"THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN"

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-50
3-18-2018

INTRODUCTION:

***Are you a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven?**

Jesus, by parables, describes four facets of the Kingdom of Heaven:

I. The <u>GROWTH</u> of the Kingdom (v. 31-32)
(The Kingdom's population started small but will end large)

II. The <u>MIXTURE</u> of the Kingdom (v. 33)
(The Kingdom's saints are presently mixed in with sinners)

III. The <u>VALUE</u> of the Kingdom (v. 44-46)
(The Kingdom's worth is infinitely beyond compare)

A. The Hidden <u>Treasure</u> (v. 44)

B. The <u>Pearl</u> of Great Price (v. 45-46)

IV. The <u>PURGING</u> of the Kingdom (v. 47-50)
(The Kingdom will not be inherited by the wicked)

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EX: How often we describe something by telling what it is <u>like</u>.

In this chapter, the Lord Jesus, the Master Teacher, uses analogous parables to tell what the *"Kingdom of Heaven"* is like.

<u>Timeline of the Kingdom</u>

1. Church Age - Matt.16:18
2. The Rapture-Resurrection of the "just" ones - I Thess.4:13-18
3. The Judgment Seat of Christ – Rom.14:10; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor.5:10
4. The Return for Armageddon - Rev. 19
5. The Separation of the Sheep from Goats - Matt.13:47-50 & Matt.25:31-46
6. Phase 1 of Christ's Eternal Kingdom = 1,000 Year reign of Christ "Millennium" - Rev.20:1-10
7. Great White Throne Judgment of the "unjust" and Millennial Mortals - Rev.20:11-15
8. Phase 2 of Christ's Eternal Kingdom = The Eternal State - Rev. 21-22

After painting several pictures of what the Kingdom of Heaven is like, Jesus asks a question (NOTE: v. 51-52).

"New and old" - teaching about the Kingdom does include the Old Testament promises made to Israel as well as the new promises given by Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

In order to rightly understand the Kingdom, one must have a balanced understanding of the Old Testament prophecy about the literal aspects of this Kingdom, as well as the New Testament statements of Christ which unfold the spiritual aspects of this Kingdom.

In brief, Christ is describing the New Testament spiritual salvation of people who will occupy that future messianic Kingdom promised in the Old Testament, to be realized in the Millennium.

***Are you a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven?**

Jesus, by parables, describes four facets of the Kingdom of Heaven:

I. The GROWTH of the Kingdom (v. 31-32)
(The Kingdom's population started small but will end large)

V. 31

"The Kingdom of Heaven" - is so called not because the events described occur in Heaven, but because it is a Kingdom brought about (initially on earth) by the God of Heaven. Hence, it is also called the *"Kingdom of God"* because it is a Kingdom wrought by God and not man.

"Mustard seed" - a seed noted for its small size (EX: *"faith the size of a mustard seed"*)

(NOTE: V. 32 - ***"which indeed is the least of all seeds" - "least" =*** *microteron* cp. "microscopic" = meaning smallest)

The mustard seed is not the smallest seed, but is the smallest among Palestine's garden plants (agricultural plants used for food) of which the mustard tree was one (MacArthur, p. 369).

"A man took" - This "man" no doubt again referring to the same man who *"sowed good seed in his field"* (v. 24) (i.e. the *"Son of man"* - Jesus Christ v. 37).

"In his field" - Again, it is important to note that the field (i.e. the world) is *"HIS"* -- it belongs to Jesus Christ (*"All things were created by Him and for Him"* - Col. 1:16)

V. 32

"Greatest among the herbs" - a mustard tree is technically not a tree, but an herb that is practically a tree, since it is so large for the herb family.

"The birds of the air" - some identify these "birds" with Satan and his demons (like in 13:4, 19). However, the point of this parable is not who the birds are. The point is that the mustard tree can grow so large that birds can come and lodge in its branches. The birds are mentioned simply to show the largeness of the tree (cp. Mk. 4:30-32; Lk. 13:18, 19), not necessarily to convey any spiritual significance.

Note: BE CAREFUL not to press every single detail of a parable and to find more meaning than is intended.

The point of this parable does not involve the birds, but the great growth of the tree (cp. Dan. 4:12).

The Kingdom of Christianity of which Christ speaks began small (Christ only selected 12 disciples and this small beginning grew to 120 ([Acts 1], then spread from Jerusalem, into Samaria and Judea, and into the uttermost part of the earth).

Don't despise "small things."

Just as Christ poured His whole public ministry (3-1/2 years) into only 12 men (and three in particular - the inner circle of Peter, James, and John), so churches that are committed to investing time and energy into discipling and training a core of committed believers must not be underestimated!

Eleven of the twelve disciples ended up *"turning the world upside down"* for Christ. The investment Christ made into 12 men paid off. The world has felt the shock and has never been the same since!

Never forget: "If we concern ourselves with the depth of our ministry, God will take care of the breadth of it" (MacArthur).

II. The MIXTURE of the Kingdom (v. 33)

(The Kingdom's saints are presently mixed in with sinners)

Some view the *"leaven"* in a good sense, as depicting the growth of the Kingdom of Heaven by means of the penetrating power of the gospel.

However, several evidences can be given to show that the word "leaven" is used in a negative sense to describe the presence of evil (sinners) within Christendom:

1. The metaphoric use of the word "leaven" always refers to the presence of impurity or sin in the Bible (Ex. 12:15; Lev. 2:11; Mt. 16:6; I Cor. 5:6-9; Ga. 5:9; I Tim. 4:1; Jude 12).

   "Throughout the Bible, leaven is a symbol of evil. It had to be removed from the Jewish homes during Passover (Ex. 12:15-19, 13:7). It was excluded from the sacrifices (Ex. 34:35). . . Jesus used leaven to picture hypocrisy (Lk. 12:1, false teaching (Mt. 16:6-12), and worldly compromise (Mt. 22:16-21). Paul uses leaven to picture carnality in the church (I Cor. 5:6-8) as well as false doctrine (Gal. 5:9). Sin is like leaven (yeast): it quietly grows, it corrupts, and it *"puffs up"* (I Cor. 4:18-19); 5:2; 8:1)." (Wiersbe, p. 46).

2. In the context, Jesus describes the same thought of sinners being mixed in with believers (Ex: wheat and tares parable - v. 24-30, 37-43). The "leaven" conveys a synonymous idea as the "tares" of verses 25 and 38.

3. Jesus deliberately uses the word *"hid"* (*enkrupto* - to hide inside) not the word "mix" (*sunkerannumi* or *mignumi*).

   This word "hid" describes the deliberate and diabolical work of Satan the enemy, who seeks to spread corruption inside of Christianity by secretly hiding his "leavened" unbelievers in the midst of the "meal" (God's children).

3 measures of meal would amount to about 1/2 bushel or 22 liters, which had leaven stirred into it.

--The presence of "leaven" makes it very difficult to distinguish the leaven from the meal once mixed together (cp. the wheat and tare similarity).

--The presence of "leaven" among the meal will physically expand the meal, making it to appear bigger (more in abundance) than it actually is. [Many of the people who fill the churches in America today are lost.]

III. The VALUE of the Kingdom (v. 44-46)
(The Kingdom's worth is infinitely beyond compare)

A. The Hidden Treasure (v. 44)

"Treasure" - this treasure unmistakably refers to Jesus Christ

(Some say the treasure refers to the church which Christ purchases with His blood. However, before conversion we were not a treasure, and we certainly were not hidden from His view.)

"Hid" - because the world cannot see Him. He is not recognizable to most of the world. He is overlooked, neglected, and unwanted by those who fail to see Him for who He is! (I Cor. 2:7-8 - *"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.")*

"Treasure" - This is an apt illustration of Jesus Christ, the King of the Kingdom of Heaven.

1) Since He is called *"the unspeakable (indescribable) gift"* (II Cor. 9:15)

2) Since He shines brighter than all silver and gold (Rev. 1:16)

3) Since to have Him is to have everything and to not have Him is to have nothing (I Jn. 5:12).

"Joy" - Did you ever experience the joy of finding someone extremely valuable?

Finding Christ brings inexpressible joy! (I Pet. 1:8 - *"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."*

"Selleth all that he hath" - This is an illustration of true repentance. Repentance is "a willingness to turn from everything that is keeping you from receiving Christ."

ILLUS: the man who was unwilling to sell all for Christ (SEE: Rev. 19:16-24).

"Buyeth that field" - in the parable, the reason the field is bought is because that is where the treasure is! It is the treasure and not the field that is desired. The treasure of Heaven is Jesus Christ.

ILLUS: The hymn "Fill My Cup" exclaims: "There are millions in this world who are craving the pleasures earthly things afford, but none can match the wondrous treasure that I find in Jesus Christ my Lord!"

Paul considered all things he formerly trusted in and lived for as "dung" when compared with the matchless treasure of having Christ (Phil. 3:5-7).

B. The Pearl of Great Price (v. 45-46)

V. 45

Man has always searched for precious gems and metals (job 28).

Yet such pursuits are vain. The only reason they are valuable is because they are rare and pleasing to the eye.

"For all the efforts taken to find, mine, refine, cut, polish, mount, sell and buy precious stones and metals, none of them offers anything truly worthwhile or lasting. They cannot heal a broken relationship, give peace to a troubled mind, or forgive a sinful heart. They offer little for the present and nothing for the future" (macArthur, p. 385).

"What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul?" (Mk. 8:365).

"Seeking goodly pearls" - many people are seeking the truth, answers, the way of salvation. However, their answer is not in *"pearls"* (plural) but *"one pearl"* (v. 46).

"One pearl of great price" - this pearl like the treasure (v. 44) refers to Jesus Christ.

"Bought it" - This parable is not teaching that you must buy salvation; or buy Jesus Christ. But what it is teaching is that when someone truly discovers the value of having Jesus Christ, they are willing to relinquish everything to have him.

As the hymnwriter said: "Turn your eyes upon Jesus; look full in His wonderful face; and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace."

Salvation is not bought with money or any material possession (Is. 55:1 - *"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.")*

Most people who consider receiving Christ as Savior and Lord do not consciously inventory all their material, social and other possessions to see if He is worth sacrificing those things for. When they discover the infinite value of salvation, they simply yield to Christ. Their focus is not on what they give up but on what they receive. But if their redemption is genuine, their lives will evidence a willingness to surrender whatever stands between them and faithfulness to their Lord." (macArthur, p. 391).

"Salvation that is not desired above everything else is not truly desired" (MacArthur, p. 390).

Do you want to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven? Then you need to see the value of the King!

ILLUS: of Spurgeon's salvation upon the invitation to "Look to Jesus" (MacArthur, p. 388-9).

IV. The <u>PURGING</u> of the Kingdom (v. 47-50)
(The Kingdom will not be inherited by the wicked)

V. 47
"A net" - this method of fishing was one of the ways Peter, James, and John fished. It involved casting a net (with floats on top and weights on bottom) into the water along the shore (men in a boat and men near shore) and dragging it (hence it is called a "dragnet") parallel with to shore and so scooping up all kinds of fish that would hug the shoreline.

V. 48
"Sat down" - this compares with how the King (Jesus Christ) will *"<u>sit</u> upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations..."* (mt. 25:31-32).

V. 49
"The end of the world" = the completion of this age

After the Rapture and after Armageddon comes this judgment to determine who will enter the Millennial Kingdom (SEE: The separation of the sheep and goats - Mt. 25:31ff. The Gentiles will be judged as well as the Jews; SEE: Ezek. 20:33-38)

V. 50
"Furnace of fire" - a reference to hell. The Lord Jesus talked much about the horrible reality of hell (Mt. 5:20; 7:13, 19, 23, 27; 10:28; 12:36; 16:18; 18:8-9; 21:43-44; 23:14-15; 24:40-41, 51; 25:30, 46).

"Wailing" - to weep in a loud cry - speaks of the emotional sorrow (because of the realization of eternal loss and ruin).

"Gnashing of teeth" - speaks of the physical pain (to be endured throughout eternity).

CONCLUSION:

<u>Timeline of the Kingdom</u>

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