

# *The Old and the New in The Matthew 13 Parables*

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## **Introduction**

Commonly, even among dispensationalists, the parables of Matthew 13 are taken to apply directly to the church today. This is done in a variety of ways.

1. Some simply ignore the normal meaning of the words and understand the kingdom of heaven to be salvation, going to heaven, or some such.
2. Others, while recognizing that the parables in Matthew 13 relate to Israel, believe that they may apply them to believers today regardless. This is the error of primary and secondary application.
3. A third view is that these parables represent a view of the period of time between the first and second comings of Christ; an interval during which the word of the kingdom (which they identify with the gospel of salvation) is being preached with a view to developing believers who will rule during the future kingdom.
  - a. Some see an actual “spiritual form” of the kingdom as going on at the present time, called the “mystery form of the kingdom.” This is presumably the church in its kingdom relationship. Some see it as “Christendom,” which includes unbelievers as well as believers.
  - b. Others see the mysteries of the kingdom as not relating to a form of the kingdom, but simply as being related to the present age. These do not say that the church is presently related to the Kingdom (For example, Stanley Toussaint says, “The whole age is in view from the ascension until the coming of the Lord to establish the kingdom. Because of this fact the rapture of the church is included in the time span of the parable [the wheat and tares] but is not spoken of as a separate detail.” *Behold the King*, pg. 181).

Many, however, see these parables as being fulfilled at the second coming. In *Explore the Book* J. Sidlow Baxter says there is no mystery form of the kingdom, and that the parables are to be fulfilled in a yet future day. George Peters, who wrote *The Theocratic Kingdom*, rejects the mystery form of the Kingdom. He believes that the parables refer to previously unrevealed truths concerning the Millennial state. The writer of *Lange’s Commentary on Revelation*, E. R. Craven, also believes the parables all apply to the future millennial state.

## **The Position of this Paper**

It is the position of the author of this paper that the kingdom parables of Matthew 13 relate only to those who are living in that short period of time during which the kingdom is being proposed. The kingdom was proposed throughout Christ’s earthly ministry, and will be again in the tribulation period, especially during the last three and one-half years. The idea that the Matthew 13 kingdom parables apply to the current time in any sense is rejected.

Hence, the parables of Matthew 13 are not applicable to the millennial state, although the kingdom predicted in the parables will be fulfilled subsequent to the time of the application of the parables.

## **The Audience and the Eschatological Situation**

The interpreter of Scripture must place himself in the place of the Israelites of the first century. At that time, Israelites knew nothing of the church nor of the present age. To them, “the coming age” was the age of kingdom blessing (Mark 10:30-31).

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Eschatologically, the next event on their horizon was the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. This explains many of the statements of the Lord Jesus to His hearers during His earthly ministry. It was the view of the disciples, extending at least until the day of His ascension, and perhaps beyond, that the Lord Jesus Christ was about to restore the kingdom of God to Israel (Acts 1:6). Jesus did not, during His earthly ministry, either before or after His resurrection, explain the long term postponement of the kingdom.

### **The Kingdom Offered by Jesus During His Earthly Ministry**

#### **The Kingdom Proposed**

Throughout His earthly ministry the Lord Jesus Christ proposed to establish the kingdom predicted by the Old Testament prophets. This proposal was contingent on the acceptance of His messianic claims by Israel. The prophets, however, knew nothing of this proposal. They viewed the kingdom as being established directly by the Lord without any possibility of Israel's rejecting the messiah. It is this proposed kingdom that is the subject of the "mysteries of the kingdom" in Matthew 13.

Toussaint recognizes that it is this proposed kingdom which is in view in Matthew 13. He says that the purpose of the parables is to reveal new truths concerning the kingdom. He goes on to say,

The truths relate to the time of the establishing of the kingdom, the preparation for it, and other such material which had never before been revealed (*Behold the King*, pg 175).

Unfortunately, he includes the present age in his time period, which has several problems. The present evil age is clearly distinguished from the prophetic age of Christ's day. It is the age associated with the current activity of Satan, and is designated the present evil age (Gal. 1:4; 2 Cor. 4:4). In fact, there is no reason to include the present age in the time of preparation for the coming kingdom. This dispensation and age are to be viewed as a parenthesis in the prophetic program for Israel. That program is not now running, nor is God dealing with Israel or the Gentile nations prophetically with regards to the coming messianic reign.

#### **The Kingdom Offered**

The preparation for the coming of the kingdom is specifically to be identified with two periods: 1) the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, and 2) the tribulation period which brings to an end the times of the Gentiles. The question arises, "Why does the Bible present the two phase offering of the kingdom?"

The answer lies in the fact that the kingdom as originally offered was rejected by Israel. This rejection lies at the root of the need for the kingdom parables of Matthew 13. Had Israel accepted Christ's messiahship, the need for these parables would have been mitigated, for they explain certain elements of the nature of the kingdom proposal and its rejection.

When Israel rejected the kingdom offered by the Lord He began to introduce the idea that Gentiles would be included in the kingdom program. This in itself was not new, but certain aspects of the Gentile relationship to the offering of the kingdom were previously unrevealed. The fact that Israel would remain under Gentile domination during the offering of the kingdom was new. That both believing and unbelieving Gentiles would continue together until the establishment of the kingdom was new.

Some have jumped to the conclusion that since these parables seem to include Gentiles in the kingdom program that they somehow include the church, which is made up primarily of ethnic Gentiles. However, God has a program, partly revealed in the Old Testament, for Gentiles as distinct from the church. During the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel, for instance, it is clear from the book of Revelation that false religion among the Gentiles continues to expand (Revelation 13:11-15). The nations continue in their economic program until that program is destroyed (Revelation 18:11ff).

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## **The Importance of Two Parables in Matthew 13**

To a certain extent the key to understanding the kingdom parables of Matthew 13 is to understand the first and last parables in the chapter. Neither of these parables contain the phrase “the kingdom of heaven is like.” The first, the parable of the sower is designed specifically to answer the question of why the kingdom was being rejected. The context of this parable must be understood to be the rejection of the kingdom based on the events of Matthew 10-12.

The final parable of Matthew 13 (vs. 52) compares “every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven to a householder.” This is a summary parable that gives a key to the understanding of the parables of the kingdom.

## **The Context of Matthew 10-12**

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to deal with these chapters in detail, it will do the student well to understand them in context with the parables of the kingdom. Christ had sent out the twelve (Matthew 10) but they had met with little or no success. The kingdom was not accepted enthusiastically by the cities into which they entered. As a result, and based on His own rejection in the towns of Galilee, Christ pronounced woe upon those cities (chapter 11).

It is based on this rejection of the kingdom offered by both Himself and His “sent ones” that the kingdom parables are presented. They present events that will be occurring just prior to the second coming of Christ and the establishment of His earthly kingdom.

## **The Kingdom Established by Jesus at the Second Coming**

### **The Kingdom Imposed**

The kingdom is viewed in the Old Testament is being imposed on the world by Messiah. Such an imposition is the only way in which the kingdom is viewed in the Old Testament. It was beyond the understanding of the Jews of Jesus day to understand that their response to His message was a vital factor in the program.

The idea of a suffering messiah is found in the Old Testament. But the idea of a kingdom offered rather than imposed is not found. This is the new idea that was being presented by Christ in His earthly ministry. No one reading the Old Testament would expect Messiah simply to offer the kingdom without establishing it by force if necessary.

## **What are the Mysteries of the Kingdom?**

We must decide the meaning of the word mystery before we discuss the use of that word in Matthew 13.

### **The Meaning of the Word Mystery – Romans 16:25-27**

**25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began 26 but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith— 27 to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.**

A mystery is simply a previously unrevealed truth that is now being revealed. In the case of the church, mysteries are truths that cannot be found in the Old Testament or the gospels. In the case of the kingdom, mysteries are truths that are not predicted by the Old Testament prophets. Specifically, the mysteries of the kingdom relate to that very brief time during Christ’s earthly ministry and the future tribulation period.

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### **The Use of the Word *Mystery* in Matthew 13**

Here the word refers to previously unrevealed things about the *coming of* the Davidic or messianic kingdom. Specifically, the concept of an offered kingdom, which was unknown in the Old Testament, is being introduced. The parables are adding to the “old” material about the kingdom program found in the Old Testament. The new material consists of the mystery elements as presented by Jesus to His disciples at the time of the parabolic teaching.

### **How Are the Mysteries of the Kingdom Revealed in the Matthew 13 Parables?**

Jesus bracketed His discussion of the mysteries of the kingdom by introducing the need for such teaching in the parable of the sower, and by summarizing the teaching in the parable of the householder. Throughout the rest of the Matthew 13 parables, however, He presents new information concerning the offering of this kingdom to Israel.

### **The Parable of the Sower – Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15**

**1** But on that day Jesus, going out from the house, sat beside the sea. **2** And large crowds gathered together to Him, so that He entered the boat to sit down, and the crowd stood on the shore.

**3** And He spoke to them many things in parables, saying, Behold, one who sows went out to sow. **4** And as he sowed, some fell alongside the way, and the birds came and devoured them. **5** But some fell on the stony ground, where it had not much soil, and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. **6** But when the sun rose, it was scorched and because it had no root, it was withered. **7** And others fell on the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them. **8** And others fell on good soil, and produced fruit a hundredfold, or sixtyfold, or thirtyfold. **9** The one who has ears to hear, let him hear.

**10** And approaching Him the disciples said, Why do You speak to them in parables? **11** And answering He said to them, To you has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to those it has not been given. **12** For whoever has, it shall be given to him and he will have abundance. But to whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. **13** Because of this I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see and hearing they do not hear nor understand. **14** And to them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which says, “In hearing you shall hear and in no way understand, and when seeing you shall see and in no way perceive. **15** For the heart of this people is dulled, and with their ears they hardly heard, and they closed their eyes lest they should see with their eyes and they should hear with their ears and they should understand with their heart and return, and I shall heal them.” **16** But your eyes are blessed because they see, and your ears because they hear. **17** For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous people strongly desired to see the things which you see and they did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear and they did not hear them.

**18** You then hear the parable of the sower. **19** Every person hearing the word of the kingdom<sup>1</sup> and not understanding, the evil one comes and snatches away the thing sown in his heart. This is the seed sown beside the road. **20** And the seed sown on the stony ground: this person is the one who hears the word and immediately with joy receives it; **21** but he does not have a root in him and has a short season. But when trial or persecution comes because of the word, he is immediately offended. **22** And the seed sown among the thorns: this person is the one who hears the word, and the anxiety of this age, and the deceitfulness of riches<sup>2</sup> chokes out the word, and it becomes fruitless. **23** And the seed sown on the good ground: this person is the one who hears and understands the word who indeed bears fruit and produces a hundredfold, or sixtyfold, or thirtyfold.

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<sup>1</sup> The “word of the kingdom” is the teaching concerning the future kingdom of God on earth that will be established at the second coming of Christ. It is not to be preached today. This parable is not presented as teaching to be allegorized, or spiritualized, and applied to believers today. Rather it is instruction concerning why the word of the kingdom, which both Christ and John the Baptist proclaimed, was not accepted by Israel. It is part of the “rejection” theme which runs throughout Matthew’s gospel. The various individuals described are kinds of respondents to the message, and only one group actually respond in a correct way. The rest either reject outright, or are fair weather respondents.

<sup>2</sup> The common teaching of the day was that riches for the Jew signaled God’s blessing. The Jewish leaders taught this “prosperity” approach. Jesus regularly refuted this view and the result was one of amazement for His listeners (Mark 10:23-26; Luke 18:24-27).

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This parable is given to explain the nature of the problem Christ and the disciples were experiencing regarding the ministry of the kingdom upon which they had been engaged. The parable is not like the parables of the kingdom that follow, in that it was not designed to present new truth concerning the kingdom. It is actually introductory to them. The nature of the problem is that the majority of Israel rejected the gospel of the kingdom. The entire concept of the messiah presenting the kingdom as voluntary element was foreign to their thinking.

The idea that the messiah would *not* set up His kingdom immediately was a new thought. The Old Testament regularly presents Him as establishing it immediately upon His advent. Today we know this will take place at the second coming. But the OT did not present this truth so as to allow the disciples to understand the nature of the problem.

Why was the message being rejected? It was rejected because the majority of Israelites did not have the spiritual understanding to accept it. It is not to be taken that each of the individuals represent one quarter of the population of Israel. The breakdown is not proportional. Most Israelites of Jesus' day fitted into the first three categories. Only a very small minority accepted the word of the kingdom and produced fruit (a lifestyle fulfilling kingdom requirements and necessary to enter it).

### **The Parable of the Wheat and Tares (Darnel) – Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43**

**24** Another parable He set before them saying, The kingdom of heaven is like a man sowing good seed in his field. **25** But while the men slept his enemy came and sowed darnel<sup>3</sup> over the wheat, and departed. **26** And when the stalk sprouted and produced fruit, then the darnel also appeared. **27** And approaching, the slaves of the master of the house said to him, Lord, you sowed good seed in your field, didn't you? From where does it have darnel? **28** And he said to them, An enemy did this. The slaves said to him, Do you desire that we go and gather them? **29** And he said, No, lest while you are gathering up the darnel, you should uproot the wheat with them. **30** Allow them both to grow together until the harvest, and at the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, gather first the darnel and bind them into bundles to burn them, and the wheat gather together into my barn.

**36** Then when He dismissed the crowds, Jesus went into the house. And His disciples approached Him saying, Interpret for us the parable of the darnels of the field. **37** And answering He said to them, The one Who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. **38** And the field is the world, and the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom. The darnels are the sons of the evil one, **39** and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the completion of the age,<sup>4</sup> and the reapers are angels. **40** Therefore, just as the darnels are gathered and burned with fire, so it will be at the completion of this age. **41** The Son of man will send His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all the offensive things and the ones who perform lawlessness, **42** and they will throw them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and grinding of teeth there. **43** Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The one who has ears to hear, let him hear.

The key to this parable is to understand that the end of the age relates to the Jewish prophetic age, and not to the current age during which the church exists. Matthew 24 teaches that the end of the Jewish prophetic age is at the second coming of Christ, which is after the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel, the time of great tribulation. This parable most likely speaks of Gentiles rather than Jews. By the end of the age, Israel will have been depleted to the point where only believers remain (the woman of Revelation 12, the dispersed

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<sup>3</sup> ζιζάνιον (*zizanon*) is a kind of darnel, the commonest of the four species being the bearded, growing in the grain fields, as tall as wheat and barley, and resembling wheat in appearance... The seeds are poisonous to man and herbivorous animals, producing sleepiness, nausea, convulsions and even death (they are harmless to poultry). The plants can be separated out, but the custom . . . is to leave the cleaning out till near the time of harvest... (Vine's Expository Dictionary).

<sup>4</sup> Not the present evil age, but the age which ends with Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. The statement "completion of the age" occurs only five times, all in Matthew: Matthew 13:39; 13:40 (the MT has "this age"); 13:49; 24:3; and 28:20. A similar phrase "the completion of the ages" occurs in Hebrews 9:26, but in an obviously different context. In each of Matthew's uses, the phrase can only refer to the end of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. Any other interpretation is forced and not consistent with the overall purpose for Matthew's writing.

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Jewish believers in Gentile lands, and the 144,000). Some believing Jews also seem to be scattered among the Gentile nations, and it has been suggested that these are the wheat, and the darnels are the Gentiles. However, we know from Matthew 25 and many Old Testament passages that some Gentiles will be believers by the end of the age and they will also enter the kingdom. While the Old Testament indicates that some Gentiles would be righteous it does not teach that both believing and unbelieving Gentiles would be allowed to continue together for a short time until the end of the age. This is the most likely meaning of the wheat and the darnels.

The character of these parables is introduced by the phrase “the kingdom of heaven is like.” The phrase does not refer to the *character of the coming kingdom*, but includes the period prior to and at the immediate beginning of the establishment of the kingdom. It is clear from the statements in this parable that the fulfillment of these events is not during the coming messianic kingdom, but in the time just prior to its imposition.

### **The Parable of the Mustard Seed – Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19**

**31 He set another parable before them saying, The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, 32 which is certainly smaller than all the seeds, but when it is grown it is larger than all the garden vegetables, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of heaven come to nest in its branches.**

This is the only parable to be found in all three synoptics. Some have argued that it must therefore have Gentile as well as Jewish significance. Benson, for instance, holds that the tree represents Gentile governmental power. According to his view, “The mustard tree teaches that during the time when the disciples were preaching the kingdom imminence a government hostile to the messianic kingdom would grow.” He goes on to say,

This political empire would afford protection and provision for all who lived under its rule. At the very moment when Jesus was teaching this parable, this condition of things prevailed. . . . The Old Testament never prepared anyone for such an eventuality. Rather, it implies that at Messiah’s advent He will immediately destroy the world government and establish heaven’s government in its place. The Old Testament knew nothing of a delay after the arrival of the Messiah.

It is possible that the mustard seed represents the continuation of Gentile domination during the period in which the kingdom is being offered. This is consistent with other Scripture which sees the times of the Gentiles continuing until the end of the tribulation period. However, continued *growth* was not revealed in the Old Testament.

However, it is more likely that this parable actually speaks of Israel coming out of the tribulation period. A small portion of Israel (the mustard seed) will grow into the mighty nation of blessing viewed in the Old Testament.

### **The Parable of the Leaven – Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20-21**

**33 He spoke another parable to them: The kingdom of heaven is like yeast which a woman took and mixed into three *satons*<sup>5</sup> of meal until the whole was leavened.**

Leaven is usually a sign of spiritual corruption, and such is most likely the case here. Toussaint says,

One of the greatest supports for the interpretation that leaven speaks of evil is the use of the word in Scripture. Invariably leaven pictures sin (Exodus 12; Leviticus 2:11; 6:17;

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<sup>5</sup> *saton* is the Greek spelling of the Hebrew measure *seah*. According to DBAG, a *saton* measures about 13 liters, or 13.78 quarts. Three *satons* are 41.34 quarts or 10.33 gallons. Clearly this is quite a mixing job.

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10:12; Matthew 16:12; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8; Galatians 5:9) *Behold the King*, pg. 182.

During the time when the kingdom is to be presented, doctrinal corruption (the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew 16:6) will be prevalent. This was certainly true during Christ's earthly ministry, and will be true again during the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel.

If leaven represents spiritual corruption, this parable cannot be applied to the millennial state, during which Israel will be worshiping in purity. But during the period of the offer of the kingdom, both in Christ's time, and in the future tribulation, spiritual corruption is rampant. The Old Testament prophets knew nothing of this element in the kingdom program.

More likely, this is another parable that simply speaks of the magnificent growth of the kingdom. Leaven causes dough to rise. The kingdom will grow to gigantic proportions.

### **The Parable of the Treasure Hidden in a Field – Matthew 13:44**

**44 Again the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid, and because of his joy he went and sold everything he had and bought that field.**

The treasure must refer to true Israel as recipients of the messianic promises, and the field to its condition in the Gentile world. It was expected that the Messiah would immediately remove Israel from Gentile domination. The "man" refers to the individual Jew who because spiritually related to Israel, even during its "hidden state." That "hidden state" cannot be the kingdom after it is established, but only the kingdom for Israel as it is proposed. Individual Israelites will accept the messianic claims of Christ, even during the time Israel is under Gentile domination. The dispersion of Israel among the Gentile nations during the proposed kingdom period is nowhere presented in the Old Testament. Here one learns that Israel will remain under such domination and dispersion while individuals became aware of its presentation and "buys the field," that is, he relates himself to the kingdom even when hidden among the Gentiles. According to Benson,

The parable of the treasure hidden in a field must signify Israel, for that nation alone is a peculiar treasure (Exod. 19:5; Psalm 135:4). The Old Testament predicted that the manifestation of the Messiah would result in the recovery of Israel from worldwide dispersion. As far as the disciples were concerned, the Messiah had manifested Himself, at least to them and to many others. They expected Him to gather the tribes from their places of obscurity among the nations. But they saw no sign of such an endeavor. Israel remained among the Gentiles at a time when the disciples were preaching kingdom imminence.

The parable thus introduces the fact that an interval will precede the inauguration of the kingdom--an interval in which Jews will remain resident in Gentile lands. The disciples certainly thought they were living in the brief interval, for they were preaching the kingdom was at hand. If the kingdom is "at hand," the interval must be brief.

In fact, the interval would have been brief if Israel had accepted Christ's messiahship. As it happens, it will not be until the tribulation period that Israel is collected together in the land of promise.

### **The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price – Matthew 13:45-46**

**45 Again the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, 46 who when he found one valuable pearl went and sold everything he had and bought it.**

This parable is almost always taken to be applicable to the church. Even many prominent dispensationalists (Darby, Kelly, Schofield, Walvoord, Ryrie, Pentecost) so take it. (Interestingly, A. Gaebelein refers it to Israel, though he sees the mystery form of the kingdom as relating to the church!)

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In fact, the disciples would never have understood the parable as relating to the church when it was originally given. Certainly to them, the pearl must refer to Israel. John Benson makes much of the idea that the pearl must be part of the treasure of the previous parable. He therefore makes the pearl the 144,000.

More likely, the parable signifies the need for the believing Jew of Jesus' day to be ready to sacrifice all and follow Christ even though the Kingdom is being postponed. They must be willing to "sell all they have" in order to be rightly related to the kingdom.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Parable of the Dragnet – Matthew 13:47-50**

**47 Again the kingdom of heaven is like a seine<sup>7</sup> cast into the sea, and gathered fish of every kind, 48 which when it was filled, they pulled up on the shore and after they sat down they collected the good ones into pails, but the worthless ones they threw away. 49 Thus it will be at the completion of the age.<sup>8</sup> The angels will come forth and will separate the evil people from the midst of the righteous people 50 and they will throw them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and grinding of teeth there.<sup>9</sup>**

Like the parable of the wheat and tares, the interpretation of parable of the dragnet rides on one's correct understanding of the "end of the age." Most likely, this parable teaches that God will gather Gentiles together at the end of the age and divide them into two groups. This would have been a new thought to the Jews, who viewed the Gentiles universally with disdain.

This introduces the idea that believing Gentiles would enter the messianic kingdom as a result of an end-time judgment. It deals with the judgment of the Gentiles as presented in Matthew 25:31ff.

### **The Parable of the Householder – Matthew 13:51-52**

**51 Jesus said to them, Do you understand all these things? They said to Him, Yes, Lord.<sup>10</sup> 52 Then He said to them, Because of this every scribe instructed regarding the kingdom of heaven is like a man who is a master of his house who brings out of his treasury new things and old things.**

Technically, this parable is not part of the previous "parables of the kingdom." It holds a concluding place much as the parable of the sower holds an introductory place.

Here the scribe (an individual who understands, a scholar, representing the disciples) who understands the instruction of the Lord in these kingdom parables is compared to a householder. Jesus is now appointing His disciples as the scribes for the kingdom. This was necessary because He had been rejected by the original group of scribes. These new scribes, His followers, are responsible to proclaim the kingdom program. This appointment is predicated on the fact that they understood the kingdom parables. Technically, this is not a kingdom parable, but parable for application only to that group of disciples.

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<sup>6</sup> See footnote on Vs. 22 above.

<sup>7</sup> A kind of net often pulled between two boats to shore.

<sup>8</sup> See note on vs. 39 above. This parable and the two before it teach the distinctions between the people who will belong to the kingdom program because of their righteousness and those who will not.

<sup>9</sup> The three parables in verses 44-47 all teach the same truth. Not every Jew (everything owned by the man, who represents God) will make it into the kingdom of heaven. Only those whose value measures up (the treasure, the beautiful pearl) will be worthy to enter. The parable of the seine is specific. There are several kinds of fish in the sea (people in the Gentile world), but only those which are valuable will be gathered and preserved. The angels will distinguish between the worthy and unworthy at the completion of the age. This is not a reference to the church, but to Gentiles at the completion of the kingdom program after the church is raptured. These parables will be fulfilled at the end of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.

<sup>10</sup> This pivotal statement is sometimes construed to mean the opposite of what it says. The disciples are, according to this view, making a claim that is unfounded. They really didn't understand the parables, which, it is claimed, is shown by their later actions. However, what those interpreters really mean is that the disciples did not understand the interpretation the interpreters give the parables. In light of the next verse which seems to indicate that the Lord appoints His disciples as scribes of the kingdom based on their claim of understanding, one wonders if perhaps the interpreters are the ones who misunderstand these parables. See Barbieri's comments in BKC for this unfounded view.



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The treasure refers to the hoard of knowledge concerning the truths concerning the kingdom. The “old things” refer to the previously revealed truths concerning the kingdom. The “new things” then refer to that body of information, especially contained in the kingdom parables, which was newly revealed by the Lord to the disciples concerning the proposal and rejection of the kingdom. Now the disciples have the ability to discern old truth from new truth. That is, they can distinguish Old Testament prophetic teaching concerning the kingdom from the new material that the Lord had just presented in the kingdom parables.

The following page presents this old/new material in chart form.

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The parables of Matthew 13 present new information concerning the brief interval during which the gospel of the kingdom will be preached prior to the actual setting up of the kingdom. This period consists of the earthly ministry of Christ and the tribulation period. The chart presents two columns of information: **The Old** presents information which was available from the Old Testament at the time Christ presented the parables, and **The New** represents information that was previously unrevealed but is being revealed by Christ in parabolic form.

<b>Parable</b>	<b>The Old</b>	<b>The New</b>
<i>The Wheat and Tares</i>	Gentiles will be part of the coming kingdom because some will become believers before the second coming of Christ.	Gentiles will consist of true believers and false believers at this time, and they will be allowed to continue together until the second coming.
<i>The Mustard Seed</i>	Israel will be a mighty nation when the kingdom of God comes to be.	Israel begins small, a remnant, and will grow into the mighty nation of the kingdom period.
<i>The Leaven</i>	When the kingdom is established all doctrinal and moral corruption will cease.	During the period just prior to the establishment of the kingdom, doctrinal and moral corruption will increase.
<i>The Treasure in a Field</i>	Israel will be established supernaturally in the kingdom immediately upon the coming of Messiah.	The Messiah's first offer will be accepted by some Jews even while Israel remains under Gentile domination and dispersed in Gentile lands. Implied is that there will be both unbelieving and believing Jews during the interval of the "kingdom proposed."
<i>The Pearl of Great Price</i>	Israel will be restored to a position of prosperity in accordance with the Old Testament covenants.	During the period of the proposed kingdom, individual Jews would be required to become impoverished as a signal of their total subservience to the messianic promises. This is consistent with the teaching concerning the "rich young ruler."
<i>The Dragnet</i>	God has a prophetic program for the Gentiles that includes entrance into the kingdom of God in a subservient sense. They will be ruled with a rod of iron by Messiah.	Only believing Gentiles will enter the kingdom as the result of the gathering of the nations at the end of the age so that Christ can distinguish believing from unbelieving Gentiles. Parallel to Matthew 25:31ff.

Benson states,

These conditions will, in fact, precede the Messiah's advent. They will occur during the time that the kingdom is imminent. They depict a brief interval of delay which the Old Testament does not disclose. (*Rethinking the Mystery Form of the Kingdom* by John A. Benson.)