

ANSWERS IN AGRICULTURE

Matthew 13:1-30; 36-43 / Mark 4:26-29

“Yeshua” §64

The offer of the Messianic kingdom had been rejected, and Jesus has begun to teach about this new “mystery kingdom” in parables. We refer to it as the “mystery” kingdom because there was no previous direct revelation about it in scripture. It was a totally new kingdom, and as such, needed some explanation as to what form it was going to take, and what it was going to be like. Jesus began to teach in Parables, and these first nine parables he taught on that day answers some questions about this new kingdom. We will look at three questions about this kingdom, and see how Jesus provides his Answers in Agriculture.

Part 1.	The Coming of the King
Part 2.	The Authentication of the King
Part 3.	The Controversy over the King
	→ Answers In Agriculture
Part 4.	The Training of the Twelve by the King
Part 5.	The Opposition to the King
Part 6.	The Preparation of the Disciples by the King
Part 7.	The Official Presentation of the King
Part 8.	The Preparation for the Death of the King
Part 9.	The Trial of the King
Part 10.	The Death of the King
Part 11.	The Resurrection and the Ascension of the King
Part 12.	The Sequels

HOW DOES THIS KINGDOM SPREAD? (MATTHEW 13:1-9; 18-23)

This question is answered definitively in this first parable. This mystery kingdom is going to be spread through the preaching of the word of God. The word will go out into the world and it will land on many different “soils” or hearts. Out of these four soils there is only one that participates in the spreading of the kingdom, the good soil. The good soil is exemplified by the disciples who want to know what these parables mean. They are seeking to discover the truths that Jesus is hiding in these short and simple stories. They do not immediately understand what these parables mean, but they have hearts that seek to understand, and in their search for the answers they are rewarded with a correct understanding. Once they had properly understood the words of Jesus about this new kingdom, they are able to spread the seeds themselves. This mystery kingdom is made available to all who hear and respond to Jesus’ words, and there are those who hear and understand that will in turn continue to “sow” God’s word in their areas of life and some of those seeds will find fertile and good soil. This is how the kingdom was spread and continues to spread today; through the words of God being faithfully shared and taught throughout the world. It won’t be spread through rebellion, strength of arms, masterful diplomacy, or simple procreation. The life force of this kingdom is found in the word of God taking root in the hearts of his committed followers.

Jesus has clearly shown the disciples through this parable and its explanation how this mystery kingdom will spread and grow. But Jesus knows that he won’t be with them for much longer, and he knows his followers will come up against the same type of resistance he currently is facing and worse. So he gives them another parable that would assure them that the kingdom, despite the incredible difficulties it will face, will progress just as God intends it to.

WHAT IS THE ASSURANCE THAT THIS KINGDOM WILL PROGRESS? (MARK 4:26-29)

This short parable answers any concerns about the ability of the kingdom to progress, because the life of the kingdom is contained in the words of God, not in human effort or cleverness. The parable shows us a farmer who simply scatters seed around and goes about his business sleeping and rising and has no idea how the seed sprouts and grows. It is a mystery to him. The farmer in this picture would be a somewhat shocking picture of a farmer in the first century. No tilling, no watering, no toiling over the soil is described. Quite the opposite in fact. He simply sleeps and wakes, yet the seed grows and progresses to the end, just like it supposed to. Similarly, the progression of this mystery kingdom is not reliant on human agency, rather Jesus is showing that within the seed itself, is everything that is needed.

I would imagine in times where the followers of Christ felt very ineffective and “unproductive” the truth of this parable would serve as a comforting reminder that the growth of the kingdom, both in individuals as well as globally, rests entirely on the ability of the words of God to progress according to

His plan. This parable is a sharp reminder to us as well, that it is not about how big and fancy and “relevant” we can make ourselves or our programs or our church buildings. The growth of God’s kingdom, and the growth of those within the kingdom, relies completely on understanding the word of God. For the word of God contains all that is needed for mysterious life and growth of God’s people.

We see and understand how this mystery kingdom is spread, and how we can be assured of its progressing according to God’s plan. But there is another issue that we will see Jesus address. It is somewhat tied to the parable of the soils as well. Within “Christendom” the seed will fall on many soils, and there will be those within this kingdom that don’t belong. These would be people who profess faith in Christ but are not truly born again. They do not have the words of life within themselves. Jesus addresses this reality in the parable of the wheat and tares.

CAN WE DISCERN WHO BELONGS IN THE KINGDOM? (MATTHEW 13:24-30; 36-43)

The last parable we will look at addresses an issue that has faced the people of God’s kingdom from the very beginning. The issue of discerning who belongs in the kingdom. The servants of the master see that there are weeds growing up with the wheat and they are willing to go and uproot them, but the master doesn’t let them. Rather he informs them of the plan for separating the weeds out from the wheat. This is a task for the master alone at the end of the age.

This parable is describing the reality that there will be people within “Christendom” who simply are not born again. They are described as sons of the Evil One, who are growing up alongside the true believers. While this is obviously a concern, the point Jesus is making is clear. The Master is the only one who can rightly discern who belongs in the Kingdom, and the only one who can do the separating without damage. The people of the kingdom are not able to discern and separate the wheat (true believers) from the tares (people who falsely claim they believe). The encouragement for the servants is to patiently wait for the Master to work it out. He knows the heart of all people and will rightly judge and divide.

I believe that today we face a temptation similar to the servants. We see people within the community of faith who aren’t living according to the word of God. They are in open and obvious rebellion despite still claiming to be born again. This is heartbreaking and makes us rightly angry! But following closely behind is a temptation to pass judgment on their salvation status, declaring that they aren’t born again or “don’t belong in the kingdom”. This parable would correct us of the thought that we are privy to that knowledge. Only the Master knows, and we must trust him to work it out when the time is right. That being said, it is important to mention that this parable is NOT addressing how we should handle and interact with those who claim to be born again and are living in unrepentant sin. The New Testament gives us instruction for those situations and provides a framework to discern and address those who are living in unrepentant sin. This parable is specifically instructing us that we are unable to discern who is truly born again and belongs in this kingdom. While we may be able to see and address the behavior of a professing believer, we are not able to discern if that profession is false.

Grace Family Needs, News and Notes

2nd Annual Turkey Bowl! Come join us on Thanksgiving at 8am for a game of flag football on the RHS Field. Simply hover your phone camera over the QR code to register. Limited Spots! For Men ages 15+

