

The Prophetic Parables of Matthew 13

Summary Lesson – Lesson 13

June 8, 2025

Introduction

We have come to the end of our 12 month journey in Matthew 13, 21, 22; Luke 19 and a number of other texts. It's my hope and prayer that we all now understand the Theocratic Kingdom better than we did before, and that we have more knowledge of God's Kingdom overall along with His plan for the world He created and the history He designed for it, as well as understanding our place in this inter-advent era we've been assessing.

Matt Waymeyer makes a lot of sense as he investigates Dispensational vs Amillennial viewpoints regarding eschatology;

"To formulate a thoroughly biblical eschatology, one must allow every passage of Scripture to make its own contribution to the doctrine of last things, including the millennium. This means starting in the OT and tracing the prophecies of the coming Kingdom from Genesis to Revelation, letting each new biblical passage build upon what was previously revealed. To honor the unity of Scripture, one must recognize that later revelation often supplements and clarifies earlier revelation by providing broader context or additional detail, but it never reinterprets or changes the meaning of those previous passages in the process. In the end, the biblical theologian must harmonize his exegesis of all the relevant passages, being careful not to allow any one of them to ⁽¹⁾ silence or distort the contribution of another. This is the only way to construct an eschatology that synthesizes the entirety of Scripture's teaching on the age to come."¹

In practical terms, this in-house debate (which has become heated at times), can be described in a single question: "Which is more exegetically feasible – the Amillennial interpretation of Revelation 20 or the premillennial insistence of a gap between key eschatological events described in the NT?"²

While we have acknowledged and studied Revelation 20:1-10 (and vv. 11-15 somewhat less) as a part of our overall investigation with a primary focus on the Matthew 13 Kingdom parables, this debate, as I've tried to show, is centered around the very end point of the interregnum, which is Christ's return or Second Advent, and His setting up of the long-delayed Kingdom of God as the long-promised One who alone has the right to rule the world from David's throne in a revitalized, and geographically lifted up Jerusalem Who finally reigns as King! Waymeyer comments again

"The present age will continue until the Second Coming of Christ, which will usher in the age to come. In the initial phase of this coming age, the Lord Jesus will reign on the earth until he has put all His enemies under His feet. And then, after the final enemy is abolished by Christ, He will

¹ Matt Waymeyer, Amillennialism and the Age to Come; Kress Biblical Resources, 2016, pg. 301

² IBID, pg. 302

hand the Kingdom over to the Father and the eternal state will begin so that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:23-28).”³

Although I've come across some strong A-mil arguments regarding their opposing position on the end times, and specifically Revelation 20's role in the end times, perhaps Sam Storms has mustered the best defence of their position; although I'm still not convinced by his arguments.

For example here he attacks the Premillennial view:

“Often the premillennial interpretation of Revelation 20 has become so deeply imbedded in the minds of its advocates that it borders on unconscious assumption.”...[p. 142]

“My point, then, is that sound hermeneutical procedure would appear to demand that we interpret the singular and obscure in the light of the plural and explicit. To make the rest of the NT (not to mention the OT) bend to the standard of one text in the most controversial, symbolic, and by scholarly consensus most difficult book in the Bible, is hardly commendable hermeneutically method. The first reason, therefore, for my theological shift to amillennialism is that I can in good conscience no longer allow the apocalyptic tail to wag the epistolary dog. I must not force the whole of Scripture to dance to the tune of Revelation 20.” [p. 143].⁴

I am a fan of Sam Storms, and have a number of his excellent theology books, the contents of which I almost completely agree with. For example [“The Grandeur of God,” and “One Thing”]. However, I strongly disagree with his position in this particular book, “Kingdom Come,” cited above. I admire the fact that he has likely written the best critique of the Premillennial Dispensational position I've read, but I disagree with him. Is he right in saying that Revelation 20 is “an obscure text?” Not according to hundreds of both OT and NT prophecies of the end times.

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The evidence for the Dispensational Premillennial view (notwithstanding the wide array of A-Mil and Post-Mil theology authors who I find are right on in their views of virtually every other biblical topic, but very wrong in their Eschatology & Israelology!)⁵ is strong, and certainly not locked in on only Revelation 20 – it is a whole-Bible hermeneutic, and I believe, without a smug bias about the Church having replaced “rebellious and wicked Israel,” yet, the Church itself can lay no claim to corporate holiness.

Many A-mil and Post-mil people fail to realize or acknowledge that the Church (cf. the parables of the Wheat and Tares, the Leaven, the Mustard Seed, and the Dragnet, etc.) is rife with similar idolatry, rebellions, sin, and wickedness that brought Israel to the point of being temporarily rejected and disciplined by God.

I'm convinced that much A-mil bluster about Revelation 20 and the Premillennial view of Dispensationalists is due to their belief (which originated primarily due to their devotion to St. Augustine, and the Reformation viewpoints of Martin Luther

³ IBID, pg. 303

⁴ Sam Storms; Kingdom Come: The Amillennial Alternative; Christian Focus/Mentor Books, 2013; Pg. 142-143

⁵ Here are some well-known Reformed Amillennialists or Postmillennialists: RC Sproul, Sam Storms, Simon Kistemaker, Michael Horton, Kenneth Gentry, GK Beale, Lorraine Boettner, Edmund Clowny, Peter Gentry, Steven Wellum, Martin Luther, DM Lloyd-Jones, Tim Keller, Roger Olsen, Kim Riddleberger, O.Palmer Robertson, Tom Schreiner, Iain Murray, John Murray, David Wells, St. Augustine, and many others.

and some others who may have been anti-semitic), that Israel has been permanently rejected by God and will never be forgiven for their rejection of Christ as Messiah and King. One of the biblical arguments which seem to be in their blind spot, (and there are many) is Jeremiah 31:35-40; and others are: Amos 9:8; Zechariah 12:10 - right to the end of the book; and Romans 11:1-2, 11-12, 25-32. In fact, the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34) is clearly given to Israel and Judah while they were living in exile due to God's disciplinary wrath, and this covenant centers on forgiveness for their sins.

Such bias against Israel has been a centuries-long "axe-to-grind" for Reformed believers, and I would postulate that it has tainted their ability to see the very clear end times Millennial Kingdom prophecies throughout the OT and even in the NT as saying exactly what they appear to say. They certainly should not make statements as uninformed as thinking the Premillennialists' only argument is Revelation 20!

As for Sam Storm's contention that the book of Revelation and its symbolism is difficult to understand, so biblically arguments should not be based on its contents, having taught through this book twice in Sunday School, and once in a Wednesday evening series, I think I'm somewhat qualified to argue that almost all the symbolism in Revelation is explained by John (the writer), and that Israel is a prominent central theme within it – the so-called discarded by God nation that according to theologians of that stripe, He supposedly has no more interest in!

Michael Vlach disagrees with Sam Storms and others who believe Israel has been permanently replaced by the Church, and says;

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"Supersessionism seems to be based on 2 core beliefs. (1) the nation Israel has somehow completed or forfeited its status as the people of God and will never again possess a unique role or function apart from the church, and (2) the church is now the true Israel that has permanently replaced or superseded national Israel as the people of God. In the context of Israel and the church, supersessionism is the view that the NT church is the new and/or true Israel that has forever superseded the nation Israel as the people of God. The result is that the church has become the sole inheritor of God's covenant blessings originally promised to national Israel in the OT. This rules out a future restoration of the nation Israel with a unique identity, role and purpose."⁶

Although there is much more to Dispensationalism than just eschatology, John MacArthur said (I am paraphrasing him here) "It's simple, Dispensationalism's main point is Israel is not the Church, and the Church is not Israel."

Why Are the Kingdom Parables So Important to This?

You may have thought when the Sunday School topic I chose in 2024 became public, "Why this topic?" People had asked me in 2023, when I completed our study of Hebrews, to consider topics like "Heaven" and "Genesis 1-11," but in 2023, I read a book that captured my attention – "The Coming Kingdom" by Andrew Woods. This

⁶ Michael Vlach; Has the Church Replaced Israel? B & H Academic; 2010. Pg. 12

book answered many questions for me which I had not known where to look for those answers.

I had wondered why Christ had come once, but then we must wait for him to return, and it has been almost 2,000 years since He left to return to heaven, having never been enthroned to rule. Why? I had just completed our study of Hebrews which almost alone in the NT, uniquely depicts Christ as in heaven, but not even yet as King, but as our Melchizedechian High Priest, although He sits on His Father's throne there, at the Father's right hand. Hebrews, although very Christ-centered, is also focussed on Israel - both in its history and the Old Covenant, and New Covenant which originate through Israel.

As I read "The Coming Kingdom," and came to the chapters which spoke of the impact of Christ's being rejected, especially in Matthew 12:22-45, and thus, resulted in the rescinded offer of the Kingdom to Israel, then Woods, relying heavily on A.W. Pink's small book, "The Kingdom Parables of Matthew 13," showed me the importance of these parables to see how the rejection of Matthew 12 inspired Jesus to start teaching Israel in parables. I had never made this connection before and it suddenly became very clear to me! And so I knew I had been shown by God my topic for Sunday School 2024. And I mistakenly figured it was a topic I could get through within 6 months, because here we are in 2025 and I'm still trying to get all the lessons in before the end of June! I still won't have exhausted the topic, but I have no plans to continue this study in 2026.

In chapter 10 of The Coming Kingdom, Woods connected the Kingdom Parables of Matthew 13 (and others) to the rejection of Christ by Israel's leaders in Matthew 12:24, then said "Consequently Christ began to explain the spiritual conditions that would now prevail in the kingdom's absence. This interim program includes His revelation of the kingdom mysteries (Matt. 13) and the Church (Matt. 16:18)."⁷ ④

I was hooked. I was very interested in what I'd read in the book up until chapter 10, but as I read chapter 10, I knew I had to investigate this more. It was a bonus that Woods is an A.W. Pink fan (as I am) and cited his book a lot – in fact – I used Pink's book title for the title of this Sunday School series. I actually had a series of theology books on the parables which also helped a lot. You have received the fruit of my investigations and hopefully the Holy Spirit has allowed these truths to impact your thinking about this coming kingdom, Israel's place in the Bible, the role of the Church, the interregnum, OT and NT prophecy, the growing 2,000 year gap between Jesus' ascension and His return to set up His Millennial Kingdom.

This, to me has been one of the most fascinating Bible studies I have done in my over 42 years as a Sunday School teacher. Has it been fascinating for you as well? I'd love it if we have time for you to tell me what stands out from these 12 months of teaching this topic and maybe what things still confuse you about it. I know it's a complex topic, but more important than I first imagined in an eschatological sense.

⁷ OP Cit – The Coming Kingdom, pg. 103

Reminder of the Difference Between the Universal and Theocratic Kingdoms

I'm filling this sub-section with 2 helpful quotes. The first is by Andrew Woods, and the second is from A.W. Pink, then I'll make brief comments.

Andrew Woods comments as he begins his book:

"At the outset a distinction must be drawn between the universal kingdom and the theocratic (or mediatorial) kingdom. Such a distinction is justified since some Bible verses present the kingdom as in a state of perpetual existence (Ps. 93:1-2) while others indicate that the kingdom will be a future reality (Dan. 2:44). Moreover, some verses depict the kingdom as universal in scope (Ps. 103:19) while other verses picture the kingdom as earthly (Dan. 2:35, 44-45). Furthermore, some verses present the kingdom as being directly ruled by God (Dan. 4:17) while other verses depict the kingdom as being indirectly administered by God through a human agent (Ps. 2:6-9). In addition, while some verses present the kingdom as something that is always in existence (Ps. 93:1-2), still other verses predict its arrival as conditioned upon some kind of human response (Ex. 19:5; Matt. 3:2; 11:14; 23:37-39).

Therefore, the universal kingdom is eternal, comprehensive, under God's direct rule, and always in existence. By contrast, the theocratic kingdom is futuristic, earthly, under God's indirect rule, and conditional. Thus, interpreters of Scripture have long observed this crucial distinction between the universal and theocratic kingdom."⁸

A.W. Pink adds;

"In contemplating "the kingdom of God" in the OT Scriptures great care must be taken to distinguish between two aspects of it. First, Scripture speaks of an unlimited kingdom of God, (5) namely, the sovereign rule of the Most High over all His vast dominions. Such Scripture as Daniel 4:34,35 refer to this aspect of His kingdom: "And I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored Him that lives forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and He does according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" This rule of God over all His creatures is universal, absolute and eternal. But Scripture also speaks of a limited kingdom, which is restricted both in its scope and time, which is neither eternal nor universal; and it is not until we learn to distinguish between these two separate aspects of "the kingdom of God" that we rightly divide the Word of truth and secure the key which unlocks quite a little of the OT. This second aspect of God's Kingdom is what may be termed the dispensational one; it is localized and temporal. This is God's Kingdom on earth, where His rule is publicly manifested over and is owned by men."⁹

And David Baron has an interesting take on how the story of Joseph foreshadows what takes place between Israel and Christ;

"The separation and estrangement between Joseph and his brethren did not last forever. In the extremity of their need they were again brought face to face with him, and though at first, yet unknown to them, he spake and dealt "roughly" with them, so as to awaken their conscience and

⁸ OP Cit – Woods, pp 5-6

⁹ IBID, p. 6

bring home to them the sense of guilt, his heart was all the time full of yearning love and compassion for them, and the account of Joseph's making himself known to his brethren is one of the most touching and thrilling stories of the Bible.

And this too, as I do verily believe, foreshadows what will yet take place between Christ and Israel. In the extremity of their need, in the "time of Jacob's Trouble," the Jewish people will yet be brought face to face with their long-rejected Messiah, and broken heartedly confess, "We are guilty concerning our brother" – Jesus – whom we handed over to the Romans to be crucified, and "denied before the face of Pilate, when he had determined to release Him,...and asked for a murderer to be granted to us, and killed the Prince of Life," calling down His blood upon us and our children. And then Jesus will make Himself known to His brethren, and comfort them in their great sorrow, saying, "I am Jesus, your Brother, whom you handed over to be crucified, and for so long thought to be dead; and now be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves...for God sent Me before you to preserve life."¹⁰

We have already noted how David's rise to power as King parallels Jesus' rise to the throne in previous lessons. So we can see some similar things in Joseph's story.

Israel has been without a theocratic king on David's throne since 587 BC when the final (so far) theocratic king of Judah – Zedekiah – was taken away captive by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon. But God has always ruled universally and sovereignly without any pause or interim period. Israel has been waiting (impatiently and right now, uncaringly) for their King and Messiah to come (oblivious to the fact so far, that He was among them, and they rejected Him! Now for literally centuries.) God had left Israel for 400 years between the testaments – He sent no prophets; being effectively silent from Malachi until the arrival of John the Baptist in Matthew to announce the Messiah's arrival, with the proclamation, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!*" Then, His ministry announced, Jesus comes into the scene at the Jordan River and with the same words, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!*" But the corruption of Israel's "shepherds" (cf. Ezekiel 34, John 10) – their leaders, the Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes, the Sanhedrin – had led the people to expect a different kind of Messiah, one that would make them victorious over the Romans, and would not interfere with the leaders' own "sovereignty." This was due to their own jealousy of Christ's miracles and adoration by the people (cf. John 11: 45-53; and Matthew 12) which led to Jesus' brutal murder on the cross. The potential final theocratic Ruler of Israel and the world died, was resurrected and ascended to heaven as our great High Priest, and we all await His return to take His rightful place to rule the entire world as Theocratic King on David's throne in Jerusalem. Israel's long period of suffering / discipline will end when the extant generation at that future time will realize their grievous error and embrace Jesus Christ as their King – cf. Matt. 23:37-39; and Zechariah 12:10,11; 14:9.

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Is There a "Theocratic" Ruler Now?

Israel has been in the era of "*the times of the Gentiles*" (Luke 21:24) since 587 BC and will be until that period of time ends with Christ's return. He is the prophesied

¹⁰ David Baron, *Israel in the Plan of God*, Kregel, 1925 / 1983; pp. 172-173

stone (Daniel 2:40-44; 7:13; 27) that crushes and wipes out all Satanic and Gentile rule in the whole world and then takes His place as rightful King of the world.

But, are we living in a theocratic vacuum right now during the inter-advent period? Is there a theocratic ruler over the world order, operating under God's universal rulership? Yes, there is, and he usurped the power in order to be that ruler.

In Matthew 4:1-11 (and cf. Luke 4:5-8), as Jesus' official ministry was just kicking off, as He'd just been baptized, the Spirit led Him into the wilderness to be tested. Notice vv. 8-9 & see Luke 4:6. Jesus' response is in MT 4:10-11, where He does not say, "Satan, those kingdoms aren't yours to give to me." There is no rebuke regarding the facts, just a decision by Jesus to end the confrontation. Numerous NT verses give us a measure of proof that Satan, while still under God's sovereign control, wields great political power and evil destructive oversight of the world. Many of the parables we've studied ascribe power to him to attempt to destroy the Church – cf. Wheat and Tares, Mustard Seed, Leaven. Like it or not, Satan is currently the "theocratic king of the world."

Andrew Woods' take on this:

"Satan's success in inciting this rebellion (in Eden) effectively removed the office of Theocratic Administrator from the earth, as Satan at that point became ruler of the world (LK 4:5-8; JN 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 1 JN 5:19). What then is the storyline of the Bible? It is how this office is restored through the Messianic Kingdom. Just as God the Father originally intended to indirectly govern the physical world through the first Adam, He will one day govern the world through the last Adam or God the Son.

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The restoration of the physical kingdom or office of Theocratic Administrator as the dominant theme of the Bible has been recognized by numerous theologians. Note Charles' Ryrie's explanation;

"Why is an earthly kingdom necessary? Did He not receive His inheritance when He was raised and exalted in heaven? Is not His present rule His inheritance? Because He must be triumphant in the same arena where He was seemingly defeated. His rejection by the rulers of his world was on the earth (1 Cor. 2:8). His exaltation must also be on this earth, And so it shall be when He comes again to rule this world in righteousness. He has waited long for His inheritance; soon He shall receive it."¹¹

Although Satan's first attack was on Eve and Adam, because of his jealousy over God's love for and creation of man to have dominion over creation, a role he surely felt rightfully belonged to him (cf. Isa. 14:13-14), it's clear from biblical history that he now has a focus to attack Israel and the Jews. This is because God's purpose has been to work His purposes out through Israel, even His redemption plan itself as He sends Christ as a Jewish man to be the Messiah. Satan is frequently seen in heaven accusing Israel before God – Job 1 & 2; Zechariah 3:1-2. During the Tribulation ("the time of Jacob's trouble" – cf. Jer. 30:7,) he makes it his agenda to make Israel his main target – cf. Rev. 12:6-17. He is the source of anti-semitism. (*Israelology* p. 768 – Arnold Fruchtenbaum).

¹¹ Charles Ryrie, *The Coming Kingdom*, pg. 9

It is clear that God is sovereign over Satan and is using him as a pawn or tool during the interregnum, to, as He used other wicked nations to punish and humiliate Israel in the OT, in order to punish them for rejecting their Messiah, His Son! When we consider the attack of Crusaders against Jews as well as Muslims, the pogroms in the late 1800's in Europe and Eastern Europe against Jews, the early years of the 1900's and the Holocaust in WW II, and many other atrocities, the horror of these things is so evil, who can possibly imagine that Satan is not at the root of them?

Summary

It is my fervent hope and prayer that everyone in the class has picked up some helpful information from this study of God's Word. Far from being a novel or unworthy discipline of Bible study, the study of eschatology, which – I hope we all realize now - Matthew 13 has a definite attachment to, and therefore, is of extreme importance to our overall study of the Bible.

In my view, the study of eschatology and of Israel's role within not only the Bible, but also within history, is very critical for us as believers. Since the return of Christ is of such importance to validate the entire Bible's truths, then eschatology is a discipline that cannot be ignored or considered to be a class B doctrine, as it often is.

Some of the criticism of this doctrine comes from some "end times" books, like the "Left Behind" series of novels, books that unduly focus on the Rapture or put forth silly theories that are not based on the Bible, and some theologians who feel that it is beneath their dignity to study this unless they can put an A-mil or post-mil spin on it. To many, dispensational eschatology is anti-Reformed. But in my opinion, you can be Reformed in your soteriology (the study of salvation) and be dispensational in your eschatology. Being a Calvinist doesn't require that you must be amillennial or postmillennial. In fact, John MacArthur presented a series of 6 sermons to his church not too many years ago, entitled "Every Calvinist Should be a Premillennialist." Those sermons are available on the Grace to You website. The very first sermon of the series was presented at a Shepherd's Conference with many amillennial theologians present in the room. It is a rather scathing polemic regarding millennial Bible interpretation, and stirred up a lot of push-back from the Reformed community. ⑧

But of course, "Premillennial, Amillennial, & Post-millennial" are only titles to help us understand certain specific positions. The biggest question is, what is biblical? That's what we should be looking for – which position allows us to interpret God's Word literally without having to allegorize or spiritualize the texts? If you want to be a serious Bible reader and student, and really want to see how God's plan and purpose unfold throughout history right to the end of time as we know it, you'll have to choose between the options. I have chosen to be a dispensational believer, not because the system is perfect, but because it best explains the whole Bible. It is unfortunate that so many dispensationalists happen to be Arminian (even strongly anti-Calvinistic) in their understanding of Soteriology, but I have no problem being a 5 point Calvinist and believing the dispensational view of the Bible and the end times.

I finished my notes for this final lesson in early March of this year, and re-read it a number of times and did a few edits. But I felt I didn't yet have the ending of this lesson that I desired. Then, as I was reading a commentary on Zechariah, I ran across a few paragraphs that applied to the Interregnum (although David Baron, the author of this commentary, did not use that term. So I am wrapping up 12 months of studying and teaching this topic with the following;

"A pause of nearly 2,000 years has already ensued between the 9th and 10th verses of this great prophecy [Zechariah 9] – between the time when Jesus, *"that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet"* Zechariah, presented Himself to the daughter of Zion as her true King, *"Meek, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass [Matt. 21:4,5], and the time when He shall "speak peace to the nations," and shall visibly "stand and feed (or 'rule') in the strength of Jehovah, in the name of Jehovah His God."*

Indeed, we know by comparing Scripture with Scripture that before the instruments of war shall be finally "cut off," and the Messiah is manifested as the Judge and "Reprover" of strong nations, so that they "shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks," and neither learn nor practice war any more, the greatest war which this afflicted war has ever seen is to take place, during which time the nations will "beat their ploughshares into swords and pruning-hooks into spears."

But this is sure and certain, that however long the pause may last, God never loses the thread of the purpose which He has formed for this earth; and as surely as the prophecies of the suffering Christ have been literally fulfilled, so surely will those also be which relate to His glory and reign; and although Israel and the nations have had to wait long for it, the angels' song at the birth of our Saviour, "Peace on earth and goodwill toward men" will yet be realized, and Christ will not only be owned by His own people as "the King of the Jews," but His rule will extend from sea to sea, and from the river even unto the ends of the earth."

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Meanwhile, while He is still rejected on earth, He is exalted at the right hand of God in heaven; and to those who already recognize Him as King, and render to Him the glad allegiance of their hearts, He already *"speaks peace,"* yea, a peace which passeth understanding even in the midst of outward strife and travail – such as the world can never give nor take away."¹²

¹² David Baron, Zechariah; Kregel, 1918/ND, Pg. 316-317