

# The Parables of the Mustard Seed, Leaven, Treasure and Merchant

📖 Matthew 13:31-35, 44-46

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In Matthew 13 the first parable is the parable of the sower. It is not a kingdom parable but a parable that introduces the kingdom parables. The first three soils did not receive the seed in such a way that it bore fruit. The fourth soil did receive the seed such that it bore fruit and would therefore bear more fruit. Jesus interpreted this parable by saying that the first three soils heard the kingdom message but had insufficient understanding of the significance of the message and would therefore not receive further understanding through the kingdom parables. They would keep on hearing but they would not understand. They would keep on seeing but not perceive. The fourth soil He said represented His disciples, the only group who did understand the significance of the kingdom message. Therefore they alone would receive further understanding through the kingdom parables.

We should be clear that the formulas "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to..." or "the kingdom of heaven is like..." mean that the objects are being used to represent some truth about this present age relative to the future kingdom. In other words, they are not describing the future kingdom but the present age that precedes and is preparatory for the future kingdom. This is known as the interadvent age. It is the period of time extending from Israel's rejection of the King until Israel's reception of the King. As such it is broader than the Church, beginning before Pentecost and ending after the Rapture, but inclusive of the Church.

The first kingdom parable is the parable of the tares. Jesus also interpreted this parable. It is therefore the key for interpreting all the other kingdom parables which are given no explanation. It begins in 13:24 where we read that Jesus presented another parable to them. This means He used the same imagery of a sower and his seed. However, this time the images are given different symbology. In 13:24 we see a man sowing good seed in his field. In 13:25 while his servants were sleeping, the man's enemy came into the same field and sowed tares, degenerate wheat among the good wheat, and went away. In 13:26 when the wheat headed out the degenerate wheat became evident. In 13:27 the servants asked how the field could have degenerate wheat in it if the landowner had sown only good seeds. In 13:28 the landowner said to them that an enemy has done this. The slaves asked if he wanted them to go and gather them out of the field. In 13:29 the landowner said no because

since they had grown up together their roots would be tangled together and they might uproot some good wheat with the degenerate. In 13:30 he said, let them both grow together until the harvest and at that time he will tell the reapers to gather up the degenerate wheat first, bind it and burn it and then gather the good wheat into the barn. In 13:36 these things had been spoken to the crowds but Jesus left the crowds and went into a house. His disciples then requested that He explain the parable of the tares. In 13:37 Jesus identified the landowner as the Son of Man, a title with definite kingdom connotations. He is the Son of Man and rightful heir of the kingdom. In 13:38 He identifies the field as the world, thus expanding His mission beyond Israel to Gentiles. He also identifies the good seed as the sons of the kingdom, referring to Jewish and Gentile believers in the present age who have their citizenship in the kingdom. And He identifies the degenerate wheat as the sons of the evil one, referring to unbelievers in the present age. In 13:39 He identifies the enemy as the devil and the harvest as the end of the age immediately preceding the kingdom and the reapers as angels who will carry out heaven's judgment on the earth-dwellers.<sup>1</sup> In 13:40 the unbelievers will be gathered up and judged at the end of the age preceding the kingdom. In 13:41 it is the Son of Man who will send the angels to gather them out of His kingdom when He is coming in His kingdom. At that time all who direct people away from the Messiah and those who follow them and thus plunge into lawlessness will be gathered, and in 13:42 cast into the furnace of fire, a real place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. In 13:43, the righteous believers will then enter into the kingdom of God.

The parable is saying that because Israel rejected there is now revealed an intervening age during which the Son of Man will be sowing sons of the kingdom in the world while Satan is sowing sons of evil right alongside of them until the end of the age when the Son of Man will send forth His angels to gather out all the sons of evil. The question was asked last week if Alva McClain held to this interpretation. I didn't know at the time but I looked it up and he does. That's what I expected because he was an excellent Bible student and he understood the kingdom and if he viewed this as during the kingdom itself then that would contradict the teaching in Rev 20 that Satan would be bound during the kingdom. Andy Woods adds something that I want you to consider. His thought was that since in the parable it was difficult to distinguish between the good wheat and the degenerate wheat until near the time of harvest that "...it will be difficult to distinguish between the saved and unsaved within professing Christendom throughout the mystery age." Until "The separation between the saved and the unsaved...made...(13:24-30, 36-43)."<sup>2</sup> It is possible that this transition is in view in the parable. It is true that it is often difficult to tell the difference between the saved and the unsaved in the present age. There is no Scriptural teaching that ensures that all the saved will live healthy, productive Christian lives, only that this is available to them as they walk by the Spirit. However, since the saved are not always successful at walking by the Spirit their lives are often indistinguishable from the unsaved. This is like the period of the wheat and tares growing up alongside of one another but not distinguishable. However, during the tribulation time the distinction between the saved and the unsaved will be clear. This is seen in two ways. First, because apart from those who are still in the process of making a decision, the unsaved will be following anti-Christ and the saved

will be following Christ. There will be no lukewarm believers during this time. This will make it easy to distinguish between the saved and the unsaved, just as the wheat and the tares at the time of harvest. The reason for such clarity in that time is because the intense nature of that period will demand choosing sides. Second, as a visible manifestation of whose side you are on the unsaved will take the mark of the beast and the saved will not. This mark will be a visible mark etched on the skin, perhaps something like a tattoo, it will not be a credit card; a credit card has different numbers to distinguish people but the mark of the beast is the same number to connect people. It is also not a technology device planted within the hand but a mark that is etched upon the surface of the skin that is either the number 666 or the name of the anti-Christ which adds up to 666. In any case, because of the intense nature of that period people will follow either anti-Christ or Christ and a visible manifestation of one's loyalty to the anti-Christ will be his mark and no believer will take that mark. So while the saved and unsaved are difficult to distinguish now they will not be difficult to distinguish at the end of the age and this may be depicted by the parable of the wheat and the tares.

Tonight we come to more parables, I had hoped all get of the parables, but they were too difficult and got the best of me. Tonight then the parables of the mustard seed, the leaven, the treasure and the merchant. I will deal with these in pairs. None of these parables are given explanation and that is why the commentators hit grease at this point. We must proceed with caution. Stallard said, "...since neither Christ nor Matthew interprets these parables (with the exception of the terse interpretation in v. 49-50), the interpreter should be more cautious and perhaps less dogmatic about his conclusions."<sup>3</sup> Alva McClain said, "In no area of the Word of God is there greater need for caution on the part of interpreters than in the parables, and especially in those concerned with the "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." Even the most spiritual and well-taught among students of the Word may go astray here; and many an error has found its basis in some parabolic detail; e.g., the gradual and ultimate triumph of the Church in converting the world through the "leavening process" of the Gospel."<sup>4</sup> We will therefore be cautious and less dogmatic about the meaning of these parables lest we say God said when God did not say. Further, some commentators recognize that the parable of the tares is the only kingdom parable given interpretation and that it may therefore provide a framework for interpreting the other kingdom parables.<sup>5</sup> If this is so then the general framework of interpreting them is as new truths revealed about the intervening age which is preparatory for the coming kingdom.

The first parable tonight is in 13:31-32, the parable of the mustard seed. It is the third in the series of parables and so it was spoken to the crowds. It is a kingdom parable. It was a difficult parable for me. It took a greatly inordinate amount of time to resolve. The views in the commentaries seemed so widely off track to me that I was forced to spend a lot of time looking at the history and what Matthew says and closing off other voices. In verse 31 we read, **He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; <sup>32</sup>and this is smaller than all *other* seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES."** Since this is a parable what is it? It is something well-known from life and true to life of a 1<sup>st</sup>

century Jew. Therefore we must understand the mustard seed as it was understood by the 1<sup>st</sup> century Jew. For this historical background we turn once again to Alfred Edersheim who in his *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* gives this explanation. "In fact, the expression, 'small as a mustard-seed,' had become proverbial, and was used, not only by our Lord, but frequently by the Rabbis, to indicate the smallest amount, such as the least drop of blood, the least defilement, or the smallest remnant of sun-glow in the sky. 'But when it is grown, it is greater than the garden-herbs.' Indeed, it looks no longer like a large garden-herb or shrub, but 'becomes,' or rather, appears like, 'a tree'—as St. Luke puts it, 'a great tree,' of course, not in comparison with other trees, but with garden-shrubs. Such growth of the mustard seed was also a fact well known at the time, and, indeed, still observed in the East."<sup>6</sup> The key then, from this note, is the mustard seed's dramatic change in size from a small seed into a large tree relative to the other garden herbs. This is, indeed, the most important characteristic to observe. With respect to the tree Edersheim gives helpful historical background when he says, "Pictorial, of course, this trait would be, and we can more readily understand that birds would be attracted to the branches or the shadow of the mustard-plant, when we know in Palestine that mustard was mixed with, or used as food for pigeons, and presumably would be sought by other birds. And the general meaning would more easily be apprehended, that a tree, whose wide-spreading branches afforded lodgment to the birds of heaven, was a familiar Old Testament figure for a mighty kingdom that gave shelter to the nations."<sup>7</sup> After much research, this background is indeed, all that one needs to properly interpret the parable of the mustard seed. The focus is on the small seed that becomes a large tree which signifies the kingdom. Ryrie's note says "The kingdom will grow quickly"<sup>8</sup> but nothing in the parable or in the historical background of the growth of this mustard seed mentions anything about rate of growth. Perhaps Ryrie borrowed this view from Walvoord who said, "Although left without interpretation, it anticipated that Christendom as a sphere of profession will grow rapidly from a small beginning to an organization with great power and wealth."<sup>9</sup> Walvoord had mentioned rapid growth but there is nothing in the parable about rapid growth. That is being brought to the text. He also mentions that the tree that results is composed of genuine believers and that the birds in the tree represent professing believers. Nothing like this is in the parable either. All of this is brought to the text. It is not the text. The text is centering on the issues in the historical background cited by Edersheim; first, the remarkable change in the mustard seeds size from small to large and the tree where the birds nesting as the kingdom.

In verse 31 we read that **a man took...a mustard seed and sowed it in his field.** The **mustard seed** in view is not the condiment that we serve with hot dogs. It was a garden seed. The word **field** refers here to "land that has been put under cultivation" and more specifically, as verse 32 notes, to a **garden.** We are looking at one particular seed and its growth relative to other seeds in a garden. In verse 32 he says of the mustard seed, **and this is smaller than all other seeds.** This statement has led many liberal commentators and critics of the Bible to claim that the Bible errs. For example, one author on freethoughtdebater.org quoted C. Dennis McKinsey as saying, "There are 2 significant errors here: first, there are many smaller seeds, like the orchid seed; and second, mustard plants don't grow into trees."<sup>10</sup> The answer to this is rather simple. The Greek word translated "smaller"

is actually a comparative adjective. The thought is that it is “very small” in relation to garden seeds, not that it is the smallest seed in the world of seeds.<sup>11</sup> J. Carl Laney says, “Scientifically we know that there are smaller seeds. However, Jesus was not referring to all seeds but to the garden seeds, the seeds a farmer would plant in the field. The black mustard seed is smaller than a grain seed, a grape seed, or a cucumber seed. It is smaller than the period at the end of this sentence. Of all the garden seeds, it is the smallest, with the greatest growth potential.”<sup>12</sup> That is the key, the smallest with the greatest growth potential. To this we may add the significance of the mustard seed to the average Jew at the time of Christ. As Edersheim noted, “the expression, ‘small as a mustard-seed,’ had become proverbial, and was used not only by our Lord, but frequently by the Rabbis to indicate the smallest amount, such as the least drop of blood, the least defilement, or the smallest remnant of sun-glow in the sky.” It was proverbial among the Jews with reference to the smallest amount. What then does the mustard seed represent? It represents Jesus’ small band of disciples. One may argue it refers only to the Twelve or even the eleven since one of the Twelve is Judas the betrayer. The point is that the great mass of the nation Israel had rejected and so this age would have very small beginnings.

Then verse 32 adds, **but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree.** This phenomena was well-known to life and true to life. As Edersheim notes, “‘But when it is grown, it is greater than the garden-herbs.’ Indeed, it looks no longer like a large garden-herb or shrub, but ‘becomes,’ or rather, appears like, ‘a tree’—as St. Luke puts it, ‘a great tree, of course, not in comparison with other trees, but with garden-shrubs.’” The tree is the result of phenomenal growth. The beginnings were tiny but the end was large. What does the tree represent? It represents the kingdom when it comes. In other words, the sons of the kingdom began with a small group but by the time the kingdom comes the sons of the kingdom will have become a very large group. That a tree represents a kingdom is seen in Dan 4 when Nebuchadnezzar had visions of a great tree. When Daniel interpreted the vision for him he said, “The tree that you saw, which became large and strong, whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth and whose foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt and in whose branches the birds of the sky lodged—it is you, O king; for you have become great and grown strong, and your majesty has become great and reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the earth.” Nebuchadnezzar was the embodiment of the kingdom of Babylon and so the tree represents his kingdom. So here the tree represents the Messiah’s kingdom. Ezekiel 17:23 confirms this association of a tree with a kingdom. “On the high mountain of Israel I will plant it, that it may bring forth boughs and bear fruit and become a stately cedar. And birds of every kind will nest under it; they will nest in the shade of its branches.”<sup>24</sup> “All the trees of the field will know that I am the LORD; I bring down the high tree, exalt the low tree, dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will perform *it*.” A tree commonly represented a mighty kingdom and so the Lord is here predicting the establishment of the Messiah in his kingdom after a period of great growth.

The final expression in verse 32 is **so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES.** The birds are often interpreted as an evil influence or professing believers. They have nothing to do with that. The birds refer to the

nations of the world that will partake of the future kingdom and enjoy the shade and produce of its branches. In other words, the parable pictures the growth of the sons of the kingdom starting small but ending in a large kingdom that provides for people of all nations. George N. H. Peters agrees saying, "...when all this preparative growth has been experienced, *the tree*, i.e. the Kingdom appears and it will be found greater than all herbs (i.e. other kingdoms), affording abundant shelter. The tree *alone* represents the Kingdom, and this Kingdom is shown *to be the result of an intervening* growth or work, a constant accretion or gathering. A tree too is *significant* of a Kingdom, Dan. 4:10, 20; Ezek 31:3. The small flock by constant accessions to its number will ultimately *at the manifestation* of the Sons of God become a mighty nation, a strong people, etc."<sup>13</sup> Mike Stallard seems also to agree saying, "The essential meaning of the parable of the mustard seed is that the period of preparation leading up to the kingdom will be one in which many would come to accept Christ as the Messiah." It is important to note that this interpretation definitively rejects that the parable is about the growth of a present form of the kingdom.<sup>14</sup> Instead, the kingdom is entirely future while the number of the sons of the kingdom is increasing until the kingdom comes. This fits nicely with the portion of the parable of the tares which corresponds to the good wheat which is also the sons of the kingdom.

The next parable is the parable of the leaven in 13:33. It is the opposite side of the parable of the mustard seed. It constitutes just 19 words in the Greek text but far more words have been written on it. It says, **He spoke another parable to them, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened."** The main controversy here is over whether the **leaven** represents good or evil. Those who say it represents good argue that it means the same thing as the parable of the mustard seed, that there will be a growth of the kingdom of heaven or believers or Christendom by the penetrating power of the gospel.<sup>15</sup> So this view thinks that leaven is viewed positively as the penetrating power of the gospel. If this is so it runs contrary to every usage of leaven in the Bible as representing something evil. Since Jesus is using things well-known to life and true to life then the leaven refers to something evil, not good. Toussaint says, "This parable reveals the fact that evil will run its course and dominate the new age. But it also indicates that when the program of evil has been fulfilled, the kingdom will come."<sup>16</sup> It is therefore much better to view the leaven as the growth of unbelief in the age leading up to the kingdom. It corresponds to the tares in the parable of the tares. This means that these two parables, the mustard seed and the leaven, capitalize on the two main elements in the parable of the tares, the wheat and the tares and correspond to the growth of the sons of the kingdom alongside the growth of the sons of the evil one. Mike Stallard agrees saying, "The controlling factor here is the parable of the tares...That parable has two key elements with respect to the activities of the present time, one good and one evil. It is not a stretch exegetically to see that Jesus gives these two parables (mustard seed and leaven) to illustrate the two elements of good and evil. In this light, the period leading up to the kingdom will see many come to Christ, but will also see many reject Him as well. Each of the two parables illustrates one-half of the description given by the parable of the tares."<sup>17</sup> This is a safe interpretation. We should be cautious about interpretations that go out on a limb by reversing usual denotations.

In 13:34 we begin the transition from the crowds to the disciples. The first four parables were given publicly to the crowds. **All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable.** Why did He not speak to them without a parable? Note back in verse 10 that this is what the disciples asked Him. Remember, their question in verse 10 was not asked this early in the discourse. The parallel in Mark 4 tells us that they actually asked this after the first four parables when they went into the house. The point is that Jesus went through four parables to the crowds with His disciples among them and only when He left the crowds and went into the house did they ask, “why do You speak to them in parables?” The very question shows that Jesus had not taught extensively in parables before this time. This was a decisive shift in His ministry. Why? His reasoning in 13:11 is that “to you [disciples] it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.” The crowds were under judgment because they did not understand the significance of His person and work and henceforth sided with the Pharisees who argued that He had done His miracles by Satan. So while a parable was usually used to help understanding by casting down something well-known to life and true to life, these parables would not help the crowds understand. They were under judgment. God had struck their ears so that they would continue to hear but not understand and their eyes so that they would continue to see but not perceive.

In 13:35 we virtually get a definition of a “mystery.” **This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: “I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN PARABLES; I WILL UTTER THINGS HIDDEN SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.”** What’s the text Matthew is quoting? Ps 78:2. This is a Psalm of Asaph. Who was Asaph? Asaph was David’s choir director. He was a very skilled musician. Next to David he wrote more Psalms than anyone else, attributed to him are twelve Psalms, Psalms 50 and 73-83. Psalm 78:2 is quoted loosely by Matthew as being fulfilled in Jesus’ teaching in parables. In the original context Asaph spoke of old truths known by the fathers being forgotten by later generations but finally remembered and taught to the children. The way it is being fulfilled in Matthew’s day is by application of the principle of things hidden from generations now revealed. This is virtually a definition of the word “mystery” that Jesus uttered in 13:11 since a mystery is something that is hidden in God **SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD** but is now being revealed through **PARABLES**. As we have said before, these parables are revealing new truths about the kingdom to the disciples that had been hidden in God. The primary truth they are revealing is that the Messiah’s coming would be interrupted by an intervening age during which the Messiah would be offered to the whole world with two responses; rejection and acceptance. In the OT this intervening age was not mentioned. We only know about it now because Jesus began revealing it in these parables.

In 13:36 it is reported **Then He left the crowds and went into the house.** So the first four parables were uttered to the crowds and now He goes into a house where He will interpret two of those privately to His disciples and give them four more parables. This was probably in Capernaum.

We won't bother going through His explanation of the parable of the tares in 36-43 since we've already done that. Let's move to 13:44, the parable of the treasure. This is another very short parable of only 31 Greek words<sup>18</sup> yet I pulled out every book in my library that dealt with it and boy, let me tell you, we'd need a week to go through all the interpretations of this one. You'd think you were walking through Disneyland, there's something for everyone. Let's read it and as you do try to think what the focal point is. This requires a lot of discipline. **The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.** There's lots here that you could get distracted by but what's the focal point? The value of the treasure. I mean, think about the value of this treasure. It was so valuable that the guy stumbled upon it, it was on someone else's property, it was so great he couldn't remove it so he hid it again and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field so he can have it. Talk about valuable. Isn't that what it's saying? I think if you keep what is said in mind and not what everyone else says about this then you'll be alright. What then is the treasure that is so valuable? It's the kingdom. It's talking about the infinite value of the kingdom and that is really all it is talking about. The rest of the picture of the man finding it, hiding it, selling all his goods and buying the field is just pointing up how valuable the kingdom really is. Radmacher, House and Allen in the Nelson Study Bible nail it when they say, "The central truth being taught is the immense value of the kingdom..."<sup>19</sup> There are actually very few who really see this.<sup>20</sup> George N. H. Peters is pretty clear when he says of this parable "...the one likens the Kingdom to the treasure..."<sup>21</sup> Of course, this fact should prompt us to reevaluate our priorities. This is the challenge of the next parable.

In 13:45 we come to the parable of the merchant. This is not the parable of the pearl.<sup>22</sup> That is misguided. Jesus says **the kingdom of God is like a merchant seeking fine pearls.** It is therefore the parable of the merchant. What then is to be our focus? The **merchant.** Who is a **merchant?** A **merchant** is one who seeks to invest in things of value so that he can be a successful businessman. This **merchant** was **seeking** to invest in **fine pearls.** What was the value of **fine pearls** in the ancient world? In the ancient world **fine pearls** were considered to be more valuable than gold, among some people groups as much as three times as valuable as gold! He was therefore seeking the most valuable asset to invest in. Did he find it? In 13:46 we find that **upon finding one pearl of great value he went and sold all that he had and bought it.** Think about what this man did. This man sold everything he owned so he could buy one thing. That ought to tell us something. The one thing this **merchant** sought out and bought was of great value. He literally is putting all of his eggs in one basket. Some people would say that is a silly thing to do. But is it silly? Well, it depends on the value of the thing you bought. If the thing fades then it is silly. But if it is eternal it is not silly. What did this man buy? **One pearl of great value.** What then is the **one pearl of great value?** It is the thing of eternal value that will never pass away; the kingdom. What then is the point? Jesus' point is that this man sought the kingdom first. Matt 6:33, seek first His kingdom and all things will be added unto you. Clearly this man is a believer who has his priorities straight. He has kingdom priorities. He thinks about the kingdom. He hopes for the kingdom. He seeks for the kingdom. He stores up treasure in heaven for use in the kingdom. The kingdom is the big idea of Scripture and it is to order

our priorities. This is a picture of a believer with the right priorities. Do you seek first the kingdom? Even in the age that we live in demarcated as the church, do you seek the kingdom first? You do know that the church is not greater than the kingdom but the kingdom is greater than the church. The church is merely a preparatory stage on the way to the kingdom. What was Jesus teaching His disciples after His resurrection? Now this is in Acts 1. What was the topic of His teaching for forty days in His resurrection body? It wasn't the church. It was the kingdom. Forty days of kingdom teaching. If that doesn't seriously bother you and get you to re-evaluate your thinking about the church and the kingdom I don't know what will. We are not to be seeking the church, we are to be seeking the kingdom. Why? Because we are "sons of the kingdom." This means that we are heirs of the kingdom. We will all inherit the kingdom. The question is how wealthy do you want to be in the kingdom? How great do you want your inheritance to be? If you are smart, as Jesus said, you will seek first the kingdom and then all things will be added unto you; you will be infinitely wealthy. The parable then is about a believer who has the right priorities in this mystery age. His every thought, every desire, every deed is with respect to the kingdom. He knows the value of the kingdom!

Parable	Reference	Meaning
Sower	Matt 13:3-9; 18-23	Only those who understood the significance of His Person and Work would receive new revelation about the kingdom
Tares	Matt 13:24-30; 36-43	Sons of the kingdom would grow up alongside sons of the devil during this age before the Son of Man returns in judgment to establish kingdom
Mustard Seed	Matt 13:31-32	The sons of the kingdom began very small in number but grew to be a great kingdom for all the nations
Leaven	Matt 13:33-35	The sons of the devil would grow up during this age prior to the kingdom's arrival
Treasure	Matt 13:44	The kingdom is immensely valuable
Merchant	Matt 13:45-46	The believer who seeks the kingdom first will be successful

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<sup>1</sup> Earth-dwellers is a technical term in the Book of Revelation for unbelievers who are thoroughly seated in this world.

<sup>2</sup> Andy Woods, *Introduction to the Book of Matthew*, p 45-6.

<sup>3</sup> Mike Stallard, *Hermeneutics and Matthew 13. Part II, Exegetical Conclusions*, paper delivered at the Conservative Theological Society, August, 2001, p 18.

<sup>4</sup> Alva McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, p 324.

<sup>5</sup> McClain agrees, see *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, p 324.

<sup>6</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 1 (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1896), 592–593.

<sup>7</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 1 (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1896), 593.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible*, note on Matt 13:32.

<sup>9</sup> John Walvoord, *Thy Kingdom Come*, p 101.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.freethoughtdebater.org/2011/12/30/bible-errors-and-contradictions/>

<sup>11</sup> See Walvoord, *Thy Kingdom Come*, p 102.

<sup>12</sup> J. Carl Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions*, p 196.

<sup>13</sup> George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom: Vol. 2, Prop. 108*, p 22.

<sup>14</sup> Various interpretations and identifications of this parable are found in the literature. John Walvoord views the mustard seed as the growing sphere of Christian profession. Stanley Toussaint views the mustard seed as signifying phenomenal growth and the birds in the tree as representing the great response to the kingdom message but strangely disconnects the tree from having any connection to the kingdom. Dwight Pentecost teaches that the mustard seed represents the new form of the kingdom which will begin insignificantly but spread out to the ends of the earth.

<sup>15</sup> An alternative but similar view is taken by Dwight Pentecost who says that the point of comparison is what yeast does when it is introduced into the flour. It causes a transformation from within. Thus the kingdom would progress by inward means effected by the Holy Spirit. Edersheim also has this positive view of the leaven.

<sup>16</sup> Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 182.

<sup>17</sup> Mike Stallard, *Hermeneutics and Matthew 13. Part II, Exegetical Conclusions*, paper delivered at the Conservative Theological Society, August, 2001, p 18.

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<sup>18</sup> 32 in the Byzantine text.

<sup>19</sup> Earl D. Radmacher, Ronald Barclay Allen, and H. Wayne House, *The Nelson Study Bible: New King James Version* (Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers, 1997), Mt 13:44.

<sup>20</sup> John Walvoord says that the treasure is Israel and that Jesus is the one who bought Israel but Israel remains a hidden entity in the world and will only emerge in the end as a major factor leading to the Second Advent. Andy Woods view is similar as is Barbieri's. Dwight Pentecost says that the treasure is Israel in exile purchased by Christ's death so that He can acquire them at the Second Advent. Toussaint says that the treasure is the kingdom from Israel's perspective. It came into focus with Solomon but then went into obscurity. Then the king came and the kingdom came near but it was rejected and so hidden and Jesus died to purchase it only to unveil it at the Second Advent. Tom Constable says that the treasure is the kingdom which was hidden for hundreds of years from the exile until the Jews stumbled on it in Christ's day but did not see its significance. The point is that Jesus' disciples should be willing to pay any price to have a significant part in the kingdom. Charles Ryrie thinks that the treasure and the pearl indicate the incomparable value of the kingdom but holds out that it's possible that the man is Christ who sacrifices His all to purchase His people. Glasscock mentions the view that the treasure is the kingdom but prefers the view that says the treasure is the church and that Jesus paid the redemption price for the church. Most acquiesce to some similar identifications. It seems to me that it is going too far to try and identify each element in the parable. The intent of a parable is more general in nature. Usually one point is being made. In this parable the point is the immense value of the kingdom.

<sup>21</sup> George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom: Vol. 2, Prop. 108*, p 23.

<sup>22</sup> Interpretations of the parable of the merchant/pearl abound. Most focus on the pearl. John Walvoord views the pearl as the Church and the man who acquired it as Jesus who died for the Church. It is pictured as a pearl because a pearl is formed by grains of sand irritating the oyster and the church formed out of the irritating wounds of Christ. Stanley Toussaint views the pearl as the true Church and the one buying it as Jesus who redeemed the Church by His blood. Since the pearl comes out of the sea this may refer to the church being composed of every nation of the earth. Dwight Pentecost viewed the pearl as Gentiles since they come out of the sea. This treasure of Gentiles is purchased by God. Others, however, see the pearl as Israel and the treasure as the Church. There is much confusion. Again, seizing upon too many elements in the parables is the essential problem. A parable focuses on one major point. When the details are not identified we should restrain ourselves from identifying them and look for the one major point.