



## **Chapter 13**

# ***Seven Kingdom Parables***

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**McGee Introduction:** As we have said, the Gospel of Matthew is probably the key gospel to the Bible. It is the open door to both the Old and the New Testaments. If that is true, then chapter 13 is the key to the Gospel of Matthew. This makes chapter 13 all-important. It will give us a better understanding of what the kingdom of heaven is than any other place in the book. We call it the Mystery Parables Discourse, and it is one of the three major discourses in the Gospel of Matthew.

1. The Sermon on the Mount looks back to the past. It is the law for the land.
2. The Mystery Parables Discourse reveals the condition of the kingdom of heaven in the world during the present age.
3. The Olivet Discourse looks to the future, to the return of the King and the things beyond this age.

Let me remind you that our Lord followed John the Baptist in preaching, "... Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). And our Lord enunciated the law of that kingdom, the Sermon on the Mount. Then He demonstrated that He had the power, the dynamic, after which He sent His disciples out with the message. The message was met by rejection—Israel rejected its King. Therefore, our Lord hands down a judgment against the cities where His mighty works had been done and against the religious rulers. When they asked Him for a sign, He said that no sign would be given to them except that of Jonah. Jonah was a resurrection sign, and they were to have that fulfilled in Christ shortly after this. Finally, He gave that very personal invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (lit., "rest you")" (Matt. 11:28).

Now the question arises: What will happen to the kingdom of heaven? It is apparent that He will not establish it on the earth at His first coming. So what will happen to the kingdom of heaven during the interval between the suffering and the glory of Christ? Well, in the Mystery Parables Discourse our Lord sets before us kingdom-of-heaven conditions on earth during this interval, using seven or eight parables.

We call them Mystery Parables because in the Word of God a mystery is something hidden or secret up to a certain time and then revealed. The church is a mystery (according to this definition) since it was not a matter of revelation in the Old Testament. It was revealed after the death and resurrection of Christ. Actually, there could be no church until Christ died and rose again. Ephesians 5:25 says that "... Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."

It is important to note that the kingdom of heaven is not synonymous with the church nor is the church synonymous with the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven today is all Christendom (the portion of the world in which Christianity is predominant can be considered as Christendom). Obviously, the church is *in* Christendom, but it is not all of it by any means.

These Mystery Parables show the direction of the kingdom after it had been offered and rejected by Israel. They reveal what is going to take place between the time of Christ's rejection and the time when He returns to the earth as King. With these parables our Lord covers the entire period between His rejection by Israel and His return to the earth to establish His kingdom. I consider them very important.

As we begin this chapter, notice that the very actions of Jesus are interesting.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:71). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

## **The Four Soils**

Four different conditions encountered, results depend upon the condition.

The Holy Spirit seems to use idioms or ideas consistently (called the “Principle of Expository Constancy”).

Who is the Sower and what is He sowing?

Don’t confuse parables with stories. Stories happened. The rich man and Lazarus is not a parable, he had a name, Lazarus, this was a real event. A parable is sort of like a riddle, an object lesson or an allegory.

## **Matthew 13:1**

**The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.**

[**out of the house, and sat by the sea side**] Matthew 13:1-35 were uttered in public by the sea; Matthew 13:36-52 were spoken in private in the house (Matthew 4:13; Matthew 9:28). This was most likely the house of Peter.

**The same day**—Our Lord scarcely ever appears to take any rest: he is incessant in his labors, and instant in season and out of season; and in this he has left all his successors in the ministry an example, that they should follow his steps: for he who wishes to save souls will find few opportunities to rest. As Satan is going about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, the messenger of God should imitate his diligence, that he may counteract his work. The gospels are journals of our Lord’s life.<sup>2</sup>

**McGee:** Notice the symbolism here. “The same day went Jesus out of the house,” which speaks of the house of Israel. “And sat by the sea side”—the sea represents the gentile nations (a symbolism used elsewhere in Scripture). Our Lord is leaving the nation of Israel and turning to the world. He is now speaking of what will take place in the world until He returns as King.

This act denotes a tremendous change that has taken place in His method. Great multitudes were gathered together to hear Him, and He went into a ship and began to talk to them as they stood on the shore.<sup>3</sup>

## **Matthew 13:2**

**And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.**

Although our Lord gives several parables in this chapter, He interprets only two of them: the parable of the sower and the parable of the wheat and tares. His interpretation is a guide to the symbolism in the other parables. For instance, in this parable of the sower, the birds represent Satan. Now when He uses the symbol of birds in another parable, we

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<sup>2</sup> Adam Clarke’s Commentary

<sup>3</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:71). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

may be sure that they do not represent something *good*. We need to be consistent and follow our Lord's interpretation.

The parable of the sower is the first of the Mystery Parables and may be considered as the foundation for all of them.<sup>4</sup>

**[and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore]** How graphic this picture!—no doubt from the pen of an eye-witness, himself impressed with the scene. It was “the same day” on which the foregoing solemn discourse was delivered, when His kindred thought Him “beside Himself” for His indifference to food and repose—that same day retiring to the seashore of Galilee; and there seating Himself, perhaps for coolness and rest, the crowds again flock around Him, and He is fain to push off from them, in the boat usually kept in readiness for Him; yet only to begin, without waiting to rest, a new course of teaching by parables to the eager multitudes that lined the shore. To the parables of our Lord there is nothing in all language to be compared, for simplicity, grace, fulness, and variety of spiritual teaching. They are adapted to all classes and stages of advancement, being understood by each according to the measure of his spiritual capacity.<sup>5</sup>

**sat beside the sea.** The Sea of Galilee. Sitting was the typical posture for teachers. Local tradition locates this discourse at the “Cove of the Parables,” a natural horseshoe-shaped amphitheater whose environmental acoustics could have carried Jesus' voice over 300 feet (91 meters) from the **boat** to a crowd of hundreds on the shore.<sup>6</sup>

**Spurgeon:** Great multitudes longed to hear his teaching, and see his miracles. These pressed upon him so eagerly that there was danger of his being pushed into the sea; and the more so because it was not a scattered crowd, but they were gathered together unto him—pressing about his person. The ship became his pulpit, and the little space between it and the shore gave him breathing-space, and enabled the more to hear him. The shelving beach and the blue sky would make a grand auditorium, with room for "the whole multitude"; a finely comprehensive expression. The teacher sat, and the people stood: we should have less sleeping in congregations if this arrangement still prevailed.

### **Matthew 13:3**

**And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow**

The Opening of the Parabolic Discourse. Jesus gives the parable of the sower and soils (vv. 3b–9), explains his purpose in speaking in parables (vv. 10–17), then interprets the parable (vv. 18–23).

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<sup>4</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:72). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>5</sup>Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 13:2). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>6</sup>ESV Study Bible

**He spake many things unto them in parables**—Parable, from παρρα, near, and βαλλω, I cast, or put. A comparison or similitude, in which one thing is compared with another, especially spiritual things with natural, by which means these spiritual things are better understood, and make a deeper impression on an attentive mind. Or, a parable is a representation of any matter accommodated, in the way of similitude, to the real subject, in order to delineate it with the greater force and perspicuity. See more on this subject at the conclusion of this chapter. No scheme, says Dr. Lightfoot, of Jewish rhetoric was more familiarly used than that of parables; which, perhaps, creeping in from thence among the heathens, ended in fables.

It is said in the tract Sotah, chap. 9. “From the time that Rabbi Meri died, those that spake in parables ceased.” Not that this figure of rhetoric perished in the nation from that time; but because he surpassed all others in these flowers, as the gloss there from the tract Sanhedrin speaks. “A third part of his discourses was tradition; a third part allegory; and a third part parable.” The Jewish books every where abound with these figures, the nation inclining by a kind of natural genius to this kind of rhetoric. Their very religion might be called parabolical, folded up within the covering of ceremonies; and their oratory in their sermons was like to it. But is it not indeed a wonder, that they who were so much given to and delighted in parables, and so dexterous in unfolding them, should stick in the outward shell of ceremonies, and should not have brought out the parabolical and spiritual sense of them? Our Savior, who always spoke with the common people, uses the same kind of speech, and very often the same preface which they used, To what is it likened? See Lightfoot in loco. Though we find the basis of many of our Lord’s parables in the Jewish writings, yet not one of them comes through his hands without being astonishingly improved. In this respect also, Surely never man spoke like this man. Under the parable of the sower, our Lord intimates,

1. That of all the multitudes then attending his ministry, few would bring forth fruit to perfection. And
2. That this would be a general case in preaching the Gospel among men.<sup>7</sup>

**[behold]** The 25th of 60 times in Mt.; 222 times in the New Testament; 1104 times in the Old Testament.

**[sower]** - Isa 55:10, 11. God is the Sower and the seed is His Word.

**[a sower went forth to sow]** The parable of the sower is explained in Matthew 13:18-23 and pictures the whole course of this age of grace, portraying reception of the Word of God in different hearts and the results that follow (cp. Matthew 13:24-30,36-43).

**Parables** are Jesus' means of communicating truth through a narrative analogy in order to teach a moral or spiritual lesson. His parables produce very different results in different people: they hide truth from the “crowd” (v. 2; see note on 5:2), while they communicate truth to the disciples.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Adam Clarke’s Commentary

<sup>8</sup> ESV Study Bible

**[parables] (Dake)** Ten facts about parables:

1. Greek: *parabole* (GSN-3850), a comparison (Mark 4:30); figure (Hebrews 9:9; Hebrews 11:19); proverb (Luke 4:23); and an illustration (Matthew 13:3,10,13,18,24,31-36,53; Matthew 15:15; Matthew 21:33,45; Matthew 22:1; Matthew 24:32; etc.). Parables are extended similes.
2. They illustrate truth and make it clear by comparison with something that is already familiar.
3. They impart instruction and rebuke without causing offense (2 Samuel 12).
4. They create interest and hunger for further information (Matthew 13:10-17; 2 Samuel 12).
5. The stories are always true and the points illustrated must not be considered false and absurd.
6. The historical background and the circumstances and occasion when uttered must be understood.
7. Their words and details must be defined literally, not spiritually.
8. The similarity between the point illustrated and the illustration must be noted.
9. The point illustrated is always stated with the parable or is clear by the occasion uttered.
10. The principles of interpretation are given by Jesus Himself. Any interpretation at variance with these principles or with the purpose of the parable is unscriptural.<sup>9</sup>

**In parables. (Barnes)** The word parable is derived from a Greek word signifying *to compare together*, and denotes a similitude taken from a natural object to illustrate a spiritual or moral subject. It is a narrative of some fictitious or real event, in order to illustrate more clearly some truth that the speaker wished to communicate. In early ages it was much used. Heathen writers, as AEsop, often employed it. In the time of Christ it was in common use. The prophets had used it, and Christ employed it often in teaching his disciples. It is not necessary to suppose that the narratives were strictly true. The main thing—the *inculcation of spiritual truth*—was gained equally, whether it was true, or was only a supposed case. Nor was there any dishonesty in this. It was well understood. No person was deceived. The speaker was not understood to affirm the thing *literally narrated*, but only to fix the attention more firmly on the moral truth that he presented. The design of speaking in parables was the following:

(1.) To convey truth in a more interesting manner to the mind; adding to the truth conveyed the beauty of a lovely image or narrative.

(2.) To teach spiritual truth so as to arrest the attention of ignorant people, making an appeal to them through the *senses*.

(3.) To convey some offensive truth, some pointed personal rebuke, in such a way as to bring it *home* to the conscience. Of this kind was the parable which Nathan delivered to David, 2 Samuel 12:1-7 and many of our Saviour's parables addressed to the Jews.

(4.) To *conceal* from one part of his audience truths which he intended others should understand. Thus Christ often, by this means, delivered truths to his disciples in the presence of the Jews, which he well knew the Jews would not understand; truths

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<sup>9</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

pertaining to them particularly, and which he was under no obligations to explain to the Jews. See Mark 4:33, Matthew 13:13-16.

Our Saviour's parables are distinguished above all others for clearness, purity, chasteness, intelligibility, importance of instruction, and simplicity. They are taken mostly from the affairs of common life, and intelligible, therefore, to all men. They contain much of *himself* his doctrine, life, design in coming, and claims; and are therefore of importance to all men; and they are told in a style of native simplicity intelligible to the child, yet instructive to men of every rank and age. In his parables, as in all his instructions, he excelled all men in the purity, importance, and sublimity of his doctrine.<sup>10</sup>

**A Sower went forth to sow. (Barnes)** The image here is taken from an employment known to all men, and therefore intelligible to all. Nor can there be a more striking illustration of preaching the gospel, than placing the seed in the ground to spring up hereafter, and bear fruit.

Jesus used many illustrations, or *parables*, when speaking to the crowds. A parable compares something familiar to something unfamiliar. It helps us understand spiritual truth by using everyday objects and relationships. Parables compel listeners to discover truth, while at the same time concealing the truth from those too lazy or too stubborn to see it. To those who are honestly searching, the truth becomes clear. We must be careful not to read too much into parables, forcing them to say what they don't mean. All parables have one meaning unless otherwise specified by Jesus.<sup>11</sup>

**[And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying]** These parables are SEVEN in number; and it is not a little remarkable that while this is the *sacred number*, the first FOUR of them were spoken to the mixed multitude, while the remaining THREE were spoken to the Twelve in private—these divisions, *four* and *three*, being themselves notable in the symbolical arithmetic of Scripture. Another thing remarkable in the structure of these parables is, that while the first of the Seven—that of the Sower—is of the nature of an Introduction to the whole, the remaining Six consist of *three pairs*—the Second and Seventh, the Third and Fourth, and the Fifth and Sixth, corresponding to each other; each pair setting forth the same general truths, but with a certain diversity of aspect. All this can hardly be accidental.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Barnes' Notes

<sup>11</sup> Life Application Notes

<sup>12</sup> Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 13:3). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

### **Matthew 13:4**

**And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:**

[fowls] - Jer 5:27.

[way side] Hard paths by unfenced fields.

**Some seeds fell by the way side**—The hard beaten path, where no plough had broken up the ground.

**Spurgeon:** When HE sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside: even when the Chief Sower is at work, some seed fails. We know he sows the best of seed, and in the best manner; but some of it falls on the trodden path, and so lies uncovered and unaccepted of the soil. That soil was hard, and beaten down with traffic. There, too, on the wayside, we meet with dust to blind, settlements of mud to foul, and birds to pilfer: it is not a good place for good seed. No wonder, as the seeds lay all exposed, that the fowls came and devoured them up. If truth does not enter the heart, evil influences soon remove it.

### **Matthew 13:5**

**Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth:**

**Stony places**—Where there was a thin surface of earth, and a rock at the bottom.

**Stony places. (Barnes)** Where there was little earth, but where it was hard and rocky; so that the roots could not strike down into the earth for sufficient moisture to support the plant, When the sun became hot, they of course withered away. They sprang up the sooner because there was little earth to cover them.

**Forthwith.** Immediately. Not that they sprouted and grew any quicker or faster than the others, but they were not so long in reaching the surface. Having little root, they soon withered away.

**Spurgeon:** Among the rocks, or on the shallow soil, with the unbroken rock-pan underneath, the seed fell; for if the sower had altogether avoided such places he might have missed some of the good ground. In these stony places the seed speedily sprang up because the rock gave it all the heat that fell on it, and so hastened its germination. But, soon up, soon down. When the time came for the sun to put forth his force, the rootless plants instantly pined and died. "They had no deepness of earth," and "no root"; what could they do but wither quite away? Everything was hurried with them; the seeds had no time to root themselves, and so in hot haste the speedy growth met with speedy death. No trace remained.

### **Matthew 13:6**

**And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.**

### **Matthew 13:7**

**And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:**

*(Hosea 10:12) Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.*

*(Jeremiah 4:3) For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.*

**[Among thorns]** Where the earth was ploughed up, but the brambles and weeds had not been cleared away.

**Among thorns.** That is, in a part of the field where the thorns and shrubs had been imperfectly cleared away, and not destroyed. They grew with the grain, crowded it, shaded it, exhausted the earth, and thus choked it.

**seeds fell along the path.** As seed was scattered in all directions while the farmer walked up and down the field, some would fall accidentally on the hard paths that surrounded the field. **rocky ground.** The terrain in Palestine was uneven and rocky, covered by a thin layer of soil. **among thorns.** Competing for nutrients from the soil, weeds choke out the good plants, which are then unable to reach maturity and bear fruit.<sup>13</sup>

### **Matthew 13:8**

**But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.**

**[good ground]** Good, because the stones and thorns were removed and the ground was plowed, thus properly preparing it to grow wheat. Where the earth was deep, the field well ploughed, and the brambles and weeds all removed.

Notice the decline in the fruit. Perhaps a prophecy. [Verse 18 explains the parables to the disciples in private.]

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<sup>13</sup> ESV Study Bible

The model is that the Lord is the Sower, sowing the seed, which is the Word of God. The field in the collective sense is the world. In the world there is different kinds of ground, in this case, four.

### **The Four Soils**

1. The first is hard surface, the seed lays there and the birds of the air take it away. Who are the birds? See v. 19, the evil one takes away the seed; birds are bad in parables.
2. In stony places, there is a little soil but not enough to take root. A little pressure, a little persecution and they are on to the next fad, there are no roots.
3. Third, they mean well but they get swept up in the cares of this world. The world makes it's demands on you and the thorns choke out any spiritual fruit.
4. The last type is the condition of the heart where the seed really takes root and bears fruit.

This parable should encourage spiritual “sowers”—those who teach, preach, and lead others. The farmer sowed good seed, but not all the seed sprouted, and even the plants that grew had varying yields. Don't be discouraged if you do not always see results as you faithfully teach the Word. Belief cannot be forced to follow a mathematical formula (i.e., a Matthew 4:1 ratio of seeds planted to seeds sprouted). Rather, it is a miracle of God's Holy Spirit as he uses your words to lead others to him.

**McGee:** Sowing seed was a familiar sight in Palestine. They would sort of scratch the surface of the ground with a very crude plow. Sometimes they didn't even do that much. Then the sower would go out and fling the seeds upon the earth. Even today in our land in the springtime, all the way from Pocatello, Idaho, to Pensacola, Florida, and from Minnesota to Muleshoe, Texas, you will see farmers sowing wheat, corn, and cotton. It is a very familiar sight—of course, *we* use machines to sow the seed, while in that day it was sown by hand.

As I have mentioned, the sower represents the Lord Jesus—we learn this from the parable of the wheat and tares (v. 37). The Lord Jesus is the One sowing the seed, and I feel that this defines His work today in the world. He was the King, but He laid aside His regal robes, and today He is doing the work of a farmer, sowing seed—but He is still the King.

The *seed*, we learn from verse 19, represents the Word of God. The *field* symbolizes the world (v. 38). Notice that it is the world, not the church. We are talking about a world situation. I think the picture is something like this: Here is the church in the world, and outside there are multitudes of people who have not received Christ. The Word of God is given to this one, and the Word is given to that one, and the Word is given to another. One accepts, another does not accept. Our business is to sow the seed, although not everyone will receive it.

The Lord Jesus has charge of this great program of sowing seed. He has given me a little corner to work in, and my business is to sow seed. I want to be specific here. This is the day for sowing seed. I don't want to split hairs, but the “harvest” is *not* the picture for today. But someone says, “Didn't Christ say, ‘Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest?’” Yes, and let's look at it again: “But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as

sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Matt. 9:36–38).

This passage occurs just before the Lord sent out His apostles to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The age of the Law was coming to an end. Harvesttime comes *after* seed has been sown. For fifteen hundred years, approximately, under Law, the seed had been sown. Then the harvest came, and a new age, a new dispensation, came in. At the close of one age there is a harvest, and at the beginning of another age is the sowing of seed. But I want to emphasize that the harvest at the end of an age is *judgment*. We will see that in some of the parables which follow.

However, in our day we are to be sowing the seed of the Word of God. I rejoice when I receive a letter from someone who has listened to my teaching of the Word by radio. Some folk listen for a year or more, and finally the seed germinates and brings forth fruit. It is my business to sow the seed while I am in the world, and it is *your* business also, my friend.

Now notice where the seed falls. It falls on four types of soil, and three-fourths of the seeds do not grow—they die. There was nothing wrong with the seed, but the soil was the problem. You can argue election all you want to, but in this parable there is a lot of free will exhibited. The condition of the soil is all-important as far as the seed is concerned.

Now let’s look at our Lord’s interpretation of the types of soil on which the seed fell. In verse 4 He says that some of it fell by the wayside, and the birds came and ate it up. In verse 19 He explains to His disciples the meaning of it—<sup>14</sup>

#### **Yashanet.com: THE FIRST PARABLE (v. 3-8)**

In two places, Yeshua explains the meaning of His parables to some degree. In verses 19-23 he explains this first parable, by showing four possible scenarios involving people who hear the gospel message of the Kingdom. The interpretation is as follows:

1. Some won't understand the message when it is presented. Why they don't Yeshua doesn't exactly say. However, it could be that they had given little time to learning about the things of God, and when the "secrets" of the Kingdom (see verses 11 & 35) were presented, they were clueless as to the importance. This lesson is reflected in the opposite (positive) sense, in the two short parables in verses 44-46, where Yeshua shows that the Kingdom is worth more than anything this life has to offer, and the wise man would give up anything of this life for it.
2. The second person is one who grasps the message, but is overcome by certain "negative" influences (i.e., incorrect doctrine from others) and pressured into letting go of it.
3. The third type of person also has some understanding, but in this case is overcome by certain "positive" things (i.e., love for the cares of the world) and also loses hold.
4. Lastly, are those who are prepared, understand, and take hold.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:73). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>15</sup> Yashanet.com

**hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.** Typical agricultural yields ranged from about fivefold to fifteenfold, with a tenfold return considered a good crop, though some historical reports tell of extraordinary yields up to a hundredfold (one is in Gen. 26:12).

**Spurgeon:** This would repay all losses, especially at the highest rate of increase here quoted. To the bird, the weather, and the weeds, three sets of seeds have gone; yet, happily, one remains to increase and fill the barn. The sowing of good seed can never be a total failure: "other fell into good ground." The harvest was not equally great on every spot of fertile soil: it varied from an hundredfold to thirtyfold. All good ground is not alike good; and, besides, the situation may differ. Harvests are not all alike in the same farm, in the same season, and under same farmer; and yet each field may yield a fairly good harvest.

Lord, if I cannot reach to a hundred fold, let me at least prove to be good ground by bearing thirtyfold.

### **Matthew 13:9**

**Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.**

**[He that hath ears to hear, let him hear]** Used by Christ to call attention to certain utterances: 7 times on earth (Matthew 11:15; Matthew 13:9,43; Mark 4:9,23; Mark 7:16; Luke 8:8; Luke 14:35); and 8 times in heaven (Rev. 2:7,11,17,29; Rev. 3:6,13,22; Rev. 13:9).

This is a proverbial expression, implying that it was every man's duty to pay attention to what was spoken, Matt. 11:15.

Human ears hear many sounds, but there is a deeper kind of listening that results in spiritual understanding. If you honestly seek God's will, you have spiritual hearing, and these parables will give you new perspectives.

**Those who have ears, let them hear!** Some early manuscripts have: "Those who have ears to hear, let them hear!" Yeshua used this phrase at 11:15; he uses it at 13:43; Mk 4:9, 23; 7:16; Lk 8:8, 14:35; Rv 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9; and related phrases are found at Mk 8:18; Lk 9:44; Ac 7:51, 28:27; Ro 11:8. It is an invitation to seek Yeshua's deeper meaning and respond with one's whole being (compare above, 7:24, 26). But, as vv. 10–17 show, not everyone is prepared to do so.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 13:9). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

## **Matthew 13:10**

**And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?**

The parables are given to those who are spiritually enlightened so you can know the mysteries of the kingdom. (Not for those in the darkness.)

When speaking in parables, Jesus was not hiding truth from sincere seekers, because those who were receptive to spiritual truth understood the illustrations. To others they were only stories without meaning. This allowed Jesus to give spiritual food to those who hungered for it while preventing his enemies from trapping him sooner than they might otherwise have done.<sup>17</sup>

**[Why speakest thou to them in parables?]** Though before this He had couched some things in the parabolic form, for more vivid illustration, it would appear that He now, for the first time, formally employed this method of teaching.<sup>18</sup>

**Spurgeon:** Perhaps the crowd had complained to the disciples that they could not see what their Master was driving at The apostles may have felt unable to reply. As the matter perplexed them, they did well to inquire of their infallible Teacher, rather than to invent an explanatory theory, which might have been altogether a mistake.

## **Matthew 13:11**

**He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.**

**[Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given]** Seven reasons for using parables:

1. To reveal truth in a form intended to create more interest (Matthew 13:10-11,16)
2. To make known new truths to interested hearers (Matthew 13:11-12,16-17)
3. To make known mysteries by comparison with things already known (Matthew 13:11)
4. To conceal truth from disinterested hearers and rebels at heart (Matthew 13:11-15)
5. To add truth to those who love it and want more of it (Matthew 13:12)
6. To take truth away from those who hate and do not want it (Matthew 13:12)
7. To fulfill prophecy (Matthew 13:14-17,35)<sup>19</sup>

**[mysteries]** A mystery is a secret previously hidden but now made clear so that no mystery remains for anyone who will accept the truth as revealed (Matthew 13:19; 2 Cor. 4:3-4).

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<sup>17</sup> Life Application Notes

<sup>18</sup> Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 13:10). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>19</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

**[kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given]** At present the realm of profession, for tares and wheat and good and bad are now mixed together in the same kingdom. At the end of this age the two classes will be separated. The professors will be sent to hell and the possessors of the kingdom will continue in its literal aspect forever (Matthew 13:40-43,49-50; Matthew 25:31-46; Rev. 20; Zech. 14).

**[The mysteries of the kingdom]** The word “mystery,” in the Bible, properly means a thing that is “concealed,” or that “has been concealed.” It does not mean that the thing was “incomprehensible,” or even difficult to be understood.

The thing might be “plain” enough if revealed, but it means simply that it “had” not been before made known. Thus the “mysteries of the kingdom” do not mean any doctrines incomprehensible in themselves considered, but simply doctrines about the preaching of the gospel and the establishment of the new kingdom of the Messiah, which “had not” been understood, and which were as yet concealed from the great body of the Jews. See Rom. 16:25; 11:25; Eph. 3:3-4, 9. Of this nature was the truth that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles; that the Jewish polity was to cease; that the Messiah was to die, etc. To the disciples it was given to know these truths. This was important for them, as they were to carry the gospel around the globe. To the others it was not “then” given. They were too gross, too earthly; they had too, grovelling conceptions of the Messiah’s kingdom to understand these truths, even if communicated to them. They were not to preach the gospel, and hence our Saviour was at particular pains to instruct his apostles in the system which they were to preach. The Pharisees, and Jews generally, were not prepared to receive the system, and would not have believed it, and therefore he purposely employed a kind of teaching which was intended for his apostles only.<sup>20</sup>

**He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven**—The word “mysteries” in Scripture is not used in its classical sense—of religious secrets, nor yet of things incomprehensible, or in their own nature difficult to be understood—but in the sense of things of purely divine revelation, and, usually, things darkly announced under the ancient economy, and during all that period darkly understood, but fully published under the Gospel (1Co 2:6–10; Eph 3:3–6, 8, 9). “The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,” then, mean those glorious Gospel truths which at that time only the more advanced disciples could appreciate, and they but partially.<sup>21</sup>

**but to them it is not given**—(See on Mt 11:25). Parables serve the double purpose of *revealing* and *concealing*; presenting “the mysteries of the kingdom” to those who know and relish them, though in never so small a degree, in a new and attractive light; but to those who are insensible to spiritual things yielding only, as so many tales, some temporary entertainment.

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<sup>20</sup> Barnes’ Notes

<sup>21</sup> Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 13:11). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

(JNTC) **Secrets**, KJV “mysteries.” Greek *mystêria* means truths hitherto kept secret but now revealed. A number of religions both then and now claim to make available special knowledge or mysteries to an inner circle. Biblical religion is not so. Its truths are available to all who read and believe the Bible. While Yeshua walked the earth there was an inner circle of disciples who received precisely the knowledge necessary to disseminate God’s truth to all men throughout all generations. But nothing in Scripture supports the notion, found today in cultish, occult and New Age circles, that true Christianity depends on teachings that are above or beyond the Bible. The extra-canonical books used to support this idea prove themselves both morally and spiritually inferior to the canon of the *Tanakh* and the New Testament. In Yeshua’s time the “mystery religions” included the cult of Dionysius and the Orphic Mysteries, as well as various Gnostic approaches (“gnostic,” from Greek *gnôsis*, “knowledge,” means that these religions claimed to offer a body of secret knowledge which would lead to salvation). Those who today champion a secret Christian tradition available only to initiates have merely revived the heresy of Gnosticism.

**It has been given to you to know the secrets ... but ... not ... to them.** By itself this is a harsh statement, seemingly out of keeping with the Talmudic epigram of Rabbi Chanina, “Everything is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven” (B’rakhot 33b), which implies that anyone can turn to God, so that there is not one group to whom “it has been given” and another to whom it has not. In vv. 12–17 Yeshua clarifies his meaning and softens the impact.<sup>22</sup>

**secrets** (plural of Gk. *mystêrion*, “mystery, secret”). The mysteries of how the kingdom of heaven would operate are revealed to the disciples but withheld from the spiritually unresponsive crowd. In particular, these secrets **of the kingdom of heaven** explained its partial and preliminary manifestations in Jesus' day as it was breaking into the world in advance of its full and final appearing at the end of the age.<sup>23</sup>

### **Matthew 13:12**

**For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.**

He is talking about spiritual insight.

**[given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath]** Believers increase in knowledge, but unbelievers go into more ignorance and darkness (Romans 1:18-32; Titus 1:15; 1 John 1:7; John 3:16-20).

**[taken away even that he hath]** This is a work of man's own unbelief and rebellion and the work of Satan (Matthew 13:15,19; 2 Cor. 4:3-4).

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<sup>22</sup> Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 13:11). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

<sup>23</sup> ESV Study Bible

This phrase means that we are responsible to use well what we have. When people reject Jesus, their hardness of heart drives away or renders useless even the little understanding they had.

**McGee:** If you know a little truth and you want to know more, the Lord will add to it. If you don't want to know the truth, the Lord will see to it that you won't get it. You see, the Lord will never shut the door to one who wants to hear. He makes it very clear that this is His reason for speaking in parables. Those who don't want to hear will not understand them.

The Lord drew His parables from commonplace things, things that were at the fingertips of the people in that day. He gave them great spiritual truths illustrated by things they knew and could see. Someone has put this concept in verse—

He talked of grass and wind and rain  
And fig trees and fair weather,  
And made it His delight to bring  
Heaven and earth together.  
He spoke of lilies, vines and corn,  
The sparrow and the raven.  
And words so natural, yet so wise  
Were on men's hearts engraven.

In the parable of the sower, we see what could be called a kingdom-of-heaven condition; that is, it exhibits God's present rulership over the entire earth as He calls out a people to His name. And God is carrying out His program today through the church, the called-out body, composed of every true believer. Therefore, we have a kingdom-of-heaven condition today as God is carrying on His program of bringing folk to a saving knowledge of Christ.<sup>24</sup>

**whoever has, to him more will be given:** Just as the failure to respond to truth brings blindness, so a positive response is rewarded with further understanding (see Luke 8:16–18). This principle is applied to the leaders of Israel in fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies—especially Isa. 6:9, 10. The leaders' rejection of the message of Jesus further blinded them to the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom. Parables then became Jesus' effective tools for both revealing truth to the faithful and concealing it from those who would reject it. As emphasized by Mark 4:11, 12, Jesus' parables revealed the truths of His kingdom as well as the unbelief of many.<sup>25</sup>

**Spurgeon:** Those who had some understanding of spiritual truth would come to yet clearer light; but those who lived willfully in the dark, would, in the presence of light, become more and more bewildered, and would gain nothing but the discovery that they did not know what they thought they knew. An ignorant man going into a museum, or

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<sup>24</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:74). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>25</sup> The Nelson Study Bible

healing a learned lecture, only feels himself a greater fool. He learns nothing, because he is not able to comprehend the elementary terms of the science. It is just so with carnal men; spiritual truth rather blinds them than enlightens them.

### **Matthew 13:13**

**Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.**

*(Isaiah 42:20) Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears, but he heareth not.*

**[they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand]** They can see, but they refuse to see; they can hear, but they refuse to hear; they are capable of understanding, but they refuse to accept the truth, desiring to hold on to their old religious traditions and professions in preference to walking in the light of new truth.

**[Because they seeing, see not]** Mark Mark 4:12 and Luke Luke 8:10 say, “That seeing, they may not see etc.,” but there is no difference.

Matthew simply states the “fact,” that though they saw the “natural” meaning of the story—though they literally understood the parable—yet they did not understand its “spiritual” signification. Mark and Luke do not state the “fact,” but affirm that he spoke with this “intention”—implying that such “was” the result. Nor was there any dishonesty in this, or any unfair disguise. He had truths to state which he wished his “disciples particularly” to understand. They were of great importance to their ministry. Had he clearly and fully stated them to the Jews, they would have taken his life long before they did. He therefore chose to state the doctrines so that if their hearts had been right, and if they had not been malignant and blind, “they might have understood them.” His doctrines he stated in the best possible way, and it was not his fault if they did not understand him. By little and little, in this way, he prepared many even of the Jews to receive the truth; by the only possible way of ever gaining access to their minds. It was, moreover, entirely proper and right to impart instruction to his disciples which he did not “intend” for others.<sup>26</sup>

**Therefore speak I to them in parables**—which our Lord, be it observed, did not begin to do till His miracles were malignantly ascribed to Satan.<sup>27</sup>

**seeing they do not see.** God sovereignly uses the parables to either harden a person's heart so that he or she will be unable to respond (v. 15), or to elicit the positive response of coming to Jesus, asking for an explanation, and accepting his message (cf. v. 10).

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<sup>26</sup> Barnes' Notes

<sup>27</sup> Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 13:13). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

## **Matthew 13:14**

**And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:**

*(Isaiah 6:9-10)<sup>9</sup> And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. <sup>10</sup> Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.*

*( John 12:37-41)<sup>37</sup> But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: <sup>38</sup> That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? <sup>39</sup> Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, <sup>40</sup> He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. <sup>41</sup> These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.*

One almost gets the idea that the truth is embodied in parables to tuck it away so some can't find them. They are a learning aid, but only to those who have the Holy Spirit to illuminate His truth.

**[And in them is fulfilled]** This place is quoted substantially from Isaiah 6:9-10. It was literally fulfilled in the time of Isaiah. In the time of Christ the people had the same character. Like them, they closed their eyes upon the truth, and rejected the divine teaching. The words of Isaiah were therefore “as well fitted” to express the character of the people in the time of Christ as in that of the prophet. In this sense they were “fulfilled,” or “filled up;” that is, “a case occurred that corresponded to their meaning.” See the notes at Matt. 1:22. It is not by any means intended that Isaiah, when he spoke these words, had any reference to the time of Christ. The meaning in both places is, that the people were so gross, sensual, and prejudiced, that they “would” not see the truth, or understand anything that was contrary to their grovelling opinions and sensual desires; a case by no means uncommon in the world. See the passage more fully explained in my notes at Isaiah 6.<sup>28</sup>

**[Waxed gross]** Literally, “has become fat.” This language is commonly applied to “the body,” but is also used to denote one who is stupid and foolish in mind. Here it means that the people were so sensual and corrupt that they did not see or understand the pure spiritual principles of the gospel.

**[Lest they should see]** Lest they should see their lost condition as sinners, and turn and live. The reason given here why they did not hear and understand the gospel is, that their “heart” was “wrong.” They “would” not attend to the things that belonged to their peace.

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<sup>28</sup> Barnes' Notes

**[I should heal them]** Should pardon, sanctify, and save them. Sin is often represented as a disease, and the pardon and recovery of the soul from sin as “healing.”

### **Matthew 13:15**

**For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.**

**[waxed gross]** Greek: *pachuno* (GSN-3975), to make fat, stupid, insensible, inattentive, dull, and callous (Matthew 13:15; Acts 28:27). The idea here is that the people became this way, little by little, until they were past normal, vigorous obedience to truth and righteousness.

**Their eyes they have closed**—Totally and obstinately resisted the truth of God, and shut their eyes against the light.

**[lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart]** Three things they were failing to do—see, hear, and understand with the heart (note, Matthew 13:13, above).

**[and should be converted, and I should heal them]** Two blessings for all believers:

1. Conversion, a change of direction, a new walk with God (note, Psalm 19:7; Psalm 51:13; Matthew 18:3; Luke 22:32; Acts 3:19; James 5:19-20)
2. Physical healing, a change of health, a new health in God (Psalm 91; Psalm 103:3; Matthew 8:17; Isaiah 53; Romans 8:11; 1 Peter 2:24; 3 John 1:2; James 5:14-16; Mark 16:17-18; John 14:12-15; John 15:7,16)<sup>29</sup>

**(JNTC)** It should not be surprising that there are people who look without seeing and listen without hearing or understanding, since Isaiah 6:9–10, quoted here (also at Yn 12:39–40 and Ac 28:26–27), predicts such a phenomenon, as do Jeremiah 5:21 and Ezekiel 12:2. If they were to see, hear and understand they would do *t.shuvah* (in earlier editions of the JNT, return to God), that is, “repent” (Greek *epistrepho*; see above, 3:2N), and God would heal them. But v. 15 says that such people—out of misplaced fear that God might do something bad, whereas actually God does only good—listen selectively (barely hear) and perceive amiss (close their eyes), or equivalently, as Yochanan puts it, they “love darkness rather than light” (Yn 3:19 and its context).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Dake Study Bible, Dake’s Study Bible

<sup>30</sup> Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 13:13). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

## **Matthew 13:16**

**But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.**

**But blessed are your eyes**—You improve the light which God has given you; and you receive an increase of heavenly wisdom by every miracle and by every sermon.

[**Blessed are your eyes**] That is, you are happy that you are permitted to see truth which they will not see.

You are permitted to understand the spiritual meaning of the parables, and in some degree the plan of salvation.

## **Matthew 13:17**

**For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.**

**Many prophets and righteous men**—These lived by and died in the faith of the promised Messiah: the fullness of the time was not then come for his manifestation in the flesh.

[**Many prophets and righteous men**] They wished to see the times of the Messiah.

They looked to it as a time when the hopes of the world would be fulfilled, and when the righteous would be happy, John 8:56. “Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad.” Compare also 1 Pet. 1:10-12; Heb. 11:13. So Isaiah and the prophets looked forward to the coming of the Messiah as the consummation of their wishes and the end of the prophecies, Rev. 19:10. The object always dearest to the hearts of all righteous people is to witness the coming and advancement of the kingdom of Christ. Compare Rev. 22:20.<sup>31</sup>

*(Genesis 22:3-4) <sup>3</sup>And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. <sup>4</sup>Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.*

**For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired**—rather, “coveted.”

**to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them**—Not only were the disciples blessed above the blinded just spoken of, but favored above the most honored and the best that lived under the old economy, who had but glimpses of the things of the new kingdom, just sufficient to kindle in them desires not to be fulfilled to any in their day. In Lu 10:23, 24, where the same saying is repeated on the return of the Seventy—the words, instead of

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<sup>31</sup> Barnes' Notes

“many prophets and righteous men,” are “many prophets *and kings*”; for several of the Old Testament saints were kings.<sup>32</sup>

**BKC: 13:10-17 (Mark 4:10-12; Luke 8:9-10).** The disciples immediately noticed a change in Jesus’ method of teaching. They **came** and **asked** Him directly **why** He was speaking in parables. The Lord gave three reasons. First, He was communicating through parables in order to continue to reveal truth to His disciples (Matt. 13:11-12a). The Lord said He was making known to them the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. The word “secrets” is translated “mysteries” in other Bible versions and in most of its other NIV occurrences. This term in the New Testament referred to truths not revealed in the Old Testament but which now were made known to those instructed.

Why did Matthew frequently use the term “kingdom of heaven” whereas Mark, Luke, and John used only “kingdom of God” and never “kingdom of heaven”? Some scholars answer that “heaven” was a softened reference to God by Jews who, out of reverence, avoided saying the word “God.” However, Matthew did occasionally write “kingdom of God” (12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43). And he used the word “God” almost 50 times. A distinction seems intended: The “kingdom of God” never includes unsaved people, but the “kingdom of heaven” includes both saved people and also others who profess to be Christians but are not. This is seen in the Parable of the Wheat and Weeds (see comments on 13:24-30, 36-43), the Parable of the Mustard Seed (see comments on vv. 31-35), and the Parable of the Net (see comments on vv. 47-52).

Significantly Jesus did not speak of any “mysteries” concerning the kingdom of heaven until the nation had made its decision concerning Him. That decision was made by the leaders when they attributed His divine power to Satan (9:34; 12:22-37). Now Jesus unveiled certain additional facts not given in the Old Testament about His reign on earth. Many Old Testament prophets had predicted that the Messiah would deliver the nation Israel and establish His kingdom on the earth. Jesus came and offered the kingdom (4:17), but the nation rejected Him (12:24). In view of that rejection what would happen to God’s kingdom? The “secrets” of the kingdom now reveal that an entire Age would intervene between Israel’s rejection of the King and her later acceptance of Him.

Second, Jesus spoke in parables to hide the truth from unbelievers. The secrets of the kingdom would be given to the disciples, but would be hidden from the religious leaders who rejected Him (13:11b, but not to them). In fact, even what they had previously known would no longer be clear to them (v. 12). Jesus’ parabolic instruction thus carried with it a judgmental aspect. By using parables in public, Jesus could preach to as many individuals as before, but He could then draw the disciples aside and explain to them fully the meaning of His words.

Third, He spoke in parables in order to fulfill Isaiah 6:9-10. As Isaiah began his ministry, God told him that people would not comprehend his message. Jesus experienced the same kind of response. He preached the Word of God and many people

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<sup>32</sup>Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 13:17). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

NIV New International Version

vv. verses

v. verse

saw but they did not truly perceive; they heard but did not . . . understand (Matt. 13:13-15).

By contrast, the disciples were blessed because they were privileged to see (understand) and hear these truths (v. 16), truths that people in Old Testament times longed to know (v. 17; cf. 1 Peter 1:10-11). Jesus' disciples heard the same truths as the national leaders, but their response was entirely different. The disciples saw and believed; the leaders saw and rejected. Since the leaders turned from the light they had been given, God gave them no additional light.<sup>33</sup>

(JNTC) *Tzaddik*, “righteous one.” In Jewish tradition generally, a godly, holy, righteous man. In Hasidic tradition such people, thought to have had supernatural powers, attracted followers and taught their disciples how to live. The implication of vv. 16–17 is that nothing inherent in the *talmidim* earned them the privilege of seeing the things you are seeing; the prophets and *tzaddikim* may well have been more meritorious; but God reveals himself not on the basis of human merit but by his own sovereign will (11:25–30, Ro 9:6–18, 1C 1:17–31). In this sense, since Yeshua had to be born at a particular time and place (Ga 4:4–5), there necessarily had to be some to whom “it was given” (v. 11) and others to whom it was not.<sup>34</sup>

### **Matthew 13:18**

**Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.**

See also Mark 4:13-20; Luke 8:11-15. “Hear ye, therefore, the parable of the sower.” That is, hear the “explanation” or the “spiritual meaning” of the narrative given before. Mark adds Mark 4:13, “Know ye not this parable? And how, then, shall ye know all parables?” By which it seems that the Saviour regarded this as one of the simplest and plainest of the parables, and gave an explanation of it that they might understand the general principles of interpreting others.

### **Matthew 13:19**

**When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.**

[wicked one] The devil

**And understandeth it not**—Μη συνιεντος, perhaps more properly, regardeth it not, does not lay his heart to it.<sup>35</sup>

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cf. *confer*, compare

<sup>33</sup>Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:49). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>34</sup>Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 13:17). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

<sup>35</sup>Adam Clarke's Commentary

**[When any one heareth]** The seed represents the word of God communicated in any manner to the minds of people—by the Scriptures, by preaching, by acts of Providence, or by the direct influences of the Holy Spirit.

**[Then cometh the wicked one]** That is, Satan Mark 4:15, or the devil Luke 8:12—the one eminently “wicked,” the accuser, the tempter.

He is represented by the fowls that came and picked up the seed by the way-side. The gospel is preached to people hardened in sin. It makes no impression. It lies like seed on the “hard path;” it is easily taken away, and never suffered to take root.

**McGee:** The birds represent the evil one—the Devil takes away the seed sown by the wayside. This is something which ought to cause every church member to examine his own heart. My friend, don’t apply this to the other fellow, apply it to yourself. Someone has written a clever little poem which says:

When you get to heaven  
You will likely view,  
Many folk there  
Who’ll be a shock to you.  
But don’t act surprised,  
Or even show a care,  
For they might be a little shocked  
To see you there.

The wayside soil apparently represents church members, professing Christians. They heard the Word of God, but it was not the hearing of faith. The Word was not mixed with faith—or if it was, it was a formal, intellectual faith which simply nodded the head. In other words, to folk like this, Christianity is a sideline. Belonging to the church is like belonging to a lodge or a club. These folk are in deep freeze. Not only do we find them in our churches, but some of them have fallen away from the church and are in cults and “isms.”

The second group are represented by the rocky soil.<sup>36</sup>

The seed in the parable (vv. 3–9) represents **the word of the kingdom** (i.e., “the gospel of the kingdom,” cf. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14). All of Jesus’ “seeds” are good, so the emphasis is on the various types of soil (13:19–23). **The evil one** is Satan, the devil (see note on 4:1). **sown along the path.** Hearts that are hardened, like the scribes and Pharisees.

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<sup>36</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:73). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

## **Matthew 13:20**

**But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;**

[anon] Meaning soon, presently, or by and by. *euthus*, Greek 2117, *yoo-thoos*'; perhaps from Greek 2095 (eu) and Greek 5087 (tithemi); *straight*, i.e. (literal) *level*, or (figurative) *true*; adverb (of time) *at once* :- anon, by and by, forthwith, immediately, straightway.

**[But he that received the seed into stony places]** Jesus explains this as denoting those who hear the gospel; who are caught with it as something new or pleasing; who profess to be greatly delighted with it, and who are full of zeal for it.

Yet they have no root in themselves. They are not true Christians. Their hearts are not changed. They have not seen their guilt and danger, and the true excellency of Christ. They are not “really” attached to the gospel; and when they are tried and persecution comes, they fall—as the rootless grain withers before the scorching rays of the noonday sun.

**[With joy receiveth it]** They are under deep distress for sin; they are apprehensive of danger; they hear the offer of mercy, and they seem to themselves to embrace the gospel. It offers them peace, pardon, salvation, and religion assumes for a time a lovely aspect. They IMAGINE that they are pardoned, and they have a temporary peace and joy. Their anxieties subside. Their fears are gone. They are for a time happy. “The mere subsiding of anxious feeling from any cause will make the mind for a time happy.” They have only to imagine, therefore, that their sins are forgiven, to produce a certain kind of peace and joy. But there is no ground of permanent joy, as there is in true pardon, and soon their joy subsides, and all evidence of piety disappears. There is no strength of PRINCIPLE to resist temptation; there is no real love of the Saviour; and in times of trial and persecution they show that they have no true religion, and fall away.<sup>37</sup>

## **Matthew 13:21**

**Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.**

**[dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended]** A plain reference to backsliding (Luke 8:13; John 15:1-6; Romans 8:12-13; Galatians 1:6-8; Galatians 5:4,19-21; Galatians 6:7-8; 2 Cor. 11:3-4; 1 Thes. 3:8; 1 Tim. 5:11-15; 2 Tim. 2:12; James 5:19-20; 1 John 3:8; Hebrews 3:6,12-14; Hebrews 6:4-12; Hebrews 10:26-29; Hebrews 12:15; 2 Peter 2:20-22; Rev. 3:5; Rev. 22:18-19).

**[tribulation]** Acts 14:22; Romans 5:3; 2 Tim. 3:12.

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<sup>37</sup> Barnes' Notes

[persecution] See Psalm 10:2.

(Psalm 10:2) The wicked in *his* pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.

**Yet hath he not root in himself**—His soul is not deeply convinced of its guilt and depravity; the fallow ground is not properly ploughed up, nor the rock broken. When persecution, etc., ariseth, which he did not expect, he is soon stumbled—seeks some pretext to abandon both the doctrine and followers of Christ. Having not felt his own sore, and the plague of his heart, he has not properly discovered that this salvation is the only remedy for his soul: thus he has no motive in his heart strong enough to counteract the outward scandal of the cross; so he endureth only for the time in which there is no difficulty to encounter, no cross to bear.<sup>38</sup>

**[Is offended]** Stumbles or falls, for this is the meaning of the word “offend” in the New Testament. See the notes at Matthew 5:29. Persecution and trial are placed in his path, and he falls as he would over a “stumbling-block.” He has no strength of principle—no real confidence in God—no true religion. Mere excited animal feeling is all that he ever had, and that is not sufficient to sustain him when the trial comes.

How easy it is to agree with Christ with no intention of obeying. It is easy to denounce worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth, and still do nothing to change our ways. In light of eternal life with God, are your present worries justified? If you had everything you could want but forfeited eternal life with God, would those things be so desirable?

**McGee:** These rocky-ground folk are the opposite of the first group. It was the Devil who took the Word away from the wayside hearers, but the flesh is the culprit with this group. Instead of being in deep freeze, they are in the oven—warm, emotional, shedding tears, greatly moved. These are what I call Alka-Seltzer Christians. There is a lot of fizz in them. They make as much fuss during a service as a rocket on a launching pad, but they never get into orbit. I classify them as the Southern California type. They have great zeal and energy during special meetings, but they are like burned out Roman candles after the meetings are over.

I stood on the rear end of a train, years ago, going through Kansas. Someone had thrown a paper onto the railroad tracks. As our train sped past, the paper fluttered up into the air and went in every direction. As soon as the train had gone by, the paper settled down on the track and was soon dead still. As I looked way back at the paper lying there, I thought, “That is just like a lot of so-called Christians. When there is a sensational meeting in progress, they really get enthusiastic, but they have no real relationship with Christ. It is just an emotional high.” They are the rocky-ground folk.

The third group of hearers is like thorny ground—<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Adam Clarke’s Commentary

<sup>39</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:73). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

## **Matthew 13:22**

**He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.**

**[He also that received seed among the thorns]** These represent the cares, the anxieties, and the deceitful lure of riches, or the way in which a DESIRE to be rich deceives people.

They take the time and attention. They do not leave opportunity to examine the state of the soul. Besides, riches allure, and promise what they do not yield. They promise to make us happy; but, when gained, they do not do it. The soul is not satisfied. There is the same desire to possess more wealth. And to this there is no end “but death.” In doing it there is every temptation to be dishonest, to cheat, to take advantage of others, to oppress others, and to wring their hard earnings from the poor. Every evil passion is therefore cherished by the love of gain; and it is no wonder that the word is choked, and every good feeling destroyed, by this “execrable love of gold.” See the notes at 1 Timothy 6:7-11. How many, O how many, thus foolishly drown themselves in destruction and perdition! How many more might reach heaven, if it were not for this deep-seated love of that which fills the mind with care, deceives the soul, and finally leaves it naked, and guilty, and lost!<sup>40</sup>

**McGee:** With these folk the world crowds out the Word of God. The Devil got the wayside folk, and the flesh took care of the rocky-ground folk, but the world chokes out the Word for this class of hearers. The cares of the world move in. Sometimes it is poverty, and other times it is the deceitfulness of riches. It is quite interesting that folk at each end of the social spectrum—extreme poverty and extreme prosperity—are folk who are the most difficult to reach for Christ. I find that a great many people have let the cares of the world crowd out the Word of God. These three types of soil do not represent three types of believers—they are not believers at all! They have heard the Word and have only professed to receive it. My friend, it is well for all of us to examine ourselves to see whether or not we are really in the faith.

Thank God, some seed falls on good ground, and our Lord interprets this for us—<sup>41</sup>

## **Matthew 13:23**

**But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.**

**[beareth fruit]** Fruit bearing depends upon the kind of soil and proper care in cultivation. See Twelve Great lessons of John 15:1-8.

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<sup>40</sup> Barnes' Notes

<sup>41</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:73). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

**[Into good ground]** Those whose hearts are prepared by grace to receive it honestly, and to give it full opportunity to grow.

In a rich and mellow soil—in a heart that submits itself to the full influence of truth, unchecked by cares and anxieties; under the showers and summer suns of divine grace; with the heart spread open, like a broad, luxuriant field, to the rays of the morning and to evening dews, the gospel takes deep root and grows; it has full room, and then and there only shows “what it is.”

The four types of soil represent different responses to God’s message. People respond differently because they are in different states of readiness. Some are hardened, others are shallow, others are contaminated by distracting worries, and some are receptive. How has God’s Word taken root in your life? What kind of soil are you?

**McGee:** These are the hearers who receive the Word and understand it. Some of them don’t bring forth much fruit—only thirtyfold, but some bring forth an hundredfold!

There must be an understanding of the Word. The Ethiopian eunuch, you remember, was reading the Word, but he didn’t understand it—although he *wanted* to understand it. So the Spirit of God put Philip there as a hitchhiker. He took a ride with the Ethiopian and gave him a ticket to heaven. He explained the Word to him—that the One who was led as a sheep to the slaughter was the Lord Jesus Christ, that He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. The Ethiopian believed and received Him.

Philip was sowing the seed of the Word of God. This is a kingdom-of-heaven situation as it reveals that the Sower, the Lord Jesus Christ, is sowing the seed of the Word of God in the world and that the Holy Spirit applies it to the hearts of those who want to believe.

After our Lord had given the parable of the sower, He said something quite interesting—<sup>42</sup>

**Sown on rocky ground** depicts a heart that is immediately receptive, but hardened, so that the gospel never takes **root** and thus fails to bear fruit. The seed **sown among thorns** likewise is **unfruitful**, choked out by a heart weighed down with the **cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches**. The good soil depicts the heart that has been prepared to receive the gospel, yielding an abundant harvest according to individual potential.<sup>43</sup>

**BKC: 13:18-23 (Mark 4:13-20; Luke 8:11-15).** In Jesus’ interpretation of **the** Parable of the Sower, He compared the four results of sowing to four responses to the kingdom message. This was the message preached by John, Jesus, and the apostles. First, when one hears the message but does not understand it, the devil (evil one; cf. Matt. 13:38-39; 1 John 5:19) snatches away the Word that was sown. This is seed sown on the path. The next two results—represented by seed on rocky places that had no root, and by seed among the thorns (worries and wealth) that choke it out—speak of hearers’ *initial* interest, but with no genuine heartfelt response. The seed on rocky soil speaks of a person

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<sup>42</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:74). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>43</sup>ESV Study Bible  
cf. *confer*, compare

who hears the Word but falls away (lit., “is offended,” *skandalizetai*; cf. Matt. 13:57; 15:12) when he faces trouble for having expressed interest in the Word. Only the seed that fell on good soil had an abiding result and the production of a crop that increased 100, 60, or 30 times what had been sown. The one who believes Jesus’ word (the man who hears the Word and understands it) will then receive and understand even more (cf. 13:12).

The difference in these results was not in the seed but in the soil on which the seed fell. As the gospel of the kingdom was presented, the good news was the same. The difference was in the individuals who heard that Word. The Lord was not saying that an exact 25 percent of those who heard the message would believe. But He was saying that a majority would not respond positively to the good news. In this parable Jesus demonstrated why the Pharisees and religious leaders rejected His message. They were not “prepared soil” for the Word. The “mystery” concerning the kingdom Jesus presented here was the truth that the good news was rejected by the majority. This had not been revealed in the Old Testament.<sup>44</sup>

### **Matthew 13:24**

**Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, *The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:***

Sowing good seed.

[**Another**] This word introduces the last three parables spoken in the public out of the house (Matthew 13:3-35), and "again" introduces the first three spoken in private inside the house (Matthew 13:44-52).

Jesus gives the meaning of this parable in Matthew 13:36-43. All the parables in this chapter teach us about God and his kingdom. They explain what the kingdom is really like as opposed to our expectations of it. The kingdom of heaven is not a geographic location, but a spiritual realm where God rules and where we share in his eternal life. We join that kingdom when we trust in Christ as Savior.<sup>45</sup>

**McGee:** In this parable our Lord picks up where He left off in the parable of the sower. He has told us that only one-fourth of the sown seed ever got into good ground. The other three-fourths never did produce anything because the folk who heard the Word did not respond to it. In other words, they were not saved. Of the people who heard the Word of God, only one-fourth were truly saved. Frankly, in my own ministry I have found the percentage even lower than that. If one out of ten responding to my invitation to receive Christ is genuine, I feel that my batting average is good. Other Christian workers tell me the same story. A member of the team of a very prominent evangelist has told me that only three percent of their inquirers can be considered genuine converts. So you see, our

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lit. literal, literally

<sup>44</sup>Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:49). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>45</sup>Life Application Notes

batting average is not too good, but we thank God for each person who does come to Christ. We are in a kingdom-of-heaven situation, giving out the Word of God—and this is what happens to it.

But now we see another facet of the kingdom-of-heaven condition in the world today. It is a picture of a man who sowed good seed in his field—<sup>46</sup>

**The kingdom of heaven may be compared to.** Jesus draws on various common experiences to describe the arrival and activity of the kingdom. Cf. “the kingdom of heaven is like” (vv. 31, 33, 44, 45, 47; 20:1; see also 18:23; 22:1; 25:1).

### **Matthew 13:25**

**But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.**

The sower is not necessarily asleep. (The Lord never sleeps).

Tares- *Zizania* -

**[enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way]** It was common in the East for enemies to sow tares and other poisonous seeds in the fields of those they wished to hurt. In India various weeds are sown that take years to get rid of.

**[tares]** Greek: *zizanon* (GSN-2215), seed in Palestine today that looks just like wheat while it is growing, but then while it matures it turns black (it shows its true color). Because if it gets mixed up in the wheat and you bake bread with it, it is poisonous! Must separate it out.

**[and went his way]** He had no doubt as to the tares growing. This should be the faith of the sower of good seed—the Word of God.

**Clarke: But while men slept**—When the professors were lukewarm, and the pastors indolent, his enemy came and sowed tares, ζιζανία degenerate, or bastard wheat. The righteous and the wicked are often mingled in the visible Church. Every Christian society, how pure soever its principles may be, has its bastard wheat—those who bear a resemblance to the good, but whose hearts are not right with God. He who sows this bastard wheat among God’s people is here styled God’s enemy; and he may be considered also as a sower of them who permits them to be sown and to spring up through his negligence. Wo to the indolent pastors, who permit the souls under their care to be corrupted by error and sin! This word does not, I believe, occur in any of the Greek classics, nor in Dioscorides; but it may be seen in the Geoponica, or Greek writers De Re Rustica: see the edition by Niclas, vol. i. lib. ii. c. 43, where το ζιζανιον is said to be the same which the Greeks call αρα; and Florentinus, the author, says, Το ζιζανιον, το

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<sup>46</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:75). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

λεγομενον Αιρα, φθειρει νον σιτον, αρτοις δε μιγνυμενη, σκοτοι τους εσθιοντας. “Zizanon, which is called αιρα, darnel, injures the wheat; and, mixed in the bread, causes dimness of the eyes to those who eat of it.” And the author might have added vertigo also. But this does not seem to be the grain to which our Lord alludes.

The word ζιζανια, zizania, which is here translated tares, and which should rather be translated bastard or degenerate wheat, is a Chaldee word; and its meaning must be sought in the rabbinical writers. In a treatise in the Mishna called Kelayim, which treats expressly on different kinds of seeds, the word זונים zunim, or זונין zunin, is used for bastard or degenerated wheat; that which was wholly a right seed in the beginning, but afterwards became degenerate—the ear not being so large, nor the grains in such quantity, as formerly, nor the corn so good in quality. In Psalm 144:13, the words מזון אל זון mizzan al zen, are translated all manner of store; but they properly signify, from species to species: might not the Chaldee word זונין zunin, and the Greek word ζιζανια, zizania, come from the psalmist’s זנזן zanzan, which might have signified a mixture of grain of any kind, and be here used to point out the mixing bastard or degenerate wheat among good seed wheat? The Persic translator renders it telkh daneh, bitter grain; but it seems to signify merely degenerate wheat. This interpretation throws much light on the scope and design of the whole passage. Christ seems to refer, first, to the origin of evil. God sowed good seed in his field; made man in his own image and likeness: but the enemy, the devil, (Matthew 13:39), corrupted this good seed, and caused it to degenerate. Secondly, he seems to refer to the state of the Jewish people: God had sowed them, at first, wholly a right seed, but now they were become utterly degenerate, and about to be plucked up and destroyed by the Roman armies, which were the angels or messengers of God’s justice, whom he had commissioned to sweep these rebellious people from the face of the land. Thirdly, he seems to refer also to the state in which the world shall be found, when he comes to judge it. The righteous and the wicked shall be permitted to grow together, till God comes to make a full and final separation.<sup>47</sup>

**[While men slept, his enemy came]** That is, “in the night,” when it could be done without being seen, an enemy came and scattered bad seed on the new-plowed field, perhaps before the good seed had been harrowed in.

Satan thus sows false doctrine in darkness. In the very place where the truth is preached, and while the hearts of people are open to receive it, by false but plausible teachers he takes care to inculcate false sentiments. Often it is one of his arts, in a revival of religion, to spread secretly dangerous notions of piety. Multitudes are persuaded that they are Christians who are deceived. They are awakened, convicted, and alarmed. They take this for conversion. Or they find their burden gone; they fancy that they hear a voice; or a text of Scripture is “brought” to them, saying that their sins are forgiven; or they see Christ hanging on the cross in a vision; or they dream that their sins are pardoned, and they suppose they are Christians. But they are deceived. None of these things are any conclusive evidence of piety. All these MAY exist, and still there be no true love to God or

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<sup>47</sup> Adam Clarke’s Commentary

Christ, and no real hatred of sin and change of heart. An enemy may do it to deceive them, and to bring dishonor on religion.<sup>48</sup>

**[And went his way]** There is something very expressive in this. He knew the soil; he knew how the seed would take root and grow. He had only to sow the seed and let it alone. So Satan knows the soil in which he sows his doctrine. He knows that in the human heart it will take deep and rapid root. It needs but little culture. Grace needs constant attendance and care. Error, and sin, and hypocrisy are the native products of the human heart, and, when left alone, start up with deadly luxuriance.

Notice *who* is asleep. While *men* slept, the enemy came. Remember, the sower is the Lord, and He neither slumbers nor sleeps. Satan is the enemy, and he sows tares among the wheat. The tares are false doctrine. There's a great deal of that type of sowing today.

**(JNTC) Weeds**, Greek *zizanion*, transliterating Hebrew *zonin*, a poisonous rye-grass which looks like wheat until the heads appear. Judaism understands *zonin* to be not a different plant from wheat but a degenerate form of it. This is seen from the fact that in Mishna Kilayim 1:1, "Wheat and *zonin* do not constitute mingled seeds with each other," in the sense of the biblical requirement that diverse kinds of seeds must not be sown together in the same field (Leviticus 19:19). The surprising legendary explanation of this comes from Genesis Rabbah 28:8 (on Genesis 6:7):

"Rabbi 'Azaryah said in Rabbi Y'hudah's name, 'All acted corruptly in the generation of the Flood: the dog had intercourse with the wolf, and the fowl with the peacock; hence it is written, "For all (flesh) on the earth had corrupted their way" (Genesis 6:12).' Rabbi Julian ben-Tiberius said in Rabbi Yitzchak's name, 'Even the earth debauched itself: wheat was sown and it produced *zonin*, for the *zonin* we find now came from the age of the Flood.' "

In the light of the fact that when Israel turns away from God the *Tanakh* repeatedly describes her with a related word, "*zonah*" ("prostitute"), this understanding of "*zonin*" has implications for understanding the parable.<sup>49</sup>

## **Matthew 13:26**

**But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.**

**McGee:** As wheat and tares first begin to grow, it is difficult to distinguish between them. Frankly, a lot of cults and "isms" also sound good at first. You cannot tell them from the real thing until about the twelfth or thirteenth lesson. Those are the lessons in which they introduce their false doctrine. Someone once said to me, "Dr. McGee, you should not criticize so-and-so. I listened to him, and he preached the gospel." Well, he does preach the gospel every now and then. But it is the other things he says that are in error. You see, he sows tares among the wheat.

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<sup>48</sup> Barnes' Notes

<sup>49</sup> Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 13:25). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

Now we will see that the sower knew who was responsible for the tares—<sup>50</sup>

### **Matthew 13:27**

**So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?**

### **Matthew 13:28**

**He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?**

**An enemy hath done this**—It is the interest of Satan to introduce hypocrites and wicked persons into religious societies, in order to discredit the work of God, and to favor his own designs.

**Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?**—A zeal which is rash and precipitate is as much to be feared as the total lack of strict discipline.

### **Matthew 13:29**

**But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.**

**[Ye root up also the wheat]** They so much resembled the true wheat that even then it would be difficult to separate them.

By gathering them, they would tread down the wheat, loosen and disturb the earth, and greatly injure the crop. In the harvest it could be done without injury.

### **Matthew 13:30**

**Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.**

There will be a separation. A burning of the tares and the wheat into His barn.

[See v. 36 for explanation.]

The sower is the Son of Man. The field is the world. The good seed are the children of the Kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one. The enemy is the devil. The harvest is the end of the Age, and the reapers are the angels.

Both tares and wheat must grow together until the end of the age (Matthew 13:39-43,49-50). Then they will be separated (Matthew 24:29-51; Matthew 25:31-46).

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<sup>50</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:75). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

**[Let both grow together] (Barnes)** They would not spoil the true wheat, and in time of harvest it would be easy to separate them.

Our Saviour teaches us here:

1. That hypocrites and deceived persons must be expected in the church.
2. That this is the work of the enemy of man. They are not the work of Christianity any more than traitors are of patriotism, or counterfeits are of the proper effect of legislating about money. They belong to the world, and hypocrisy is only one form of sin. The Christian religion never “made” a hypocrite, nor is there a hypocrite on the earth whose principles and practice it does not condemn.
3. That all hope of removing them entirely would be vain.
4. That an “attempt” to remove them altogether would injure real Christianity, by causing excitements, discord, and hard feelings even among Christians.
5. That Christ will himself separate them at the proper time. There is no doubt that it is the duty of the church to keep itself pure, and to cut off gross and manifest offenders, 1 Corinthians 5:4-5; but the Saviour refers here to those who may be “suspected” of hypocrisy, but against whom it cannot be proved; to those who so successfully imitate Christians as to make it difficult or impossible for man to distinguish them.<sup>51</sup>

The young weeds and the young blades of wheat look the same and can't be distinguished until they are grown and ready for harvest. Weeds (unbelievers) and wheat (believers) must live side by side in this world. God allows unbelievers to remain for a while, just as a farmer allows weeds to remain in his field so the surrounding wheat isn't uprooted with them. At the harvest, however, the weeds will be uprooted and thrown away. God's harvest (judgment) of all people is coming. We are to make ourselves ready by making sure that our faith is sincere.

**McGee:** This is a very important picture to see and to interpret. Our Lord says, “Don't try to pull up the tares. Let them both grow together, and when they finally head up, you will be able to recognize which are tares and which are wheat.”

Somebody comes to me and says, “Pastor McGee, do you think the world is getting better?” I reply that I do think it is getting better. Someone else asks me, “Do you think the world is getting worse?” I tell him that I do believe the world is getting worse. A third party who heard me give both answers, says, “What are you trying to do—ride the fence? It is not like you to try to please everybody.” Right! But actually, both are true. The wheat is growing and the tares are growing. The world is getting better—the wheat is heading up. Never has there been so much Bible teaching as there is today. I thank God for that. And there are many wonderful saints of God who love His Word and who would die defending it. That wheat is growing, my friend!

However, the world is also getting worse. There are a lot of tares growing. I have been a pastor for a long time. When I began my ministry, I entered a denomination with the idea of cleaning it up. I was the one that just about got cleaned out. I found I could not straighten out my denomination. I was thankful to find out from this passage, and related

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<sup>51</sup> Barnes' Notes

passages, that my business was to preach the Word. I don't go around pulling up tares anymore because I found that when you pull up tares, you also pull up some wheat with them. But now I know that my business is not to pull up tares but to sow the wheat. Sowing the Word of God is my responsibility.

Both tares and wheat are growing in this world. This is a kingdom-of-heaven situation in Christendom during this interval between Christ's rejection and His return to establish His kingdom upon the earth. It is not a picture of Christ's church. "Well," you say, "it certainly is a picture of the organized church." That is true, but the organized church is not *His* church. His church is composed of that invisible number of saints. When I say invisible, I mean that they are not confined to an organization. (Actually, I do not like the term *invisible* because I find out that a lot of the saints think it means that they are to be invisible Sunday night and at the midweek service. In fact, they are invisible many times.) The true church is made up of true believers, irrespective of any denomination. True believers are those who have trusted Christ as Savior, are resting in Him, and love His Word—this is the real test. Don't be disturbed that the wheat and tares are growing together. One day the Lord will put in His sickle and separate the tares and wheat. I am thankful it will not be my job because I am afraid I would pull up some of the wheat.<sup>52</sup>

**but gather the wheat into my barn**—Christ, as the Judge, will separate the two classes (as in Mt 25:32). It will be observed that the tares are burned *before* the wheat is housed; in the exposition of the parable (Mt 13:41, 43) the same order is observed: and the same in Mt 25:46—as if, in some literal sense, “with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked” (Ps 91:8).<sup>53</sup>

**Weeds** (plural of Gk. *zizanian*, only here in the NT) are probably darnel, a weedy rye grass with poisonous black seeds which resembles wheat in its early growth but is easily distinguished from it at maturity. Any attempt to **gather** the weeds would only endanger the wheat, because the roots of the weeds would be intertwined with those of the wheat. **Let both grow together** (v. 30). God allows both believers and unbelievers to live in the world until the day of judgment; see note on v. 38.<sup>54</sup>

### **Matthew 13:31**

**Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:**

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<sup>52</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:75). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>53</sup>Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 13:30). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>54</sup>ESV Study Bible

## **Matthew 13:32**

**Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.**

Mustard seeds grow into bushes about 3 feet tall. Have you ever seen a bird lodge in a small bush? This mustard seed apparently grows to become a monstrosity, something larger than it is supposed to. It becomes a structure so large and spacious that birds come and lodge in the branches. Birds are the birds that picked up the seed in the first parable; the ministers of Satan!

**McGee:** The mustard tree is an unlikely symbol of the church or of individual Christians. Ordinarily, fruit-bearing trees are used to depict believers. Mustard is a condiment and has no food value. It's not wheat germ, loaded with vitamins; it's just good on hot dogs and hamburgers. Mustard is not a food you can live on.

The mustard seed does not grow into a mighty oak like the little acorn does. It is a shrub which thrives best in desert lands.

The mustard seed "is the least of all seeds." Several years ago a liberal preacher in our area made the discovery that the mustard seed is not the least of all seeds. He thought he had found an error in the Bible. What did our Lord mean by "the least of all seeds"? It was the least of all seeds that the people in His audience knew about. It is my understanding that it is least of all the seeds in the category of plants to which the mustard belongs. It is a very small seed.

"But when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." This little seed, which should have become an herb, got to the fertilizer and became a tree large enough for birds to roost in.

This parable reveals the *outward* growth of Christendom as the parable of the leaven speaks of the *internal* condition of Christendom. The church has not converted the world, but it has had a tremendous influence on the world. Any place that Christianity has gone can be called Christendom.

This parable reveals the outward growth of the organized church. The church and the world have become horribly mixed. There has been real integration between man in the church and man in the world. They live and act very much alike in our day. The Christian should be *salt* in the world, not *mustard*!

"The birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." Years ago I heard another liberal preacher interpret the birds as being different denominations. He spoke of the Baptist birds, the Presbyterian birds, the Methodist birds, and all other church groups as being birds. That, of course, is a contradiction of our Lord's own interpretation of the birds in the first parable. We can be sure that the birds in the parables of this discourse do not speak of anything good, but rather they represent evil. The birds are the ones that took the seed which fell by the wayside. Our Lord said that they represent the enemy who is

Satan. I am afraid that Christendom today is a mustard tree filled with a lot of dirty birds!<sup>55</sup>

### **Matthew 13:33**

**Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.**

**McGee:** The parable of the leaven is the key parable of this chapter. Let me try to help you realize the importance of it. First of all, the Gospel of Matthew is the key book of the Bible. Secondly, chapter 13 is the key chapter of Matthew. And thirdly, verse 33 is the key verse of chapter 13. So actually, what we have here is one of the key verses of the Bible!<sup>56</sup>

Leaven in Jewish terms is a symbol of sin. Ex. Passover ceremony to get the leaven out of the house. Leaven is sin because it corrupts by puffing up.

What is the root of all sin? Pride. Whose pride? Satan's (Isa 14). Leaven is used as a type of sin throughout the Old Testament and the New (2x Jesus says, and 2x Paul says "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.")

"Three measures of meal": To an Arab or a Jew historically suggests the Oaks at Mamre (Gen 18 - from that time on - three measures of meal are the fellowship offering.) Wrong to hide leaven in the measures of meal! The Church will not be perfect, it will be impure. Leaven will be introduced and it will grow and contaminate.

These parables are prophecies of the Church age!<sup>57</sup>

**[leaven]** Leaven is figurative of sin (1 Cor. 5:6-8; Galatians 5:9); false doctrines (Matthew 16:6-12; Mark 8:15-21); and hypocrisy (Luke 12:1). A woman used figuratively in an evil sense represents wickedness, fallacy, uncleanness, and unfaithfulness (Lament. 1:17), harlotry (Ezekiel 16:15,22,26,28-59; Ezekiel 23:1-49; Ezekiel 36:17; Hosea 1:2; Hosea 2:2-17; Hosea 3:1; Rev. 17), wickedness (Zech. 5:5-11; Rev. 17:5), and false religion (Rev. 17). When used in a good sense women represent Israel (Genesis 37:9-10 with Rev. 12; Ezekiel 16), the two covenants (Galatians 4:21-31), and righteousness and purity (2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7-8). Meal symbolizes the Word of God (Matthew 4:4; John 6:47-63).

This illustrates how the kingdom of heaven teachings and the program of God in this age would become corrupted by false doctrines and unscriptural programs until the whole is corrupted (Luke 18:8; 1 Tim. 4:1-8; 2 Tim. 3:5; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; 2 Peter 3:3-4).

**[hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened]** All false teachings, religious programs, and professed Christian lives seek to hide behind the Word of God.

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<sup>55</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:76). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>56</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:76). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>57</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Matthew, khouse.org

**[measures]** Greek: saton (GSN-4568), about 1 1/2 pecks. Three measures was a heaping bushel, the common quantity used by one baking for a large household (Genesis 18:6).

**McGee:** “The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven”—but don’t stop there—“which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal.” What does the leaven represent? There are those who interpret the *leaven* as the gospel, and they ought to know better! Nowhere is leaven used as a principle of good; it is always a principle of evil. The word leaven occurs ninety-eight times in the Bible—about seventy-five times in the Old Testament and about twenty-three times in the New Testament—and it is always used in a bad sense. The great scholar, Dr. Lightfoot, made the statement that rabbinical writers regularly used leaven as a symbol of evil. In the Old Testament it was forbidden to be used in the offerings made to God. In the New Testament our Lord warned to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees (see Matt. 16:6). And the apostle Paul spoke of the leaven of malice and wickedness (see 1 Cor. 5:8). Symbolism in Scripture does not contradict itself, and we may be certain that leaven is not used in a good sense here in Matthew 13. Leaven is not the gospel.

The gospel is represented by the three measures of meal. How do we know this? Because meal is made out of grain or seed, and our Lord has already told us in the parable of the sower that the seed represents the Word of God.

Remember that this parable is a picture of what happens to the Word of God on this earth during the interval between Christ’s rejection and His exaltation when He will return to set up His kingdom. Note what happens to the Word of God represented by the meal. This woman comes along—I hope you ladies will forgive me for pointing this out—and when a woman is used in a doctrinal sense in Scripture, she is always used as a principle of *evil*. She takes the leaven and hides it in the meal. If the leaven represents the gospel, why in the world did she hide it? The gospel is to be shouted from the housetops and heralded to the very ends of the earth. Obviously, the leaven is a principle of evil, and the woman puts it in the meal, which represents the gospel, the Word of God.

We certainly see this in reality in our day. There is no cult or “ism” which ignores the Bible. I find that even those who worship the Devil, the demon worshipers, use the Bible. False teachers of every description put leaven in the meal, the Word of God.

What does leaven do? Well, leaven is a substance, such as yeast, used to produce fermentation. When it is put in bread dough, it causes it to rise. And it makes it tasty, also. That is the reason a great many people find a thrill in some of the cults. Unleavened bread is just blah as far as the natural taste is concerned. A little leaven really helps it. I grew up in the South, and my mother used to make delicious biscuits. She would put leaven in the dough and put them on the back of the stove to rise. If I came running into the kitchen, she would shush me because she didn’t want those biscuits to fall. When they got to a certain height, she would stop the fermentation by putting them in the oven and baking them. Have you ever seen what happens when you let dough continue to rise? I tell you, it makes a pan of corruption—something you wouldn’t want to eat! Leaven is a principle of evil.

This parable teaches that the intrusion of wrong doctrine into the church will finally lead to total apostasy—“The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, *till the whole was leavened.*” The Lord Jesus

Christ Himself said, "... when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). The way the question is couched in the Greek, it demands a negative answer. In other words, he is saying that when He does return the world will be in total apostasy. And the apostle Paul, writing to a young man studying for the ministry, warns that the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine (see 2 Tim. 4:3). The final, total apostasy of the church is revealed in the church of Laodicea (see Rev. 3:14–19).<sup>58</sup>

### **Yashanet: THE THIRD AND FOURTH PARABLES (v. 31-32 & 33)**

These short parables are the most peculiar. The first, involving the mustard seed, would indicate that the Kingdom of God would grow enormously despite its humble beginnings. However, the reference to the birds coming to land in the branches may be an indication of evil in the Kingdom. The latter parable involves leaven, which is also normally a metaphor for sin or evil. In this case as well, it may seem that Yeshua is saying that evil spreads throughout the Kingdom.<sup>59</sup>

### **Matthew 13:34**

**All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:**

### **Matthew 13:35**

**That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.**

Jesus only spoke to the multitudes in parables (from Chapter 12 on). These parables contain truths that are hidden from the Old Testament (otherwise they would not have been "kept hidden from the foundation of the world"). These things that the Lord is talking about in Mt 13 are first time occasions. Not found overtly in other Old Testament books.

What has been kept secret? Most concepts are found in the Old Testament. Except one (Eph 3:5): that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body and partakers of His promise in Christ Jesus by the gospel. The Church, not just that Gentiles, will be converted.

"Foundation of the world": 7x here ( Mt 25:34; Lk 11:50; Heb 4:3; 9:26; Rev 13:8; 17:8). From this mystery, we get the insight that these seven parables have the specific focus in the Church.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:77). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>59</sup>Yashanet.com

<sup>60</sup>Chuck Missler, Notes on Matthew, khouse.org

**[foundation]** Greek: *katabole* (GSN-2602), to cast or throw down (note the verb *kataballo* (GSN-2598), translated "cast down" in 2 Cor. 4:9; Rev. 12:10). *Katabole* should have been translated "overthrow" or "casting down of the world" in Matthew 13:35; Matthew 25:34; Luke 11:50; John 17:24; Ephes. 1:4; Hebrews 4:3; Hebrews 9:26; Hebrews 11:10; 1 Peter 1:20; Rev. 13:8; Rev. 17:8. With the exception of Hebrews 11:10, *katabole* is used with *kosmos* (GSN-2889), social world, and refers to the overthrow of the pre-Adamite world by the flood of Genesis 1:2; 2 Peter 3:5-7; Psalm 104:5-9; Jeremiah 4:23-26 and the defeat of Lucifer and his earthly kingdom before Adam (Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:11-17; Luke 10:18).

*Katabole* (GSN-2602) is not the ordinary word for founding or foundation. A reference to the founding of the world would require the use of *themelios* (GSN-2310), as in Luke 6:48-49; Luke 14:29; Acts 16:26; Romans 15:20; 1 Cor. 3:11-12; Ephes. 2:20; 1 Tim. 6:19; 2 Tim. 2:19; Hebrews 6:1; Hebrews 11:10; Rev. 21:14,19. This word is never used with *kosmos* (GSN-2889), social system, or used of *ge* (GSN-1093), the earth. The verb, *themelioo* (GSN-2311), occurs in Matthew 7:25; Luke 6:48; Ephes. 3:17; Col. 1:23; Hebrews 1:10; 1 Peter 5:10. This verb is used only once of the founding of the earth (Hebrews 1:10).

*Katabole* (GSN-2602), therefore, means the disruption, overthrow, or ruin of the social system before Adam. In Genesis 1:1 we have the *themelioo* (GSN-2311), founding of the earth (Hebrews 1:10), and in Genesis 1:2 we have the *katabole*, overthrow of the social system on the earth by a flood. Note in the first scriptures above that "from" is used seven times and "before" is used three times in connection with the overthrow of the social world. Thus, the New Testament is very clear that the earth became desolate and empty before it was re-created in the six days of Genesis 1:3-31.<sup>61</sup>

**McGee:** "I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world"—nail down that statement. Our Lord is giving us a brand-new truth. The things He is revealing now, in parables, have never been revealed like this in the Old Testament.<sup>62</sup>

### **Matthew 13:36**

**Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.**

**[Declare unto us]** That is, explain the meaning of the parable. This was done in so plain a manner as to render comment unnecessary. The Son of man, the Lord Jesus, sows the good seed—that is, preaches the gospel. This he did personally, and does now by his ministers, his providence, and his Spirit, by all the means of conveying "truth" to the mind. This seed was, by various means, to be carried over all the world. It was to be confined to no particular nation or people. The good seed was the children of the kingdom; that is, of the kingdom of God, or Christians. For these the Saviour toiled and died. They are the fruit of his labors. Yet amid them were wicked people; and all

<sup>61</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

<sup>62</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:77). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

hypocrites and unbelievers in the church are the work of Satan. Yet they must remain together until the end, when they shall be separated, and the righteous saved and the wicked lost. The one shall shine clear as the sun, the other be cast into a furnace of fire—a most expressive image of suffering.

We have no idea of more acute suffering than to be thrown into the fire, and to have our bodies made capable of bearing the burning heat, and living on in this burning heat forever and forever. It is not certain that our Saviour meant to teach here that hell is made up of “material” fire; but it is certain that he meant to teach that this would be a proper “representation” of the sufferings of the lost. We may be further assured that the Redeemer would not deceive us, or use words to torment and tantalize us. He would not talk of hell-fire which had no existence, nor would the Saviour of people hold out frightful images merely to terrify mankind. If he has spoken of hell, then there is a hell. If he meant to say that the wicked shall suffer, then they will suffer. If he did not mean to deceive mankind, then there is a hell, and then the wicked WILL be punished. The impenitent, therefore, should be alarmed. And the righteous, however much wickedness they may see, and however many hypocrites there may be in the church, should be cheered with the prospect that soon the just will be separated from the unjust, and that they shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.<sup>63</sup>

### **Matthew 13:37**

**He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;**

### **Matthew 13:38**

**The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;**

### **Matthew 13:39**

**The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.**

“end of the age” - found 6x (v. 39, 40, 47; 24:3; 28:20; Heb 9:26). Man’s age.

[**devil**] Satan is called "the enemy" (Matthew 13:25,28,39; Luke 10:19; Acts 13:10).

[**world**] Greek: *aion* (GSN-165), age, a period of time long or short. It refers to the end of this age, as do all the other places where "the end of the world" is used (Matthew 12:32; Matthew 13:39-40,49; Matthew 24:3; Matthew 28:20). This age will end at the second coming (Matthew 24:29-31; Matthew 25:31-46; Rev. 19:11-21; Zech. 14:1-5), but the earth and man will continue forever (Genesis 8:22; Genesis 9:12; Eccles. 1:4; Psalm 104:5; Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 7:13-14; Rev. 11:15; Rev. 21:3-22:5).

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<sup>63</sup> Barnes’ Notes

**The harvest is the end of the world**—the period of Christ’s second coming, and of the judicial separation of the righteous and the wicked. Till then, no attempt is to be made to effect such separation. But to stretch this so far as to justify allowing openly scandalous persons to remain in the communion of the Church, is to wrest the teaching of this parable to other than its proper design, and go in the teeth of apostolic injunctions (1Co 5).<sup>64</sup>

### **Matthew 13:40**

**As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.**

**[tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world]**

This refers to the judgment of the nations (Matthew 25:31-46; Daniel 7:9). The tares will be burned in the same sense the branches of Christ will be if they do not abide in Him (Matthew 8:12; Matthew 13:40-43,49-50; Matthew 24:31; Matthew 25:41,46; John 15:6).

**harvest.** The judgment that will follow the Son of Man's return at the close of the age (see note on 24:3) to establish his kingdom in its fully realized form.

### **Matthew 13:41**

**The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;**

### **Matthew 13:42**

**And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.**

**[furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth]** Another description of eternal hell, not the grave (Matthew 13:42,50; Rev. 9:2). Wailing, here and in Matthew 13:50; weeping in Matthew 8:12; Matthew 22:13; Matthew 24:51; Matthew 25:30; Luke 13:28; and gnashing of teeth in all these passages picture bitter remorse and pain.

Jesus often uses these terms to refer to the coming judgment. The weeping indicates sorrow or remorse, and gnashing of teeth shows extreme anxiety or pain. Those who say they don’t care what happens to them after they die don’t realize what they are saying. They will be punished for living in selfishness and indifference to God.

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<sup>64</sup>Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 13:39). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

### **Matthew 13:43**

**Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.**

“Who hath an ear...,” from Rev 2&3; the letters to Seven churches.

**[Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father]** The righteous will take over the kingdoms of this world forever (Rev. 1:5-7; Rev. 5:10; Rev. 11:15; Rev. 20:4-6; Rev. 22:4-5; Matthew 25:31-46; Zech. 14).

**[shine forth as the sun]** Be luminous like the sun and inherit all things (Matthew 5:5; Matthew 25:35; Luke 12:32; Romans 8:17; Daniel 7:18,22,27; Rev. 21:7).

At the end of the world, angels will separate the evil from the good. There are true and false believers in churches today, but we should be cautious in our judgments because only Christ is qualified to make the final separation. If you start judging, you may damage some of the good “plants.” It’s more important to judge our own response to God than to analyze others’ responses.

### **Matthew 13:44**

**Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.**

**[like unto treasure]** Here we have Israel's part in the kingdom or realm of profession in this age. She is like a treasure (Psalm 135:4; Exodus 19:5; Malachi 3:17) hid (lying dormant and failing to fulfill her calling, Romans 9-11). The field is the world (Matthew 13:38). The man is Christ (Matthew 13:34,37) seeking the treasure (John 1:11-12; Matthew 23:37-39). He joyfully gives His all to buy the field to get the treasure and all else in the field (Phil. 2:5-8; 2 Cor. 8:9; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 12:1-2). The treasure, though found, remains hidden in the world until Christ comes to take possession of it at His second coming (Romans 11:25-29; Luke 21:24; Luke 1:32-33; Isaiah 9:6-7).

**McGee:** The “treasure” is Israel. The “field” is the world. The “man” is the Son of man who gave Himself to redeem the nation Israel. This is not a sinner buying the gospel because the gospel is not hidden in a field. Israel, however, is actually buried in the world today. Someone says, “Well, they are a nation right now.” They are, but they certainly are having a struggle. They will not be able to enjoy their land until they receive it from the Lord Jesus Christ.

I was very much interested in reading a paper that came from Israel concerning a convention of certain scientists. In a picture I noted above the platform a great sign, printed in both Hebrew and English, which read something like this SCIENCE WILL BRING PEACE TO THIS LAND. May I say to you, friend, science will not bring peace to Israel—nor to any country. Only the Prince of Peace is able to do that.

Actually, Israel is buried throughout the world. The largest population of Jews is not in Israel but is in New York City. And Jewish people are scattered throughout the world. But God is not through with Israel as a nation. The apostle Paul wrote: “I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew...” (Rom. 11:1–2).

Paul believed that the Lord was not through with Israel. Zechariah, one of the last writers in the Old Testament, wrote that a new day would come for Israel: “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” (Zech. 12:10).

The prophet Jeremiah in many passages speaks of the regathering of the people of Israel and of God bringing them to their own land. That time is still future. When God regathers them, it will be by miracles so great that they will even forget their miraculous deliverance from Egypt which has been celebrated longer than any other religious holiday. God is not through with the nation Israel, and this parable makes that fact very clear. Israel is the treasure hid in a field, and Christ is the One who “for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.” In fact, He gave *Himself* to redeem the nation. Our Lord purchased them with His blood, just as He bought your salvation and my salvation. Zechariah writes of the cleansing which will take place at the time of Christ’s return to this earth: “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness” (Zech. 13:1).<sup>65</sup>

**(JNTC) A treasure hidden in a field** (v. 44). According to *halakhah*, if the treasure is unmarked and found on public land, it belongs to the finder. If it is marked, the owner must be sought. If it is natural (a gold nugget or a diamond) or unmarked and on private land, it belongs to the owner of the land; that’s why the finder **bought that field**—to become the owner.

But the story seems to imply that the finder bought the field at the “pre-treasure” price, and that if the owner had known the treasure was there, he wouldn’t have sold the field at that price. This raises an ethical question: is the finder obligated either by *halakhah* or morally (if that is different) to notify the owner of the treasure before buying the field? No. Property always has potential beyond what owners know; only God has perfect information. An owner can investigate the opportunities offered by what he owns, and others are not obligated to occupy their time with increasing his knowledge. So if I learn that your land has oil under it, I need not inform you of that fact when I offer to buy it, since ownership should motivate you more than me to find this out for yourself. The seller of this piece of land received a fair price for his land with the potential he knew about; as is often the case, the new owner bought it because he perceived additional potential.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:78). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>66</sup>Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 13:44). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

Treasure was often hidden in fields, since formal banks did not exist (the “bankers” of 25:27 were money-changers who exchanged currency and also seem to have loaned money at interest). Buys that field does not suggest earning one's salvation; instead, the parable emphasizes the supreme value of the hidden treasure (the kingdom of heaven), which is worth far more than any sacrifice one could make to acquire it (sells all that he has).<sup>67</sup>

### **Matthew 13:45**

**Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:**

Sounds like the parable of the hidden treasure. See Mal 3:17, yet says jewels, not pearls. Remember in the Torah the laws that were laid down, Deut 8 forbids oysters. Oysters are not kosher, one can only eat seafood with scales. This means that pearls were not prized by the Jewish community. While they might trade in them because they would sell them to the Gentiles, pearls are distinctly a Gentile ornament, not a Jewish ornament.

So why a pearl of great value used by Jesus in this parable? Because of all jewels, pearls are the only one that is made by a living organism as a response to irritation that has been introduced. What a fascinating model of the Church! A Gentile organ grows as the response to an irritation. The Church always grew under persecution. It is removed from its place of growth to become an item of adornment.<sup>68</sup>

**[like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls]** Here we have the church phase of the kingdom or realm of profession. The man, the seeking, the finding, and the purchase price are the same as in note <sup>c</sup>, Matthew 13:44, but here the pearl is purchased and not the place where the pearl is found, indicating the church's calling is heavenly, and Israel's is earthly.

### **Matthew 13:46**

**Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.**

Not saying to sell all and buy Jesus Christ, as Jesus is free gift. To aspire to doing anything to gain Him is blasphemy. To feel that you can add one thing to that which He has done 100% is arrogance; to assume that you can add to that which God has called complete is blasphemy.

The treasure is hidden in the field, or the world (Ex 19:5; Ps 135 – we are described as His peculiar treasure).

The One that gave up all that He had for the sake of the treasure is Jesus Christ! He wanted the treasure, He didn't buy just one little parcel He bought the whole field. He

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<sup>67</sup> ESV Study Bible

<sup>68</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Matthew, khouse.org

died on the cross for all sinners. Who did the buying? He did. What did it cost Him? His Blood. He purchased what? You and I! Who is the treasure hid in the field? You and I!

**[The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman]** The meaning is, that the proper seeking for salvation, or the proper conduct in reference to religion, is like the conduct of a “merchantman.” In his searches he found one pearl of great value, and sold all his possessions to obtain it. So, says the Saviour, people seeking for happiness and finding the gospel—the pearl of great price—should be willing to sacrifice all other things for this. Pearls are precious stones found in the shells of oysters, chiefly in the East Indies. See the notes at Matthew 7:6. They are valuable on account of their beauty and because they are rare. The value of them is greatly increased by their size. The meaning of this parable is nearly the same as the other. It is designed to represent the gospel as of more value than all other things, and to impress on us the duty of sacrificing all that we possess in order to obtain it.<sup>69</sup>

The kingdom of heaven is more valuable than anything else we can have, and a person must be willing to give up everything to obtain it. The man who discovered the treasure in the field stumbled upon it by accident but knew its value when he found it. The merchant was earnestly searching for the pearl of great value, and, when he found it, he sold everything he had to purchase it.

**McGee:** The popular interpretation of this parable says that the sinner is the merchantman and the pearl of great price is Christ. The sinner sells all that he has that he might buy Christ. One hymn says:

I have found the pearl of greatest price.  
My heart doth sing for joy.  
And sing I must for Christ is mine;  
Christ shall my song employ.

I cannot accept this interpretation, and I have dismissed it as unworthy of thoughtful consideration. To begin with, *who* is looking for goodly pearls? Are sinners looking for salvation? My Bible does not read that way, nor has that been my experience as a minister. Sinners are not looking for salvation. The merchantman cannot be the sinner because he has nothing with which to pay. To begin with, he is not seeking Christ, and if he were, how could he buy Him? The merchantman sells all that he has—how can a sinner sell all that he has when he is *dead* in trespasses and sins (see Eph. 2:1)? Further, the Scriptures are very clear that Christ and salvation are not for sale. Salvation is a gift—“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). God so loved that He *gave*. And in Romans 6:23 we are told that “the *gift* of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The correct interpretation of this parable reveals Christ as the merchantman. He left His heavenly home and came to this earth to find a pearl of great price. He found lost sinners and died for them by shedding His precious blood. He sold all that He had to buy us and redeem us to God. Paul told this to the Corinthians: “For ye know the grace of our

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<sup>69</sup> Barnes’ Notes

Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2 Cor. 8:9). He redeems us to God—He bought us.

Now let’s look at the pearl for a moment. The pearl represents the church. A pearl is not a stone like the diamond. It is formed by a living organism. A grain of sand or other foreign matter intrudes itself into the shell of a small sea creature. It hurts and harms it. The response of the organism is to send out a secretion that coats over the foreign matter. That fluid builds up until a pearl is formed—not a ruby or a diamond, but a beautiful white pearl. A pearl is not like other gems. It cannot be cut to enhance its beauty. It is formed intact. The minute you cut it, you ruin it.

The pearl was never considered very valuable by the Israelites. Several verses of Scripture give us this impression. For example, in Job 28:18 pearls are classed with coral. Although the pearl was not considered valuable among the Hebrews, it was very valuable to the Gentiles. When Christ used the figure of “goodly pearls” (v. 45), I imagine that His disciples wondered why. Oriental people gave to the pearl a symbolic meaning of innocence and purity, fit only for kings and potentates.

With this information in our thinking, let’s look again at the parable.

Christ came to this earth as the merchantman. He saw man in sin, and He took man’s sin and bore it in His own body. Our sin was an intrusion upon Him—it was that foreign matter. And He was *made* sin for us. As someone has put it, I got into the heart of Christ by a spear wound. Christ “... was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities ...” (Isa. 53:5).

Notice Christ’s response to the sinner. He puts around us His own righteousness. He covers us with His own white robe of righteousness. “... we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus ...” (Eph. 2:10). Christ sees us, not as we are now but as we shall be someday, presented to Him as “... a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27). Christ sold all that He had in order that He might gain the church. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

When we come to the last book of the Bible, the Book of the Revelation, we find a description of the New Jerusalem, the future home of the church. Notice the emblem on the outside of the city—the gates are made of *pearls!* That is no accident, friend; it is planned that way by Christ’s design. He is the merchantman “Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:79). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<b>Parables of the Kingdom in Matthew 13</b>		
<b>Parables</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>Meanings</b>
1. The Sower	13:1-23	The good news of the gospel will be rejected by most people.
2. The Wheat and the Weeds	13:24-30, 36-43	People with genuine faith and people with a false profession of faith will exist together between Christ's two Advents.
3. The Mustard Seed	13:31-32	Christendom, including believers and unbelievers, will grow rapidly from a small beginning.
4. The Yeast	13:33-35	People who profess to belong to God will grow in numbers without being stopped.
5. The Hidden Treasure	13:44	Christ came to purchase (redeem) Israel, God's treasured possession.
6. The Pearl	13:45-46	Christ gave His life to provide redemption for the church.
7. The Net	13:47-52	Angels will separate the wicked from the righteous when Christ comes.

### **Matthew 13:47**

**Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:**

**[like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind]** This illustrates the universal gospel work of gathering men into the kingdom. Their continuance together (in the same net), their separation and destiny are the same as that of the tares and wheat (Matthew 13:36-43,49-50).

### **Matthew 13:48**

**Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.**

**[The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net]** This parable does not differ in meaning from that of the tares. The gospel is compared to a net dragging along on the bottom of a lake, and collecting all—good and bad. The gospel may be expected to do the same; but in the end of the world, when the net “is drawn in,” the bad will be separated from the good; the one will be cast away, and the other saved. Our Saviour never fails to keep before our minds the great truth that there is to be a day of judgment, and that there will be a separation of the good and the evil. He came to preach salvation; and it is a

remarkable fact, also, that the most fearful accounts of hell and of the sufferings of the damned, in the Scriptures, are from his lips. How does this agree with the representations of those who say that all will be saved?<sup>71</sup>

### **Matthew 13:49**

**So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,**

The judgment. Separation of the good and the bad.

The parable of the fishing net has the same meaning as the parable of the wheat and weeds. We are to obey God and tell others about his grace and goodness, but we cannot dictate who is part of the kingdom of heaven and who is not. This sorting will be done at the last judgment by those infinitely more qualified than we.

### **Matthew 13:50**

**And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.**

**McGee:** Our Lord makes it clear in this section that it is a terrible thing to be *lost*.

I was very much interested in reading a scientific paper written by men who were presenting certain scientific evidence in several different fields, and their point was that science was not sure of many things. For example, they were not sure exactly what the atom blast would do. They were not sure of the consequences of germ warfare. They were not sure about the effect of the birth control pill. And many other things were mentioned. Then one of the scientists said this, "It's just like this matter of eternity. You may not *know* whether there is a heaven or a hell, but you had better make sure that you are going to heaven because even if you happen to be wrong, you'll be all right. But if you are wrong, it is surely going to be bad." And our Lord made it very clear that it is indeed going to be very bad.

It is considered sophisticated in our day to be a suave person. Certainly, you will not be considered a square if you deny the existence of hell. But, my friend, in reality you don't know a thing about it, do you? You may say, "Well, you don't know either." Well, I know what is in this Book. And since the Bible has been accurate in everything it has predicted, and since in my own life I have proven it true, I take it for granted that it is accurate in its description of hell. And I work on that premise—and it's more than a premise.

If you were told that a hurricane was going to hit your town, what would you do? After you had been given the information, someone might come along and say, "Oh, they warned of a hurricane ten years ago, and no hurricane came." I think you would say, "Well, they might have been wrong ten years ago, but they could be right this time; so I think I'll go to a storm cellar." You would be a fool if you didn't. What about the man

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<sup>71</sup> Barnes' Notes

who rejects Christ's warning of hell? He says, "I'll take my chance." It will be too bad if he is wrong. Our Lord Jesus Himself makes this fact very clear in this parable when He says, "the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."<sup>72</sup>

### **Matthew 13:51**

**Jesus saith unto them, *Have ye understood all these things?* They say unto him, Yea, Lord.**

Jesus asked the disciples if they had understood all He told them. Their yes answer is surprising, for they could not have known the full implications of these parables. In fact the disciples' subsequent questions and actions proved that they did not really comprehend the parables. Jesus, however, was performing the function of an owner of a house who could bring new and old treasures out of his storeroom.

In these seven parables He presented some truths they were well aware of and others that were new to them. They knew about a kingdom over which Messiah would rule and reign, but they did not know it would be rejected at the time it was offered. They knew the kingdom would include righteousness, but they did not know it would also include evil. Jesus pointed up a new truth that the period between His rejection and His second coming would be characterized by professing followers, both good and evil. This era would have a small beginning, but it would grow into a great "kingdom" of professors. Once this process began, it could not be stopped, and within it God is maintaining His people Israel and creating His church. This interadvent period will end with a time of judgment in which God will separate the wicked from the righteous and the righteous will then enter the earthly kingdom to rule and reign with Christ. Through these parables Jesus answered the question, What happened to the kingdom? The answer: God's kingdom will be established on earth at Jesus' second coming; meanwhile good and evil coexist.<sup>73</sup>

### **Matthew 13:52**

**Then said he unto them, *Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.***

Some call this the a parable. Somewhat like a figure of speech. Nevertheless, the content of this single verse has an important message for us.

**[scribe which is instructed]** Christ authorizes His disciples to be scribes ( Matthew 2:4).

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<sup>72</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:80). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>73</sup>Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:52). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

**[like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old]** The eighth parable in this discourse illustrates the fact that the kingdom of heaven truths are a mixture of new and old doctrines which will enable disciples to be qualified scribes in the realm of profession. The householder is the same man in all the other parables—Christ (Matthew 13:3,24,31,37-45).

**[new and old]** Mixture of old and new truths. Ministers must thoroughly understand truth and be able to disperse it abroad. "Things new and old" is a Jewish idiom of great plenty.

### **Matthew 13:53**

**And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.**

**[these parables]** Eight parables of the kingdom in Matthew 13:

1. Classes of hearers (Matthew 13:3-9,18-23)
2. Mixing bad with good (Matthew 13:24-30,37-43)
3. Abnormal growth (Matthew 13:31-32)
4. Truth corrupted (Matthew 13:33)
5. Israel's present state (Matthew 13:44)
6. Church phase of the kingdom (Matthew 13:45)
7. Universal effect of truth (Matthew 13:47)
8. Mixture of old and new truths (Matthew 13:52)

### **Matthew 13:54**

**And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this *man* this wisdom, and *these* mighty works?**

**[Into his own country]** That is, into Nazareth. Mark, who has also recorded this Mark 6:1-6, says that it took place on the Sabbath. It was common for our Saviour to speak in the synagogues. Any Jew had a right to address the people, if called on by the minister; and our Saviour often availed himself of the right to instruct the people and declare his doctrines. See Matthew 4:23.

The Identity of the Messiah Revealed. This section marks a major new emphasis in Matthew's narrative as Jesus' messianic identity is increasingly clarified.

### **Matthew 13:55**

**Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?**

The residents of Jesus' hometown had known Jesus since he was a young child and were acquainted with his family; they could not bring themselves to believe in his message. They were too close to the situation. Jesus had come to them as a prophet, one who challenged them to respond to unpopular spiritual truth. They did not listen to the timeless message because they could not see beyond the man.

“Is not this the carpenter's son?” That was what confused them. They did not recognize who He really was. To them He was just a carpenter's son. And that is all He is to some folk in our day. They think He was a great teacher, a great man, a wonderful person, but to them He was only a carpenter's son.

### **Matthew 13:56**

**And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this *man* all these things?**

[**sisters**] Christ not only had four half brothers, but more than two sisters, for if there had been only two the word "both" instead of "all" would be here.

Since they know Jesus' human roots, the people of Nazareth assume he cannot be anything special. He is a hometown son making fantastic claims for himself. His brothers and his sisters refers to other children born to Joseph and Mary after the birth of Jesus. Some interpreters, seeking to defend a doctrine of the “perpetual virginity of Mary,” have suggested that these were cousins, or children of Joseph from another marriage, but no evidence in the Greek words *adelphoi* (“brothers”) and *adelphai* (“sisters”), or in any other historical information, gives support to that view. For Mary to have sexual relations with her husband, Joseph, and to bear children, would contribute to her holiness, not detract from it (cf. Gen. 1:28; 1 Cor. 7:3–5; 1 Tim. 5:14). On Jesus' family, see note on Mark 6:3.

### **Matthew 13:57**

**And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, **A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.****

[**offended**] Greek: *skandalizo* (GSN-4624), scandalized or stumbled because of Him (Matthew 13:41,57).

[**And they were offended in him**] That is, they took offence at his humble birth, and at the indigent circumstances of his family. They were too proud to be taught by one who, in family connections, they took to be their equal or inferior. People always look with envy on those of their own rank who advance pretensions to uncommon wisdom or superior power.

**[A prophet is not without honour]** This seems to be a proverbial expression. Jesus advances it as a GENERAL truth. There MIGHT be some exceptions to it, but HE was not an exception. Everywhere else he had been more honored than at home. There they knew his family. They had seen his humble life. They had been his companions. They were envious of his wisdom, and were too proud to be taught by him. A case remarkably similar to this occurs in the history of the discovery of America. Columbus, a native of Genoa, had by patient study conceived the idea that there was a vast continent which might be reached by sailing to the west. Of this his countrymen had no belief. Learned people had long studied the science of geography, and they had never imagined that such a continent could exist; and they were indignant that HE, an obscure man, should suppose that he “possessed wisdom superior to all the rest of mankind united.” It was accordingly a fact that he was obliged to seek for patrons of his undertaking out of his own country; that there he received his first honors; and to other kingdoms the discoveries of the obscure Genoese gave their chief wealth and highest splendor.<sup>74</sup>

Jesus was not the first prophet to be rejected in his own country. Jeremiah experienced rejection in his hometown, even by members of his own family (Jeremiah 12:5-6).

**(Jeremiah 12:5-6)** <sup>5</sup>*If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?* <sup>6</sup>*For even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee; yea, they have called a multitude after thee: believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee.*

### **Matthew 13:58**

**And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.**

This is a tremendous revelation. Note what it was that limited the power of God when He was here. It was unbelief! “He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” It was not that He was unable to do them; but because of their *unbelief*, He did very few miracles there. My friend, the great problem with you and me is that we do not have faith to believe—and I’m talking about faith for the salvation of men and women. We need the kind of faith that believes Christ can save the lost. He is limited today in your own community, in your church, in your family, and in your own life by *unbelief*. And this is certainly true of me also. Our Lord states a great truth here. Let’s not bypass it.<sup>75</sup>

**[he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief]** Not because their unbelief limited His power, but it kept them from bringing their sick to be healed. Christ made no failure in any one case He undertook to heal. Nor did unbelief of anyone

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<sup>74</sup> Barnes’ Notes

<sup>75</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:81). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

present hinder His healing everyone who came to Him for healing. On the contrary, 23 times it is stated He healed "them all" and "every one" (Matthew 4:23-24; Matthew 8:14-18; Matthew 9:35; Matthew 11:5; Matthew 12:15; Matthew 14:14,35-36; Matthew 15:30; Matthew 19:2; Matthew 21:14; Mark 1:32-35,39; Mark 3:10; Mark 6:5,56; Luke 4:40; Luke 5:15,17; Luke 6:17-19; Luke 7:21-23; Luke 9:11; Luke 17:17; Acts 10:38).

**[Did not many mighty works]** Miracles. This implies that he performed SOME miracles. Mark tells us what they were: "He laid his hands upon a few sick folk and healed them," Mark 6:5.

**[Because of their unbelief]** That is, it would have been useless to the great purposes of his mission to have worked miracles there. We are not to suppose that his POWER was limited by the belief or unbelief of people; but they were so "prejudiced," so set against him, that they were not in a condition to "judge of evidence" and to be convinced. They would have charged it to derangement, or sorcery, or the agency of the devil. Compare John 10:20. It would have been of no use, therefore, in proving TO THEM that he was from God, to have worked miracles. He did, therefore, only those things which were the proper work of benevolence, and which could not easily be charged on the devil. He gave "sufficient" proof of his mission, and left them in their chosen unbelief without excuse. It is also true, in spiritual things, that the unbelief of a people prevents the influences of the Holy Spirit from being sent down to bless them. God requires faith. He hears only the prayers of faith. And when there is little true belief, and prayer is cold and formal, there the people sleep in spiritual death and are unblessed.<sup>76</sup>

Jesus did few miracles in his hometown "because of their lack of faith." Lack of faith blinds people to the truth and robs them of hope. These people missed the Messiah. How does your faith measure up? If you can't see God's work, perhaps it is because of your unbelief. Believe, ask God for a mighty work in your life, and expect him to act. Look with the eyes of faith.

not . . . many mighty works . . . because of their unbelief. Hard-heartedness and rejection of Jesus prevent the Spirit's healing ministry, just as they prevent forgiveness of sin (see note on 12:31-32). The Holy Spirit does not force his miracles on a hostile, skeptical audience.

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<sup>76</sup> Barnes' Notes

<b>The Parables of Jesus Christ</b>			
<b>Parable</b>	<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Luke</b>
1. Lamp Under a Basket	5:14-16	4:21, 22	8:16, 17 11:33-36
2. A Wise Man Builds on Rock and a Foolish Man Builds on Sand	7:24-27		6:47-49
3. Unshrunk (New) Cloth on an Old Garment	9:16	2:21	5:36
4. New Wine in Old Wineskins	9:17	2:22	5:37, 38
5. The Sower	13:3-23	4:2-20	8:4-15
6. The Tares (Weeds)	13:24-30		
7. The Mustard Seed	13:31, 32	4:30-32	13:18, 19
8. The Leaven	13:33		13:20, 21
9. The Hidden Treasure	13:44		
10. The Pearl of Great Price	13:45, 46		
11. The Dragnet	13:47-50		
12. The Lost Sheep	18:12-14		15:3-7
13. The Unforgiving Servant	18:23-35		
14. The Laborers in the Vineyard	20:1-16		
15. The Two Sons	21:28-32		
16. The Wicked Vinedressers	21:33-45	12:1-12	20:9-19
17. The Wedding Feast	22:2-14		
18. The Fig Tree	24:32-44	13:28-32	21:29-33
19. The Wise and Foolish Virgins	25:1-13		
20. The Talents	25:14-30		
21. The Growing Seed		4:26-29	
22. The Absent Householder		13:33-37	
23. The Creditor and Two Debtors			7:41-43
24. The Good Samaritan			10:30-37
25. A Friend in Need			11:5-13
26. The Rich Fool			12:16-21
27. The Watchful Servants			12:35-40
28. The Faithful Servant and the Evil Servant			12:42-48
29. The Barren Fig Tree			13:6-9
30. The Great Supper			14:16-24

31. Building a Tower and a King Making War			14:25-35
32. The Lost Coin			15:8-10
33. The Lost Son			15:11-32
34. The Unjust Steward			16:1-13
35. The Rich Man and Lazarus			16:19-31
36. Unprofitable Servants			17:7-10
37. The Persistent Widow			18:1-8
38. The Pharisee and the Tax Collector			18:9-14
39. The Minas			19:11-27

Doctrines Related to the Parables of Our Lord		
Parable	Text	Related Doctrines
Lamp under bowl	Mt 5:14-15; Mk 4:21-22; Lk 8:16; 11:33	Discipleship
Builders	Mt 7:24-27; Lk 6:47-49	Discipleship
New Cloth on Old Coat	Mt 9:16; Mk 2:21; Lk 5:36	Jesus Christ
New Wine in Old Skins	Mt 9:17; Mk 2:22; Lk 5:37-38	Jesus Christ
Sower and Soils	Mt 13:3-8,18-23; Mk 4:3-8,14-20; Lk 8:5-8,11-15	Evil & Suffering, Evangelism, Christian Ethics, Election, Revelation, Missions
Weeds and Wheat	Mt 13:24-30,36-43	The Church, Evil & Suffering, Sin Christian Ethics, Election, Jesus Christ, Revelation
Mustard Seed	Mt 13:31-32; Mk 4:30-32; Lk 13:18-19	The Church, Election
Yeast	Mt 13:33; Lk 13:20-21	The Church, Holy Scripture, Election
Hidden Treasure	Mt 13:44	The Church, Salvation, Revelation
Valuable Pearl	Mt 13:45-46	The Church, Revelation
Net	Mt 13:47-50	The Church
Owner of a House	Mt 13:52	The Church, Education
Lost Sheep	Mt 18:12-14; Lk 15:4-7	Evangelism, God
Unmerciful Servant	Mt 18:23-34	The Church, Salvation, Christian Ethics
Vineyard Workers	Mt 20:1-16	The Church, Humanity, God
Two Sons	Mt 21:28-32	The Church, Salvation
Tenants	Mt 21:33-44; Mk 12:1-11; Lk 20:9-16	Jesus Christ, Holy Scripture, Election
Wedding Banquet	Mt 22:2-14	The Church, Jesus Christ, Election
Fig Tree	Mt 24:32-35; Mk 13:28-29; Lk 21:29-31	Jesus Christ, Election, Creation, Last Things
Faithful and Wise Servant	Mt 24:45-51; Lk 12:42-48	Last Things
Ten Virgins	Mt 25:1-13	The Church, Salvation, Humanity
Talents	Mt 25:14-30; Lk 19:12-27	Stewardship, Humanity, Jesus Christ, Last Things
Sheep and Goats	Mt 25:31-46	Stewardship, Evil & Suffering, Salvation, Christian Ethics, Jesus Christ, Last Things, Creation, Discipleship
Growing Seed	Mk 4:26-29	The Church, Evangelism
Watchful Servants	Mk 13:35-37; Lk 12:35-40	Jesus Christ, Last Things, History
Moneylender	Lk 7:41-43	Stewardship, Salvation, Revelation
Good Samaritan	Lk 10:30-37	Christian Ethics, Discipleship
Friend in Need	Lk 11:5-8	Humanity, Prayer
Rich Fool	Lk 12:16-21	Stewardship, Humanity, Christian Ethics, Election
Unfruitful Fig Tree	Lk 13:6-9	Discipleship
Low Seat at Feast	Lk 14:7-14	Christian Ethics, Election, Discipleship
Great Banquet	Lk 14:16-24	Election
Cost of Discipleship	Lk 14:28-33	Discipleship
Lost Coin	Lk 15:8-10	Salvation
Prodigal Son	Lk 15:11-32	Sin, Salvation, Humanity, Christian Ethics, Revelation
Shrewd Manager	Lk 16:1-8	Christian Ethics
Rich Man & Lazarus	Lk 16:19-31	Evil & Suffering, Salvation, Evangelism, Holy Scripture, Last Things, Prayer
Master and Servant	Lk 17:7-10	Discipleship
Persistent Widow	Lk 18:2-8	Evil & Suffering, Election, Jesus Christ, Prayer
Pharisee and Tax Collector	Lk 18:10-14	Stewardship, Salvation, Christian Ethics, Prayer