



## World Christian Fellowship

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### Overview to Parables Matthew 13

**Matthew 13:10-17**, *And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"* <sup>11</sup>*He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. <sup>12</sup>For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. <sup>13</sup>Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. <sup>14</sup>And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; <sup>15</sup>For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.'* <sup>16</sup>*But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; <sup>17</sup>for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.*

**Matthew 13<sup>th</sup> chapter** opens us to a new perspective in our Lord's ministry.

In the Old Testament they never saw what happens between the rejection and the refusal to receive the King and the time they will receive the King.

That is the mystery period, hidden from all generations past. Never detailed in the holy scriptures until Jesus opens our understanding here in **Matthew 13**.

Part of redemptive history known as the parenthesis, the interregnum or the interim, filled up in our understanding by the words of our Lord.

How important it is that **Matthew 13** be where it is.

Anyone reading the gospel of Matthew, the account of Jesus Christ, seeing Him come as the King. Seeing Him refused and His kingdom refused, is immediately going to ask the question what happens now.

If the kingdom is postponed until a future time, when the people of the King will receive the King and the kingdom will then come, what happens in the meantime?

Precisely is the question answered by the series of parables in **Matthew 13<sup>th</sup> Chapter**.

Each parable describes a particular facet of this period in which we now live known as the mystery form of the kingdom.

This is also known as the church age. This church age will end when Jesus comes.

- 1. The plan,**
- 2. The purpose and**
- 3. The promise.**

### **1. The plan.**

**V 3**, *Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow.*

The plan of our Lord was to speak in parables.

A very important reason was in His mind.

Jesus spoke many things.

All the parables here in this chapter were spoken at one time. On this very occasion, the very day that He left the house and went to the seashore, the multitude gathered, and He went

out offshore in a little boat. That very occasion was the occasion in which He gave these parables.

It is possible that the parables included in the other gospels were also given on that day and Matthew does not include them all.

Jesus spoke only those things in parables.

**Matthew 13:34**, *All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them,*

He spoke to them in parables and only in parables.

He did not even explain the parables to the multitudes.

### **What is a parable?**

***Parabol.***

Para, meaning alongside.

To lay something alongside something else, so to place something alongside something else so that a comparison can be made.

A comparison or an illustration.

A spiritual truth that may be hard to be understood. You lay alongside of it a physical, earthly story which gives understanding to that spiritual truth. That is a parable.

The term *parabol* is used in the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, **45 times**, which indicates to us that it was a very common form of Jewish teaching.

It is an extended comparison.

It is taking something very external, observable, objective, earthly and laying it alongside something spiritual, supernatural, heavenly, and subjective so that one helps you to understand the other.

An earthly story with a heavenly meaning. That is a parable.

Any good teacher knows that you must communicate to people in terms of parables.

You cannot just talk in the supernatural dimension or in abstraction. You must draw alongside those theological concepts and spiritual concepts that which is concrete and earthy so that they can understand the more difficult from that which is readily understood.

Jesus teaches profound spiritual lessons about a period of time no one ever knew about. He does it in the simplest

terminology so that those whom He wishes to understand can understand very easily.

Jesus uses very easily understandable common things.

- Field,
- Grain,
- Birds,
- Road,
- Thorns,
- Sun,
- Wheat,
- Tares,
- Mustard seeds,
- Tree,
- Leaven,
- Treasure,
- Pearl, and
- Net.

These are all very, very common terms to those people in their agrarian and agricultural lifestyle.

This is the most prominent method of our Lord's teaching. People feel when they think about the teaching of Jesus that He just normally taught in parables.

Interestingly it is most commonly associated with Him, it was not His exclusive method of teaching.

But whenever He taught, He used life situations, though they may not have been fully extended to be parables.

**Matthew 13** is the first time in the New Testament we find a parable.

All throughout Jesus' teaching, prior to this recorded in Matthew, He gave them graphic analogies.

**Matthew chapter 5.**

Jesus said men were to be in the world like salt and light.  
Teaching by analogy.

**Matthew chapter 6.**

Jesus spoke about the kingdom of God. How to perceive the birds and the lilies of the field in relationship to how you sought the kingdom of God.

**Matthew chapter 7.**

Jesus spoke about a wise builder and a foolish builder.  
He talked about a foundation of sand and a foundation of rock.

**Matthew chapter 9.**

Jesus spoke about garments, putting a new piece in the Old.

He talked about putting wine in certain kinds of wineskins, as illustrations of spiritual truth.

**Matthew chapter 11.**

Jesus spoke about children playing in the marketplace as illustrative of certain spiritual responses.

All of those are talking in pictures.

But now that technique of our Lord is fully extended into a full range story with many parts in which He conveys spiritual truth. All good teachers use that kind of technique.

**Parables are effective.**

**Parable make truth concrete.**

Most people think in pictures and they take abstract concepts and make pictures out of them. We may not understand the concept of spreading the gospel, but we do understand it when we see a man throwing seed in a field.

**Parable make truth portable.**

You remember the story and you carry the story in your mind, you can always recover its spiritual meaning because all the elements are there in the story. They allow truth to be carried away.

**Parable make truth interesting.**

They reduce it from a rather dull sort of ethereal thoughts down to life situations that carry interest and grab our attention.

**Parable make truth personally discoverable.**

You begin to eternalize the spiritual truth and see it in the story so that you internalize that truth yourself.

So, parables are a marvellous mode of teaching because they make truth concrete, portable, interesting, and personally discoverable.

Thus, our Lord spoke in parables as the Hebrews commonly did. They used the term *mashal* to speak of their parabolic teaching.

Now, the Lord then is going to use parables.

That's His plan.

Describe the parable without reading the details, draw out of it the truth that Jesus is teaching in each parable.

We will see the description of the church age, the first time it is ever described, from the viewpoint of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**First parable: Sower of the seed.**

**V 3-23.** A parable about a sower and a seed. He went into the fields, and he sowed the seed.

This is representing the preaching of the gospel throughout the world.

- Some people will initially reject it, stony ground.
- Some people will initially receive it, but the thorns or the sun will cause them to fall away.
- Some people will initially receive it and ultimately bring forth fruit.

### **What is the Lord saying?**

When the gospel preached throughout the world. Some will hear it and reject, some will hear it and accept it for a while and fall away, some will hear it and believe and bring forth fruit.

A very simple principle.

We will never win the whole world.

### **Second parable: Wheat and Tare**

**V 24-30**, a parable of the wheat and the tares.

A field, wheat is sown in the field. While the workers sleep, the enemy comes and sows' tares which look exactly like wheat. They crowd the wheat and ruin the crop, but you can't

pull them out because you can't tell them from the wheat, so you have to let them alone until the harvest.

### **What is the Lord saying about this period?**

There will be true believers and false believers. There will be people within the identification of the kingdom, people saying they belong. People moving along with the rest who are the genuine, who will be false. Ultimately God will barn the true and burn the false.

We will never purge the church.

Throughout the period of the kingdom, we are going to have the true and the false side by side, coexisting until judgment.

So, we are not shocked when we find out that there are unbelievers in the church.

### **Third parable: Mustard seed.**

**V 31- 32**, A parable about a mustard seed which is one of the smallest of all the seeds.

It was planted in the ground, and it bloomed and became a huge tree, so big that birds could come and live in it.

That means it had big, huge branches to support birds. It wasn't just a bush, as a mustard seed normally would produce a very small bush.

The church age will begin with a very small beginning. Yet it will grow to massive proportions, big enough to be a haven for birds.

The kingdom will begin small, and it will become worldwide. It will become widespread and influential, and all kinds of things are going to live in its branches.

#### **Fourth Parable: Leaven**

**V 33.** The parable of the leaven which small but permeate the whole thing.

The leaven represents the kingdom, buried as it were in the dough of the world, which, ultimately, will penetrate and permeate and influence the whole earth.

The internal permeating influence of the kingdom which touches every dimension of human life.

#### **Fifth Parable: Treasure hidden in the Field.**

**V 44.** The parable of the treasure hidden in a field.

A man is working in the field, and he stumbles across this treasure. He buys the field because he is an honest man. He doesn't steal the treasure. He makes a deal and buys the whole field and then gets the treasure that's in it.

The treasure is salvation.

The treasure is redemption.

When it is found, the man does all he can, sells everything he owns in order to get that. There will be people in this kingdom period who will give up everything to get the treasure.

The man wasn't looking for the treasure. It was in the routine of his workaday life that he was surprised by the reality of redemption.

There are many people who will come to know Jesus Christ in this period who will stumble as it were, almost by accident, upon the grace of God.

### **Sixth Parable: Pearl.**

**V 45**, Parable of a man with the desire to find a pearl.

He seeks and seeks fine pearls, finally finds the one that he wants. He sells everything and buys it. Just like the last parable.

This man is willing to pay the supreme price which is always the

giving up of everything to purchase redemption.

He takes this pearl.

The difference is that this man has all the while been seeking for that pearl.

This tells us that there will also be people in the kingdom who will spend a great amount of time seeking the truth and finally find it. Some people will come without ever seeking but other people will spend long time and effort endeavouring to find the truth.

### **Seventh Parable: Dragnet.**

**V 47:** Parable of a net.

Everything is pulled into the net and the good separated from the bad.

This pictures the end of the church age, the end of the mystery kingdom when Jesus pulls it all together and sorts out the true from the false.

### **Eight Parable: Householder.**

**V 52.** Parable of the householder bringing out the treasure of old and new.

All of those we know to be true of this time.

The mystery kingdom, the church age, is big.

- We have preached our message across the globe.
- We have seen that come to pass.

- We know that as we proclaim, some reject and some accept it for a little while, and some are real and produce the fruit.
- We also see that the church is mixed with good and evil.
- The true and the false, the wheat and the tares.
- We know that the enemy attacks us.
- We know we are influenced by the world, and we never seem to be able to purge the church.
- We know there are people searching for God and sometimes going through religion after religion to find the answer.
- There are others who comes to introduced to redemption.
- All of it in the end will be made clear by Christ.

So, this is the character of our time. This is how it will be before the King returns.

**V 3,** So, the Lord teaches all of this in parables.

- Parables make things clear only when they are explained to us.
- An unexplained parable is nothing but an impossible riddle.

An unexplained parable is an impossible riddle unable to be understood.

That is why Jesus had to explain everything, even to His own disciples.

**Mark 4:10-11**, *But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. <sup>11</sup>And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables,*

He said, *"It is only for you."*

Jesus only explained the parables to the twelve and those who believed, not to the rest.

All the others got was unexplained parables. Those are nothing but riddles, unable to be understood.

## **2. The Purpose.**

**V 10-11**, *And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" <sup>11</sup>He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.*

The purpose of the parables is to reveal, and they are to conceal.

- To some they make truth clear.
- To others they make it even more unclear.

Jesus says it is for us to know the mysteries.

When Jesus said that word, no doubt their cultural identification helped them to understand it better than we do. When we think of the word mystery, we think of some suspense thriller or some kind of mystery books like Sherlock Holmes.

But that is not the way they did.

In the Greek culture mysteries were sacred secrets known only to upper-level religionists. They were truths only for the initiated.

We have a parallel to that with the secret societies of today like the Masons and others who have these secret truths that nobody knows except the people who get to certain levels to know them. That's really a heritage borne out of Gnosticism, from the word gnosis, to know.

We are the ones to know the secrets.

The mystery religions of Greece which were borne out of Babylon, were religions in which there were these secrets that you attained as you moved up the ladder of that religion.

Jesus says that I am going to show you mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, the secrets never revealed to anybody.

But not to them because they don't accept the King.

The Lord then unfolds and hides at the same time.

**V 12, *For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.***

- Whoever has in the sense of having received from God.
- Whoever is regenerate,
- Whoever is part of the kingdom,
- Whoever has received the King and believes in the King and, therefore, identifies with the King.

Whoever has accepted God's truth will get more of God's truth.

That is ascent!

Illumination of the truth one who has gets more and more.

The parables of the talents which our Lord says to the one who is an unfaithful servant in **Matthew 25**.

**Matthew 25:28-29**, *So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. <sup>29</sup>For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.*

To the one who accepts the simplicity of the King and His kingdom, God will begin to reveal an ascending revelation of truth.

To those who live up to the light of Christ, He will give more light.

- Whoever is not regenerate,
- Whoever does not accept the King and His kingdom,
- Whoever does not believe God,

*“from him shall be taken even what he has.”*

### **What does that mean?**

There may have been a little bit of light dawning as he was being led to that point.

Certainly, that was true of Israel.

- ✓ The King had come,
- ✓ He had taught,
- ✓ He had preached,
- ✓ He had done miracle after miracle.

They had some understanding of who He was, and what He could do, and some glimpses and foretastes of the kingdom.

They had seen the signs of the Spirit of God.

They had seen wonders.

But when they said no to the King, even what they had they lost. None of it made any more sense and they began to descent into more profound and deeper darkness all the time.

Nobody in our society, no group of people in our society are as lost in terms of disorientation from their religion as Jewish people today in our society.

**Romans 9:4-5**, *who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; <sup>5</sup> of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.*

Paul said to the Jews that they had everything. As soon as they rejected the King and the light went out, they began to lose the meaning of everything they had.

Judaism has moved from orthodoxy to what is called Conservative Judaism, to reformed Judaism where they don't even believe the Bible is the Word of God. It's just been a descent into darkness, deeper and deeper.

- If you live up to that light which Christ gives, then more light comes.
- If you refuse that light, then deeper darkness ensues.

The parables of the servants and the talents reiterate this again and again. Take away what he has and give it to one who has rightly responded to Me.

All men then are in progress, up or down. That's a fearful thing. No man stays static.

- The longer you know Jesus Christ, the more faithful He is to reveal His truth.
- The longer you refuse Jesus Christ, the deeper the pit of darkness becomes.

**V 13,** *Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.*

Jesus spoke to them in parables because this is an act of judgment.

Because they will not hear with understanding, they will not see, I will now speak to them so they cannot see.

**What happens is that wilful rejection becomes judicial rejection?**

Man says no, so God says no as well.

God confirms men in their own stubbornness.

God binds them by their own chain.

For them the parables become interesting stories and they really don't know what the point is. Just riddles.

**V 14-15,** *And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; <sup>15</sup>For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.'*

They fulfilled the prophecy of **Isaiah 6:9-10**.

### **When did Isaiah write that?**

Isaiah wrote that at a time of profound judgment on Israel.

- He had just pronounced a series of curses on them.
- He cursed them for all their drunkenness, debauchery, their immorality.
- He cursed them for their bribery.
- He cursed them for their oppression of the poor.
- He cursed them for their hypocritical religion.

At the height of all of that cursing, the King Uzziah died, and the country plunged into the darkest days in a long time.

They were on the edge of imminent conquering, and the Babylonian captivity came as that judgment.

**Isaiah** says to them,

God's going to judge you.

- You wouldn't hear.
- You wouldn't see.
- You can't hear.
- You can't see.
- You wouldn't be converted.
- You wouldn't be healed.

It wasn't long after that, **Jeremiah** echoed the message of Isaiah. The great hosts came and swept away the people into **Babylonian captivity**.

That was the first fulfilment of Isaiah's words.

Jesus says to them that the parables are a judgment on unbelief. The fact that the natural man does not understand the things of God is not only a statement about his ignorance. It is a statement about God's judgment on that individual. We who love Jesus Christ understand the Bible is not a statement about our intellect.

It is a statement about God's gracious illumination of our hearts and minds. This is judgment.

When Jesus first came,

- ✓ His words were very clear.
- ✓ He said He was the King.
- ✓ He proved He was the King.
- ✓ He preached the Kingdom message.
- ✓ He said, "this is how it is in My kingdom."
- ✓ He said, "Repent, the kingdom is at hand."
- ✓ He gave them all they needed to know about the kingdom.

They didn't hear.

They refused Him.

So, when they wouldn't listen to the clear words that He spoke.

**Matthew chapters 5 to 7**, He would say, "The kingdom of heaven is like" and then He would use that analogy, salt or light or birds or lilies of the field and He would always explain its meaning.

Therefore, He said, "*Seek the first the kingdom and all these things will be added.*" It was always very clear what He meant. Then when they hardened their hearts and blasphemed Him and said He was from Satan, then He talked to them in riddles that He did not explain.

**Paul quoting Isaiah 28.**

**1 Corinthians 14:21-22**, *In the law it is written: "With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; And yet, for all that, they will not hear Me," says the Lord. <sup>22</sup>Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.*

**What are tongues for?**

It says right there, they are a sign for those who don't believe.

Not for those who believe, but for those who believe not.

### **Where were tongues primarily used?**

On the day of Pentecost in the face of the Israelites.

### **Why?**

They wouldn't listen when He spoke to them clearly in their own language, so He judged them by speaking in riddles.

They wouldn't listen and seek the truth.

He spoke to them in a language they didn't even know.

The progression of judgment.

Tongues are a sign of judgment upon Israel. God is now talking so you can't even understand the language.

**Matthew 13** Jesus says the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled.

The plan was to speak in parables.

The purpose of the parables was to reveal and to conceal.

### **The revelation.**

**V 16**, *But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear;*

Because Jesus explained them.

We have the New Testament text and because the Spirit of God is our teacher.

The illumination.

**Mark 4:34**, *But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.*

Jesus took time explain the parables to them.

**Matthew 13:51**, *Jesus said to them, "Have you understood all these things?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord."*

They just possessed the illuminating presence of Jesus Christ.

This was part of His ministry.

**Luke 24:44-45**, *Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me."<sup>45</sup> And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.*

Even though you are regenerate, you would still not understand the Scripture were it not for the illuminating work of the Spirit of God.

That is His marvellous illuminating work.

**Psalm 119:18**, *Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.*

**Isaiah 64:1**, *Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence—*

**V 17**, *for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.*

**1 Peter 1:10-12**, *Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you,<sup>11</sup> searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.<sup>12</sup> To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.*

They didn't get to see what we see.

They didn't see what the disciples saw in the heavens being rent and God coming down in human flesh to reveal His truth.

Now we have the resident Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth.

**1 Corinthians 2:10**, *But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.*

We only know them because of the Spirit revealing them to us.

Even for the saved there must be divine illumination.

We must study the Bible.

There must be the discipline of study, and in the process the illumination of the Spirit of God.

So, parables conceal as an act of judgment against Israel.

At the same time, they reveal because Jesus gave the parables and gave you explanation.

Today we have the Word.

Jesus isn't here to explain.

Jesus said when I go away, I will send the Holy Spirit.

Holy Spirit will lead you into all truth.

**Do you realize what a privilege we have?**

Do you realize that we not only have this Bible, but we have its author living in us to explain it to us?

To interpret it to us?

To apply it to us?

How they of old hungered for that.

### **3. The promise.**

**If the King offered the kingdom and they rejected it, did this cancel the plan?**

**Does God have plan B?**

**Does this alter what's going on?**

*V 34-35, All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, <sup>35</sup>that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world."*

**Who said that?**

**Asaph.**

Asaph was a prophet and a seer.

**Psalm 78:2, I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old,**

Psalm by Asaph.

Asaph predicted that the Messiah would have to speak in parables as an act of judgment.

That to His own people He would reveal a secret kept from the foundation of the world.

God didn't adjust. Before the foundation of the world, He knew they would reject. God knew He would have to put that secret mystery period in there.

## **Conclusion:**

This confirms that everything's on schedule.

God is not making alterations as He goes.

He's sovereign.

Everything is on schedule.

There are some great profound lessons that we have seen just this morning.

Truth is only available to people who believe and are taught by God.

Rejection of Jesus Christ means the decreasing darkness of unbelief. You don't stay in the same spot. It gets deeper and deeper.

God's plan is on schedule. It's big enough to encompass the unbelief of Israel and the mystery of this age.