

Without a Parable...

Matthew 13:34-36

All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, 35 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." 36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house.

At the conclusion of the parable of the leaven we find a commentary given on Jesus' use of parables. This commentary precedes the Lords return "into the house," where He gives the explanation to the parable of the wheat and tares and then gives the remaining three parables of the seven parable sequence here in Matthew Chapter 13. Let's notice three things from our scripture about His use of parables –

- "Without a parable He did not speak to them."
- Speaking in parables is the fulfillment of that spoken by the prophet.
- Through parables He would "utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world."

The prophet being referenced is from Psalms 78—

Psalms 78:1-3

<<A Contemplation of Asaph.>>

Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. 2 I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, 3 which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.

In the opening verses of this psalm we see the admonition from the Lord to *give ear* to His law and *to hear* the words of His mouth. And through parables He would be uttering the dark sayings of old, He would be speaking things that were "heard and known," things that the "fathers have told us"; *things contained in the law, the prophets and the psalms*.

As we think about "hearing the words of His mouth," let's consider the statement, "without a parable He did not speak to them." The reason for the Lord's use of parables was stated earlier in Matthew Chapter 13 –

Matthew 13:10-18

And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" 11 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." 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. 13 Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 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; 15 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.' 16 But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; 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. 18 Therefore hear the parable of the sower..."

The first thing we can see is that He makes a distinction between "you," *the disciples*, **to whom it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven**," and "them," the remainder of the nation of Israel, the multitude, to whom it has not been given to know.

This is not an arbitrary distinction, but one based upon hearing the spiritual truth of scripture. We must remember that the multitude were *eternally saved* as a result of faith in the Passover lambs and therefore had the ability to receive and understand spiritual truth. Let's remember the way the first parable, the parable of the sower concludes, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

So let's look again at what the Lord has just said regarding the multitude *who have spiritual life* and who are listening to the words that He speaks –

13 "Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 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; 15 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.'"

Despite hearing the actual words that the Lord speaks and having the ability to receive and understand spiritual truth, the multitude *does not have spiritual ears to hear* the spiritual truth being presented. And the reasons for their inability to hear that which they could have understood are clearly stated –

- "the hearts of this people have grown dull"
- "their ears are hard of hearing"
- "their eyes they have closed"

This is a condition they have brought upon themselves through their own choices, choices that had resulted in a setting aside of the prophetic word that had been given to God's chosen people in favor of the commandments of men. And remember that this deplorable condition is in no small part the responsibility of the religious leaders of the day, who had failed in their responsibility to properly teach the people in preparation for Messiah's coming –

Mark 7:7

And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.

Matthew 23:13

"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in."

What separates the disciples from the rest is *an individual choice to hear, believe and to follow that which the Lord had been teaching them*, even when that teaching was not what they wanted. Notice what we see here recorded in John—

John 6:67-69

Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" 68 But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal [age-lasting] life. 69 Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

This is one of those Orpah moments that occur in the life of all Christians, where a choice has to be made to go on or turn back. In our example here in John many of His disciples chose to turn back —

John 6:66

From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.

But the twelve chose to go on, even though what was being taught was very hard for them. But despite being in a difficult place, they had come to "believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Knowing what this revelation meant, because of the promise of 2 Samuel 7, it was in their hearts to submit themselves to God's plans and purposes even though they were struggling. And the significance of this revelation we see here —

Matthew 16:15-19

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven..."

And here we clearly see that the understanding that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God" is a **spiritual revelation that is brought forth from above**; a revelation that is available for those with eyes to see and ears to hear. Anyone on a basic level of comprehension can understand the words, but only in the Spirit can the truth be discerned and embraced in its fullness.

And we should also note that in our examples here we witness an individual, positive response on the part of those who believe, and this individual response is found *despite* the context of a collective generational rejection –

John 19:15

But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!"

And despite this collective generational rejection of the King and His kingdom—which is a rejection of that which God had promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and David, and a rejection of all that had been foretold by all the prophets that have been since the world began, and a denial of the scriptures they so zealously revered and enthusiastically read— there were at least 120 individuals who did have ears to hear, who were gathered together in the upper room at the Pentecost following the Lord's death and resurrection.

This group became *outcasts* from main stream Judaism and were considered to be a sect, a heresy, even though they were drawing on the same scriptures as everyone else –

2 Corinthians 3:5-6

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, 6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

And it is with regards to those who believe—initially this small group, beginning with His disciples—that we find the fulfillment of that which the Lord said –

Matthew 13:12

"For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance..."

This is what scripture records in respect of this –

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." 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

So it was these disciples who became apostles, the beginnings of His church, who were untaught and untrained in the eyes of men –

Acts 4:13

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

It was these disciples who had eyes to see and ears to hear, to whom *more* was given so that they should have an abundance, who came to understand the way God has given the scriptures – line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, there a little – to understand that all Scripture is about God’s plans and purposes by and for His Son Jesus Christ. These disciples grasped the foundations, understanding that Adam was a type of Him who was to come, who saw in the scriptures “things kept secret from the foundation of the world.” And these were the ones who then took this message of the gospel of grace and the gospel of glory (the word of the kingdom)— and this would include the Apostle Paul— to the Jew first and then to the Gentile and then almost exclusively to the Gentiles, to all who would be eternally redeemed who would have ears to hear.

And it is interesting to note that at the end of the Book of Acts, marking the end of the re-offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel by the church, the Holy Spirit, through Paul, draws attention to the same scripture in Isaiah that the Lord used in Matthew 13 –

Acts 28:27-28

“‘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.’ 28 Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!”

Despite the Lord’s death, burial and resurrection and the spectacular events recorded in Acts that accompanied the preaching of the gospel, the heart condition of the nation of Israel in a collective sense remained unchanged; they remained completely devoid of repentance with regards to bearing fruit for the kingdom and separated from the truth of God’s word, and yet still zealously engaged in the rituals and practices of religion –

2 Corinthians 3:14-15

But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. 15 But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.

But as for the apostles, their hearts were *not* dull, their ears *did* hear and their eyes *did* see and they progressed from the elementary principles of Christ to maturity, from belief in Christ as the Passover Lamb to belief surrounding the coming Melchizedec priesthood. And they understood these things because the veil had been taken away in Christ, they had been given “the keys of the kingdom of heaven,” not only in a symbolic sense pointing to a future inheritance, but also the keys to interpret and to understand all that scripture teaches about that coming kingdom – the very thing which is the central theme, the central message, God’s focus in His revelation to man.

And it is at this point in time, at the inception of the church, that we see that which had been kept secret from the foundation of the world, being made manifest –

Ephesians 3:10

...to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places...

1 Corinthians 2:7-8

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, 8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

This hidden wisdom is “the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens,” which had been given to the disciples to know *in abundance* and was the content of the message they proclaimed. However, as we saw in our previous study of the parables of the sower, the wheat and tares, the mustard seed and the leaven, that this message, “When anyone hears the word of the kingdom,” has, through the work of the enemy of our souls during the course of this dispensation, become completely corrupted within the “church” so that we will hardly find it taught anywhere. And where the kingdom is presented, it is usually apart from the foundational truth on which it must be based, without comparing scripture with scripture, resulting in error. This would include everything from “there is no literal kingdom” to “the kingdom is already here.”

Witness what was reported in the Times of London under the heading, “Catholic Church no longer swears by truth of the Bible,” published in 2005—

“The hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church has published a teaching document instructing the faithful that some parts of the Bible are not actually true. The Catholic bishops of England, Wales and Scotland are warning their five million worshippers, as well as any others drawn to the study of scripture, that they should not expect “total accuracy” from the Bible. “We should not expect to find in Scripture full scientific accuracy or complete historical precision,” they say in *The Gift of Scripture*.

The document is timely, coming as it does amid the rise of the religious Right, in particular in the US. Some Christians want a literal interpretation of the story of creation, as told in Genesis, taught alongside Darwin’s theory of evolution in schools, believing “intelligent design” to be an equally plausible theory of how the world began. But the first 11 chapters of Genesis, in which two different and at times conflicting stories of creation are told, are among those that this country’s Catholic bishops insist cannot be “historical.” At most, they say, they may contain “historical traces.”

Similarly, they refute the apocalyptic prophecies of Revelation, the last book of the Christian Bible, in which the writer describes the work of the risen Jesus, the death of the Beast and the wedding feast of Christ the Lamb. The bishops say: “Such symbolic language must be respected for what it is, and is not to be interpreted literally. We should not expect to discover in this book details about the end of the world, about how many will be saved and about when the end will come.”

They say the Church must offer the gospel in ways “appropriate to changing times, intelligible and attractive to our contemporaries.” They go on to condemn fundamentalism for its “intransigent intolerance” and to warn of “significant dangers” involved in a fundamentalist approach.”

I am sure we can see in this the outworking of those destructive heresies that are summed up in the question, “Where is the promise of His coming?” And we can also find within the evangelical church an equally disturbing departure from the truth of scripture. Around the same time that the article in the Times was written, the following appeared in a publication called “The Prophetic Bulletin” which came to our mail box –

“The gospel of the kingdom is not the same as the gospel of salvation, commonly referred to as “The Gospel” which has been the primary message of the protestant and evangelical church for the past 500 years. It is now time to understand the gospel of the kingdom, how it is to be distinguished from the message of salvation that has been preached and how the message of the church is about to change so as to be preached throughout the whole world. To be saved with a vision of our salvation is good, but it is man centered – to be saved by a vision of the kingdom is enlistment in the army of the coming King. This is not a question of majoring on minors – each has different consequences and different fruit. When the gospel of salvation is preached we are compelled to accept the Lord, and often it is done as if we are doing Him a favor. When the gospel of the kingdom is preached so that the kingdom is seen we shall bow the knee begging His acceptance.”

What we find here is no more than Lordship Salvation. A doctrine of demons that completely destroys the gospel of grace, which is succinctly put –

Acts 16:31

So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

And then completely nullifies the word of the kingdom by taking a message that concerns the salvation of the soul and applying it to initial salvation where it has no place. We can clearly see in this the outcome of the work of the tares. The publication then continues –

“Great changes have been happening deep in the heart of the church for years – these are about to accelerate resulting in such a great transformation that it will be viewed as the greatest move of God in His people since the day of Pentecost.”

Again, this “vision” of the church in the last days is completely at odds with the plain, clear, distinct teaching of scripture given by the Lord in the first three chapters of Revelation. Let’s just remember how the Book begins –

Revelation 1:1

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants--things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John,

That which we see in this errant “prophetic vision” then is the literal fulfillment of that which the Lord says about the Laodecian church –

Revelation 3:17

"Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' --and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—“

Those following this teaching of a great end time revival are deceived into believing that there is to be an unprecedented outpouring of God’s Spirit upon the church, rising to a crescendo of spiritual blessing , signs, wonders and miracles, paving the way for the Lord’s return. But this is not what scripture teaches concerning the “church” prior to the Lord’s return. The reality is what we have seen in the first 4 Matthew chapter 13 parables and the first 3 chapters of Revelation.

Those responsible for the examples we have just looked at have access to and draw from the same scriptures that contain the mysteries of the kingdom, the same scriptures where the hidden wisdom of God is revealed. And being *redeemed* they have the ability to receive and understand the spiritual truth contained in them; but what we find is a direct parallel with the condition of the nation of Israel at Christ’s first coming –

2 Corinthians 4:3-4

But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

2 Peter 2:2

And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

We also find this –

Hebrews 5:10-12

[Christ] called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek," 11 of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

And we will notice at once that the recipients of Hebrews had *become* dull of hearing, something they had not always been. And we also see those in Galatia being misled –

Galatians 5:7-9

You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? 8 This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. 9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

What we find then, within Christendom, is a chilling parallel to the situation in Israel at Christ's first coming. And now, as then, within the context of a generational rejection of the King and His kingdom, there must always be an individual response to the word of the kingdom, a response that *if positive* will most assuredly fly in the face of mainstream religious thinking whether it be conservative or liberal. Yet the good news is that God is still speaking to those who will have ears to hear, who have an unquenchable thirst for the truth –

Revelation 3:20

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

Luke 11:9

"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 11 If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

Matthew 5:6

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.

And for those who do have ears to hear scripture is very clear –

Hebrews 3:14-19

For we have become partakers [companions] of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, 15 while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." 16 For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? 17 Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

And just as Israel, or the recipients of the Book of Hebrews, or the church of Ephesus, or those in Galatia, it is more than possible for those who have received the spiritual truth of the word of the kingdom to choose to harden their hearts to it, or to allow their choices and their actions to cause them to become blinded to the truth.

And so I am particularly mindful today as we have been studying and continue to study the parables in Matthew chapter 13, that it has been given to [us] to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, *things kept secret from the foundation of the world*. Who can measure the importance of what God has taught us regarding the circumstances of the Lord's return and the establishment of His kingdom?

2 Peter 3:8-9

But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

1 Corinthians 3:13-15

...each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Romans 8:17

...and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

1 Peter 1:4-5

... to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

1 Peter 1:12

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.

Galatians 3:29

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Romans 4:13

For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

1 Peter 1:9

...receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls.

And again I feel impressed to challenge us in respect of complacency, lethargy and familiarity with regards to this. If any of these have crept into our attitude towards the glorious good news that God has made known to us and the exceedingly great and precious promises He has given us, let us be encouraged to remove them, remembering –

James 1:21

Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

The phrase “overflow of wickedness” comes from a word having to do with ‘earwax.’ If we allow ourselves to become lethargic, complacent and familiar to the point where what we hear becomes *commonplace*, and the promises *ordinary*, then our ears also will become dull of hearing. If this is happening then let the cotton bud of repentance root out that wax and let us choose to hear again what the Spirit is saying.

Because it is in complacency, in treating the word of the kingdom as commonplace, in thinking that it really doesn’t matter that much, “I’m OK,” that we are most susceptible to the deceitfulness of sin –

Hebrews 3:13

...but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

...that we are most vulnerable to eating leaven –

Matthew 13:25

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

Let us take to heart the lessons learned from Israel –

1 Corinthians 10:11-12

Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Let us encourage ourselves by seeing the attitude of those at the beginning of the dispensation–

Acts 2:42, 46-47

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers...46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and

breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

- “continued steadfastly” = Greek – ‘proskartereo’ = *be constantly diligent*
- “fellowship” = Greek – ‘koinonia’ = *partnership*
- “gladness” = Greek – ‘agalliasis’ = from a word meaning *jump for joy*.
- “simplicity” = Greek – ‘aphelotes’ = *smoothness* (literally, “without stubbing the toe”)

2 Peter 1:10

Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble...

And finally remember the Lord’s words to His disciples, the first part of which we can make personal –

Matthew 13:16-18

"But blessed are [our] eyes for they see, and [our] ears for they hear; 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. 18 Therefore hear the parable of the sower: (the wheat and tares – the mustard seed – the leaven – the treasure – the pearl – the dragnet)

Do we realize that we have so much more to praise God for than to complain about?