

## The Nature of the Unexpected Kingdom

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Text: Matthew 13

### Introduction

Matthew is literary masterpiece, Jewish background, OT quotes, thematic consistency, servant king.

- The presence of Jesus [Matt. 1:23, 28:18-20]
- Two divisions [Matt. 4:17, 16:21]
- Theme of Part I [Matt. 4:23, teaching/preaching/healing]

### Five discourses

#1—Mountain Discourse

- Listeners: Crowds, with disciples present
- Topic: Introduction to the Kingdom of Heaven [ye have heard it said, contrasts]
- Next: Crowds marvel, Jesus goes teaching/preaching/healing, with result in 9:35-38

#2—Mission Discourse

- Listeners: Disciples, Jesus enlists his followers in his mission
- Topic: Followers in the Kingdom of Heaven
- Next: Result is increasing opposition from Pharisees

#3—Parables Discourse

- Listeners: Crowds, with explanations to disciples
- Topic: The Nature of the Kingdom of Heaven
- Next: Result is offense (13:57)

#4—Relationship Discourse

- Listeners: Disciples
- Topic: Principles in the Kingdom of Heaven
- Next: Result is Pharisees' testing Jesus

#5—Judgment Discourse

- Listeners: written to all
- Topic: Outcomes in the Kingdom of Heaven
- Next: Jesus' crucifixion

### Introduction to Matthew 13

Matthew 13; end of parables discourse (13:53)

What matters most in the kingdom: kingdom priorities

Discovering what is hidden; the surprising kingdom

Church is mentioned twice in gospels, kingdom hundreds of times. *Kingdom is bigger than the church!*

Parables confound the theologian or philosopher but delight the children and simple

The Kingdom is no novel invention that needs a PR job! Its communication isn't showy but simple.

The parables illuminate the subject of the kingdom for those who are willing to accept the message and darken it for those who reject the message of the present reality of the kingdom.

The kingdom message of Jesus was the most radical message the world has ever heard. Here is a true revolution, not launched with guns, tanks and soldiers but with a wandering preacher in Galilee.

**Quote:** *'The doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven, which was the main teaching of Jesus, is certainly one of the most revolutionary doctrines that ever stirred and changed human thought. It is small wonder if the world of that time failed to grasp its full significance, and recoiled in dismay from even a half apprehension of its tremendous challenges to the established habits and institutions of mankind. For the doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven, as Jesus seems to have preached it, was no less than a bold and uncompromising demand for a complete change and*

*cleansing of the life of our struggling race, an utter cleansing, without and within.... It is true that he said his kingdom was not of this world, that it was in the hearts of men and not upon a throne; but it is equally clear that wherever and in what measure his kingdom was set up in the hearts of men, the outer world would be in that measure revolutionized and made new....*

### **Focus Text**

Begin at the end. 13:52—not really a parable, perhaps an illustration, some lists of parables include it—some do not. Two lessons: (1) the Kingdom of Heaven is a combination of the old and the new treasures, (2) the Kingdom of Heaven is unpredictable, it is unexpected.

So what does the Kingdom of God look like? We need images of the Kingdom of God to inspire us and to help us recognize it when it is right in front of us. Like prophets before him, Jesus uses parables to describe it. His parables speak to common ordinary folk—farmers, gardeners, merchants, fishermen, women. His Kingdom metaphors—hidden treasure, a precious pearl, a tiny seed, yeast—all work to point our minds from specifics to the infinite. Whatever the Kingdom is like, it is surprising and yet found in ordinary places. Like a seed, it is characterized by slow organic growth, it demands careful watchfulness because it is hidden and it is precious beyond measure. Yet the Kingdom is accessible anywhere, anytime, to anyone. It is found in soup kitchens or at our work. It is there for anyone who intentionally enters into Christ's reconciling work.

### **Basic Outline of the Parables**

Chapter 13 includes 6 parables of the form, “The kingdom of heaven is like...”

The first parable (sower) is not of this form, but is a kingdom parable.

Considering the parable of the sower as a “model” or paradigm, there is a possible chiasmic structure in the remaining parables, with interesting points of correspondence.

### **Sower**

**A\*--Weeds**

**B\*--Mustard seed**

**C\*--Yeast**

**D--Explanation of parable of weeds**

**E\*\*--Hidden treasure**

**F\*\*--Pearl**

**G\*\*--Net**

### **Weeds/net (A/G)**

These two parables have the same general lessons, final separation of righteous and wicked, with the lessons being that one does not make separation prematurely. They both show the existence of good and evil continually; a day of reckoning is coming.

The kingdom of heaven is not easy—the kingdom of heaven faces continuing challenges.

### **Mustard seed/yeast (B/F)**

These two (companion?) parables also have parallels. Here are lessons of influence, gradual growth and influence, and surprising results.

### **Hidden treasure/pearl (C/E)**

These parables share an emphasis on value, priorities, desire

### **Explanation of the parable of the weeds (D)**

Coming of son of man, who sends his angels

Weed out everything that causes sin and those who do evil

Weeping and gnashing of teeth

## Alternate Outline

1 (Model) Sower, not koh is like, but disciples see it as a parable, v. 10

*[The secrets of kingdom are given to those who understand the parables. Knowledge of the kingdom of heaven is not given to everyone. Fulfillment of prophecy, some will not understand. Blessed are those who see and hear.]*

1A (D) Sower explained (see #3 below)

2 (A\*) Weeds (to people)

2a (B\*\*) Mustard seed (to people)

2b (C\*\*) Yeast (to people)

These two parables show great results from small beginnings, the remarkable growth of the kingdom

*[Unique to Matthew: the explanation of how unbelief is the fulfillment of OT prophecy*

*Parables of weeds (and explanation); hidden treasure, pearl, net, householder]*

3 (Explain Model) Explain weeds (to disciples)

4 (E\*\*) Hidden treasure, poor man stumbles, accidentally finds the treasure (to disciples)

4a (F\*\*) Pearl, seeking the treasure (to disciples)

These two parables are unique to Matthew, kingdom of heaven is of such supreme worth so that all must be sacrificed in order to attain it

5 (G\*\*) Net

The distinctive kingdom which separates people (to disciples, do you understand?)

## Lessons

### Householder, every teacher of the law...

Treasures old and new, new does not replace the old but builds upon it, Jesus himself is the teacher described, so this paragraph is the controlling paragraph for all that precedes it in our study. We should try to understand the relationship between the old and the new in this chapter, what is old, what is new. May have been a “dig” at the Jewish scribes who could produce only what is old, tattered, worn, misunderstood and misapplied.

<b>Parable</b>	<b>Expectation</b>	<b>Unexpected</b>	
Sower	Messiah rules all nations.	Individuals respond to God’s invitation.	CHOICE
Weeds	Citizens rule world with Christ.	Citizens live among people of the world.	COMMON
Mustard seed	Kingdom begins in majestic glory.	Kingdom begins in insignificance.	SMALL
Yeast	Kingdom rule is coerced.	Kingdom rule come gradually through influence.	CONTROL
Treasure	Kingdom is public, visible to all.	Kingdom is hidden, individual purchase.	COST
Pearl	Kingdom brings valued things.	Kingdom requires abandoning earthly values.	COMMITMENT
Net	K. begins w/ separation of unrighteous	Kingdom endures to separation of unrighteous	ENDURE

### What is new/old in this section?

**CHOICE**--Kingdom choice, kingdom power is not coercive, the kingdom of God is chosen, seed sown; not born into the kingdom

**COMMON**—Kingdom exists in common life

**SMALL**—kingdom begins in small, insignificant ways; kingdom expands little by little

**CONTROL**--The kingdom power is of God, the rule of God, the control of God, weeds growing together; fish gathered; the kingdom power is great results from small beginnings, remarkable growth

**COST**—kingdom is available to all, but cost is high

**COMMITMENT**--The kingdom price is invaluable

**ENDURANCE**—the kingdom exists not for itself

**CHALLENGE**--The kingdom challenge is freshness

## **Conclusion**

Although the kingdom is hidden, it can be found; and when it is, one should make whatever sacrifice is necessary to obtain it. 'Anyone who counts the cost of discipleship has completely failed to grasp the greatness of the reward'.....Granted the kingdom's value and its sure triumph, one must strive to overcome every obstacle in the way of obtaining it.

If it dominates your life and leads to sacrifice, you will be the winner 'The sole point being made is that the kingdom is worth everything.

Of course it is possible to see this the other way round where the one doing the seeking for treasure and paying everything is Jesus. Both can be true. The kingdom principle is that sacrifice for something worthwhile is no sacrifice at all and will be rewarded. Missionaries often say at the end of their ministry, 'I sacrificed nothing.'

The kingdom is a source of great joy and riches but not always like some would want! God doesn't promise you a BMW or a mansion on earth, but he does promise you treasure you may not see or value. God meets us in the hidden place when things are tough and the treasure we find there makes it all worthwhile.

The kingdom CAN be understood. And when understood right there will always be new things to say but the good old story will never cease to excite. We will say new things that are relevant to our society in terms of our communication, but we will never change the message.

The kingdom is the oldest story yet new every day!

We will learn to work out for ourselves the way that the kingdom can be hidden yet revealed!

If we seek the kingdom all other things will be added to us