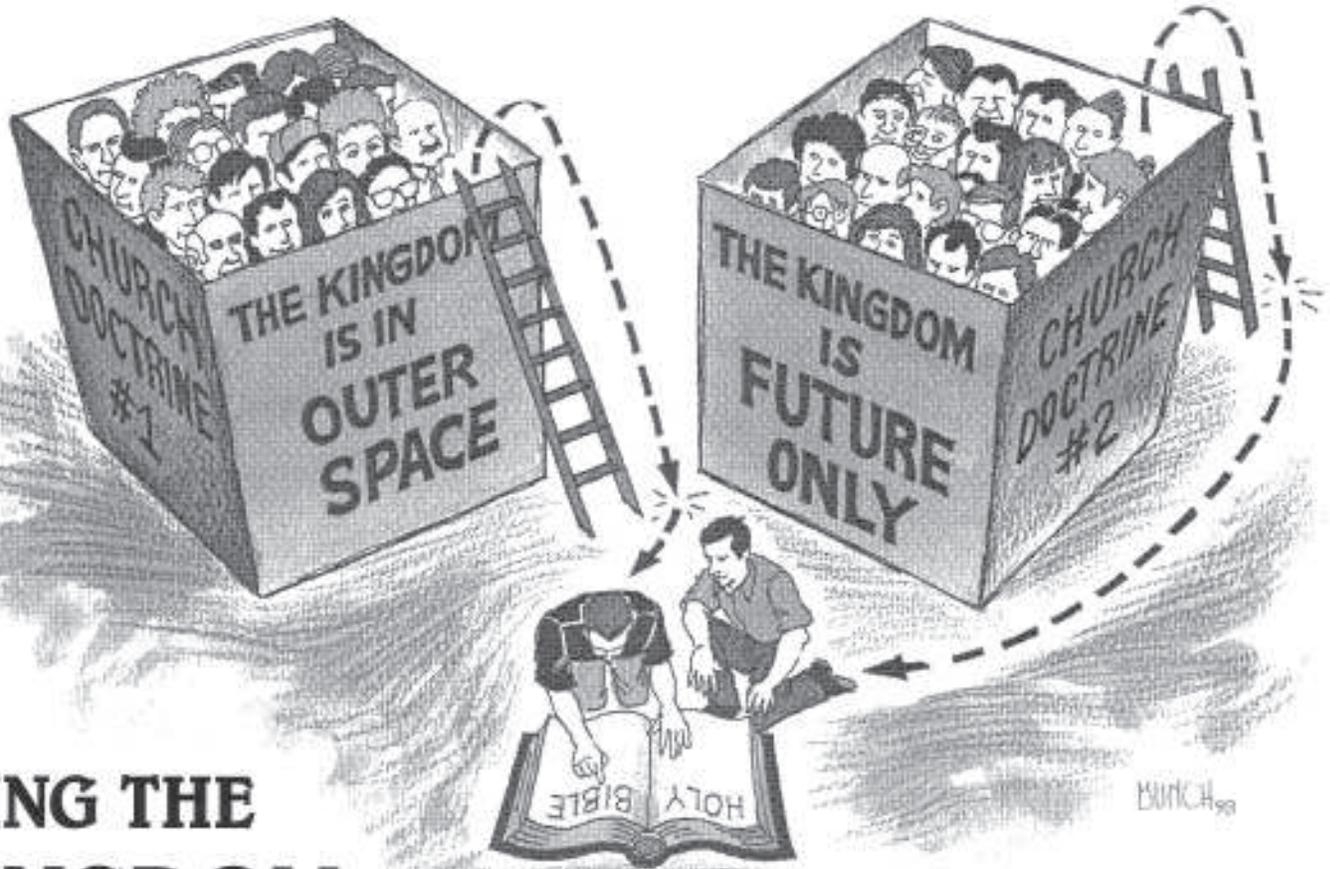


"Woe to you, translators and religious leaders, hypocrites! for by deception you are shutting up the Kingdom of Heaven before men: for you yourselves are not entering, neither do you allow them that are entering to go in."

BASED ON MATTHEW 23:13



"Thinking Outside The Box"

USING THE KINGDOM PARABLES TO FIND THE KINGDOM

Part 2

USING THE KINGDOM PARABLES TO FIND THE KINGDOM Pt. 2

by Paul Bunch & Ben Williams

IN PART ONE of this series we learned that parables and other stories, including those we think we understand, can have unanswered questions and hidden truths that have been missed. In such cases we need to reread and rethink. Otherwise we'll continue thinking incorrectly on those subjects, coming to wrong conclusions, and wasting time building on false premises.

We gave an example of how this works with a simple nursery rhyme. More importantly we gave examples of how it works with more relevant issues like the Kingdom Parables. The big problem, however, is that most people see no reason to go to the trouble to rethink their past teachings ... including the Kingdom Parables. They lack motivation because of two reasons: 1. They don't like the possibility that they may have missed something; and 2. They don't consider it important.

It was obvious in Part One that, in the case of the Kingdom Parables, rethinking is in order. We discovered that the true Kingdom Parables do not match up with the Utopian fairytales taught by the churches. After reading through five Kingdom Parables we have seen clearly that they describe a Kingdom that is quite different from the model described in churches. They tell of a Kingdom that exist simultaneously with:

- other kingdoms.
- both good AND evil.
- people who use money, and debt.
- employers and working employees.
- some people who are unfair, and some that have disagreements.

Obviously, the Kingdom of God

operates in a world where sin exists.

The churches are wrong about the nature of the Kingdom, as well as the time of its existence and duration.

In Part One we pointed out the word "inherit." Scripture tells of those who will, and those who will not, "inherit" the Kingdom. Based on the correct definition of the word, we showed that an inheritance that is handed down from generation to generation must, of necessity, exist! Therefore, if Yahweh has offered certain people, over many millennia, the ability to inherit and enjoy the Kingdom, then the Kingdom had to be in existence the whole time ... otherwise how could they inherit and enjoy it?

But why do some people still have trouble seeing God's Kingdom? And why should men have to go looking for it? That certainly doesn't sound like the four-square Kingdom our childhood church teachers have told us about. They told us it would someday drop from the sky and land at Jerusalem ... and the world would be changed!

THE HIDDEN KINGDOM

There are three parables that plainly tell us that the Kingdom of Heaven is HIDDEN in our midst and men must search to FIND it:

LEAVEN: Matt. 13:33

33. *Another parable he spoke to them; The kingdom of the heavens is like leaven, which a woman takes and hides in three measures of flour, till it all becomes leavened.*

TREASURE: Matt. 13:44

44. *The kingdom of the heavens is*

like treasure hidden in the field; which when a man finds it, he hides it, and for joy thereof he goes and sells all he has, and buys that field.

A PEARL: Matt. 13:45,46

45. *Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like a traveling merchant seeking fine pearls:*

46. *But finding one pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has, and buys it.*

The Kingdom of Heaven exists, and the parable describes it the way that it IS ... and it is HIDDEN from some people.

Leaven was hidden in three measures of flour until it all was leavened. In other words, the Kingdom was HIDDEN among the people until they all were changed by it. There can be no doubt that the Kingdom affects people. The question is, will they respond positively and enter the Kingdom, or negatively and increase their blindness?

These parables tell of a hidden Kingdom that some men find, and others don't find. When a man seeks and finds the Kingdom (pearl of great price) he considers it more valuable to him than all his other possessions combined, and is willing to sacrifice all he has in order to secure his new found treasure. But once he has found it he hides (or protects) it. Perhaps this means he hides his knowledge of it. Why? Because he is afraid someone will steal his new treasure. Is such worry founded, or is it merely faithlessness?

One thing for sure, this parable indicates that men worry about theft in the Kingdom. This tells us that the Kingdom is not a no worries Utopia like the one promoted in the churches. It ap-

pears that, in the Kingdom, we must deal with sin, and sinful men.

This leaves us to ask, "Can the Kingdom be stolen from you once you have found it? If so, how?"

Well, for one thing, the Kingdom can be stolen from you through confusion and by teaching the false doctrine of Futurism. Once some church teacher indoctrinates you to believe that the Kingdom can't exist until the distant future, you may never see the Kingdom again because blindness sets in. We'll also see another way the Kingdom can be stolen later in this article.

By the way, these three parables show us:

1. The Kingdom of God functions among people who don't always know it is there, and they are nonetheless affected by it.

2. There are merchants (business and commerce) in the Kingdom.

3. People buy and sell in the Kingdom (another way of saying there is commerce).

4. Scripture describes a hidden Kingdom that men must search out.

31. *But SEEK YOU RATHER HIS KINGDOM; and these things will be added to you.*

Luke 12:31

Jesus told us to seek an actual Kingdom; a Kingship; a Reign! He did not instruct us to seek mere awareness of a future promise.

In Mark 12, a scribe approached Jesus and asked Him which was the first commandment of all. Jesus answered by saying that we should *love the Lord our God with all our heart, and all our soul*. Then He recited the second part: *Love your neighbor as yourself*. Hearing this, the scribe then replied:

32. *... Teacher, you have stated well the truth; that He is One, and there is no other besides Him:*

33. *And to love Him with the whole heart, and with the whole comprehension, and with the whole*

strength, and to love one's neighbor as himself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

34. *And Jesus, seeing that he answered wisely, he answered and said to him, You are not far from the Kingdom of God.*

Mark 12:32-34

When Jesus said, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God," He was giving the man a clue ... somewhat like the game where you hide a button or a thimble in a room and allow someone to come into the room and search for it. As he begins to search around the room, you give him clues by saying "You're getting warmer" or "You're getting colder." In the case of the scribe's search for the Kingdom of God, Jesus told him that he was getting "very warm." In this case, as in the game, the object being sought after existed. Otherwise God would have men searching for something that does not exist!

WHAT EXACTLY ARE WE TO LOOK FOR?

When we look for the Kingdom, are we to look for a city with four walls, or a location with geographical boundaries? Are we to look for something physically appealing ... like Atlantis? The Garden of Eden? Shangri-La? Camelot? Nirvana? Utopia? Is the United States of America the Kingdom we seek?

The problem with looking for a purely physical Kingdom is that we never come to realize how the Kingdom of God works, since the Kingship encompasses more than just the physical aspects of life.

To be sure, it does include physical things. For instance, when the ancient Israelites left Egypt to enter Canaan, God gave the land to them as an inheritance. Also, many descendants of those ancient Israelites were led to America, where they speculated this might be another "inherited land."

But an inherited land is not neces-

sarily synonymous with the Kingdom itself. If we limit the Kingdom of God to a physical location, what does that say about other lands in other parts of the world? What about our Christian Israel brethren in Australia, Germany, England, etc.? Are they without access to the Kingship in those lands?

Many don't want to accept it, but Jesus answered this question clearly:

20. *But when the Pharisees asked him when the Kingship of God comes, he answered them and said, The Kingship of God does not come with observation:*

21. *Neither will they say, look here! or there! for, behold, the Kingship of God is inside you.*

Luke 17:20-21

There it is in plain English. Read it again if you like.

The Pharisees, like modern churchgoers, were wondering WHEN a physical kingdom was going to arrive. Jesus told the Pharisees that the Kingdom of God is not what their Mithraic teachers had told them. God's Kingship is not an observable entity. It does not arrive like a plane arriving at an airport.

At an airport we can gaze longingly into the sky until we observe a plane coming in the distance. We can observe it arrive at a scheduled time, land, and finally pull to a stop on the runway. But Jesus said the Kingdom of God is not observable like that.

For one thing, God's Kingship is already here, and cannot "arrive" since it was never removed! Secondly, the Kingdom is not a physical entity that can move from place to place, come or go, depart or arrive. Rather, it is **a state of mind and heart: a paradigm (a way to see reality)**.

Jesus IS King. He exists, therefore his Kingdom exists. Period! Whether or not men recognize Jesus' Kingship is a question of their own ability to perceive. If some men cannot see it, it exists nonetheless. Jesus exists, which means his Kingship exists, and therefore his Kingdom exists. It's logical.

The phrase, *“Neither will they say, look here! or there!”* means that no one can point to a specific geographical location and say, “There is the Kingdom of God.” In other words, we were told not to believe any man who may try to tell us the Kingdom of God is a country over here or a country over there! No, the Kingdom of God exists “inside” or “within” people!

In the phrase, *“The Kingdom is inside you,”* the word “you” is in the plural form (Greek *“hoomone”*). It means “you people”; the body of people. Jesus was saying that the Kingdom of God was inside THEM (the body of people; Christ’s Body). You can see the effects of Christ’s Reign by observing the people who follow God’s Law.

Ecclesias operate and are manifest in this way. And although tangible lands are involved, the actual Kingdom does not require a land in order to exist. Christ’s Kingship is not defined by physical boundaries because it is a state of being, not piece of real estate.

The more you see Christians who have erased pagan beliefs and superstitions from their minds, who have quit loving and worshipping the Beast System, and who promote and follow God’s Law instead of man’s law, the clearer the Kingdom of God will appear to you.

What Jesus was conveying is that the Kingdom is more than just a physical thing. It’s a way of thinking; a way of perceiving reality. It’s “the way of the Tree of Life” as referenced in the historical account of the Garden of Eden. Compared to the myths of churchdom, the Kingdom of God is a different paradigm.

SOME DON’T WANT TO SEE

It may seem strange that some people do not see the Kingdom even though it is in their midst. In fact, some folks DON’T WANT TO SEE THE KINGDOM! Let’s read the parables that deal with those who don’t see the Kingdom:

THE TEN VIRGINS: Matt. 25:1 -13

1. *Therefore the kingdom of the heavens is likened to ten virgins that take their lamps and go out to meet the bridegroom.*
2. *And five of them are foolish, and five are wise.*
3. *The foolish ones take their lamps, and take no oil with them:*
4. *But the wise ones take oil in their vessels with their lamps.*
5. *While the bridegroom tarried, they all nod off and fall asleep.*
6. *But in the middle of the night there arises a cry, Behold, the bridegroom; go out to meet him!*
7. *Then all those virgins arise and trim their lamps.*
8. *And the foolish ones say to the wise, Give us some of your oil for our lamps are gone out.*
9. *But the wise ones answer, saying, Perhaps there may not be enough for us and you. Go your way rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.*
10. *And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came. And the ones that are ready go in with him to the marriage feast: and the door is shut.*
11. *Afterward come also the rest of the virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.*
12. *But he answers saying, Truly I tell you, I know you not.*
13. *Stay awake therefore, for you know not the day or the hour.*

A lamp is a symbol of LIGHT. And of course LIGHT is a symbol of PERCEPTION (EYES TO SEE). But if a lamp has no OIL it cannot function (cannot enlighten). It isn’t prudent to rely upon lamps that provide no light. Unfaithful, irresponsible people don’t maintain their lamps.

When truth (oil) is available they don’t seek it.

The five foolish virgins with no oil represent people who don’t care enough to seek truth when it is available ... much like the many churchgoers who carelessly follow after churches without checking to see if truth is there. Churches claim to be lamps, and are symbols of light ... and yet they have no light. They are lamps without oil. Clouds without water. They teach doctrine that has no “light. They teach the gospel of man’s government and man’s self-deification. They do this by teaching a false gospel. They teach Mithraism, patriotism, and the established doctrines and laws invented in churches and governments.

Churchgoers misplace their faith in neglected, dark lamps. Their “light” is darkness.

23b. ... If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

Matt. 6:23

Also, notice that everyone was sleeping - the wise virgins as well as the foolish virgins. Those who had oil in their lamps (i.e., had perception) slept along with those who had no perception. They all grew weary and lost concentration at least for a while. They may have shared the same community.

But when time came for them to draw upon the “truth” and “light” they had collected, some had it and some didn’t. The truth was like a two-edged sword, separating between those with oil and those without oil. Their light – or lack of it – determined which way they would react to the truth. Some had prepared with years of learning. These had oil in their lamps and were ready to enter the door when it opened.

But the foolish virgins, who didn’t care enough to seek truth, couldn’t see the Kingdom of God. They hadn’t invested the years research and thinking that the wise virgins had invested.

Learning isn’t an easy, instant thing. Moreover, truth can disrupt a man’s life.

It can force us to re-evaluate many things of man's kingdom we collect around us.

The wise virgins told the foolish virgins to "Go to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." In other words, go to your sources (i.e., churches and governments) and let them help you.

The group was divided. The wise virgins had taken the light seriously and maintained their lamps. They invested the time and effort to seek and find oil (light), and when they saw the Kingdom they were ready to enter. Then they used their functioning lamps (i.e., awareness) to illuminate their pathway (they understand what was happening).

The foolish virgins had not taken it seriously, had not bothered to prove truth, and when their window of opportunity occurred, and the door was open to them, they had no light (no awareness) to illuminate their path. They missed their call.

To apply the airport analogy, we could visualize ten people at an airport waiting for a king to arrive. They gaze longingly into the clouds for some evidence of a coming plane. By midnight all ten had fallen asleep. Then an announcement was heard that the King was there. Five of the people that had studied the issue realized that the King was "in their midst" (Lk. 17:21) so they entered into the Kingdom that was present. Meanwhile, the five foolish people who carelessly had not studied for truth remained unaware, kept watching the sky expecting the Kingdom plane to come down through the clouds. The plane never did arrive, and eventually their faith was lost.

Those who don't have perception may hate those who do. Those who can't see the Kingdom go to great length to prove they are still right.

THE TARES: Matt. 13:24-30

24. *Another parable he set before them, saying, The kingdom of the heavens is likened to a man sowing good seed in his field:*

25. *But as men are sleeping, his*

enemy comes and sows tares over the wheat, and then goes.

26. *So when the blades sprout, and fruit is making, then appear the tares also.*

27. *So the servants of the master come and say to him, Lord, don't you sow good seed in your field? From where then comes the tares?*

28. *He says to them, A hateful man does this. They ask him, Would you then have us go and gather them up?*

29. *But he says, No, lest in gathering up the tares you might uproot also the wheat with them.*

30. *Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will tell the harvesters, Collect first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up: but gather the wheat into my storehouse.*

This parable is similar to the one of the Ten Virgins in that it depicts kingdom life with both good and bad people. In other words, there are those who are Christians indeed, and then there are those who claim to be Christians but are not. But at first glance they seem to look like Christians.

Also notice that just as in the parable of the ten virgins, men were sleeping. As a result, Christian plants (the "wheat") became mixed in with the counterfeit Christian plants (the "tares" or "weeds").

The "servants" notice weeds in the wheat. They want to rid the field of the weeds, but are told by the "master" (Jesus) that if they try to uproot the bad before they mature they may uproot many good plants along with the bad. In other words it was not yet time. The weeds did not yet stand out from the wheat. The master knew the right time. The wheat head must first mature so that it no longer needs water and nutrients from its root system. Then, when the root systems are disturbed by uprooting the weeds, the wheat plants will not be hurt.

The "servants" who are anxious to weed out the "tares" prematurely represent some people who would like to judge prematurely. They are the ones who think Jesus is not yet reigning. In their ill-conceived exuberance and impatience to "help" they fail to consider the fact that Jesus has things under control, and his time schedule will produce the best harvest.

There is a time for all things. There is a time to plant, and a time to weed. For the technology of their day, the best time to separate the weeds from the wheat was at harvest time. The tares (weeds) were then pulled up and discarded first, then the wheat plants were gathered for threshing. In this way the wheat and the weeds were separated. This represents the work that is occurring presently in the Kingdom through the on-going judgment and separation of people. Like oil separates from water, true Christians separate from false Christians.

The lesson is that true Christians perceive and respond positively and love the Kingdom. Others (the tares) do not fit, so they react negatively and refuse to see the Kingdom. In this scenario, the tare people usually come to hate the wheat people and persecute them.

Notice, also, this parable confirms that there are "enemies" at the time of the Kingdom of God. Who are these enemies? Let's see if we can answer that question by reading another parable.

THE SOWER: Matt. 13:3-9; 18-23

3. *And he speaks many things to them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower goes out to sow;*

4. *And as he is sowing, some seeds fall by the way side, and the birds come and eat them:*

5. *Some fall upon rocky places, where there is not much soil: and quickly it springs up, because the soil has no depth:*

6. *But when the sun is risen up it is scorched; and because it has no root it is dried up.*
7. *And others fell among thorns, and the thorns came up, and choked them:*
8. *But others fall upon the good soil, and bring forth fruit, one a hundredfold, one sixtyfold, and one thirtyfold.*
9. *Let him who has ears hear. ...*
18. *You, therefore, hear the parable of the sower.*
19. *When one hears the word of the kingdom but does not understand, evil comes and takes that which was sown in his heart. This is the sowing by the wayside.*
20. *And the one sown upon rocky places, this is the hearing of the word, and at once it is received with joy;*
21. *But is transient having no root in it: for when tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, he is quickly stumbled.*
22. *Also that being sown into the thorns, this is he that hears the word but the worry of the age and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.*
23. *But that sown upon good soil, this is the one who hears the word and comprehends it; who actually bears fruit, and produces, indeed one a hundredfold, one sixty, and one thirty.*

WAYSIDE RELIGION

In verses 4 and 19 we see those “by the wayside” who hear the word of the Kingdom but don’t comprehend it. They can’t believe the Kingdom could possibly exist in this age.

When the seed of the Gospel of the Kingdom is planted in someone’s heart by hearing about the PRESENT King Jesus, what makes the seed unproductive?

The answer is obvious. The “soil” (the heart) is unprepared and will not

sustain life. Hearts are poisoned by deception from preachers teaching false doctrine. These are also the ones who sow weeds among the wheat. They teach that Jesus is absent and will not return until an unknown future date. A deceiver might also tell you that God wants you to honor the laws of man (the Constitution, or some other man-made law system). If the deceiver convinces you to accept his line of reasoning, then you would be blind to the Kingdom even though it is right in front of you. The seeds of truth will have been overrun by weeds, or dried up by heat.

Of course, you recognize that these false teachers are the “experts,” pastors, and ministers of the churches who have effectively stolen the seeds of the Kingdom by brainwashing their followers to think in wrong paradigms. Thus, no matter how much one may try to convey to them how the Kingdom works in reality, they will forever reject it because churches have inoculated them against truth, and robbed them of their ability to see it.

BED OF ROSES RELIGION

In verses 5, 6, 20 and 21 we see a picture of another type of man who hears the Gospel of the Kingdom and receives it with joy. Here is someone who actually learns something about the Kingdom! However, his roots or Christian background is too shallow to withstand the inevitable trials and tribulations that result from his change of lifestyle. As a result, this type of man reverts back to the churches and the kingdoms of man like the sow who returns to her wallow, and the dog who returns to his vomit (2 Pet. 2:22).

CHOKING ON THE WRONG INVESTMENTS

In verses 7 and 22 we see those who sit alongside and hear the word of the Kingdom, but because of their investments in the kingdoms of man, their interest in the Kingdom gets “choked

out” and they lose heart. Their wrong investments are not only those of money, but also those of heart and mind. When man invests his heart in the kingdoms of man, anxiety and concern for those kingdoms possess him. Such men have loyalty to the wrong kingdoms, not realizing that the so-called “success” they seek is empty and destructive.

LIVING IN THE KINGDOM

Finally, in verses 8 and 23, we learn about the type of man that takes the Gospel of the Kingdom seriously. This type of man not only hears and understands the Kingship of God, he also “bears fruit.” In other words, he doesn’t reject the present Kingdom or passively wait for a future one. Instead, he acts, moves, and lives as a citizen of THE KINGDOM! And by doing so, he is much more effective and blessed than those who act as if the Kingdom cannot start until “after they die and go to Heaven” or until their saviour “returns” from “heaven.”

THE GREAT SUPPER: Lk. 14:16-24

16. *Then he said to him, A certain man makes a great supper, and calls many:*
17. *And at the supper hour he sends his servant to say to them that are called, Come, for things are now ready.*
18. *And they all in one accord begin to make excuse. The first says to him, I am buying a field, and I need to go out and see it: I ask you to have me excused.*
19. *And another said, I am buying five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them: I ask you to have me excused.*
20. *And another said, I am marrying a wife, and therefore I cannot come.*
21. *So that servant comes and reports to his lord these things. Then the master of the house becomes angry and said to his servant, Go*

out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the crippled, and the blind, and the lame.

22. *And the servant said, Lord, it is done as you have ordered, and yet there is room.*

23. *And the lord says to the servant, Go out into the ways and fenced places, and compel (more people) to come in, that my house may be filled.*

24. *For I say to you, That none of those men who were called shall taste of my supper.*

This parable expresses how some people, in spite of their invitation to enter the Kingdom of God, reject it because they have too much invested in the kingdoms of man. The master invited certain guests because He thought they were friends, and yet the invited guests made excuses and didn't attend the supper.

One potential guest said, "I am buying a field, so I can't come."

Another said, "I am buying five yoke of oxen, so I must attend to them and won't be able to come."

And still another says, "I am marrying a wife who requires my time."

These are examples of the "thorns" in the Parable of the Sower which choke the Word. Modern-day "thorn" scenarios might be:

· "My entire business (banking, for instance) is built around usury, and I can't quit that business now because I have a family to support and that business is my livelihood."

· "Looking for the Kingdom is a luxury I cannot afford while I am busy doing important and urgent things."

· "Sure, Bible laws were OK back in their day, but they can't address my obligations."

· "My girl friend (or boy friend) does not believe in the Kingdom, but I'm desperate to find someone to marry, so I can't talk about my Kingdom beliefs with her (or him) because it makes her (or him) upset. I'll pursue

marriage first, then decide about the Kingdom."

MARRIAGE OF THE KING'S SON: Matthew 22:1-14

2. *The kingdom of the heavens is likened to a man, a king, that makes a marriage feast for his son,*

3. *And he sends out his servants to hail them that are called to the wedding feast: but they do not want to come.*

4. *Again, he sends out other servants, saying, Tell them that were called, Behold, I prepare my dinner: my oxen and my fattened cattle are killed, and all things are ready: come into the marriage feast.*

5. *But they don't care, and go off, one to his field, another to his business:*

6. *And the remnant seize his servants, and deal with them violently, and kill them.*

7. *But the king becomes wrathful: and he sends his armies, and destroys those murderers, and burns their city.*

8. *Then he says to his servants, Indeed the marriage feast is ready, but they that were called were not worthy.*

9. *Go you therefore into the ways leading out, and as many as you find, call into the marriage feast.*

10. *So those servants go out into the ways, and gather together all whom they find, evil and good: and the wedding room is filled with guests reclining.*

11. *And when the king comes in to see the guests reclining, he sees there a man that is not clothed with a marriage garment:*

12. *And he says to him, Fellow, how did you get in here not having a marriage garment? But he is speechless.*

13. *Then the king says to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and cast him out into outer darkness;*

there will be weeping and gnashing of the teeth.

14. *For the called are many, but the called-out are few.*

This parable is similar to the parable of The Great Supper, but this time the event is a marriage. Here again, those that were invited to the wedding (the Kingdom) make excuses not to come. They even make light of it.

Obviously, the king represents Yahweh and those first invited to the marriage were Israel. Today they would likely be "Christians." However, in this case these Israelites make light of the event and go their ways to their farms and businesses. Again, they had invested everything in the kingdoms of men rather than the Kingdom of God. To them, the kingdoms of men were more important.

The rest of the so-called Israelites (or so-called Christians) violently attack the servants (prophets) and kill them!

But how could this be? The very people who, by their own profession, should love the Lord and his Kingdom, and should want to be there, turn out to be the ones that reject the invitation and murder his servants. So more servants go out into the streets and call strangers to the marriage feast, and many came!

In today's society we can see a cross-section of religious people who ostensibly appear to be interested in things pertaining to Jesus and His Kingdom. They have Bibles. They memorize verses and Bible stories. They talk about Jesus and His Kingdom as if they know Him. And they are religious people. They call themselves "Christians." Just by having this label and going through the motions of attending church, they develop a religious image.

However, if you closely examine how they think, you will see they reject the real Jesus and His Kingdom. In subtle ways they reject the Kingdom of God by forever relegating it to another nebulous world and time. Year after year they profess that the King-

dom may come suddenly next week, or next month, or next year ... but it never seems to come. Always “coming,” never present.

An even more subtle rejection is when they say they believe the Kingdom exists but it’s “not yet perfected.” The insinuation is that it is not yet complete and it cannot yet function.

Furthermore, they claim that Jesus is absent and will “return” at some unknown future time.

However, the fact is Jesus told us: *am with you always*” (Matt. 28:20).

Not only do people subtly reject Jesus by saying He is “absent,” they often deny Him by claiming He is actually His own Father (the deeply-rooted Trinity doctrine). For those who believe this doctrine, Jesus could not really exist as the Son of God and thus cannot be the King we read about in the Bible. For these folks, Jesus is a disguise for Yahweh Himself. Therefore, behind the happy-face Christianity as most people know it, there is a basic rejection of Yahweh’s Son and the Son’s Kingship.

These churchgoers are represented by “the called” (the invited) who reject the marriage invitation. The others (“the called out”) are those who accept the call and actually COME OUT to enter the marriage feast (they acknowledge Jesus as King). These are “the ecclesia” “the called out.” The King James Bible wrongly calls them “the chosen.” In some cases, even strangers accept the call sooner than the arrogant families and friends originally invited to the marriage feast. This usually results in the strangers becoming the targets of abuse from the ones who rejected the call and refused to accept Christ as their present King.

THE WICKED FARMERS: Matt. 21:33-46

33. *Hear another parable: There is a man, a master, who plants a vineyard, and puts a fence around it, and digs a winepress in it, and builds a tower, and lets it out to farmers, and then travels abroad:*

34. *And when the time of the fruit draws near, he sends his servants to the farmers to receive his fruits.*

35. *And the farmers take his servants, and beat one, and kill another, and stone another.*

36. *Again, he sends other servants more than the first: and they go to them likewise.*

37. *And last of all he sends to them his son, saying, They will respect my son.*

38. *But when the farmers see the son, they say among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us take his inheritance.*

39. *And they take him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and kill him.*

40. *Therefore, when the lord of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those farmers?*

41. *They say to him, He will mercilessly destroy those bad men, and will let out his vineyard to other farmers, who will give back to him the fruits in their seasons.*

42. *Jesus says to them, Did you never read in the scriptures, The stone being rejected by the builders is the one that becomes the head of the corner: this comes from the Lord, and it is wonderful in our eyes?*

43. *Therefore I say to you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation (family) producing the fruits of it.*

44. *And the one falling on this stone will be broken: but upon whoever it might fall, it will pulverize.*

Now, some have speculated that the “master” in this parable represents Jesus and that He is therefore not present on the Earth because He “traveled abroad” (the KJV says “went into a far country”). However, that interpretation doesn’t work. Jesus was represented by the SON, not the master. Remember, it was the SON whom the wicked farmers took and killed. The

master, not the son, traveled abroad and returned, and mercilessly destroyed those bad farmers. The son didn’t return from a trip. The father, not the son, was the one who travelled abroad. It’s a simple point, but one that seems to escape church theologians.

Notice if you will, there are good and evil, violence and death, in the Kingdom. The farmers – (i.e., Israel) those who maintained and kept up the vineyard and were given a position of trust – ended up being the enemies who beat and killed the servants (the prophets). When they saw that the son (Jesus) had been sent to collect the fruits of the vineyard, they murdered Him and tried to seize on his inheritance. The “farmers” represented the nation of Israel of old, and today it represents all the churchgoers who hold themselves out as Christians. This also brings to mind Matthew 11:12:

12. *But from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of the heavens is strengthened, and the strong eagerly claim it.*

This illustrates another way the Kingdom of God can elude certain men as we discussed earlier. Only the strong in faith have the drive to seek and find it, and claim it as their home.

Another point you should seriously consider is that the strong could not find and claim the Kingdom if it were still future.

That “the inheritance” is the Kingdom of God is further confirmed by the following verse. It also confirms that “our inheritance” (the Kingdom) is in THIS AGE.

15. *And through this, He (Christ) is the mediator of a new covenant, so that by means of death for the release from the transgressions under the first covenant, they that were called might receive the proclamation of the inheritance (i.e., Kingdom) of this age (i.e., New Covenant Age).*

Heb. 9:15

SEEING IS A GIFT

It is a strange concept, perhaps, to consider that some people do not want to see and acknowledge the Kingdom of God. In dealing with this type of people Jesus spoke in parables. Remember that there are two reasons why He used parables while speaking in public. The first was to MAKE THE TRUTH KNOWN to those WHO WANT TO KNOW. The second was to HIDE THE TRUTH from those WHO DID NOT WANT TO KNOW. Jesus, Himself, made this clear:

10. *And the disciples come, and say to him, Why are you speaking to them in parables?*
11. *He answers and says, To you it has been given to know the mysteries (truths to be learned) of the kingdom of the heavens, but to them it has not (yet) been given.*
12. *For whosoever has (ears to hear), it will be given to him, and he will be made to abound: but whoever has not (ears to hear), even what he has will be taken from him.*
13. *For this reason I speak to them in parables: because seeing they see not; and hearing they hear not, nor are they comprehending.*
14. *And in them is being fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, who is saying, By hearing you shall hear, and not comprehend; and seeing you shall see, and not perceive:*
15. *For this people's heart is grown thick, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they close; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should comprehend with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.*
16. *But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.*
17. *For truly I tell you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see what you are seeing, and saw not; and to hear what you*

are hearing, and heard not.

Matthew 13:10-17

Therefore, whenever you read the Kingdom Parables remember that our Lord was revealing truth to his disciples, and simultaneously hiding it from others who hated Him and would NOT follow Him in any case.

Those who saw the truths in the parables had spiritual eyes to see and ears to hear. Their ability to comprehend wasn't due to perfect arguments or flawless logic. Rather, they saw, heard, and comprehended because they used the spiritual eyes and ears (the oil in their lamps) that had developed over years of preparation. It was given because they were diligent and attentive - they WANTED TO KNOW.

It is a matter of breeding good character. Character, like soil, must be conditioned and prepared before the seeds of faith can take root and produce fruit. Christ sows the seeds through his word and through his planters (spokesmen). It is imperative that parents prepare their hearts, and the hearts of their children, to receive the seeds of truth that may fall to them. Basic traits of "good soil" (i.e., good character) must be instilled into our hearts to condition them for planting. Those traits are, first and foremost, HONESTY and LOVE FOR TRUTH. This is essential.

It causes great alarm to us who see that most children today are being raised with exactly the opposite traits. Denied the parental investment to make them into citizens of the Kingdom, they are left on their own to be dishonest, disrespectful, spoiled, undisciplined, selfish, and without love for truth.

Character (soil) preparation and conditioning is a common theme in the Bible:

3. *Forasmuch as his godly power has freely given to us the things of life and respect through the accurate knowledge of the One who calls us through praise and virtue,*

4. *Through which the precious and grand proclamations were given to us, in order that through these things you might become sharers of the godly nature, escaping the lust of corruption in the world.*

5. *Therefore having received this, increase your response by adding to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge,*

6. *And to knowledge discipline, and to discipline endurance, and to endurance respect,*

7. *And to respect brotherly affection, and to brotherly affection love;*

8. *For if these things exist and increase in you, they prevent you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the accurate knowledge of Jesus our Christ.*

9. *But anyone in whom these things are not present, he is blind, not perceiving, having forgotten the cleansing of his old sins.*

10. *Wherefore rather, brethren diligently confirm your calling and make your choice. For in doing these things you will never stumble.*

11. *For so the way into this age's Kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Christ Jesus will be richly supplied to you.*

2 Pet 1:3-11

NEXT TIME

In Part Three, the last installment in this study of the Kingdom Parables, we will take note of how many Kingdom parables actually show that the "master" or "king" is not absent but is present and interacting with his subjects. If the King (the Son) were absent from his Kingdom, the parables would indicate this. But they don't. There are a few parables that talk about a "master" that "comes," but as we shall learn, that "coming" is quite a different concept than the so-called "return" or "second advent" taught by the churches.