

THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS

INTRODUCTION

This is the beginning of a series of articles on the thirteenth chapter of Matthew. The chapter is fundamental and primary because in it is a chronological development of Christendom from the time of our Lord's first advent until His return. The Lord Himself gives the interpretation of the parables of the sower and the tares which enables us also to interpret the remaining five.

The first verse says, "The same day, went Jesus out of the house and sat by the seaside." The expression "same day" refers to a particular day, and in the light of the context, that particular day is the one in which the events of chapter twelve took place. The significant thing about the "same day" is that on that day Israel had turned her back upon the Lord, and He then turned His back upon Israel. In the closing verses of this chapter He announced a new relationship which was conditioned upon obedience rather than lineal descent. Now the first verse will be something like this, paraphrasing: "On the day that Israel went out from the Lord, Jesus went out of the house." The expression "house" in relation to Israel sometimes refers to the land of Palestine; sometimes it is the city of Jerusalem; sometimes the temple, and sometimes the children of Israel themselves. For instance, in Matthew 23:38 where the Lord says, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate," He evidently meant all four, because the desolation spread from the land to the people.

The sea in Scripture symbolizes the Gentile nations of the world. I call to your attention the dramatic action of the Lord in the speaking of the parables. In verse one Jesus gets up and goes out of the house and down to the seaside where He speaks four parables: The sower, the tares, the grain of mustard seed, and the leaven. Now in verse 36 we find that after having spoken these four parables Jesus gets up from the seaside, goes into the house and speaks the remaining three parables: the hidden treasure, the pearl, and the dragnet. His action in the light of chapters 12 and 13 gives us this setting: When Israel turned her back upon Jesus, He then turned from Israel to the Gentiles and spoke to them four parables; then, He turned from the Gentiles and went back to Israel and spoke three parables.

Why did He speak to them in parables? The word parable comes from two Greek words, *para*, meaning alongside, and *ballo*, meaning to cast or to throw; that is, to throw alongside. A parable then is a fact of common knowledge put alongside a deep spiritual truth enabling one to understand a truth hitherto not grasped. The Lord did not speak to them in parables in order to keep anyone from understanding. On the contrary, He spoke in parables in order that they might understand. He quoted from Isaiah 6:9, 10 at which time He called attention to the fact that the people themselves had hardened their hearts, deafened their ears, and blinded their eyes lest they should be converted. So the Lord spoke in parables in order that they might

understand once and for all and know the truth of which He spoke.

In verse 11 of Matthew 13, Jesus calls attention to the fact that His disciples who were there with Him could understand the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, but that the others could not. I said disciples of *that* day, because today there are many disciples who cannot understand the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens. And in order to understand the doctrines of the kingdom of heaven one must know that Jesus the Christ is to be a literal, visible, tangible, corporal King, ruling over a literal kingdom composed of geographical territories and literal subjects; seated at times upon a literal throne of David, located in the literal city of Jerusalem in the literal land of Palestine.

Without such a grasp of kingdom truth one is in total darkness pertaining to the kingdom teaching of the Lord. It is impossible to understand without this knowledge because in verse 19, beginning with the interpretation of the parable of the sower, we find the whole parable turns upon the attitude of a disciple toward the word of the kingdom.

“When anyone heareth the WORD OF THE KINGDOM and understandeth it not...” Please note that it is not the word of salvation, it is not the preaching of the gospel, it is the WORD OF THE KINGDOM: that is, the teaching pertaining to the coming of the King and the establishment of His Kingdom during which He shall rule and reign for 1,000 years.

PARABLE OF THE SOWER

In the study of the parable of the sower one must also study closely the parable of the tares and the interpretation which the Lord gave. Because these seven parables constitute one single discourse, we do not look for any discrepancies or any difference in interpretation among these parables.

..... a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side ...; some fell among thorns ...; but other fell into good ground
A key in interpretation is to be found in the concluded translation of portions of verses 19, 20, 22, and 23. Instead of reading in verse 19, “This is he which received seed by the way side,” it should be translated, “This is he which was *sown* by the way side.” Verse 20 should read, “But he that was *sown* into stony places .. .” Verse 22 should read, “He that was *sown* among the thorns...” Verse 23 should read, “But he that was *sown* in the good ground...” The seed sown by our Lord in Matthew 13 are the children of the kingdom. In Luke’s Gospel the seed is called the word of God. Though many think so, there is no conflict in these two ideas because the word cannot be sown except in redeemed men and women; that is, it takes an individual to carry, speak, or write the word. This parable of the sower is not a parable of salvation but of fruit-bearing for the kingdom. All four groups are children of the kingdom and as such, are saved. The result of the inward conflict is not loss of salvation, but unfruitfulness

for the kingdom.

Notice very closely the nineteenth verse. "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not . . ." the word of the kingdom is snatched away, and this child of the kingdom consequently bears no fruit for the kingdom.

In conferences where I have spoken on the kingdom there have been those individuals who have attended and heard but did not understand one single word about the coming kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Of course they are unfruitful and of no particular value to the kingdom. One can be saved without comprehending the kingdom of the Lord, salvation being dependent solely upon faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:30, 31).

We read in the twentieth verse that the second class of the children of the kingdom hear the word, understand it and rejoice in it for awhile, but when tribulations or persecutions arise because of the word, that is, the word of the kingdom of the Lord, they are offended. Again, I have seen many people who hear messages on the second coming of Christ, become thrilled with the message and immediately go out telling people all about the Lord's return; but when some "program man" or "organization individual" ridicules him and his belief in the second coming of Christ, he immediately ceases to witness to the word of the kingdom and becomes unfruitful. I am constantly amazed as I travel over the country at the number of individuals I meet who have heard the word of the kingdom, believed it, rejoiced in it, but have become unfruitful because of a little persecution from leaders in the manmade program. Many a pastor tells me, "I believe about the kingdom just like you do, but if I preached it the denominational leaders would not let my name be considered by a large church." It is absolutely true that a little persecution because of the word of the kingdom keeps many a servant of God from declaring the whole counsel of God.

He that was sown among the thorns is the one who hears the word of the kingdom, believes it, and even propagates it. Such a person is a thoroughgoing premillenarian and will not have a pastor or Sunday school teacher who is not; but the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches keep him so absorbed in world affairs that he does not have time to bear fruit for the kingdom.

In these first three groups we have three different types of children of the kingdom and their response to the word of the kingdom. They bear no fruit at all. Their salvation is not affected because salvation is by grace. It is simply that they do not bear any fruit and will not have any rewards in the coming kingdom.

There is the fourth group described as the ones sown on good ground. They hear the word, understand it, and bring forth fruit. They love the appearing of our Lord, talk about it, and their daily lives are governed by it. You will notice that within this group there are varying degrees of fruitfulness—some a hundred fold, some sixty, and some thirty. They are like the servants of the Lord in the parable of the

pounds: Some gained ten pounds, others gained five—that is, according to their faithfulness in the service of the Lord.

In closing I want to call your attention to the chronological aspect of the parable of the sower. Our Lord being the Sower began to sow the children of the kingdom while He was here on earth. This parable marks the inception of the Christian era; however, the sowing of the children of the kingdom continues even until today.

PARABLE OF THE TARES

After the good seed had been sowed in the field and while men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. When the blade sprung up and brought forth fruit, the tares also appeared. The servants questioned the Sower about the tares, and He replied, “An enemy has done this.” The servant suggested gathering up the tares, but the Sower said, Nay, lest while gathering up the tares the wheat would be rooted up with them. The Sower then said, “Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘Gather first the tares to burn, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

The explanation of this parable by our Lord in connection with the first parable does not leave us in doubt as to the exact meaning. I want just here to graphically depict the Lord’s explanation of the parables:

The Sower is the Son of man.
The field is the world.
The good seed are children of the kingdom.
The tares are the children of the devil.
The enemy that sowed the tares is the devil.
The harvest is the end of the age.
The reapers are the angels.
The fowls symbolize the wicked one.

A careful study of these representations will eliminate completely all guesswork on the interpretation of the parable.

The parable of the sower and the parable of the tares are bound together chronologically and personally. The Sower, who is the Lord Jesus Christ, goes forth sowing seed, which are the children of the kingdom. AFTER the children of the kingdom have been placed in the field, which is the world (that is, after a Christian testimony has been established that is true to the Lord Jesus Christ), Satan comes along and sows tares, which are the children of the devil, AMONG the wheat, or among the children of the kingdom.

Who are the tares? They are children of the devil. They were never children of God; neither can they become children of God. For that reason Jesus says to LEAVE THEM ALONE. All children of the devil are lost, but not all the lost are children of the devil. The tares are individuals who have heard the true gospel, understood it, but have rejected it. Having rejected the true gospel, somehow, sometime, somewhere, they hear a false gospel, the gospel of Satan, believe it, accept it, and thereby become children of the devil just as those become children of God by hearing and believing the true gospel. None is considered a tare in the true sense of the word who has not heard the true gospel and rejected it. We get that from verse 25—the word *among*—the tares sowed *among* the wheat. They have seen and heard and rejected the testimony of Christians. You study the false cults and sects of today: Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses: Seventh Day Adventism; Mormonism; Christadelphians, and scores of others (but these are the most prominent), and you will find these facts to be true: First, their membership is made up of individuals who have come out of orthodox, evangelical churches. They have heard the true gospel and received it not; second, they all deny the deity of Christ. That is, they look like Christians, they act like Christians, they talk like Christians; and our Lord says that it is only in the harvest time that they can be distinguished from the true Christians. The wheat brings forth golden grain but the grain of the tare is black. For that reason our Lord says to LEAVE THEM ALONE, and He Himself will supervise the separation of the wheat and the tares in the end of the age.

One of the sad spectacles of today is the exodus from within the bounds of orthodox Christianity of several hundreds of thousands a year into these false sects. Untold numbers of Jews are joining these cults every year because they think they thus become Christians without changing their attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christianity is not failing, but those who are entrusted with the propagation of Christian truths are failing. People are received into the membership of churches today without having had a real experience of grace. Having never been saved they find no joy, no happiness, no reality in their pseudo-Christian experience, and consequently become an easy prey for Satan and his false gospel, which makes a great show of personal righteousness but knows not the righteousness of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The parable of the tares shows a concerted plan and effort on the part of Satan to hinder the spread of the true gospel, by imitations. I mean by that, Satan with his false church and false Christianity deludes and misleads earnest seekers, and thus militates against the work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

What is the hope, or what is the answer to this problem? Simply this: A return on the part of true evangelicals to their God-given task of teaching the Word of God.

PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying. The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field; Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof” (Matthew 13:31-32).

The common interpretation of the parable is that the mustard seed symbolizes or represents the Gospel of Christ, and the field the world. The Gospel is placed in the world and it begins to grow until it becomes the largest of herbs. The birds are supposed to symbolize people who find safety and refuge in the branches of the tree, which is Christianity. We must learn, however, that the symbolism of the parables has been set by the Lord and He told us that the fowls of the parable (verses 4 and 19) symbolize the wicked one, or Satan. It is true, a grain of mustard seed represents the Gospel of Christ which the Lord Jesus took and sowed in the world.

The smallness of the seed represents the insignificance of the beginning of the Christian movement. But from that small seed—that is, from the least of beginnings—sprouted the mustard bush which grew until it became the greatest among herbs. Christianity spread very rapidly from the days of its inception. I have heard some individuals speak of the comparative lack of growth of Christianity during the days of our Lord, and refer to the fact that at the time of His ascension only 120 converts had been made; however, we know that such is not the case, for Paul mentioned in I Cor. 15 that in the resurrection appearances, He appeared to over 500 of the brethren at one time. There were many, many followers of our Lord and Christianity really spread like the growth of a mustard bush into the largest of herbs from the least of seeds. But what is overlooked by the majority of commentators is the statement that the mustard bush, the greatest of herbs, BECAME A TREE. That is abnormal and unnatural. In the realm of nature, herbs are herbs, trees are trees, grass is grass, etc.; but in the parable of the mustard seed the Lord tells of a vegetable becoming a tree. After it became a tree the birds came and lodged in the branches.

What does a tree in Scripture symbolize? In Judges 9:8-15, trees represent nations. In Daniel 4, the tree represents a nation as a world power. In the New Testament the Lord speaks of the nation of Israel both as a fig tree and as an olive tree. In Luke 21:29, He speaks of the nation of Israel under the figure of a fig tree, and the Gentile nations, under the figure of “All the trees.” I don’t believe it is open to question concerning the symbolism of a tree in Scripture. It must mean a world power.

Now when our Lord says the kingdom of heaven is like unto a mustard seed which grew into the largest of herbs and then became a tree, it is in keeping with the symbolism of the entire Scripture. Christianity started from the smallest and most insignificant of beginnings, developed into the largest of spiritual movements, and

then something happened: It became a tree; that is, Christianity became a world power. On October 28, 312 AD, Constantine the Great decreed that Christianity should be the world religion. This fiat opened the door for political and ecclesiastical intrigue, and of a truth, CHRISTIANITY BECAME A WORLD POWER OVERNIGHT.

Our Lord said in the parable that when a mustard bush became a tree, the birds would find lodgment in the branches; and when Christianity became a world power, the evil one found lodgment within its organization. This is the day of our Lord's rejection, and it is supposed to be the day of the church's rejection. The church is not supposed to be a world power until the Lord returns to the city of Jerusalem to rule and reign for 1,000 years; then, as consort queen, the church is to rule and reign over the world with Christ. The subtlety of Satan is no where manifest to a greater degree than in the way he misguides churches and Christians into programs of world betterment and reform instead of faithfully witnessing to the lost. Today we witness the sad spectacle of the church majoring in trying to produce the effects of the Gospel rather than preaching the Gospel and letting the effects follow as is natural and as they inevitably will. What Satan could not do by persecuting and martyring Christians and hindering the spread of the Gospel, he has accomplished in part by the placing of false Christians among true Christians. The Gospel, nevertheless, has continued to go out to the ends of the earth and Satan has resorted to the scheme of diverting the energy and effort of the church. Social and political reform, humanitarian and benevolent projects, may be worthy causes in themselves, but as such they do not in any way constitute the high calling of the church of the living God.

The effort to make the church a world power has robbed the church of its spiritual power. It was a sad day for the cause of our Lord when the mustard bush became a tree.

PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN

"Another parable spake he unto them: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 13:33-35).

Usually this parable is interpreted thus: The leaven is the gospel, the woman is the church, three measures of meal is the world, and the hiding of the leaven therein with its working continues until the whole world is saved. That would be all right except for the fact that it is all wrong. In the first place, leaven is never used in the Scripture for anything good. In Matthew 16:6-12 our Lord warns His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The disciples thought He was speaking of bread, but Jesus tells them that when He told them to beware of the

leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees He was warning them to beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. In Mark 8:15 we find a further injunction to beware of the leaven of Herod, which was the doctrine of Herod.

Now the doctrine of the Pharisees was the degeneration from true worship into ritualism and formalism, emphasizing, the letter of the law and ignoring the spirit of the law. The doctrine of the Sadducees was that of rationalism with its denial of the supernatural. The doctrine of Herod was that the government under Herod's control would be the panacea for all this world's ills. Jesus sought to turn His disciples away from its falsities and keep their attention focused on Him. In Lev. 2:11, we have positive prohibition from God Himself of putting leaven in the meal offering.

In the next place, three measures of meal is not used of our Lord to symbolize the world. He used the field as a symbol of the world. Three is the number that has no relation to the world but is a number that pertains to God.

The true interpretation of the parable of the leaven follows: In the growth and development of the kingdom of heaven in its outward manifestation, which may also be called Christendom, we have a woman which symbolizes a church, but not the true church. The true church is always characterized by the expression "virgin." This woman, symbolizing the false church, takes the leaven which Jesus calls false doctrine, and hides this false doctrine in three measures of meal. Three measures of meal symbolize the truth and teaching of the Godhead, or the Trinity, with special emphasis on the Son who Himself is the wheat crushed and made into meal, or flour, if you prefer. Leaven is a putrefying agent, producing deterioration in the flour into which it is placed. Our Lord here is speaking of a degeneration which is going to take place in Christendom by the false church interjecting false doctrine into the truth of the gospel until the whole of Christendom shall be permeated with its heresies. The false doctrines introduced into Christendom thus far are in part: the denial of the inspiration of the Scriptures; the denial of the Old Testament miracles; the denial of Israel being God's chosen people; the denial of the dates of the writings of the prophets Jonah, Daniel, and parts of Isaiah; the denial of the ability of God to foretell the future; the denial of the doctrine of the Trinity; the denial of the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus Christ; the denial of His sinless life; the denial of His vicarious death on Calvary's cross; the denial of His physical resurrection and ascent into heaven; the denial of His physical presence at the right hand of God today; the denial of His physical return to sit on the literal Throne of David in the literal kingdom here on the earth for a literal period of 1,000 years; the denial of the literal destruction of the heavens and the earth to be replaced by a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

The work of the leaven has been so subtle and sure that today it is difficult to find a place to worship where the leaven has not manifest itself in part at least.

As we have traced the development of the kingdom of heaven we have noted four major attempts of Satan to bring to naught the work of the Lord through its outward expression on the earth. First, Satan martyred Christians, as is expressed in the fowls snatching away the ones sown by the way side. Then he (Satan) found that the martyring of Christians did not defeat God's purpose but rather caused it to increase in its development, he turned to that shrewd movement of imitation, so aptly described in the parable of the tares. A pseudo-gospel by a pseudo-minister to pseudo-Christians producing a pseudo-church made it next to impossible to distinguish from the true. He turned next to the expediency of making the church a world power as set forth in the parable of the mustard seed, and thereby robbed the church of its true testimony because of the worldliness of the church. But true Christianity continued to spread; and so Satan used a fourth and last means in attempting to thwart the purpose of God through the preaching of the gospel by introducing false doctrines into the pulpits of the land making it next to impossible for the lost to hear the true gospel which they MUST hear before they can be saved.

PARABLE OF THE HID TREASURE

"Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field" (Matt. 13:44).

The common interpretation of this parable is that the treasure hid in the field is the gospel, and the man who is a lost soul is out hunting for salvation, and when he finds the gospel hidden in the world, he goes and sells all that he has, returns and buys the field, and becomes a Christian.

Beginning with Adam in the Garden of Eden after his fall, we find him and Eve hiding from God rather than hunting God and the forgiveness of sin. From that point straight on through the Bible, lost man is always found trying to escape any responsibility concerning his relationship to the Lord. When a lost man is saved it is because God finds him, brings conviction of sin upon him, and brings him in contact with the gospel, whereby he believes unto life everlasting. God takes the initiative in salvation. *"Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16). "No man cometh unto the Father except the Father draw him" (John 6:44).* Man does not become interested in his salvation until after the Lord draws him.

Again, this common interpretation of the parable is not true because there is nothing that man can sell and there is nothing that he can buy in regard to the gospel of the grace of God. How true are the words of the song, "Just as I am without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me ..." Man must come as a poor, humble, repentant supplicant, believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and accepting salvation as a

free gift. *BUT THE GIFT OF God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Rom. 6:23).

No, this parable does not have a thing to do with the gospel of grace nor the salvation of individual souls — but rather it has to do with the nation of Israel.

Israel is the treasure hid among the nations of the world. *"Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine" (Ex. 19:5). "For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure" (Psa. 135:4).* These Scriptures show us that Israel is God's treasure. God's peculiar love for the choice of Israel goes back to Genesis 9:26 and Genesis 12:1-3. In Exodus 4:22 we learn of Israel's relationship to the Lord, and in Romans 11:28, we learn of God's continued love for Israel.

Because of Israel's disobedience God destroyed her cities and scattered her abroad, hiding her in the nations of the world, which is symbolized by the field. The Lord Himself says in Matthew 13:38 *the field is the world.*"

When Jesus came at His first advent, He came only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. In the sending out of the twelve, the Lord sent them, only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Paul's ministry at first was only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and later it was to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Because of Israel's refusal to accept Christ at His first advent the Lord has hidden Israel again in the field and has sold all that He has to buy the field.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:5-8).

Here we have the Holy Spirit's description of Christ selling all He had and purchasing the world with His own blood. Contrary to common theological concepts, God is not through with the Jew, has never been through with the Jew, and will never be through with the Jew. *"I say then, Hath God cast away his people: God forbid..." (Rom. 11:1a).*

Today, Israel is God's treasure hidden in His field, the world, for which the Lord sold all that He had and purchased; and when He returns, He is going to reclaim Israel from the world, restore her to her land, recommission her, and she will again in truth, even as never before, become Jehovah's witnesses.

PARABLE OF THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls; Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it” (Matthew 13:45, 46).

We must do the same with this parable that we have with the others, that is, explain what it does NOT mean. This is not a parable of salvation showing a man seeking to be saved and finding the one pearl of great price (commonly interpreted as salvation) and then selling all that he has and buying it.

I tried to make clear in the first article of this series that in verse 19 of this chapter we learn once and for all that the word is not the word of salvation but the word of the kingdom and that it pertains to saved people and not to lost people. In harmony with the consistent interpretation of these parables, the leading character of the parable of the pearl of great price is the Lord Jesus Christ; He is the Man in all of the parables. When our Lord did change that figure (as He did in verse 33) He made the leading character a woman. In the last three parables—the hid treasure, the pearl of great price, and the dragnet, there are three special groups of people who are going to be in the kingdom of the heavens. In verse 44 we have the first group; namely, Israel converted and restored. In verses 45 and 46 we have the second group and they are symbolized by the pearl of great price. All that is necessary in the interpretation of these parables is to remember the symbolism in them and the Word of God in the whole.

Luke 19:10 says, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Here we have the world-wide mission of our Lord’s first advent: seeking that which He might save. In the parable of the pearl He is the *Merchantman seeking that one pearl of great price*. Having found it He sells all that He has and buys it. *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it was not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:5-8).*

Now I want to call your attention, first of all, to the fact that the pearl is not an Old Testament stone. It was not one of the stones in the breast plate of the high priest, neither is the word pearl found in the Old Testament at all. The occurrence of the word *pearl* in Job 28:18 is a mistranslation. The Hebrew word should be translated *crystal*.

The pearl comes from the oyster which is unclean to the orthodox Jew, and for that reason the pearl has never been appreciated by the Jewish people. The pearl is a New Testament stone. Our Lord used the hid treasure to symbolize Israel; here He is using the pearl to symbolize the church. The hid treasure comes from the field,

which is the world. The oyster bearing the pearl comes from the sea, which symbolizes the Gentile nations. The Jewish people looked on the Gentiles as dogs, that is, the basest of human beings. The oyster, living in the muck and mire of the sea, is one of God's refuse gatherers— "*For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called*" (1 Cor. 1:26).

A foreign particle gets into the side of the oyster and as it protects itself, a substance is built up around this particle. Slight streaks of blood go into the forming of this covering, giving it a pink shade. As the pearl continues to form, a beautiful, lustrous stone is produced. The oyster gives its life when it is broken open and the pearl is removed. The pearl is the only stone which cannot be divided and made into two or more. It is the only stone that may be called a living stone because it grows while in the oyster. It is the only stone whose beauty is enhanced by use. I have been told that unless genuine pearls are worn they lose their luster, but that contact with human flesh restores such luster.

I am sure by now you have been able to see that the Lord chose this pearl of great price to symbolize His church. According to Acts 15:14, He, by His incarnation, made Himself of no reputation, and from His riven side flowed the blood which brought into existence the church, the one pearl of great price.

The church of the living God is an entity which cannot be divided and made into two. It is one. It is a living organism, and its beauty shines out all the more through its activity in faithfulness to the Lord. Ephesians 1:4 reveals to us that we were found before the foundation of the world, and according to Philippians 2:5-8, Jesus sold all that He had. In John 19:30 where He said, "It is finished," He calls attention to the fact that He had paid in full the price for His church—the *one pearl of great price*.

PARABLE OF THE DRAGNET

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just. And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:47-50).

Because of the confusion pertaining to this parable and because it is uniformly called THE GOSPEL NET, I want to establish a fundamental truth pertaining to this mystery.

In the first part of verse 49 it says, "So shall it be *at the end of the world*" A better translation would be, "*at the consummation of the age.*" Young's literal

translation has it, *“at the full end of the age.”* The meaning is that this parable takes place just before and synchronizes with the absolute end of the age when the Lord Jesus Christ shall deliver the kingdom back to God the Father that God may be all in all. If you have noticed the chronological sequence of the parables from the sower down to the dragnet, you have seen that the parable of the dragnet takes place after Israel’s recognition and recommissioning as portrayed in the hid treasure. You have also recognized the fact that the parable of the dragnet takes place after the rapture of the church as illustrated in the parable of the pearl of great price. The parable of the dragnet does not illustrate or portray the preaching of the gospel during the dispensation of grace, rather it is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Matthew 24:14. The preaching of the gospel in this dispensation is characterized by the Spirit of God as the TAKING OUT OF THE GENTILES a people for His name to be put in with the remnant of the election according to grace. The preaching of this parable of the dragnet is a preaching of the GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM for a witness unto ALL THE GENTILES, and it is strictly a witness, and is to be preached to all the inhabitants of the world. As of today, the gospel has not come in contact with over two-thirds of the individuals of the earth’s population, and over two-thirds of the earth’s inhabited portions have not yet been touched.

Now for the exposition of the parable. After God’s dealings with Israel as the hid treasure and with the church as the one pearl of great price, we have the dragnet (the largest of nets or seines known to man) cast into the sea. The symbolism of Scripture is uniform, and throughout the Scripture the land pertains to Israel while the sea pertains to the Gentiles. So, in this parable, Israel on the land puts the gospel of the kingdom net into the sea, which is the Gentiles, and gathers in of every kind until it is full. This is a very comprehensive statement of the extent of the preaching of the gospel and its result. It is to be preached in the whole world, and a host innumerable is to be gathered in. When the net becomes full it is dragged to shore, the good gathered into vessels and the bad cast away. Here we have results similar to the preaching of the gospel today in Christendom. It is the same as it was the night the children of Israel left Egypt: the mixed multitude followed. With the preaching of the gospel today many unbelievers attach themselves to Christian groups. It will be no different with the preaching as described by the dragnet; there will be many interested yet unbelieving people associated with them, but they shall be separated by angels sent forth from heaven to place the true believers in one group and the false professors in another.

Our Lord has spoken of this world-wide ministry of the nation of Israel both in type and in word. We have it in type in the prophet Jonah who typifies Israel as being commissioned of God to go to the Gentiles and preach. He refused to do so and ultimately ended up in the sea, a graphic description of Israel lost in the Gentile nations of the world. In Jonah’s distress and suffering he cried to God. Israel amid the persecution of the great tribulation will call upon the name of the Lord. God heard Jonah and put him back on the land. God will hear Israel and put her back in the land. Jonah once again on the land was recommissioned by God to go to the Gentile

city of Nineveh. Israel back in the land will be recommissioned by God and will once again become Jehovah's witness to the Gentiles (Isaiah 43:9-12). Jonah's preaching as a recommissioned prophet resulted in the salvation of the entire city of Nineveh and its two million souls. Israel, preaching as God's recommissioned witness shall bring to salvation a host of Gentiles that cannot be numbered.

The Lord has spoken by word in Revelation 7. Immediately after the rapture of the church, typified in Rev. 4:1, 2, the four angels holding the four winds (judgments) were commanded, "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads" (Rev. 7:3). That is, before a single movement of the tribulation begins, God's bond slaves are to be sealed. In Rev. 7:4-8 we read that 12,000 out of each of the twelve tribes were sealed, making a total of 144,000. This is the initial group which begins the gospel of the kingdom as prophesied in Matthew 24:14. This preaching does not begin until after the rapture. In Revelation 7:9-17 God gives the result of this preaching of the gospel of the kingdom by the Jewish evangelists as typified in the Book of Jonah and described in the parable of the dragnet. As a result of this preaching, John beheld a great multitude of all nations, kindreds, peoples and tongues. When queried as to the identity of the innumerable host John said, "Sir, thou knowest," and the elder then said to John, "These are they which have come out of the great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

To really understand the parable of the dragnet you must know the Book of Jonah and its symbolism, as well as the teaching of Revelation 7.

Here now is the parable of the dragnet in a very few words. After the rapture of the church, Israel being recommissioned will become God's witness to the ends of the earth, and an innumerable host of Gentiles will be brought to a saving knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ through this Jewish witness. Praise the Lord for the beauty and perfection of His eternal purpose concerning Israel.

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