

Kingdom Parables, Part 2

Scripture: Matthew 13:3a, 10–17, 34–35

Code: 2298

INTRODUCTION & REVIEW

In the chapters preceding Matthew 13, Matthew presented Jesus Christ as King. He showed us beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus is the anointed of God, the Messiah, the Christ, the King, and the Savior of the world. John the Baptist said He would bring a Kingdom. Jesus did what John the Baptist said He would--He offered a Kingdom. He taught about the Kingdom, and called people to acknowledge Him as the King. However, the people rejected the King and refused His Kingdom. That became a monumental point in redemptive history. The people of God-- those called out of the loins of Abraham--were to be the channel through whom the world would be blessed. It was through them that the Kingdom and the King would come (Gen. 12:2-3; Isa. 11:1-6). But they refused the King. Consequently, they had refused His Kingdom, and as we find out in Matthew 13, the Kingdom was postponed. The Kingdom couldn't come when the people of the King refused the King. So it was postponed to a future time when the people of Israel will accept the King and acknowledge His Kingdom, and thereby receive it in its fullness.

A. The Insight

1. Of the New Testament

The period of time between the rejection of Christ and His return is called "the mystery form of the Kingdom." It is a time hidden from all generations past--Jesus refers to the things of this time as "the mysteries" in Matthew 13:11. This period had never been described in all of revelatory history. It wasn't until Jesus described this time in Matthew 13 that anyone knew the details of it. The rest of the New Testament builds on that description, but Matthew 13 is where it all began.

2. Of the Old Testament

For an idea of how the Old Testament saw this mystery period, look at the book of Zechariah. Chapters 12, 13, and 14 of Zechariah talk about the conversion of Israel and the establishment of the great Kingdom of the Lord. Let's look at some of the specific details regarding that:

a. Zechariah 12:10-11a "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning...." "There is coming a day when the people of Israel will look upon the One they pierced (that speaks of the crucifixion), and will mourn that they ever did that. This passage tells us that when the King came, He would be rejected and pierced. Both Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 say the same thing. But later on, people will mourn that the King was rejected and crucified. However, Zechariah, the psalmist, and Isaiah say nothing about the time between Christ's rejection and return.

b. Zechariah 13:1 "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." In other words, when they're sorry for their sin of rejecting the King and His Kingdom, then God will pour out the fountain of salvation upon them.

c. Zechariah 14:4, 9 "And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in its midst toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south [That describes the coming of the Lord.].... And the LORD shall be king over all the

earth; in that day shall there be one LORD, and His name one."The prophet Zechariah said there would be a rejection and a piercing, and later on, a mourning. Then he said there would be salvation for the people of God, and the establishment of the Kingdom. But the period of time between the refusal of the King and the receiving of the King was never mentioned. That is the mystery period, hidden from all generations past and never discussed in the pages of Holy Writ, until Jesus opens our understanding here in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew.

B. The Inquiry

It is important for Matthew 13 to be where it is. Anyone reading the Gospel of Matthew, seeing Jesus come as the King and seeing Him and His Kingdom refused, is immediately going to ask, "What happens now? If the Kingdom is postponed until a future time, what will happen in the meantime?" That is precisely the question answered by the series of parables in Matthew 13. Each parable describes a particular facet of the period we now live in, otherwise known as the mystery form of the Kingdom. It is also known as the Church Age. It will end when Jesus calls the church to be with Him.

Now, let's continue our general overview of Matthew 13:

I. THE PLACE (vv. 1-2)

II. THE PLAN (vv. 3a, 34)

Verse 3 starts by saying, "And He spoke many things unto them in parables...." The plan of our Lord was to speak in parables. He had a very important reason for that, which we will see later. The phrase "He spoke many things unto them in parables" indicates to us that all of the parables in this chapter were spoken at one time. They were all spoken to the multitude on the seashore while Jesus sat and taught from a boat in the water (vv. 1-2). It's possible that the parables that appear in the other Gospels were also given on that day, and that Matthew didn't include them all. It's possible Jesus taught things that aren't even recorded in the Bible.

Nonetheless, we know at that time, Jesus spoke many things to the crowd, all in parables. It says in verse 34, "All these things spoke Jesus unto the multitude in parables, and without a parable spoke He not unto them." He spoke only in parables, and He did not explain the parables to the multitude.

A. A Definition

Now, what is a parable? The Greek word for parable is parabole, of which para means "something alongside of something else" so that a comparison can be made. It basically means "a comparison, or an illustration." If you have a spiritual truth that is hard to understand, and lay alongside it a physical, earthly story that is easily understood, then you give understanding to that spiritual truth. That comparison is a parable.

The word parabole is used in the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint) forty-five times. That indicates that it was a very common form of Jewish teaching. It meant taking something very external, observable, objective, and earthly and laying it alongside something spiritual, supernatural, subjective, and heavenly so that people could understand the spiritual truth. It's an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

B. A Discussion

1. Parables Are Instructive

A good teacher knows that you must communicate to people in terms of parables or analogies related to life. You can't just talk in abstraction. Difficult theological and spiritual concepts that are hard to understand need to be compared to things that are concrete and earthly so that people can understand the more difficult principles from those that are readily understood. In Matthew 13, Jesus teaches profound spiritual lessons about a period of time no one knew about, and He does it using simple terminology so that those who are supposed to understand Him will understand Him easily. In one parable, Jesus speaks of a field and grain, using birds, a road, thorns, and the sun in His story. In the rest of the chapter He referred to wheat and tares, the mustard seed and tree, leaven, treasure, pearls, a fishing net, and a householder. Those were all things that were understood by the

people of the agricultural culture in which Jesus taught.

2. Parables Are Effective

There are four reasons why parables are effective: The first reason they are effective is because they make truth concrete. In other words, because most people think in pictures, it is effective to 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 it's pictured by a man throwing seed in a field. Parables help make truth concrete. Second, they make truth portable. By that I mean if you remember the story, you can always recover its spiritual meaning because all of the elements are there in the story. A parable allows truth to be carried around in people's minds. Third, they make truth interesting. Parables can reduce rather dull thoughts into life situations that grab people's attention. Fourth, they make truth personally discoverable. In other words, as the story is told, you begin to internalize the spiritual truth that is being conveyed.

So, parables are a marvelous mode of teaching because they make truth concrete, portable, interesting, and personally discoverable. Our Lord spoke in parables just as the Hebrews commonly spoke in parables (they used the term *mashal* to refer to parabolic teaching). It was His plan to use parables here.

C. A Description

Let me just briefly introduce you to the parables, and describe each one without reading the details. I want to draw out the truth that Jesus is teaching in each parable. As we read them, you will see the description of the Church Age, the first time it is ever described from the viewpoint of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. The Sower and the Seed

This parable starts from the last part of verse 3 and continues on to verse 23. Here, Jesus tells of a sower who went into the fields and sowed seeds. This depicts the preaching of the gospel throughout the world. The stony ground in this parable represents the people who will reject the gospel. Then there are some people who will initially receive the gospel, but thorns or the sun will cause them to fall away. Last, some people will initially receive the gospel, and ultimately bring forth fruit. Jesus is saying this: The gospel will be preached throughout the world. Some will hear it and reject it; some will hear it and accept it for a while, but then fall away; yet some will hear it and believe and bring forth fruit. The principle here is very simple: We will never win the whole world to Christ.

The second parable, in verses 24-30, is the parable of...

2. The Wheat and the Tares

Jesus talks here of a man who sowed wheat in his field. While the man was asleep, an enemy came and sowed tares in the field. Tares look exactly like wheat, and crowd the wheat and ruin the crop. But you can't pull them out because you can't tell the difference between the two until they're ready to harvest. The Lord is saying that there will be true believers and false believers during the Church Age. There will be people who say they belong to the Kingdom, but in reality don't, and they will be alongside those who are genuine believers. Ultimately, God will put the wheat (true believers) in the barn, and burn the tares (the false believers). The principle here is that we will never fully purge the church. The true and the false will coexist in the church until judgment. That is why we know there are unbelievers in the church.

3. The Mustard Seed

This parable is in verses 31-32. It's about a mustard seed, which is one of the smallest of all seeds. This seed, when planted in the ground, grew and became a huge tree. The tree was so large that birds lived in it--it had large branches. Normally a mustard seed just produces a small bush. This parable is saying that the Kingdom will begin small, and it will become worldwide. It will become widespread and influential, and will be a haven for many people.

The fourth parable, in verses 33-34, is the parable of...

4. The Leaven

Here, Jesus likens the Kingdom of heaven to leaven. The leaven represents the Kingdom buried in the dough of the world, which ultimately will penetrate and permeate the whole earth. This parable shows the internal, permeating influence of the Kingdom, which touches every dimension of human life.

5. The Treasure

This parable, in verse 44, talks about a treasure hidden in a field. A man was in this field (probably working in it), and he stumbled across the treasure. Rather than steal the treasure, he is honest and buys the whole field to get the treasure that's in it. Here, the treasure represents salvation. When the man found it, he sold everything he owned to get it. The principle is that there will be people in this Kingdom period who will give up everything they have to get salvation. The interesting thing about this parable is that the man wasn't looking for the treasure; He found it in the routine of his work day. It was while he was working that he was surprised by the reality of redemption. That tells us there will be many people who will come to know Jesus Christ by "stumbling" upon the grace of God.

The next parable, in verses 45-46, is the parable of...

6. The Merchant and the Pearl

Jesus describes here a man with the desire to find fine pearls. In his search, he finds a pearl that he wants very badly, and sells everything he owns to purchase it.

Just like the man in the last parable, this man is willing to pay the supreme price, which always involves giving up everything. They both gave up everything to purchase redemption. The difference is that this man was searching for the pearl, and that tells us there will be people in the Kingdom who spend a great amount of time seeking the truth before they finally find it. Some people will come without ever seeking. They will be "surprised by joy," as C.S. Lewis put it. Other people will spend a lot of time and effort endeavoring to find the truth.

The last parable, in verses 47-50, is about...

7. The Dragnet

Here, a net was thrown into the sea, and many things were caught in it. After the net was pulled in, the good things were separated from the bad. This pictures the end of the Church Age, when Jesus brings everyone together and sorts out the true believers from the false.

All those parables are a tremendously profound insight into our time. We know each parable to be true of this time. The mystery Kingdom is big. We have influenced the world, and preached our message across the globe. The church has both good and evil--the wheat and the tares. We also know that as we proclaim the gospel, some reject it, some accept it for a little while, and some truly accept it and produce fruit. We know that the enemy attacks us. We know that we'll never be able to purge the church. And we know that there are people who search diligently for God, while others seem to stumble across God. Those are the characteristics of our time, and that is how it will be before the King returns.

So, the Lord's plan is to teach in parables. Now, while parables can help make things clear, an unexplained parable is nothing but a riddle that is impossible to understand. That is why Jesus had to explain what they meant, even to His own disciples. Mark 4:10-11 records the same occasion as appears in Matthew 13, and says, "...when He was alone, they that were about Him with the twelve asked of Him the parable. And He said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto those who are outside, all these things are done in parables." Jesus only explained the parables to the Twelve and to those who believed. Everyone else heard nothing but the unexplained parables. That takes us now to...

III. THE PURPOSE (vv. 10-17)

In verses 10-11 we read, "...the disciples came, and said unto Him, Why speakest Thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." That tells us about the purpose of the parables.

They were to reveal the truth to some, and conceal it to others.A. The Interpretation Of A Word

1. Explained

Jesus said to His disciples, "...it is given unto you to know the mysteries..." (v. 11). When He said the word "mysteries," the cultural background of the disciples helped them to understand what He was saying. When we think of the word mystery, we think of Agatha Christie, or some kind of whodunit. But in the Hellenistic world, mysteries were sacred secrets known only to the upper-level people in a religion. They were truths only for the initiated.

We have secret societies today, too, such as the Freemasons. In such groups, only those who reach a certain level are told the secrets of the group. That's a heritage borne out of gnosticism (the word gnostic comes from the Greek word gnosis, which means "to know"). The mystery religions of Greece, which were borne out of Babylon, contained secrets that you learned as you moved up in rank.

2. Exemplified

One of the most famous mysteries was that of Isis and Osiris. Osiris was a wise and good king in Egypt. Seth, his wicked brother, hated him. He, with seventy-two conspirators, persuaded Osiris to come to a banquet. When he came to the banquet, Seth put him in a coffin and threw him in the Nile River. Isis, the wife of Osiris, found the coffin and brought it home. Seth came again and cut Osiris' body into fourteen pieces, and shipped them to fourteen locations throughout Egypt. But Isis found all the pieces, and somehow Osiris rose from the dead. Now, the initiated people were told what that story meant. Every part of that story had a secret. It talked about good versus evil, the sorrowing search of love, the triumphal discovery when love finds its object, and the conquering of death. The ultimate secret was that if you, as a worshiper, said to Osiris, "I am thou and thou art I," you would then be placed in union with Osiris and live forever. Without an explanation, you could only do your best to try to make sense out of the story.

B. The Interpretation of the Parables

Jesus said to the disciples, "The secrets about the Kingdom of heaven--the mysteries--I will give to you to know. But for those who reject Me, I will not explain the mysteries." So, the Lord both reveals and conceals the truths about the Kingdom of heaven. Let's look now at the interpretation of the parables...

1. Concealed (vv. 12-15)

a. The Exception (v. 12a)"For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance..."The phrase "for whosoever hath" refers to those who have received from God all that comes to those who are believers. Jesus is saying that whoever is regenerate-- whoever has received the King and therefore identifies with Him--and has accepted God's truth, will get more of God's truth. This is speaking of enlightenment: the person who has God's truth will get more of it. A parable that illustrates that principle is in Matthew 25:14-30. An unfaithful servant who was entrusted with a little of his master's money had it taken away from him, and it was given to a servant who had been faithful with larger amounts of that master's money (v. 28).God will reveal an ascending revelation of truth to the person who accepts the King and His Kingdom. To those who live up to the light of Christ, He will give more light.b. The Exclusion (vv. 12b-15)1) Explained (v. 12b)"...but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even what he hath."The King had come; He had taught; He had preached, and He had done miracle after miracle. The Jewish people had some understanding of who He was and had been given a foretaste of the Kingdom. They had seen the signs and wonders of the Spirit of God. However, when they rejected the King, they lost even what they had previously understood. None of what they saw made sense anymore, and they began to descend into deeper darkness.That disorientation is still evident today. No other group in our society is as lost in terms of their religion as the Jewish people. Paul said in Romans 9 that they had the covenants, the promises, and the gifts of God. They were adopted by God, and had the patriarchs (vv. 4-5). Yet as soon as they rejected the King, God turned the lights out on them, and they began

to lose the understanding of everything they had. The religion the Jewish people ascribed to no longer made sense to them. That's why some of Judaism has moved from an Orthodox position to a Conservative position and then to a Reformed position, which teaches that the Bible is not the Word of God. The descent into darkness has continued since the time they rejected Christ. If you accept the light that Christ gives, then more light will be given. If you refuse that light, then deeper darkness will ensue. The parable of the servants and the talents shows that (Mt. 25:14-30). Jesus says that those who reject Him will lose what they have, and it will be given to those who respond to Him. That shows us that all men are progressing one way or the other; they never stay static. The longer a man knows Jesus Christ, the more truth that is given to him. The longer a man refuses Jesus Christ, the deeper the pit of darkness becomes.

2) Expressed (vv. 13-15)a) By Jesus' Parables (v. 13)"Therefore speak I to them parables, because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand." Jesus is saying, "I speak to them in parables because this is an act of judgment. Because they will not see and hear while they can understand, I will now speak to them so that they cannot understand." The willful rejection of Christ by man has brought the judicial rejection of Christ. Man says no to God, so God says no to man. By doing that, God is simply confirming the stubbornness of man. For those who rejected Christ, the parables became interesting stories they couldn't understand.

b) By Isaiah's Prophecy (vv. 14-15)"And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, by hearing, ye shall hear and shall not understand; and seeing, ye shall see and shall not perceive; for this people's heart is become gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." (1) The First Fulfillment This prophecy appears in Isaiah 6:9-10. Isaiah had pronounced overwhelming judgment on Israel. He had already cursed the people for their drunkenness, debauchery, immorality, bribery, oppression of the poor, and hypocritical religion. At the height of the pronouncing of the curses, King Uzziah died, and the country plunged into the darkest days of its history. The Babylonian Captivity was their imminent judgment. Then Isaiah said, in 6:9-10, "God is going to judge you. You wouldn't hear and see Him, so now you can't hear and see. You wouldn't be converted and healed, so now you can't be converted and healed." Jeremiah echoed the message of Isaiah, and not long after came the Babylonian Captivity. That was the first fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, and Jesus says in Matthew 13:14-15 that the rejection of Him was the second fulfillment of that prophecy.

(2) The Second Fulfillment The parables, then, are an expression of judgment on those who refused to believe. The fact that man does not understand the things of God doesn't just testify to his ignorance; it also testifies to God's judgment. Believers understand the Bible not because of their intellect, but because God graciously illuminates their hearts and minds. There were three steps in this second fulfillment:

(a) Step 1 When Jesus first came, His words were very clear. He said He was the King and proved His claim. He preached the Kingdom message. He said, "...Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 4:17).

(b) Step 2 But the people didn't listen to Him, and they rejected Him. Even though in Matthew 5-7 Jesus spoke using clear analogies referring to salt, light, birds, and the lilies of the field, and summed up everything by saying, "...seek ye first the kingdom...and all these things shall be added unto you" (6:33), they just hardened their hearts. They blasphemed Him by saying He was from Satan; so now He talks to them in riddles that He wouldn't explain.

(c) Step 3 In 1 Corinthians 14:21 we find another pronouncement of judgment upon Israel by Isaiah. It quotes Isaiah 28:11-12, and says, "...it is written, with men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear Me, saith the Lord." Verse 22 continues, "Wherefore, tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not...." People always ask me, "What are tongues for?" It says in 1 Corinthians 14:22 that they are a sign, not for those who believe, but for those who don't believe. The primary use of tongues occurred on the Day of Pentecost in front of the unbelieving Israelites. The people wouldn't listen to Christ when He spoke to them clearly in their own language, so He judged them by speaking in riddles.

After that, He judged them by speaking to them in a language they didn't even know. Tongues are a sign of God's judgment upon Israel. So, Jesus says that the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled by those who rejected Him. Incidentally, that prophecy is quoted no less than five times in the New Testament. Each time it is quoted, it is in relation to Israel's rejection of Christ. Jesus not only concealed the truths about the Kingdom of heaven, but He also made them...

2. Revealed (vv. 16-17)

a. The Present Illumination (v. 16) "But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear." Isn't that wonderful? We understand the parables because Jesus explained them. We also have the New Testament text to read from, and the Spirit of God as our Teacher. Mark 4:34, a parallel verse of this same incident, says, "...He expounded all things to His disciples." In Matthew 13:51, Jesus said to the disciples, "Have ye understood all these things? They say unto Him, Yea, Lord." They didn't understand those things because they were smart; they understood because they possessed the illuminating presence of Jesus Christ. Luke 24:45 says, "Then opened He their [the disciples'] understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." Did you know that even if a person is saved, he will not understand the Scripture without the illuminating work of the Spirit of God? That is why in Psalm 119:18 the psalmist cries out, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." Isaiah meant the same thing in Isaiah 64:1 when he said, "Oh, that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down...." Let me clarify what he meant by that.

b. The Past Inquisitiveness (v. 17) "For verily I say unto you that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." Isaiah wasn't alive when the heavens were rent and Jesus came down. Hebrews 11:40 says that the salvation of the Old Testament saints did not become complete until our time (the time of Christianity). Peter said that the Old Testament prophets had looked into their own prophecies wanting to find out what person and what time would fulfill the prophecies (1 Pet. 1:10-11). They didn't get to see what we see. The disciples saw the heavens rent and God come down in human flesh to reveal His truth, and we have the resident Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth. 1 Corinthians 2:10 says that the Holy Spirit searches the deep things of God and reveals them to us. We understand the truths of God because we have divine illumination. That doesn't mean we don't need to study the Bible--we should study to keep from being ashamed (2 Tim. 2:15). When we discipline ourselves to study, we open ourselves to the illumination of the Spirit of God. So, Jesus' use of parables conceals God's truth as an act of judgment against Israel. At the same time, they reveal God's truth, because Jesus explained the parables to those who believed. Although Jesus is not here today to explain the Word to us, when He left earth He promised that the Holy Spirit would lead us into all truth (Jn. 16:13). Do you realize what a privilege we have? We not only have the Bible, but we have its Author living in us, explaining it to us! The saints of old really hungered for that!

We've seen the Place, the Plan, and the Purpose. Let's look now at...

IV. THE PROMISE (v. 35)

There is one question that many people ask: If the King offered the Kingdom and it was rejected, then doesn't that foul up God's plan? In other words, because the Kingdom wasn't accepted, does God have to alter His plans? Was the mystery age something that God had to add to His plans when things didn't go the way they were supposed to?

Let's read the promise in verse 35: Jesus spoke in parables "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world." That was quoted from Psalm 78:2, a Psalm written by Asaph the prophet (2 Chr. 29:30). Asaph predicted that the Messiah would one day speak in parables as an act of judgment, and that He would reveal to believers a secret kept from the foundation of the world. Therefore, we know that God didn't have to alter His plans; He knew that

Israel would reject the King and that there would be a mystery age. What does that tell us? It tells us that God's plan is on schedule. He is sovereign, and is not making alterations to His schedule as time goes along.

CONCLUSION

There are some profound lessons to be learned from what we've just studied. Let's sum them up: First, truth is only available to people who believe and are taught by God. Second, those who reject Jesus Christ only descend deeper into the darkness of their unbelief. And third, God's plan is right on schedule. It's big enough to encompass the unbelief of Israel and the mystery of this age.

Focusing on the Facts

1. Will the people of Israel always reject Christ? Why or why not? Use Scripture to support your answer.
2. Explain what the word parable means, and explain what a parable does.
3. Why is it important to use parables or analogies?
4. What are four reasons why parables are effective teaching instruments? Explain each of the reasons.
5. What does the stony ground represent in the parable of the sower and the seed? What other responses will people have to the gospel? What is the principle being taught in this parable?
6. In the parable of the wheat and the tares, why are tares so troublesome? What principle is being taught here?
7. What is unusual about the plant produced by the mustard seed in the parable of the mustard seed? What is that parable teaching about the Church Age?
8. In the parable of the leaven, what is the leaven likened to? What does that parable illustrate?
9. What does the treasure represent in the parable of the treasure? How did the man go about obtaining the treasure? What does the fact that the man accidentally stumbled across the treasure indicate?
10. In the parable of the merchant and the pearl, how did the merchant go about obtaining the pearl? What difference is there between this parable and the parable of the treasure?
11. What two categories was the catch divided into in the parable of the dragnet? What do they represent?
12. Who did Jesus explain the parables to? Who did Jesus not explain the parables to?
13. What was Jesus' purpose in speaking in parables?
14. What is the definition of a mystery, according to the Hellenistic world?
15. What does the phrase "for whosoever hath" in Matthew 13:12a mean? What parable in Matthew illustrates the principle behind that? Describe what happens in that parable.
16. What happened to the understanding the Jewish people had of Christ when they rejected Him? What has happened to the Jewish people and Judaism over the years to show that?
17. Matthew 13:14-15 quotes from Isaiah 6:9-10. Before Isaiah pronounced judgment on the Israelites, what had he condemned the people for? How was God's judgment made manifest to Israel?
18. The parables are an expression of _____ on those who refused to believe.
19. The fact that man does not understand the things of God doesn't just testify to his ignorance; it also testifies to _____. Why is it that believers are able to understand the Bible?
20. What are tongues a sign of (1 Cor. 14:21)?
21. Using Scripture, support the fact that Jesus helped the disciples to understand what He said.
22. What was the desire of many Old Testament prophets and righteous men, according to Matthew 13:17? According to 1 Peter 1:10-11, what were the Old Testament prophets searching for?
23. Did God have to change His plans for everything when Israel rejected Christ? How does Matthew

13:35 indicate that God knew Israel would reject Christ?

Pondering the Principles

1. Jesus taught to the multitude by the seashore in Matthew 13 by using parables. His purpose was to speak in unexplained riddles to those who rejected Him, and to reveal truths about the mystery form of the Kingdom to those who believed Him. What kind of terminology did Jesus use in the parables? (see pp. 3-4) Why would it be important for us to understand the cultural background that the parables were told in? Would you have understood the significance of the mustard tree in Matthew 13:31-32 without knowing that mustard seeds normally produce a small bush? Does the overview of the seven parables in Matthew 13 begin to reveal to you the thorough way that Jesus taught? Why, then, should we be thorough in Bible study? Make it a habit to not only read God's Word, but to study it with the desire to understand what God is teaching in the Scripture.
2. In the parables of the treasure and the pearl, the men who found these objects of worth recognized their true value upon seeing them. That is evidenced by the fact that they were willing to give up everything they owned to purchase what they knew was of greater value. Is that true in your life with regard to your relationship with God? How much do you value your relationship with God in comparison to how you value other things? Ask God to help you have your heart's desire in the right place.
3. When did Jesus begin to speak in parables: before or after the people rejected Him? Read the account in Nehemiah 9:6-37. What wonderful things did the Lord do for the Israelites in verses 9-15? How did the Israelites respond in verses 16-17a, 18? What was God's response in verses 17b, 19-21? After God graciously gave the Israelites the Promised Land, what happened (v. 26)? What attribute of God was continually shown to the Israelites in verses 27-31, despite their rebellion? Verse 33 sums up the whole situation: "Howbeit, Thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for Thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly." What does that passage teach us about God's judgments upon men? Do you think God is fair to men when He judges them? Pray right now to God and thank Him for His patience and mercy to you despite your sinfulness.

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