

## PARABLES OF MATTHEW 13

Dr. Jack L. Arnold

### MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM

Matthew 13:1, 2, 10-17

#### I. INTRODUCTION

A. One of the most common questions asked me by sincere Christians who are trying to help others come to know Christ as their personal Lord and Savior is, “Why can’t my friend understand the truth of the gospel? It is so clear to me but my friend just cannot grasp it!”

B. There are two reasons why a person does not understand spiritual truth. The first reason is that he is spiritually blind and cannot grasp divine phenomena (II Cor. 4:3, 4). The second reason is that unsaved men do not really want to know the truth because it means they must change their lives and natural men love their sins (John 3:19).

***II Cor. 4:3, 4: But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.***

***John 3:19: And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.***

C. Only the Holy Spirit can reveal truth to man, and man’s desire must be that God does reveal truth to him. Spiritual truth can only be known supernaturally. Christianity is the one true religion because it is supernatural in character.

#### II. THE MULTITUDE 13:1, 2

A. Some have entitled Matthew 13 the Sermon On The Sea. This is a beautiful setting for instruction on the mysteries about the kingdom. This sermon took place on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, not too far from where Christ preached the Sermon on the Mount. NOTE: Christ gave three major discourses in His ministry: The Sermon on the Mount, which tells the followers of Christ how to live; The Sermon On The Sea, which tells the followers of Christ about the mysteries of the kingdom when the King is gone; and the Olivet Discourse, which tells the followers of Christ about the second coming of Christ and events surrounding it. NOTE: The Sermon on the Sea is composed of seven parables. These parables deal with the great spiritual principles that will affect all human life during the present age; that is, the age between the first and second advents of Christ.

B. We are told that great multitudes gathered about Jesus. We are not told exactly how many but it must have been in the thousands. Christ attracted people like a magnet because they saw in Him great wisdom and power. The multitudes were attracted to Christ for various reasons but they were not converted. For want of space, Christ went into a boat and pushed off from the shore a few feet and talked with the people. NOTE: This was hardly a formal church service: no pulpit, no singing, no choir, no collections but there was power in Christ and the multitudes seemed to sense this. NOTE:

Thousands of people are attracted to Christ because He is the most wonderful, dynamic, beautiful person the world has ever produced. No one can read about the life of Christ and not be impressed. Yet, most who are initially attracted to Christ never truly become converted because they come to realize that to follow Christ means that one has to change his lifestyle and most people are not willing to make radical changes, even when their salvation is at stake.

### III. THE USE OF PARABLES 13:10

A. Christ spoke to the multitudes in parables. The Greek word parable means “a placing along side.” So a parable is a comparison or an analogy by taking a common experience of life and setting it along side the truth in order to illustrate spiritual truth. NOTE: The Old Testament taught truth by types: the Epistles teach truth primarily by doctrine, but Christ taught spiritual truth by the use of parables.

B. Up until this point in His ministry, Christ had not used a parable but now He uses this teaching method of parables or illustrations to communicate truth. NOTE: Christ was a simple teacher and He used the Old Testament constantly in His teaching. Christ built upon the Old Testament, corrected erroneous views held by the Jewish theologians and added new truth in progressive revelation. Jesus Christ was the greatest teacher of all time and those who sit at His feet and listen will find the solutions to the deepest problems of life; they will find answers for time and eternity.

### IV. THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN 13:11

A. Christ specifically tells His disciples that He spoke in parables to conceal truth from the multitudes and to reveal truth to the disciples. Obviously Christ did not want the unsaved multitudes to understand the teachings on the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. Why? We will discover later that the nation of Israel as a whole had become dull of spiritual understanding and did not really want to know the truth concerning the Messiah and His Kingdom.

B. What then are the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven? The Kingdom of Heaven (a) was a common Jewish expression for the reign of Messiah over an earthly kingdom. The kingdom concept was preached by all the prophets of the Old Testament and had been anticipated for centuries by the Jews. If you were to take a concordance, you will find the expression “Kingdom of Heaven” refers to a literal, earthly kingdom all other places in the Book of Matthew. These parables, then, are in some way related to Christ, the King, and His literal earthly kingdom.

1. It is important to notice that the possibility of this kingdom coming was announced by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:2), by Christ (Matthew 4:17), and by the Disciples (Matthew 10:7). This kingdom was offered to Israel on the condition that they would repent and believe on Christ, the Messiah, who was their king. The nation rejected the offer of the kingdom because they rejected the King. The Jews as a whole had cast their lot against Christ and with Satan when they said of Christ that He was demon possessed (Matthew 12:24).

***Matthew 3:2: And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.***

***Matthew 4:17: From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of***

*heaven is at hand.*

***Matthew 10:7: And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.***

***Matthew 12:24: But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.***

2. Because of Israel's rejection of Christ, the Messianic kingdom would be postponed. The earthly manifestation of the kingdom would be put in abeyance until the appointed hour of the Father to bring in the kingdom. NOTE: Since there is no kingdom present, how then are the disciples to live until Christ returns to establish His kingdom? NOTE: The thirteenth chapter of Matthew is written to show how Christ's kingdom program is to be carried out when the King is absent from them.

3. The word "mysteries" is very important because it does not mean something mysterious but the revealing of some truth that has previously been unknown. These parables, then, reveal truth about the Messianic kingdom that were not revealed in the Old Testament. These are new truths about the kingdom. NOTE: It is interesting to note that from this time on our Lord never speaks about the kingdom as "being at hand." NOTE: The King was present with no earthly kingdom and soon the King would leave them through resurrection and ascension. What then is the kingdom program between the first and second advents? The mystery or the thing previously unknown is that the earthly kingdom would be postponed and the kingdom would spiritually reign in the hearts of all true believers until Messiah establishes His kingdom. Christ's kingdom is not physically and literally on this earth at them moment, but it is here spiritually in the hearts of all who acknowledge Christ as Lord, Savior, Master and King. The kingdom is in the hearts of true believers in Christ and they all anxiously await the fulfillment of this kingdom in a physical sense at the second advent. NOTE: The whole unsaved world, like Israel, has rejected the King, Jesus Christ, but Christ's kingdom is not gone from this world but He reigns as King over your heart and the hearts of all true believers in the Messiah. At some future time, known only to God, Christ will return to this earth and establish His kingdom over this earth and we shall be part of it and reign with Him forever (Revelation 3:21; 5:10).

***Revelation 3:21: To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.***

***Revelation 5:10: And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.***

#### V. THE PRINCIPLE OF APPLYING TRUTH 13:12-17

A. Christ sets forth a principle that never changes – a person who has spiritual truth will be granted more truth by God and that in abundance, but a person who does not have spiritual truth shall not get more and whatever inklings of truth he might have shall be taken away from him. This is a fundamental principle of life; it never changes.

B. This simply means that truth must be acted on in order to be retained. Truth

rejected or not used is truth lost. Those who pursue spiritual knowledge and apply it will be given much spiritual blessing. But if a man does not act on the truth, if he has any truth, it shall be taken from him. An individual's advance or regression in spiritual matters depends upon his obedience or disobedience to this principle. ILLUSTRATION: Muscle Use.

ILLUSTRATION: The principle of use is also true in the physical level. If you deliberately refuse to use one of your muscles, you will find that soon it will begin to weaken and atrophy, and that muscle you have is taken away or rendered totally inoperative.

C. Christ spoke in parables to the unsaved multitudes because they had hardened their hearts to the truth. The vast majority of them would never be saved because they did not want the truth and therefore became insensitive to the truth. They had so rejected the truth that God put a double blindness over them so they could not understand the truth.

D. Then our Lord quotes from Isaiah 6 to show that it was prophesied that Israel would reject the truth of Messiah and His kingdom. NOTE: The appeal is to their human responsibility. The words "you," "their," and "they" are more than obvious. If they would turn to Christ, then God would most certainly heal them spiritually.

E. The disciples who were born of God's Spirit did understand spiritual truth. They understood because they were willing to act upon the truth they had. They were "blessed" or "happy" because they were operating on divine principles and the more they obeyed God, the more light God gave them.

## VI. APPLICATIONS

A. All spiritual truth must come from God. It is supernaturally bestowed. Unless God grants truth, we can never understand. We might gain much intellectual understanding of the Bible but we can have no spiritual understanding until God reveals it to us. We must never read our Bible or face a crisis of life without asking God to give us spiritual understanding.

B. God gives more truth and light to those who are acting upon the truth that they already have, but He withholds truth when we are not walking in obedience. NOTE: This is true of nations. Russia and China had the gospel but rejected it and now they have rank atheism. England, as no other nation has been the recipient of the gospel but also has rejected it, and this once great nation is declining economically, morally and politically. The USA has been blessed of God as few nations have and it is rejecting the gospel and will certainly decline and fall. NOTE: What is true of nations is more true of individuals. We know that we should witness, pray and read our Bibles but if we do not do this we may find ourselves losing truth rather than gaining insight. We know that we are to have Christian homes where the husband loves his wife as Christ loved the church, and the wife is to submit to her husband in all things as unto the Lord. But if we do not operate on these truths, God may remove the blessing from our homes and we shall find ourselves losing truth rather than gaining it.

C. We Christians in the church have truth about Christ and His kingdom that the Old Testament prophets and righteous men sought all their lives and could not grasp it. What do you know about Christ, your King, and His kingdom? Do you take your Bible for

granted? If you do, you may lose even your desire to know the scriptures.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

A. It is reasonable to assume that there are people within the sound of my voice who have never been converted to Christ. I would also be so bold as to say that there is probably no one in this room who has never heard the gospel of Christ. Most people have heard the truth of Christ and His salvation from sin and hell, but they reject it. Each rejection of the truth becomes easier until a person can come to the place where he never will believe.

B. But the reverse is also true. If you desire to be saved. If you want to know Christ. If you long for forgiveness of sins and eternal life. If you are willing to turn from your old life and follow Christ. If you are willing to act in simple faith, and trust Christ to save you, He will. If you desire truth, you shall have it!

---