The Parables of the Kingdom - Matt.13 pt2

1. SUMMARY OF THE SEVEN PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

a. Jesus taught the parables of the kingdom (Mt. 13:1-3; Mk. 4:1-2; Lk. 8:4) when a great crowd had gathered by the Sea of Galilee which forced Him to speak from a boat.

Mt. 13:1-3 *That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. [2] And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. [3] And he told them many things in parables*

b. The purpose of these parables was to reveal the mystery of the Kingdom to help the hearers understand that the coming of the kingdom was not one cataclysmic event (as they expected based on OT prophesies e.g. Daniel 2) but was inaugurated by Jesus to be completed at his second coming.

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

a. The parable of the sower and the seed was spoken to the crowd (Mt.13:3-9; Mk. 4:3-9; Lk. 8:5-8). It described how the crowds responded to His teaching by illustrating 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.

Mt. 13:1-8 *That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. [2] And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. [3] And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. [4] And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. [5] Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, [6] but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. [7] Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. [8] Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*

i **Wayside:** Some seeds fell on the path where birds ate them before they germinated (13:4).

ii **Stony places:** Seed that fell 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)

iii **Thorns:** Seed that fell among the thorns will eventually be choked by the thorn bushes that squeeze out the young plant, robbing it of necessary light and nourishment, so it dies (13:7).

iv **Good ground:** Some seed fell on good ground and produced a crop.

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. The mystery is that the kingdom is here, but it currently **does not have the irresistible power** Daniel 2 described where it destroys wicked governments.

3. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER (MT. 13:18-23)

a. Jesus explained the parable of the sower and seed (Mt. 13:18-23; Mk. 4:13-20; Lk. 8:11-15). The seed is the Word of the kingdom which is the good news of salvation from sin, death and Satan and life in an eternal kingdom under the rule of Jesus. The Word is Jesus. This seed fell on four types of soil, speaking of the responses to the Word of the kingdom. For the seed to grow there needs to be understanding.

Mt. 13:19-23 *[19] When anyone hears **the word of the kingdom** and **does not understand it**, the **evil one** comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was **sown along the path**. [20] As for what was sown on **rocky ground**, this is the one who hears the word and immediately **receives it with joy**, [21] yet he has **no root in himself**, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. [22] As for what was sown **among thorns**, this is the one who hears the word, but the **cares** of the world and the deceitfulness of **riches choke the word**, and it proves unfruitful. [23] As for what was sown on **good soil,** this is the one who hears the word and **understands it.** He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

i **Wayside**: Some seeds fell on the hard path where birds ate them quickly (13:4).

ii **Stony places**: Seed that fell on stony ground (13:5-6) immediately sprouted with an initial joyful response. This convert fell away, showing his response was not deep or genuine.

iii **Thorns**: Seed that fell among the thorns ultimately were choked out (13:7) by cares or anxiety of this world and the seduction of riches, and produced no fruit.

iv **Good ground:** The seed that fell on good ground produced an extraordinary crop. A tenfold yield was considered good..

b. Two groups made a profession of faith that later proved superficial. They began well, but failed to continue to follow the Lord. Whether they are saved or lost is not the point emphasized in this parable. What matters most is not a person's profession of faith, but their perseverance in faith.

c. As we share the message of the kingdom we need to realise that not all will respond as they ought. Three obstacles to the effective appropriation of the message of the kingdom include:

i The first type heard but the devil stole it. The first obstacle is Satan, who seeks to snatch the word of the kingdom from the hearts of those who hear it but have not yet responded to it.

ii The second heard the Word of God, but only had a shallow response to it. External pressures of affliction and persecution from others after an initial interest and joyful response cause them to fall away.

iii The third type heard the Word of God, but thorns of worldliness choked the life of that seed. The lack of **internal spirituality** within the hearers themselves means worry, the desire for riches, and being overly attached to this present world keep the Word of God from bringing forth the fruit of the Kingdom in their lives.

iv The fourth type heard the Word of God and had varying degrees of fruitfulness. 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 fruitfulness.

d. The next six parables that follow elaborate on this first parable by showing us other pictures of other aspects of the arrival and growth of the kingdom of God.

i The parable of the wheat and tares explains hypocrites and heretics in the Church.

ii The third and fourth parables (mustard seed and leaven) show how the kingdom advances.

iii The fifth and sixth (treasure and pearl) show the great value and worthiness of the kingdom.

iv The seventh (net) reinforces the truth of the parable of the wheat and tares, showing the importance of that truth so that we are neither deceived nor offended.

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

a. Many wonder why victory is not seen more clearly if the kingdom has arrived already? If Jesus is Messiah, why do so few receive His leadership? In the first parable, the sower used the same seed. Here we see two different kinds of seed being sown by two men—a farmer and his enemy.

b. ***Mt. 13:24-30*** *"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, **25** but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. **26** So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. **27** And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' **28** He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' **29** But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. **30** Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"*

c. 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.

d. Jesus Himself gave the interpretation of this parable to the disciples (13:36-43) teaching that judgment will be delayed until the end of the age

Mt. 13:37-43 *"The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. **38** The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, **39** and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels. **40** Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. **41** The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, **42** and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **43** Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.*

e. The good seed represents believers in Jesus, while the tares are sons of Satan (Jn. 8:44). The devil is the enemy; the harvest is the end of the age (Joel 3:13). The harvesters are angels (Mt. 24:30-31; 25:31). The field is the world, indicating a global mission beyond Israel.

f. The righteous and the wicked are defined by their family relationship. Each person is either a son of the kingdom that belongs to God or a son of the devil, whose desire is to deceive and to destroy God's work. The fact that it is often difficult to distinguish the sons of the evil one from the sons of the kingdom supports the fact of satanic deceitfulness mentioned throughout Scripture.

g. 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 good and bad people. This can confuse some, especially when the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer.

h. 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.

i. This parable describes an order of events at His return (Mt. 24:37-41; Lk 17:26-37). Jesus will come with angels to execute the final judgment of the righteous and the wicked (Mt.16:27; 25:31-33). The righteous will be rewarded by shining like the sun (Dan. 12:3).

5. 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.

b. The parable of the mustard seed (Mt. 13:31-32; Mk. 4:30-32; Lk. 13:18-19) highlights the unforeseen character of kingdom as starting much smaller than most thought and then growing gradually instead of coming in one cataclysmic event. The work of the kingdom can be dismissed.

Mt. 13:31-32 *"The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. [32] It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."*

c. The parable of the leaven or yeast hidden in flour [bread dough] (Mt. 13:33; Lk 13:20-21) communicates a similar message as that of the mustard seed, emphasizing the initial smallness and unimpressiveness 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.

Mt. 13:33 *"The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."*

d. These parables encourage believers to remember that what God is doing during the present phase of the kingdom will enjoy a successful growth. And, in contrast to what was thought by some to be only a Jewish hope, the kingdom of God in the present age, starting with almost imperceptible beginnings, will survive and even expand to international proportions, bringing light to the nations before the end of the age.

6. 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.

Mt. 13:44-46 *[44] "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. [45] "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, [46] who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.*

b. The treasure and the pearl can speak either of the kingdom or of Jesus, the King of the kingdom.

c. In the first parable (Matthew 13:44), the hidden treasure is found "by chance," it seems, without the man looking intentionally for it. In the surprise of it all, the accent falls on his shocking and happy response: from his joy he goes and sells all he has to buy the field. Joy flooded his heart as he stumbled on such value.

d. In the second parable (Matthew 13:45–46), we have a merchant searching high and low, near and far. For fine pearls – one of the most precious commodities in the ancient world. The merchant's life

has been bound up with pursuing the most precious of earthly objects. Now, he comes across one singular pearl of such beauty, of such great value, one pearl so precious, he goes and sells all he has to have it. The emphasis is not on his accidental find but on the over-the-top fulfillment of an intentional search. Now the accent is not on the subjective response of joy but on the exceedingly precious value of the object.

e. Whether finding the word of the kingdom by chance or through searching the response is the same. We lay down everything we have to pledge allegiance to Jesus and His Kingdom. The things of this world no longer hold any value for us. We are willing to pay the cost as Mary did with the ointment she poured over Jesus and as Paul declared:

Philippians 3:8 *Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.*

7. THE PARABLE OF THE NET (MT. 13:47-50)

a. The kingdom is like a net that gathered both that which was good and bad.

Mt. 13:47-50 *47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. 48 When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. 49 So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous 50 and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

b. The agents of this judgment are said to be the angels, while the Son of Man is portrayed as the Judge who has the right to determine the destiny of both the righteous and the wicked. The punitive judgment is said to include all who are stumbling blocks and all who are guilty of wickedness (v. 41). This speaks not only of their personal character but also of their negative influence on others.

c. 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. The righteous will enjoy the kingdom of the Father (v. 43), sharing in His glory. Having been faithful through the "now" they will share in the "not yet"

8. THE PURPOSE OF THESE PARABLES

a. These parables are in two sections:

   i Parables 1-4 (soil, wheats and tares, mustard seed and leaven) were spoken to the crowd. They reveal the nature of Satan's schemes to prevent the growth of the Kingdom and the nature of the Kingdom

   ii Parables 5-7 were shared with the disciples and bring encouragement for living as citizens of the Kingdom.

b. Jesus then goes on to encourage them to share the good news of both that which had already been revealed and this new mystery of the Kingdom

Matt.13:51-52 *51 "Have you understood all these things?" They said to him, "Yes." 52 And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."*

c. Jesus wants us to disciple (teach) others by carefully balancing the teaching of the Old and the New Testaments (Matthew 5:17-19; Acts 26:22-23). The prophetic promises and eschatological hope are still just as essential to our understanding of the Kingdom as the content of these parables which reveal the mystery of the Kingdom revealed in Jesus' first coming.

d. In these parables Jesus takes the old understanding of God's Kingdom and focusses new light on it to expand the people's understanding of its character and future course. Jesus here makes it clear that we should store up revelation from both the old and the new to feed others. We store up treasure in our storehouse and bring out that which will best nourish and strengthen one another to live as citizens of the Kingdom and see it grow.

Col.2:1-3 *For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, [2] that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, [3] in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*