

Sunday January 10th 2015
Without a Parable
Part Fourteen

1). Mt 13:47 *"Again, the kingdom of heaven continues like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, 48 "which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. 49 "So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, 50 "and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."*

a). In our study of the parables in Matthew Chapter 13 we have seen that they all have to do with a people other than Israel, Christians primarily taken from amongst the Gentile nations, who are to hear 'the word of the kingdom', those who are offered the opportunity to become part of the Bride of Christ.

b). With this in place we saw that the first 4 parables given after Jesus had left the house and sat by the sea dealt with Christians who hear the word of the kingdom within the context of the present dispensation in which we find ourselves with a view to the coming Kingdom of Christ. And consequently we must see ourselves as those spoken about in these parables – it would be impossible for us not to be there.

c). The final 3 parables given after Jesus had reentered the house then take us beyond the end of this dispensation, beyond our appearance at the Judgment Seat of Christ to events to do with the redemption of the inheritance as they apply to both Israel and the 'Church' prior to the beginning of the Kingdom Age, although the parable of the dragnet does give us a succinct overview of the entire dispensation as well as that which lies beyond it.

d). The last of the 3 parables given back inside the house, which we have read again this morning, takes us to the separation that will take place amongst those who 'hear the word of the kingdom', based upon their response to that word. In this sense all these parables really only deal with those who hear the word of the kingdom.

e). What is of paramount importance to us as we read these parables is to realize that we are hearing 'the word of the kingdom' and therefore that addressed in these parables applies directly to us.

2). *Ge 24:2 So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, "Please, put your hand under my thigh, 3 "and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; 4 "but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac."*

a). These verses from the foundation in Genesis Chapter 24 form the type of the present work of the Holy Spirit amongst the eternally saved searching out a Bride for God's Son. This work of the Holy Spirit and hearing 'the word of the kingdom' are really one and the same thing –
Joh 16:13 "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. 14 "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. 15 "All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

b). And it is the completion of this work of the Holy Spirit that is seen in the parable of the dragnet when the net is described as 'full' and is then drawn to shore – *48 "which, when it was full, they drew to shore;*

Ge 24:61 Then Rebekah and her maids arose, and they rode on the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed.

1Th 4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

2Co 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

All of these scriptures describe exactly the same thing don't they? The Lord uses metaphor in Matthew Chapter 13, a type in Genesis Chapter 24 and a literal description in Thessalonians and Corinthians and then a return to metaphor and figurative language again when this same event is seen in fulfillment in the Revelation – Re 1:10 *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, 11 saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea." 12 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.*

b). I hope it will not escape our attention that the one thing the Lord had as His central focus in these parables in Mathew Chapter v13, before this present dispensation began, before there was ever a Christian, is how this dispensation would end for the household servants within it with respect to the Kingdom in the 7th Day. If this was where the Lord had His focus, prior to the formation of His 'Church', and it was, then it would be a good place to keep our attention.

c). Keeping this to the forefront in our understanding of the scriptures not only enables us to have a correct scriptural view of dispensational history, but also a great motivation to be on the right side of the divide when the separation is made - Ga 6:7 *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*

d). Within the imagery of the dragnet the separation is made between the 'bad' fish and the 'good' fish who, within the Lord's explanation are classified as 'wicked' and 'just' or 'justified' - Jas 2:21 *Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God.*

e). The use of the word 'wicked' with respect to a Christian can be a problem for some folks because this is not a word they would want to see

used of anyone who is an eternally saved child of God. This is however a word that God chooses to use and we can see why He does so in both the parables of the talents and the minas - Lu 19:12 *Therefore He said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. 13 "So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.'*

f). The 10 servants symbolize all the 'nobleman's' servants, his household servants, which is where our word 'dispensation' comes from – a time when the servants in the master's house are dealt with by the master – and delivering to them 10 minas equates with 'when anyone hears the word of the kingdom'. And, as we have seen, the command to the servants is 'Do business till I come'. Doing business till He comes is the same as producing fruit seen in the parable of the sower; it is taking that which the Lord has given and then by faith working with it in order to produce an increase, some 100, some 60, some 30.

g). The 'certain nobleman' going into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom pictures the ascension of our Lord to the right hand of the Father following His resurrection, but here is the thing to keep in mind with this: in order to be resurrected so as to ascend to the Father and then send the Holy Spirit to search out a Bride our Lord had to first die on the cross. God Himself had to suffer and shed His blood and die so that He could call out of the Gentiles a people for His name who could then hear the word of the kingdom – 2Pe 1:3 *as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

h). A place alongside Christ as a co-heir with Him realized through the salvation of the soul is the greatest and most incredible thing that God could make possible for His creation. It is so extraordinary as to defy words to describe it. This is then, in essence, the word of the kingdom, the minas delivered to the household servants.

i). With this in mind let's return to - Lu 19:20 *"Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. 21 'For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did*

not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.' 22 "And he said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. 23 'Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?'

j). And here in these verses we see a household servant, a member of the household of God described by the Lord as 'wicked' – and why? Simply, because he had taken that which his Lord had given him and had chosen to do nothing with it, he put it away in a handkerchief.

k). And so to bring this over into the parable of the dragnet, within the context of the previous parables in Matthew Chapter 13, we can easily see why anyone hearing the word of the kingdom and then choosing to do nothing with it is seen by the Lord as 'wicked' because of what it has taken to make hearing the word of the kingdom possible.

l). For those who hear and do embrace the great and precious promises, the word of the kingdom, there is the certainty of a redeemed soul, being glorified together with Christ and a regal position as Christ's Consort Queen – Heb 11:13 *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.*

m). But for those who choose to ignore that which God died and rose from the dead to give them, the outcome for them with respect to rulership in the Kingdom Age is described in the parable of the dragnet as - *cast them into the furnace of fire.*

3). So before we leave this let's just talk about 'the furnace of fire' so that we are quite clear as to what the Lord is saying through this.

a). We had seen this same 'furnace of fire' previously in the Lord's explanation of the parable of the wheat and tares - Mt 13:41 *"The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that*

offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42 "and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 43 "Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

And again here we see the striking contrast between the 'lawless' and 'the righteous' – the faithful and the unfaithful.

b). The furnace of fire inevitably has echoes of the lake of fire which we do find in connection with the overcomers' promise recorded in the letter to the Church of Smyrna –Re 2:11 *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death."*

Now, if the overcomers are 'not hurt by the second death' then the corollary is the non-overcomers are hurt by the second death - Re 21:8 *"But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."*

And being hurt by the second death is exactly what we see in this verse from Chapter 21. Those graphically described here are the unfaithful and they are clearly seen associated with the lake which burns with fire and brimstone that was prepared for the devil and his angels, something that is Millennial in its scope.

c). Then at the conclusion to the parable of the wedding guest which takes us to the same time, place and individuals seen in the parable of the dragnet, the outcome for the guest without a wedding garment is described this way – Mt 22:12 *"So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. 13 "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

d). The same conclusion seen at the end of the parable of the talents – Mt 25:30 *'And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

We see then those described in these verses being in the darkness outside, away from the light and the One who is the light of the world. And we are given a poignant picture of this on the night preceding the Lord's crucifixion –

Lu 22:61 *And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."* 62 *So Peter went out and wept bitterly.*

e). Now when dealing with the Jews with respect to the offer of the kingdom of the heavens the Lord describes the outcome for those who reject the offer this way - Mt 10:28 *"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.*

Now although Gehenna is used in the context of the offer of the Kingdom to the Jews its association is with the rejection of the Kingdom not just the Jewish people and is always used by the Lord with regards to a separation from regality within Christ's Kingdom.

f). And as we will remember Gehenna is the valley to the south of the city of Jerusalem where the garbage from the city was burned and so textually the Lord references this place as the abode of those who for whatever reason reject His Kingdom.

g). Christ's use of Gehenna in the Gospel accounts deals with the earthly Jerusalem, but we find exactly the same picture with regards to the New Jerusalem in the Revelation - Re 22:14 *Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. 15 But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.*

Those 'who do His commandments', those who are faithful, who are blessed, will enter 'through the gates into the city', but those who do not 'do His commandments', described graphically in v15, are outside the gates of the city, presumably to the south of the city, in a place that would parallel the earthly Gehenna.

h). Those seen graphically described here are the same as those we saw graphically described in Revelation Chapter 21 who would have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone.

i). So what does all this mean? Are we to understand these descriptions as literal or not?

j). Well when the Lord deals with the eternally lost with respect to the endless ages their outcome is described only one way - Re 20:14 *Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

Because the only way the end for the eternally lost is described, being cast into the lake of fire for the endless ages, there is no reason to suppose that this is anything but literal, but because there is a variety of ways to describe the outcome for the unfaithful during the Millennium, and not just one, there is no reason to suppose that this is anything but metaphorical.

k). And if we now go to the account of Lot we might be able to pull all of this together - Ge 19:29 *And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt. 30 ¶ Then Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountains, and his two daughters were with him; for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar. And he and his two daughters dwelt in a cave.*

What do we see then? Lot, a picture of the unfaithful Christian, following the overthrow of the cities of the plain, 'dwelt in the mountains', 'dwelt in a cave'.

l). And Lot's position at this time in the cave is in stark contrast to that of believing Abraham - Ge 19:27 ¶ *And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD.*

Abraham is on the top of the mountain standing before the Lord, and Lot is dwelling in the mountain but in a cave, a place of darkness and shame and not 'before the Lord'.

m). And here we have it – the unfaithful, the bad, the wicked Christian will find himself within the Millennial Kingdom, but completely separated from the purpose for the Kingdom – outside the gates of the city. No place of rulership and separate from Christ's regal magnificence, an experience associated with darkness and punishment rather than light and blessing.

o). But this should in no way minimize the outcome for the unfaithful, this is not sitting in a deck chair on the beach waiting for the 1000 years to pass. The nature of the metaphors, the furnace of fire, the lake of fire, Gehenna, the outer darkness, outside the gates of the city all picture a shocking, sickening and distressing time of tears and regret that will be

poignantly felt throughout the Kingdom Age and this is a picture that is repeated over and over throughout the NT.

p). It's not scripture but it would be true to say that forewarned is forearmed and knowing this outcome is absolutely essential to our motivation to gain victory in the spiritual warfare and the race of the faith and it is of course an integral part of the word of the kingdom - Jude 1:20 *But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto age lasting life.*

1Jo 5:4 *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith.*

Da 12:2 *And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to age lasting life, Some to shame and age lasting contempt. 3 Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.*

Mt 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!"*

Php 2:14 ¶ *Do all things without complaining and disputing, 15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.*

4). The word of the kingdom which lays out what is on offer to us and reveals both the positive and the negative consequences for our response to it is the central message of the NT and clearly shows us the reason for living a godly life in faithful obedience; no other part of scripture will open the rest of scripture to our understanding as this does and at the end of His teaching on 'the word of the kingdom' the Lord asks His disciples a question that we can also ask ourselves – Mt 13:51 *Jesus said to them, "Have you understood all these things?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." 52 Then He said to them, "Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old."*

a). We will continue with this next week – if the Lord is willing.