

## THE KINGDOM PARABLES

### Matthew 13

#### I. THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

It is important to note the significant shift in Matthew's narrative discussed in Lesson 26. He was preventing the populist movement from gaining momentum, which could have led to the people trying to make him their king and inciting a revolt against Rome. "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed" (John 6:15). He first gave the parable of the sower, and before it could be explained the disciples asked why He even told it to the multitudes (Matthew 13:1-17). **Why parables to them?** "because" (vs. 11).

#### A. Three Reasons

- 1. Beneficial only to those who hear with faith.** Parables illustrate truth to the believing. The disciples heard and already received it as truth. (Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 4:33,34). "without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples."
- 2. Consequential to those who hear with unbelief.** Parables hide the truth from the unbelieving. Many had heard and followed the Jewish leadership unquestionably, rejecting Jesus' teachings as truth. They lacked faith in the divine origin of the truth therefore the truth they refused was now lost to them. It was willful. They did not understand because they would not (Matthew 13:14, 15). This was a mindset regardless of the evidence. Maybe "Despite the evidence, this was a mindset that persisted." This is the classic sin of unbelief seen in the report of the 10 Hebrew spies at Kadesh –Barnea.

"And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice. Surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it."  
(Numbers 14:11,22,23)

The writer of the Book of Hebrews in the New Testament summarized this account;

"To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."  
(Hebrews 3:15-19; 4:6-11) Labor not for salvation but labor not to miss the simplicity of believe God's promise. Abraham believed the Lord and He accounted it to him for righteousness. Gen. 15:3

God didn't initiate the hardening of the minds of the Jewish leadership toward Jesus. Their rejection was deliberate. They refused to repent of their need for regeneration and His righteousness and were unwilling to renounce self-righteousness and self-rule. Anyone who anesthetizes his heart muffles his ears and shuts his eyes to the Word of God will be abandoned to his own darkened understanding. The parable describes the four types of heart-conditioned responses to the Word of God. (vs. 10) "Blessed are your eyes and ears." Reception of the truth opens our understanding to more truth. (vs. 12) Parables were not spoken to deliberately hinder understanding but to

identify receptive hearers. He was still giving another chance; “Hear ye therefore” (vs. 18).

3. **Fulfillment of Prophecy** This parabolic style was the prophesied method of delivering the message by both Isaiah and by the Messiah resulting in Israel’s hardness and rejection of both.

**B. Parable of Sower – addresses how people hear the truth.**

1. **Opportunity** - The disciples who received Him would now understand the new mystery form of the kingdom in the interim until the Messianic Kingdom is established.

**A. Openness** (vs. 18) Anyone among the multitude repenting of the hardness of their heart could be saved. Hear ye therefore. . . “here’s your chance.”

**B. Objection** (vs. 15) a judicial acknowledgment of a rejective blindness. “And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.” (Isaiah 6:9-10)

2. **Obscurity of the Truth**

**A.** These parables were to uncover and reveal that which had been hidden and secret.

**B.** To make known the events from His first appearance until His second coming.

**C.** These parables are prophetic as to the sequential progression of this interim age.

**D.** The Messiah would return to Heaven before He established Israel’s kingdom.

3. **Overview of the Parables** - Mysteries of the Kingdom (13:11) A *mystery* is a truth which heretofore has been hidden but is now revealed. (13:35) These parables revealed things that had been kept secret from the foundation of the world. The seven parables of Matthew 13:1-53 plus two parables in Mark 4:1-34 and Luke 8:4-18, describes the outworking of the Mystery Kingdom in the present age. The mystery form of the kingdom includes the Church as well as the believers during the Tribulation. The period began with the rejection of Christ and will conclude with the return of Christ at the end of the Tribulation. Arnold Fruchtenbaum assessed that “the best word to describe this period is “Christendom.”<sup>i</sup> While Israel awaits the restoration of their prophesied messianic, millennial kingdom, all who by saving faith are members of His spiritual kingdom which is “within you.” We as believers i.e. the Church do not replace Israel’s kingdom. While their national kingdom is deferred, it is not deleted. Jew and Gentile saved from their sin are in His spiritual kingdom under His rule in our hearts and lives. It never was the Church’s role to subjugate the nations under His control as post-millennialism or amillennialism believes. The history of “Christendom” driven by that misinterpretation was marred by a succession of Church-State hybrids forcibly attempting to subjugate all under Christ’s kingdom. The cathedrals of Europe were built by taxing all citizens whether they were believers or not. This was a satanic corruption of the true church based on a misinterpretation of the kingdom. The devastating results of satanic corruption are foreseen in these parables in the form of an enemy who sows the bad seed, evil birds in a tree, and leaven permeating the dough.

4. **Clarification on the Terminology “Kingdom of Heaven**

The term “Kingdom of Heaven” is synonymous with the “Kingdom of God” **but** it is not the same as the Church. Arnold Fruchtenbaum gives insight into the Jewish context of the kingdom phraseology particularly

in the book of Matthew who “consistently used the expression *kingdom of heaven*. However, in the parallel accounts of Mark 4 and Luke 8, both Mark and Luke consistently used *kingdom of God*. The reason Matthew used kingdom of heaven is because he is writing his Gospel to the Jews, and they were sensitive about using the name “God” vainly. In place of saying “God,” they would say “the name” (Hebrew – *ha Shem* as in “Blessed be the name” Job 1:21). Matthew writing to the Jews and being aware of Jewish sensitivities, used the expression kingdom of heaven...”

## II THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER Matthew 13 Mark 4 Luke 8

### A. This parable covers the spread of the Gospel in the interim period Matthew 13:3-9

The seed is the Word of God, and the field is the world. (Luke 8:11; Hebrews 4:12; I Peter 1:23).

### B. The four soils are classes of hearers or “hearts” (Matthew 13:19, Mark 4:15, Luke 8:12, 15)

1. **Wayside Hearer** (vs. 4) This is the response of unbelief, a hard path, incapable of receiving it, “understandeth it not” (Vs. 19.) Many have heard it but have become hard-hearted. As the Lord said to Moses, “how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?”
2. **Stoney Ground Hearer** (vs’s. 5, 6; Mark 4:5)  
“Forthwith” or immediately (Mark 4:16; 4:17 (Vs. 20, 21) the hearer responds in belief and is saved but is never deeply rooted in the faith and is tossed “to and fro” with every new wind of doctrine and withers under the heat. They are not stabilized in their spiritual life. There was life in that the seed sprouted but their walk withered.
3. **Thorny Ground** (vs. 7 ) They also believe but have a distracted life focus. (vs. 22) The cares of this world dominate and take all their attention (Mark 4:19; Luke 8:14). Thorns do not indicate a lack of an internal life, but rather external obstacles to fruitfulness. Jesus said you cannot serve God and Mammon (Matt. 6:24). The weeds take over and the Word is choked out. Fruitful gardens require cultivation and fertilization.
4. **Good Ground** (vs. 8) These hear, believe, understand, and bear fruit (Vs. 23).  
Three of the four soils had real life, but only 1 of the 4 was fruitful more or less 30% - 60% - 100%

### C. The miraculous spiritual growth of a seed is symbolic of the mystery of spiritual regeneration.

Mark 4 emphasizes faith in this simple Gospel that Jesus the Messiah Christ died in our place for our sins was buried and rose from the dead. It has the mysterious ability to transform a person from the inside out, like a dead and dry seed sprouting to life. The life of the seed is its inner power to reproduce the spirituality that was dead. “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” (1 Peter 1:23) This is the age of sowing the word of the gospel to the world. The early Jewish church gave the Gentiles the gospel of salvation which is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, as explained in Romans 11. The gentile believer and the church are indebted to the Jewish remnant of believers and to the nation of Israel. “Now if the fall of them *be* the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of **this mystery**, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy” (Romans 11:13- 31).

Paul, the former Rabbi, used the analogy of spiritual blindness to explain the rejection of the Jewish prophecies

“their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which *vail* is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty” (2 Corinthians 3:13-17).

When exposed to hundreds of Jewish prophecies fulfilled by Jesus, found in the New Testament, the heart must set aside all preconceived ideas and turn to ask God whether Jesus is really the sent Messiah. When the heart sincerely asks God to know Him in the four Gospel accounts of Jesus’ life, then the Holy Spirit of God will free the mind from self-imposed blindness or religiously imposed blindness. He brings light into the soul to see that the truth is not just a scriptural text but a person who is the author of the truth. “Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” (John 8:32,36)

**Paul himself had experienced this struggle.** “For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Romans 10:1-4,10,11).

The seed of the Gospel of Jesus the Messiah/Christ that was sown among the Gentiles by the Jewish disciples is coming full circle to the Jewish people and to Israel as this Mystery form of the Kingdom age winds down, just before Jesus the Messiah establishes the Messianic Kingdom. The tragedy is that the 7-year period; “The Time of Jacob’s Trouble” precedes His coming as a double holocaust for Israel. The Gospel of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life provides an escape from the darkest hour in Jewish history yet to come through the Rapture. But God ensures that the sowing of the gospel will have continuity after the church is removed in the Rapture via the witness of two Jewish prophets and 144,000 Jewish evangelists mentioned in Revelation. The result will be that:

“I heard the number of them which were sealed: *and there were* sealed an hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel”. “After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.” “And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” “I will give *power* unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days.” (Revelation 7:4,10)

Even after that, God will extend a universal invitation of mercy.

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” (Revelation 11:3-6; 14:6,7)

Of the final judgment, Jesus said, “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me.” (Revelation 22:11,12)

If expert eyewitnesses missed it so can you. Each will answer for our own rejection of the overwhelming evidence.

#### Sources

The basic outline was based on a series on parables by Dr. Lehman Straus, Parables of the Kingdom, Messianic Bible Study MBS040, by Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Ariel Ministries, Austin Texas