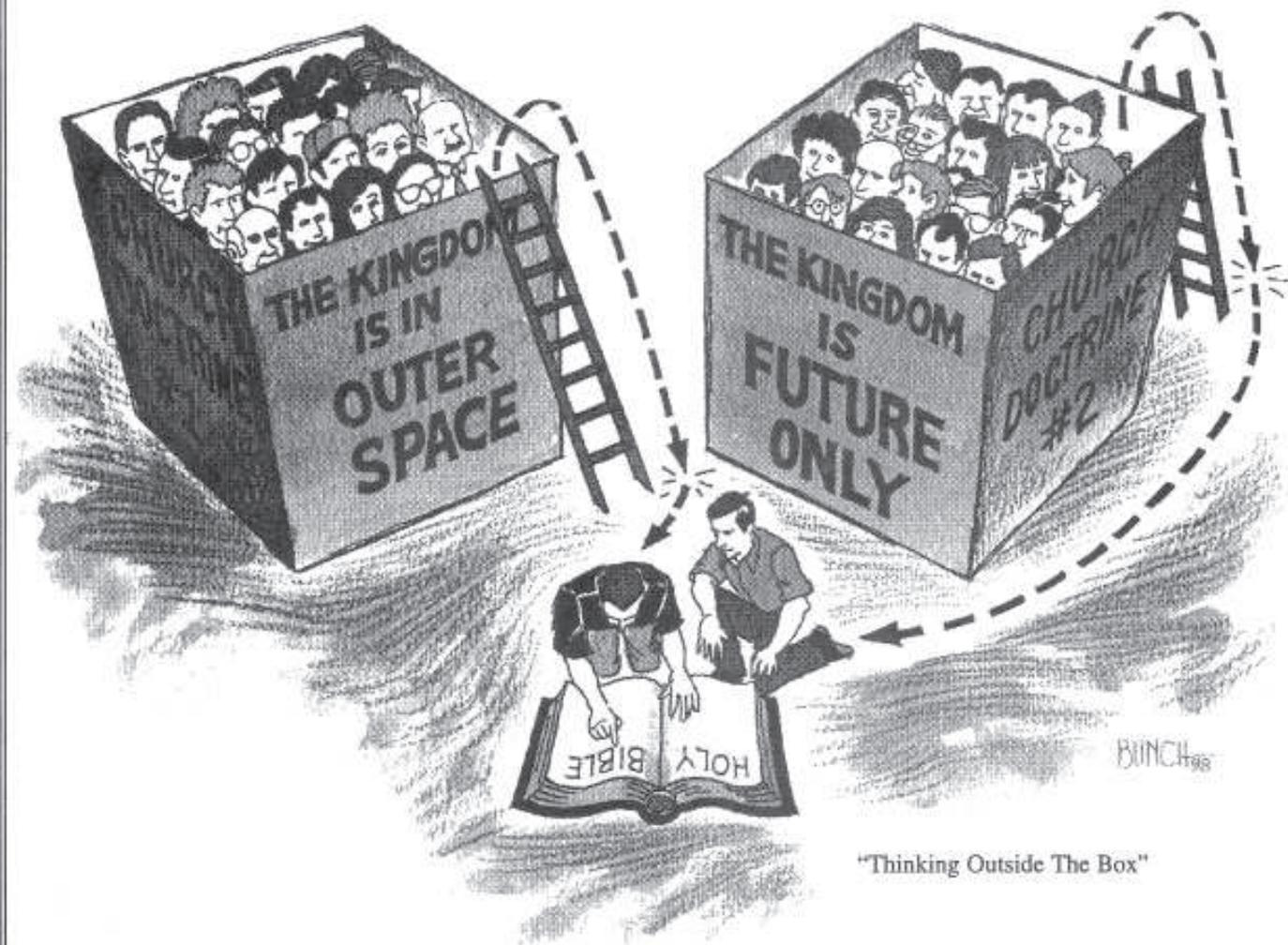


USING THE KINGDOM PARABLES TO FIND THE KINGDOM



"Thinking Outside The Box"

USING THE KINGDOM PARABLES TO FIND THE KINGDOM

by Paul Bunch & Ben Williams

THIS will be an exercise in reasoning. To warm-up your mind please read carefully the following meaningful quote:

*Jack and Jill went up the hill
to fetch a pail water.
Jack fell down and broke his crown,
and Jill came tumbling after.*

Now, you're probably thinking to yourself, "What's so 'meaningful' about a silly nursery rhyme some ancient poet conjured up for small children? Our teachers recited it to us, and we memorized it. But, there was never any particular meaning, or message in it. This little boy and girl went up a hill to get some water. They both fell down in the process. End of story. Time to move on to something more important."

But consider the Jack and Jill story as an example of how *we* become indoctrinated. We were given the Jack and Jill story as a meaningless rhyme. SO we accepted it as such. We know it, but it means nothing. When the subject of Jack and Jill comes up, *we*, always think about it in that context, just as we learned as kids.

Our teachers call this "the learning process." But, was it really learning, or mere memorization and mental desensitization?

We never rethink Jack and Jill because we need no answers. Where there are no questions, no answers are needed. Why should we bother to rethink what happened to Jack and Jill? We all know what happened. What's the point?

The point is that memorization is not the same as learning. How many things have we memorized, or relegated to some memory hole, without gaining any benefit whatsoever from them? To gain meaningful understanding in our life

experience we must not only experience things and store them in our memory, we must examine them for understanding.

In that spirit, let us reopen the investigation into what happened to Jack and Jill! Let's rethink it by asking some simple, but overlooked, questions:

1. When did Jack and Jill fall? Was it on the way up the hill or on the way back down?

2. We know that Jack broke his crown, but was Jill hurt?

3. Are we incorrectly assuming that Jack's "crown" referred to his head? Maybe it was an actual king's crown that fell off his head and got broken.

4. Why did Jack fall down? Did he lose strength? Stumble, Was he shot by a sniper?

5. Why did Jill fall down?

6. Why were they going up a hill to collect water? Don't people usually go down a hill to a river or lake? Was there a well at the top of the hill? Or was there a water reservoir at the top of the hill? We don't really know.

7. Did Jack survive his head injury.

8. How old was Jack? How old was Jill? Were they related? Was Jack the father and Jill the daughter? Was Jill the mother and Jack the son? Or were they both senior citizens and did this have something to do with why they both fell going up the hill?

9. Did they carry the pail up the hill or was it waiting for them at the top?

Questions like these are not usually asked. As you can see, if there had been a meaningful message contained in the Jack and Jill rhyme it would have been totally missed by the hearers who could think no farther than the typical "learning" protocol. The teachers tell us what they want us to know and we gullibly accept it at face value and look no further.

On the other hand, if you want to think and reason on your own (instead of complacently accepting what you 'told) you must ask questions. You must demand meaningful answers. You must be curious. And you must be able to think "outside the box." Independent thinking may lead you to form new conclusions about what you once thought was truth.

With some simple inquiry the Jack and Jill rhyme might prove to be quite interesting, and serve as an example for us in our inquiry into the parables of the Kingdom.

I find that people usually approach the Bible and the Kingdom with the same mindlessness they exhibit when they read Jack and Jill. For instance, regarding the Kingdom Parables – in the past, the churches gave us the approved (meaningless) explanations, and we were not expected to question or seek further. Americans have come to expect their teachers to give them the question, and then the answer. That relieves us of responsibility

But let's approach the subject of the Kingdom as if all the answers haven't yet been given to us, and let us assume that it is permissible for us to question what we've been told.

A better, clearer picture may appear to us.

THE KINGDOM

Now, because of your former programming, most of you are probably sitting there picturing the Kingdom according to the “approved” futuristic paradigm. Even if you don’t think you are, you probably are just the same. I mean no offense, but you are probably thinking in one of the following three kingdom models;

Model #1: The Kingdom exists, but not on Earth. It is in “Heaven” (i.e., floating invisibly in the stratosphere, or farther out in space). In the future when you “die” and your “spirit” goes to “Heaven” you can enter the Kingdom. Jesus is King of that outerspace Kingdom but not of Earth. Meanwhile the Devil continues to have the run of the Earth as he has since the time of “the fall” in Genesis chapter three.

Model #2: The Kingdom does not exist yet, but will exist sometime in the future when the Devil will be chained down and Jesus will return to Earth from his outerspace “Heaven.” At that time Jesus will begin to reign as King, and the Kingdom will have arrived. (Some think this Kingdom will emerge from the clouds as a great cube city and touch down on Jerusalem.)

Model #3: The Kingdom exists, and Jesus is King ... but his Kingship cannot really function until it has been “perfected.” Evil still exists in the world, preventing the Kingdom from working properly. Somehow the righteous people and/or God must rid the world of all the evil before the “perfected” phase can start and the long awaited Reign of Christ can truly begin. This will occur sometime in the future. “The Kingdom” spoken of in Scripture refers to the future “perfected” Kingdom, not the current Kingdom in its “imperfect” (i.e., incomplete) state.

All three of these common Kingdom models are futurist and infected with church error. So this futurist approach (whichever variation is preferred) depicts a typical interpretation of the Kingdom Parables ... notwithstanding what the parables actually teach.

If you’ve been indoctrinated with the churches’ version of the Kingdom

Parables, when anyone brings up the subject you’ll automatically think about them in the context of your particular indoctrination. You can’t help it ... unless, or until, you’ve altered your indoctrination programming. To do this you must do it YOURSELF. It requires that you force yourself to step back and ask meaningful questions, and seek meaningful answers ... no matter how intimidating it may be for you.

If all three of the above models of “the Kingdom” are wrong (and they are) that means you may be thinking of “a kingdom,” but not “THE Kingdom.” It means you probably won’t think of the real Kingdom, nor can you rethink the Kingdom Parables at all, because your basic model is wrong. You are using a wrong paradigm from which to visualize the Kingdom/Kingship.

This state of error is rampant. None of us have escaped the embarrassment of finding we’ve participated in wrong models of reality. It happens to everyone in the course of life. But that doesn’t mean we are stuck with the error forever. Men can change, and learn. Thank God!

First we must be willing to admit that there may be an error in our accepted models of the Kingdom. Otherwise, why would we want to rethink the teaching of the Kingdom Parables? If I think I already know it all, then what’s the point of rehashing it?

Well, there is a big problem with the answers to the Kingdom Parables we were all given by the churches. We ought to reopen the investigation, and reread the Kingdom Parables and let them teach us about the Kingdom of God! Let us temporarily set aside our prejudices given to us by the church teachers, and let us be willing to venture “outside of the box.” Let’s rediscover the “Good News” explained in the Kingdom parables as if we were hearing it for the first time. The fact is, if you read them and listen carefully as Jesus speaks to you, this may actually be the very first time you’ve TRULY heard what they teach.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS LIKE ...

After hearing the euphoric interpretations of the Kingdom from church teachers (any of the variations mentioned earlier) we might have been programmed to think something like this:

- 1. The kingdom of heaven is like an old man who had waited all of his life to see a perfect city promised to him when he was a small boy by a great king who then went away into a far country.*
- 2. When he was four score and nine years old, while on the road to his home, he heard a great noise. And behold, there were thousands of warriors of a wicked king invading and burning his land. The land was destroyed and most the inhabitants were slaughtered that day.*
- 3. Suddenly an angel appeared and carried the old man into the mountains, and showed him a great walled city in a remote valley where there had been no city before. It had large beautiful, pearl-colored gates.*
- 4. As he walked up to the entrance, trumpets sounded, the gates opened and he entered.*
- 5. There, waiting for him was the great king who, after many long years, had just finished building this wondrous city. As they listened to beautiful harp music, they both walked down the main street thronged with winged angels, and paved with transparent gold bricks. The air was laden with sweet perfumes coming from the fairest flowers. Then they went into one of the opulent mansions that lined the street.*
- 6. I have prepared this mansion just for you, said the great king to the old man, who had by this time become young again and in perfect health. This is your new home.*
- 7. The man asked to go back to his city and collect his family and possessions.*
- 8. Then the great king opened another door and there was his family gathered to meet him. The old way of life is over, said the king. My kingdom is now here and the old*

world with all the other kingdoms is about to be destroyed. My winged angels and I are preparing to ride out and destroy it all, and slaughter everyone left in it including the wicked king and his minions

9. *But you have been judged a good and faithful servant to passively wait for me all these many years, whereas the others of your town would not wait, but went about their lives in worldly pursuits.*

Now, obviously, this parable is not from the Bible. But it more closely approximates the mental picture church teachers portray about the Kingdom of God. It has all the fabled elements: a) the King that leaves but will return someday; b) “the end of the world” cataclysm where the “Wicked King” of this world attacks the “Good King” and gets destroyed; 3) the Kingdom of the returning “Good King” is finally established after His long-awaited arrival. It also contains the elements of euphoria everyone loves to contemplate, like streets of transparent gold; beautiful harp music and pure joy.

There’s only one problem. If you turn to all the New Testament chapters where “The Kingdom Parables” are located, you won’t find any parable, anywhere that is at all similar to the one you have just read! You won’t find any of the fabled elements in any form!

So, let’s rethink the Kingdom Parables by starting with a simple logical premise: A Kingdom Parable paints a figurative picture of what the Kingdom is actually like! After all, many Kingdom Parables start with the phrase, ‘*The Kingdom of Heaven is like...*’ Then they go on to describe the Kingdom.

The chapters containing the Kingdom Parables (Matthew 13, 18, 20, 21, 22, 25; Mark 4, 12; Luke 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19) should describe to us what the Kingdom of God (or Kingdom of Heaven) is actually like.

With this in mind let us read the Kingdom Parables and let us see just what kind of picture they DO paint.

Open your mind and let the spirit of truth guide you.

THE MUSTARD SEED **Matthew 13:31,32**

31. *Another parable he set before them, saying, The kingship of the heavens is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field:*
32. *Which indeed is the smallest of all seeds: but when it grows, it is the greatest among herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the heaven come and find lodging in its branches.*

Again, this parable begins with the words, “The kingship of heaven is like...” These are Jesus’ words to us to explain what the kingdom is like. Thus, from this passage we observe that the kingdom is already in existence, not held in abeyance for some future arrival. We know this because it uses the Greek present active verb “*esti*.” Jesus was talking about a kingdom that was present at that time. However this is usually swept aside as being ridiculous because people have a preconception of the Kingdom as a kind of magical Disneyland theme park where there is only endless euphoria. And since they cannot see that kind of theme-park kingdom in existence, they reason that the Kingdom of God is not yet in existence. They ignore the fact that the word “is” does not refer to the future.

The word “is” does not mean “will be” (as in the kingdom of heaven *will be like...*). Therefore we must, in all honesty, conclude that the Kingdom of Heaven exists here on Earth, and Jesus is telling us how to recognize it. Obviously, not everyone can recognize it. Millions of churchgoers have been blinded to it by the erroneous church-implanted concepts.

This parable goes on to liken the Kingdom to a seed, an herb, and then a tree (actually an herb that grows large and resembles a tree). It then says that “*it is the greatest among herbs,*” which lets us know that the Kingdom of God is not only present and contemporary, but that there are other kingdoms existing right along side the Kingdom of God.

THE DRAGNET **Matthew 13:47-50**

47. *Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathers up together out of every kind [of fish]:*
48. *Which, when it is filled, they draw it to shore, and sit down, and gather the good into vessels, but the spoiled ones they throw out.*
49. *So shall it be in the accomplishment of the age: the messengers will go out and separate out the evil ones from among the just,*
50. *And will throw them into the furnace of fire: there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

The parable of the Drag Net lets us know that both good AND bad exist during the Kingdom of Heaven. There are wicked ones as well as righteous ones in the Kingdom, and that messengers (men with messages) will separate (call out) the righteous ones out from the wicked ones by their message. Both good AND bad are found IN the Kingdom (i.e., in the dragnet). The effect of the Kingship is that it brings them to judgment and separates the good from the bad! This is not a one-time judgment at the end of the world (so-called), but rather a continuing action brought on by the operating principles of the Kingdom.

Churches teach that only the good can exist when the Kingdom comes. However, Jesus said the good and bad BOTH exist in the time of the Kingdom, but the Kingdom causes distinction and separation between the two.

THE UNJUST SERVANT **MATTHEW 18:23-35**

23. *Thus the kingship of the heavens is compared to a king who wants to settle accounts with his servants.*
24. *And beginning to settle them, a man is led to him, a debtor of ten thousand talents.*
25. *But since he has nothing with which to pay, the lord commands him to be sold, also the wife, and the children, and all that he has, to*

- settle the payment.
26. *The servant therefore falls down, and keeps begging him, saying, Be patient with me, and I will deliver all to you.*
27. *Then the lord of that servant is moved with compassion, and releases him, and forgives him the debt.*
28. *But the same servant goes out, and finds one of his fellow servants, which owes him one hundred denarii, and he takes hold of him, and keeps choking him, saying, Pay what you owe.*
29. *And his fellow servant falls down, and entreats him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will deliver.*
30. *But he is not willing, and goes and casts him into prison until he pays back what he owes.*
31. *Therefore, his fellow servants, seeing what is happening, are much grieved, and come and explain to their lord all that is happening.*
32. *Thus his lord summons him and says to him, Evil servant! All your debt I release because you entreat me:*
33. *Should you not also have compassion on your fellow servant, even as I have compassion on you?*
34. *And being provoked, his lord delivers him to the tormentors till he pays all that is owed him.*
35. *Thus also shall my heavenly Father do to you if you do not, from your heart, forgive every one his brother.*

This parable effectively destroys the myth of a euphoric Disneyland Kingdom by revealing the existence of worldly things in the Kingdom.

It shows that at the time of the Kingdom there are unjust people, who, after receiving mercy, will yet be unmerciful to others. It also says that there is debt during that time - a mark of imperfection. One lender even wants to sell a debtor and his family into slavery in order to satisfy the debt. There are employers and employees in

this story, as well as slavery. And remember, this is during the Kingdom!

And even though it pains many to admit it, this parable says that there are prisons and tormentors existing at the time of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Where are the mansions? Where are the streets paved with gold? Where is the perfection?

THE VINEYARD LABORERS MATTHEW 20:1-16

1. *For the kingdom of the heavens is like a man, a householder, who goes out in the early morning to hire laborers into his vineyard.*
2. *And when he agrees with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sends them into his vineyard.*
3. *And he goes out about the third hour, and sees others standing idle in the marketplace,*
4. *And says to them; Go you also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I give you.*
5. *And they go their way. Then again he goes out about the sixth and ninth hour, and does likewise.*
6. *Then about the eleventh hour he goes out, and finds others standing, and says to them, Why are you standing here idle all day?*
7. *They say to him, Because no one hires us. He says to them, Go you also into the vineyard.*
8. *So when evening comes, the lord of the vineyard says to his foreman, Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning from the last to the first.*
9. *And when they come that were hired about the eleventh hour, each receives a denarius.*
10. *And when the first comes, they suppose that they should receive more; and they each receive a denarius also.*
11. *But receiving it, they murmur against the householder,*
12. *Saying, These last worked one hour, and you make them equals to us which bear the burden and heat*

of the day.

13. *But he answers one of them, and says, Fellow, I am not wronging you. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?*
14. *Take what is yours and go your way: I wish to give to this last one as also to you.*
15. *Am I not allowed to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?*
16. *Thus the last will be first, and the first last.*

Here is another illustration beginning with the phrase, "...the kingdom of heaven is like..." and then goes on to describe laborers who are hired by a "householder." According to this parable, people need and use money in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The householder contracts with laborers whom he keeps hiring throughout the day, agreeing to pay each a denarius. Toward the end of the day he even hires some laborers to work just one hour before quitting time!

When they are paid at the end of the day everyone receives a denarius no matter how long they worked. Those who worked all day become jealous of those who only worked for one hour but received the same reward.

So we see that there is a medium of exchange (money), there is jealousy, and there are disagreements as to what is fair in the Kingdom of God.

THE TWO CHILDREN MATTHEW 21:28-32

28. *What does this seem to you? A man has two children. He comes to the first and says, Child, go work today in the vineyard.*
29. *He answers and says, I go, lord: but does not go.*
30. *And he comes to the second, and says likewise. And he answers, I will not: but later repents and goes.*
31. *Which of the two does his father's will? They answer, The latter one. Jesus says to them, Truly I say to you, that the publicans and the*

harlots are going ahead of you into the Kingdom of God.

32. *For John comes to you in the way of righteousness, and you believe him not; but the publicans and the harlots believe him. But you, seeing, feel no regret afterward that you might believe him.*

This parable is shocking to some folks. It tells us that publicans (tax collectors) and harlots may enter into the Kingdom of God more readily than insincere family! This certainly does not align with the churches' teachings about the Kingdom of Heaven.

WHAT ARE WE LEARNING?

So far we have briefly looked at five Kingdom parables, and we have found no trace of the idealistic future kingdom of perfect comfort, leisure, and bliss the churches have told us about.

Instead we have found that the kingdom is already here on Earth, existing right alongside other kingdoms.

We have learned that the Kingdom functions in a world where there are good things and bad things.

We see that men use money in the Kingdom and some people go into debt to other people. There are those who are merciful and forgive debts, and there are others who are unmerciful and deliver the debtors to the tormentors who throw them into prison. Some creditors in the Kingdom even consider selling their debtors into slavery for debt.

It is also obvious from these parables that there are employers and employees in the Kingdom. Men work for a living in the Kingdom.

In the Kingdom men disagree as to what is fair.

And there is jealousy within the Kingdom.

Should we just ignore all these things that are plainly written in the Kingdom Parables? Will you keep thinking the Kingdom (or the "perfected" Kingdom) can only exist after all sin is gone in the future? The parables are describing the Kingdom as present and active

now, today, in an imperfect world.

Will you continue to think of the Kingdom as being "otherworldly" and unattainable for Earthbound man, when the parables describe it as LIFE AS USUAL ON EARTH?

By dwelling on the negatives of these parables it might seem as if I'm trying to convince you that the Kingdom of God is faulty ... like the world system. But I'm not. What I AM trying to do is to show you how **Yahweh** sees his creation compared to how man may see it. We ought to attempt to see creation as God sees it. Not only are there good things existing in the Kingdom of God, but there are bad things also. It is life as God created it:

6. *...I am Yahweh, and there is none else.*

7. *I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I Yahweh do all these things.*

Isaiah 45:6,7

If your mind is programmed to *expect* to escape from all things disagreeable, into a perpetual euphoric smiley-face Mithraic religion as the churches teach, then this matter-of-fact look at the Kingdom parables might be disagreeable to you. It might appear that I am being irreverent or negative,

However, these parables actually focus upon Jesus' Kingship (The Reign Of Christ). They showcase truth, mercy, forgiveness of debts, faithfulness, and repentance. These are features of the Kingship of Christ as compared to other kingdoms which cater to the base nature of unregenerate man. This shows the advantage of the Kingdom of God in that it points the way to a better life. THAT is the benefit of Kingdom Thinking. However, anti-Kingdom thinking is still rampant, and we cannot ignore it.

In the process of rethinking the Kingdom we must quit the old way of thinking about it. We must put aside our fairy tale models.

"INHERITING" THE KINGDOM

In the Kingdom parable of "The Talents" we read this verse toward the end:

34. *Then the King will say to them on his right hand, Come you blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the planting of the system (i.e., New Covenant):*

Matthew 25:34

Two very important points in this verse are: 1. The Kingdom has already been "prepared" from the planting (founding or beginning) of the New Covenant System. In other words Christ's Kingdom is NOT waiting to be prepared or "perfected."

2. The word "inherit" in itself indicates that the Kingdom of God is a PRESENT Kingdom! The word "inherit" means to receive something (i.e., a possession) by succession or will. This thing would have been previously in the hands of someone else. Therefore, whatever is inherited has already been in existence and is being passed on to a successor. That which is received is called an "inheritance," which is something that's already in existence.

Therefore, based on the correct definition of the word there is no way anyone can inherit something that has not been in existence. One might inherit a promise of something not yet in existence. But that is NOT what is being said. Israel did inherit promises as well. But that is another subject. It is the Kingdom that is being inherited ... not a promise of it. Something that is only a future plan cannot be handed down from generation to generation as an inheritance ... because it wouldn't yet exist!

With this correct definition in mind read this verse:

9. *Don't you know that the unjust will not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate men, nor homosexuals,*

10. *Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.*

1 Cor 6:9,10

Maybe you can begin to see that the blind can live their entire lives and completely miss the Kingdom which is present around them. They never know that it exists, so they never inherit it.

JACK & JILL - ANSWERED

At the beginning of this article I raised several questions concerning the innocuous little rhyme about Jack and Jill. A childish little rhyme: a mystery that had to be solved. To many this would seem like a useless exercise that would lead nowhere.

It just so happens that in People magazine (the 7/13/98 issue) there was a one-page article about none other than Jack and Jill!

Apparently, the children's rhyme is based on an actual event in the 15th century that occurred in the tiny English village of Kilmersdon. According to a local historian, Chris Howell, a youth named "Jack" did die of a broken crown (skull), but it was probably caused by a rock falling from a quarry nearby.

A girl named "Jill" died of a broken heart after giving birth to their son. Howell has also found 32 phone listings of the surname "Gilson" (Jill's son) within a four-mile radius of Kilmersdon. He believes they are descendants of Jill's son, who was raised by the community after Jill's death.

Seeking to gain recognition, the town, about 200 miles west of London, formed a Jack and Jill committee to raise close to \$50,000 to renovate the hill and the unused well and install signs claiming Kilmersdon as the home of the ill-fated couple.

How about that?

When people find out it's okay to start rethinking a subject and to ask questions about it, then real answers can come.

The same thing can happen with a more important and relevant subject such as the Kingdom Parables. If the stigma of "heresy" and "sacrilege" is somehow lifted off, we can once again start questioning what the churches have taught, and the gears can once again start turning in our minds. Suddenly, the mystery of the Kingdom is understood. The real answers come. The truth comes. It's inevitable when intelligent minds, unchecked by preachers, priests or other "experts," work to solve a problem or a mystery.

In Part 2 of *Using the Kingdom Parables to Find the Kingdom* we will continue our rethinking exercise into the nature of the Kingdom as described by the Kingdom Parables by reading three parables which describe the Kingdom of God as a hidden kingdom which must be sought out by men. It doesn't just come down out of the sky at the so-called "end of the age" like we've been told. Instead we should be finding it on Earth right now.

We will also learn from five Kingdom Parables why people don't see the Kingdom and why they purposely don't want to see the Kingdom. We'll also better understand why they don't want others to see the Kingdom.

And finally, we'll study the very basic principle that, if there is a king presently reigning, then there has to be a kingdom in existence. We'll investigate why many people are wasting their time waiting for Jesus to bring the Kingdom to Earth when in fact neither Jesus nor the Kingdom ever left the Earth!

He who has eyes to see, let him see!

2. *Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house.*

Ezek. 12:2

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work within the
system, but too
early to shoot the
bastards.*

-Claire Wolfe