

Kingdom Parables, Part 1

Scripture: Matthew 13:1–2

Code: 2297

INTRODUCTION

A. The King

1. Depicted

The book of Matthew was written primarily to present Jesus Christ as the King, the Son of God, the Messiah, and the rightful heir to David's throne. In chapter 1, Matthew showed that He was the One who should reign because He was in the Messianic line. He was the Son of David. In chapter 2, His right to reign was affirmed by the oriental king-makers, which we know as the Wise Men, or the Magi. Through their own understanding of prophecy and the direction of the Spirit of God, they were led to confirm that Jesus was the King. Christ's kingship was affirmed again in chapter 3 by the testimony of John the Baptist, who was the preordained forerunner to the King. In chapter 4, Christ was presented as God's chosen King by His conflict with Satan: He overpowered Satan, and conquered the kingdom of darkness.

In chapters 5, 6, and 7, Jesus spoke with authority--He spoke as a King. Here, He talked about the principles of the Kingdom. Those chapters make up the great Sermon on the Mount. Chapters 8-10 present the credentials of the King. Those three chapters are full of miracles, which were all proof that He fulfilled the prophecies concerning Him. He proved Himself to be the King through His supernatural power.

2. Denied

In chapters 8-10, while Christ was performing His miracles, there was a mounting rejection of Him. The greater the evidence that He was the King, the greater the rejection became. That shows the profound blindness of the people. In chapter 11, Jesus denounced the sinful nation of Israel for rejecting Him. He promised them severe judgment. Then He closes chapter 11 with an invitation: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (v. 28). Out of the message of judgment came the message of grace--an invitation. In chapter 12, this rejection reaches its climax as does the pronouncement of judgment. The final rejection by the leaders of Israel is summed up in the fact that Jesus was accused of being satanic. Jesus then pronounced a final judgment on the leaders and said, "You're beyond the point of being forgiven" (vv. 31-32). But even after saying that, Jesus closes with another invitation: "For whosoever shall do the will of My Father, who is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother" (v. 50). What is the will of the Father in heaven? Very clearly the Father had said, "...This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him" (Mt. 17:5b). Whoever recognized Jesus as the Son of God and heard His message, would come into an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

a. The Inherent Consequence Christ had been proven to be the King. The people had rejected Him as the King, and consequently, He pronounced judgment on them. Yet He still offers an invitation to whomever will believe. So as we approach chapter 13, the die is cast. Israel has rejected the King. Therefore, Israel has rejected the Kingdom, because the Kingdom cannot be separated from the King. For centuries, they had awaited the Messiah and His establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. They had awaited the restoration of the glory and the blessing that was man's before the fall. But when it was offered to them, they refused it and therefore lost it in that generation.

b. The Illogical Conclusion Starting with chapter 13, we enter a new perspective in the ministry of Christ. Stanley

Toussaint, in his commentary on Matthew, says, "Not seeing the Messiahship of Jesus in His words and works, they have separated the fruit from the tree" (Behold the King [Portland: Multnomah Press, 1980] p. 168). I think that is an important statement. The Jewish leaders came to the wrong conclusion about Jesus not because they denied His power or weren't fascinated by His words, but because they never traced the fruit of Christ's ministry to its logical conclusion. They separated it from the reality of who He was. You can see in chapter 13 the shadow of the cross looming in the background. They were already seeking to destroy Him in Matthew 12:14. They had reached the point of wanting only to kill Him. They had rejected the King and His Kingdom.

B. The Kingdom

1. The Postponement

Now, the question that immediately comes to mind is this: If Jesus came to bring His Kingdom to earth, to reign and to establish that which was promised, but Israel refused Him and His Kingdom, then what happened to the Kingdom? Chapter 13 answers that question. You see, the Kingdom cannot come until the nation of Israel receives the King. Until that point, then, the Kingdom has to be postponed in terms of its complete fulfillment. It has to be postponed to a future time. What time is that? The Second Coming of Christ. That's why Christ is coming a second time--to bring the Kingdom that was refused at His First Coming. Christ came and said, "Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 4:17). The message of John the Baptist and the Apostles was the same (Mt. 3:2; 10:7). They preached that the Kingdom of God was at hand. But the people rejected the King and His Kingdom; therefore, the Kingdom was postponed.

2. The Promise

You say, "Why didn't God just eliminate the Kingdom altogether?" Because God promised Israel a future Kingdom, and God keeps His promises. That's why Christ is coming back to offer His Kingdom again, and at that time it will be received. God promised that He would bring a Kingdom to Israel and that through that nation His Kingdom would extend to all the world. God will keep His promise. That's why the Jewish people are still on the earth right now and they are regathered in their land. God's plan is right on target for them. If God just set the Kingdom aside and said, "Forget it; I gave you one chance at it," then His prophecies would not come to pass and His word would be violated. Thus, God postponed the Kingdom to a time when Israel will believe.

Zechariah 12:10 says that there is coming a day when Israel shall "look upon [Him] whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son...." Then Zechariah 13:1 adds, "The fountain of salvation will be opened up to the line of Israel, and the nation will be regenerated." They will be redeemed. Paul said in Romans 11:26 that "all Israel shall be saved." That will happen during the Great Tribulation. Revelation 7:9 says that there will also be a multitude of Gentiles saved during that time. There will be people of every tongue, tribe, and nation in that multitude. When the Kingdom of God comes into the hearts of men internally, then its complete fulfillment will come externally, when Christ reigns on the earth in the Millennium (the thousand-year reign of Christ spoken of in Revelation 20). The complete fulfillment of the Kingdom refers to the Kingdom that will be on the earth both internally (in the hearts of believing people) and externally (as Christ reigns as King).

Had the Jewish people believed Christ the first time He came, they would have received the King internally and the Kingdom externally. But because they didn't believe, the complete fulfillment of the Kingdom was postponed. There was a remnant who received the King internally, and there are today those who receive the King internally, but someday there will be a massive response to Him. When the Kingdom comes internally at the level that it does in the Tribulation, then it will come externally in the wonderful Millennial reign.

3. The Parenthesis

Now, what happens in the time between the rejection of the Kingdom and Christ's Second Coming? Some theologians have called this period "The Parenthesis," some have called it "The Interim," and

some have called it "The Interregnum." It is a period that is not seen in the Old Testament. Thus Jesus calls it "the mystery" in Mark 4:11. It was a period of time hidden from the people. That's why chapter 13 is so essential, because there were no teachings on what this period of time would be like. Throughout chapter 13 are seven parables, and it is in those parables that Jesus describes the interim period.

We are living in that period now. If we can understand what Jesus says about that period, then we can know what we should be doing during it. That is why we need to understand chapter 13. As we study the parables, you'll see the perfect parallel they have to our time.

That time is also known as the mystery form of the Kingdom. That doesn't mean it is clandestine or secretive; it just means something that was hidden and is now revealed. The Old Testament people thought that the Messiah would set up His Kingdom right after He came to earth. There were a few subtle hints given to them about the interim period, but there was never a full description of it.

a. The Circumstance¹) Explained During the interim period, the Kingdom goes on with the King being absent. Jesus, at this point, is in heaven. That doesn't mean He's not present in our midst, for the Bible says that He is. But in terms of where He identifies Himself to be in His glorified body, He dwells at the right hand of the Father. It is there that He intercedes for us to the Father, and awaits the time of His Second Coming. So, there's a sense in which the Kingdom is here on earth with the King in absentia. Some theologians have difficulty with that and say you can't have a Kingdom if the King isn't here. That is not true. There is a realm here, and in this realm there are people who are subjects of Christ. Jesus is the King by definition of who He is, even though He is in absentia.²) Exemplified

A classic illustration that proves that possible is in 2 Samuel 15-17. David was still the king of Israel even though his son Absalom usurped him and Absalom's revolutionary cohorts rejected him. It didn't matter that they chased him into the wilderness and that he hid for a long period of time to avoid being killed. He was still the king, and Israel was still his realm. He still had the right to rule and was the recognized monarch in the hearts of many of the people. He eventually was able to come back to take up the throne that was rightfully his. In the same way that David was the king in absentia during that incident, Christ is King now.

b. The Concept The Lord Jesus Christ is ruling on the earth now even though He Himself in His glorified form is absent. To help you understand that better, I want to explain the concept of the Kingdom. It is a very big issue to discuss, but we'll discuss it in reduced form and look at the heart of the matter. There are two basic aspects of God's Kingdom. The first aspect is God's...

1) Universal Kingdom This simply refers to the fact that God rules everything and everyone forever. He is the Sovereign, the Creator, the Sustainer, the beginning and the end of all things, and He dominates all things. That is made evident in... a) Psalm 29:10--"The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the LORD sitteth King forever." He is the eternal King. There is no time when He is not the King and there is no time when someone else takes His place. b)

Psalm 103:19--"The LORD hath prepared His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom ruleth over all." He is the King over everything. You say, "Is He King over the devil?" Not only is He King over the devil, but He's also King over the demons and unbelievers. That's why He has the power to throw them all into hell. The Bible says to "fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mt. 10:28). Hell is not controlled by Satan; God will punish Satan in hell along with the demons and unbelievers. God rules over hell just like He rules over everything else in His universal monarchy. c) 1

Chronicles 29:11--"Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine. Thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and Thou art exalted as head above all." God is the universal King. Sometimes when you read the phrase "the kingdom of God" in the Bible, it is God's universal rule that is being spoken of.

The second aspect of God's Kingdom is the... 2) Mediatorial Kingdom I have searched for a better definition of this aspect of God's Kingdom, and can't find one. It is Alva McClain who calls it "the mediatorial Kingdom" (The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God as Set Forth in the Scriptures [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959]). In other words, it is not the direct rule

of God, but His rule mediated through human instruments. That refers to God's rule on earth. It is the Kingdom that the Lord had in mind when He said, "After this manner, therefore, pray ye.... Thy kingdom come. They will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Mt. 6:9a, 10). The phrase "as it is in heaven" perceives the universal Kingdom of God, and the phrase "in earth" perceives the earthly, mediated Kingdom of God. We are to pray, "God, rule on the earth the way You rule everywhere else." That isolates the earth as a point of rebellion in the midst of God's universal Kingdom. When God created the world, He planned to rule on the earth through human instruments. The first two people He ruled through were Adam and Eve. He gave them dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:28). He told them to rule for Him; He made them His vice-monarchs. When Adam and Eve fell prey to Satan, rebellion set in, and Satan became the monarch of this world. There is now ruling on the earth an usurper. But God said, "I still want to mediate My rule on the earth. I want My will and My Word known. I want My moral standards known, and people to be subject to Me. I want to call men into My Kingdom." He is doing just that and has been doing that ever since the Fall.

a) In the Old Testament If you read the book of Genesis, you'll see that God mediated His rule on the earth through the patriarchs. The patriarchs were great, godly men who knew the mind, heart, and will of God. They had expressed God's will, heart, and mind to the people of their time. God mediated His rule through Seth, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Melchizedek (who was a priest of God), and other such individuals. Later on, God called out a nation of people to be the human agents of His mediatorial Kingdom. That nation was Israel, and they were to give the Word of God, the mind of God, and the heart of God to the world, and to bring the world to know God (Dt. 6:4-7; cf. Gen. 12:2-3; Isa. 43:10, 12). Throughout the Old Testament God called prophets, priests, and kings to be His key human instruments in mediating His rule on earth.

b) In the New Testament In the New Testament, God became directly involved in mediating His Kingdom through the human instrument Jesus Christ. Jesus came into this world and told us what God was like and what God's standards were. He preached about the Kingdom of God and called for people to be subject to it. After Jesus was rejected, He went back into heaven and the message was carried on by the Apostles and prophets. God now mediates His rule on earth through the church, which is made up of believers who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. As God's agents, we are to speak the Word of God; hold up the standards of God; bring God's will, way, and moral values to men; and call men to enter into God's Kingdom. There is coming a time in the future, during the Tribulation, when God will anoint 144 thousand Jewish people to mediate His rule and take His message to the world. There will be a worldwide revival in which numerous Gentiles and Jewish people are saved, and then Christ will come back and mediate His own Kingdom on the earth again. That mediated Kingdom will eventually merge into the eternal Kingdom, which will have "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1). The mediatorial Kingdom, which began at creation, will end at that final merger, and we'll go into eternity that way.

c. The Composition Let me share with you something of interest about the mediatorial Kingdom: It is a Kingdom composed of those who are true to God and those who are falsely attached to God. The term mediatorial Kingdom encompasses everyone who externally identifies himself with the people of God. This Kingdom is made up of people who outwardly profess to be Christians (but aren't really Christians), and people who inwardly possess Christ. Oftentimes, we cannot tell who is really a Christian and who isn't. That has been true of God's mediatorial Kingdom ever since the Fall. When God was mediating His Kingdom through the nation of Israel, there were some people who weren't really true to Him. In Romans 9 Paul wrote, "...For they are not all Israel, who are of Israel" (v. 6b). In Romans 2 he said, "For [a Jew] is not a Jew who is one outwardly...but he is a Jew who is one inwardly..." (vv. 28a, 29a). There will always be people who identify themselves with God, whether they really are with Him or not.

Let me give you two illustrations of this:

1) Matthew 8:12 Here we read, "But the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." That is a description of hell. Now, those who are believers do not go to hell. It is only unbelievers who go to hell. Notice the title used for those who will be cast into hell--"the sons

of the kingdom." Because believers do not go to hell, we can conclude that not all sons of the Kingdom are believers. The Lord Himself makes that clear here. Within the framework of the Kingdom are the true and the false. We'll see that in Matthew 13 in the parable of the tares among the wheat.) John 15:2, 6 People sometimes become confused with John 15 because they don't understand the concept of the mediatorial Kingdom encompassing the true and the false. John 15 does not use the Kingdom metaphor; it uses the concept of a vine and its branches, which is an agricultural metaphor. In this concept, Jesus is the vine. Who are the branches? Look at verse 2: "Every branch in Me...." The branches are people who somehow are connected with Christ. Jesus said, "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He [God] taketh away...." What happens to those branches that are taken away? Verse 6 tells us: "...men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." That describes hell. A branch that doesn't bear fruit is going to be thrown into hell. You say, "Wait a minute! Does that mean you can lose your salvation?" No, it doesn't. It is merely speaking of the fact that you can be in the Kingdom and not of the King. You can be superficially attached. I think he's talking about a Judas branch here: The outward attachment is there, but the obvious lack of life is manifest by the fact that there is no fruit. You will be needing to keep that principle in mind as we study Matthew 13. Some of the "sons of the kingdom"--some of the branches-- are going to go to hell because there was no real life in them. There was no real subjection to the King. Let me give you another thought about the interim period in which we live: d. The Conditions God's universal Kingdom has no conditions for entrance. In other words, everybody and everything is already under God's universal rule. But God's mediatorial Kingdom has a condition: You're not really in His mediated Kingdom unless, according to Mark 1:15, you "repent, and believe the gospel." If you don't do that, then you aren't truly in God's mediated Kingdom, but you're still in His universal Kingdom. You will suffer under His universal rule over hell, and not know the blessing of heaven. 1) The Internal Kingdom Offered When Jesus said in Matthew 4:17, "...Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," what was He asking men to come into? He was inviting them into the mediatorial aspect of His Kingdom--the redeemed community. There is no room for a neutral response here. The Lord repeatedly said, "You either receive Me or you don't" (Mt. 12:30; Mk. 9:40). You either accept the King or reject Him; therefore, either enter the Kingdom or be kept out. John the Baptist asked the Jewish people to make a decision, too. Tragically, they made the wrong decision. They refused the King, and therefore refused His Kingdom. Because of their rejection, judgment was pronounced on them. At that point, the complete fulfillment of the Kingdom was postponed. You say, "Does that mean there is no Kingdom now?" No, the Kingdom does exist now, but it is an internal Kingdom. In its complete fulfillment, it will be both internal and external. 2) The External Kingdom Observed The Scripture talks about a day when Jesus Christ will be sitting on the throne of David in the literal city of Jerusalem, reigning with a rod of iron and being sought by the nations (Ps. 2:6-9; Isa. 9:7; 11:1-5, 10). That will be the real, external Kingdom of Christ. In Revelation 20 we read that that Kingdom (the millennial Kingdom) will be on earth for a thousand years. It will be preceded by an internal response to Christ on a worldwide basis. For now, the external element of the Kingdom, or the fullness of the Kingdom, awaits the belief of Israel. In the meantime, the Kingdom is internal and God is reaching out across the world and bringing people into His Kingdom through salvation. e. The Clarifications 1) The Kingdom of Heaven I would like to bring to your attention something of importance at this introductory level of our study. In Matthew 13:11, Jesus said, "...it is given unto you to know the mysteries [the mystery form] of the kingdom of heaven...." The phrase "the kingdom of heaven" is very important in this chapter, and appears eight times (vv. 11, 24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47, 52). Some people have tried to suggest that the Kingdom of heaven and the Kingdom of God are two different things. That is not true. The Kingdom of heaven is simply another way of saying the Kingdom of God. The reason we know that is because in Luke 8:10, a parallel passage of Matthew 13:11, "the kingdom of God" is used instead of "the kingdom of heaven." Thus, we accept the fact that the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of heaven are the same. 2) The Church Age Another

important thing to know is that the interim period in which we live is also called the Church Age. We are in the unique mystery period that is defined by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 3: "[This is the mystery] which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel" (vv. 5-6). In other words, the mystery of this age is that both Jew and Gentile would constitute a new body, or a new identity. That new identity is the church, and the church is the body of Christ. That was not seen in the Old Testament. So there is a sense in which this age is the mystery age, the Kingdom, and the Church Age. The Kingdom, however, is not the same as the church. The Kingdom was here before the church and it goes on beyond the church. It is just for this period of time that they are the same. I might add that within the mediatorial Kingdom there will always be the true and the false. That was true in the Old Testament nation of Israel; it is true now in the church. It will even be true in the Millennium. There will be believers and unbelievers on the earth during the reign of Christ. That is shown by the fact that when Satan is loosed from the pit at the end of Christ's one- thousand-year reign, he will go about the earth, gather a multitude of people, and make an army of them to fight against Christ (Rev. 20:7-9). Whatever aspect of the mediated Kingdom you look at--the Old Testament, the Millennium, or the time in between--you will always see the true and the false side by side. That's why we shouldn't be surprised to find unbelieving people associated with the church.

Now, there are four things that I want to focus on in an overview of Matthew 13: The Place, The Plan, The Purpose, and The Promise. First, let's look at...

I. THE PLACE (vv. 1-2)

A. The Duration Of Ministry Continued

The beginning of verse 1 starts by saying, "The same day...." What does that mean? It simply means that what follows that phrase occurred on the same day as what happened in the preceding verses. In 12:46 we are told that Jesus is in a house, and that His mother and brothers came to speak with Him. Prior to that, He had condemned the Pharisees, who had earlier accused Him of blasphemy. In 12:22 He had healed a demon-possessed man who was blind and dumb (and perhaps deaf). It's possible that on the same day He did other healings. He healed a demoniac; He was blasphemed; He pronounced judgment on the Pharisees; His parents and brothers came to Him, and He gave an invitation for people to do the will of the Father--all in one day! It had been a busy day for Him.

B. The Dimension Of Ministry Changed

1. A Change of Territory

Reading all of verse 1, it says, "The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the seaside." This verse doesn't convey any profound spiritual truth, so why is it important to mention? Matthew could have started at verse 3: "...He spoke many things unto them in parables...." Verses 1 and 2 just say, "The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the seaside. And great multitudes were gathered together unto Him, so that He went into a boat, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore." Was it necessary to include that information?

It's interesting to note that at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, He was in houses a lot. From here on, however, toward the end of His ministry, He seems to be outdoors a lot. You see Him teaching by the seaside, on the highways and byways, in the village streets, on the hillsides, and in the countryside. It's almost as if there was a subtle statement being made about Jesus' ministry going into a new dimension. Another noticeable change is that in the latter part of His ministry, Jesus spent less time in the synagogues. The times He did go into a synagogue, He faced extreme hostility.

2. A Change in Teaching

a. The Interest of the People Verse 2 says that there was a great multitude around Him. It was an indiscriminate multitude. Public curiosity about Jesus was still very high. In spite of the Jewish leaders' rejection, there were many people who were interested in Him. He fascinated people. In

verse 2, there was such a big mob around Him that they practically pushed Him into the water. Imagine the pressure there must have been on Jesus! With all of the healings that He did, and the words that He spoke, He became the attraction of attractions. There weren't books and other sources of entertainment available in those days. The things that Jesus was doing fascinated many people. Because of the pressing crowd, Jesus got one of the little fishing boats beached upon the sand, and probably with the help of the Twelve (or some of the Twelve), He pushed the boat out into the water. Then He got into the boat. The men helping Him probably stopped when they stood waist deep in the water, holding onto the boat to keep it from spinning around or being carried along by the tide. Then He sat in the boat. I once read a book that connected that action with the fact that rabbis always sat when they taught, but I think the reason He sat was because if He hadn't, He would've fallen in the water. It is a lot easier to sit in a boat than stand in it while it is bouncing back and forth in the tide.

b. The Initiation of the Parables While the multitude stood on the shore, "...He spoke many things unto them in parables..." (v. 3a). Before this time, whenever Jesus taught, he spoke in clear terms. However, many people had refused to listen to Him. So He began to teach parables that weren't able to be understood. Before this point, there is no record of Jesus having spoken in parables. He gave some wonderful allusions and figures of speech, but no parables. A parable, when it is left unexplained, is a riddle that cannot be understood. When the people refused to listen to what they could have understood, Jesus began to speak in riddles that they couldn't understand. First Corinthians 14:21 refers to the fact that the Lord would speak in a language that couldn't be understood to those who didn't listen to Him. Jesus' speaking in parables marked a turning point in His ministry. But to those who believed, He explained every single detail of what He said.

Focusing on the Facts

1. For what primary purpose was the book of Matthew written? How did Matthew prove that Jesus is King in the chapters preceding chapter 13?
2. What was the consequence Israel's rejection of the King?
3. Explain what Stanley Toussaint meant by the phrase "they [the Israelites] have separated the fruit from the tree."
4. Why was the Kingdom postponed? When will the Kingdom come?
5. What would happen if God eliminated the Kingdom altogether?
6. Will the Jewish people eventually accept Christ as their Messiah? Support your explanation with Scriptures.
7. What are the different titles that have been given to the time period between the rejection of the Kingdom and Christ's Second Coming? Why did Jesus call that period of time "the mystery" (Mk. 4:11)? What does Jesus describe in Matthew 13?
8. During that interim period, the _____ goes on with the King being _____. Give an illustration of this from the Old Testament.
9. Define what is meant by the term universal Kingdom. Does God extend His universal rule over Satan? Explain.
10. Define what is meant by the term mediatorial Kingdom. How did God mediate His rule in the Old Testament era? How did God mediate His rule in the New Testament era? How does God mediate His rule now?
11. How will God mediate His rule during the Tribulation? After the Tribulation, Christ will come back to earth to mediate His rule again. What will the mediated Kingdom eventually merge into?
12. From the human point of view, what two kinds of people are in the mediatorial Kingdom? Are all "the sons of the Kingdom" believers (Mt. 8:12)? Explain.
13. What will God do with branches that do not bear fruit (Jn. 15:2, 6)? Does this mean you can lose your salvation? Explain.
14. Which aspect of God's Kingdom is everyone in? What is the condition for truly becoming a part of

God's mediatorial Kingdom?

15. How do we know that the Kingdom of heaven and the Kingdom of God are the same?

16. What is another term used for the interim period in which we now live? What is the mystery of this age, according to Ephesians 3:5-6?

17. Is the Kingdom the same as the church? Why?

18. How do we know that there will be unbelievers on the earth during Christ's millennial reign? What Scripture supports this?

19. What is the meaning of the phrase "the same day" in Matthew 13:1? What happened during that day?

20. How was the latter part of Jesus' ministry different from the earlier part?

21. Explain the difference between how Jesus taught prior to Matthew 13 and how He taught afterwards. What is a parable? Who were the only people Jesus explained His parables to?

Pondering the Principles

1. When the Jewish people rejected Jesus as their King, they also rejected the Kingdom that God had repeatedly promised He would give them. Despite the rejection, God is still holding to His promise that Israel shall one day have a Kingdom ruled by their Messiah. One of the most wonderful things about God is that we can always be sure that He will keep His promises. Read the following verses: Psalm 46:1; 55:22; 145:18-20; 147:3; Isaiah 40:29-31; Matthew 7:7-8; Philippians 4:7, 19; James 1:5. Write down each verse and the promise that is mentioned in that verse. Put this list in a place where you will be able to refer to it when you want to remember God's promises to you. As you learn of other promises, add them to the list.

2. Not all those who profess to be Christians are true believers. This is evident by what Jesus said in Matthew 8:12: "But the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." There are people who are superficially attached to Jesus yet don't submit to His lordship. Read Matthew 7:15-23. How can you know if a person is not a Christian? Can a corrupt person manifest good fruit? What does Jesus say will happen to the trees that do not bear good fruit? Verses 21-23 indicate that there will be people who appear to be doing miraculous works for the Lord, but never were of the Lord. According to verse 23, for what reason does Jesus tell them to depart from Him? What kind of fruit had they produced in their lives? Knowing this, how can we evaluate a person if we're doubtful that he's a Christian?

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