

# Seeking My King & His Kingdom

## Lesson #18 The Mysteries Of The Kingdom

We have seen in Matthew 11 the rejection of Jesus Christ. The postponement of the kingdom is anticipated. In very severe language, Jesus itemized their sinful rejection with severe indictment upon the cities where His mighty works were done.

Chapter 11 closed with an invitation to individual believers to come unto Him for rest.

Chapter 12 recorded the further rejection of Jesus which climaxed in the charge of the Pharisees that He performed His miracles in the power of the devil.

Matthew 13 marks a new division in the gospel and faces the question:

What will happen when the rejected king goes back to heaven and the promised Messianic Kingdom is postponed until His Second Coming?

A. Christ's Ministry in view of His final rejection by the nation of Israel

1. The death of the King and His second coming become the central focus.

a. Jesus knew the growing opposition of the religious leaders would lead to His crucifixion.

2. Chief purpose of the new phase of teaching is to prepare the disciples for His rejection and for the "interregnum" which will intervene between His death and His return from heaven in glory to establish the Messianic Kingdom on earth in accordance with OT prophecy.

a. This includes the present church age, the rapture, the tribulation, the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming and the sheep/goat judgment.

b. The church age is not specifically revealed in Matthew 13, but it does note there will be a great ingathering of believers during this "interregnum."

God will later reveal the specific purpose His eternal plan had for believers of this age.

3. Since the King was rejected, it was impossible to set up His Messianic Kingdom, so the Kingdom took on another aspect known as "The Kingdom In Mystery." [Matt. 13:11]

a. Matt. 13 introduces a new subject, new approach and a new method of teaching = parables.

b. In a new series of parables, Christ sets forth the mysteries of the Kingdom during the interregnum.

c. The Mystery Kingdom is limited in time with a definite beginning and will end at the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus Christ to set up His Messianic or Millennial Kingdom. [not eternal]

d. Mystery Kingdom is limited to the earth.

e. Mystery Kingdom is not the same as the Spiritual Kingdom because it has both believers and unbelievers in it. [wheat & tares]

f. It is not the continuation of the Theocratic Kingdom because it does not involve God's rule over Israel as a theocracy. It also includes Jews & Gentiles.

g. It is not the Messianic Kingdom because Jesus is not ruling over the Mystery Kingdom from Jerusalem. He is ruling in Heaven from the throne of His Father, not the throne of David.

h. The Mystery Kingdom is not the same thing as the Church. The Church is within the Mystery Kingdom; it is the believing element; the "wheat" of God's Mystery Kingdom.

i. This time will be a time of preparation for the future Kingdom.

Tasker: "Jesus deliberately adopted the teaching of parables for the purpose of withholding further truth about Himself and the Kingdom from the crowds, who had proved themselves to be deaf to His claims and irresponsible to His demands. From now on, when addressing the unbelieving multitude, He speaks only in parables which He interprets to His disciples privately."

4. The parables are designed to Reveal The "Mysteries Of The Kingdom, the present age."

5. Mysteries refer to truth that was not revealed in the Old Testament but is revealed in the New Testament.

a. There are more than a dozen truths revealed in the NT which adhere to the basic definition of Col. 1:26 which defines a mystery: "that which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints."

b. A mystery truth has 2 elements. (1) It has to be hidden in the OT and not revealed there. (2) It has to be revealed in the New Testament.

c. Truths that can only be understood on the basis of divine revelation

6. The Old Testament reveals, in clear terms, the earthly reign of Christ when He comes as King to reign on the throne of David. These truths are NOT mysteries.

7. Matt. 13 introduces a different form of the Kingdom, namely the present spiritual reign of the King during the period He is physically absent from the earth, prior to His Second Coming. Therefore, the mysteries of the kingdom deal with the period between the first and second advents of Christ and not the Millennial Kingdom which will follow the Second Coming.

In these parables, Jesus explained the course of the gospel in the world. If Israel had received Him as King, the blessings would have flowed out from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. But the nation rejected Him, and God instituted a new program on earth. "The kingdom of heaven" is a mixture of true and false, good and bad, as pictured in these parables. It is Christianity professing allegiance to the King and yet containing much that is contrary to the principles of the King. We will study the Beginning of the Kingdom, the Opposition to the Kingdom and the Outcome of the Kingdom.

Note: The initial 5 of these special parables about the Kingdom [4 in Matthew 13 & 1 in Mark 4] were addressed primarily to the general public in Israel, not just to the disciples.

1. Matt. 13:10 Then the disciples came and asked Jesus, "Why do you speak to people in parables?"

2. Mark 4:33-34 With many other parables like these, Jesus kept speaking his message to them according to their ability to understand. <sup>34</sup> He did not tell them anything without using a parable, though he explained everything to his disciples in private.

Consider: 2 methods of teaching: parables to the general public; exposition to the disciples

## Parable #1 Parable of the Sower

Matt. 13:1-2 On The Same Day...[day of His rejection] Because of the great multitudes thronging the shores of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus sat in a boat a short distance from the shore and began to teach the crowd.

Matt. 13:3-9 "Listen! A farmer went out to sow. <sup>4</sup> As he was sowing, some seeds fell along the path, and birds came and ate them up. <sup>5</sup> Other seeds fell on stony ground, where they did not have a lot of soil. They sprouted at once because the soil wasn't deep. <sup>6</sup> But when the sun came up, they were scorched. Since they did not have any roots, they dried up. <sup>7</sup> Other seeds fell among thorn bushes, and the thorn bushes grew higher and choked them out. <sup>8</sup> But other seeds fell on good soil and produced a crop, some 100, some 60, and some 30 times what was sown. <sup>9</sup> Let the person who has ears listen!"

A. Consider the STATED PURPOSE of these parables about the "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven."

1. Jesus stated their purpose was TO HIDE rather than to reveal.

Matt. 13:10-12 Then the disciples came and asked Jesus, "Why do you speak to people in parables?" <sup>11</sup> He answered them, "You have been given knowledge about the secrets of the kingdom from heaven, but It Hasn't Been Given To THEM, because to anyone who has something, more will be given, and he will have more than enough. But from the one who doesn't have anything [spiritual insight], even what he has will be taken away from him.

[Context: knowledge of secrets of the kingdom from heaven]

B. These mystery parables of the Kingdom had a beneficial purpose.

1. For those who had accepted the simple facts about the Kingdom, the parables would give further enlightenment.

2. The principle of double purpose, both beneficial and penal, is stated by Jesus.

C. The giving of these parables must be regarded as a Divine Judgment upon Israel.

1. They did not receive the simple announcement of the Kingdom.

2. They are now given something they cannot understand.

3. Because Israel rejected Jesus, their responsibility to reach the world and bless the world would be taken from them and given to another - the church.

4. The judicial significance of the mystery parables is confirmed by a prophecy from Isa. 6:9-10 which Jesus quotes in:

Matt. 13:13-15 That's why I speak to them in parables, because 'they look but don't see, and they listen but don't hear or understand.' <sup>14</sup> "With them the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says:

'You will listen and listen but never understand. You will look and look but never comprehend, <sup>15</sup> for this people's heart has become dull, and their ears are hard of hearing.

They have shut their eyes so that they might not see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.'

- a. Because they had hard hearts, they could not hear Jesus' words.
- b. Because they would not listen to His words, they could not see who He was.
- c. They could not see He was the Messiah.
- d. Therefore they could not see the Kingdom that had come upon them.

Note: While He was hiding the truth from the hard hearted, He was revealing truth to those who had open hearts and were willing to accept the truth, even if it was not what they expected.

5. This passage from Isaiah is referred to 5 times in the NT, always in connection with Israel's rejection of her King. [Matt. 13:13-15; Mark 4:11-12; Luke 8:10; John 12:39-40; Acts 28:25-27]

6. Is it fair that the truth was revealed in such a way that unbelievers cannot understand?

- a. There is a LONG background of unbelief and disregard of previous revelation.
- b. Darkness follows light rejected!

D. The disciples were to be blessed by this new revelation which was not revealed to the prophets and the righteous men of old but was now being revealed to them.

Matt. 13:17 For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them.

- a. This confirms the previous definition of a mystery as a truth not revealed in the OT but now revealed in the NT.
- b. The prophets did not see this "interim period." In OT Israel there was the present age and the age to come which was the kingdom where the Messiah would rule.
- c. They did not see or hear about the church age. They saw only 1 coming of the Messiah. They did not see Him coming to die the first time and returning later to judge and rule.

E. Matt. 13:35 Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables. He did not tell them anything without using a parable. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Psalms 78:2 I will open my mouth in parables;

I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

Consider: These "Kingdom of Heaven Parables" must not describe the Messianic or Millennial Kingdom, because it was NOT secret to the OT prophets.

They must describe the character and conditions on earth of this present dispensation while the King is absent from the earth and is in Heaven.

Mark 4:13 Then he told them, "You don't understand this parable, so how can you understand any of the parables?"

- a. The motifs laid down in the first parable and interpreted by Jesus are the key to understanding the rest of the parables.

Note: This parable does not begin with: "The kingdom of heaven is like" because it describes How The Kingdom Begins. It begins with the preaching of the Word, the planting of the seed in the hearts of people.

## Parable of the Sower Explained - Matt. 13:18-23

### 1. The Seed = God's Word

Question: Why compare God's Word to seed? It is "living and powerful." [Heb. 4:12]

- a. God's Word has life in it and this life can be imparted to those who will believe.
- b. Truth of God's Word must take root in the heart, be cultivated, and permitted to bear fruit.

### 2. Various Soils = Different Kinds of Hearts

### 3. Various results = different responses to God's Word

### 4. Show The Causes That Hinder The Growth Of The Seed

Matt. 13:18-23 "Listen, then, to the parable about the farmer. <sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the word about the kingdom yet doesn't understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. <sup>20</sup> As for what was sown on the stony ground, this is the person who hears the word and accepts it joyfully at once, <sup>21</sup> but since he doesn't have any root in himself, he lasts for only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes along because of the word, he immediately falls away. <sup>22</sup> As for what was sown among the thorn bushes, this is the person who hears the word, but the worries of life and the deceitful pleasures of wealth choke the word so that it can't produce a crop. <sup>23</sup> But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the person who hears the word, understands it, and produces a crop that yields 100, 60, or 30 times what was sown."

Point #1 The Mystery Kingdom Age will be characterized by the sowing of the gospel seed.

Point #2 It will receive opposition from the world, the flesh and the devil.

Point #3 It will be marked by different preparations of the soil.

Point #4 It is also marked by 4 different responses to the seed sown.

a. "By the Wayside" response = response of unbelief; hear the gospel but never believe

- V. 19 The seed never takes root. The "Devil's birds" [criticism, doubt, unbelief, prejudice, preoccupation, etc.] snatch up the seed before it can be worked into the soil.
- Birds represent Satanic influence which supports the hardness of the heart that rejects the message.

b. "Rocky [stony] Places" response = Hear the gospel, believe it and are saved

However, they are never rooted in the Word of God, so they are never stabilized in their spiritual life. They are the ones who are tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. They tend to be very experiential, but their experiences go up and down, so their spiritual life goes up and down. Because they are never rooted in the Word, they are never stabilized in their faith.

While they are saved, they do not produce the kind of fruit that believers need to produce.

Jesus mentioned 2 stones that underlie the soil of their heart.

- Tribulation - Trials - God's Word is doing its work in them to produce endurance, etc.
- Persecution - Sun represents persecution that comes because of the Word. Persecution helps believers grow. The sunshine will kill a plant with no roots.

c. "Thorny Ground" response = The seed takes root, grows up, but does not bear fruit. The soil of this heart contains the seeds or roots of "thorns" and these spring up and outgrow and overshadow the wheat, and absorb from the soil the nutrients needed by it. Matthew mentions 2 thorns = Cares of the World & Deceitfulness of Riches. Mark 4:19 also mentions the Lust of Other Things. Luke 8:14 adds Pleasures of This Life. They never seem to be able to overcome the cares of this world. They are choked by the world and never seem to stabilize. While those who fall on rocky places are not stabilized because they were never rooted in the Word of God, the ones who fall among thorns may be theologically sound and have a good knowledge of the Scriptures. They may not be experienced-centered. However, they still seem to have difficulty living consistent spiritual lives because they are involved in the cares of the world. These cares may be family, financial, or social cares. They also never leave the milk stage.

d. "Good Ground" response = Rooted in the Word of God - They overcome the world. They are productive in the spiritual life. They progress from milk to meat. The seed takes root, grows up, bears fruit, but the amount varies. Some brings forth 100 fold, some 60 and some 30. This is not the fault of the soil. The soil was equally good all over the field, even on the "wayside" and in the "stony" and "thorny" ground parts. Why the difference? Lack of cultivation: If the soil had been properly cleared, tilled and cultivated, and the proper atmospheric conditions prevailed, it would have brought forth a uniform crop of 100 fold.

#### 1. Christianity is the New Thing.

It is not like weeds that grow up spontaneously, but it must be sown and cultivated like wheat.

2. The figure is an agricultural one - a farmer sowing seed.

3. This is not a King setting up His Kingdom!

4. This Mystery Kingdom is an "agricultural one" for the purpose of getting the "wheat of the church."

a. The purpose of this age is to call out believers through the preaching of the gospel in this present age in order to reign and rule with Christ in His Kingdom after the 2<sup>nd</sup> advent.

Rev. 3:21 He who overcomes I will grant to him to sit down with me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

b. Our destiny as the Bride of Christ is to reign with Him, but we are not yet in His Kingdom.

5. The apparent fruitfulness of the soil, only  $\frac{1}{4}$  bringing forth any fruit and that in unequal proportions seems to indicate the comparative failure of the Gospel in the Mystery Kingdom.

6. Jesus did not describe an age of great harvest, but one in which the Word would be rejected.

Consider: This parable makes it clear: There is no anticipating in the present age that there will be universal reception of the truth, as post-millennials teach. Most who hear the message of this kingdom will reject it. Some will receive it, cherish it in their heart and believe in the truth of the kingdom.

7. He was not impressed with the great multitude that followed Him.

He knew most people would not receive His Word within and bear fruit.

Jesus challenged: "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."