

The Prophetic Parables of Matthew 13

Lesson # 2 – Why the Matthew 13 Parables?

February 4, 2024

Introductory Remarks

With the official rejection of Christ as Israel's Messiah-King in Matthew 12, we almost immediately see a palpable change in Jesus' teaching to the crowds. There are a series of 8 Kingdom Parables in Matthew 13, and some more in Matthew 21-25, and in Luke. There are also some parallels in Mark and Luke. Lord willing, we will be able to assess those in later chapters, but with a 6 month limit, it may take us until 2025 to get there. DV

In Matthew 15 and following, the main reason for Jesus' new phase of teaching is to prepare His disciples for His ultimate rejection (at Calvary), and to describe the intervening period of time between His resurrection, ascension and return to setup the Millennial Kingdom, and the eternal state, all in accordance with OT prophecies. This intervening period is called "the inter-advent period" or "the interregnum." It is a gap of indeterminate time. WE are living in that gap now.

In Matthew 13, Jesus switched His speaking to the crowds from preaching and narratives, to parabolic stories with a purpose. His prior teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (MT 5-7), talking about the cost to follow Him (8:18-22; 10:16-42); healing people of many ailments, exorcising demons, calling His 12 disciples; satisfying John the Baptist's serious questions about His being the Messiah by telling him the things He is doing among the people, and many other things, were designed to prepare the people for the Kingdom, which was at that point, imminent. Parables, however, are scarce in Matthew prior to Matthew 12 and in early passages in Mark or Luke, and there are no parables in John. Matthew 12 changes the whole flow of Jesus' ministry, as we observed in our first lesson, and so Jesus' new teaching regimen begins in Matthew 13. It begins with the Parable of the Sower (or Soils) which we will take a close look at in our next lesson. It may be His most well-known parable and has parallels in both Mark 4 and Luke 8. ①

What I wanted us to look at in this lesson first of all is the reasons biblically and those given by Jesus as to why He was suddenly teaching in parables. So, although I had this lesson written out and typed, I wanted to establish again from Matthew 12 first of all why the situation arose which altered the course of Jesus' teaching ministry (and other things) that shows up first in Matthew 13's Kingdom Parables. I know I did an overview of Matthew 12 in the introductory lesson, but here I will have a slightly different focus, because this is a critical chapter.

So, in order to understand the Matthew 13 parables and other Kingdom parables elsewhere, we must comprehend the context, and circumstances which came about so that Jesus changed His ministry of teaching almost immediately after Matthew 12. In fact, evidence suggests these parables were spoken the same day as Matthew 12 takes place. What the events of Matthew 12:22-37 did in rejecting Israel's King (Messiah), delayed the arrival of the Kingdom promised to Israel in numerous OT prophecies, and necessitated the need for a Second Coming of Jesus, so that the now set-aside kingdom of heaven – an earthly kingdom - could finally arrive with Israel's Messiah-King on David's throne ruling from Jerusalem. Arnold Fruchtenbaum fleshes it out for us this way;

“The basis of the second coming the Messiah consists of two main pillars. First is the rejection by Israel of the messiahship of Jesus, and the second relates to the prerequisite of His second coming.

Closely connected with God's kingdom program is the first coming of the Messiah. Both John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1-2) and Jesus (Matt. 4:17) came proclaiming *the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. Neither John nor Jesus, according to the Gospel writers, felt the need to define the nature of this kingdom, apparently expecting the audience to understand what they meant by this term. And well they might. Jewish audiences had common knowledge of the OT and understood the nature of the messianic kingdom. In first-century Israel, the common Jewish understanding of the kingdom was that of a literal earthly kingdom centered in Jerusalem and ruled by the Messiah. The obvious origin of such a view was the literal understanding of the OT prophets.”¹

So, if John the Baptist and Jesus meant something different by this “Kingdom” their statements are inexplicable. The fact that they never explained the term differently, means then it must be an earthly kingdom, with a ruling Messiah on David's throne in Jerusalem. It has not happened in history and has not happened yet. (2)

John the Baptist and Jesus preached a need for repentance in order to enter this kingdom. This more than implies that not all Israelites would enter it – only those whose lives were surrendered to be subjects of their God and King.

Fruchtenbaum further elaborates;

“The common Jewish understanding, however, that “all Israel has a share in the age to come” was an incorrect one. So both John and Jesus proclaimed that the need to repent for righteousness was the means of entering the kingdom. Furthermore, agree [Stanley] Toussaint and [Wayne] Dyer, to see the messianic kingdom established in their day required Israel's acceptance of Jesus as the messianic King.

“The Gospel of the kingdom” proclaimed by Christ in Matthew 9:35 must be the same as that preached by Him in 4:23. It was the good news of the nearness of the kingdom and freedom of access by repentance. The kingdom was proximate in two senses. First, the Messiah was

¹ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, in Jim Congdon, Editor, *Jews and the Gospel at the End of History*, Kregel, 2009, p. 201-202

here on earth, and second, the kingdom's coming was contingent on Israel's response to her Messiah."²

When Jesus was rejected (this is not the only text that indicates He was, and we will look at those texts as we go on) a major change affected the kingdom program. The kingdom had been there for Israel to accept or reject because their King was in their midst. Again, Fruchtenbaum is helpful;

"When Jesus was rejected, a key change took place in the kingdom program. Toussaint has stated the dispensational view point quite well;

"Very often the dispensational school of interpretation will refer to "the offer of the kingdom" to Israel. By this is meant the contingency of the coming of the kingdom to Israel in the first century based on Israel's acceptance of Jesus as its Messiah. This concept is clearly found in the NT. For instance, Peter openly states the coming of the Messiah rests on Israel's repentance (Acts 3:19-21). The Lord Himself said that John the Baptist could have been the fulfillment of the Elijah prophecy of Malachi 4:5-6 if Israel had repented (Matt. 11:14)...

"However, dispensationalists may want to clarify their terminology. The NT does teach the contingency of the coming of the kingdom premised on the response of the Jews. But every Israelite wanted the kingdom to come. To say Christ offered the kingdom to Israel is true, but it leaves the impression the Jews did not want the kingdom to come. It would be far better to say Jesus offered the kingdom himself as Israel's Messiah and the coming of the kingdom was contingent on their acceptance or rejection of Him."³

Matthew 12: 22-42

The Unpardonable Sin – a Second Look

③

The King was rejected, and so, along with Him, so was the Messianic kingdom. This is very important, a critical juncture for Israel and its impact extends to our time and beyond because the judgments assessed after they rejected Christ as Messiah have been ongoing for centuries and will continue until the Great Tribulation per Jesus in Matthew 24-25.

It is also important because it changed the tone and purpose of Christ's ministry after Matt. 12;

"Two condemnations are especially relevant to this study [of Matthew 12], the Pharisees are held accountable not only for their rejection of the messiahship of Jesus, but also for leading the whole nation to reject His messiahship: *"Ye enter not yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering in to enter."* This is an important component of the pillar that forms the basis of the second coming of the Messiah."⁴

At the start of this passage, we are told specifically that "a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to Him and He healed him "so that the man spoke and saw." Note v. 27 – this seems like an odd defence by Jesus for what they are accusing Him of. But when He says this to the Pharisees, it's for a specific reason. There were Jewish exorcists operating in those days, who claimed to cast

² IBID, pp. 202-203

³ IBID, p. 203

⁴ IBID, p. 211

out demons, and apparently, sometimes successfully. These are the ones Jesus calls “*your sons*.” Apparently, the Pharisees were not concerned about their actions, so this is sarcasm. These exorcists would establish communication with the demon in someone, and the demon would use the victim’s vocal cords to talk. Acquiring the demon’s name, the exorcists would invoke it and be able to ‘cast it out.’ But, if the victim happened to be dumb, the demon could make no use of the vocal cords so the exorcism failed. In Luke 8:30 Jesus was faced with a similar demonic presence.

But, here in Matt. 12, the man is dumb so when Jesus is still able to cast out the demon, this is a special case and it astounds the onlookers. In Mark 9:14-28, note the interchange (pay particular attention to v. 17).

Matthew 12:23 – It is the comment of the crowd that really sets the rejection of Jesus in motion (v. 23b). *“Can this be the Son of David?”*

v. 24 – The Pharisees hear this comment and cannot let it go by unchallenged. They have to choose: agree with the people and announce that Jesus is the Messiah; or figure out an alternative explanation for this miracle specifically as well as all the other ones He had done before this, which most had heard of or observed themselves. The people looked to their leaders for official advice, not realizing or perhaps, caring how corrupt and self-serving they had become.

Of course, not wanting to support or acknowledge Jesus in the least, because they hated Him, they choose to attribute His power to Satan, They chose to answer this way because they refused to accept Jesus as their Messiah because He didn’t fit their idea of who Messiah should be or say. It is noteworthy to look at a very telling passage to observe their heart attitude after Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. – See John 11:45-53, 57. ④

What they should have realized is what Jesus points out in Matt. 12:28.

This is their verdict after hearing of the 1st “sign of Jonah” promised by Jesus in Matt. 12:38-42 – Jesus’ own resurrection is the 2nd “sign of Jonah”. They had to respond to the people again after Lazarus’ resurrection, because the people looked to them for guidance. Of course, they chose wrongly again.

Here is Fruchtenbaum’s take on it;

“The resurrection of Lazarus, recorded in John 11:1-44, is the presentation of the first sign of Jonah. The Messiah had raised others from the dead, yet all the other resurrections are covered in just a few verses. But here, John the apostle uses 44 verses to give great detail about the resurrection of Lazarus. Why? This is the sign of Jonah that Yeshua had promised. In verse 42, Jesus makes it clear for whom Lazarus was raised, namely, the Jewish multitudes. *“And I knew that you heard me always; but because of the multitude that stands around I said it, that they may believe that You did send me.”*

The response of the Jews follows in vv. 45-46; *“Many therefore of the Jews, who came to Mary and beheld that which He did, believed on Him. But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done.”*

Some of the Jews responded correctly to this first sign of Jonah and believed that Jeshua was who He claimed to be. But others still wanted some kind of word or judgment from their leaders, and so they reported to the Pharisees what Jesus had done. Since this was the sign the Messiah had promised them, they must respond in some way or another.

The Sanhedrin's verdict'

"The chief priests therefore and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What do we do? For this man does many signs. If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him; and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation. But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor do yet take into account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not...so from that day forth they took counsel that they might put Him to death."...

The rejection of the messiahship of Jesus was now complete. Going beyond the rejection of His messiahship, they now condemned Him to death."⁵

This talk about the "sign of Jonah" comes into Matthew 12 @ vv. 38-42, and shows the complete arrogance of the Pharisees, *"Teacher, we wish a sign from you."* !

"The Pharisees were stunned by Jesus' pronouncement of judgment. They tried to retake the offensive by demanding a sign (v. 38), as though the Messiah had done nothing thus far to substantiate His messiahship! But now there was a change of policy regarding His signs (v. 39); from now on, there would be no more signs for the nation, except one. While the Messiah would continue (after Matthew 12) to perform miracles, the purpose of the miracles had changed. No longer would they be performed for the purpose of authenticating His person and message in order to get the nation to come to a decision. That decision had already been made. Rather, His miracles would be for the purpose of training the Twelve for the new kind of ministry they would need to conduct as the result of His rejection. The apostles performed this ministry in the book of Acts."⁶

5

Also note their rejection of the sign of Jonah

"A few days after Jesus spoke these words of judgment, the second sign of Jonah was given; the resurrection of the Messiah. Israel again followed their leaders in rejecting this second sign of Jonah, as Luke records in Acts 1-7. The stoning of Steven by the Sanhedrin in Acts 7 marked the official and final rejection of the second sign of Jonah. That is why not until Acts 8 does the gospel go out to the non-Jewish world."⁷ See Paul's points in Acts 18:6; 22:20-21; 28:25-29.

As you can tell, this is not a full-fledged exegesis of Matthew 12, but we must look at MT. 12:30-32. This is an important passage for a number of reasons:

1.) They have blasphemed the Holy Spirit. Jesus' power was from the Holy Spirit, so they are not insulting Jesus (although they are rejecting Him) but the Holy Spirit.
2.) This sin will not be forgiven them – note v. 32.

⁵ IBID, p. 209-210

⁶ IBID, p. 206-207

⁷ IBID, p. 212-213

Fruchtenbaum adds this:

“According to Matt. 12:31, that generation had committed the unpardonable sin: blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. This is the only context in which the unpardonable sin is found, and it must be interpreted accordingly. The unpardonable sin is not an individual sin, but a national sin. It was committed by that generation of Israel in Jesus’ day and cannot be applied to subsequent Jewish generations. The content of the unpardonable sin was the national rejection of the messiahship of Yeshua, based on the grounds that He was demon-possessed, while He was physically present. This sin was unpardonable, and judgment was set. The judgment came forty years later in AD 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and the worldwide dispersion of the Jewish people. This does not mean that individual members of that generation could not be saved, for many were. It did mean, however, that henceforth nothing could avert the coming destruction of Jerusalem...

The committal of this unpardonable sin by that generation had two ramifications for that generation. The first is that the offer of the kingdom to that generation was rescinded; instead, it will be reoffered to a later Jewish generation [Matt. 21:41-43] that will accept it; the Jewish generation of the Great Tribulation introduced in Matthew 24-25. The second is that divine judgment fell upon that generation, the physical judgment of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70.”⁸

The massive importance of this rejection and sin of the Pharisees, who represented Israel, is observed in at least 5 ways it changes Jesus’ ministry conduct after Matthew 12;

- 1.) The purpose of His miracles changed. They were no longer done as signs for Israel to recognize their Messiah. Now, they were used to train the apostles for their ministry. (MT 16:1-4)
- 2.) A change of audience . Now miracles were done in response to individuals who had faith in Him. (cf. MT. 17:9-13; 17:14-21)
- 3.) A change in the message proclaimed. Until Matthew 12, they proclaimed Jesus as Messiah. In Matt. 16:20, Jesus ordered them not to tell anyone He was the Messiah. They were to follow this policy of silence until it was rescinded in the Great Commission (MT 28:18-20).
- 4.) A change in His teaching method, which brings us to consider where we are heading – to Matthew 13 and 8 Kingdom Parables.
- 5.) Jesus begins to earnestly prophesy of His impending crucifixion and resurrection. (Matt. 16:21; 17:9-13,22-23)

Bringing Matthew 13 into play;

“In Matthew 13, Jesus began teaching with a new method, the parabolic method, the purpose of which was to hide the truth from the masses. The very act of teaching in parables was a sign of judgment against Israel. And the first series of parables Jesus spoke introduced the mystery kingdom, the stage of God’s kingdom program that was inaugurated as a result of the rejection of the messiahship of Jesus and the rescinding of the offer of the messianic kingdom.

⁸ IBID, p. 205-206

In summary, to clearly comprehend what is happening in Matthew 13, one must understand the relationship between Matthew 12 and 13. Matthew 12 records the national rejection of the messiahship of Jesus. Jesus was officially rejected by the leadership of Israel. By so doing, they were guilty of the unpardonable sin. From that point on they were condemned to the judgment that fell in AD 70, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. In Matthew 13, Jesus taught a series of parables. These parables were spoken on the very same day of the occurrence of the rejection by the nation of Jesus' messiahship (Matt. 13:1-3). On that same day the parabolic method of teaching began as a result of the rejection of the messiahship of Jesus. (cf. Matt. 13:10-18)."⁹

Before we move on to teaching from the Kingdom Parables themselves, I want to point out one more time as we consider the length (in reference to time) of the gap between Jesus' ascension and His second coming, now almost 2,000 years and counting, that the judgment that God laid upon Israel for their rejection of Jesus as their King and Messiah is still ongoing. Just look at history and the news! But also consider there is an unseen element behind it too, and Fruchtenbaum fill us in:

"Satan knows that once the second coming occurs, his career is over, but he also knows there will be no second coming apart from the Jewish request for it to happen. So, if he can succeed in destroying the Jews once and for all, before they have a chance to plead for the Messiah to return, then there will be no second coming, and Satan's career will be safe forever."

"This study helps explain why Satan has used one name more than any other name to persecute Jews. Since the fourth century, more than 90% of all persecutions against the Jews have been done in the name of Christ. Satan knows the one name they need to call upon for national salvation and the second coming, so he mapped out a strategy to make that name odious in the Jewish community, and indeed it has become odious. The vast majority of Jewish reaction to Jesus today is not based upon a knowledge of the Yeshua of the NT, but is based upon the Jesus of Jewish and church history which is not the biblical Jesus at all. Because of such massive persecution in that one name, Jewish reaction toward a Jew who believes in Jesus is much more hostile than to the Jew who accepts Buddhism or even atheism."¹⁰

7

The underlined partial sentence above is also an important aspect of the second coming. The Bible is clear that a big part of what becomes the timing for Christ's return. Note verses such as: Hosea 3:4-5; 5:15; and Zechariah 12:10.

So, all things are working in sync now, working together to bring Israel to the point where they will finally call out to Christ to come and save them. Romans 9-11 will present that to us very clearly and many other passages we will examine throughout our 6 months will enlighten us to see not only God's judgment but also His grace.

⁹ IBID, p. 214

¹⁰ IBID, p. 219-220

Matthew 13:10-17

The disciples' question comes as Jesus has presented the actual Parable of the Sower to "*great crowds*" gathered while Jesus taught from a boat – the water is probably the Sea of Galilee (13:1-9). Jesus' main reply is in Matt. 13:11-17, then He tells the disciples the background detail so they can understand it. We will concentrate here only on vv. 10-17. (par in Mark 4:10-12)

The wording of v. 10 is interesting because, although the disciples were there when He taught, they must have felt the parables weren't addressed to them, Note: "Why do you speak to **them** in parables?" Not "us." Notice also Mark 4:33-34. In fact, the last 4 of these Kingdom parables appear to have been taught to the disciples after the crowds had been dismissed – cf. MT 13:35-53. (esp. v. 36) – so, while the crowds were receiving parables, the disciples were getting exposition.

We may be surprised to hear Jesus' response to His disciples – vv. 11-13 firstly. Jesus' reply says He used parables to save some, but also to hide truth from others! Keep in mind what happened in Matthew 12 as the Jewish leaders attributed Jesus' obviously Divine miracle power to Satan. This answer from Jesus tells us that this type of teaching reveals a judgment on the nation from God. Verse 12 brings this more to light. Those who have had an "ear to hear," or whom God has chosen and saved, will receive more blessing, while those who rejected the Messiah and support those who rejected Him as their leaders, will have blessings removed. Thus, their "blindness" is judicial. Since the nation had refused to accept the offered Kingdom by rejecting the King, they are instead given information they can't understand without divine direction. ⑧

Jesus now confirms what He is doing by citing Isaiah 6:9-10 in Matt. 13:14-15. If we go to Isaiah 6 to see the context of the original passage being cited by Jesus, which comes on the heels of Isaiah's famous view of The Lord High & Lifted up (Isaiah 6:1-7), and Isaiah's "*Here am I send me,*" but by gleaning the initial context of this scene, we go to chapter 1:1-20 to see why God would tell Isaiah to use this tactic. It is into this mindset that the Lord sends Isaiah as an "evangelist." He is to bring a judicial message to a rebellious people. Well, the same thing is happening in Matthew 13. Jesus had virtually exhausted Himself in healing, travelling, speaking to huge crowds, performing miracles, and proving to the unbiased that He was their Messiah, yet they had rejected Him time and time again, and finally their leaders sadly seal the nation's fate in Matthew 12. Israel had again ended up on the wrong side of God.

Notice in Matthew 13:14-15 the extent of the judgment:

- They will "hear, but never understand."
- They will "see, but not perceive"
- Because their hearts have grown dull, their ears can barely hear
- They have closed their eyes (note this is wilful on their part) so they wouldn't see with their eyes or hear with their ears, and understand with

their heart and turn (repent) and I (God) would heal them. In other words, they will not be healed by God.

In vv. 16-17, Jesus sums it up; His disciples are not in line to receive this judgment, and they would be surprised to hear who longed to see and hear the things they have seen and heard – these were prophets and the righteous – cf. I Peter 1:10-12.

But it must also be considered that even in the case where someone had heard, seen and understood, like the disciples who were surely among them, they needed some parables explained to them (i.e., The Sower and the Wheat and Tares). Mark 4:34 indicates that Jesus had explained all of the parables to them; in fact, at the end of the series, in Matt. 13:51 – note Jesus' words, and their reply in v. 52.

The point is, for the parables to be of any beneficial purpose, even for the saved, they must be divinely interpreted. Note I Cor. 2:14 and also note vv. 15-16. Alva McLain cautions here:

“The point to be emphasized in all this is that these parables of the Kingdom, even for the saved, must be divinely interpreted in order to serve any beneficial purpose. In no area of God's Word is there greater need for caution on the part of the interpreters than in the parables, and especially in those concerned with the “mysteries of the Kingdom.””¹¹

John Walvoort points out that one of the key mysteries that is often overlooked in interpreting these parables, is the fact that the church is not predicted in the OT, even though many say that these parables are directed at the church; (9)

“The uniform use of the word ‘mystery’ in the NT, however, is that it refers to truth which was “not made known unto the sons of men” in the OT. A normative instance is found in Colossians 1:26 where the statement is made, “Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations, but now is made manifest to His saints.” In Ephesians 3:5, the same meaning is intended. The contrast is not between degrees of revelation, but between that which was not revealed in the OT but is now revealed unto the apostles and prophets of the NT. That this absolute character of contrast between what is hidden and what is revealed is intended is brought out plainly in verse 6 where the contents of the mystery is said to be the revelation “that the Gentiles will be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel.” In the OT, Gentiles and Jews are distinguished beginning in Genesis 12 and continuing until the Day of Pentecost. Jews and Gentiles are never equated in the OT, as the Jews are the chosen people in contrast to the Gentiles who are outside of the covenant.”¹²

It's important to realize that this particular series of parables is not just about the Kingdom of heaven (or of God), but specifically, about the “mysteries of the Kingdom” – cf. MT 13:11; MK 4:11; LK 10). In these 3 parallel passages (or parts), we have the first NT use of the Greek word, “*musterion*” (mystery). It's a word which refers to something which is hidden and secret, and can only be known

¹¹ Alva McLain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, BMH Books, 1960, 1980; p. 324

¹² John F. Walvoort, *The Nations, Israel & the Church*, Zondervan, 1967, p.46 (in “The Church” section)

to those who are specially initiated or taught. It means something hitherto unrevealed. It does not mean ‘incomprehensible.’ It can only be discerned once it is revealed in Scripture.

Clarence Johnson points out;

“Many interpretations of “the Kingdom of Heaven” in Matthew 13 redefine or rename it “mystery Kingdom” or “mystery form of the Kingdom.” Needless to say, Jesus did not announce a new or corrected meaning for the Kingdom of heaven He and His disciples proclaimed. Nor did He change His offer to a different Kingdom in a “mystery form.” To the Jew, there were two ages; the age of waiting for the Messiah and the Messianic Age. The OT did not contain prophetic truth regarding a time [gap] between the advent of the Suffering Servant and His second advent as conquering King.

The prophets saw an advent at which time redemption and judgment would come. Israel’s enemies would be defeated, spiritual hearts would be changed, and the Messiah would rule and reign from Jerusalem. The newly disclosed mysteries contain additional truth about the timetable of the Kingdom prophesied for the Jews. The parables of the Kingdom of heaven reveal a period of postponement, beginning with the rejection of the Messiah and concluding with the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom when Christ returns to rule in glory and power.¹³

So we need to determine what this mystery is that’s associated with the kingdom. We will see this develop as we move more into all the parables, but the most important thing which will rise to the top will ultimately be an answer to the disciples’ question in Acts 1:6. The mystery is the interregnum (gap or inter-advent period) which will follow the arrival and rejection of the King (Messiah) until His 2nd coming. It is implied here but not revealed in NT Scripture and also not revealed in the OT prophecies as a gap in time. It could not be known until Israel’s rejection of her King had become an historical certainty. Now that this has been made a completed event, and will be revealed in NT Scripture, beginning somewhat cryptically with Matt. 13. However, nowhere in the Bible is the length of the gap revealed – even Jesus states Himself in Matt. 24:36 that only the Father knows the timing – and this is the gap of time Jesus refers to (Acts 1:7; LK 8:35; MK 13:32).

⑩

After this gap or interregnum has passed, then the Kingdom will finally come, in full accord with the OT prophecies. Even the length of the Millennial Kingdom itself is only ever stated in Revelation 20:1-10 (6 times). No OT prophet saw the length of the Messiah’s Kingdom, though it was to be eternal as it transitioned into the eternal state.

One of the Kingdom Parables we will look at (lesson 4) is the Parable of the Wheat and Tares. It firmly gives us a clue that all these Kingdom Parables point to a fulfillment at the end of the age. (13:39) – read vv. 38-43 (and cf. Rev. 14:15-20).

¹³ Clarence Johnson, in Thy Kingdom Come, Jim Showers and Chris Katulka (eds); FOI, 2019, pg. 92

Summary

When the Kingdom Parables are understood harmoniously together (along with a number of other Kingdom Parables in other passages) a comprehensive picture of this mystery (NASB) or secret (ESV) age, per Matt. 13:11 begins to emerge. The “mystery” age is that (now) lengthy gap in time between Christ’s 2 advents. By teaching in parables Jesus could simultaneously reveal and conceal, which we’ve already touched on. He wanted to reveal truth to the remnant, those who would have “ears to hear” but conceal it from those who had rejected Him. The principle is stated in Matt. 13:12. This believing remnant which would become the Church, would be (and is) the instrument of His redemptive message until the Messiah comes – cf. Eph. 2:19-22.

As we prepare to study each of these parables in Matthew 13, they collectively teach us the whole story of this time period. I will here briefly outline what we should expect these Kingdom Parables to reveal to us and to Jesus’ Elect remnant.

Brief Outlines¹⁴

The Parable of the Sower – Matt. 13:1-9, 18-23 – this parable teaches that the gospel will be preached throughout the course of the “mystery age” with variant responses to this gospel based upon how one’s heart has been prepared to receive it (by God). Responders to the truth will be given more revelation.

The Parable of the Wheat and Tares – Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43 – this parable tells us that it will be difficult to distinguish between the saved and unsaved within professing Christianity throughout this age. The judicial separation will not be made between believer and unbeliever until Christ’s return. These 2 Kingdom Parables come with a recorded explanatory explanation from Christ to His disciples. ⑪

The Parable of the Mustard Seed – Matt. 13:31-32 – Christendom will experience great numerical and geographic expansion from a very small beginning; but the final form will represent an apostate form of truth. (cf. Revelation 3:14-22 – Laodicea)

The Parable of the Leaven – Matt. 13:33 – the leaven working its way through the flour teaches that professing Christendom will experience moral and doctrinal corruption as the “mystery age” progresses. It will be critical in our interpolation to remember that, in Scripture, “leaven” is symbolic of evil, not good.

The Parable of the Treasure Hidden in a Field – Matt. 13:44 – this teaches that Jesus came to purchase Israel, but Israel will remain in unbelief throughout the mystery age and won’t be converted until the conclusion of the age.

¹⁴ These outlines are basically given by Andrew Woods in *The Coming Kingdom*, Grace Gospel Press, 2016, pg. 104-107

The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price – Matt. 13:45-46 – Christ’s death redeems members of the church throughout this age allowing Christ to gain treasure among the Gentiles (trophies of His Grace) – worshippers from every tribe, tongue, tribe and nation.

The Parable of the Dragnet – Matt. 13:47-50 – teaches the co-existence of the righteous and the wicked throughout the age (much like the Wheat and the Tares) only to be separated at the end of the age. (cf. Revelation 14:14-19)

The Parable of the Householder – Matt. 13:51-52 – these Kingdom mysteries must be considered alongside OT Kingdom truth for one to understand the totality of God’s Kingdom agenda.

These are the Matthew 13 Kingdom Parables. Below I have listed other Kingdom Parables and their NT locations. They will be of great value to our study.

Matthew 21:28-32 – The Parable of the Two Sons

Matthew 21:33-46 – The Parable of the Tenants

Matthew 22: 1-14 – The Parable of the Marriage Feast of the King

Matthew 24:32-35 – The Parable of the Budding Fig Tree

Matthew 24:43-51 – The Parable of the Faithful and Unfaithful Servants

Matthew 25:1-13 – The Parable of the 10 Virgins

Matthew 25:14-30 – The Parable of the Talents

Luke – Luke 19:11-27 – The Parable of the Minas

⑫

In sum, when all these parables are considered together, The Lord is revealing the spiritual conditions that will prevail in the world during the interim period when the King is not yet present.

The Amillennial (Opposing) View

Matt Waymeyer starts us off here in our brief review of an opposing viewpoint: “In the debate between premillennialism and amillennialism, the most fundamental disagreement concerns the thousand-year reign of Christ in Revelation 20. Premillennialists believe the thousand years refers to a future reign of Jesus on earth, an intermediate kingdom between His Second Coming and the final consummation. But amillennialists believe it describes the current reign of Christ throughout the present age. For this reason, while premillennialism affirms an earthly kingdom between the present age and the eternal kingdom, amillennialism denies this intermediate kingdom, arguing instead that the present age will be followed immediately by the new heavens and new earth.”¹⁵

The disagreement / debate between Amillennialists and Dispensationalists centers around the time period we live in now ourselves. We live in the era that began when Christ ascended, which will last until He returns the Second time.

¹⁵ Matt Waymeyer, Amillennialism and the Age to Come; Kress, 2016, pg. 1

Amillennialists believe there are only 2 ages, the one we are in now, and the one to come. IOW, the church age, over which Christ reigns from His position at God's right hand on the Father's throne in heaven, which He ascended to in 29 – 32 AD; followed by the eternal state of Revelation 22. For them, there will be no separate 1,000 literal kingdom before the eternal state, because in their view, we are all in that millennial kingdom now, so the 1,000 years must be symbolic, because it has so far lasted almost 2,000 years.

Therefore, as a result of this eschatological interpretation, there will be no reign of Christ on David's throne in Jerusalem, and most other prophetic eschatological factors are symbolized away. In fact, they say that by Jesus sitting on the Father's throne in heaven, this is the fulfillment of this prophecy. But note Rev. 3:21 and the differentiation by Christ between two thrones. There is also no expectation of Israel the nation to reappear in history and to be the primary nation. Some of Israel's people will be saved throughout the age, but there will not be a wholesale salvation nationally (as per Paul in Romans 9-11 – especially Rom. 11:25-27), since the current age is dominated by Gentiles. In fact, for Amillennialists, the church has replaced Israel.¹⁶

To them, Satan is already imprisoned per Revelation 20:1-3, so, it is not a future event. He has “a very long chain,” they'll argue to explain away the many things the NT says he is doing now (see below). They claim his power is limited to 1) deceiving individuals, but not nations (which, ironically, are made up of individuals) (Rev. 20:3b); and 2) preventing the spread of the gospel in the world. Of course, to us, this is ridiculous. It sounds like an argument concocted to safeguard an agenda. ⑬

Notice what Matt Waymeyer lays out for us to reveal Satan's work in the NT / church age;

“The NT makes it abundantly clear that Satan, who is described as “the god of this age” (2 Cor.4:4) and “the ruler of this world” (JN 12:31; cf. JN 14:30; 16:11; I JN 4:4) – is extremely active on earth during the present age. He not only “prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (I Pet. 5:8), but he is also involved in a host of other activities – he tells lies (JN 8:44); he tempts believers to sin (I Cor. 7:5; Eph. 4:27); he disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:13-15); he seeks to deceive the children of God (2 Cor. 11:3; cf. Col. 2:11); he snatches the gospel from believing hearts (MT 13:19; MK 4:15; LK 8:12; cf. I Thess. 3:5; I Tim. 1:20; 4:1-2); he takes advantage of believers (2 Cor. 2:11); he influences people to lie (Acts 5:3); he holds unbelievers under his power (I JN 5:19; Eph. 2:2; Acts 26:18; I JN 3:8-10); he torments the servants of God (2 Cor. 12:7); he thwarts the progress of ministry (I Thess. 2:18; Rev. 2:10); he seeks to destroy the faith of believers ((LK 22:31); he wages war against the church (Eph. 6:11-17), and he traps and deceives unbelievers, holding them captive to do his will (2 Tim 2:26). It is impossible to reconcile this portrayal of Satan's activities in the present age with the view that he is currently sealed in the abyss.”¹⁷

¹⁶ An excellent argument against this position is found in Michael Vlach's excellent book, “Has the Church Replaced Israel?” many other dispensational eschatological books offer good arguments as well.

¹⁷ Waymeyer, IBID, pg. 178

Amillennialists have an alternate argument for almost every aspect of the end times, and for our times. There is no room in their theology for a Rapture, for a literal fulfillment of the Abrahamic or Davidic Covenants, or for a regathered Israel, or the literal 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth. To them although the New Covenant was promised quite specifically to Israel and Judah (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34), the New Covenant blessings are given now to the church in this age, not in a future Millennial Kingdom, because this, what we live in now, is that kingdom. To Amillennialists, Israel is out, disinvited, despite Jeremiah 31:35-37 and Romans 11:25-29!

This is just a basic, thumbnail sketch of how Amillennials interpret things in a spiritual rather way versus the literal interpretation of Dispensationalists.