

- The Parable of the Hidden Treasure appeal to peoples' desire for wealth
- The Parable of the Pearl appeal to peoples' desire for wealth
- The Parable of the Dragnet fishing
- The Parable of the Householder running a household

Each of these parables is a piece of the puzzle – a piece of the picture of the mystery kingdom – the Interregnum. That's what we've seen as we've studied each of these parables so far.

The picture being painted is one that reveals exactly what we see in world history since Christ ascended – in nations, everyday life, in church life, in the church, and in other world religions in the Holy Land, in politics, in crime and punishment, in natural disasters, famines, diseases, superstorms, and on and on. It's the growth of Satanic influence, seeds of weeds being sown, God's authority and sovereignty being challenged, and through it all, God remains sovereign and will continue to build His Church as the clock ticks off the hours, days, weeks, months, years, decades and centuries till Christ returns and the Kingdom finally arrives.

At some point, a time known only to God, history will reach its apex and all the covenants and prophecies of the end times will converge and time will be brought into God's utter control (although it's never for a second been out of His control), the Tribulation will come, and Christ will return to earth to start His Kingdom and rule the world for 1,000 literal years.

Introduction

②

To the disciples, the ones that Jesus is teaching this parable to (and explaining it per Mark 4:34), many of whom were fishermen before they began to follow Christ, this parable would make a lot of sense to them, even before an explanation. It has some similarity with the Parable of the Wheat and Tares (Matt. 13:24-30; 36-43), although where the Parable of the Wheat and Tares showed us how the evil got mixed into the good, the Parable of the Net shows us the end of the matter, the result of their co-existence and the subsequent judgment that is partly depicted in the Parable of the Wheat and Tares, but more fully shown here.

Despite the fact that a lot of salvation and sanctification goes on in the inter-advent period (i.e., the Mystery age), this age must not be confused with the "kingdom." The righteous and wicked will (and do) co-exist throughout the mystery age only to be separated at the end of the age by Christ and His angels. Here, there are no seeds, soil or fruitful plants alongside weeds, but fish – some good (edible) and others bad (inedible). We are not told how they got there, just acknowledgement that they were caught. Could the "Dragnet" be symbolizing life in the world?

The "dragnet" catches all the fish who get caught in it – no distinction being in the net. The distinction takes place as the parable unfolds, as we will see.

Again the Kingdom is like...vv. 47-48

This 'net' that is thrown into the sea is not a small net a fisherman might use to land a fish caught by rod and reel on a hook. The net Jesus is describing – often used on the Sea of Galilee – was about 2 metres in height, and could be up to a 100 metres in length. The top was held up by corks, and the bottom weighed down by stones or similar heavy items. Sometimes it would be fastened at one end on shore as a boat pulled the other end out into the lake (or sea), in a semi-circle, bring the net back to shore. It would then be drawn together so the fish caught inside the semi-circle could be gathered into the boats. It took about 5 or 6 fishermen to do this correctly – some cast the net, some rowed and guided the net and some beat the water to drive the fish into the net.²

Experienced fishermen would try to locate a school of fish before setting up the net. Once the net was set in place, the men pulled in all the fish in the net – cf. Luke 5:1-11 & John 21:1-11.

The catch was always mixed – using a large net was not a method to catch specific fish. Both edible and inedible fish were often caught together. Some were unclean according to Jewish dietary laws (those without scales or fins could not be eaten – see Lev. 11:10-12). Only marketable fish were stored in suitable containers. Until the fish were sorted, no one knew what the exact yield was.³ The other fish were discarded. The fact that good and bad fish were caught together does not reflect on the skill of the fishermen. Their skill played a part in sorting the fish. The sorting at the end of the age (of men) will be done by Christ and His angels. This is described in vv. 47-48. So the question is why these verses are being used to describe the kingdom of heaven? And we still need to deal with vv. 49-50 as well. ③

James Montgomery Boice points out helpfully that there are real similarities between this parable and the Parable of the Wheat and Tares;
“When we come to...this parable, we find more repetition. Jesus introduces a new imagery (fishing), but the parable makes essentially the same points as parable 2. The earlier parable told of wheat and tares growing up together until the time of the harvest. Then there is a gathering in of both followed by a separation. The wheat is gathered into the owner's barns; the tares are burned. In this, the last of the parables [it is not, there is one more, although many do not see the next one as a parable], there is also a gathering in of many kinds of fish followed by a separation of the good fish from the bad. In both parables, Jesus describes a separation of the wicked from the righteous . We see the work of the angels. We even have a repetition of key phrases from Christ's explanation. Of the second parable: “the end of the age” (vv. 40,49), and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (vv. 42,50).

But now we have a problem. What does the seventh parable teach that has not been taught by the second.? That is, why (in view of the earlier parable) is this one included? It is true, as we have indicated, that the others also involve repetition. But each, nevertheless, adds

² Simon Kistemaker, *The Parables of Jesus*, Baker, 1980, pg. 59

³ *Ibid*, pg. 60

something new. The first two speak of sowing, but the first focuses on the kind of soil into which the seed falls, whereas the second focuses on the devil's work in sowing harmful seed. Similarly, the devil is described as active in parables two, three and four, but in each case, he is doing something different. Is there anything new in this last parable? Is there anything we would lose if it were not included?"⁴

Boice (and others) point out, that as we make comparisons, we begin to see not only what is repeated, but also what is left out. In the Parable of the Net, there is no explanation of how the fish got into the water in the first place, and no emphasis on their growth or lack of it. There are no human workers, or any devil. All we have is the catch with the net, and the separation of the good from the bad fish – then the suffering of those which are discarded. Therefore the new element is the warning to the wicked. Their fate has already been described, but was mixed with other elements. Here, it stands out because it is conspicuously alone. In other words, judgment is coming and the fate of the ungodly will be horrible.⁵ Just as in the Parable of the Wheat and Tares, the fish grow and live together, and at the end, they are judged.

Facing this judgment requires a separation; and there are 3 important aspects of it;

- 1) It's absolute – the time for mixtures will be over when God judges. No one will be partially righteous and partially wicked. Note Acts 17:30-31
- 2) It is previously determined – the separation was determined by God B4TFOTW – cf. John 17:6; 10:26, etc.
- 3) It's permanent – on the day of judgment, the opportunity to repent will be gone eternally – cf. Matt. 25:34 vs v. 46 Note – not final judgment / the end of the age.⁶

④

This parable has been notoriously difficult to interpret. Some have seen it as representing the widespread acceptance of the Gospel by the Jewish remnant, including the 144,000 Jewish “evangelists” in Revelation 7. But if that's the case, what do the angels mentioned in v. 49 have to do with it? Others see it as the judgment of the sheep and goats in Mathew 25 (see above) but it is not that.

A.W. Pink gives us helpful direction here. He points out that there are only 4 elements in this parable.

- 1) the net
- 2) the sea
- 3) the fishermen
- 4) the fish enclosed in the net⁷

Here is how Pink sorts these elements out:

- 1) The net is the symbol of the gospel

⁴ James Montgomery Boice, *The Parables of Jesus*, Moody Press, 1983, pp. 38-39

⁵ IBID pp 39-40

⁶ IBID. Pg. 40-41

⁷ A.W. Pink, *The Prophetic Parables of Matthew 13*, pg. 78

- 2) The sea stands for the nations as it does in many places (Matt. 13; Rev. 17:5) This is important because it speaks of this dispensation / era in which Israel is being set aside and Gentiles become the primary receivers of the gospel offer
- 3) The fishermen, those who cast the net into the sea are the evangelists, preachers and missionaries (cf. Matt. 4:19). They are not even mentioned by name in the parable – cf. v. 48, “*men.*” In v. 47 we are not told who specifically cast the net into the sea.
- 4) The fish, both good and bad – are people. Some who’ve come to Christ, some who have not. It doesn’t tell us why, just lays out the bare fact that they are either good or bad. (i.e., saved or unsaved)

The goal of the fishermen was to net good fish. It is God alone who supplies the good fish – ultimately – they represent His elect, chosen before time began. But the gospel is to go out to all, to plant seeds, to set up a net – God (cf. 1 Cor. 3:1-9) will see to the soil, the rain, watering the seed, and protecting His ‘fish’ as they grow to maturity. We pray that God will use us to find His chosen ones to hear and accept the gospel message. They are the ‘good’ fish.

As in the other Kingdom parables, the fish, prior to being caught in the net are swimming in the sea (or lake) together is implied, co-existing but what happens then, as this era ends, and they are netted together – note Revelation 14:14-20 vv. 14-16 , reaping the harvest of the sheep; vv. 17-20 reaping the harvest of the wicked and damned.

⑤

So, like in the Parable of the Pearl, we have the church age in sight here – in fact, in all of these kingdom parables, the interregnum fills the void until Christ returns and sets up the kingdom, and the church in this time period is God’s primary tool to bring the gospel to the world.

Verses 49-50

There is an interesting order of things in these verses and comparing this to v. 48. In v. 49, we are told “*at the end of the age, the angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous.*” In the parable, the work is done by the fishermen, but in reality, it will be done by angels. And also, note that in v. 48, the good was separated from the evil – the reverse order.

In the Parable of the Wheat and Tares, the weeds (evil) are gathered first, then bound and burned, but here the fishermen throw away the bad fish, while the angels throw them into the fiery furnace. IOW – hell / the day of judgment.

Verse 50 adds a common bromide when the NT talks about hell – cf. Matt. 13:42; 8:12; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; and Luke 13:28

Here ends, according to many expositors, the full extent of the Matthew 13 Kingdom parables. However, many others see an 8th parable in vv. 51-52, and I agree. So we will take a look at that next lesson. Here is what Walvoort says;

“The concluding parable, that of the dragnet, is presented in Matthew 13:47-50...Here again is dramatic proof that the present age is quite different from the millennium for the net gathers of every kind, both good and bad fish. The kingdom of heaven in this passage stands in contrast to the kingdom of God in the other Gospels where the kingdom of God seems to be restricted to those who are born again. Here the kingdom of heaven includes the bad fish in the net as well as the good, and the Scriptures say specifically that the net “gathered of every kind” (Matt. 13:47).

The Scriptures make clear that this judgment will occur at the second coming of Christ “at the end of the world” or better translated, “at the end of the age.” Just as the good and bad fish are separated, so here in Matthew 13:49,50 the angel is seen putting the good into vessels, but casting the bad away, symbolic of the future judgment at the second coming of Christ when the righteous will go into the millennial kingdom and the wicked will be cast into the furnace of fire (Matt. 25:41). The time when this will occur is at the end of the Tribulation and at the beginning of the millennial kingdom when the sphere of profession is brought to a close in its present form.

As in the parable of the wheat and tares, there is emphasis here on the dual line of development within the sphere of profession, namely, those that are true believers symbolized by the wheat and the good fish as contrasted to those who are merely professing believers who, though intermingled with the true believers now, will be separated from them at the end of the age. In contrast to the millennium when judgments will be inflicted immediately upon those who rebel against Christ, this is descriptive of the present age when God is withholding judgment and reserving it for the consummation.”⁸

This series began with only the Matthew 13 kingdom parables in focus, but as I studied, I realized that other parables, found in Luke and later in Matthew (with parallels in Mark) also provide us with a kingdom perspective worth assessing. Hence, I’ve inserted Luke 19:11-27 – The Parable of the Minas, (in lesson 6), and DV, we will also look at Matthew 21:33-46 - The Parable of the Tenants; and Matthew 22:1-14; The Parable of the Wedding Feast. There may be one or two more that fit our theme as well, DV and if time allows. In 2026, if I continue to teach, I may pick a new topic or short book. ⑥

Kingdom Question Appendix

Here is a passage I have referred to often throughout these lessons to show Paul’s take on the Millennial Kingdom which effectively ends the Interregnum and finally restores the promised Kingdom to whatever generation of Israel it arrives in (cf. Matt. 21:43).

I Corinthians 15:24-28

In my estimation, this passage is an often overlooked NT evidence of an actual Millennial Kingdom over which Christ will reign for a certain period of time (Paul, like all NT and OT prophets except John do not give us a length of time for the

⁸ John F. Walvoort; The Nations, Israel and the Church; Zondervan Academic; pg, 30-31

kingdom). John alone tells us the span of time for the Kingdom will be 1,000 years. The Kingdom will end and transition into the eternal kingdom where God will be *“all in all.”*

So, what Paul writes here fits well with Revelation 20 and other prophecies of the Millennial Kingdom.

It is not my intention to do an in depth exegesis of this passage here, but I just want to point out a few important aspects of it to show how it confirms that there will be a Millennial-Messianic kingdom which correlates with the other prophecies.

Here, I will cite James Hamilton Jr. as he helps us understand the text better; “Synthesizing what Paul says in I Cor. 15:20-28 with other NT teaching is one of the challenges of interpreting this passage. For this reason, and to explore what Paul is saying about the end and the resurrections that take place, I will align Paul’s comments with what John says about resurrections in Revelation 20.

Having what John calls “the first resurrection” (Rev. 20:5-6), that of believers, in I Cor. 15:23, Paul moves to what happens after that in I Cor. 15:24-25: “Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.” Again, there is great harmony between what Paul says here and what John writes in Revelation 19-20. Paul says in I Cor. 15:25 that Christ must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet,” and this would match Christ’s coming in conquest in Revelation 19 and setting up his 1,000 year kingdom in Revelation 20:1-6, at the end of which he puts down Satan’s final rebellion by defeating Gog and Magog in 20:7-10, “then comes the end,” Paul writes in I Cor. 15:24, “when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.”

What happens after Christ has reigned until all his enemies are under his feet (I Cor. 15:25)? Paul seems to indicate that the resurrection of all those not raised at the coming of Christ – all those who do not belong to Christ (cf. 15:23) – comes next. This would appear to be the upshot of I Cor. 15:26, “The last enemy to be destroyed is death.” This matches John’s description in Rev. 10:11-15 where “Death and Hades were thrown into the Lake of Fire (20:14). To this point in I Cor. 15:23-26, Paul has clearly been concerned with the events of the end, and his depiction of those events line up very well with what John depicts in Rev. 20:1-15. This is the wider context in which I Cor. 15:27-28 must be understood.”⁹

So, according to James Hamilton, this text in I Corinthians 15 matches Revelation 20 re: the two resurrections that tend to cause a lot of controversy for some people. But not only does it provide some Pauline corroboration of Revelation 20, it also lines up with many OT prophecies of the end times.

For example, in v. 25, Paul says, *“For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.”* This is undoubtedly based on Paul’s understanding of

⁹ James Hamilton Jr., cited in “One God in Three Persons,” Bruce Ware and John Starke, Editors, Crossway, 2015, Pg. 99

Psalm 110: 1. In fact, let's read all of Psalm 110. It is definitely about the Messianic Kingdom.

Then, in v. 27, there is a definite allusion to another Messianic Psalm. Psalm 8:6, which says, "*You have given him [man] dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet.*" So everything for that time period of the Millennial Kingdom will be placed in subjection to God's Son, Jesus Christ. And since everything will be in subjection to Him, He will reign on David's throne from Jerusalem – and when Satan has been released (by God) from where he has been imprisoned for he 1,000 years, and is defeated by Christ finally and completely and almost immediately, - cf. Rev. 20:1-3,7-10, then the final enemy , death (I Cor. 15:26) is conquered.

At that point, I Cor. 15:24 & 27-28 can be conjoined. The One over whom Jesus will not reign in the Millennial Kingdom is God the Father, the One who has given Him His kingship (Ps. 110:1; 8:6; etc.). This kingship is over the whole earth, yet God the Father, as depicted in Revelation 4 is on the throne in heaven, before the Tribulation and the enthronement of Christ in His Kingdom which follows the Tribulation, and He (the Father) surely continues to universally reign from heaven during Christ's earthly reign.

Then, Paul fills in a gap in the flow of Revelation 20,21,22 by telling us about the transition back to the supremacy of the Father when v. 28 tells us "*that God may be all in all.*" Since this concerns the Trinity, some may wonder, "but aren't all 3 Persons God?" Kevin Giles, cited by James Hamilton, offers some clarity for us here; ⑧

"What Paul is teaching is that at the resurrection God the Father freely makes God the Son ruler over all, and at the end, God the Son freely gives back this rule to God the Father. Rather than speaking of fixed roles or of an eschatological subordination of the Son, or of the demise of the Trinity, this text indicates a changing of roles in different epochs by two omnipotent divine persons."¹⁰

The 3 are indivisibly God, but here in I Corinthians 15, Paul is distinguishing between Father and Son, In what they do, in their function, Christ is functionally subordinate to the Father, but in the Millennial Kingdom, Christ has been granted the authority to rule and reign on earth for the 1,000 years in order to accomplish the purposes that the Godhead (cf. Eph. 1:11) has decreed. He would accomplish. In Revelation 20:4, Christ reigns and the Father is not mentioned, but by Rev. 22:3 – Father and Son co-reign in the new heaven and new earth. Paul tells us how this return to that reality takes place in I Cor. 15:27-28.

Thomas Schreiner comments briefly about this;

"Of course, the victory over sin and death can be accomplished only by One who is fully God and fully man (I Cor. 15:1-11), but the subjection of the Son in I Cor. 15:27-28 should not be read as an ontological subjection but as a functional subordination. [i.e., Jesus is still God

¹⁰ IBID, pg. 103

when He reigns on earth]. As the Davidic King and Messiah, He hands over the Kingdom to God and submits Himself to Him. Still, the reality is complex. By virtue of His equality with God, He also reigns forever with the Father (Rev. 11:15-19).”¹¹

Bruce Ware weighs in;

“[in I Cor. 15:27-28] We see here again the same basic themes we’ve observed in Ephesians 1 and Philippians 2. By the Son’s victorious death and resurrection, he is given a position he did not have before. Following the resurrection and ascension of the Son, God (the Father) puts all things in creation in subjection under the feet of this triumphant Son. But because the Father does the subjecting, he is not himself one of those made subject to the Son. No, the Father is subject to no one and nothing. But the Son, now under only the Father, is given the position of supreme authority over all, even as he willingly and gladly subjects himself to the Father, “that God (the Father) might be all in all.”¹²

And J. Sidlow Baxter makes the following comment;

“So it is with the “kingdom of heaven” and the “kingdom of God.” The kingdom is one; not two. With that in mind, look again now at that passage in I Corinthians 15 (vv. 24-28). Observe carefully what it does not say, and what it actually says.

It does not say that the millennial kingdom becomes merged with the “kingdom of God.” What it does say is, that the millennial kingdom shall at last be delivered up by Christ to “the Father” (v. 24). In that delivering up of the great millennial kingdom by Christ to the Father, we see the voluntary subjection of this whole world to God, through Christ the representative of the new humanity. That is the transcendent consummation. The kingdom is not delivered to a greater “king,” but to “the Father”; not that the Father might only reign, but that God [the Triune Father, Son and Holy Spirit, together] may be all in all.” The one great kingdom of Christ and the Father is the means to this grandest of all consummations. God, not only as all-sovereign King, but something even more profoundly glorious and mysteriously wonderful – “God, all in all.”¹³

9

And one last quote, this time by Donald MacLeod regarding v. 28;

“The monarchy of Father and Son is one monarchy, and however necessary it became to stress that the Father was not the Son, nor the Son the Father, it became equally necessary to insist that they were not two separate kings. In the last analysis, the resolution of the problems implicit in I Corinthians 15:24ff. could only be found along the lines suggested by John 10:30; “I and the Father are one.”

What of the clause, “so that God may be all in all”? Calvin answers as follows: “Then God will be governing heaven and earth by Himself, without any intermediary, and then in that way he will be all.” It is difficult to square this with other biblical passages which clearly indicate the supremacy of Christ over the world to come. The most important of these is Hebrews 2:5ff., which states categorically that the world (Gr. *Oikoumenen*) to come is subject to the enthroned Saviour. The writer bases his assertion on the role assigned to the Son of Man in

¹¹ Thomas Schreiner, in “Scripture and the People of God”, John DelHousaye, John J. Hughes, Jeff T. Purswell, Editors, Crossway, 2018, Pg. 214

¹² Bruce Ware, The Man Christ Jesus, Crossway, 2013, pg. 141

¹³ J. Sidlow Baxter, The Strategic Grasp of the Bible, Marshall, Morgan and Scott, `068; pg. 263

Psalm 8, especially v. 6; “You have made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet.” The sentiments of the psalmist are themselves rooted in Genesis 1:28, which directs Adam to exercise dominion over the whole creation. This clearly indicates that the dominion of God over the primal creation was not immediate. It was exercised first through the first Adam. In the same way, the sovereignty of God over the new creation will be exercised through Jesus, the Last Adam, and the Son of Man, already clothed with glory and honour.”¹⁴

Among other important things, this passage tells us by inference and exegesis that there really will be a future Millennial Kingdom, the Father is supremely ruling in heaven as Jesus acts as His theocratic ruler on earth - the 2nd Adam / the Perfect King, and that Revelation 20,21, and 22 are absolutely true prophecies. The delayed Kingdom is coming!

¹⁴ Donald MacLeod, *The Person of Christ*; IVP; 1998, pg. 89