, in whom there is no spark of spiritual desire nor meetness to receive the engrafted word, has taken from him even that which he hath.¹

Verse twelve is of key importance because it gives the direct purpose of the parables for the disciples. The verse also gives the major premise for what will follow in verses thirteen through fifteen. This key premise is the fact that something will be taken away (καὶ ὃ ἔχετε ἀρθήσεται ἀπ' αὐτοῦ). Alford mentions that this very fact is expounded upon in the following verses.² This final statement of verse twelve becomes the major topic of the following verses, until Christ again speaks to his disciples in verse sixteen.

Summary

In the brief reply of Christ to the disciples, in verses eleven and twelve, two important points are revealed. First, the disciples are a particular group of people, because they are the ones who have the present knowledge of the Kingdom. Because of this condition, the reply of Christ to them is that the

¹Alford, The Greek Testament, 1:188.

²Ibid.

parables will help them to have more insight into the Kingdom truths. Second, the major premise for the purpose of the parables in relationship to the multitude is given in verse twelve. The reply had been directed to the disciples, but in the concluding remarks Christ gives his major purpose of the parables for the multitude. This purpose is then expounded by Christ in the following verses.

This evaluation indicates again that Christ did have a twofold purpose for the parables. He addresses both audiences in his reply. Even though he had been asked about only one purpose, he reveals two purposes.

CHAPTER III

THE PURPOSE OF THE PARABLES FOR THE MULTITUDE

Introduction

It has been shown that as Christ begins to address the multitude in verse thirteen, he repeats the original question asked by the disciples. This repetition is for the sake of drawing attention back to the original question, and the purpose of the parables for the multitude. There is an extensive amount of material in these verses which relates to the purpose of the parables for the multitude. However, it is the purpose of this chapter to discuss the major controversy. This controversy relates to the use of ὅτι in verse thirteen. If this major problem is explained it will give significant insight into the purpose of the parables for the multitude.

The Use of ὅτι in Verse Thirteen

The problem which arises in the use of ὅτι in this verse is that the parallel accounts in Mark and Luke use a ἵνα in place of the ὅτι. This has led to several possible conclusions and interpretations which must be

discussed. There are five basic interpretations in relationship to this interchange of *ὅτι* and *ἵνα*.

1. The more liberal view is to suggest that the authors erred in their recording of what Jesus said.¹
2. Others would suggest that *ἵνα* is a distortion of the original Aramaic.²
3. A more conservative approach is to attach the causal meaning of *ὅτι* to *ἵνα*.³
4. Another conservative approach is to say Christ was speaking ironically and apply the idea of result to *ἵνα*.⁴
5. Others designate the *ἵνα* in the natural way as introducing a final clause.⁵

The remaining portion of this chapter will discuss and interact with these five basic views and draw significant

¹A. B. Bruce, "The Synoptic Gospels," in vol. 1 of Expositor's Greek Testament, ed. w. Robertson Nicoll (New York: George H. Doran Company, n.d.), p. 196. Bruce states that it is much better to impute a mistake to the authors than an inhuman purpose to Christ.

²T. W. Manson, The Teaching of Jesus, Studies of Its Form and Content (Cambridge: The University Press, 1935), pp. 76-80. Dr. Manson is the champion of this view.

³A. T. Robertson, "The Causal Use of INA," in Studies in Early Christianity, ed. Shirley J. Case (New York: The Century Company, 1928), pp. 51-60. Dr. Robertson does not support this view but interacts very effectively with those who do. He gives an excellent discussion of the causal use of *ἵνα* but does not apply it to this text.

⁴C. F. D. Moule, An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek (Cambridge: The University Press, 1953), pp. 142-3).

⁵Henry B. Swete, The Gospel According to Mark (London: Macmillan Company, 1913; reprinted ed., Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1977), p. 76.

conclusions in relationship to the purpose of the parables for the multitude.

The Liberal View

This approach to the problem simply suggests that the authors of the accounts erred in recording what Christ had stated at this point in his ministry.

Dr. Tasker interacts with this basic conclusion in the following:

Liberal critics have been persistently unwilling to think that Jesus could have adopted this policy, and they have almost invariably refused to accept this section of Matthew at its face value. Certainly, the view that the evangelists are all wrong in this matter and that we moderns know better, together with all the negative criticism that it entails, is one that we would do well to reject.¹

This type of handling of the text does not confront the problem, but either conjectures a new solution or rejects the authenticity of the text. Because of such an approach it becomes evident that this is not the proper method for finding a solution to the problem in verse thirteen. Therefore, this suggestion is easily rejected.

The Aramaic Distortion

The popular approach to many of the Synoptic differences is to attribute these differences to an

¹R. V. G. Tasker, The Gospel According to St. Matthew. In The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961), pp. 135-6.

Aramaic origin. This is a supposed solution to the divergency between Matthew and the two other Synoptics. The solution suggests that the *‘va* in Mark and Luke is actually an error in the understanding of the Aramaic particle (ܛ).

The popular proponent of this view is T. W. Manson. Dr. Manson notes that the quotation from Isaiah ends rather uniquely in Mark's account (καὶ ἀφεφῆ ἑταῖς). From this observation he notes that this phrase is not found in the Hebrew text or the Septuagent. Dr. Manson suggests that the source of this phrase is found in the Aramaic Targum.¹ The significance of appointing this portion in Mark to an Aramaic source is that this is evidence for the words being originally in Aramaic. This fact opens the door for the Aramaic influence upon the text. Thus, the *‘va* is understood to be the transference of a misunderstood particle from the Aramaic.

Dr. Manson summarizes his view in the following statements:

The chief point of difference is that the Marcan form gives final clauses where the Targum has relative clauses. Now in Aramaic the particle ܛ, which is used in the Targum here, can be used to introduce either a relative or a final clause: it can be either *‘va* or *oi*. The conclusion to be drawn, I think, that the form in which the words were spoken

¹Manson, The Teaching of Jesus, pp. 77-8.

by Jesus approximated to what we find in the Targum, and that the Marcan version rests on a misunderstanding of the Aramaic due mainly to the ambiguity of the particle ܐܝܢ .¹

This type of approach by Dr. Manson is used to support the fact that the strong final influence of ܐܝܢ is not present in Mark. The conclusion is then drawn that there is no basic problem with Matthew using ὅτι because there is no final clause found in the parallel texts.

Dr. Manson continues to develop his argument by softening the use of μήποτε in verse fifteen to the simple idea of lest or perhaps. The basic conclusion that Dr. Manson presents is found in the following diagram and translation of Mark 4:11-12.

To you is given the secret of the Kingdom of God;
but all things come in parables to those outside
who
 see indeed but do not know
 and hear indeed but do not understand,
 lest they should repent and
 receive forgiveness.²

These suggestions and conclusions given by Dr. Manson sound conclusive. However, if one examines the text more closely, the error of such reasoning and speculation becomes quite evident. First, if Mark had stopped where Luke did, this conclusion by Dr. Manson might be more attractive. For Luke did not follow his statement with a μήποτε Mark does follow the ܐܝܢ with

¹Ibid., p. 78.

²Ibid.

a *μήποτε*. This *μήποτε* becomes the key to the rejection of Dr. Manson's position. Even if the *ἵνα* is explained, there still remains the *μήποτε* which must be explained and cannot be avoided as Dr. Manson has.

A strong proponent of Aramaic originals is Matthew Black.¹ As a supporter of the Aramaic, Dr. Black reacts to the position of Dr. Manson with several convincing arguments.

Mark's *μήποτε* clause, that is to say logically depends on his *ἵνα* clause. To remove the first 'stumble-block' by regarding it as a misunderstood *d^e* clause, which should have been relative, makes its dependent *μήποτε* clause meaningless.

Nothing is more certain than that Mark wrote and intended *ἵνα . . . μήποτε*; his original purpose is clear from the *ἵνα* clause; it is continued and reinforced by the *μήποτε* clause, which has been selected and adapted from the Old Testament quotation in order to be subordinated to the *ἵνα* clause.²

These comments by Dr. Black reveal that the logical development of the passage must demand a *ἵνα*. Thus, the conclusion of Dr. Manson is inadequate.

It should also be noted that the basic premise of Dr. Manson is speculative. There must be the supposed Aramaic words of Christ and the Aramaic context of Isaiah 6:9-10, and such conclusions are speculative. It should also be mentioned that it is inappropriate to

¹Matthew Black, An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967).

²Ibid., p. 154.

suggest that Mark misunderstood either the Targum or the Aramaic which Jesus spoke. All such speculation does not seem conducive to a respectable approach to inspiration and preservation.

In conclusion, the evidence suggested by Dr. Black, and the speculative nature of Dr. Manson's position, argue against an Aramaic distortion of the $\text{‘}va$ in Mark 4:12. There is no reason to follow such a speculative course when a much better explanation can be given. The solution to the problem seems to produce more problems than it solves.

$\text{‘}va$ Used as a Causal $\text{‘}tu$

The two previous suggestions have not been the basic interpretations of the conservative exegetes. Most conservatives approach the text with the hope of finding a solution to the text without altering the text. One such solution is to suggest that the $\text{‘}va$ in Mark and Luke is being used as a causal $\text{‘}tu$.¹ Thus, the blindness of the hearts of the multitude caused Christ to use parables for the sake of penetrating the hearts of the people. This has the $\text{‘}tu$ of Matthew, verse thirteen, softening the true intent of a $\text{‘}va$ in Mark and Luke. In reaction to this solution, it should be noted that in

¹Robertson, "The Causal Use of $\text{‘}INA$," pp. 51-60. Dr. Robertson interacts with this position and refutes it thoroughly.

the grammar done by Dana and Mantey there are eight possible classifications of $\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha$ in the New Testament.¹ However a causal use of $\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha$ is not listed. Dana and Mantey also list four particular uses of $\delta\tau\epsilon$ and it is very commonly used in a causal sense.² But Dana and Mantey do not see the necessity of associating the causal force to $\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha$. Blass and Debrunner suggest that the $\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha$ is softened to a causal force by the use of $\delta\tau\epsilon$ in Matthew.³ In brief, the grammarians do see the difficulty in relationship to the interchange in the Synoptics.

The major controversy over the causal use of $\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha$ in the New Testament has been effectively dealt with by A. T. Robertson.⁴ In his discussion of the possibility of a causal use of $\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha$ in Mark 4:12, Dr. Robertson concludes in the following way:

I admit the possibility of $\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha = \delta\tau\epsilon$ in a passage that makes it necessary. Is that true here? A close study of the context in each Gospel, of the Hebrew original, and of the Septuagint translation makes it far from certain. Matthew in 13:13 uses $\delta\iota\alpha\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron$ --- $\delta\tau\epsilon$ as the reason for the use of parables by Jesus, but he immediately adds in verses 14 and 15 the verbatim quotation of the Septuagint

¹H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (Toronto: The Macmillan Company, 1955), pp. 248-9.

²Ibid., p. 252.

³Blass and Debrunner, Greek Grammar of the New Testament, p. 369.

⁴Robertson, "The Causal Use of $\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha$," pp. 51-60.

text of Isaiah 6:9-10, including *μήποτε*. . . . It cannot be said, therefore, that Matthew has softened the purpose into cause to avoid the difficulty, for the problem remains with *μήποτε*. But, if Matthew changed *ἵνα* to *ὅτι* to avoid purpose, that would argue against the causal use of *ἵνα*.

The major difficulty then does not relate to the softening of the *ἵνα*, but to the use of the *μήποτε* in the following verses. Since Matthew also uses *μήποτε* and since Mark uses both *ἵνα* and *μήποτε*, it is not possible to say Mark means anything but purpose in the use of *ἵνα*.

The parallel accounts reveal the strong use of *ἵνα* as purpose. Luke has used *ἵνα* but not *μήποτε*. Matthew has used *ὅτι* but also *μήποτε*. However, Mark used both *ἵνα* and *μήποτε*. This is conclusive evidence that Mark intended for his reference to refer to the purpose or aim of the parables. If Matthew or Mark had not included the *μήποτε* it might be possible to think of *ἵνα* as being softened by Matthew's use of *ὅτι*, but this is not the case. The most natural way to see the *ἵνα* is as a final clause.

ἵνα as Indicating Result

Another conservative suggestion is to see *ἵνα* as being used in the sense of result. This idea suggests that there is a blurring of both the result and purpose in the use of *ἵνα*. This makes Christ speaking rather

¹Ibid., p. 56.

ironically in the passage. He was using the parables even though he knew they would be of no accord.

Dr. Moule states that there is such a blurring of the purpose and result idea in the use of *ἵνα* in the following:

First, be it noted that the Semitic mind was notoriously unwilling to draw a sharp dividing-line between purpose and result. It may be for this reason (or, at least Semitic influence may be a contributory) that the *ἵνα* with Subj. sometimes occurs in contexts which seem to impose consecutive, instead of final, upon it.¹

The conclusion which Moule draws from this observation is that the use of *ὅτι* is essentially true to the sense, while his illogical retention of the *μήποτε* is true to the Semitic idiom.²

This type of conclusion in relationship to the use of *ἵνα* has brought about a particular interpretation in relationship to Mark 4:12. Dr. M'Neile states this particular view in his work on Matthew.

ἵνα may therefore be virtually equivalent to *ὥστε*: in accordance with a well-known Hebraic idiom, the result is ironically described as a purpose . . . 'you have been granted the spiritual ability to grasp the secret of the kingdom of God, but to those outside all my teaching takes the form of parables, with the only result that, . . .³

¹Moule, An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek, p. 143.

²Ibid.

³Alan H. M'Neile, The Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: Macmillan and Company, 1915), p. 192.

The basic interpretation is that Christ speaks of a result which does not exactly exist.

In response to this interpretation of the *ἵνα* in Mark 4:12, it should be noted that Dana and Mantey recognize the possible use of *ἵνα* as result, but they mention that the usage is rare and it is late in Koine development.¹ It should also be noted that this interpretation does not effectively handle the *μήποτε* which follows in Mark's record.

ἵνα Introducing a Final Clause

The most natural way to understand the *ἵνα* in Mark 4:12 is as introducing a final clause. The basic reason for rejecting this interpretation is the application of what the actual intent would then be for Christ speaking in parables. However, with a closer look at the record in Matthew and the accounts in Mark and Luke, it becomes obvious that Mark is using *ἵνα* in the most natural sense as a final clause. The previous interaction with the opposing views is sufficient support for this conclusion.

Suggested Solution

A possible solution to the whole controversy over the use of *ὅτι* in Matthew instead of the *ἵνα* in the other two Synoptics is to look at the structure of

¹Dana and Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, p. 249.

Matthew's account. In verse thirteen Matthew introduces an allusion to Isaiah with the use of *ὅτι*. However, when he makes reference to the direct quote which is taken from Isaiah 6:9-10, Matthew makes a direct reference to the prophecy of Isaiah. In the parallel accounts of Mark and Luke, the editors of the text see this direct quote as being introduced by *ἵνα*.¹

This basic observation indicates that the *ὅτι* in Matthew 13:13 is introducing the allusion to the Isaiah passage and not the direct quote. This leads to the conclusion that the *ὅτι* of Matthew is not parallel to the *ἵνα* in Mark and Luke.² Matthew is using the *ὅτι* in the causal sense, but also emphasizes the purpose of the parables in the direct quote of Isaiah, found in verses fourteen and fifteen, by the use of *μήποτε*.

This conclusion dissolves the controversy over the parallel usage of *ὅτι* and *ἵνα* because they are not being used to introduce the same material. The implications of these observations will be demonstrated

¹The Greek New Testament, ed. Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce Metzger, and Allen Wikgren in cooperation with the Institute for New Testament Textual Research, Munster and Westphalia, 3rd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1975). In the introduction to the text (p. xi) the editors state that all bold face type is in reference to a direct quote from the Old Testament. Thus, they believe the Mark and Luke passages introduce the direct quote with the *ἵνα*, while the allusion in Matthew 13:13 is introduced by the *ὅτι*.

²For a comparison of the structure of the Synoptic Gospels see appendix 1.

in the next section, which relates to the purpose of the parables for the multitude.

Summary: The Purpose of the Parables
for the Multitude

The previous sections of this chapter have been directed to the major controversy over the parallel usage of the ὅτι and the ἵνα. The conclusion drawn is that these two conjunctions are not introducing parallel material, but the ὅτι introduces an allusion from the Old Testament, while the ἵνα introduces the direct quote. This basic conclusion introduces several important facts in relationship to the purpose of the parables for the multitude. These important facts are discussed in the following pages.

The Failure of the Multitude

Since it has been concluded that Matthew has both an allusion to Isaiah and a direct quote from Isaiah, it is now concluded that Matthew had two particular points which he desired to emphasize when he recorded what Christ said. He first wanted to emphasize the human failure on the part of the multitude (Matt. 13:13). Their failure to respond had caused (ὅτι) Christ to speak in parables. To introduce this emphasis Matthew used both the ὅτι and the allusion to the Isaiah passage. In brief, there was the human responsibility of the multitude in relationship to why

Christ began to speak in parables. Matthew emphasizes this human responsibility in verse thirteen.

The Judgment of God

The consequences of this failure on the part of the multitude were a judgmental act by Christ. Matthew introduces this judgment by stating that in them it has been fulfilled (*ἀνα πληρώω*). Thus, the purpose of the parables now was in direct relationship to this failure on the part of the multitude.

The parables were for more than concealing truth, they also were for the prevention of repentance and conversion. Note the comments of Matthew Black:

The parabolic teaching is not simply to prevent perception and comprehension; more important still, it is to prevent their consequences, repentance and forgiveness and it could not do so unless those without were taught in parables in order that they might not perceive and understand.¹

This is the key significance of the *μήποτε*. The purpose was to prevent the consequences of seeing. Thus, the parables could not reveal the truth for this would result in seeing.

The basic conclusion is that the parables did prevent the multitude from understanding the truth.

¹Black, An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts, p. 154. The fact is that any response which would result in real conversion is clearly negated. See also: Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, 1:105. Lenski, The Interpretations of St. Matthew's Gospel, p. 515.

The consequences of the parables were that they were not able to repent and believe. In comparing what Matthew is saying in relationship to Mark and Luke, one must conclude that Matthew adds an element of reason (Matt. 13:13) to the account, along with the emphasis upon the purpose of the parables (Matt. 13:14-15). Matthew is not contradicting what Mark and Luke are saying; he is only adding another element to what Mark and Luke have said.

CHAPTER IV

THE FINAL WORD FROM CHRIST TO HIS DISCIPLES

Introduction

The record given by Matthew has incorporated a great number of details not found elsewhere in the Gospels. The final words which Christ now speaks to his disciples are another example of such detail. Before Matthew concludes his account, he incorporates these few unique words which are addressed to the disciples. It is the purpose of this chapter to analyze these words and see how they are significant in relationship to the purpose of the parables.

The Parallel Accounts in the Synoptics

The comparison of Matthew with Mark reveals that Matthew incorporates a favorable reply to the disciples, while Mark mentions a reproach (Mark 4:13). Mark mentions that Christ rebuked the disciples for not knowing the parable. However, Matthew mentions that the disciples are blessed because they have eyes that see and ears that hear.

When a comparison is made of Luke and Matthew, a similarity exists between the two Gospels. However, Luke transfers the words of Matthew to another occasion and into another context in his Gospel (Luke 10:23, 24). John Calvin's reply to this unique feature gives an adequate explanation for this difference.

Luke seems to transpose this saying to a different occasion. But the solution is easy. He is there assembling a number of sayings irrespective of when they were spoken. We shall therefore follow Matthew, who expresses more clearly the occasion when this was said.¹

The fact is that Matthew has another unique feature to his account. It is natural to see these words in direct association to what preceded. It is also natural to see them as a conclusion to what Christ is saying to the disciples.

The Significance of Matthew 13:16-17

These two verses, in connection with Matthew 13:10-15, stand out with key significance. The verses are emphasizing the privilege of the disciples now, in contrast to the multitude. This emphasis can be observed by the repetition of Christ's direct reference to his disciples and the allusion to the disciples' ability to see.

¹John Calvin, "A Harmony of the Gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke," trans. T. H. L. Parker, in vol. 2 of Calvin's Commentaries, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, 12 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), p. 68.

The Address to the Disciples

The final words of Christ are immediately seen as being addressed to the disciples, by the emphatic use of the second person plural personal pronoun (ὑμῶν).¹ This now draws the attention away from the multitude and sets the attention upon the disciples. Dr. Hendriksen states that there is a close conjunction with the first portions of verses eleven and twelve.²

However, within verse sixteen there is also a contrast with the multitude (οἱ). These two observations are effectively noted by John Calvin.

Earlier He had told them of the extraordinary grace they had been given, that the Lord had separated them out and admitted them as intimates into the mysteries of the kingdom. Now He lauds the same grace in another comparison--they surpass the prophets of old and the holy kings. And this is much finer than being preferred to the multitudes of unbelievers.³

John Calvin points out the contrast by stating that the purpose of comparing the disciples with those of old in

¹The majority of commentators note this emphatic use of the pronoun. W. C. Allen draws specific attention to this by stating that the ὑμῶν is emphatic, and contains a direct contrast to those referred to in αὐτοῖς, vv. 10-13, ἐκεῖνος, v. 11, and in vv. 13-15. W. C. Allen, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew, ICC (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), p. 147.

²Hendriksen, Gospel According to Matthew, p. 556.

³Calvin, "Matthew," p. 68.

verse seventeen is for the purpose of showing that the disciples were better than the multitude of unbelievers.

It becomes obvious then that Christ again speaks to his disciples. There is a definite reason for the return to them in this direct address. This reason will be discussed in the next section.

The Reason for the Direct Address

The format of Matthew's record is presented in a unique pattern. In verse ten, the disciples had asked Christ about the multitude. Christ did not answer that question immediately, but redirected the attention of the disciples to themselves, and the first reply of Christ was directed to his disciples in verses eleven and twelve. After this reply Christ then directed his attention to the original question and gave a twofold answer in verses thirteen through fifteen. His answer incorporated both the cause and the purpose of the parables in relationship to the multitude. Now in verses sixteen and seventeen Christ will reply to the disciples again.

It has been determined in the previous pages of this work that the purpose of the parables for the disciples was given in verses eleven and twelve. That particular purpose was that they might abound in that which they knew. In verse eleven there was that particular

emphasis upon what God had done for them.¹ It was God's sovereign activity in the lives of the disciples which caused them to comprehend the parables. In contrast, the sovereign activity of God in relationship to the multitude was the hiding of the truth through the use of parables, with the consequences of no belief or repentance. The reason for this particular activity on the part of God, in relationship to the multitude, was their lack of response in accordance with their free-will. They had been rejecting, therefore their reward was the concealing of the truth.

All this has been stated so it might be observed that in the context of Matthew 13:10-15 three particulars have been brought out. First, the disciples have the parables so they might see. Second, the multitude have the parables because they have not responded. Third, the multitude have the parables for the purpose that they will not see and believe. The previous verses (Matt. 13:10-15) have emphasized the human responsibility and the divine act of God upon the multitude. However, in relationship to the disciples, the emphasis has only been upon the divine act of God, and nothing has been said of the disciples' human responsibility or the cause for the parables being spoken to them.

¹Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel, p. 511.

It is the conclusion of this writer that verses sixteen and seventeen emphasize the cause for the parables being spoken to the disciples. The reason for Christ speaking to the disciples in parables is because they had responded to the truth. Lenski emphasizes this in the following:

The emphasis is on *ὁμῶν* which is placed prominently forward. The great contrast is drawn between the others who lose all blessedness by the way in which they see and hear and the disciples who have all this blessedness by the way in which they see and hear. But note that here the means are mentioned, the eyes and the ears being adjudged "blessed," not the source of the blessedness which has been mentioned already in v. 11, the divine Giver and his giving. The source and the means should never be dissociated.¹

The conclusion is that verse eleven had emphasized the divine act of God, who was the source of their knowing. In verses sixteen and seventeen Matthew makes reference to the human response to what they had heard. It was because of their responsiveness that they were now receiving the parables for further enlightenment. This is the natural way to understand this verse, as in the following verses (vv. 18-23) the explanation of the parable will be given to them.

The Unique Relationship of Matthew 13:16-17
to the Previous Verses

With the addition of these two verses by Matthew, the account can be divided into four particular divisions

¹Ibid., p. 515.

(Matt. 13:11-12; 13:13; 13:14-15; 13:16-17). Each of these sections have their unique contribution to the purpose of the parables. The first section relates to God's act in the behalf of the disciples, while the second section relates to the human response of the multitude. However, the third section of these verses speaks to the divine act of God in response to the multitude. Then, finally Matthew returns to an emphasis upon the human response of the disciples.

The conclusion of this writer is that this may well be an unique chiastic construction in Matthew 13:11-17.¹ The two particular emphases upon the disciples are found at the beginning (Matt. 13:11-12) and end (Matt. 13:16-17) of Christ's reply to the question originally asked. Between these two replies of Christ to his disciples is an address to the multitude which has a twofold emphasis. The first section deals with the reason (Matt. 13:13) for Christ speaking in parables, and the second section relates to the purpose of the parables for the multitude (Matt. 13:14-15). Thus, this chiastic construction reveals the twofold purpose of the parables. For the disciples, the purpose of the parables was to reveal the truth of the Kingdom (Matt. 13:11-12) because they had responded to the truth (Matt. 13:16-17). However, for the multitude, the purpose of the parables

¹For the structure of this chiasma see appendix 2.

was that they might not see the truth (Matt. 13:14-15) because they had rejected the truth (Matt. 13:13).

The Significance of Mark 4:21-23

Before closing this chapter it must be noted that in the parallel account found in Mark's Gospel there is the mention of the parable of the Lamp, which immediately follows this discussion of the parables. This parable has caused some confusion in respect to the purpose of the parables. G. C. Morgan summarizes the supposed significance in the following:

Go on to verses twenty-one to twenty-five in this fourth chapter of Mark. He used the lamp as His illustration. This lamp is not put under the bushel, which would extinguish it. It is put on a stand. The parables therefore constituted a lamp, a lamp shining. It was not in order to hide things, but that the hidden things might be brought to light.¹

G. C. Morgan continues in his discussion of the purpose of the parables and states that this parable is conclusive proof that the parables were not to conceal truth but reveal it.²

In response to G. C. Morgan it must be noted that this particular parable in Mark 4:21-23 is not addressed to the multitude, but to the disciples. If this parable is to be directed to the explanation given in either Mark 4:13-20 or Mark 4:10-12, it must

¹Morgan, The Parables and Metaphors of Our Lord, p. 15.

²Ibid., pp. 15-17.

be emphasized that those to whom Christ is speaking are his disciples, not the multitude. G. C. Morgan has directed the application to the multitude and not the disciples.

Dr. Hiebert makes this significant observation in the following:

The "light" which Jesus entrusted to His followers by giving them the explanation of the parables was not intended to be kept hidden from those outside. His teaching was not intended to be esoteric, restricted to an inner circle of enlightened followers. Just as it is the function of light to shine, so it is the duty of His disciples to let their light shine that others too may come to know the truth.¹

In a sense this was a warning to the disciples to be sure and let the world know what they knew. To direct this parable to the multitude is inconsistent with what Christ is teaching his disciples at this point.

Summary

The conclusion to Christ's reply to the original question directed to him (Matt. 13:10) is found in verses sixteen and seventeen. These verses are directed to the disciples with particular emphasis upon the fact that they had responded to the teaching of Christ. Because of this responsiveness they were given the parables so they might increase in their knowledge of the Kingdom.

¹D. Edmond Hiebert, *Mark A Portrait of the Servant* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), pp. 106-7.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Introduction

In the previous pages of this work a basic format has been presented for Matthew 13:10-17. The emphasis of these verses has been directed to the controversy over the purpose of the parables. The basic conclusion drawn is that Matthew records the twofold purpose of the parables, with emphasis upon both the disciples and the multitude. The following is a summary of the indications found in these verses and how they relate to the purpose of the parables.

Matthew 13:10

Matthew begins his record of the encounter with a direct question from the disciples. The disciples had asked about the multitude. Matthew immediately gives an indication that two groups of individuals are under consideration. The disciples are asking the question, while the multitude is the concern of the question.

This basic information reveals the fact that as Christ now gives his reply he will address himself to

these two groups of people. If there were these two groups, then Christ had a purpose for using parables for each group. The conclusion is drawn from the following verses that there was a purpose for the disciples and the multitude.

Matthew 13:11-12

The answer that Christ gives in these verses is not directed to the original question in verse ten. Instead, Christ redirects his answer to the disciples. He states that there is a purpose for the parables for the disciples. That purpose was that they might abound in their knowledge which had been entrusted to them.

This point demonstrates that Christ does use the parables for the sake of revealing, but it is only in the case of those who respond and come to him. These disciples had the knowledge of the Kingdom, and the parables would now help them to understand it more clearly.

Matthew 13:13-15

The major premise for these verses is found in the concluding words of verse twelve, and this premise draws the attention of Christ back to the original question (Matt. 13:10). Christ repeats the question for the disciples and gives his answer with a twofold emphasis. First, he notes that the reason for his use

of parables is because the multitude has not responded. However, the second element of the answer (Matt. 13:14-15) reveals that there was a definite purpose for what he was doing. Not only would the parables conceal truth, but this concealing would result in the absence of belief and repentance.

The second purpose for the parables is found in these verses, and it is directed to the multitude. Thus, the twofold purpose of the parables is presented. To the disciples the truth will abound. However, for the multitude the truth is veiled.

Matthew 13:16-17

In these final verses Christ redirects his attention again to the disciples. This time it is with particular emphasis upon the reason for his speaking in parables to these disciples. That reason is because their eyes have seen. They have responded to what Christ has done and taught. Therefore, to the disciples he will give the parables to reveal even greater truths.

This closes the significant portion of Matthew which relates to the purpose of the parables. However, the verses again point to this twofold purpose of the parables. For those without they were to conceal the truth, but for those from within they were to reveal greater truths.

Summary

In summary, Matthew presents the most extensive material in the New Testament on the purpose of the parables. Not only does he mention the cause, but also the purpose of the parables. The two groups of followers have reacted to his ministry in two different ways. For the multitude it had been a time of rejection, which caused the use of parables, but prevented the reception of the truth. For the disciples it had been a time of responsiveness, which caused the use of parables and introduced them to greater and grander truths.

APPENDIX 1

THE USE OF ὅτι IN MATTHEW 13:13
AS COMPARED WITH MARK 4:12

Matthew 13:13¹

Therefore speak I to them
in parables: because (ὅτι)
they seeing see not; and
hearing they hear not, neither
do they understand

Matthew 13:14-15

And in them is fulfilled
the prophecy of Esaias,
which saith, By hearing
ye shall hear . . .
Lest (μήποτε) at any time
they should see with
their eyes, . . .²

Mark 4:12

That (ὅτι)
seeing they may see and not
perceive;
and hearing they may hear, and
not understand;
lest (μήποτε) at any time they
should be converted, . . .

This basic structure of Matthew, and the comparison with Mark reveals that the ὅτι and ὅτι are not used to introduce the same material, and this indicates that they are not parallel. Thus, each has a particular significance in each passage.

¹These verses are taken directly from the KJV.

²The underlined material indicates that the text presents this material as a direct quote from the Old Testament.

APPENDIX 2

THE CHIASTIC CONSTRUCTION

OF MATTHEW 13:11-17

Matthew 13:11-17

A - Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

B - Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

B - And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; . . .

A - But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

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