

Mysteries of the Kingdom

by Steve Gallagher

Steve Gallagher explores the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven through the teaching of parables, emphasizing the importance of genuine repentance and the distinction between true and false converts.

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Scripture: Matthew 13:24

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Description

This sermon delves into the parables of the Kingdom of Heaven presented by Jesus, highlighting the shift in teaching style to parables due to the rejection of the message of repentance by the people. The parables illustrate the mysteries of the Kingdom, the coexistence of true and false converts, the numerical growth, the permeating influence, the supreme worth of the Kingdom, and the separation at judgment day. Jesus emphasizes the importance of repentance and the challenges of discerning true conversion.

Transcript

Okay, last week we began looking into the Kingdom of Heaven as Jesus was presenting it to the people. And I said that that Sermon on the Mount probably occurred about a year into his ministry time. And at that point there was a lot of excitement about Jesus.

But the period between Matthew 7 and Matthew 13, apparently Jesus started realizing that even though there was a lot of excitement about him, the people were not responding to the message that they needed to repent and repent deeply in their heart and prepare themselves spiritually, inwardly, for this new kingdom that he was ushering in. So he started realizing that, and because of that, that he could see what didn't actually unfold until later, that the people really were rejecting the truth that he was bringing. He could see that in their hearts.

So he changed the way that he started teaching. And with his disciples, he continued being very forthright. And when I say disciples, I don't mean just the 12, but also those others around his small group like Mary and Martha and so on.

He would give them the straight truth. But with the crowds, that was different. So he began teaching them in parables sometime in that, I don't know, maybe just a guess, maybe a year and a half, two years, something like that, into his ministry.

And the reason for using parables is he could use them to illustrate deeper truths of the kingdom for those who had ears to hear, for those whose hearts had been opened by the Holy Spirit and were absorbing what he was saying and were responding to it. But to the insincere, the parables masked what he was saying. So he wasn't making these straightforward statements anymore to the whole multitudes.

You know, when you see the things he said in the Sermon on the Mount, he was pretty much laying it out. And now, he takes a different tact and he starts veiling his message through the use of parables. Now, Jesus is the only teacher in the New Testament to employ parables.

And nearly all the parables are found in Matthew and Luke. There's a couple in Mark, none in John. And let me just say something about Luke for a minute here before we get off into Matthew 13, which is where we're heading.

Luke also shared parables, but most of the parables that he shared are not found in Matthew or obviously the other Gospels either. And as I pointed out last week, the Apostle Paul seems to have played a large role in the stories or teachings that Luke shared in his Gospel. And you really can get a sense of that when you take a look at some of the parables that Luke shares, you know, that Jesus gave during his time.

For instance, the Good Samaritan, it's a powerful parable. The Friend at Midnight regarding prayer, the rich fool, the prodigal son, the rich man and Lazarus, the Pharisee and the publican, and there's a few others. You know, these are powerful parables, but they're not found anywhere else but in Luke.

And I could just, I don't know, it just seems like the kind of teachings that Paul would have been attracted to rather than, you know, the kind of things that we're going to be sharing here this morning. All right, I should also mention that there's a couple of rules of interpretation with parables that we should at least note. One is that, you know, as with any teaching in Scripture, context is king, right? So, you know, the context often establishes the point of the parable.

For instance, Peter asked Jesus, this happened later, you know, about forgiveness, and so how did Jesus answer it? He gives this long, elaborate story of these two debtors to this rich man, and, you know, he's painting a picture through the use of parable about forgiveness and the importance of it. So that's just one example of context establishing the meaning of the parable. The other thing I wanted to mention that's probably a little more important, especially for these parables today, is that you have to be careful not to press the details beyond where they're, you know, meant to be used.

Let me put it to you this way. Just picture a building being erected, and there's a scaffolding. This isn't what scaffolding is used for, but for my story, it'll just have to work.

A scaffolding is erected to hold it in place, you know, until it's all completed. So the building itself are the actual truths that Jesus is trying to communicate. The scaffolding are the secondary, peripheral details that just kind of support the story.

There's no real meaning to them. They're just used to paint a picture. Are you getting what I'm saying? So, you know, that's the way it is with these parables.

You take the basic, obvious truth that Jesus is communicating and don't get too attached to the secondary details, you know, because some people will do that and build doctrines out of them, and you can't do that. There's just, you know, it goes against hermeneutical rules. For instance, let me just give you an example how dangerous it could be.

In the parable of the treasure hidden in the field, which we'll get to here in a few minutes, you know, basically the man discovers that there's this treasure buried in this field that's up for sale. So rather than going and being honest with the seller and saying, hey, do you understand that there is an enormous treasure buried out in your field, you know, and I'll pay you all that it's worth, you know, instead of doing that, the man goes and buys the field for what the seller thinks it's worth and inherits this enormous treasure. Well, you know, that's at the very least unethical, right? We wouldn't do that.

We know that, you know, instinctively that Jesus wouldn't want us to do that, and yet there it is right in his parable. So again, don't press the details, you just get yourself in trouble. Better not to.

All right, let's look at Matthew 13. There are seven parables here, each of which illustrates some particular truth of the kingdom of heaven. And I'll mention also that some people say there's eight.

There's this last little statement at the end of the chapter where Jesus makes a comment about scribes, but it really, meaning disciples of the kingdom, and he kind of just paints a little something there, but it's really not a parable. And most people agree that there's actually just seven parables in Matthew 13. And six of these parables begin with the phrase, the kingdom of heaven is like, and they explain it.

I mean, then he explains it. So I mean, it's obvious what it's about, right? The kingdom of heaven, and different aspects of it, and different looks at it, and different things about it. So there's three pairs of parables here, and then there's a concluding parable, and I'll get to this in a few minutes, that kind of sums it all up, wraps up everything.

So the first and the second parable take up almost the whole chapter, the sower and the seed and the wheat and tares. That makes up the first pair. So let's take a look at the sower and the seed.

You're all familiar with this parable, and I'm not going to read the verses. I'll just, you know, say some things about it. Before we get into actually looking at it, though, you know, it's arguably the most important of all the parables Jesus taught.

It establishes an overarching fact that most of the other parables in Matthew 13, and also the four vignettes at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, you know, those aren't really parables. They're more like little stories that kind of supported and wrapped up his sermon. They all are making the same point, that there is a kingdom of heaven, and that there are true and false converts alongside each other in that kingdom, you know, on earth.

So that's kind of the overarching truth that comes out here. Let me read what Ray Comfort says. The fact that there are true and false conversions is made very clear in the statement Jesus made to his disciples in Mark 4.13. He had just given them the parable of the sower, and the disciples asked what he meant by it.

And he said to them, do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all parables? In other words, the parable of the sower is the key to unlocking the mysteries of all the other parables. Once that understanding has been established, then the light of perception begins to dawn on the rest of what Jesus said in parables about the kingdom of God. In fact, if someone doesn't understand the principle of the true and false being alongside each other, they will be in the dark about almost everything Jesus taught, because he taught in parables.

All right, so that's a little background on this parable, some things to consider about it. Let's look at these four types of soil, because it is such an important parable. The wayside hearers are those who listen to the message of the kingdom of heaven, but they don't allow that message to penetrate their hearts.

And their lack of receptivity to the message allows the enemy an opportunity to come and steal away the word that's been planted there, that's been thrown there on that soil. So let's put this in the context of some guy sitting in church, and he's hearing sermons, maybe powerful sermons, and the word comes at him, but he's not absorbing it, he's not letting it in. There's something about it that he rejects deep in his heart, but he's a religious guy and he's doing what he's supposed to do, and all those sorts of things.

So he's not letting it penetrate his heart, and as soon as the sermon's over with, his thoughts are all over the place. He's thinking about the weather, he's thinking about how the pastor should have done a better job with his sermon, or he's thinking about who knows what. And that is how the enemy comes in and steals the truth from these kinds of people.

And of course, as soon as he walks out that back door, then the things of the world do the rest of the work. But that is a picture of people who don't allow the truth of his message, which is repentance. That's the entrance into the kingdom, that is the message of the kingdom.

You enter through repentance, they don't want that message, they reject that message. Their hearts are hardened towards it, so since they're shutting it out, it never gets in. The rocky soil hearers enthusiastically respond to the message.

They like the whole message, but something about it doesn't hold them. And they end up, when things get difficult or when things go against what they're hoping for or whatever, they end up giving up and falling away or whatever, at least inwardly. Anyway, the rocky soil hearers, they receive the word with joy rather than the sorrow and grief over sin that accompanies true repentance.

And they respond enthusiastically, but under the surface level of their emotions, is a heart made of stone. You know, they're not accepting it, really, they're not letting it get in. And they're quick to decide for Christ, and they're quick to abandon him.

That's rocky soil hearers, and we all have seen them, you know. But how many, I wonder, in the church, that's something we never think about with this particular type of person. We always think of it, oh yeah, you know, like we have a family member who really came to the Lord, all excited, she was all in for a year or a few months or something.

And then, you know, this happened, that happened, and she fell away. We all know people like that, and she went totally back into a life of sin. But what about people in the church who get excited, but they remain in the church, even though inside, inwardly, they have fallen away from the Lord, they've departed from him, and their hearts are elsewhere.

I don't know, it's just something to consider. The thorny soil hearers make a lifetime commitment, but it's only a half a commitment. They want the kingdom of heaven.

You know, they like the way Jesus is presenting it, and they want it, they want to be in heaven one day, and all of that, but, you know, they like the kingdom of this world, too. And so they constantly are back and forth in their minds, they can't get themselves to make a full commitment to either. They're like the double-minded man that James talks about, you know, and they got one foot in the world and one foot in

the church, and they never really make a full consecration and surrender to the Lord.

So they stay in the church, but their hearts are not there, really. All right, and then we have the good soil hearers who respond with their whole hearts, and eventually, they bring forth fruit for God's kingdom. And now, Matthew quotes Jesus as saying that this person understands the Word.

The Word comes to them, they understand it, and they accept it. Luke adds this little phrase, they receive it with a good and honest heart, you know, and that says a lot right there. So, that's what the person who actually enters into the kingdom of heaven, you know, what they go through.

Let me put it to you this way. This person receives the truth with his whole being. With his intelligence, he counts the cost, and he decides he's willing to pay it.

With his conscience, he obeys the laws of the kingdom. With his affections, he loves the Lord and his people. With his will, he's determined to follow the Lord, no matter where it may take him.

And it's all summed up, you know, with the heart, you know, from which flows the issues of life. The core of his being is all in for the Lord. And it's not to say he doesn't have struggles, doesn't have times where he's not doing so great or whatever.

But he is headed in a direction, there's a definite change, a definite conversion, a definite repentance, he's a new man in Christ, all those things are true of this guy. And Jesus mentions that there are degrees of receptivity, and, you know, accompanying them are degrees of reward when we stand before the Lord, you know, so it's not all just black and white exactly. But the bottom line is that it isn't whether or not there's a plant there, it's whether or not there's fruit at the end of the season.

That's the ultimate issue. Gil said in regards to that, what Jesus said about bringing forth fruit, which does not mean performing duties such as leading sinners to Christ. It means showing godly sorrow over sin, having fear and reverence of God, great humility, much self-denial, ardent love to Christ, deep longing after Him and communion with Him, strong affection for the people of God, zeal for His cause, and a concern to honor and glorify Him.

So that's the sower and the seed, you know, in a nutshell. So let's move to the second half of that first pair, which is the parable about the wheat and the tares, and I'm not going to read this one either, I'll just make a few observations about this one. You know, as I thought about this one, to me it seemed like an amplification of the sower and the seed, because in the sower and the seed you have four types of people, and you know, one of the commentators brought out the fact that we don't know how much seed went on good soil, that could have been half of it.

Half the soil out there could have been good, and then you have the little rocky spots and the pathways that are beaten down, all that kind of stuff, thorny area. We don't know the numbers, and you know, don't read too much in one out of four sort of thing. But the seed has gone all over the place, and in the sower and the seed you've got four different types in the wheat and the tares, only two types are mentioned, those who are in and those who are out, those who are sincere, those who are insincere, those who are true converts, those who are false converts.

So the false converts, the tares, are just kind of an amplification of those three types of soils in the first parable. And these tares that grow in the Middle East, they're called bearded darnel, and they're botanically very close to wheat, actually, and what would happen is, you know, take the enemy out of the

picture, more of the normal way of life, I suppose those seeds blow around in the winds and stuff, and they just get off into the wheat field after it's just been tilled and everything, and so they get down in there with the wheat plants and grow up together, and what happens is the root systems get all tangled up, so it would be very difficult in a practical way to try to just get the tares out. But beyond that, you don't even know which is which because they look almost identical until they grow up and actually start growing the heads of grain.

That's when you can tell what's real and what isn't real, which works real well with everything else because it is the fruit that is the final evidence whether a person is a true convert of Christ. Is there fruit? That's how you know. And Jesus said that also in the Sermon on the Mount about the false teachers that are wolves in sheep clothing.

Look at their fruit on their trees. What do you see? And what John Gill was just talking about, that's the fruit of someone who really has come to the Lord. All right, another thing I'll mention is that the workers slept while the enemy did this.

Now some commentators, it seems like maybe Adam Clark was one of them, kind of read something into that like the ministers aren't doing what they should do and they're sleeping on the job and therefore the enemy's able to get in there and bring false converts into these congregations and such. I suppose there could be some truth to that. But I don't tend to think that that is what Jesus is really trying to say.

But just mentioning it in passing. Another thing I'll mention is that the professing church has two sowers. You have Jesus and his true ministers who are working diligently, working hard for God's kingdom, sowing the Word of God, getting it out there as best they can.

But also working very diligently are Satan, his demons, and false teachers who are also diligently sowing seed. It's bad seed, it's evil seed, but they're out there working too. And you know, that's just the way it is.

Jesus mentions that the field is the world. Now that little phrase there has stumbled some people, some preachers, who kind of, I believe, read more into that than is meant by Jesus, whatever with that. But I'll just say this, that when you look at the context of all these parables, what is the context? It's the kingdom of heaven established in the hearts of men here on earth.

That's the context. And that's what Jesus is looking at here. He's not looking at the whole vast world with all the pagans and people who pay no attention to the gospel or anything.

That isn't what he's referring to at all. He's referring to people who are professing themselves to be part of his kingdom. And I'll just say that if you look at the commentators all the way back to Augustine and before, the early church fathers, they have all believed that this is referring to the visible church.

I couldn't find anybody that believed that it was, you know, about the world and stuff like that. Although I know there are a few people that do think that way. Anyway, finally, you know, we should mention that when Jesus said that we shouldn't uproot the tares, and that's kind of what his message was to his workers, it doesn't mean that we should just allow sinners to brazenly flaunt their sin in our congregations and do as they will and so on.

There is too much teaching in the New Testament to refute that notion. In fact, Jesus himself, for instance, in Matthew 18, he gives a formula for how to deal with sinners. People in sin, you go to them in person, that doesn't work, you take two witnesses, if that doesn't work, you bring them before the entire church

and you cast them out, you know, so obviously he doesn't believe that.

And also in his messages to the seven churches in Revelation, a couple of those churches, I think Laodicea and Pergamum maybe, he chastised them because they were allowing sinners to flourish in their congregations. So we know that's not what he's saying, alright, so don't take that beyond where it should be either. Let me read a couple of quotes here about this parable.

Matthew Henry says this, "The tares are hypocrites, children of the devil. Though they do not own his name, yet they bear his image, do his lusts, and from him they have their education. He rules over them, he works in them.

They are weeds in the garden. Have the same rain and sunshine and soil with the good plants that are good for nothing. Such is the proneness of fallen man to sin, that all the enemy has to do is to sow the tares and go his way.

They will spring up by themselves and do the damage. Whereas when good seed is sown, it must be tended, watered, and fenced, or it will come to nothing." You know, and that is so true. It doesn't take anything to make people do the wrong thing and to go against the kingdom of God.

It is our natural bent to be that way. Alright, J.C. Ryle says this, "In the first place, we must expect to find believers and unbelievers, converted and unconverted. The children of the kingdom and the children of the wicked one all mingle together in every congregation of baptized people.

The purest preaching of the gospel will not prevent this. In every age of the church, the same state of things has existed. But how beautiful will the whole body of believers appear when finally separated from the wicked.

How fine will the wheat look in the barn of God when the weeds are at length taken away. How brightly will grace shine when no longer dimmed by incessant contact with the worldly and unconverted." And that is such a wonderful and glorious thought. Alright, let's get to our second pair of parables here, the mustard seed and the leaven, here in verse 31.

He presented another parable to them saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. And this is smaller than all other seeds. But when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air will come and nest in its branches.' He spoke another parable to them.

"The kingdom of heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened." Alright, now let me just say something about, first of all, the mustard seed parable. This is showing the numerical growth that would take place with the kingdom of heaven. Now think about it.

We just went over the book of Acts a few months ago. And if you remember in the early church some of the stories that we were reading, just consider that 10 days after the ascension, 120 believers is all really that Jesus has to show for his efforts. But the Holy Spirit came swooping down on them that day and 3,000 souls were added to the kingdom that particular day after Peter preached his message.

And a short time after this, as we read in Acts 4, the number of the men, I guess this means the men alone, excuse me, who publicly avowed their faith in Christ was about 5,000. The next notice of the size of the church is in Acts 5 where we're informed that there were multitudes now following Christ. And then in

the beginning of Acts 6, the number of the disciples was multiplied.

And then also a little further in that chapter, the word of God increased and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly. And a great number of the priests were obedient to the faith. All of this occurred probably within a couple of years.

So what began as a tiny little thing, a little mustard seed, was flourishing very quickly. And by the time the Apostle Paul was done, it had gone through the entire Roman empire. And that's exactly what happened.

The mustard seed shows the numerical growth, but the leaven makes the point, it's kind of like an additional amplification or something like that, about how the kingdom would permeate and influence the nations it got into. And really, if you look at history, the last 2,000 years, the nations that are the most barbarous, the most ruthless and merciless are those nations that did not embrace the kingdom message. But you look at the more civilized nations tended to be, not always, it wasn't always perfect and so on, but they tended to be more together.

Let me just read what the pulpit commentator said. The kingdom of heaven has powerfully influenced all civilized nations, and all barbarous nations to which it has extended have become civilized. And now kingdoms many and mighty repose in safety and rest in security under this widespread gospel tree, like the birds of the air taking refuge under and nestling among the branches of the magnificent mustard tree of this parable.

So basically, leaven is used elsewhere in the New Testament to talk about influences kind of working their way in amongst people, and I think that's really what the point of it is. All right, the third pair, the hidden treasure and the costly pearl. Let's just start with the hidden treasure, verse 44.

The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field which a man found and hid again. And from joy over it, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. All right, this is kind of a far-fetched story.

I mean, as far as reality is concerned in our lives. I mean, how many people have you heard do something like this? They buy a field, and there's a buried treasure, and they discover it and all that. I mean, you do hear that stuff occasionally.

Sometimes you see it in the news where someone bought an old house, and there was something stored in the walls or whatever. I mean, that stuff, I guess it isn't so far-fetched. But, you know, it's pretty rare.

And it's basically, he's using the extravagance of this story to dramatize the supreme worth of his kingdom to men. You know, and men tend to discount it, and Satan is constantly trying to deaden it in people's eyes. In our eyes.

Constantly, constantly, constantly trying to film our eyes over with the world and the spirit of the world and dim the luster of his kingdom. But the treasure shows that the worth of his kingdom is worth infinitely more than the cost of following Christ. You know, sometimes it seems like, man, such a price to pay to follow Jesus Christ.

I mean, I know unsaved people, you know, make no pretense about it. And they're just living regular lives, and they don't seem to have some of the hardships we have and so on. But there is no comparison to what we will enter into one day.

Matthew Henry says this. Excuse me, I'm just kind of dealing with the cold here today. Jesus Christ is the true treasure.

In him there is an abundance of all that is rich, treasures of wisdom and knowledge, of righteousness, grace, and peace. These are laid up for us in Christ. The reason why so many slight the gospel and will not pay the price and run the hazard of entertaining it is because they look only upon the surface of the field.

But the richest minds are often buried in ground that appears most barren, and therefore they will not so much as bid for the field, much less come up to the price. I mean, a perfect example of that is oil fields, which Matthew Henry, of course, wouldn't have known anything about. Who could have known that under the sands of Saudi Arabia would be the richest treasures the earth has ever seen? And places like Texas, the barren places.

Yeah, it's quite the truth there, really, and that the treasure is often buried. So that's one. Let's look at the other one, verse 45.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. Now, I could say that every human being is looking for a pearl of great price. It's just that we attempt to, mankind attempts to, put that pearl in certain boxes, according to the lust of their own heart or the desires of their own lives or whatever.

So some people will spend their entire lives chasing pleasure. Other people will spend entire lives trying to build a successful business or whatever. You can go after all kinds of things, but only Jesus Christ can truly fulfill, and that's really the point here, is that he is the pearl of great price.

Now, really, the same point is made in the hidden treasure. They're both making the same point, but the difference in the two is that the man who bought the field just happened upon the treasure, whereas this man was seeking after the pearl of great price. Now, who can understand the ways of God? I mean, we just had a man come into the live-in program a few months ago who I knew 20 years ago, and he was fully engrossed in sin, did not have a thought in the world about the Lord, and suddenly, you know, he's backslidden, had been backslidden for 20 years, and then suddenly, after a night of sin, the next morning, he wakes up and has what's tantamount to a vision of the Lord and completely turned his life around and came back to us looking for help, and he's in the live-in program now.

You know, that's a guy that was not out there looking for the Lord, and yet other people tend to be more so that way, where they are searching in ways, and I've heard stories about people who are searching for truth, and if they're sincere in their hearts, the Lord makes sure that they get guided to the real truth, and that's kind of the difference in these two parables. Let me read what J.C. Ryle says here. These two parables explain the conduct of a true Christian.

He is what he is and does what he does in his religion because he is thoroughly persuaded that it is worthwhile. He comes out from the world. He puts off the old man.

He forsakes the vain companions of his past life. Like Matthew, he gives up everything, and like Paul, he counts all things lost for Christ's sake. And why? Because he is convinced that Christ is an endless treasure.

This is true faith. Unconverted professing Christians are not fully persuaded that the kingdom is worth the cost. They flinch from decision.

They shrink from taking up the cross. They halt between two opinions. They will not commit themselves.

They will not come forward boldly on the Lord's side. And why? Because they are not convinced that it will compensate them. They're not sure that the treasure and the pearl is worth so great a price.

They cannot yet make up their minds to sell all that they may win Christ, and so too often they perish everlastingly. It's kind of a scary thought. All right, and then the final parable is this one in verse 47.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea and gathering fish of every kind. And when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach and they sat down and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away. So it will be at the end of the age.

The angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous and will throw them into the furnace of fire. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Have you understood all these things? Jesus asked his disciples.

All right. You know, it's kind of making the same point that has been made all the way through this, that there are true and false in the visible kingdom of heaven on earth. It really, especially, is a lot like the wheat and tares, but the focus isn't so much on the church age in which the wheat and the tares, you know, coexist together for that period of time.

The focus is more on the separation at judgment day, you know, and the reality of what that's going to be like. And so, you know, really it's a fitting conclusion to the chapter because it shows, you know, where everything is headed. All right.

Now let me wrap this up, and I want to do it by going back to verse 9. Yeah, we're good on time. Let's go back to verse 9 because right in the midst of the sower and the seed, Jesus offers an explanation of what the parables are all about. Let's just read these verses.

Let me start with verse 10. And the disciples came and said to him, Why do you speak to them in parables? Jesus answered them, To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance.

But whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. In their case, the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, you know, he's saying the prophecy of Isaiah, but who said these words? He's quoting himself.

He could have said, This is what I said 600 years ago when I was on my throne, and Isaiah was standing before me quaking in fear. This is what I told him. I mean, it's true.

That is exactly what happened. But anyway, he's quoting himself. You will keep on hearing, but will not understand.

You will keep on seeing, but will not perceive. For the heart of this people has become dull. With their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes.

Otherwise they would see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and return, and I would heal them. But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear. For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

All right, now there's a whole ton of stuff in there that I can't get off into, but let me just sum it up by saying this, that the setting here is that the Jewish people are expecting the Messiah. But their idea, and even the disciples are still out of it at this point. Remember back in the early church messages when we first started that series, we talked about this.

How out of it the disciples were, even after Calvary and everything. They're still like, huh, what is the kingdom about? They're just like out of it. Well, the reason they were out of it is because they've been raised in a culture, just like we have been raised in a Christian culture to believe certain things, whether we really act like we believe them or not with our lives.

But anyway, they've been raised to believe that the Messiah was coming. He was going to usher in his kingdom, overthrow the Romans, set up a magnificent kingdom on earth, and everything was going to be great for the Jewish people. They had been raised to believe that.

What are the mysteries here that Jesus is talking about? The greatest mystery is this, that there were going to be two comings of the Lord, two appearances, and between those two appearances is something like a 2,000 year period called the church age in which the kingdom of heaven is being established on earth, but it's being established in the hearts of men, in their inward lives. That's the mystery. And as kind of the secondary part of that mystery is because it's being established within people's hearts, it's difficult sometimes to know who the true converts are and who are the false converts.

And that's the basic message of Matthew 13 right there in a nutshell, is that we have to get ourselves out of our American Christianized nation mentality. Oh yeah, of course it's this way. No, take yourself back 2,000 years and see what the Jewish people had to overcome in their thinking.

And Jesus is presenting truth that they could come into this kingdom, but it would require repentance, it would require turning away from their idols, from what they believe about themselves, from living a life of self. They have to turn away from that and deny it and put their allegiance upon Christ alone. That was the message that people were shutting out.

That's why they became increasingly more blind, the more Jesus spoke, because they were not willing to pay that price. And you know, when you think about the parables, it really fits a larger pattern of the way Jesus dealt with people and continues to deal with them today. He speaks truth, irrefutable truth.

And in his day on earth, he backed it up with miracles, and we could say the same, they're not so demonstrative, but man, Kathy and I have talked about, we've been living in the miraculous for 30 years. You know, it's just constant, the answers to prayer and the things that happen that just are not explainable and stuff like that. But anyway, he presents truth, he backs it up with miracles, and then he allows obstacles to come in, which operate for a purpose, because those who are only attracted to the outward, the demonstrative, the miracles and that sort of stuff, as soon as they get to those obstacles, it's going to act like a sieve or something, and it's going to keep them back, because they're not sincere in their hearts and they're really not responding to that message of the kingdom, which is to repent.

That's the mystery right there. Blessed are you. You have eyes to see and ears to hear.

All right, so that's it for this week. Next week, we'll do next week's message. I can't remember what it is, but I'm sure it'll be great.

Need to be there. God bless you.

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