

THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM (1) – (3)

Matthew 13 reveals that there are many mysteries related to the kingdom of the heavens. The parables in this chapter are not merely teachings or stories; they are mysteries difficult for people to apprehend. To understand these mysteries we need an open heart, and we also need to be poor in spirit. The Lord told the disciples that it was given to them to know the mysteries of the kingdom, but to the others it was not given **because their hearts were hardened, and their spirits were filled with other things** (vv. 11-15). We need to pray, *“Lord, grant us to be poor in our spirit. Sweep away the doctrines and the old Bible knowledge. Lord, empty our spirit and make us poor in spirit. In our spirit we cling to nothing.”* You need to pray in this way. Otherwise, even after reading all these chapters, you will receive nothing. May the Lord keep us from having anything old in our spirit.

(1) Parable of the **Sower**

The Wayside

In the parable of the sower the people who receive the Lord Jesus are likened to **four kinds of earth. The first is the wayside**. This margin or border of the field lies between the field and the road and is somewhat neutral, being neither the road nor the field. Because this kind of earth is close to the road, it has been **trodden down by the traffic of the world and has become hardened and preoccupied**, making it difficult for the seed to get in. The birds of the air realize this situation and come immediately to snatch away the seed. When some people listen to the word of the gospel of the kingdom, **their hearts are preoccupied by the worldly communication and traffic**.

The Rocky Places

Even if your heart is not like the earth by the wayside, do not be confident that you have no problems. There is still the second kind of earth—the rocky places. The Lord Jesus said that the rocky places are covered with soft soil that is apparently very good for growing something. In reality, however, **the soil is shallow**—perhaps only a half-inch deep. **On the surface there is good, soft soil, but underneath are rocks**. These rocks do not mainly represent the sinful things, but they represent our natural mind, emotions, and will. **Our unrenewed mind, our untouched emotions, and our unsubdued will are three huge rocks in our heart**.

The Thorny Places

Now we come to the next kind of earth, that which is filled with thorns. We should remember that the source of the thorns was the serpent (Gen. 3:18). In Matthew 13:22 the Lord Jesus told us that **the thorns represent the anxiety of the age and the deceitfulness of riches**. These thorns

choke the growth of the Lord Jesus within us. We all are familiar with the anxiety of the age and the deceitfulness of riches.

In the United States it is easy for people to earn a living, but this situation is filled with temptations. These temptations arise from the cooperation between the modern things and our lusts. We need to earn a living in order to maintain our existence on the earth. With this there is no problem. However, Satan is very subtle. God's intention is for us to earn a living, but Satan's subtle design is to choke the growth of Christ within us. **If we know the Lord's way, we will be happy to lower our standard of living rather than trying to lift it. We will continually encounter the temptation of raising our standard of living, of wanting better cars and bigger houses. It is an endless cycle of slavery.** Satan wants to make us slaves to the standard of living. He will entice us to work harder and longer to make more money and then to occupy more time to spend the money. It is much wiser to simplify our living...

On the contrary, many brothers and sisters have been willing to lower their standard of living for the sake of **migration**. They have sacrificed their standard of living, and this afforded them a way to migrate to various places. If the Lord allows, we will continue to take many more cities by the way of migration. However, if we are always trying to raise our standard of living, we are through with migration. As long as we have food, drink, and clothing, that is sufficient. We are not here for our standard of living; we live on this earth for the Lord's recovery.

The Good Ground

We, however, come from another source, from our Father, the God of life. Therefore, we are a field, a farm, much blessed by our Father. We grow Christ, the real wheat. We are not the wayside or the rocky place or the thorny earth. We are the good earth, growing Christ.

(2) Parable of the Tares

After this, Satan came in to sow false seed, the tares, into the field. Many years ago, I read an article which said that even an expert cannot tell the difference between tares and wheat until the blade appears. In other words, it is only after the fruit appears that anyone can discern between the wheat and the tares. The tares resemble the wheat in every aspect. The difference is clearly evident only after the fruit appears. The genuine wheat brings forth the ears; the tares produce something else, something false. At that time it is easy to tell the difference between tares and wheat. Satan was very subtle to produce the counterfeit, false Christians, and plant them among the genuine Christians to confuse the situation and frustrate the growth. We all must be alert. Satan sowed the tares while men slept, meaning they were not alert. In all the churches we must be alert, making it difficult for Satan to sow the false seed. Satan himself will never sleep.

Regardless of how good a church is, he will attempt to sow the false seed, to grow something that closely resembles the real thing. This will choke and frustrate the growth of the real wheat and will confuse the condition of God's farm. We must be careful. Some people may make a certain suggestion, and this may be a sign that they are tares and not real wheat. **When they first appeared, they had the same appearance as everyone else.** Even an expert could not discern whether they were genuine or false until the day that they made a certain suggestion. Then some began to realize that they might be tares. In the churches the leading ones must be especially alert not to be cheated by tares. Satan will try to sow tares to cause confusion, frustration, and damage, and to hinder the growth of the real wheat. We must be careful of anyone who suggests something that will frustrate the growth of the wheat. That may be the sign of a tare.

(3) Parable of the Mustard Seed

The Lord Jesus said that the mustard seed is the smallest of the seeds, yet **it grows into a great tree.** Although it may not be readily apparent, this also is damage caused by Satan. According to Genesis 1, all the vegetables are to reproduce according to their kind, and the animals according to their kind. Therefore, an herb should be according to its kind, and a tree should be according to its kind. However, in this parable we see something that grows not according to its kind—an herb becomes a tree. This is growth out of proportion and growth that breaks the regulation of the life law. With every kind of life there is the life essence, the life power, the life shape, and the life law. We have the confidence that if a peach sprout grows, it will become a peach tree, it will attain the height of **a normal** peach tree, and it will bring forth peaches. We do not need to be concerned that the peach tree might grow into another kind of tree and not produce peaches. This is impossible, for within the peach sprout is the peach life, and within the peach life are the peach essence and the peach law, which regulate its development.

The mustard herb became a great tree by breaking the life law and growing out of proportion. What does this mean? Many Christians are **ambitious to be great.** We thank the Lord that the move of His recovery in this country has been growing gradually throughout the years... Although it has been rather slow, it is nevertheless the normal growth. During the past years we have been growing slowly because we do not like to have a big work. Therefore, we do not use propaganda and advertisements... We prefer to remain hidden. We are a little mustard herb; we do not want to be a great tree. According to the natural human concept, it is good to be a mushroom, growing up overnight. A mushroom grows up overnight, but it also disappears overnight. Anything that comes fast will also go fast... We must grow according to the law of life and be according to our kind, in the proper proportion. I advise you never to use any advertisement... In the Lord's recovery we have no giants. If anyone comes to your locality asking who is your minister, you should tell him that everyone is a minister. We do not have a great leader; we are the little

mustard herbs. Mustard herbs are good for food. The whole world is hungry. The hungry world does not need a great tree; it needs a little mustard herb to feed people, to satisfy the hunger in all the human beings. Let all the local churches be small; even if we have a large number, we should be small in nature. We should always maintain the law of life and never grow out of proportion.

(4) Parable of the **Leaven** - A Mixture

In this parable there is the **meal**, the **leaven**, and the **woman**. This woman in Matthew 13 signifies the Roman Catholic Church. She is also Jezebel, the woman mentioned in Revelation 2. This evil woman, the great harlot, added leaven to the fine flour, producing a mixture of the real and the false, the good and the bad, the elements of Christ and the elements of Satan. In Christendom you can see **some real things and some false things**, some holy things and some worldly things, some elements of Christ and some elements of Satan, all mixed together. In the Roman Catholic Church and in all the denominations, there are many real Christians, yet there is also much leaven. The Roman Catholic Church has picked up many pagan things and mixed them with the things of Christ. For example, did you know that the origin of Christmas is pagan? The Roman Catholic Church took in this pagan holiday, making December 25 the birthday of Christ. Many Christians argue that Christmas is an excellent time to preach the gospel because they can take the opportunity to preach Christ while people celebrate Christmas. This is leaven and is the subtlety of the enemy. Easter is also a leaven. When the Catholic Church went to China, it even embraced ancestor worship. Not only in the Roman Catholic Church but also in the denominations, there are many worldly things and lusts added to the things of Christ to produce a mixture. Our eyes need to be opened to see this mixture...**Catholicism** excuses its use of leaven by saying that it is difficult for people to take Christ if leaven is absent. Catholicism claims that people will not accept the simple truth of the birth of the Lord Jesus or the resurrection of Christ without the leaven of Christmas and Easter. Christ is the meal; “mas” is the leaven. Christmas is Christ plus “mas,” that is, the meal plus the leaven. The resurrection of Christ plus the leaven becomes Easter.

I have visited Catholic cathedrals in the Philippines to study the situation. At the side of the entrance to the cathedral, I found an idol of Jesus. I debated with them, saying, “The Bible says clearly that we should never make any images, any idols. Why do you make an image of Jesus?” They argued back, replying, “Without an image of Jesus, it is difficult for people to have some realization of Jesus. We put up such an image so that everyone can have some impression of Him as they come in.” This is evil leaven. Perhaps you still have some portraits of Jesus in your home that make Him appear beautiful or handsome. The Bible says that the Lord Jesus had no attracting form or beautiful appearance (Isa. 53:2). Many Christians, not realizing the leaven involved, have such pictures of Jesus in their homes.

The **clergy-laity system** is also a kind of leaven. Every Christian is a member of the Body of Christ, and as a member he must function. But what is the situation today? In the so-called Christian service, most of the Christians are silent while one man ministers to them. This is the clergy-laity system. ..Eventually, you learn to be critical. When you come to the meeting, do you have the burden or desire or concept that you must function in the meeting? I am afraid that many of you do not have this realization. Your concept is that someone else will do it. This is some of the leaven which that woman took and hid in the fine meal.

(5)– (7) THE TREASURE, THE PEARL, AND THE NET

Now we come to the three remaining parables in Matthew 13: the treasure, the pearl, and the net. This will make a total of seven parables. In the Bible the number seven is composed of four plus three, three plus four, and six plus one. The number seven in Matthew 13 is firstly composed of four plus three. The first four parables comprise one group, and the last three comprise another...

The Treasure and the Pearl

Each of the four parables in the first group contains something related to the **vegetable life**. The two parables following—the treasure hidden in the field and the pearl—are both related to minerals. The treasure certainly must contain either precious stones or gold, both of which are minerals. The pearl also is a type of mineral since its basic structure, a tiny rock, is a mineral.

Three Peoples

There is a great deal involved here. The Lord Jesus is very wise, and the parables, although they are simple, contain great wisdom. Taken as a group, the last three parables cover the whole human race. The human race is composed of three peoples: the Jews, the church, and the Gentiles. First Corinthians 10:32 reveals that among the human race today there are only these three peoples—the Jews, the church, and the Gentiles, represented by Greeks.

Two Worlds

In the eyes of God, there are only two worlds: one signified in the Bible by the **earth**, the other signified by the **sea**. **The Gentiles belong to the sea-world, and the Jews belong to the earth-world.** Both Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 reveal that the Gentile world is a world of the sea. **The treasure hidden in the field, that is, in the earth, refers to the kingdom with Israel. The pearl refers to the church.** Thus, the treasure is the kingdom, and the pearl is the church. **Both are eventually for the kingdom.** The fish drawn out of the sea in an unregenerate condition, some good and some bad, represent the Gentiles. **This parable refers to the conclusion of the Gentile world at the end of the age.** When the Lord Jesus returns, there will be the **Jewish people**, the **church**, and the

Gentiles. The real Jewish people are a treasure in the eyes of God. The church is a pearl in His eyes. The remainder of humanity, the Gentile world, are classified as the fish of the sea. At the end of the age, the angels will gather them to the Lord Jesus, and He will exercise His judgment upon them.

A Personal Treasure

When God brought the people of Israel out of Egypt to Mount Sinai, He told Moses that He would take them as His personal treasure from among all the peoples (Exo. 19:5). **Psalm 135:4** also tells us that God chose Israel to be His own personal treasure. These verses prove that **in God's eyes the Jews are a personal treasure to Him.** In **Matthew 13:44** the treasure is mentioned again, showing that the Jews, as God's treasure, are also a part of the kingdom. This parable says that a treasure was hidden in a field, that a man found it, and after finding it, he hid it and sold all that he had to buy the field. The Lord Jesus is the man who came and found the treasure and then hid it. He first presented the kingdom to the Jewish people, but because they rejected Him, the Lord hid it, concealing it from the unbelieving Jews. After discovering and hiding the treasure, the Lord Jesus went to the cross to sell all that He had to buy not only the treasure but the whole field. He redeemed the whole earth for the sake of the treasure. The treasure in the field signifies the kingdom with the true Israel. In Revelation 21 and 22 the New Jerusalem contains not only the names of the twelve apostles but also the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There are precious stones and pearls, representing Israel and the church. God has gained some people from the Jewish race for His possession. He has also gained some people from the Gentile world. Through the death and resurrection of Christ and through the secretion of the life of Christ, these people from the Gentile world have become the pearl. God has put these two peoples together to produce a city, the New Jerusalem, which is composed of the precious stones and the pearls.

THE NET

What about **the remainder of the Gentile world**? When the Lord Jesus comes back, many of them still will not be Christians. The Lord knows how to take care of them. He will send His angels to gather them all to Him, and He will exercise judgment over them. This is the significance of the parable of the net, and **this will complete the Lord's dealing with the human race.** After this judgment God will be able to rest.

CONCLUSION

From A Seed To A Pearl

These parables of the mysteries of the kingdom show us that the Lord Jesus came as a Sower to sow the seed and that eventually He gained a pearl. The pearl comes out of the seed. Christ is the seed, and the church is the pearl. No wonder the Lord Jesus sold all that He had to buy the pearl!

We should not think that we are the seller or the buyer. We are poor and cannot pay; neither do we have anything to sell. **The pearl is too precious, and the price is too great.** The Lord Jesus paid the price, selling all that He had to buy the church. Acts 20:28 reveals that the Lord Jesus purchased the church **with His own blood**. He bought the church by paying such a high price. The Lord Jesus sowed Himself as the seed, and eventually He will receive a pearl. What a joy this will be to the Lord!

Growth And Transformation

If we examine Matthew 13, we will notice two things. First is **growth**; the seed needs to grow. As we pointed out previously, Paul planted, Apollos watered, and God caused the growth (1 Cor. 3:6). The second thing is **transformation**. The pearl is not an item of God's original creation; it is a transformed piece of sand. In itself the sand is not precious, but it is covered and transformed by the secretion of a precious element. Transformation is not self-correction or a mere outward change. It is a **metabolic change** that results from a new element being added into us. **At one time, we were all little rocks. Then the resurrection life of Christ was added to us.** Again and again the resurrection element was secreted over us, producing a change in life. This is transformation. In this one chapter of Matthew, we see both growth and transformation. We need to experience growth and transformation day by day. In the next chapter we will see that growth and transformation are always accompanied by the building. Eventually, there are not many pearls but one great pearl. This signifies one entity comprised of many who have been built together into oneness. This is the building. Thus, we have growth, transformation, and building.

With the **seed**, the **wheat**, and the **meal**, there is the possibility for the evil one to damage by bringing in something negative and corrupting. But with the **pearl** and the **treasure**, Satan can do nothing. In the parables of the treasure and pearl, **Satan is not mentioned**. Whenever there is transformation in a church, Satan is finished. Satan can do nothing against the New Jerusalem. At that time, he will be in the lake of fire. The principle is the same today. If the church is transformed, Satan will be jobless. If our growth remains at the stage of the seed, the wheat, or the meal, Satan will have many opportunities to damage and frustrate. However, when we are transformed, Satan will be finished. He will be unable to inject any more leaven. We need growth, and even more, we need transformation. We are not only wheat and meal; eventually, we become the pearls. First, we are the **vegetables**; by growth and transformation we become the **minerals**. According to the revelation of the Bible, the precious stones and pearls are for God's building. The building comes from growth and transformation. For the building, the vegetable life is insufficient—we need the minerals. We need the treasure and the pearl.