

## ***Matthew 13 - The Parables of the Kingdom (part 2)***

### **I. INTRODUCTION: THE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM**

A. In Matthew 13 there are seven parables about the kingdom of God that Jesus taught by the Sea of Galilee, autumn AD 28 (*Mt. 13:1-52; Mk. 4:1-34; Lk. 8:4-18*).

B. Jesus explained why He taught with parables (13:10-17)—both to reveal and to conceal truth.

*10And the disciples...said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?” 11He answered..., “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12For whoever has, to him more will be given...but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. 13Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear... (Mt. 13:10-13)*

C. ***Mysteries of the kingdom:*** These parables revealed the mysteries of *how the kingdom is manifested in this age*. A “mystery” in the Scripture speaks of truths not revealed in the Old Testament and only revealed in the New Testament. Paul defined a mystery as that “*which has been hidden but now is revealed*” to God’s people (Col. 1:26). It is not a truth difficult to understand, but a truth that can be understood only by divine revelation in the New Testament.

D. The Messianic expectation is the backdrop for the *parables of the Kingdom* found in Matthew 13. The old testament is filled with prophecy regarding the coming messiah and the establishment of the Kingdom. Passages like Daniel 2 informed the thinking and expectation of the Jewish people.

E. Daniel 2:34-35 pictured a single cataclysmic event which ushered in God’s kingdom with power—as a stone that struck and shattered the oppressive governments. Thus, Israel was looking for Messiah who would totally remove all the opposing evil kingdoms.

F. Jesus proclaimed that the kingdom had come, yet it came in an *unexpected and hidden form* that did not overwhelm the present order of life. It grows only as people respond in faith. Israel expected a cataclysmic event like what will happen when Jesus returns. However, Jesus’ message was that, though small, the kingdom promised in Daniel 2 is here in its early stage.

G. At Jesus’ first coming Israel had a mix of wrong expectation and right expectations. As stated before in paragraph E. they had a “Daniel 2” expectation as they pictured a cataclysmic event which ushered in God’s kingdom with power. They expected the Messiah to be that stone that would strike and shatter the oppressive governments. They were looking for Messiah who would totally remove all the opposing evil kingdoms. They had a partially right expectation on *what* the Messiah would do but they had a wrong expectation on *when* He would do it.

H. Sometimes the difference between a right or wrong expectation is not *what* you expect to happen but rather *when* you expect it to happen.

I. Each one of these 7 parables contains principles regarding *the way of the Kingdom*.

## II. THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER AND THE FOUR TYPES OF SOIL (MT. 13:3-9, 18-23)

- A. The parable of the sower describes the four types of responses people make to the preaching of God's reign. These four types of soil were familiar to farmers who scattered seeds as they walked through their fields. Jesus interpreted this parable in Mt. 13:18-23.

*3 "...Behold, a sower went out to sow...4 some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. 5 Some fell on stony places...and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. 6 But...because they had no root they withered away. 7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns...choked them. 8 But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." (Mt. 13:1-8)*

1. **Wayside:** Some seeds fell on the path where birds ate them before they germinated (13:4).
2. **Stony places:** Seed that falls on stony ground may grow quickly in the shallow topsoil, but because it does not have deep roots to obtain the necessary moisture, it dies (13:5-6)
3. **Thorns:** Seed that falls among the thorns will eventually be choked by the thorn bushes that squeeze out the young plant, robbing it of necessary nourishment, so it dies (13:7).
4. **Good ground:** Some seed fell on good ground and produced a crop. The seed that fell on good ground produced an extraordinary crop. A tenfold yield was considered good. Genuine believers seek to obey the Word and thus become spiritually fruitful, though the measure of fruitfulness varies. Jesus commended all who received the message regardless of their measure of productivity.

- B. In each case, the seed is the same, but the difference is in the receptivity of the soil or the heart response of each person who heard the message of the kingdom.

## III. THE PARABLE OF THE WHEAT AND THE TARES (MT. 13:24-30)

*24"...The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; 25 but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares [weeds] among the wheat...26 When the grain...produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. 27 So the servants of the owner...said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' 28 He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' 29 But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and...I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."'" (Mt. 13:24-30)*

- A. Jesus breakdowns the parable: (vs 37-43) **He who sows the good seed:** The Son of Man. **The Field:** the World. **The Good Seeds:** Sons of the kingdom. **The Tares:** Sons of the wicked one. **The enemy who sowed:** The Devil. **The Harvest:** the End of the Age. **The Reapers:** Angels

- B. *God will permit the righteous and wicked to coexist in this age, but He will separate the wicked and judge them, while gathering the righteous to be rewarded in His presence forever.*
- C. The problem is in the tares being closely intermingled with the wheat—the wheat could get pulled up with the tares. In this present age, there is a mixture of the wheat and tares. This can confuse some, especially when the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer.
- D. The tares or weeds are more literally *darnel*. Some characteristics of darnel: First, it closely resembles wheat in its early growth stages, earning the nickname “false wheat”. Second, its seeds can be infected by a fungus, which, when ground into flour, causes dizziness, nausea, vision problems, and even death. Third, its roots intertwine with wheat roots, making it hard to weed out without damaging the actual crop. Fourth, due to the intermingling it was only able to be separated at harvest time.
- E. This parable addresses *the delay of judgment*—this was one of the most difficult aspects of Jesus’ teaching. God’s people are not to separate the wheat from the tares because this will be delayed until the end-of-the-age harvest. Thus, Jesus did not destroy the wicked Roman oppressors.
- F. Here Jesus dealt with the character of the seed rather than its reception. The enemy sowed darnel, that which looks like wheat on the surface, but can be toxic and deadly.

#### IV. THE PARABLES OF THE MUSTARD SEED AND THE LEAVEN (MT. 13:31-33)

- A. Jesus compared the kingdom to a mustard seed and to a lump of yeast—*the kingdom will grow from an insignificant beginning to great size (mustard seed) with vast influence (leaven)*. The manifestation of God’s reign started with Jesus’ small group of uneducated disciples. Without right perspective the seemingly small work of the kingdom can be dismissed as insignificant.

***31“...The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, 32 which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.” (Mt. 13:31-32)***

- B. The parable of the leaven or yeast hidden in dough communicates a similar message as that of the mustard seed, *emphasizing the initial smallness of the kingdom compared to what it eventually becomes*. Jesus compared the growing of kingdom to the invisible and imperceptible impact of leaven in a lump of dough. We can be confident that regardless of any opinions, the kingdom has a glorious future.

***33“...The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.” (Mt. 13:33)***

V. THE PARABLES OF THE TREASURE AND THE PEARL (MT. 13:44-46)

- A. *These parables highlight the value of the kingdom and the fact that its value is hidden to many. The kingdom is so valuable that it is worth sacrificing anything for our participation in it. The problem is that its value is hidden. It is not obvious to everybody now, but it will be shortly.*

**44**“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. **45**Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, **46**who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.” (Mt. 13:44-46)

VI. THE PARABLE OF THE DRAGNET (MT. 13:47-50)

- A. The kingdom is like a dragnet that gathered both that which was good and bad.

**47**“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, **48**which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and...gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. **49**So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will...separate the wicked from among the just, **50**and cast them into the furnace of fire...” (Mt. 13:47-50)

VII. SUMMARY OF THE SEVEN PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

- A. *The parable of the sower* (Mt.13:3-9; Mk 4:3-9; Lk 8:5-8) illustrated the four types of responses people make to the preaching of God’s reign and teaches *that kingdom obedience is not forced* as the the parables speaks of very different responses to the message of the kingdom.
- B. *The Parable of the Wheat and the tares* (Mt. 13:24-30) addresses the delay of judgment. *God will permit the righteous and wicked to coexist in this age*, but He will separate the wicked and judge them, while gathering the righteous to be rewarded in His presence forever.
- C. *The parable of the mustard seed* (Mt. 13:31-32) and *the parable of the leaven or yeast hidden in dough* (Mt. 13:33) *highlights the unforeseen character of kingdom as starting much smaller than most thought and then growing gradually instead of coming in one cataclysmic event*. It will grow from an **insignificant beginning** to great size (mustard seed) with vast influence (leaven).
- D. *The parables of the Treasure and Pearl* (Mt. 13:44-46). These parables *highlight the value of the kingdom and the fact that its value is hidden to many*.
- E. *The Parable of the Dragnet* (Mt. 13:47-50). The kingdom is like a dragnet that gathered both that which was good and bad. This teaches us that many who profess to be a Christian and who associate with the kingdom are not all genuine believers. Both good and evil will continue until the end when both are evaluated according to their true character. The Lord will remove the wicked in His timing.