

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

## *The Mysteries of the Kingdom of God* **Matthew 13**

**Keywords:** Kingdom of God, Parables, Mysteries, End Times, Gospel, Matthew 13

**SermonAudio Blurb:** In a key transition point in the gospel of Matthew we see a consequence of the rejection of Jesus as the Messiah-King. From this point forward He began to speak in parables and in doing so He hid the hope of the Kingdom of God from most of the listeners. He called these parables the “mysteries of the kingdom.” This sermon examines what they say and what they reveal about the Kingdom of God.

### **I. Introduction.**

- A. Last week we saw several things with regard to the Kingdom of God.
1. First, that as King, Jesus announced the nearness of the kingdom and called Israel to repent, or turn from their rejection of God and turn and follow Jesus.
    - a. This was closely connected to the Old Testament covenants which require you to be in a right relationship with God to enjoy their benefits.
    - b. Until **Israel** repents, the Kingdom of God will not come about.
  2. Second, we saw that the actual actions of Jesus gave the people, and us, glimpses into what awaited them in the kingdom. Demons fled, sickness was banished, blindness or lameness could not stand against King Jesus. And the final enemy of death was no match for His Kingly command to arise and come forth. Nature did things we could only dream about when the King commanded it to obey. And in all of this was picture after picture of what awaited them if they would repent and believe.
  3. Third, to enter the Kingdom of God requires a work that God alone can do. John 3 talks about the need to be born again. The more fancy word is regenerated. It is not something we do or cause, but rather it is a sovereign, gracious act of God. A heart of unbelief is changed to a heart that believes. A hard heart becomes a heart that loves God and love those who belong to God. Without being born again no one will enter the Kingdom of God.
  4. Finally, we saw that because of the rejection of Israel of their King that we are still waiting for it to come. Do not think that because they rejected the offer of the kingdom that somehow they stymied God’s plan for the bible

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is clear that all of this was part of His plan. In this intervening time we see the birth of the Church in Acts and the spread of the gospel out from Israel and into the rest of the world. In this time God's grace is flowing outward to the nations and it is that reality that is why you and I worship today.

- B. In the middle of the gospel of Matthew we saw that a shift came—a critical shift.
  - 1. The people and the religious leaders had begun to openly reject Jesus in chapters 11-12. This is very important to keep in mind.
  - 2. Chapter 13, then, records a series of parables that Jesus taught about the Kingdom of God.
  - 3. And these parables are our focus today to see what they teach and what we learn about the nature of the Kingdom of God
- C. What is a parable?
  - 1. It is not a story that is designed to make deep truths accessible to anyone. (Repeat)
  - 2. It is not a historical fact or event. Whether what the parable describes what actually happened or not is unimportant because it is not history.
  - 3. Simply put, a parable is a short, simple story that contains hidden within it deep, spiritual truth.
- D. More important than what **is** a parable is the what is the **purpose** of the parable.
  - 1. It is a story that is designed to conceal spiritual truth rather than reveal it. (Repeat)
  - 2. In Matthew 13 Jesus begins to shift to a new way of speaking about the Kingdom of God. It is in parables and in these parables He says He is speaking of the “mysteries of the kingdom.”
  - 3. Look at vs 10-17.
    - a. The question by the disciples (10). They are confused, not enlightened and excited by this great new teaching methodology. Remember that up to this point Jesus Christ has said things plainly. So they are as confused as everyone else.
    - b. Parables do instruct, but only to those who are given the ability to know their meaning (11).

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- (1) “You” = disciples and “them” = the multitudes of vs 2.
- (2) “Granted” here speaks of God bestowing the ability to learn and know and understand. So when it says “not granted” it speaks of the sovereign decision of God to withhold truth from others. Why?
  - (a) vs 12 explains that the disciples had faith. It may be small faith but it was faith in the right thing, or person, Jesus Christ. So because of this God was granting more understanding.
  - (b) But after having plainly taught the crowds repeatedly and watching them continue to challenge and question Him, He now withdraws everything from them. This is the horror of divine judgment on this side of eternity. Their path is set.
  - (c) And vss 14-15 quote Isaiah the prophet and it is a hard prophecy. The multitudes hearing Jesus are just like the multitudes of Israelites in the days of Isaiah. Religious perhaps, but with hearts far from God.
- c. Notice also that the information found in these parables are the very things the prophets of the Old Testament longed to understand and see fulfilled.
  - (1) Each prophet had the terrible task of speaking against the sin and rebellion of their day. They were not loved but hated as a general rule because of what they said.
  - (2) But each of them also declared hope in the coming day where the Messiah would come and make all things right. When the true King would come to the people and rule in righteousness.
  - (3) As they watched the people of God suffer due to their sin and they wrote these words of hope by the Spirit of God, their souls were filled with a longing to see this come to pass. But they died without seeing it.
  - (4) But these people in the gospels! They had the King in their midst. He did works of mercy and miraculous things. Yet

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they fought and debated and ultimately only wanted Him to keep them healthy and feed them. And so they were denied truth by God.

- (5) They crossed a line in their unbelief. It is now a wilful rejection. It is like what Jesus said about the unpardonable sin. To see the works of Jesus done in the power of the Spirit and then try to say that these were done in the power of Satan is to blaspheme the Spirit. And there is no forgiveness to such a wilful act.
4. So what is a mystery since that is what He is revealing here according to in vs 11?
  - a. A mystery in the New Testament is simply information that has not been revealed fully in the Old Testament. Rather, now in the New Testament it is shown. The New Testament term is closer to our term “secret” than mystery.
  - b. This mystery Jesus is going to reveal here in chapter 13 is **additional** information that He did not reveal earlier in His ministry; nor is it revealed in the Old Testament.
5. So with this in mind we can look at what we learn about the Kingdom of God in these parables of Matthew 13.

## II. Seven Parables of The Kingdom of God.

- A. First is the parable of the soils.
  1. The parable (3-9):
    - a. Simply read it.
    - b. Basic explanation.
    - c. What is noteworthy is that none listening understood the meaning because no one explained it. The disciples only understood after Jesus explained it.
    - d. But because He did this with this first parable, now the other parables became more clear because they were given the interpretive keys to unlock their meaning even without an explanation.

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2. The explanation (18-23):
  - a. So what is the seed that is sown? This is important to notice because usually you will hear that it is the gospel. But what does Jesus say?
  - b. It is the “word of the kingdom.” This is the seed and in a sense it is the gospel, but often not as we think of it. Remember that the announcing of the Kingdom of God was called the “gospel.”
  - c. Jesus had sent the 12 out to preach that the Kingdom of God was near in chapter 10 and when they did and they received all sorts of reactions to it. And this parable gives us an explanation of what is going on when they were out preaching.
  - d. Some reject it out of hand, the hard soil.
  - e. Some receive it with great joy but their hearts are shallow and it never actually takes root. So when hardship and persecution comes, they leave as well.
  - f. Some receive it but their hearts are like soil filled with thorn seeds which Jesus calls “worries of the world” and the lies we believe about money. It seems to take root but is soon choked out because the heart does not really love the Kingdom of God **more** than these things.
  - g. Only one soil/heart ultimately shows itself to be true and it is shown by bearing fruit. The fruit is not defined, but it doesn’t need to be defined. What would it look like if you really believed that Jesus Christ is your King and this world is not your home?
3. The lesson shown here is to explain to the disciples what is happening as they and Jesus proclaim the Kingdom of God. They assumed everyone would jump on board and the kingdom would occur but they are realizing that this is now how it is working out.
4. We learn here that there is nothing wrong with the sower or the seed. If you will, the preacher and the message is not the problem. It is the heart of the one who hears. And this is why we saw Jesus say in John 3, you must be born again.
5. Whether it be Satan, persecution or the pursuit of things of this age like power and money, they all are enemies of the Kingdom of God. The call of

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God to each of us is the same always. We must deny ourselves and follow Christ. We serve and love God or we love money. There is no middle ground.

- B. Second is the parable of the tares and wheat.
1. The parable (24-30):
    - a. Read it.
    - b. Tares look much like wheat in the early stages of growth but when mature and ready for harvest the difference is obvious.
    - c. The landowner was content to let them coexist with the wheat until it could be determined what they were in reality.
    - d. He knew full well what was in the land and because of this as he saw the initial growth, he was unimpressed. Time would reveal what was true.
  2. The explanation (34-43).
    - a. Simple explanation once you understand who is represented in the characters of the parable (37-39).
    - b. But in this we have new information about the kingdom. It is not coming in this first advent of Jesus. No longer is Jesus going to preach, "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." And this is important for you to remember.
    - c. Instead, side by side both true citizens of His Kingdom and false ones will coexist. Only when He returns with His Kingdom will they be dealt with, separated by His angels and cast away into hell.
- C. Third are the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven (31-33).
1. We deal with both of these because they are similar and make the same point.
  2. The seed is tiny but grows larger than everything else in the garden. The lump of leavened dough is small, but given time it permeates the entire loaf of dough.
  3. The point of both is that the reality of the Kingdom is growing as people hear of King Jesus and believe. It starts small, which it certainly did but the growth is unstoppable.

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4. And in the end it will be fully formed and ready. It tells us to never mock small beginnings but simply be faithful with the message of the Word and let growth come as the Lord wills it.
- D. Fourth are the parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great value.
1. In both there is either a treasure or a valuable pearl. In one the person is not looking for it but in the other he is searching.
    - a. What is important to note is that both recognized the immense value of the find and that nothing else mattered. Everything changed for each of them.
    - b. Also it is key to see that to gain the treasure or pearl required the person to sell everything else. Not most, some or almost all, but they must sell everything.
    - c. In other words, life with Christ costs you everything but you gain Christ. You are not adding Jesus Christ to your treasures and delights. He must be the only delight and treasure. And I believe this is what will cause many professing Christians in America to weep on the day of judgment, for they will find they never actually had Christ for they loved their many treasures.
    - d. As Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Christ must be first. And that means the Kingdom is first.
- E. Sixth is the parable the dragnet (47-50).
1. Read it.
  2. The dragnet was a type of net that had weights that would take one portion of the net to the bottom and the other portion would float, creating a barrier. Then they would drag it toward shore and everything caught in it is brought onto shore for separating.
  3. This is very similar to the wheat and tares with the exception of Satan seeking to harm the kingdom. Here the sea is simply the world of humanity and the net is the inexorable reality of the coming Kingdom.
    - a. It appears far away but it is moving closer and closer to the shore.

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- b.      And like the fish, people think they are fine. Another day has come and gone. But what they forget is that the net keeps coming closer.
- c.      Within the net are believers and unbelievers. They live together and coexist. But their end is very different.
- 4.      The truth taught is that the Kingdom is delayed but it is coming. It will be an event of joy for some and horror for others.
- F.      Seventh is the parable of the head of the household (51-52).
  - 1.      So now He asks if they were understanding Him and they said yes.
  - 2.      And with that He gives one last one that summarizes everything said up to this point.
  - 3.      The meaning is very simple but profound as well. As the disciples go out and preach the gospel they will be bringing with them both old truths about the Kingdom of God from the Old Testament and new truths taught them from Christ their King.

### **III. Conclusion.**

- A.      So, eight parables all teaching new aspects of the Kingdom of God that were not understood or revealed up to that point.
- B.      They are not changing Old Testament revelation. Rather they are adding to the information already known. It is the idea of progressive revelation.
- C.      What are the truths? Let me summarize them:
  - 1.      First, that Israel would not, as a whole, embrace their King in His first advent. Some would but the majority would not.
  - 2.      Second, right now true and false citizens of the kingdom will exist until the second coming where the false will be separated out and judged.
  - 3.      Third, the Kingdom of God will start small and will inexorably grow until the fulness comes into existence.
  - 4.      Fourth, to be a citizen of the kingdom requires you to have no other thing or person before Christ. To gain it requires you to be wholeheartedly committed to its King.



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5. Fifth, the Kingdom of God involves both things promise in the Old Testament and new things revealed in the New Testament.
- D. So this is where we find ourselves today. So let us finish by considering the parable of the dragnet.
1. The net of God has already been cast and it is being pulled into shore. It has been doing so for over 2,000 years.
  2. Yesterday it was a bit further from the shore than it is today. And for all you who think you have time, you live a lie. You do not see the net, you do not live in awareness of it. Rather you are functionally in full denial.
  3. But one day, soon or not so soon, it will be pulled to the shore and the end comes for you. You will be separated out and consigned to hell. No more pleas and no more denials, only judgment.
  4. To you who love Christ, this is true of us as well. We wonder if everything is true. But Jesus says, by faith we believe and rest in these things. Why? Because God has always been faithful to His promises and therefore we can be sure He will fulfill these as well. So we labor and run and put away sin and take on hearts of a servant because we trust that one day we will enter into the fulness of the kingdom.

## **Community Group Questions**

1. How did the teaching on the parables challenge how you saw them or heard them taught in the past? What stood out for you in reconsidering them?
2. Spend some time identifying people who have in your life that need to hear the gospel. Share their name(s) with the group and have another person in the group pray for you specifically and vice versa, that you would be bold by faith to share your faith to them.
3. Ask yourselves this question posed in the sermon. Be careful to think about this first. What would it look like if you really believed that Jesus Christ is your King and this world is not your home?