

Kingdom of Heaven

Matthew 13

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1/16/2022

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What is a mystery?

- In the classical Greek, a "mysterion" was that which is only known by the initiated, a secret from the uninitiated.
- In the New Testament, a mystery is outside the range of normal apprehension, it can only be known by divine revelation in a manner and time appointed by God.
- There are 12 great mysteries of God that are revealed in the New Testament, one by Jesus, nine by Paul, and two by John.

What do you expect the average Jew on the street at the time of Jesus to think of the Kingdom of Heaven?

That is would be when the Messiah would rule the earth from Jerusalem:

Isaiah 2:2-4 - *In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.*

What did Jesus have to say about the Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew 4:17?

Matt 4:17 - *From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."*

The Kingdom of Heaven was near, at hand; people didn't have to wait for the Messiah to vanquish the enemies of Israel. All they had to do was accept Him as Messiah.

So, what was the kingdom of heaven?

It was the spiritual kingdom that God would build during the Church Age because Israel would reject His offer of the Millennial Kingdom. Jesus referred to believers during the Church Age as "*sons of the kingdom*" (Matthew 13:38) indicating that they would inherit the Millennial Kingdom.

What did the average Jews on the street expect the Messiah to do when He came?

- They expected Him to deliver Israel from the tyranny of Rome and usher in the Kingdom Age where He would rule the world from Jerusalem.
- They missed the idea that the Messiah would come twice, the first time to establish a spiritual kingdom, the second time to established the promised physical kingdom ...the spiritual kingdom was a mystery.

Jesus revealed the mystery of the kingdom of heaven in the eight parables of Matthew 13...

Why did Jesus speak in parables?

Because He was revealing a mystery that was to only be known by those given spiritual eyes to understand what He was saying...

Matt 13:11-13 - *"Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.*

It also fulfilled the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 6:9 & Psalm 78:2 (see Matt 13:14, 35).

Parable of the Sower – Matthew 13:3-9

"Behold, a sower went out to sow. ⁴And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. ⁶But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. ⁷And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. ⁸But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Matthew 13:3-9

"Therefore hear the parable of the sower: ¹⁹When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches

away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. ²⁰ But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹ yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. ²² Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. ²³ But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

Who is this sower who went out to spread seed?

It is anyone representing Christ sharing the good news of Jesus. It is also the Holy Spirit who convicts people about the truth of Jesus.

What is the word of the Kingdom?

It is the good news of the Messiah coming to fulfill His promises of a Millennial Kingdom.

How is the word of the kingdom central to the good news of Jesus Christ?

God’s promises of salvation for those trusting in Christ will be realized just as His promise of the kingdom.

- Indeed, we can be part of His spiritual kingdom right now.

What do we learn about the Kingdom of Heaven from the Parable of the Sower?

- The Word of God about the Kingdom is like a seed that depends on the heart of the recipient as to whether it bears fruit.
- There are four kinds of hearts: (1) hard-packed ground of the wayside: seed removed by the Enemy of God, (2) stony place: no room for the seed, (3) thorny place: cares of the world choke out the seed, (4) good ground: bears fruit producing many more seeds

What does this tell us about how the good news of Christ is generally received?

Most hearts are not of the type that receive the message.

What is the fruit that is produced in the good soil?

It is the fruit of the Spirit and the impact of this believer on the lives of others whose hearts represent good soil.

Is there significance to the fruit count getting lower?

During the course of the Church Age, the impact of believers on others we be less effective than in the earlier stages of the church.

Parable of the Wheat & Tares – Matthew 13:24-30

²⁴ Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “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 among the wheat and went his way. ²⁶ But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. ²⁷ So the servants of the owner came and 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 at the time of harvest 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.” ’ ’ ”

Matthew 13:37-43

³⁷ He answered and said to them: “He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. ³⁹ The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. ⁴⁰ Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, ⁴² and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

Who is the Sower here?

It is the Son of Man, Jesus Christ.

What is the field?

It is the world.

What are the good seeds?

The children of the kingdom of heaven.

What are the tares?

The sons of the wicked one... if you are not a child of God, you are effectively a child of Satan.

Who is the enemy of the sower?

Satan and his fallen angel helpers

Who are the reapers at harvest time?

They are the angels who will sort out the wheat from the tares during the Tribulation.

What do we learn about the Kingdom of Heaven from the Parable of the Wheat & Tares (Matt 13:24-30, 37-43)?

- Weeds (tares) look like wheat until maturity
- Believers and unbelievers will be revealed at the time of harvest (when the Messiah returns).
- The wheat will reside in God's barn, that tares will be bundled up and burned (hell)

What is the significance of the tares being sown while men slept?

- People didn't notice the tares being sown because they were not alert to it.
- Satan does a lot of his evil work under the cover of darkness... evil can't stand the light of truth and avoids it.

How do we know this parable cannot be referring to the Millennial Kingdom?

Because Satan is active... it has to be the current inter-advent age of the church.

What do the tares represent in today's world?

These are those who profess to be Christians, for the most part act as Christians, go to church, but they really haven't been born again.

Matthew 7:21-23 – *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ ²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’*

Some of the tares actually cause problems within the church. Jesus referred to them as wolves...

Matthew 7:15-17 – *Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.*

Parable of the Mustard Seed – Matthew 13:31-32

³¹ Another parable He put forth to them, saying: *“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.”*

What do we learn about the Kingdom of Heaven from the Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matt 13:31-32)?

- The Kingdom of Heaven will start from a small beginning but grow into a great tree.
- Once the Church has become huge, birds (unclean animals representing the enemies of God) will make their home in the church.

What does the symbolism of the tree generally represent?

It often represents a worldly kingdom:

Daniel 4:10-12 – *I was looking, and behold, A tree in the midst of the earth, And its height was great.*

¹¹ *The tree grew and became strong; Its height reached to the heavens, And it could be seen to the ends of all the earth. ¹² Its leaves were lovely, Its fruit abundant, And in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, The birds of the heavens dwelt in its branches, And all flesh was fed from it.*

So, is does this tree represent a good development or a bad one?

- These parables are all related and re-enforce the same concept that there are false professing Christians during the Church Age.
- The tree, rooted in the earth symbolizes people really of the world, not destined to heaven.
- The tree became a monstrosity having started out as an herb but became something entirely different with woody branches.
- The tree became a habitation for birds of the air which symbolize Satan and his agents even in these parables.
Revelation 18:2 – *Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!*

So, what does this tree represent in our world today?

It represents apostate, institutionalized Christendom. It includes the Catholic Church that officially teaches that works are required for salvation.

The Parable of the Leaven – Matthew 13:33

³³ *Another parable He spoke to them: “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.”*

What do we learn about the Kingdom of Heaven from the Parable of the Leaven (Matt 13:33)?

- Leaven represents evil, the meal represents the product of the seed of God's Word.
Luke 21:1 – *Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.*
- The Church will be corrupted by evil; there will be professing Christians seeking to undermine the cause of Christ... Jesus warned about wolves in sheep's clothing (Matt 7:15)

What is the significance of the woman being the one to put the leaven in the meal?

God intended the spiritual leaders of the church to be men... his disciples, the 70 he sent out were all men. The women getting involved in certain roles like lead pastor of church represents departing from God's order.

What is the significance of the three measures of meal?

The number three represents things of God... it is God who produced the meal of the church. The leaven was worked into the church to weaken it by an enemy of God.

How have we seen the leaven permeate the meal of the church in our world today?

Erroneous doctrines...

- salvation-by-works – the idea that you can lose your salvation is salvation-by-works
- universalism – the idea that there are my paths to God and belief in Jesus is just one of them.
- Wokism – the idea that the church needs to engage in social justice as a priority often to the exclusion of the gospel.

Parable of the Hidden Treasure – Matthew 13:44

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.*

Who is the man who sold all to purchase the field?

It is Jesus who willingly gave up His life so that our sins may be forgiven thus purchasing all who would trust in Him.

Why does this treasure represent Israel and not the church?

- In the Old Testament, Israel was often spoken of as God's treasure and special possession (Exodus 19:5, Deuteronomy 14:2, 32:8, Psalm 135:4).
- The treasure was found on the land which relates to Israel whereas the sea represents the nations.

What does the treasure of Israel being hidden in the field represent?

During the Church Age, God is not working through Israel; National Israel has been set aside as God's representatives on earth until the times of the Gentiles is complete.

Why didn't Jesus go on to say the treasure becomes unhidden?

Because Israel will not be used as a nation to represent God during the Church Age.

- God is instead working through the church today but the day will come when the Church Age is over and He will resume working through Israel.

What do we learn about the Kingdom of Heaven from the Parable of Hidden Treasure (Matt 13:44)?

- The treasure is Israel hidden in a field which represents the nations of the world.
- The man who sold all was Jesus who died for all, even Israel.
- Jesus paid the price for Israel so that they may be His treasure

The Pearl of Great Price – Matthew 13:45-46

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.*

Who is the merchant?

That is Jesus Christ who paid the price for the Pearl of Great Price

What is the Pearl of Great Price?

It is the church which Jesus paid the price for... His life.

How is this parable often misinterpreted?

That it is talking about people finding salvation and dying to their self to purchase the Pearl of Great Price as salvation. But this would advocate salvation-by-works.

- It is God who seeks us, we don't seek Him.
Romans 3:11 – *There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.*

What do we learn about the Kingdom of Heaven from the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price?

- The pearl of great price is the church.
- Christ gave His mortal life so that our sins may be forgiven if we trust in Him.

The Parable of the Dragnet – Matthew 13:47-50

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 they sat down 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 come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, ⁵⁰ and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

What does the sea often symbolize in Scripture?

The Gentile Nations.

What is represented by the good fish and the bad?

The good fish represent the children of the kingdom of heaven. The bad fish are not part of the kingdom of heaven.

What do we learn from this parable that is different from the parable of the Wheat and Tares?

- It reinforces the Wheat and the Tares in that it is the angels that sort out the good from the bad.
- Since it reinforces the parable of the Wheat and Tares, this message is important... that there will be false professing Christians mixed in with the true born again Christians and we generally cannot tell the difference.

What do we learn about the Kingdom of Heaven from the Parable of the Dragnet (Matt 13:47-50)?

- The good will be saved and the bad will be discarded as fishermen sort through their catch.
- True believers and unbelievers will be revealed at the end of the Age when the Messiah returns.
- The bad (rebellious unbelievers) will be cast into hell (furnace of fire)

Parable of the Householder – Matthew 13:52

Then He said to them, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.”

What is the treasure new and old?

It is the revelation of God... Old Testament and New.

What do we learn about the Kingdom of Heaven from the Bonus Parable of the Householder?

The treasure of the message on the Kingdom of Heaven consist of new things, that which Jesus revealed and old things, that which was previously revealed in the Old Testament.

Why was necessary for Jesus to hide the Mysteries of God from those who were not ready spiritually?

In his mercy he was protecting unbelieving Israel from more consequences of knowing more about the kingdom of heaven since they rejected the offer of the Millennial Kingdom.

How should we react to the knowledge that there is evil hidden in the Church?

- Recognize that this is the nature of this age... be aware and be wary so as to not be deceived.
- Get to know Scripture so that we are better prepared to discern what is of God and what is not.