

MATTHEW 13

THE PLAN OF SALVATION REVEALED IN PARABLES

The following is based on John W. Welch and Brent J. Schmidt, The Gospel of Matthew, BYU New Testament Commentary (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, forthcoming).

Introduction

Jesus taught His various audiences using parables, creating example stories out of surrounding activities that rang true to daily and eternal life. He often used these parables to respond to temporal problems that He faced as He was challenged or questioned, often by Pharisees or scribes but also by His own fledgling Apostles. Many times, the parables dealt with broader issues in addition to the particular concern at hand.

Jesus took His parables in this chapter from factual stories that were sequential as far as planting-to-harvest is concerned. They were based on practical examples but offered deep religious meanings. People could hear these stories or situations and recognize that they spoke accurately of the way people ordinarily behaved. In addition, depending on the hearers'—or readers'—level of understanding, each parable offered several more layers of meanings: symbolical, allegorical, doctrinal, and inspirational. It was then and is now each recipient's responsibility to evaluate how these parables may help them individually to become a better disciple of Jesus Christ.

When the disciples asked Jesus why He taught in this manner, He assured them that they knew much more than the general audience. Because they had access to divine instruction as well as to personal revelation, they could understand and apply higher levels of meaning to these parables than most general people. Thus, Jesus intentionally taught at multiple levels of understanding and reception so that those who had ears to hear and eyes to see could indeed see and hear.

Table 1. Principles and the parables that teach them

Principle	Parable
A. The premortal choice between two sons of God	The willing and unwilling two sons
B. We will be planted in various conditions on earth	The sower
C. Agency of humankind in choosing between two ways	Two Ways, Two Gates
D. Our fall among evil thieves and the plan of rescue	The good Samaritan
E. Truth is found in all dispensations, old and new	The wise scribe
F. Jesus will preach the spirit of the gospel	Leaven in the loaf
G. Out of one small seed will come a shelter for all	The mustard seed
H. Jesus and others will seek and rescue lost souls	The ninety-nine and one lost sheep
I. Joy in heaven at our repentance and return	The prodigal son
J. There is only one way into the fold of God	The door to the sheepfold
K. We must pray always and persistently	The importuning widow
L. Humility and confession of sin are required	The publican and Pharisee
M. We will be forgiven as much as we have forgiven	The forgiven but unforgiving debtor
N. God will send His son who will be killed	The wicked tenants
O. Apostasy is a mixture of truth and error	The wheat and the tares
P. The Restoration and Rise of the Church	The treasure in the field
Q. People will sell all to gather to Zion	The pearl of great price
R. Intense missionary work in the last dispensation	The eleventh-hour laborers
S. People will be gathered from all humankind	The great net
T. The time of the Second Coming is unknown	The watchful servant
U. Readiness to greet Christ, the Bridegroom	The ten virgins
V. Worthiness to attend the son's wedding	The great wedding feast
W. The coming day of judgment	The pounds
X. Rewards to faithful stewards	The talents
Y. Consequences for not having given to the poor	When saw we thee?
Z. Ultimate separation of good from evil	The sheep and goats

Most in Jesus's audience were still in spiritual darkness, yet Jesus did not use parables to obscure the truth from them. But these memorable and attractive object lessons subtly invited all audiences to think about the issue at hand, beginning from their vantage point and level of understanding. Each of His parables can be understood and applied practically, doctrinally, symbolically, and spiritually. By studying these parables and pondering their applicability, everyone today can still use them to progress in their knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the plan of the Father, and the path that helps all people to become more like Jesus.¹

The table above lists in the left column various stages of the plan of salvation and in the right column shows the parables given by Jesus to teach each of those principles. It is not hard to see where every parable fits into that masterplan which stands behind all of Jesus's parables.

About half of the parables in this list are found exclusively in Matthew; the other half are found only in Luke. A few are found in Mark or John.

Matthew 13 is a unique chapter in the New Testament. It contains eight parables that may be seen altogether as a single overview of all the main sequential stages in the plan of salvation. Joseph Smith gave lengthy explanations of each of the parables in Matthew 13, seeing them as a sequence setting forth revelations regarding the unfolding of the gospel from the time of Jesus until the Final Judgment.² Joseph's inspiring insights will often be followed in the comments below.

Note also that parable 1 in the Gospel of Matthew, that of the wise man building upon the rock, is discussed in connection with Matthew 7:24–29. Parables 2–9 are found in this chapter, which is sometimes referred to as the Parable Sermon.

Matthew 13:1–9. Parable 2: The Sower and Varied Circumstances of Life on Earth

Jesus begins with this famous parable. It can be called the parable of the sower, the parable of the soils, or the parable of the circumstances. It is an excellent example of how Jesus's parables can be understood on multiple levels: as ordinary stories, as ethical instructions, as religious symbols, and as revelations of God's plan and purposes.

Beginning with a story about planting seeds was obviously a good place for Jesus to begin. The sower may represent Jesus Himself. The seeds may represent His words that land on four different qualities of ground, symbolizing the different kinds of listeners and their various receptions of the Word. Presumably, Jesus's audience would have assumed that all the seeds were of the same type, for Jewish law prohibited the mixing of seeds in one field. Thus, the seeds may represent human spirits—all spirit children of the same heavenly parents—coming down from Heaven, now being planted on earth.

For various reasons and differing circumstances or surrounding pressures, as Jesus will explain in verses 18–23, some seeds will be fruitful while others will not. But before giving His explanation of this parable in particular, Jesus pauses to answer the Apostles’ question of why He uses parables.

See *John W. Welch and Jeannie S. Welch, The Parables of Jesus: Revealing the Plan of Salvation (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2022), 50–59; John W. Welch, Charting the Book of Mormon (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999), chart 9-6.*

Matthew 13:10–17. Instruction 13: The Heavenly Mystery Stands behind Jesus’s Parables

When asked, Jesus explained that the general audience had not been privileged to know *the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven*, while those mysteries had been revealed to the disciples (Matthew 13:11). Thus, those who are prepared to understand will understand, He said. To this effect, Jesus quoted Isaiah 6:10 as teaching that the words of God will be understood by people at the level at which they are ready to receive and progress.

The word *mysteries* refers to God’s plan of salvation that was revealed to the prophets in the council in heaven.³ Many prophets, such as Lehi, Nephi, Moses, Isaiah, and Enoch, were taught the details of the plan, often called the mysteries of heaven, when they were called to be prophets. They learned that God (Jehovah) would come and teach what people need to do in order to be as good and as obedient as possible. In His parables, Jesus exemplified those mysteries symbolically. Joseph Smith thus provided allegorical meanings for all the parables in this chapter.⁴ Those who have eyes to see and ears to hear will learn and understand these deeper meanings.

Explaining why those symbolic meanings were not given by Jesus “to the world,” Joseph Smith said: “We draw the conclusion, then, that the very reason why the multitude, or the world, as they were designated by the Savior, did not receive an explanation upon His parables, was because of unbelief. To you, He says [speaking to His disciples] it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God [Matthew 13:11]. And why? Because of the faith and confidence that they had in Him. This parable [the sower] was spoken to demonstrate the effects that are produced by the preaching of the word.”⁵

See *John W. Welch and Jeannie S. Welch, The Parables of Jesus: Revealing the Plan of Salvation (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2022), 16–19.*

Matthew 13:18–23. Instruction 14: Receive and Cultivate the Word as a Seed

Matthew then gives the explanation of the parable of the sower that Jesus gave to His disciples. The seeds fell on four different types of ground. Some grew and some did not. What is the moral obligation of people who hear and understand the word of the Lord? It is to plant it in their souls and let it grow, to be sure

that they are fertile soil. Here, the Lord is the sower scattering good seed. The more one can receive and nourish the good seed, the more it will produce fruit that is useful for the Lord.

The moral or ethical question each listener is encouraged to ask could be, “What kind of soil am I? What can I do to improve so that when those seeds fall—whether it is while reading the scriptures or listening to general conference—I am open and helping these seeds to find a home in me for them to grow?” As Alma said, “now, if ye *give place*, that a seed may be planted in your heart . . . it will begin to swell within your breasts” (Alma 32:28; emphasis added).

Turning to this parable’s allegorical meaning, Joseph Smith taught that the sower represents Jesus in His lifetime, or in other words, “This parable was told to demonstrate the various effects that are produced by the preaching of the word; and we believe that it has an allusion directly, to the commencement, or the setting up of the Kingdom in that age.”⁶

The prophet Joseph also taught the elders:

When any one heareth the word of the Kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.’ Now mark the expression—that which was sown in his heart. ‘This is he which receiveth seed by the way side’ (Matthew 13:19). Men who have no principle of righteousness in themselves, and whose hearts are full of iniquity, and have no desire for the principles of truth, do not understand the word of truth when they hear it. The devil taketh away the word of truth out of their hearts, because there is no desire for righteousness in them.⁷

Matthew 13:24–30. Parable 3: The Wheat and the Opposing Tares Must Together Grow

The next parable, the parable of the wheat and the tares, is a familiar parable, which speaks of the devil coming in and sowing many seeds of weeds among a newly planted field of wheat. Here Jesus basically teaches that the tender wheat must grow together, intermixed, with those tares.

Details about wheat and tares are informative here. According to the Bible Dictionary, the term *tares* denotes darnel grass, a poisonous weed which, until it ripens, is similar in appearance to wheat. The Greek word *zizania* is the name for this kind of weed found in the Near East. Darnel (known today as *lolium temulentum*) and *zizania* are hated by farmers because they grow alongside the wheat and are indistinguishable from it until the very last stage when their heads of seed begin to mature. At harvest time, the difference is evident because the heavy wheat heads bow down but the light grass heads stand straight up so that their seeds are blown away.

This contrasting image contributes to the power of this parable. The weed is still visible in wheat fields in the Middle East today. The problem for the farmers is that if they were to tear up the weeds too early, they could not tell the difference and they would tear up a lot of the wheat by mistake. In addition, pulling

up the tares would dislodge the roots of the wheat. There is really not much that can be done except to let the plants grow together. Eventually the farmers are able to tell the difference.

Jesus explicitly stated the allegorical meaning of this parable (Matthew 13:37–39). “While men were sleeping” refers to a time when the Church leadership was gone or inattentive and Satan came in and threw false doctrines into the teachings of the Church. Joseph Smith said that the tares represent the corruptions that crept into the early Church. The early disciples, of course, wanted to tear the tares out immediately, but as Joseph Smith said, “He [Jesus], knowing all things, says . . . it is better to let them grow together until the harvest, or the end of the world.”⁸

Thus, even during the Apostasy after the deaths of the Apostles, there was wheat still growing in the world but it was not easy for people to tell the difference between good doctrines and erroneous practices, so time had to pass until the wheat was ready to be harvested. Then, in Doctrine and Covenants 86 the Lord gave a detailed interpretation of this parable, explaining that the harvest time had arrived, beginning with the restoring of priesthood authority and revelation in Joseph Smith’s day. The workers whom Jesus said would go out into the fields in the last days are those who have the proper priesthood authority to do that. The problem with early Christianity may well not have been that it had too little wheat growing in it, but without the guidance of revelation, it was impossible to know which doctrines were original and which had been affected by corruptions. Therefore, it is those who come with noble birthright and revelation (see Doctrine and Covenants 86:8–10), who can step forward to begin bringing together the wheat that is ready to be harvested.

Some of the wording of this parable, which is found only in Matthew, was changed slightly both in Doctrine and Covenants 86 and in the Joseph Smith Translation to clarify that the coming of angels and messengers will commence by gathering the wheat. A farmer would not go out and start by focusing on trying to pull the grass or tares away first and then say, “Now let’s harvest the wheat.” At harvest time, everything was cut and brought to the threshing floor, where the grass, tares, and chaff are all blown away and the good kernels of grain are kept.

See John W. Welch, Charting the Book of Mormon (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999), chart 9-7; John W. Welch and Jeannie S. Welch, The Parables of Jesus: Revealing the Plan of Salvation (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2022), 60–67.

Matthew 13:31–32. Parable 4: The Nurturing and Flourishing of the Tiny Mustard Seed

Here Jesus teaches a general principle that something very small that people tend to overlook can become something very important. A person could look at a mustard seed being planted and wonder what good could possibly come from such a tiny thing, just as people in Jesus’s day said, “What good can come from Nazareth?” People judge small things inappropriately by not realizing their potential.

This parable can also be read allegorically. Joseph Smith likened the parable to the growth of the restored kingdom in latter days: “Now we can discover plainly that this figure is given to represent the Church as it shall come forth in the last days.”⁹ He also explained that a man—that is, Moroni—was instructed by God to plant the Book of Mormon in the earth, “securing it by his faith, to spring up in the last days, or in due time.” Like the tiny mustard seed, that book will become great. Joseph continued: “Let us behold it coming forth out of the ground, which is indeed accounted the least of all seeds, but behold it branching forth, yea, even towering, with lofty branches, and God-like majesty, until it, like the mustard seed, becomes the greatest of all herbs.”¹⁰ Many people have judged the Book of Mormon in the same way one might superficially discount the mustard seed.

Joseph Smith went on to say that this parable represented the way in which the Church will come forth in the last days, beginning as something that people will think of as insignificant but that in the end will provide enormous spiritual blessings. In the end, this parable depicts God’s gifts to humankind, sending down powers and making a place for His children to lodge in the branches of the Church that has grown up out of the Restoration. The size, height, branches, and leaves of the mustard tree provide to all a place of refuge, protection, shelter, and habitation.

The New Testament texts use the Greek verb *kataskēnaō* to describe the birds of heaven coming and making their home in the branches of this tree. With the related word *skēnē*—meaning “tabernacle” as well as “shelter, or lodging”—Jesus’s text can be understood as saying that these heavenly beings will “tabernacle” there. They make camp there, as Israel had made camp with the tabernacle or temple of the Lord, as they seek refuge and shelter in the wilderness.

In addition, the parable of the tiny mustard seed not only refers to God’s care of the house of Israel in the past but also looks ahead to a magnificent time when a new Israel will grow strong in the eyes of all the world. In saying that “the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof,” Jesus alluded to Psalm 104:12 (“by them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation”) as well as to Daniel 4:20–22 (“in whose branches the birds of the heavens had their habitation”) and also to Ezekiel 17:23 (“in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell”). As Jesus knew, those prophetic texts looked forward to the messianic or millennial day.

See John W. Welch and Jeannie S. Welch, The Parables of Jesus: Revealing the Plan of Salvation (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2022), 68–75.

Matthew 13:33. Parable 5: The Useful Spreading of Leaven throughout the Loaf

Jesus next gave the parable of the leaven hidden in three measures of meal. At the factual level, its details are well known. Leaven, seemingly magically, creates lightness (air bubbles) throughout bread dough just as the word of God enlightens our minds and raises our joy. This image can thus inspire us in doing the work of the Lord. Sharing testimonies, bringing the joy of service, loving our neighbors—all these have

leavening social effects. If you have the Spirit and if you have the Lord's leaven, it will also bring you joy and make life easier and lighter for you.

In addition, this parable is encouraging to the small groups of followers of Christ. A small amount of yeast will leaven a large amount of flour. David Turner has noted, "The Mishnah contains instructions on the use of leavening, which probably refers here to old or sour dough (*m. Menah.* 5.1–2). The amount of flour leavened by the yeast is literally three *sata*. This is surprisingly large, since a *saton* was about thirteen liters [about 3.4 gallons]. Three measures would amount to almost forty liters, nearly a bushel of flour, enough to feed around 150 people."¹¹

An additional important allegorical meaning of this parable is that the leaven is "hidden in three measures of flour" (Matthew 13:33). Why three? Joseph Smith connected this with the testimonies of the three Book of Mormon witnesses. As the previous parable of the very small mustard seed symbolizes the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the parable of the leaven teaches how the truthfulness of that scripture is proclaimed to all the world by the Three Witnesses. Notice that one cannot see the leaven in the bread. Once it is mixed into the flour, it cannot be separated back out. We cannot see it even as it does its work. In the same way, we cannot see what the Three Witnesses saw. But their influence permeates throughout and expands the whole Church. Their testimonies have power to enable growth and give rise to the Spirit.

In addition, in Jewish life, leaven is a strong symbol of joy. To have leavened bread is to be living with blessings and with the fat of the land. At the Passover celebration, Jewish people eat only unleavened bread to remind them of the hardships that they had to suffer in Egypt and in the wilderness, but once they had entered the Promised Land, they had the leaven that lightened their load and lightened life, a relationship or covenant with Jehovah. Thus, in this parable, the leaven also represents the effects of living in tune with the Holy Spirit and appreciating the effects of truth, power, and righteousness as blessings throughout the kingdom of God on earth.

Matthew 13:34–35. Instruction 15: Hear the Secrets from the Foundation of the World

In these two verses, Matthew notes that when Jesus spoke to the multitude, He spoke nothing to them except in parables, particularly regarding the kingdom of heaven. At this point, Jesus explains that He does this so that "it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet," as Psalm 78:2 says, "I will open my mouth in parables. I will utter things that have been kept secret from the foundation of the world."

What, then, we might wonder, was kept secret (meaning "sacred," see Matthew 7:6) from the foundation of the world? What had been laid out from before the foundation of the world? It was the whole plan of salvation, the promise of the coming of the Savior, the opposition of Satan, and the promised Restoration, including those who were foreordained, such as Joseph Smith. In other words, the parables told by Jesus should not be read just as entertaining or enlightening stories. They are not given in some

random order. They deliberately lay out the things that were kept hidden, or kept behind the veil of forgetfulness, from the beginning.

Right within the Gospel of Matthew, we have this indication that Jesus wanted the faithful to look far beyond ordinary earthly meanings to see why and how His parables speak of the heavenly plan for the eternal history of the earth. Matthew clearly preserved here this prophetic testimony of the importance of the revelation of divine secrets. This was also the key that Joseph Smith used in interpreting the parables of Jesus.

Matthew 13:36–43. Parable 6: The Fate of the Useless Tares

Earlier in this chapter, Jesus had told the parable of the wheat and tares (see parable 3 above). Now His disciples asked Him to interpret that parable for them. He explained that the sower is Him, the Son of Man, and that the field is the world and the good seeds are the members of the Church, but the tares are the children of the devil, who will be gathered at the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels (or messengers). “As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.” Jesus clearly pointed here to the last days and to His Second Coming (Matthew 13:40).

Joseph Smith likewise readily saw this parable as looking forward to the last days: “As the servants of God go forth warning the nations, both priests and people, and as they harden their hearts and reject the light of truth, these first being delivered over to the buffetings of Satan, and the law and the testimony being closed up . . . they are left in darkness, and delivered over unto the day of burning.”¹²

Jesus pointed out that the work of gathering the wheat will take place as the tares are being bound over for the day of burning. Happily, He ends His explanation on an exalting note. Those who listen and apply these teachings and who choose righteousness shall “shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (13:43).

See John W. Welch and Jeannie S. Welch, The Parables of Jesus: Revealing the Plan of Salvation (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2022), 148–151.

Matthew 13:44. Parable 7: The Purchase of a Whole Field to Obtain a Lost Buried Treasure

To help disciples and members of the Lord’s kingdom keep focused on their treasures in heaven, this parable portrays a man who stumbled across treasure in a field and proceeded to hide it in that field. With joy, he sold everything he had to then go and buy that field. In New Testament times, as stipulated by Roman law, a person had to both own the field and discover the treasure in order to legally possess such a treasure in its entirety.

One prescriptive lesson of this parable would be this: when the Lord puts a great treasure right in your path, do not ignore it. Make the effort to obtain all of it. To obtain this great treasure, changes must be made. One must give up worldly pursuits to be worthy of all of it.

This parable also has a historical application. The Saints in the Church were doing just that in Joseph Smith's time by selling all they had to build Zion. Joseph said: "The Saints work after this pattern. See the Church of the Latter-day Saints selling all they have and gathering themselves together unto a place that they may purchase for an inheritance that they may be together and bear each other's afflictions in the day of calamity."¹³

On an eternal level, imagine a person encountering the gospel. Perhaps they "just happened" to find it, or the opportunity was unwittingly presented to them. Perchance, for example, somebody walking on the streets of Sophia, Bulgaria, randomly stumbles upon a missionary and sees the gospel as a great treasure and is willing to sacrifice absolutely whatever it takes to attain the related celestial blessings. So it has happened, many times over.

Matthew 13:45–46. Parable 8: The Consecration of All to Acquire a Pearl of Great Price

What about the parable of the pearl? This parable is generally similar to but a little different from that of the treasure in the field. This man was a fairly sophisticated merchant of pearls himself; he knew a good pearl when he saw one, and he had searched until he found one. He did not just stumble across a pearl, as did the man coming across an ancient treasure in an open field. This man found this pearl because he had done his homework, because he had worked hard, and after searching and looking at all the choices, he picked the best pearl.

There will be many good pearls in the world, but this man wanted only the very best, and he sold all that he had to get it. The most elite Romans in Jesus's day were well known for wanting to purchase only the best pearls. Having the best pearl would give this merchant great joy, value, and business status among his elite contemporaries.

Again, Joseph Smith provided a historical application to this parable, declaring it to be about the building of Zion and its stakes. The Saints of his day worked to find and purchase the pearl of great price, a place for Zion: "See men traveling to find places for Zion and her stakes or remnants, who when they find the place for Zion, or the pearl of great price; straitway sell all that they have and buy it."¹⁴ Today, diligent experts go throughout the world finding the best places for the stakes of Zion and temples. They do all that is necessary to buy it.

This parable also points to the work involved in helping the truth go forth and preparing the world for the coming of the Lord. It is also applicable for the people who are searching for the truth throughout the world. Once they find the gospel, sacrifices are made to embrace it completely, and the results are magnificent.

See John W. Welch and Jeannie S. Welch, The Parables of Jesus: Revealing the Plan of Salvation (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2022), 118–123.

Matthew 13:47–50. Parable 9: The Sorting of a Great Catch of Various Fish

To the audience there on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, this parable offered a very powerful conclusion at the end of the parables in Matthew 13. Several of the early disciples were fishermen. They especially understood the process of pulling in the nets and then sorting out the catch, keeping the good fish and discarding the rest.

At a practical level, all individuals must be judicious in their use of time and other resources, in making choices within their stewardships, and in separating good opportunities from the bad.

At the allegorical level, the sorting of the fish caught in the great net invites readers to think about the Final Judgment. The net symbolizes the gathering and building up of the Church. When we cast the net out into the sea, we pull in all kinds of fish and other things. The parable advises us to bring everything into the ship because we cannot immediately discern which catches are good or bad until a sorting can take place on shore.

Joseph Smith says, “For the work of this pattern, behold the seed of Joseph, spreading forth the gospel net upon the face of the earth, gathering of every kind, that the good may be saved in vessels prepared for that purpose, and the angels will take care of the bad.”¹⁵

All the useful fish (which is most of them) will be sorted and put into various large clay storage jars for processing and shipping. From the Sea of Galilee, fish sauces and other products were indeed shipped far and wide throughout the Mediterranean region, drawing in handsome revenues. Those in the catch that are not useful will be thrown away. So it will be at the end of the world with the separation of the righteous and the wicked.

Just as Jesus spoke of this concluding doctrine in the plan of salvation here in the conclusion of this parable sermon in Matthew 13, He will return to this same final point during His last mortal hours when He speaks of the separation of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:31–46.

See John W. Welch and Jeannie S. Welch, The Parables of Jesus: Revealing the Plan of Salvation (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2022), 152–155.

Matthew 13:51–52. Instruction 16: Use Things Wisely, Both the Old and the New

At the conclusion of this chapter of parables Jesus spoke directly to His listeners: “Therefore, every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a person . . .” (Matthew 13:52). All who have been taught the gospel and know its teachings are like managers who can bring forth out of their treasury both new things and old things, bringing them forth things from the treasury of the heart that are old, tried and true, and giving them new meanings and applications.

Joseph Smith again recognized and embraced what Jesus was saying here. Joseph said that this could be applied to the things that Jesus and God had cause to be written: “For the works of this example, see the Book of Mormon coming forth out of the treasure of the heart. Also, the covenants [in the Doctrine

and Covenants] given to the Latter-day Saints, also the [Joseph Smith] Translation of the Bible—thus bringing forth out of the heart [by revelation] things new and old . . . in the last days.”¹⁶

These scriptures mentioned by Joseph Smith all bring forth new things out of the heart: new interpretations, new revelations, and new restorations. They also bring forth the old by building on the old and eternal scriptures, just as every new dispensation has built upon the foundation of former dispensations.

While the Gospel of Matthew does not tell us how Jesus interpreted these parables to His disciples, other than the parable of the sower, Joseph Smith added that Jesus took the disciples aside and taught them the meanings of every one of these parables.¹⁷ Two thousand years later, all these parables still bear careful and inspired analysis and beneficial application.

Notes

1 See generally, John W. Welch and Jeannie S. Welch, *The Parables of Jesus: Revealing the Plan of Salvation* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2022).

2 See “Letter to the Elders of the Church, 30 November–1 December 1835,” p. [226], The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-the-elders-of-the-church-30-november-1-december-1835/2>.

3 See Amos 3:7; 1 Corinthians 2:7; 4:1.

4 “Letter to the Elders of the Church, 30 November–1 December 1835,” pp. [225–230], The Joseph Smith Papers.

5 “History, 1838–1856, volume B-1 [1 September 1834–2 November 1838],” p. 645, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-b-1-1-september-1834-2-november-1838/99>; punctuation and capitalization modernized.

6 “Letter to the Elders of the Church, 30 November–1 December 1835,” p. [226].

7 “Letter to the Elders of the Church, 30 November–1 December 1835,” p. [226].

8 “Letter to the Elders of the Church, 30 November–1 December 1835,” p. [226].

9 “Letter to the Elders of the Church, 30 November–1 December 1835,” p. [226].

10 “Letter to the Elders of the Church, 30 November–1 December 1835,” p. [226].

11 David L. Turner, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 344

12 “Letter to the Elders of the Church, 30 November–1 December 1835,” p. [228].

13 “Letter to the Elders of the Church, 30 November–1 December 1835,” p. [228].

14 “Letter to the Elders of the Church, 30 November–1 December 1835,” p. [228].

15 “Letter to the Elders of the Church, 30 November–1 December 1835,” p. [228].

16 “Letter to the Elders of the Church, 30 November–1 December 1835,” p. [226].

17 See “Letter to the Elders of the Church, 30 November–1 December 1835,” pp. [126–128].

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