

Sent: Wednesday, January 15, 2020 6:09 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Matthew 13

"Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father! He who as ears (to hear!), let him hear!" (Matthew 13:43)

Remember (way back when), 4 weeks ago, when we discussed Matthew 12, we said, "The die was cast"! Jewish religious leaders had begun not only rejecting Jesus as Messiah, but openly attacking His words and actions, even claiming that He had cast out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons! Blasphemous charges! They then began to "conspire together against Him as to how they might destroy Him"!

So how did Jesus respond? Matthew 13:1 says that on that very day He "went out of the house" (kind of symbolic of leaving the "house of Jacob") and went back to a very familiar place (maybe His favorite place) by the Sea of Galilee, where He got into a boat, sat down, and spoke once again to the large crowd that had followed him, standing on the beach. And so, He began speaking again! But now, in a different manner! Speaking in "parables"!

This represents a real turning point in His earthly ministry! No longer preaching that the "kingdom of heaven was at-hand" but now speaking exclusively to the crowds in parables that He referred to as "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven"--which, He said, were "granted" to be known by the disciples, but "not granted to them" (the crowds)! This was to fulfil the words of the prophet (Isaiah) who wrote (in Isaiah 6:9-10) how the people would "keep on listening but not understand and keep on seeing, but not perceive... because of the "dullness of their hearts"! And so, the parables were used both to "reveal" truth to the disciples (but then only after private explanations from Jesus), while "concealing" truth from those who had no heart to believe! Jesus would later (in verse 35) call the parables "things hidden since the foundation of the world" (quoting from Psalm 78:2).

Matthew 13 includes eight interrelated parables which are all about the "kingdom of heaven" and picture, among other things--first in the parable of the "soils"--the reception of four different individuals (represented by four different kind of soils) to the message of salvation (and the "seed" of the Word of God), and how it finds its way (or doesn't find its way, more commonly) into a fertile (prepared) spot in the human heart! Next the parable of the wheat and the tares which pictures how the truly "possessing" believers will, at "the end of the age," be separated from those "professing but not possessing" (counterfeit) ones! Similar to the parable of the "dragnet"! The parables of the "mustard seed" and the "leaven," picturing the ever-advancing and pervading influence of the kingdom of heaven throughout the world! Even to this day! And, finally, the parables of the "hidden treasure" and the "pearl of great price," picturing the great value of belonging to the kingdom--worth more than anything else in the world!

So, what actually is the "kingdom of heaven"? David Platt, pastor of McLean Bible, has written that, "There's a sense in which the kingdom of heaven is a present reality in that true believers have submitted to the rule and reign of God through Christ in their lives. There's another sense in which the kingdom of heaven is a future realization! The redemptive reign of God in Christ is infiltrating the world today (through the "body of believers:), but His Kingdom will not be consummated until the day when He returns!"

Interestingly, when Jesus asked the disciples if they understood "all these things," they said "Yes!" (Sure about that?) Jesus had earlier said that their "eyes and ears were blessed" (in verses 16-17) because "many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you seek, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it!" And yet there were so many "mysteries" the disciples had not yet seen! Including the great "mystery" of Christ going to the cross! And the "church age"! And the Gospel opened to the Gentiles! And the rapture of the church! And others yet to be revealed (Check them out!)

Think how much more we are blessed, having the sacred Scriptures and being able to look back and see the "mysteries" of God which have already been revealed to us! I Peter 1:10-12 says: "As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the suffering of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which the angels long to look!" Mysteries!

Think of the "mystery" of the "rapture"! I Corinthians 15:51-58--"Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed (not just a nursery theme!), in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed...Thanks be to God, who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our toil is not in vain in the Lord"

It's in this context, I believe, that we can go back to our memory verse in Matthew 13:43: "Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father! He who has ears (to hear), let him hear!"

Well, go with God this week, men and let your light shine!

Lowell