

Promises and Parables Matthew Chapters 5 and 13

Introduction

1. There are eight beatitudes and eight Kingdom-of-Heaven parables (**8 sets or couplets**).
2. While the Beatitudes emphasize a **disciple's character**, transformation, and attendant blessings, the parables demonstrate **outer conduct** (ministry) and its effect. The first four beatitudes are internal; the second four, external. The pattern is reversed for the parables.
3. All the couplets are dealing with the "Kingdom of Heaven," that is, the development of the invisible "*Kingdom of God*" as it invades the visible kingdom of the devil. Note that no evil exists in the Kingdom of God (John 3:3; 1 Cor. 6:9–10), but careful observation shows there is some evil to combat in the Kingdom of Heaven.
4. The setting: In the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:1–2), Jesus "*sits as a refiner*" (i.e., a fulfilment of Mal. 3:3). In the parables, He "*goes out of the house*" (Matt. 13:1), anticipating Matthew 23:38–39.
5. The Beatitudes promise blessing to saints; the parables anticipate judgment on the lost.
6. The Beatitudes are a spiritual **ladder** that we climb as we draw near to God (Gen. 28:12; John 1:51). The Kingdom of Heaven parables constitute a **ledger** of our effectiveness while we go into the world with the Gospel message.

Set One: The Poor and the Productive (i.e., the promise plus the parable)

1. **Matthew 5:1–3**, "*blessed*" (*Makarios* means to "share God's happiness," e.g., Neh. 8:10 "*the joy of the Lord is our strength*"). "*Poor in spirit*" (e.g., the publican in Luke 18:13), "*for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*" designates entrance into the Kingdom and possession of it.
2. **Matthew 13:3–9**: Parable of Four Soils (i.e., souls). We choose the kind of soil we want to be. "*He that has ears let him hear!*" is the imperative. **Matthew 13:10–17**: The **Purpose** is to create a division: "*them*" versus "*you*"), quoting Isaiah 6:9–10. Considering Matthew 12:24, the tide is turning toward Jesus being rejected. Note: the phrase "*mysteries of kingdom of heaven*" in Matthew 13:11.
3. **Matthew 13:18–23: Interpretation**—there are there are four kinds of hearers. **Which are you?** Note: Hardened, stony, or thorny ground is not permanent or helpless; it just needs to be cleared.
4. **Principle**: If we are truly "*poor in spirit*," we will both receive and apply God's Word. We will both grow spiritually and **bear good fruit**.

Set Two: The Mourners and the Multitudes

1. **Matthew 5:4**, "*blessed are those who mourn*," that is, for our sin (Psalm 51), and for the lost (Matt. 9:36–38). Note that gratitude for our salvation produces an "indebtedness" to the lost (Rom. 1:14, "*I am debtor*").
2. **Matthew 13:24–30**: A good man (Jesus) sows good seed (i.e., wheat), while an enemy sows tares. Note the parallel in Matthew 13:30: tares are burned while the wheat is gathered. This is John the Baptist's very language in Matthew 3:12. So, **Matthew 13:36–43** is Jesus' interpretation. The time of judgment is coming!
3. **5 Interpretive keys**: It is important to be consistent in interpretation.

4. *"The kingdom of heavens is like"* (Matt. 13:24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47, 52). Many interpreters' conclusions are what the Kingdom of Heaven is "not like"! Consider what you have heard, especially regarding Matthew 13:31–33 (i.e., mustard seed and leaven) and Matthew 13:44–46 (i.e., the hidden treasure and great pearl).
 - a. The *"man"* = the Lord Jesus (He who sows the seed).
 - b. The *"field"* = the world.
 - c. The division = believers (*"good seed"*) versus unbelievers (*"tares"*).
 - d. The judgment = heavenly kingdom (e.g., barn) vs. hell (e.g., fire). Again, consider John the Baptist's words in Matthew 3:12.
 - e. The harvest = the end of the age.
5. **Principle:** Note that unlike the *"tares,"* the lost can be saved. This is our great commission (Matt. 28:18–20). However, we must have a burden (i.e., *"mourn"*). In other words, **we must seek to win the lost.** Our attitude should be that of Paul's, not Jonah's!

Set Three: The Meek and the Mustard Seed

1. **Matthew 5:5**, *"The meek ..."* [Num. 12:3 = Moses was meek; Matt. 11:29 = Jesus is meek] ... *shall inherit the earth* (see Psalm 37:11). "Meekness" is "submission or surrender to God's will."
2. **Matthew 13:31–32**, *"mustard seed"* = faith (Matt. 17:20; Luke 17:6). *"A man"* = Jesus. *"Grown ... greater tree ... nest"* = heavenly kingdom (Dan. 4:10–12, 20; Ezek. 31:3–6). Jesus is the Man who sowed the mustard-seed faith in the world.
3. **Note:** Many interpret this as the Church growing into a religious monstrosity, which then shelters the world (*"birds"*). Certainly, that is "not like" the Kingdom!
4. **Principle:** If we are **meek**, we'll have **mustard-seed faith** and it will work for the expansion of God's kingdom, which becomes a shelter for the small and weak (consider Paul's discussion of weakness in 1 Corinthians 1:26–29).

Set Four: The Famished and the Fed

1. **Matthew 5:6**, *"Hunger and thirst for righteousness"* (present active participle) = God's Word applied through God's Spirit. David had this spiritual craving (Psalm 42:1). Also, see John 6:54, *"They shall be filled."* *Chortazo* means "filled full or fully satisfied." In John 6:35, Jesus says, *"He who comes [continuously] to Me shall never hunger, he who believes in Me shall never thirst."*
2. **Matthew 13:33**, *"The kingdom of heaven is like leaven,"* NOT "is unlike leaven"! Neither the Kingdom, nor the leaven, are evil!
 - a. What made the Feast of Unleavened Bread special? They normally used leaven in bread!
 - b. In Isaiah 49:15, God compares Himself to a mother having compassion on her only son. Leaven is positive!
 - c. In Genesis 18:1–8, we have a biblical example of a woman using three measures of meal. Abraham's *"morsel"* is, in fact, a *"feast"* for the Lord.
3. **Principle:** If we **hunger and thirst for righteousness**, then our benefit is to see that it **permeates our lives**, and that it affects our families, our church, and, ultimately, the world.

Set Five: The Merciful and the Mission

1. **Matthew 5:7**, “*The merciful*” will “*obtain mercy.*” Mercy withholds what we deserve. This is what James 2:8 and 13 teaches us. To be merciful in this life, will bring mercy at the Judgement Seat of Christ.
2. **Matthew 13:44**, “*treasure*” = those He brought to Himself (i.e., Israel in Exod. 19:5 and Psalm 135:4; the Church in 2 Cor. 4:7), “*a man*” = Jesus; “*a field*” = the world.
3. The man “*sells all that He has*” to “*buy that field*” (see also Phil. 2:5–9; 2 Cor. 8:9).
4. **Principle:** Be merciful like Jesus; Fulfill your **mission** like Paul, “*I am a debtor ... I am ready ... I am not ashamed of the Gospel*” (Rom. 1:14–17)! “*He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose*” – Jim Elliot (note Eph. 1:3).

Set Six: The Pure and the Prize

1. **Matthew 5:8**, “*the pure in heart*” requires two cleansings (see John 13:10): 1) once for eternity (see Eph. 5:26), and 2) moment-by-moment cleansing (1 John 1:9).
2. “*They shall see God.*” How? In the effect of their/our lives, our witness, and our labor.
3. **Matthew 13:45–46**, The “*pearl*” may well represent the Church. Consider the bride in Revelation 21:9 and 21, “*I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife ... the [holy] city [Jerusalem] ...*” “*the twelve gates [are] twelve pearls.*” The “***pure in heart***” will continue seeking “***the pearl***” for whom Christ gave everything.
4. **Principle:** We who are the Body of Christ are here to do His will and work on this Earth. Let us be willing to “count the cost” to gain the prize for which Christ died (Phil. 3:4).

Set Seven: The Peacemakers and the Purged

1. **Matthew 5:9**, “*the peacemakers*” are the “*ministers of reconciliation*” of 2 Corinthians 5:18–20.
2. “*They shall be called the sons of God,*” i.e., bearing His likeness, reflecting His character, love, and sacrifice.
3. **Matthew 13:47–50**, “*like a dragnet,*” the **Gospel message** draws in many “*good*” (fish). The “*bad*” (fish) represent the lost (i.e., for whom Christ “*came to seek and save*”). Again, “*I am a debtor to the Greeks [sophisticated] and to the barbarians [uncultured], both to the wise [educated], and the unwise [untaught]*” (Rom. 1:14).
4. **Principle:** If we are true “***peacemakers,***” we will find and fulfill our role in bringing in as many as possible into the **Gospel net**. We know a day of judgment is coming, which will effectively “*separate the wicked [bad fish] from the just [the gathered good].*” Let them hear!

Set Eight: The Persecuted and the Prosperous

1. **Matthew 5:10–12**, “*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,*” is a result of the previous promise-parable sets above, which we take step-by-step in our own spiritual growth and ministry to others.
2. “*Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*” We end where we began, but in **Matthew 5:3**, we possess it ourselves; where as in **Matthew 5:10–12**, we seek it for others to possess. Our “*reward in heaven*” is the “*crown of joy*” (Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19), gained from those we have helped to faith in Jesus Christ.
3. **Matthew 13:51–52**, “*every scribe instructed*” (i.e., a well-taught disciple) “*is like a householder*” [i.e., a good steward] “*who brings out of his treasure things new and old.*”

This speaks of skill in relating Old Testament and New Testament truths and demonstrating the unity and consistency of Scripture.

4. **Principle:** Paul teaches us that “*all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution*” (2 Tim. 3:12). The more effective we are in **presenting God’s Word** to an evil world, the more will be our **persecution**.

Conclusion

We need to daily climb “the ladder” of the Beatitudes and fill out “the ledger” of the Kingdom of Heaven parables. Internal transformation must come before external triumph. Don’t get weary, don’t give up—keep pressing on for the prize of the high calling we have in Christ (Phil. 3:14)!