



BIBLE  
STUDY

# THE KINGDOM PARABLES OF MATTHEW 13



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## WEEK 1 – SECRETS OF THE KINGDOM

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*The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?” He replied, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. This is why I speak to them in parables...”*

*Matthew 13:10-13*

Jesus then quotes Isaiah 6:9-10. In that chapter, Isaiah sees the Lord on a high throne surrounded by angels in the temple in heaven. This vision contains the “secrets of the kingdom of heaven” for in it Isaiah experienced the same redemption that Jesus came to offer to the world:

- He saw the Lord lifted up (v1)
- He heard angels declare the Lord’s holiness (v3)
- He freely confessed his sinfulness (v5)
- His sin was atoned for, taking away his guilt (v7)
- The Lord called for someone to GO for Him to the people (v8)
- He responded willingly to this call

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THE SECRETS OF ENTERING THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN ARE THE  
RECOGNITION OF GOD’S HOLINESS, THE CONFESSION OF OUR SINS,  
FAITH IN THE LORD TO REDEEM US, AND THE WILLINGNESS TO GO  
TELL OTHERS WHAT HE SAID.

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Knowing these four “secrets” should help us a great deal as we read the parables in Matthew 13. The possessors of these secrets are the true church, the good grain that produces a harvest and feeds a hungry world with the bread of life. It is not church membership, baptism, or communion that makes us the Body of Christ. We become his body by placing our faith in him and by leaving our old life to become his feet and mouth in the world. A wife willingly gives her body to her husband to bear children. We give ourselves to Jesus and accept the pleasure and labor of bearing him sons and daughters from the world.

**Pattern in the Structure:** There are seven kingdom parables in Matthew 13. Seven is the number of completion, the end of a full week or octave, and is often used in scripture to represent a completed whole. Many commentators compare these seven parables with the seven letters to the churches in Revelation chapters 2-3.

1. The Sower - Ephesus – the first century church in which the apostles sow the seed
2. The Weeds - Smyrna – the persecuted second and third century church
3. The Mustard Seed - Pergamos – the state church after 300 AD – Greek Orthodox?
4. The Yeast - Thyatira – the medieval papal church – Roman Catholic?
5. The Treasure - Sardis – the Protestant reformation, which has become “dead”?
6. The Pearl - Philadelphia – the missionary church of the last 2 centuries – Evangelical?
7. The Net – Laodicea - the rich, lukewarm church (catches all kinds of fish, good and bad)

Although there is some agreement that the kingdom parables and the letters to the churches follow a similar pattern, there is disagreement as to whether they are prophetically sequential through church history (a Protestant view), or if they are to be seen as simultaneously present through the entire church age (the Orthodox view). This is not a minor problem, because if they are sequential it runs afoul of the doctrine of the imminent return of Jesus during the first six periods of church history, unless it was God’s plan for the comparison to be hidden until the end.

A few commentators add a third layer of pattern to this by comparing the seven parables and the seven churches to the seven epistles Paul addressed to churches:

<b>Kingdom Parables</b>	<b>Churches of Revelation</b>	<b>Church Epistles</b>
The Sower	Ephesus - “Return to your first love”	Ephesians – Bride of Christ
The Weeds	Smyrna – Persecuted	Philippians – Persecution, heresy
The Mustard Seed	Pergamos – Compromising	Corinthians – Factions, immoral
The Yeast	Thyatira – Corrupt	Galatians – False gospel
The Hidden Treasure	Sardis – Dead	Romans – New life in Christ
The Pearl	Philadelphia - Open Door	Thessalonians – The Rapture
The Net	Laodicea – Lukewarm	Colossians – Faith in Jesus alone

We could also add the seven NT epistles written to individuals:

- 2 John to the “elect lady” reiterating the law of love
- 3 John to Gaius regarding the persecution of the brethren by Diotrephes
- Titus by Paul, instructing him on dealing with divisions in the church
- 1 Timothy by Paul, opposing legalism (the yeast of the Pharisees) in the church
- 2 Timothy by Paul, in which he prepares for his death
- Philemon by Paul, pleading for an open door of forgiveness for Onesimus to go home
- Jude writing his letter to combat the same Gnosticism addressed in Colossians

Finally, there is the law of first mention. The first time a figure is used in the Bible it provides a foundational pattern for understanding it every time it comes up again. The first mention of a “seven” occurred in Genesis 2:2 when God finished his work of creation, rested, and made that day holy. In the seven days of creation we see this:

Day 1 – Light	Day 4 – Luminaries
Day 2 – Atmosphere & Seas	Day 5 – Birds & Fish
Day 3 – Dry land & Plants	Day 6 – Land animals & Man
Day 7 – Rest & Holiness	

Notice that in the first three days God sets a stage in the heavens and on earth, and in the next three days he “fills” them with actors to carry out their parts in their assigned places. The seventh day he sanctified, or made holy. This is the first mention of setting apart something for God’s exclusive use and provides the pattern for what rest and holiness mean. “Holy” (Latin: *sanctus*) means set apart for a special purpose or “not like all others”. If a man sets apart one woman to be his wife, then no one else is permitted to touch her. She is holy to him, or from the Latin, a *saint*.

When we look at this pattern and come back to the seven kingdom parables, we can expect to see Jesus set the stage with the first three, and to “fill” it with actors in the next three. The final parable should be set apart from these in some way that is not like all the others.

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THE MORE ATTENTION WE GIVE TO EACH OF THE “SEVENS” THE  
MORE OBVIOUS IT BECOMES THAT THE BIBLE HAS ONE AUTHOR.

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The answer Jesus gave his disciples regarding his use of parables (Matt. 13:10-13) tells us that they were intended to conceal something from unbelievers that believers already know. In this series we will read the seven kingdom parables in the light of the secrets of entering the kingdom of God, and discover how they are amplified in the letters Jesus and Paul sent to the churches.

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## HOMEWORK FOR WEEK 2

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Your assignment for next time is to read Isaiah chapter 6 and Matthew chapters 11-13.

Next week, you (the class) will give the lesson. These are the questions I will ask you to comment on:

1. As you ponder the “secrets” of entering the kingdom of heaven from Isaiah 6, what unlikely person comes to mind that had a similar experience with Jesus in Luke 23?
2. Look up the Greek word for “secrets” (*mysterion*) in Matthew 13:11. What does this word mean when it is used in the NT?
3. In Matthew chapters 11-12 how many times does Jesus say something that divides his hearers into those who do and those who don’t have the “secrets”?
4. Jesus draws a line in the sand in Mt. 12:30-33. Either the kingdom of God has come to you, or not; the decision is personal. The “secret” of entering is to recognize Jesus as Messiah on the basis of the witness of the Holy Spirit, to turn from our former life, and to GO follow him without seeing him physically upon a throne first. Why does he say every kind of sin can be forgiven except one? What is this unforgivable sin? Why can’t it be forgiven? Hint: re-read verse 28!
5. The above confrontations occurred “that same day” Jesus gave the parables in the next chapter (Mt. 13:1). Up until this time Jesus and the apostles proclaimed the arrival of the kingdom of God with a call to repentance in preparation for the king to take his proper place. Why do you think he now began to teach in a way that his enemies would not know what he was saying? Will the parables comfort his hearers or condemn them?
6. The “secret” of the kingdom is that the proper place of my Lord and King *is the throne of my heart*. I can only demonstrate my love and inward loyalty to him by leaving my old life and following him *before* he comes to power. He will ascend a visible throne later, but then it will be too late to “enter” as his bride. What will happen to the people of earth who survive the tribulation when Jesus ascends David’s throne?

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## WEEK 3 – THE SOWER

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*That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. <sup>2</sup> Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. <sup>3</sup> Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. <sup>4</sup> As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. <sup>5</sup> Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. <sup>6</sup> But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. <sup>7</sup> Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. <sup>8</sup> Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. <sup>9</sup> Whoever has ears, let them hear.”*

*<sup>18</sup> “Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: <sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. <sup>20</sup> The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. <sup>21</sup> But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. <sup>22</sup> The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. <sup>23</sup> But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”*

*Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 NIV*

### **Four Soils, Four Hearts**

Every year the cycle of life repeats with planting and harvest, then winter comes when farmers rest. In each generation the word of God goes out to reach four different kinds of heart. Notice that the way it comes is not by seeing, but by hearing the Word, who is Jesus. The world demands a sign because “seeing is believing”, but Romans 10:17 says “faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the preached word of Christ.” When we GO for the Lord and tell others the good news about what he did, our words fall onto these four soils:

- The hardened heart – pain either makes the heart softer or harder, better or bitter. The hardened heart reveals a decision not to believe because real belief is a sacrifice of self. Perhaps this person has been stepped on so many times he or she feels like a sidewalk. When the word of God comes, it is a call to die to self and rise in Christ. The bitter heart reacts to this by refusing to understand it is the way to a new and better life.
- The shallow heart has neither wisdom nor depth. This is the one that accepts everything as true, passing from one interest or belief to another like changing clothes. This heart believes in Jesus as long as there are other believers to approve, but when someone becomes

offended or hostile, then no more. The shallow heart wears a bumper sticker that tells others to “co-exist” and celebrate diversity.

- The encumbered heart belongs to a person who worries about so many things there is little room left for faith. The more this person needs to know what will happen next the longer the thorns grow, making it difficult to move in any direction or even to breathe. When the Master says GO, this person says “I will, as soon as I can pay for this or finish that.”
  - Read Luke 9:57-62.
  - Read Matthew 9:9.
- Good hearts are rich and deep; soft and broken. This heart is quick to understand that Jesus is not just a good deal, he is the only “deal” there is. It takes time to develop good soil. Ask any gardener how many years it takes of breaking the ground and enriching it before it starts producing really nice plants. The good soil does not resist the breaking process, but trusts in the Gardener to produce a harvest many times greater than anyone expects.

If the “stage” of the kingdom is the human heart, it begs the question: are the kingdom parables about the kingdom within, or the kingdom age to come? Each time people in the NT thought Jesus was going to become the visible King he disappointed them. He did not ride into Jerusalem as a conqueror on a horse to be crowned. Instead he came lowly, riding the colt of a donkey to be crucified.

Read Luke 23:39-42

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THE FEW WHO LOOKED UPON JESUS IN FAITH DID SEE THE KING, BUT NOT WITH THEIR EYES. THEY CROWNED HIM WITHIN THEIR HEARTS.

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## **The Letter to Ephesus**

Now let’s walk through Revelation 1:9-19 and 2:1-7 with this parable in mind. The seven candlesticks are the seven churches, which we take to mean the complete Church. The menorah or lamp stand in the temple had seven lamps. They were placed to hold up Jesus, the Light of the World. Just as light shines equally in all directions, the Sower throws his seed everywhere. The seed is the news about him. He walks among the churches; as he comes to each one he has something to say.

First, let us acknowledge that all seven churches belong to Jesus. He died to redeem his church and has taken her for his Bride. Anything he says to the seven churches is said for her benefit, not for condemnation. In heaven we can expect to see true believers from every part of the church, whether they were Jews or Gentiles, Orthodox or Protestant, Ephesians or Laodicians.

Ephesus means “my darling”. Jesus commends their hard work, but laments that they have lost the love they had at the beginning. Perhaps their heart has grown harder, rockier, or there are weeds choking it, but he desires to make them soft and receptive again.

## **Epistle to the Ephesians**

In Ephesians, Paul addresses the relationship between Jesus and his church. Chapter one emphasizes that the church is “holy” to Christ, sanctified or set apart just for him. Chapter two shows how much he loves the church by what he did for her and the position he has given her.

Chapter three lays out the “mystery” of Christ saving Jew and Gentile in one body by grace, and how wide, long, high, and deep the love of Christ is. Chapter four is an appeal for the church to walk in the love that he has bestowed on her by remaining united in that love. Chapter five speaks of the profound mystery of marriage in which two individuals become one by love and mutual submission. He concludes this by saying he is really speaking about Christ and the church.

When the Sower sows his seed the good soil receives it as a bride receives her husband, giving herself to him with nothing held back. She thus produces a harvest by the planting of his seed within her. The imagery is adult and earthy, but the realization of what it means is beyond words: *Does Jesus love me that much?* Did his love break, soften, and enrich me to the point that I produce a harvest of 100, 60, or 30 times what he sowed?

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## HOMEWORK FOR WEEK 4

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Your assignment for next time is to read Matthew 13:1-23, Revelation chapter 1 and 2:1-7, and Ephesians chapters 1-5.

Next week, you (the class) will give the lesson. These are the questions I will ask you to comment on:

1. Does it seem like a stretch to say that these three passages are connected? Why or why not?
2. Read Ephesians 5:31-32 again. What is this “mystery”?
3. Read through 1 Corinthians Chapter 2. Does this explain why the things of God are not understood by the world? Are God’s mysteries kept from the world, or is there some other problem preventing them from understanding?
4. The Bible mentions two kinds of birds. In Genesis 8:7-8 Noah first sent out a raven and then a dove. Which one returned to him? In verse 20 Noah made whole burnt offerings of all the clean birds. How did he know which ones were “clean”? Where do we have to go in the Bible to find out?
  - Genesis 15:9-11. What did the unclean birds try to steal?
  - Genesis 40:16-19. What did the unclean birds take from this man?
  - In this parable, what did the birds take away? Were they clean or unclean?
  - Read Exodus 16:9-13. What did God give them? What did he take away?
  - Read Psalm 78. Note verses 2 & 27. Compare with Psalm 106:14-15. Not every translation gets this right – take a look in the King James.
  - Read Matthew 3:16 for the contrasting figure. How is the filling of the Spirit different from filling our flesh?
  - How do the birds in this parable illustrate a recurring pattern from the OT?
5. Fertile soil produces much fruit. What is the “harvest” your life is producing because of Christ in you? What verses in Ephesians 5 confirm this?

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## WEEK 5 – THE WEEDS

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*Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.*

*"The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'*

*"An enemy did this,' he replied.*

*"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'*

*"No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn."*

*Matthew 13:24-29 NIV*

### **Weeds in the Wheat**

There is some disagreement on whether "tares" look just like wheat, but that is not the main point Jesus makes in this parable. His servants recognized the problem as soon as the wheat sprouted and formed heads. The main point is that the Lord allows evil to flourish for a time because if he were to judge it as soon as it appears it would harm those who are still coming to Jesus. As long as the Church or Bride is incomplete, world-wide judgment will be held back.

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THE MOST COMMONLY ASKED QUESTION ABOUT GOD IS, "WHY DOES HE ALLOW EVIL IN THE WORLD?" THIS PARABLE GIVES HIS ANSWER.

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Later on in private, Jesus explained how the story describes his kingdom.

Read Matthew 13:36-43

- The Sower = \_\_\_\_\_
- The field = \_\_\_\_\_
- The good seed = \_\_\_\_\_
- The weeds = \_\_\_\_\_
- The enemy = \_\_\_\_\_
- The harvest = \_\_\_\_\_
- The harvesters = \_\_\_\_\_

We must be very careful to apply this parable to the "audience" it is intended for. Is Jesus speaking about the Church, Israel, or the world?

- Will the Church be on the earth when angels come in judgment at the end of the age?
- What is the order of events in verse 30?
- Who will be thrown into the fire?
- Who are the sons of the kingdom then?

Read Matthew 25:31-46. Does this passage describe the same events? Who is judged in verse 32? Is the Son of Man judging individuals on the basis of belief, or nations on the basis of their behavior?

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THE FIRST PARABLE TOLD US WHO WILL ENTER THE KINGDOM FROM WITHIN BY FAITH. THE SECOND TELLS US WHO WILL ENTER IT FROM WITHOUT BY WORKS.

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In Week 1 we noted that the first three parables would set a stage for the kingdom in the same way that the first three days of creation provided places to be filled by birds, fish, beasts, and man. In the parable of the Sower, we saw how a person enters the kingdom by how his heart receives the news about Jesus. This is entering from within. Those who receive Jesus as their Lord on the basis of faith alone are the Church. The destiny of the Church is to become his Bride *before* the judgment at the end of the age.

The second parable sets the stage for a part of God's kingdom that is as different from the first as the waters below are different from the lights above. After the Church is taken to heaven there will be a time of great turmoil and judgment on earth. The parable of the weeds describes the nations of the earth at the visible return of Jesus in power and great glory. They will not be separated and judged individually on the basis of grace by faith, but as nations on the basis of their righteous and unrighteous works.

### **The Letter to Smyrna**

In his letter to the church at Smyrna, Jesus commends them for their faithfulness under great persecution. Smyrna means "City of Myrrh", the perfume used for burial because it was strong enough to mask the stench of death. He tells them to have no fear of the suffering that the devil is going to put them through for ten days. He tells them to be faithful even unto death.

During the tribulation "the beast" will rise to power and wear ten crowns (Rev. 13). He will persecute Jews and anyone who tries to help them. There will be 144,000 Jewish evangelists who will convert countless people to Jesus Christ (Rev. 14). Those who believe in places where the beast holds power will be hunted and executed (Rev. 6:9-11). At the end of this time Jesus will come and establish the visible kingdom. The nations that worshipped the beast and persecuted "my brethren" will be bound and put into the fire, but nations that fought the beast or tried to help Jews and their converts will enter into the kingdom as subjects and inhabit the millennial earth.

### **The Epistle to the Philippians**

We can summarize this letter as a call to discernment (1:9) and unity (1:27) in the face of interference from self-serving evangelists (1:12-18), persecution from the world (1:27-30; 2:14-18), and antagonism from heretics, especially legalists (3:1-11). It also contains Paul's thanks for their generosity in caring for his physical needs while he was in prison (4:10-20). Perhaps in Paul's ministry to Gentiles we see a pattern that recurs with the 144,000 Jewish evangelists.

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## HOMEWORK FOR WEEK 6

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Your assignment for next time is to read Matthew 13:24-29 and 25:31-46, Revelation chapter 2:8-11, and the Epistle to the Philippians.

Next week, you (the class) will give the lesson. These are the questions I will ask you to comment on:

1. Does it seem like a stretch to say that these four passages demonstrate a consistent pattern? Why or why not?
  
2. Many Bible teachers apply the parable of the weeds to the Church and not the world. According to this view, it is impossible for us to know who is grain and who is a weed in the Church until the end of the age comes and we see who goes to heaven. Do you agree or disagree with this as the parable's meaning? Why or why not?
  
3. On the basis of your answer to question 2, who are the "sons of the kingdom"?
  
4. Read John 18:36, 2 Cor. 4:3-4, and 1 John 5:19. In light of these statements who is the ruler of this world? How did he rise to this position? Is Jesus the king of the world today? If yes, when did this happen? If no, when will it happen?
  
5. On the basis of your answer to question 4, what is the kingdom of heaven and where is it located?
  
6. Jesus was always with the Father, but in his incarnation he became a prophet, high priest, and king.
  - a. When do we see him as a prophet? Give a verse.
  - b. When do we see him as high priest? Give a verse.
  - c. When do we see him seated upon David's throne as the promised king?
  - d. Can there be a kingdom where there is not yet a king?

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## WEEK 7 – THE MUSTARD SEED

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<sup>31</sup> He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. <sup>32</sup> Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”

*Matthew 13:31-32*

### **Small Parable with a Big Meaning**

This is the hardest of the parables, but it finishes setting the “stage” for the kingdom that comes in three phases: first in the hearts of those who receive the king as their redeemer; second in the judgment and separation of nations when he comes with angels to conquer them; and finally after he has maintained the *Pax Christos*—an enforced peace—for a thousand years from David’s throne.

The man in the parable is still Jesus and the field is still the world. He plants mustard, a condiment for food that sets the tongue on fire. The famous 11<sup>th</sup> century Talmudist Rashi said oral tradition held Abraham served his three heavenly guests calf tongue with mustard (cf. Acts 2:3). Romans used it as a flavoring for food like we use fresh cracked pepper. They cracked the seeds on their plate and mixed the paste with unfermented wine which is called *mustum* in Latin.

The mustard plant is a humble herb with a natural tendency to spread, but it should not become a tree. It is in the same family as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, collard, kale and kohlrabi. The so-called “mustard tree” with tiny clusters of yellow blossoms is not related to it. Mustard plants have been known to grow to 9 feet tall with branches shooting out, but if this happens it has become an untamed monster. The gospel message Jesus planted is simple—it is the smallest of seeds—*believe in the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved*. At the same time it is a fiery irritant. It insults a man’s intellect because a little child can understand it, and it requires neither talent nor effort from him.

When the mustard plant ceases to be humble and becomes a tree, the birds come and perch in its branches. Jesus already told us the birds represented the devil in the first parable. When the subjects of the king cease to be humble toward the Lord, their hearts will become a home for wickedness, even if all outward sin is restrained. It is tempting to make this tree represent the Church, but its destiny is to be uprooted and destroyed.

### **Pattern from the OT**

The first mention of a tree are the two in the midst of the garden. One was beautiful but deadly, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Eve found Satan lodging in its branches. The Tree of Life was also there, but the tendency of man from the beginning has been to ignore the way of life and reach first for knowledge. Everyone does this, thus the remedy for our rebellion is the “small” gospel of trust, repentance, and humility. The king’s subjects were meant to remain small in their own eyes and to become great in number. They were never meant to tower above all the plants in the garden.

The pattern recurs in many places in the OT. Giants among men were an abomination to be destroyed. God told Noah and his sons, "Increase and multiply, and fill the earth." In chapter 10 they began to spread out according to the commandment, but in chapter 11 Nimrod came. His name means "we rebel". He was called the mighty hunter, but it seems he was a hunter of men to follow him. He gathered all the people into one place to build a city, a name, and a tower. The city was Babel—later Babylon—the source of every false religion in the world. *Bab-El* means gateway to God. The tower was built to give man direct access to the heavens. The top of this tower housed the Temple of Heaven, where priests worshipped deities pictured in the stars. This tower was a second Tree of Knowledge, offering technology and religion as a substitute way to heaven, and it brought a second curse.

We see the pattern again in the dream God gave to Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon.

- Read Daniel 4:19-22

Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom spanned the civilized world. His branches shaded the whole earth and became the nesting place for the birds of the air. A holy one came after this and cut the tree down, trimmed off its branches, stripped the leaves, and scattered its fruit, but the stump and roots remained in the earth. After the dream a curse came upon the king for seven years.

I shudder as I follow the branches of the mustard tree back to its trunk in Babylon and down to its roots in Eden. It is the cursed tree, a tower of rebellion that God must overthrow. The kingdom is *relationship with the King*, not the knowledge of good and evil or governmental power. It is true that every "unclean bird" has lodged in the branches of the Church, but religious people are not the Bride. The true Church walks in the grace and humility that comes from a real relationship with Jesus, not by being good, taking authority, or substituting religion for our relationship with him.

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THE DESTINY OF THE BRIDE IS NOT TO BE CUT DOWN AND STRIPPED,  
BUT TO BE RAISED UP AND CLOTHED IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF  
CHRIST LIKE A WEDDING GOWN.

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### **The Kingdom Age Pictured**

Men who abhor their smallness become great in their own eyes. In the kingdom age the nations will rebel (Psalm 2) in spite of a government that will eradicate injustice, war, crime, poverty, disability, and even restrain the devil. After a thousand years when man's hubris has become a tree shadowing the earth and harboring every evil, men will be left with nothing to explain it but their utter depravity in rejecting their Creator who came down from heaven to dwell with them in flesh.

The Jews standing on the Galilean seashore were just like them. Jesus said it will be better for Sodom than for that generation, because they saw with their eyes the miracles he did but would not believe (Matt. 11:23-24). He told Thomas, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

- Where is the kingdom of heaven and when does it come?
- Read Luke 17:20-21. Is it in you?
- How can you know for sure?

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## HOMEWORK FOR WEEK 8

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Next week, you (the class) will give the lesson. These are the questions I will ask you to comment on:

1. The first two trees in the Bible provide a foundation for understanding what trees represent in prophesy and the parables. If the mustard tree is a second Tree of Knowledge, then what is the second Tree of Life? (See 1Peter 2:24.)
  
2. The first two kings of Israel, Saul and David, tell the same story. Read 1 Samuel 9:1-2 and compare with 1 Samuel 16:7-12. Read 1 Chron. 21:17. How were Saul and David like the two trees from question 1?
  
3. With the above examples in mind, study Ezekiel 17 carefully.
  - What did the two eagles represent?
  - What was the cedar tree?
  - What was the land of merchants and city of traders?
  - What was the seed?
  - What kind of plant was it?
  - Where did the first eagle plant it?
  - What happened when the plant turned toward the second eagle?
  - Who replaces this plant with a new one in verse 22?
  - What tree (family) does the shoot come from? Compare with Isaiah 11:1. Who is he?
  - Where does he plant him?
  - Does verse 24 unlock the parable of the mustard seed?
  
4. What figures do you find in the letter to the church at Pergamum (Rev 2:12-17) that parallel the mustard seed that becomes a tree harboring all kinds of birds?
  
5. If you had to pick one word to describe the problem Paul addressed in his letters to the Corinthians, what word would you choose? Give a verse.
  
6. Is it possible to practice righteous living, and not “enter” the kingdom?

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## WEEK 9 – THE YEAST

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<sup>33</sup> He spoke another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened.”

*Matthew 13:33 NASB*

### **Corruption in the Pantry**

There is nothing wrong with putting some yeast into the dough when you are making fresh bread, but that is not what this parable says. The woman “hid” some yeast in the flour, so it was something she did not want anyone to see. It was a large amount of flour; three pecks is about sixty pounds. In this story she added something to the flour container that would corrupt its contents without anyone knowing how it happened.

Yeast (or leaven) is mentioned so many times in the Bible it will not be necessary to list them all to get a clear understanding of the comparison Jesus is making. In the offerings of the law salt was required, but yeast was not to be added (Lev. 2:11-13). Salt and yeast have opposite effects. Salt is a preservative that allows food to be stored a long time without spoiling, but yeast causes foods to ferment (puff up) and spoil very quickly unless the process is halted by cooking it. Even then food so prepared must be eaten within a day or it spoils. Unleavened bread can be stored safely for years.

### **Pattern from Abraham and Israel**

Read Genesis 18:1-8. This is the pattern, for the three measures of fine flour—made into bread in haste—would have no yeast added, for they would have to wait for it to rise. This was the bread of Abraham’s communion with the Lord. The pattern is repeated in Genesis 19:1-3 when Lot bakes unleavened bread for the angels the evening before Sodom was destroyed. On the evening before the death angel “passed over” the firstborn of Israel in Egypt, they were commanded to sacrifice a lamb without blemish, paint the blood on the doorposts, and to eat it with unleavened bread. For the next seven days they fled before the Egyptians and ate unleavened bread, in haste.

*Sacrifice as the Passover to the Lord your God an animal from your flock or herd at the place the Lord will choose as a dwelling for his Name. Do not eat it with bread made with yeast, but for seven days eat unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, because you left Egypt in haste—so that all the days of your life you may remember the time of your departure from Egypt. Let no yeast be found in your possession in all your land for seven days.*

### *Deuteronomy 16:2-4*

The Lord calls it “the bread of affliction” that was eaten in haste before destruction fell on the Egyptians. Abraham was afflicted by the news that Sodom would be destroyed, because Lot was there. Lot was afflicted by having to leave because he had family and possessions there. The faithful eat unleavened bread as they endure affliction because of judgments that will soon come to the people where they live. Eating it was to remind them to be ready to depart from Sodom and Egypt at a moment’s notice.

- How does this pattern mirror the position of the faithful today? Are you ready to leave the afflictions of this world at a moment’s notice?

### **Jesus’ Last Passover**

The last supper was a Passover feast. When Jesus commanded the apostles to remember him after his death by breaking bread with the third cup of wine, it was unleavened. This was *the bread of his affliction*, which he ate the evening before judgment fell on him for our sins. The Pharisees called Jesus *Rabbi* and pretended to be interested, but murder was in their hearts. Soon after they conspired to destroy him, Jesus gave the following warning:

*Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying: “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”*

### *Luke 12:1*

Yeast represents corruption, and in particular corruption that puffs up. In 1 Cor. 5 Paul calls the church “proud” and takes them to task for it:

*<sup>6</sup> Your boasting is not good. Don’t you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? <sup>7</sup> Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. <sup>8</sup> Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

Corrupt people appear to have good motives but are not sincere. A hypocrite is an actor wearing a mask. Yeast is hidden within hearts where no one sees, but when the heart is corrupt the whole person is leavened. It was not just the few either. The three measures of flour is the whole House of Israel. The yeast of the Pharisees corrupted the entire nation into skepticism toward Jesus.

### **The Fourth Day**

We said earlier that the seven kingdom parables reflect the seven days of creation. In the first three days, God set three stages. In the next three days he filled them with actors. In the first parable of the Sower, Jesus set before us the stage of the heart. In this fourth parable, he places an actor on that stage who wears a mask.

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IF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE THIS THEN THE SUBJECTS OF  
THE KINGDOM WEAR A MASK WHILE MURDER IS IN THEIR HEARTS.  
THEY WANT THE KING DEAD SO THEY CAN RULE IT.

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## Letter to the Church of Thyatira

Thyatira is the Hittite name for the “Queen of Heaven” in paganism. Baal worship was a mother-son cult in which the two deities were worshipped together. Corruption entered the Church when Christians began to give equal honor to Mary and Jesus, even praying to Mary. In his letter to Thyatira, Jesus indicates his jealousy by describing his eyes like blazing fire and his feet like burnished bronze. The bronze altar was where a substitute for sin had to be sacrificed by fire.

He mentions Jezebel, the Princess of Tyre and High Priestess of Baal who married the king of Israel and killed the prophets of YHWH. Her name means “chaste” but she caused Israel to commit adultery toward God. Her religion was just a mask for killing the faithful.

## Epistle to the Galatians

*You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?*

*Galatians 3:1-3*

Someone crept in while Paul was away and corrupted this church with the yeast of the Pharisees. They taught that faith in Jesus would not save them unless they accepted circumcision and other points of Jewish law. They made certain religious laws a pre-condition for following Jesus. This sort of heresy puffs up any church and corrupts the whole thing.

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SALVATION IS BY FAITH IN JESUS—*PLUS NOTHING*. ADDING ANYTHING TO THIS CORRUPTS THE WHOLE CONTAINER BY PUFFING IT UP.

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## HOMWORK FOR WEEK 10

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Your assignment for next time is to read Matthew 13:33, Revelation 2:18-29, and the Epistle to the Galatians.

Next week, you (the class) will give the lesson. These are the questions I will ask you to comment on:

1. The story of Jezebel is interwoven with the story of Elijah the prophet who stood against her. She appears in 1 Kings 16:31, and reappears in 1 Kings 18, 19, and 21. She is finally destroyed in 2 Kings 9. How does her story reflect the parable of the yeast?
  - a. Who is the woman?
  - b. What is the yeast?
  - c. What do the 3 pecks of flour represent?
  - d. What happened to that container of flour in the end?
  - e. What does this story have to do with the kingdom of heaven?
  - f. Did this happen in the kingdom in the past? If yes, when?
  - g. When will it happen in the kingdom in the future?
2. Personal application: what happens to a believer that thinks a ceremony, sacrament, covenant, position, study, prayer, ordination, or good works brings him closer to God?
3. If that is not the way, what *does* bring a person closer to God?
4. What are your proudest achievements? Do they bring you closer to God or get in the way?
5. What do you think about Christians that say God wants to make you healthy and wealthy right now? If you become healthy and wealthy by a miracle, will it bring you closer to God than poor believers who suffer for their faith?
6. Can you summarize in one sentence the main idea Paul makes in Galatians?
7. Based on this parable, what will people be like during the kingdom age to come? Do you think it will be a pleasure to rule over them with Jesus for 1,000 years?

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## WEEK 11 – THE TREASURE AND THE PEARL

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*“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.*



*“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.*

*Matthew 13:44-46*

Verse 26 told us that after Jesus gave the first four parables to the crowd at the seashore, he left them and went into the house. Inside, he explained the parables of the sower and of the weeds to his disciples, and then he gave *them* three more parables. We may take it that these were given for the benefit of those who already believe.

### **What is the Treasure?**

In these two parables a man found something of great value and went away, sold all he had, and gave it to buy it for himself. It is tempting to make Jesus into the treasure and the pearl, but that would deny the gospel. No human can give anything to “buy” Jesus, or salvation, or entrance into the kingdom because those things are the free gift of God. That interpretation leads to heresy; many believers have gone down that road to join the Christian cults.

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EXPOSITIONAL CONSTANCY REQUIRES US TO SEE WHERE A FIGURE IS MENTIONED FOR THE FIRST TIME TO LEARN ITS MEANING.

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In the earlier parables, there was a man and a field. The man was Jesus, and the field was the world. The man in all the parables is Jesus, the Son of Man. He came into the world and uncovered a treasure that was hidden. Then he covered it back up and went away. He gave all he had to buy the *field*, not the treasure. Finally, he returns to take possession of the field for the sake of the treasure there.

Where do we find God naming something in this world as a treasure to him?

- Exodus 19:5
- Psalm 135:4

Israel was meant to show God's presence to the world, but when Jesus came the glory of the Lord had been hidden for a long time. When Jesus came proclaiming the kingdom, he uncovered their destiny as God's peculiar treasure. Jesus did not go to Asia. He did not visit Europe or America. He came to Israel but they would not have him for their king, so he covered them up again until he returns. He gave all he had to purchase the world where he will reveal Israel as his special treasure among all the nations.

### **What is the Pearl?**

Jesus is not saying the same thing twice even though these two stories are given as a pair. The merchant is Jesus, the man in all the parables. A merchant is one who travels to foreign lands to buy what is cheap there to sell where it is dear, and to sell what is dear there that he bought where it was cheap. But in this story he does something no merchant does. In his travels abroad he finds a single pearl of great value. He goes away and sells everything he has and returns to buy it *for himself*. He never cared about making a profit; he only wanted to find the finest pearl in the world.

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IF HIS BURIED TREASURE IS ISRAEL, THIS PEARL CAN ONLY BE THE CHURCH, A BEAUTIFUL WHITE ADORNMENT THAT HE BOUGHT WITH HIS VERY LIFE FROM FOREIGN LANDS ACROSS THE WORLD. HE WENT AWAY, BUT PROMISED TO RETURN AND MAKE US HIS MOST PRIZED POSSESSION.

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The pearl is the only gemstone that comes from a living organism. It forms around a grain of sand which is an irritant to its host. A pearl grows out of hurt, as the oyster transforms it into something that is no longer a source of irritation. Note that oysters are not *kosher*, so a person under the Law would not care for pearls. The future dwelling place of the heirs of salvation is the New Jerusalem, a city with twelve gates.

*The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl....On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there.*

*Revelation 21:21, 25*

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JESUS SAID HE IS THE DOOR OF THE SHEEPFOLD, BUT THE CHURCH IS THE OPEN GATE, SHOWING WHERE THE DOORWAY MAY BE FOUND WHERE A PERSON MAY ENTER. OUR PROPER PLACE IS TO STAND OPENLY BESIDE HIM.

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## HOMEWORK FOR WEEK 12

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Your assignment for next time is to read Matthew 13:44-46, Revelation 3:7-13, and the Epistles to the Thessalonians.

Next week, you (the class) will give the lesson. These are the questions I will ask you to comment on:

1. Why do you think Jesus did not give these parables to the crowd at the seashore? Did the first four parables relate to them?
  
2. Read about the veiled glory in 2 Cor. 3:7, 13-18 and 2 Cor. 4:3-12. How does Paul's imagery compare with these two parables?
  - a. The treasure:
  
  - b. The pearl:
  
3. How does the Letter to Sardis (Rev. 3:1-6) relate to secular Israel today? How can a person or nation be the walking dead?
  - a. Compare with Ezekiel 37:1-14. The bones came to life in two phases. What were they? What does verse 11 reveal about them?
  
  - b. Find a chapter in Romans that tells us Israel will come back to life.
  
4. What prominent figure (or figures) in the Letter to Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13) bring the pearl to mind?
  - a. Compare with 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Look up the Greek word *harpazo* from verse 17. What does this word mean?
  
  - b. Compare with Revelation 4:1-2. Is this the same event?

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## WEEK 13 – THE NET

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*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:*

*Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.*

*So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,*

*And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

*Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.*

*Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.*

*Matthew 13:47-52 KJV*

### **The End of Time**

God created the earth in six days and then he rested. Jesus was a working man in five of the first six parables, but in the seventh he rests. Instead of a “man” entering the earth, we have a net cast into the sea, but he uses it as a figure for the end of the world. Seventeen different OT verses tell us that God “spread out” the heavens like so much fabric. At the end of the thousand years, the fabric of space-time will gather up the world for judgment.

Most of the passages in the OT that have a net are either prayers for deliverance or prophecies against the enemies of God.

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A NET IS A TRAP, AND IF YOU ARE CAUGHT IN ONE, YOUR LIFE IS OVER.

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Read 2 Peter 3:3-7 and 10-13. What do great waters and fire represent?

Water and fire are both used for purifying. When uncleanness was very great, a flood came to wash it away and bury it. Every ancient culture on earth remembered a worldwide flood. When Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed for wickedness by fire from heaven, the Jordan Plain became the Dead Sea. When Antichrist comes, John pictures him as a beast rising from the sea. The final use of this figure is the “lake” of fire (water and fire).

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THE SEA IS A VISIBLE REMINDER OF AN UNSTABLE WORLD THAT ALTERNATES QUICKLY BETWEEN CALM AND TEMPEST.

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## Judgment

Jesus explains his own parable by saying the angels will come forth, separate the wicked from the justified, and throw them into the fire. This is similar to what we saw occurring in the parable of the weeds, but Jesus is not repeating the same events in different parables. God has been judging his creation from the beginning, and will continue until the end. In the past he judged angels, Adam, Eve, giants, the world of Noah, Babel, Egypt, Israel, kings, nations, and last he crucified Jesus in judgment of my sin. Justification comes by believing the word of God in every age.

Present judgments are also mentioned in the Bible:

- 1 Cor 11:27-32 Self-judgment of the believer
- Heb 12:4-11 Discipline judgments of God in love
- Rom 1:18-32 Judgment of moral degeneration for deliberate unbelief

There are future judgments also:

- 2 Cor 5:10 The judgment (*bema*) seat of Christ for believers' works, good and bad
- Jer 30:7 God's judgment of Israel's unbelief in the great tribulation
- Rev 18 The judgment of Babylon
- Rev 19:20 The Judgment of antichrist and the false prophet
- Mt. 25:32-34 Judgment of the nations for their treatment of Jews
- 1 Cor 6:2-3 Judgment by the Church of the world during the 1,000 years, and of the angels afterward.

There are also the seven seal judgments, the seven bowl judgments, and the seven trumpet judgments mentioned in Revelation. Satan gets his own special judgment in Rev 20:10.

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THE PARABLE OF THE NET CLOSES THE KINGDOM AGE WITH THE  
FINAL JUDGMENT OF THE DEAD.

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*<sup>11</sup> And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.*

*<sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

*<sup>13</sup> And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.*

*<sup>14</sup> And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire.*

*<sup>15</sup> And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.*

*Revelation 20:11-15*

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## HOMEWORK FOR WEEK 14 - FINAL

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Your assignment for next time is to read Matthew 13:47-52, Revelation 3:14-22, and the Epistle to the Colossians.

Next week, you (the class) will give the lesson. These are the questions I will ask you to comment on:

1. Read Revelation 14:14-20. Does it describe the same thing as the net? Who are the harvesters in all the parables? How will they know the wicked from the just?
  
2. After explaining the first two parables to them in private, Jesus asked the disciples if they understood all the others and they said they did. How were they able to understand parables 3-7 without any explanation?
  
3. What figures does the letter to Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22) have in common with this parable?
  
4. As you read through Colossians, did you see anything that reflects this “Sabbath” or seventh epistle? Did you find any passages that refer to your death in the world?
  
5. Summarize for our group the seven parables of Matthew 13 according to what each one meant for you personally.
  - Sower –
  - Weeds –
  - Mustard Seed –
  - Yeast –
  - Treasure –
  - Pearl –
  - Net –

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## HOMEWORK FOR WEEK 2

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Your assignment for next time is to read Isaiah chapter 6 and Matthew chapters 11-13.

Next week, you (the class) will give the lesson. These are the questions I will ask you to comment on:

1. As you ponder the “secrets” of entering the kingdom of heaven from Isaiah 6, what unlikely person from the NT comes to mind that had a similar experience with Jesus?  
**Luke 23:32-43 the thief on the cross.**
2. Look up the Greek word for “secrets” (*mysterion*) in Matthew 13:11. What does this word mean when it is used in the NT?  
**1 Timothy 3:16 Without any doubt, the mystery of our religion is great: He was revealed in flesh, vindicated in spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among Gentiles, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory.**  
**John 10:9 I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.**
3. In Matthew chapters 11-12 how many times does Jesus say something that divides his hearers into those who do and those who don't have the “secrets”?
  - **Mt. 11:6 to John and his disciples “Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.”**
  - **Mt. 11:15 to the crowd, “Whoever has ears, let them hear.”**
  - **Mt. 11:21 “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.”**
  - **Mt. 11:25 At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.”**
  - **Mt. 11:27 “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”**
  - **Mt. 12:7 to Pharisees, “If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent.”**
  - **Mt. 12:9-14 <sup>9</sup> Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, <sup>10</sup> and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to bring charges against Jesus, they asked him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”  
<sup>11</sup> He said to them, “If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? <sup>12</sup> How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”  
<sup>13</sup> Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. <sup>14</sup> But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.**
  - **Mt. 12:22-28 <sup>22</sup> Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. <sup>23</sup> All the people were astonished and said, “Could this be the Son of David?”**

<sup>24</sup> But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons."

<sup>25</sup> Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. <sup>26</sup> If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? <sup>27</sup> And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. <sup>28</sup> But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

4. Jesus draws a line in the sand in Mt. 12:30-33. Either the kingdom of God has come to you, or not. The "secret" of entering is to recognize him on the basis of the witness of the Holy Spirit, to turn from our former life, and to GO follow him without seeing him physically upon a throne first. Why does he say every kind of sin can be forgiven except one? What is this unforgivable sin? Why can't it be forgiven? Hint: re-read verse 28!

What is the mission of the Holy Spirit? Here is a quote by theologian David M. Coffee, of the Catholic Institute of Sydney, St. Patrick's College, Manly, N.S.W., Australia (Theological Studies 47, 1986):

**Thus, if the Holy Spirit is present in His own right, there too is Christ, for Christ is the content of the Gift of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Christ; and where Christ is, there too is the Father, for Christ is ... the Word of the Father.**

With this in mind, what are the consequences of rejecting the witness of the Holy Spirit?

5. The above confrontations occurred "that same day" Jesus gave the parables in the next chapter (Mt. 13:1). Up until this time Jesus and the apostles proclaimed the arrival of the kingdom of God with a call to repentance in preparation for the king to take his proper place. Why do you think he now began to teach in a way that his enemies would not know what he was saying?  
They saw the miracles he did by the Spirit of God, but they denied the Holy Spirit by saying he did them by the prince of demons (Mt. 12:24). They also denied the truth they already had (Thou shalt not kill) when they went out and plotted how they might kill him (Mt.12:13). Jesus therefore says, "Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. This is why I speak to them in parables..."
6. The "secret" of entering the kingdom is that the proper place of my Lord and King is *the throne of my heart*. I can only demonstrate my love and inward loyalty to him by leaving my old life and following him before he comes to power. He will ascend a visible throne later, but then it will be too late to "enter" as his bride. What will happen to the people of earth who survive the tribulation when Jesus ascends David's throne?  
Those that survive the tribulation period will not "enter" the kingdom that comes upon them by choice, but will be subjected against their will. They will be subjects, period, never to be trusted.

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## HOMEWORK FOR WEEK 4

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Your assignment for next time is to read Matthew 13:1-23, Revelation chapter 1 and 2:1-7, and Ephesians chapters 1-5.

Next week, you (the class) will give the lesson. These are the questions I will ask you to comment on:

1. Does it seem like a stretch to say that these three passages are connected? Why or why not?
2. Read Ephesians 5:31-32 again. What is this “mystery”? Marriage
3. Read through 1 Corinthians Chapter 2. Does this explain why the things of God are not understood by the world? Are God’s mysteries kept from the world, or is there some other problem preventing them from understanding?

**Spiritual things are rejected by flesh but received by the spirit. Men are born spiritually dead and remain so until they are redeemed by grace through faith in God. It is not entirely an intellectual process - in many cases intellect keeps us out while little children go right in.**

4. The Bible mentions two kinds of birds. In Genesis 8:7-8 Noah first sent out a raven and then a dove. Which one returned to him? In verse 20 Noah made whole burnt offerings of all the clean birds. How did he know which ones were “clean”? Where do we have to go in the Bible to find out? **Leviticus 1:14, Deut. 14:11-18.**
  - Genesis 15:9-11. What did the unclean birds try to steal? **Abraham’s covenant with the Lord, a fancy word for “marriage”**
  - Genesis 40:16-19. What did the unclean birds take from this man? **The bread of his “communion” with his Lord the Pharaoh**
  - In this parable, what did the birds take away? Were they clean or unclean? **They steal away belief in the word about Jesus, which is the basis for a person to enter as the Bride**
  - Read Exodus 16:9-13. What did God give them? What did he take away? Read Psalm 78. Note verses 2 & 27. Now read Psalm 106:14-15. Not every translation gets this right – take a look in the King James. **He gave them what their flesh demanded – flesh to eat. He filled their bellies to bursting, but emptied their souls. Only Joshua and Caleb lived to enter into marriage with the land God gave them.**
  - Read Matthew 3:16 for the contrasting pattern.
  - How do the birds in this parable illustrate a recurring pattern from the OT? **Those who only wanted Jesus to satisfy their flesh were ravens. The ones who received him as he was were declared “clean” thus making them doves – Holy Spirit filled.**
5. Fertile soil produces much fruit. What is the “harvest” your life is producing because of Christ in you? What verses in Ephesians 5 confirm this? **V9-10, compare Gal 5:22-23**

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## HOMEWORK FOR WEEK 6

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Your assignment for next time is to read Matthew 13:24-29 and 25:31-46, Revelation chapter 2:8-11, and the Epistle to the Philippians.

1. Does it seem like a stretch to say that these four passages demonstrate a consistent pattern? Why or why not?
2. Many Bible teachers apply the parable of the weeds to the Church and not the world. According to this view, it is impossible for us to know who is the grain and who is a weed in the Church until the end of the age comes and we see who goes to heaven. Do you agree or disagree with this as the parable's meaning? Why or why not?

Jesus interpreted this parable for us. He said the field is the world, not the Church. If this field was the Church, then Jesus got the order of events at harvest wrong, because the Church is gathered into the barn first in the rapture, and then judgment falls on the earth. Angels will not separate us for the rapture. Jesus will take us personally.

3. On the basis of your answer to question 2, who are the "sons of the kingdom"? They are those who believed the witness of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, and the nations that either opposed the beast or tried to help Jews and their converts. For example, Arabia and Ethiopia are prominent in prophesy relating to the kingdom age.
4. Read John 18:36, 2 Cor. 4:3-4, and 1 John 5:19. In light of these statements who is the ruler of this world? Satan When did this happen? When humans joined the fallen angels in their rebellion. Is Jesus the king of the world today? No (John 18:36). There are two kingdoms - light and darkness. If yes, when did this happen? If no, when will it happen? Jesus will be king when he takes David's throne as Gabriel said to Mary (Luke 1:32).
5. On the basis of your answer to question 4, what is the kingdom of heaven and where is it located? The kingdom has three phases: those who received the king before he came to power, those whom he conquers to live as subjects, and those who will be born in the kingdom age under the monarchy of the King and his Bride. These three phases are pictured in the first three parables!
6. Jesus was always with the Father, but in his incarnation he is also a prophet, high priest, and king.
  - a. When do we see him acting as a prophet? Past – his human ministry (Deu. 18:15,18; Matt 21:11, Mark 6:4, Luke 24:19, John 4:19)
  - b. When do we see him acting as high priest? Present (see Rom 8:34, 1 John 2:1, Heb. 7:25-10:18)
  - c. When do we see him seated upon David's throne as the promised king? Future (Matt 19:28,
  - d. Can there be a kingdom where there is not yet a king? No. The kingdom is already within and among us, but it will become visible when the Day of the Lord comes.

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## HOMWORK FOR WEEK 8

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Read Matt. 13:31-32, Ezekiel 17, Rev. 2:18-29, and look over the section headings in 1-2 Corinthians. Next week, you (the class) will give the lesson. These are the questions I will ask you to comment on:

1. The first two trees in the Bible provide a foundation for understanding what trees represent in prophesy and the parables. If the mustard tree is a second Tree of Knowledge, then what is the second Tree of Life? (See 1Peter 2:24.) **The cross of Christ is a second tree of life. We can't go back to the Garden of Eden, but anyone can come to the cross and receive eternal life.**
2. The first two kings of Israel, Saul and David, tell the same story. Read 1 Samuel 9:1-2 and compare with 1 Samuel 16:7-12. Read 1 Chron. 21:17. How were Saul and David like the two trees from question 1? **Saul was tall. As king he was above all others. He made decisions by the worldly knowledge he had instead of trusting God. When he made bad decisions, he blamed others. David was lowly and did not dress or talk like he was better than others. When he made bad decisions he acknowledged it and repented.**
3. With the above examples in mind, study Ezekiel 17 carefully.
  - What did the two eagles represent? **Nebuchadnezzar and Pharaoh. The Hebrew word (*neshar*) means griffin vulture.**
  - What was the cedar tree? **David's family, the kings of Judah, the topmost twig being young King Jehoiachin whom Nebuchadnezzar carried into exile.**
  - What was the land of merchants and city of traders? **Babylon.**
  - What was the seed? **Zedekiah (born Mattaniah) was Jehoiachin's uncle, whom Nebuchadnezzar set up as a vassal king over Israel under covenant to him. V 14 "That the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, but that by keeping of his covenant it might stand."**
  - What kind of plant was it? **A spreading vine of low stature.**
  - Where did the first eagle plant it? **In a fruitful land by great waters (Israel, beside the sea).**
  - What happened when the plant turned toward the second eagle? **Zedekiah looked toward Pharaoh for nourishment; the east wind (Babylon is east) dried him up, and threw a net over him to drag him off to Babylon.**
  - Who replaces this plant with a new one in verse 22? **The Lord.**
  - What tree (family) does the shoot come from? Compare with Isaiah 11:1. Who is he? **David's cedar tree. This will be Christ, the Son of David.**
  - Where does he plant him? **"In the mountain in the height of Israel", Mount Zion.**
  - Does verse 24 unlock the parable of the mustard seed? **As God brought down the high tree of Saul and replaced him with the low tree of David, so shall he bring down any servant who exalts himself and put him under Christ in the kingdom age.**
4. What figures do you find in the letter to the church at Pergamum (Rev 2:12-17) that parallel the mustard seed that becomes a tree harboring all kinds of birds? **They follow the doctrine of Balaam who caused Israel to commit fornication, and the doctrine of the**

Nicolatians, that Jesus hates. Balaam was a pagan prophet who taught the king of the Moabites how to defeat Israel. He sent Midianite girls to worship Baal on the heights of Beth Peor within view of the camp of Israel. They sacrificed meat, and danced naked before the idol. They invited the young men of Israel to come for the free food and sex. God sent a plague on Israel for this, allowing Moab to defeat them without a battle. When the Church married the pagan Roman Empire to become a state church, it exalted itself by dressing up the clergy in expensive robes and high hats (Nica'ō = conquer + Laity = the common believers). Pergamum means per = mixed or perverted + gamy = marriage, a perverse marriage between the holy Church and world government.

5. If you had to pick one word to describe the problem Paul addressed in his letters to the Corinthians, what word would you choose? Give a verse. **Pride: 1 Cor. 4:6. He reproveth it by example v6, by argument v7, by sarcasm v8, by precedent v9, by contrast v10, and by an enumeration of the humiliations and sufferings of their founders v11-13.**
6. Is it possible to practice righteous living, and not "enter" the kingdom? **Every generation has its Pharisees, who set themselves above the humble followers of God. See Mt 23:13.**

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## HOMework FOR WEEK 10

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Your assignment for next time is to read Matthew 13:33, Revelation 2:18-29, and the Epistle to the Galatians.

Next week, you (the class) will give the lesson. These are the questions I will ask you to comment on:

1. The story of Jezebel is interwoven with the story of Elijah the prophet who stood against her. She appears in 1 Kings 16:31, and reappears in 1 Kings 18, 19, and 21. She is finally destroyed in 2 Kings 9. How does her story reflect the parable of the yeast?
  - a. Who is the woman? **Jezebel is the "woman" who wears a religious mask but seeks to kill those who speak the truth.**
  - b. What is the yeast? **Corruption that is hidden behind a religious office.**
  - c. What do the 3 pecks of flour represent? **The whole house of Israel, the whole container.**
  - d. What happened to that container of flour in the end? **Destroyed: Kingdom of Israel carried off into Assyria, and Kingdom of Judah subjugated by Greeks and ended by the Romans.**
  - e. What does this story have to do with the kingdom of heaven? **The woman corrupted the heart of the nation so that they would reject the king.**
  - f. Did this happen in the kingdom in the past? If yes, when? **It happened in the time of Jeroboam to the northern Kingdom when they rejected David's heir, Rehoboam. It happened to the kingdom of Judah when they rejected David's heir, Jesus.**
  - g. When will it happen in the kingdom in the future? **Revelation 20:7-9.**
2. Personal application: what happens to a believer that thinks a ceremony, sacrament, covenant, position, study, prayer, ordination, or good works brings him closer to God? **If he adds anything to the work of Jesus on the cross he becomes religious which has a tendency to puff him up like yeast. If he persists in this, it will corrupt his faith in Jesus.**
3. If that is not the way, what *does* bring a person closer to God? **Relationship: trust, love, faith in Jesus, and to what he said and did. Read John 6:28-29. Does this verse set you free?**
4. What are your proudest achievements? Do they bring you closer to God or get in the way? **I was proud of my religion, education, profession, and mind until God took them all away. I was mentally ill for seven years with little hope of recovery. I got to know my Father in a whole new way during that time, and it became personal, based on Him, not on merit.**
5. What do you think about Christians that say God wants to make you healthy and wealthy right now? If you become healthy and wealthy by a miracle, will it bring you closer to God

than poor believers who suffer for their faith? **Who rejoices more as death approaches: the one who has everything and must leave it behind, or the one who has nothing but the arms of Jesus waiting for him?**

6. Can you summarize in one sentence the main idea Paul makes in Galatians? **If we were saved by grace, we must remain in that grace. We add nothing to it by becoming religious.**
7. Based on this parable, what will people be like during the kingdom age to come? Do you think it will be a pleasure to rule over them with Jesus for 1,000 years? **They will praise Jesus with their lips while their hearts wish him dead at the same time. They will rise up to follow Satan, Gog, and Magog at the end of the thousand years. It might be like owning and running a company where many of your employees obey but hate you.**

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## HOMEWORK FOR WEEK 12

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Your assignment for next time is to read Matthew 13:44-46, Revelation 3:7-13, and the Epistles to the Thessalonians.

Next week, you (the class) will give the lesson. These are the questions I will ask you to comment on:

1. Why do you think Jesus did not give these parables to the crowd at the seashore? Did the first four parables relate to them? **All seven parables are about the kingdom, but the first four condemn his audience because of unbelief. "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. This is why I speak to them in parables..."** The last three parables are part of the "more" he promised to those who have the secrets.
2. Read about the veiled glory in 2 Cor. 3:7, 13-18 and 2 Cor. 4:3-12. How does Paul's imagery compare with these two parables?
  - a. The treasure: **When Moses brought the Law down from Sinai, his face was so bright they could not look at it, so he wore a veil over his face. The glory of God was in him, but covered up by the veil until it faded away. Paul compares this to the Law that was glorious but temporary, ending with Christ. In the parable, the man uncovers the glory of gold treasure in the earth, but covers it.**
  - b. The pearl: **When the Church was born on Pentecost, tongues of fire rested on those gathered there. This open revelation was temporary, but the glory within us is not. When Jesus returns he will reveal the Church for what it is. Until that time we are like Moses, with the glory hidden behind the veil of our mortal flesh.**
3. How does the Letter to Sardis (Rev. 3:1-6) relate to secular Israel today? How can a person or nation be the walking dead? **Israel is alive physically as a nation, but is still spiritually dead. No prophets, no temple, no sacrifices, and no king.**
  - a. Compare with Ezekiel 37:1-14. The bones came to life in two phases. What were they? What does verse 11 reveal about them? **The bones are the nation of Israel, but they are very dry, cut off from the Lord. Verse 14 says the Lord will put his Spirit in them, and then they will live.**
  - b. Find a chapter in Romans that tells us Israel will come back to life. **Romans 11.**
4. What prominent figure (or figures) in the Letter to Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13) bring the pearl to mind? **The open door and the New Jerusalem whose gates are pearls.**
  - a. Compare with 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Look up the Greek word *harpazo* from verse 17. What does this word mean? **To snatch, to seize, to forcefully take or abduct. It is the way you would grab a child in the street to prevent**



being hit by a car. In the old world it meant to carry off the women of people you conquered. Thus, the famous statue Raptio Sabine or “Rape of the Sabine women” by Giambologna. When I read rapturo or harpatzo I think of this statue. In this case “rape” does not mean a sexual act; it means to take a valuable prize by force.

Compare with Revelation 4:1-2. Is this the same event? I think it is: The Church is never mentioned again on earth after this verse. John is part of the Church and is taken up to heaven suddenly. The trumpet of God is mentioned, same as in 1 Thessalonians 4:16. The elder in Rev 7:13 asks John who the tribulation saints are and he doesn't know. If they were the Church wouldn't he recognize them?

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## HOMEWORK FOR WEEK 14 – FINAL

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Your assignment for next time is to read Matthew 13:47-52, Revelation 3:14-22, and the Epistle to the Colossians.

Next week, you (the class) will give the lesson. These are the questions I will ask you to comment on:

1. Read Revelation 14:14-20. Does it describe the same thing as the net? Who are the harvesters in all the parables? How will they know the wicked from the just? **No, I think this is a description of what happened at the end of the parable of the weeds at the beginning of the 1,000 years. The net comes at the end. In both cases, however, the harvesters are angels. Rev 14:9 gives a clear mark on those who will be “harvested”.**
2. After explaining the first two parables to them in private, Jesus asked the disciples if they understood all the others and they said they did. How were they able to understand parables 3-7 without any explanation? **The figures in the sower and the weeds mean the same thing when they recur in the other parables. Jews know what yeast means. They know that harvest is a metaphor for judgment. They know that Israel is God’s treasure. The rest was not difficult to understand from what they already had.**
3. What figures does the letter to Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22) have in common with this parable? **God calls his name “the Amen”. This is the last word. He calls himself the ruler of God’s creation. He made it, and he can unmake it. He knows everyone’s deeds and will judge. The gold refined in the fire is the work we do in Jesus (1 Cor. 3:15). Matthew 24:33 and Mark 13:29 are Jesus words about the end being “nigh, even at the doors.” Rev 3:20 “Here I am, I stand at the door and knock”.**
4. As you read through Colossians, did you see anything that reflects this “Sabbath” or seventh epistle? Did you find any passages that refer to your death in the world? **Col 2:16-17 explains that the Jewish Sabbath was a shadow of the eternal rest we have in Jesus. Col 2:20 and 3:5 explain that we have died to the world already and that we should put to death the desires of our flesh.**
5. Summarize for our group the seven parables of Matthew 13 according to what each one meant for you personally.
  - Sower –**The earth represents my heart. That is where the drama of God happens. This parable also represents the church age.**
  - Weeds –**A day is coming when God will clean house and burn the weeds. He will restore justice to a broken world. The parable represents the second coming of Christ.**
  - Mustard Seed –**The subjects of the kingdom should multiply in number, not in individual greatness. This parable represents the 1,000 year reign of Jesus.**

- **Yeast** –Corruption in the heart corrupts the whole body. This corruption is religion masking a heart that hates God and what he requires. This parable represents the internal state of the kingdom at the end of the 1,000 years.
- **Treasure** –Israel is God’s special treasure, married to the land he gave them. He will be their God and they will be his people during the 1,000 years. He will sit upon the throne of David, and Israel will be a nation of priests.
- **Pearl** –The Church is the pearl that Jesus traveled the world to find, that he has bought with all he had as his prized possession. We will not be his subjects or his people; we are the Bride, a white jewel worn upon his heart.
- **Net** –Time and space are finite. It will end and the judgment of the dead who are not already resurrected will close the kingdom age like a net from which no one escapes. After this, a new heavens and a new earth will bring the eternal rule of God over his people, and there will be no more death or sin.