

Matthew 13:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

Analysis

'And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?' After Jesus taught the Parable of the Sower publicly (v.3-9), disciples privately asked why He used parables. Their question suggests confusion—parables seemed to obscure rather than clarify. Jesus's answer (v.11-17) is shocking: parables intentionally reveal truth to some while concealing it from others. This overturns assumption that all teaching should be maximally clear to everyone. Reformed theology recognizes this demonstrates divine sovereignty in revelation: God chooses to whom He grants understanding. Parables serve dual purpose: for receptive hearts with spiritual eyes, they illuminate truth through memorable stories; for hardened hearts without spiritual perception, they obscure meaning as judgment for previous rejection of clear truth. This explains why identical teaching produces radically different responses—not because message is unclear but because hearers have different spiritual capacities (granted or withheld by God). The question leads to crucial teaching about election, revelation, and spiritual understanding (v.11-17).

Historical Context

Rabbinic tradition used parables (מְשָׁלִים/meshalim) extensively in teaching—familiar pedagogical method. However, rabbis used parables to clarify difficult concepts, making abstract ideas concrete. Jesus's parabolic method differed: He used parables to simultaneously reveal and conceal. This shift occurred after mounting opposition (chapters 11-12), particularly after Pharisees attributed His

work to Satan (12:24)—point of no return in their rejection. From that point, Jesus taught publicly in parables while explaining meanings privately to disciples (v.36). This pattern fulfilled Isaiah 6:9-10 (quoted in v.14-15): judicial hardening where God gives persistent rejecters over to their chosen blindness. Early church recognized this pattern: gospel preached to all, but understanding granted sovereignly (Acts 16:14, 2 Corinthians 4:3-4). The disciples' question was therefore profound: why this teaching method? Answer revealed deep truths about election, revelation, and sovereign grace.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. Why would Jesus deliberately teach in ways that conceal truth from some while revealing it to others?
2. What does the parabolic method teach about the necessity of divine illumination for understanding spiritual truth?
3. How do you respond to the reality that identical gospel message produces vastly different responses based on God's sovereign gift of understanding?

Interlinear Text

Kai	προσελθόντες	oi	μαθηταὶ	εἶπον	αὐτοῖς	Διατί	ἐν
And	came		the disciples	and said	unto him	Why	in
G2532	G4334		G3101	G2036	G846	G1302	G1722
παραβολαῖς	λαλεῖς	αὐτοῖς					
parables	speakest thou	unto him					
G3850	G2980	G846					