



How Did Jesus Describe the Kingdom of Heaven?

Matthew 13:44: (NRSV) *The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*

We all know Jesus came to save the world from sin and death. We all know Jesus opened the way to heaven for his truest followers. We all also know Jesus taught frequently about *the kingdom of heaven*. What we may not know is what he meant by that phrase, because it is used in a variety of ways that seem to contradict one another. So, how do we figure out what Jesus was really talking about when he spoke of *the kingdom of heaven*?

First, a look at the different ways *the kingdom of heaven* or *the kingdom of God* is used. Are they exactly the same or is there a difference between the two?

The kingdom is here - Jesus himself "carried" the kingdom: Matthew 4:14-17

The kingdom is in you - Jesus' true followers also "carry" the kingdom: Luke 17:20-21: Is the *kingdom of God* exactly the same as the *kingdom of heaven*? Through Bible study, we believe both are the same. **Please see this CQ Rewind Bonus Material.** The Pharisees were looking for the kingdom of God and questioning Jesus. Jesus answered the Pharisees saying, *The kingdom of God is within you*. But how could it be coming if it is within you? Jesus himself carries the kingdom and Jesus' true followers also carry the kingdom. This could be confusing!

The kingdom as future - so, why would you pray for something to come that you already carry? Matthew 6:10: (KJV) **Thy kingdom come.** (God's kingdom) *Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.* So far, Jesus brings the kingdom, it is within his followers and you have to pray for it to come. Hmmmm...we need to pay close attention to what was said, to whom it was said and why it was said.

The kingdom as a message to be spread: Matthew 4:23: Jesus preached and healed sickness. He was previewing what the kingdom would be like at resurrection. So then, how is that within us? *Confusing?* Answer to follow.

The kingdom is difficult to enter - how do you enter something that is in you? Matthew 18:3: (KJV) *And said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into **the kingdom of heaven**.*

The kingdom associated with the resurrection: 1 Corinthians 15:21-25: So, we have this kingdom Jesus brought when he was here the first time. It is something his followers can have within them. You have to pray for it to come, but it is a message that has to be spread! And finally, it is associated with the resurrection.

Kingdom can mean any of many facts of the kingdom: It can refer to Jesus himself in his first advent. It can refer to the context of the development of the true "church" in this present time. It can refer to the time of the resurrection. It can refer to the final reign of God after all enemies, even death, are destroyed.

The kingdom of God and *the kingdom of heaven* were used in many ways. With all of these meanings, how can we know which one fits where? Context! We will look at four parables that center on *the kingdom of heaven* to unfold this apparent mystery: **The Treasure in the Field, The Pearl of Great Price, The Fishing Net (Dragnet) and The Master of a House Bringing Out His Treasure.**

First, this is the context of the four parables. Jesus had just spoken the **Wheat and Tares parable to many:** Matthew 13:34-36: Jesus often spoke in parables. It is important to realize the book of Matthew specifically was meant for a Jewish Christian audience to show Christianity was built on the foundation of the Old Testament. We suggest the explanation Jesus gave of the Wheat and Tares helps us to unlock the meaning of the next four parables. We will break down the explanation of the Wheat and the Tares into four different phases.

Phase 1 of the explanation of the Wheat and the Tares Matthew 13:37-38: (NASB) ³⁷*And he said, the one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, ³⁸and the field is the world.* Jesus is the catalyst, as it is he who spreads the seeds of the Gospel of the kingdom in the world. It all starts with him.



FIRST PARABLE: Hidden Treasure - Personal sacrifice for something of great value

Matthew 13:44: (NRSV) *The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*

The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. The clue! Jesus just explained what that means in the Parable of the Wheat and Tares - the field is the world. Who goes into the world, finds a treasure of such great value that he sells all he had to purchase the world? Jesus!

Isaiah 6:8: Jesus was talking about himself, just like he did in the first part of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. Proverbs 8:22-30 describes the beautiful relationship between Jesus and his Father in heaven before Jesus volunteered to purchase the world.

He found and hid - the treasure he bought the field for was hidden. Remember Jesus had just said he would speak to his followers in parables - hidden parables. There is a sense of a great purchase going on but no one could really understand why. He hid the purpose to fulfill prophecy. These little two lines of text are profound in explaining Jesus' role.

Jesus paid the price - he truly "sold" all that he had: Philippians 2:5-11: Justice was satisfied - a perfect man (Jesus) for a perfect man (Adam) to buy back the human race. This particular parable focuses on one individual, Jesus, and his relationship to the world by his recognizing the great value in reconciling the world back to God and purchasing it.

We have the context of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares and in the explanation Jesus gives the keys for his next parables. Jesus bought the world for the sake of the great treasure.

In the process of paying the price and purchasing the world, Jesus brought light and the Father's will to the world: John 12:46-49: This is where the kingdom begins - Jesus coming into the world. **The price was paid once for all!** Hebrews 10:7,10

The kingdom of heaven is illustrated in the first parable by showing the magnitude of the sacrifice of Jesus (selling all), to buy back the human race from its sentence of death. This is where the kingdom begins.

Phase 2 of the explanation of the Wheat and the Tares Matthew 13:38: (NASB) *...and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one;*

In the Wheat and the Tares, Jesus sows in the field - the world. In the Hidden Treasure Parable, he "buys" the world. Now the Wheat and the Tares parable introduce the wheat as *the sons of the kingdom* and as the next most important thing in the kingdom. How are these *sons of the kingdom* represented next?

SECOND PARABLE: The Pearl of Great Price - Personal sacrifice based on Jesus' example for great value

Let us look at how the second story begins: Matthew 13:45-46: (NRSV) ⁴⁵*Again <3825>, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.*

Again: Strongs #3825 palin; anew, i.e. back, once more, or furthermore or on the other hand

That sounds similar to the first parable. When you see the word *again* it means "once more" or "furthermore." Is there a difference or simple repetition in different words? A parent explains things using different words several times. Is Jesus doing that OR is he saying, "Furthermore, let me build upon what I just told you?"

The second phase of the parable of the Wheat and Tares is talking not only about Jesus but also about his followers. If we understand "again" to mean "furthermore," then we can tie these two stories together. Based on Jesus' ransom purchase of the world (first parable), we now have a merchant and a pearl of great value.

The Merchant - those called to a life of sacrifice as footstep followers of Jesus (equivalent to *the wheat* in the Parable of the Wheat and Tares)



Philippians 2:5: (ASV 1901) *Have **this mind** in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.* What mind? We are supposed to be like Jesus. How? **Luke 18:22-24:** Christianity is about divesting yourself of all earthly interests and worldly attachments. It is not just about being a good person, but instead what you can do for others and how you can honor God. **Romans 12:1:** This was the greatest thing ever offered to fallen humanity! This must have a great price. The merchant is in search of something wonderful and finds this one pearl of great value and then sold everything he had because that pearl was more valuable than anything else. We are learning that the kingdom of heaven is a process.

The Merchant represents: Those called to a life of sacrifice as footstep followers of Jesus. The Merchant (Jesus' followers) sold all that he had to buy the one pearl. Jesus bought the whole field (the world). **The Pearl represents:** The unspeakable value of the call of the Gospel church. That call is the most amazing thing ever offered to humanity.

Interestingly, in ancient times the pearl occupied the chief place among the jewels of personal adornment. This helps us to understand why the Merchant does not represent Jesus, but instead represents the followers of Jesus - this pearl is something we put on - not something we have inherently. Jesus' followers are said to be "covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness."

We are to be clothed - covered with Christ: **Galatians 3:26-29:** It is not about having something that can make you rich in an earthly fashion. The pearl is this great value that is worth selling all that you had. We "sell" our earthly ambitions to be able to have the privilege of having a heavenly ambition and reward of helping all the families of the earth.

We are to be adorned (covered) with the beauty of holiness: **Revelation 21:2:** The *bride* is a picture of the followers of Christ.

We are to follow him to death and then to life to overcome evil: **Revelation 17:14:** When we read *kingdom of heaven* or *kingdom of God*, we have to ask ourselves what phase of that kingdom is being referenced in order to help us understand the correct application.

The kingdom of heaven is illustrated in the second parable by showing the calling out of the true Christian church, those who see the great value of that call to follow in Jesus' footsteps and give up their lives for it, just as Jesus gave up his life for the world.

So, the kingdom starts with the King himself - his attitude and actions. The next phase of the kingdom is the footstep followers of Jesus - their attitude and actions.

Next, is the third Parable of the Dragnet. In order to pre-explain the Dragnet we will go back to the third phase of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares.

Phase 3 of the explanation of the Wheat and the Tares **Matthew 13:39-42:** (This is not referring to eternal torment. To understand the meaning of *weeping and gnashing of teeth*, please refer to our series of programs called "Do the Fires of Hell Come From God?" (Part I) June 7, 2015, (Part II) July 26, 2015 and (Part III) August 30, 2015. Part I specifically deals with all usage of this phrase.)

Phase three now deals with separating out the true from the false. Jesus sowed the good seeds of the Gospel at the beginning of the Gospel Age. The good true wheat (true Christianity) was allowed to grow alongside of tares (a corruption of the system). At the end of that phase was a harvest. The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares described a separation of false and true Christian systems. To the listening crowd, Jesus gave this broad overview of what the Gospel would look like and how there was going to be corruption within the Christian system. Next when Jesus spoke to his truest disciples, he personalized the message by giving the details of the four parables to show how the Gospel was going to have an individual effect.

The Dragnet Parable is still a picture of separation but now on an *individual* basis instead of that of a broad system of Christianity.

THIRD PARABLE: The Dragnet - Personal results of the kingdom call of the Gospel Age

Matthew 13:47-50: Jesus is not repeating himself but is *building new details* of what he already set as a foundation in the Wheat and the Tares. He not only gives us the answer within the four parables but he gives us the way to interpret the answer in his explanation of



the Wheat and the Tares. The context of the call and journey of the true Christian church was established in the second parable. The third parable illustrates and focuses on the broader circumstances of the entire Gospel Age on a personal basis.

The dragnet represents: The Gospel message that pulls in fish (true and false Christians) of every kind. This is just like how the wheat and tares grew together. Matthew 13:47: (NRSV) **Again <3825>**, *the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind.*

First, the invitation is cast to be different from others: Matthew 4:18-20: The Merchant and the Pearl identified the true followers of Christ. This would take several thousand years during the call of the Gospel. Next, we are to fish for followers throughout the world. (In Scripture, *the sea* generally pictures the restless masses of humanity.) When Jesus said, *I will make you fishers of men*, he meant, "The dragnet is going to be in operation throughout the entire age of the Gospel, drawing many people to the Gospel message. There will need to be a separation of true and false followers." This shows us the time factor - the kingdom of God is a process that takes a long time (by our standards) to develop.

Next, the command to fish for followers throughout the world: Matthew 28:18-20: An important point about God's plan is everything has to come to its fullness - allowed to be mature in its development. By why does it seem to take so long? When developing the kingdom, an eternal fixture for the human race, what is a few thousand years when compared to eternity? Matthew 13:48-50: It comes to a point when the net is full and we are no longer fishing! The call of the Gospel is over and the separation phase is in place.

There were many warnings about the danger of corruption within Christianity through the age: Acts 20:28-30: **This Scripture describes good and bad fish!** Drawing in so many will by its very nature draw in corruption. There are corrupt Christian systems in place that teach us about things that are not Christ-like, bringing us to end results that are *not* based on Scripture but based on satisfying what YOU want (based on ritual and tradition). That is what the Wheat and the Tares are about. Those *systems* will be destroyed. Here, the Dragnet is about individual separation between those who really follow after the will of God through Christ, and those who follow partially. Now at the end of the age of the Gospel, the fishing ends and the next phase is the separation.

Now the end result: Matthew 13:49-50: Weeping and gnashing of teeth is *not* associated with hellfire. (Please refer to our series of programs called "Do the Fires of Hell Come From God? (Part I)" June 7, 2015.) Can you imagine waking up on the wrong side of Christianity and having the disappointment of not making the reward? That is when there will be *weeping and gnashing of teeth!*

What is this *furnace of fire*? It is a time of purification and destruction, what the Scriptures describe (see Daniel 12:1, for example) as *the great time of trouble* at the end of the Gospel Age.

The kingdom of heaven is illustrated in the third parable by showing the broad attraction the Gospel has, and the necessity for a separation at the end of the call to show the true colors of those involved. The true and false growing together is lesson often taught by Jesus.

Please see CQ Rewind the Full Edition for the rest of the story about the Third Parable: The Dragnet and the Fourth Parable: The Master's Treasure.

The secret of Scripture is something glorious. *The kingdom of heaven* has begun its developmental process with Jesus coming the first time and it is still in the process of growing and developing until such a time when it will become obvious not only to those of us who want to follow Christ but to every other human being through the resurrection because of his ransom. That is the fruition of *the kingdom of heaven*. We want to be a part of God's will and plan!

*So, how did Jesus describe the kingdom of heaven?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*