

**Kingdom Parables, Part 1**

Scripture: Matthew 13:1-2

Code: 2297

I'm excited this morning to be able to take us back to Matthew chapter 13. After a couple of months being diverted to study the matter of worship, we return now to this wonderful gospel of Matthew. I hope you have your Bible ready there and open to Matthew chapter 13. We're going to just get a brief introduction, really, to the chapter and barely enter it but what we have to say this morning is utterly important.

Now, the marvelous thirteenth chapter of Matthew marks a new division in Matthew's gospel. It is a very clear point of beginning a new train of thought. It opens us to a new perspective in our Lord's ministry. Let me see if I can set that in your mind. Matthew's gospel is geared, primarily, to present Jesus Christ as the King, the Son of God, the Messiah, the rightful heir to David's throne.

And it began in chapter 1 by showing Him as the one who should reign because He was in the Messianic line. He is indeed the son of David. In chapter 2, His right to reign was affirmed by the oriental kingmakers that we know as the wise men or the magi who, in their own understanding of prophecy and through the direction of the Spirit of God, were led to confirm that this was the King. That is affirmed again in chapter 3 by the testimony of John the Baptist who was the foreordained forerunner to the King.

Then in chapter 4, the King, again, was attested to by His conflict with Satan. And the very fact that Jesus overpowered Satan, conquering the kingdom of darkness, was a clear testimony to the fact that He was God's chosen anointed King. For only God's King could overcome Satan. Having then affirmed in a positive way in chapters 1 to 3 and a negative way in chapter 4 that Jesus is the King, He speaks then with authority in chapters 5, 6 and 7. He speaks as a King. And you have the principles of His kingdom in chapters 5, 6 and 7 in that great Sermon on the Mount.

Then in chapters 8 to 10 you find the credentials of the King. And there are His miracles, three chapters full of miracles. They are the prophesied credentials, as again and again He proves Himself to be the King in His supernatural power. And running parallel with His credentials in chapters 8, 9 and 10 is a mounting, ascending rejection. It's a very strange situation. The greater the evidence that He is the King, the greater the rejection, which shows the profound blindness of the people.

Finally, you come to chapter 11 and Jesus denounces the sinful nation of Israel for rejecting Him. And He promises them severe judgment, then closes chapter 11 with an invitation. "Come unto Me all ye

that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” So, out of the message of judgment comes again the message of grace, an invitation. And then, when you come to chapter 12, rejection reaches its climax and the pronouncement of judgment reaches its climax as well. Their final rejection is summed up in the fact that they accuse Jesus of being Satanic. And Jesus then pronounces a final judgment on the leaders and says, “You’re beyond the point of being forgiven.”

But even chapter 12 closes with another invitation. Verse 50, “For whosoever shall do the will of My Father who is in heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother.” And what was the will of the Father in heaven? Very clearly the Father had said, “This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him.” And whoever recognized Jesus as the Son of God and whoever heard His message would come into an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. So, Christ has been proven to be the King. The people have rejected Him as the King. He has pronounced judgment on them and yet offers an invitation to whoever will believe.

So as you approach chapter 13, the die is cast. Israel has rejected the King. Israel, therefore, has rejected the kingdom because you cannot separate the kingdom from the King. For centuries they had awaited the Messiah. For centuries they had awaited the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth. They had awaited the times of refreshing, the restoration, the granting back of the glory and the blessing that was man’s before the fall. And when it was offered to them, they refused it and they lost it in that generation. And so, as you approach chapter 13, you enter a new dimension, a new perspective in the ministry of Christ.

Stanley Toussaint in his commentary on Matthew says, “Not seeing the Messiahship of Jesus in His words and works, they have separated the fruit from the tree,” end quote. And I think that an important statement because it is not that they denied His miracles, it is not that they were not fascinated by His words, it is not that they were not aware of His power, it is that they never traced the fruit to its logical conclusion. They separated it from the reality of who He was.

And so as you come to chapter 13, you can see the shadow of the cross looming in the background. Already in chapter 12 verse 14, they had sought to destroy Him. They had reached the point of wanting only to kill Him. They have rejected the King. They have rejected His kingdom. Now, the question that immediately comes into my mind and in the mind of any intelligent reader or any thoughtful reader is this.

If Jesus came to offer the kingdom, if Jesus came to bring His kingdom to earth, to reign and to rule and to establish that which was promised, and they refused Him and refused His kingdom, what then happened to the kingdom? What happens now? And that is exactly the question answered by chapter 13. It tells us what is going to happen.

Because, you see, the kingdom cannot come...listen carefully to this...until the nation of Israel receives the King. And so, at this point, the kingdom had to be postponed in terms of its full fulfillment. And I know that sounds redundant but it's still a good phrase as I hope you'll understand before we're through. Because they rejected the King, the kingdom in its full fulfillment had to be postponed. And it had to be postponed to a future time. What time? The second coming of Christ.

You see, that's why Christ is coming a second time, to bring the kingdom that was refused the first time. He came and His message was this, "Repent for the kingdom is at hand." And the message of John the Baptist, His forerunner, was the same. "Repent for the kingdom is at hand." And the message of the apostles, chapter 10, verse 7, was the same. The kingdom of God. They were preaching the kingdom, the kingdom, the kingdom. And the people said no to the King and no to the kingdom and the kingdom therefore was postponed.

You say, "Well, why didn't God just eliminate it altogether?" Because God made a promise to Israel and God keeps His promises. God is a God of His Word. And if God just set the kingdom aside and said, "Forget it, I gave you one shot at it," and dropped it, then his prophecies would not come to pass and His Word would be violated. And so, it is postponed until they believe. And the day will come when they do, you know.

For example, Zechariah says, "The day is coming when they will look on Him whom they have pierced and they will mourn for Him as an only Son, and at that moment a fountain of salvation will be opened up to the line of Israel and the nation will all be regenerated." They will be redeemed. There's coming a day when they look on the one they've pierced and they will have a fountain of cleansing opened to them. They will be redeemed.

So, all Israel will be saved, Paul says. We know that's to come and we believe it to come in the time known as the great tribulation. At that time, also, it says in Revelation 7, "There will be so many Gentiles saved they will be unable to be counted. And innumerable hosts from every people, tongue, tribe and nation across the globe." So, you have the nation of Israel redeemed.

You have worldwide Gentile salvation and when the kingdom of God comes into the hearts of men, internally, then it will realize its full fulfillment, externally, as Christ reigns on the earth for a thousand years in the millennium, spoken of in Revelation 20. And so, when we talk about the full fulfillment of the kingdom, we mean that kingdom which comes to pass on the earth both internally, that is in the hearts of believing people, and externally, as Christ rules and reigns as King on the earth.

Now, there were some. There was a remnant who received the King internally. And there are today those who receive the King internally. But someday there will be a massive response, and when the kingdom comes internally at the level that it does in the tribulation time, then it will come externally in the wonderful millennial reign of Christ on the earth for a thousand years.

But what happens in the middle? What happens between now and then? This is the period that some theologians have called “The Parenthesis.” Some have called it “The Interim.” Some have called it the “Interregnum.” But it is a period that is not seen in the Old Testament. And so, Jesus calls it the mystery. That is that which was hidden from time past.

They didn't see this period of time. That's why you have to have chapter 13 because they had no teaching on what it would be like. And so, in chapter 13, you have a series of eight parables from verse 1 on to verse 52, and in those parables...listen now...Jesus describes the interim period. He describes that parenthesis in which we live. We're in that period. And that is what makes this so profound for us, because if we can understand what Jesus says about this period, then we can understand how to be about doing what He wants done in this period, you see?

We need to understand chapter 13 because it's talking about our time, our period. What it will be like when the King has been rejected and the kingdom postponed until He comes again to set up His kingdom. What's it going to be like? This describes...believe me; it describes Christianity in 1982 to the very tee. It's amazing. Our Lord said it would be this way, and each of the parables discovers another facet of this period and you'll see how they perfectly parallel our time.

Now, we call this the mystery form of the kingdom, the mystery form. And by that we don't mean that it's a sort of a clandestine secretive thing. Mystery simply means something that was hidden and is now revealed. That's the biblical use of the term. And we'll see more about that next week. But it means that this is something they didn't see in the Old Testament. This was something they didn't know. They only saw the Messiah coming and setting up His kingdom.

Now there were a few subtle little hints that there might be something going on in there, but they never got a description of it. They just saw the Messiah coming and establishing His kingdom internally and externally. They didn't see this period. And so we call it the mystery form, that which was hidden from the past. And it is a period of time...mark this carefully...when the kingdom goes on with the King being absent.

Jesus, at this point, is in heaven. Now, that is not to say that He's not present in our midst, obviously the Bible says it. But in terms of where He identifies Himself biblically, in terms of that glorified body, He dwells with the Father at the right hand interceding for us in heaven. And He is awaiting the time to return to earth.

So, there's a sense in which this is the kingdom with the King in absentia. Now, some theologians have found difficulty with this and, therefore, determined that you cannot have a kingdom if the King isn't here. But that is not the case. There is a realm here and there are people here who are subjects of Christ, and Christ is the King by definition of who He is, though He is in absentia. And the classic

illustration of this is found in David.

David was still the king of Israel even when Absalom rejected him, even when Absalom's revolutionary cohorts rejected him. Even when they chased him into the wilderness and he hid for his life for a long period of time, he was still the king, Israel was still his realm, he still had the right to rule, and he was still the recognized monarch in the hearts of many of the people. And there was a day when he came back to take up the throne that was rightfully his. And so, Christ in that sense...sense is the King in absentia.

Now, the chapter then describes this period of time, when the Lord Jesus Christ is ruling on the earth, though He Himself personally in His glorified form is absent. Now, to help you understand this further...and I want you to get ready. Here's your theology lesson for this month, and you need to get this foundation.

I want you to understand the concept of the kingdom. Now, may I say at the very beginning that this is a very big issue to discuss, and it's...it's got all kinds of possibilities and ramifications. We could spend hours and months and years studying the kingdom, but let me see if I can reduce it down to something you can really grab on to and get the heart of the matter.

There are two basic aspects of God's kingdom, and you need to understand these at the very beginning. First, is God's universal kingdom, and that's very simple to understand. That means God rules everything and everyone forever. He rules everything and everyone forever. He is the sovereign, He is the creator, He is the sustainer, He is the beginning and the end of all things. He dominates all things, He rules over everything and everyone forever.

In Psalm 29, for example, in verse 10, it says, "The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King forever." He is then eternally the King. There is no time when He is not the King, and there is no time when someone else takes His place. He is the King forever. Then if you look at Psalm 103 verse 19, you would read this, "The Lord has prepared His throne in the heavens and His kingdom rules over all." So, He is not only the King forever but He is the King over everything.

You say, "Well, what about the devil?" He's the King over the devil. "Well, what about the demons?" He's King over the demons. "What about the unbelievers?" He's the King over them. That's why He has the power to throw them all into hell. That's why the Bible says, "Fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." He is the King of hell. Hell is not run by Satan; Satan is punished in hell along with all the others. God runs hell just like He runs everything else from the viewpoint of His universal monarchy. He is the King over everything and everybody forever.

In fact, in I Chronicles 29 verse 11, it says, "Thine, O Lord is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is

the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all.” God is the King. God is the universal King. So that the first perception we need to have of the kingdom of God is that which gives us His universal rule over everything and everybody forever. And that’s very important and very basic. And sometimes when you read the term, the kingdom of God, in the Bible it is that which is being spoken to.

But then there’s a second aspect of God’s kingdom. And I suppose that Alva McClain has given it a title that’s as good as any. I’ve searched my own mind for a better one and haven’t found one. Let me use his term. He calls it the “mediatorial” kingdom. That is it is mediated. It is not the direct rule of God; it is mediated through some other agency, through some other individual or individuals. And it refers to God’s rule on earth. It is directly referring to God’s rule on earth.

Now, it is this kingdom that is in view in Matthew chapter 6 when the Lord says this, “Pray this way: Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done –” What’s the next phrase? – “on earth as it is in heaven.” The “as it is in heaven” perceives the universal kingdom of God; the “on earth” perceives the earthly mediated kingdom of God.

And the prayer says, “God, rule on the earth the way You rule everywhere else.” So that the earth somehow is isolated in the midst of God’s universal kingdom as a point of rebellion. And it is the only point, really, where the rebellion is focused, in the universe. And here is the prayer. “God, rule on earth as You rule everywhere else in Your universe.” And this brings us to the perspective of the mediated kingdom.

In God’s great glorious universal kingdom there is a...there is a little tiny stage of rebellion. Now, when God created the world, He designed to rule on the earth through human instruments. Now, keep that in mind; that’s the key. He designed to rule on the earth through human instruments. The first, Adam and Eve, and He said to them, “Have dominion over the earth,” didn’t He. Have dominion over everything that’s created. You rule for Me. You are My vice-regent; you are My vice-monarch; You are My sub-king, if you will. You rule for Me. You mediate My rule on the earth.

And, of course, they fell prey to Satan. And at that point, the rebellion set in, and Satan became the God of this world. Satan became the prince of this world. Satan became the monarch of this world. And there is now ruling in the earth, a usurper, isn’t there? But God, then, comes back and says, “I still want to mediate My rule on the earth. I want My will known, I want My Word known, I want My principles known, I want My moral standards known, I want people to be subjects to Me, and so I want to call men into My kingdom.” And He designed to do that and He did that and has done that from that time on.

You say, “Even after the fall?” That’s right. And if you follow the book of Genesis, you’ll see that God mediated His rule on the earth through patriarchs, great godly men who knew the mind of God, the

heart of God, the will of God and gave that expression of His will and heart and mind to the people of their time. You see them there. And you can trace the men that God used. You can see the Seths and the Noahs and the Abrahams and the Isaacs and the Jacobs and the Josephs and even the Melchizedek, at one point, who was a priest who was a priest of the Most High God.

But God mediated His rule through certain individuals. And then God called out a nation of people who would be His human agents to mediate His rule, and it was the nation Israel. And what was Israel's calling? Israel's calling was to give to the world the world...the Word of God, wasn't it? The statutes of God, the principles of God, the mind of God, the heart of God, and to call the world with the knowledge of the true God, Deuteronomy 6:4. And God, in the nation Israel particularly, called out prophets, didn't he, and priests and kings to be His key human instruments to mediate His rule on the earth. And you have that all throughout the Old Testament.

You come to the New Testament and, all of a sudden, God directly gets involved in mediating His kingdom through the human instrument, Jesus Christ, and Jesus becomes a man. And Jesus comes into this world in human form, and He tells us what God is like and He tells us what God's standards are and He preaches the kingdom of God and He calls for people to be subjected to the kingdom of God. And He is mediating God's kingdom, as it were, to men. Jesus is rejected. He goes back into heaven and immediately the message goes on and it is carried by the apostles and it is carried by the prophets. And the church then becomes the agency.

And in our day, God is mediating His rule on the earth through the believers who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. And we are God's agents to speak the Word of God, to hold up the standards of God, to bring to men God's will and way and moral values, and we are here to call men to enter into God's kingdom. And there will be a day in the future, in the tribulation, when God will anoint 144 thousand Jews and those Jews will mediate in the sense that they will take God's message to the world.

And there will be a worldwide revival so that numerable Gentiles and the nation of Israel is saved, and then Christ will come back and mediate His own kingdom on the earth again. And then that mediated kingdom ultimately will merge completely into the eternal kingdom which is known as the new heavens and the new earth. And all that once began at the creation will end at that final merger, and we'll go into eternity that way.

Now, do you understand a little bit about how those two kingdoms work, or two facets of the same kingdom? Now, let me talk for a moment about this mediatorial kingdom, this kingdom which on earth is mediated through the instruments God chooses. As you look at the kingdom on earth as it is defined biblically, you must understand several things.

And the first is this. That it is a kingdom composed of the true and the false. If you don't understand that, you get very confused biblically. That the kingdom is a term that encompasses all those who

externally identify with the people of God. So you're looking at it from...from the earthly view. As we look at the kingdom of God on the earth, the mediatorial kingdom, we see outward profession and inward possession.

And the fact of the matter is we really sometimes can't tell which is which, right? We don't know, always, who's real and who isn't. Now, this has been true in God's kingdom. You go all the way back when God began to mediate His kingdom after the fall. And there were people, for example, in the nation Israel through whom God was mediating His kingdom. There were people in the nation Israel who weren't really true to God, right?

Remember what it says in Romans 9? Paul said this, "All Israel is not Israel." All Israel is not Israel. He also said, "A Jew is not a Jew who is one outwardly –" Romans 2 – "but is one –" what? – "inwardly." So, there will always be identified with the quote/unquote "kingdom of God" both the true and the false. If you don't understand that, you get very confused.

Let me give you an illustration of that right here in Matthew. Back to chapter 8, it says in verse 12 an interesting word, "But the sons of the kingdom –" the sons of the kingdom – "shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Now if you know anything about the New Testament and anything about the gospels, you know that is a description of what place. Hell, eternal hell. Now, it seems to me that believers do not go to hell. Is that true? That is true. Believers do not go to hell. Unbelievers go to hell.

But would you notice the title of the people who are sent to hell here? Where is there a title? "Sons of the –" what? – "sons of the kingdom." Therefore we can conclude that not all sons of the kingdom are what? believers. And that is the whole point the Lord is making. So, you must see within the framework of the kingdom the true and the false.

And we'll see that in Matthew 13 because growing together in the field is the wheat and the tares. And we'll see that. Now, if you want to see it from an...and by the way, this is consistent all through the Scripture. If you look at John 15, I think you see another illustration of the very same principle. And people get confused about John 15 because they don't understand this concept.

John 15 does not use kingdom terms, it uses the terms of vine and branches, which is an agricultural metaphor rather than a kingdom metaphor. But, nonetheless, the idea is the same. Jesus says, "I am the true vine and you are the branches." Now, who are the branches? Who are the branches? Look at verse 2. "Every branch in Me." All right, the branches are people in Christ somehow.

I'm not sure of all that means yet in reading this; we have to go on. "But every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away." Did you hear that? You want to see what He does with it? Verse 6 tells you, "Men gather them, cast them into a fire and they're burned." What do you think that describes?



Take a wild guess. Hell. It describes hell.

Now, it says a branch in Me that doesn't bear fruit is going to be thrown into hell. And you say, "Wait a minute. Does this mean you can lose your salvation?" No, no. You see, you've got to go back to the kingdom principle that you can be in the kingdom and not of the King. You understand? You can be superficially attached. I think He's talking about a Judas branch at this point. Where the outward attachment is there but the obvious lack of life is manifest in the fact that there's no fruit. There's no fruit.

And this is the principle that you have to keep in mind as you get into Matthew 13. That the kingdom of God, mediated today, as we're living in this interim period, this time of the mystery kingdom, as at other times in the kingdom will encompass the true and the false. And some of the sons of the kingdom and some of the branches that attach themselves are going to go to hell, see. Because, there was no real life there. There was no real subjection there to the King. Now then, you understand some very basic things about the kingdom. And this is what is in Matthew's mind as we come to chapter 13. He will show us the character of the kingdom as it will exist in this interim period in which we live.

Now, let me give you another thought about it. God's universal kingdom has no conditions for entrance. Did you get that? God's Universal kingdom has no conditions for entrance. If you are, you're in it. It's everybody and everything forever. But God's mediatorial kingdom has a condition. You're not in His mediated kingdom unless, according to Mark 1:15, you repent and believe the gospel. That's what it says. Unless you repent and believe the gospel. If you do not do that, you are not in God's mediated kingdom.

While you are in His universal kingdom you will suffer under His universal rule over hell, but know not the blessing of heaven. And so, the universal kingdom has no condition for entrance, the mediatorial kingdom does, and when Jesus was coming, then, and saying, "Repent and believe. The kingdom is at hand," what was He asking men to come into? The mediatorial aspect of His kingdom, the redeemed community. And there's no room for neutrality at this point. Over and again the Lord was saying, "You either receive Me or you don't. You're either for Me or you're not." You're either accepting the King or rejecting the King, therefore either entering the kingdom or being kept out.

And that was the thing that John the Baptist asked the Jews to decide, and that was the thing that Jesus asked them to decide. And, tragically, they decided the wrong thing, didn't they? They refused the King and, therefore, refused His kingdom, refused it, and so He pronounced judgment on them. And at that point...listen carefully...the full fulfillment of the kingdom was postponed.

You say, "Does that mean there's no kingdom now?" No, the kingdom how exists, but its primary definition is internal, internal. In its full fulfillment it will be both internal and what? External. And as

you read the Scripture you see Jesus Christ sitting on the throne of David in the literal city of Jerusalem, reigning with a rod of iron, and the nations being brought to Jerusalem to see Him there and so forth. And that's the real kingdom of Jesus Christ.

When I say real, I mean that external, objective, touchable reign of Christ on this literal earth that will come. If you have any fears that isn't going to come to pass, read Revelation 20. It says it will come to pass on earth for a thousand years, that's the millennial kingdom. It will be preceded, as I said earlier, by the by the...the internal response to Christ on a worldwide basis and, particularly, by Israel. And then the kingdom will come and through them to reach the world.

But for now, that external element of it, in its fullness, awaits the belief of Israel. And, in the meantime, the kingdom is internal and God is reaching out across the world and bringing people into His kingdom through salvation. Now, what is the character of this interesting period? Well, there's so many principles that are in chapter 13, verses 1 to 52, we're going to have to wait until next time.

So let me skip that for this morning and we'll get it all next time. And we're going to do an overview of the whole thing so you'll know all the answers. Then we're going to take one parable at a time for the next couple of months, or so. I want to make one other statement of importance, I think, at this introductory level. In verse 11, would you notice a phrase there? Jesus says, "It is given to you to know the mysteries."

Now, that's why we call this the mystery form, He called it that. "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." Now, may I suggest to you that the term "the kingdom of heaven" is a very important term. It is used in verse 11, it is used in verse 24, it is used in verse 31, it is used in verse 33, verse 44, verse 47 and then in verse 52. The phrase "the kingdom of heaven" is used then at least eight times.

Now some people have tried to suggest that the kingdom of Heaven and the kingdom of God are different terms. That is not true. It is simply another way of saying the kingdom of God, God being synonymous with heaven. The reason we know that is that because in the parallel passage to this in Luke, the term "the kingdom of God" is used to refer to the same things. So, two titles used to refer to the same thing, mean the same thing. And so, we accept the fact that the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Heaven are the same. That's not important to most of you. It might be important to some of you.

Now, just another note to try to help you define this period. The period in which we live is also called the church age; it is synonymous with the church age. We are the unique mystery of this period, and that is defined for us rather explicitly by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 3. He says, "This is the mystery which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, is now revealed to the holy Apostles and prophets by the Spirit, that the Gentiles would be fellow heirs and of the same body and partakers of the promises in Christ by the gospel."

In other words, the mystery of this age is that Jew and Gentile would constitute a new body, a new identity unknown. And that is the church. The church is the body of Christ, isn't it? Made up of Jew and Gentile. That was not seen in the Old Testament. That was hidden from them. So there's a sense in which this is the mystery age. This is the kingdom but it is also the church age.

Now, having said that, we must say that the kingdom is not the same as the church, and the church is not the same as the kingdom in this sense. The kingdom was before the church and the kingdom concept goes beyond the church, but for this period of time they are one and the same.

But the kingdom you must see is sweeping beyond those things. And, I might add as well, that in all of that sweep you will have within the kingdom both the true and the false. You had it in the Old Testament, didn't you, with the nation Israel? You have it now in the church. And listen to this, you'll have it even in the millennium where right on the earth in the kingdom of Jesus Christ, there will be believers and unbelievers, as witnessed by the fact that at the end of that millennial time when Satan is loosed from the pit and goes about the earth.

He gathers a multitude of people, doesn't he, and makes an army and fights against Jesus Christ. So, whenever you're looking at the mediated kingdom on earth, whether you're looking Old Testament or millennium or any time in between, you always see the true and the false side by side. So, we're not surprised today to find it, are we? We're not surprised today to find the church populated by unbelieving people. It may not be that they admit it. But if the truth were known, we would see that that is the case.

Now, that's all just the introduction to the introduction. I had eleven pages of notes. That's the first two. Something's happening to me in my old age. I don't know what it is. But let me just at least do this. I'm not going to keep you very long this morning. I'll just introduce the chapter and I'll save the rest. Maybe the Lord knew all those pastors needed this next week. Who knows?

Let's look at verses 1 and 2, and at least we'll get a very small start. Now, there are four things that I want to focus on in an overview of the chapter. First, we're going to do an overview this week and next week, and then get into it in detail. But there are four things I want you to see, The place is first of all, the place. And it's just a small little point but I think it's an interesting kind of way to remember things. And then the plan, and then the purpose and then the promise, and we'll look at that today and next time.

First, let's look at the place. Verse 1, "The same day —" What does that mean? What day? Well, the same day with whatever's been going on. What's been going on? Well, Jesus is in a house, it tells us at the end of chapter 12. And His mother and brothers and all came to Him. Prior to that He was letting the Pharisees have it. Prior to that they had accused Him of blasphemy. Prior to that He had,

chapter 12, verse 22, healed a man possessed with a demon who was blind and dumb, perhaps deaf. It's been some day. In fact, it may have been even that there had been other healings. It may have been a whole day full of healings.

Then He heals a demoniac, then He is blasphemed, then He pronounces judgment, then His parents come, then He gives an invitation at the end, and on the same day...boy, what a day, what a day. "On the same day, He went out of the house and He sat by the seaside." Now, I know that's just a geographical footnote, and I know it doesn't convey any profound spiritual truth.

And I suppose I stopped at that point and said to myself, "Why is all that there? Why does it even bother to say that. It doesn't even really matter?" You could have started in verse 3, "He spoke many things unto them in parables." You don't even need one and 2, because 1 says, "He went out of the house and sat at the seaside," and 2 says, "Great multitudes were gathered together unto Him, so that He went into a boat and sat, and the whole multitude stood on the shore." Is that important?

Well, I think it's important if for no other reason than just as an interesting way to remember the transition here. If we can extend ourselves a little bit and use this as an illustration or a symbol...though that is not its purpose or intention...it can serve as an illustration for us. We could liken the house to what group of people? Israel.

And throughout Scripture the sea is likened to what group of people? Gentiles. And we can remember the chapter's transitional nature by remembering that as Jesus went out of the house and to the sea, at this point He turns from Israel to the Gentiles. Something new is happening. He's left the house. This serves as an illustration, a symbol of a sort.

And it's also interesting, I think, to note that at the beginning of His ministry He seemed to be in houses quite a lot. Whereas, as you begin to see His ministry from here on, toward the end of His ministry He seems to be outdoors a lot. And you see Him teaching by the seaside, you see Him teaching on the highways and the byways, in the village streets. You see Him on the hillsides. You see Him in the countryside. It's almost as if there's some sort of a subtle statement being made, isn't it? This is a new dimension. The kingdom is preached to the nations.

And I note, too, as I kind of thought this through and traced it, it seemed to me that early in the life of Jesus, He spent more time in the synagogue. Later, in the life of Jesus, He spent less time in the synagogues. And the times in His synagogues later in His life were extremely hostile. There's a real turning here. And it says in verse 2, "He found a great multitude." And it's an indiscriminate multitude, isn't it? And that was going to be the major thrust.

Now, public curiosity was still very high about Jesus. In spite of the leader's rejection, there were many people who were interested in Him. He fascinated people and they just mobbed Him. And it

says that He had so many people pushing Him, they pushed Him into the water. And I mean, I can understand that kind of pressure on someone like Him.

Can you imagine if you could heal all the diseases there were, if you could speak the words that He spoke, I mean, you would be the attraction of all attractions. And there, basically in those days, were not available books and sources of entertainment. I mean, this would be the most fascinating thing going by a long shot. And the massive crowds just pushed Him.

And in those days they would take their little fishing boats and they would beach them up on the sand. And He found one of those beached boats, and I'm sure He got His twelve to help Him or some of them, and they pushed the little thing off shore. And He went out about waist deep and got in the boat and He probably had them standing in the water up to their waists, holding the side of the boat, or else He would have been spinning around or being carried along by the tide. And as the water flopped and lapped on the shore, He sat off the shore in His boat. "And they stood on the shore, and He spoke many things unto them in parables." And what He said, they didn't understand at all.

You want to know something? That was the whole point. That was the whole point. "What are you saying, John?" This, you don't listen when He speaks clear, He'll speak so you can't understand Him. You want to know something? First, He spoke to them in simple terms, no parables. Up to this point there's not one parable recorded. There are some wonderful allusions, figures of speech, but no parables, because a parable unexplained is a riddle that can't be understood. So, He spoke very clearly. Then when they didn't listen, He spoke riddles.

Listen to this. When they still didn't listen, I Corinthians 14 says, He spoke in a language they couldn't understand. The depth, deeper and deeper into darkness, and so a turning point. But to those who believed, He explained every single detail. And you'll understand them, too, if you believe, as we go through this chapter. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, thank You for sending the King, offering us His kingdom. Thank You that if we repent and believe the gospel, we can enter the kingdom. Even though the King was rejected, even though the full fulfillment of the kingdom in its internal and external glory awaits His second coming, we thank You that the internal element of the kingdom is here and now and the kingdom is in our midst, for the King reigns in the hearts of His redeemed people. Thank You that we can be a part of the kingdom.

Our hearts are grieved that the world today is no more eager to receive the King and His kingdom than was Israel of old. And yet we rejoice, Lord, that even after the announcement of judgment, there was always the message of grace. "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I'll give you rest." "He that doeth the will of My Father, the same is My brother and sister, and mother." Always the message of grace. And so, Lord, to this rejecting world, we must preach the message of judgment because they, too, have rejected the King. But for some, their hearts are opened to do Your

will to come for rest.

And we would ask, Lord, today, that if there are any in this place gathered who do not know Jesus Christ, that today they might open their hearts to Him. That they might be translated, as Paul put it to the Colossians, from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son. May they believe the gospel and repent, turning from their sin in sorrow and brokenness. And may they enter the kingdom to walk forever with the King. Father, I ask You to do Your work in every heart, bring those that You would have to come and bring us all to the place of confession, repentance, of a deeper commitment to You.

Bring us again, tonight, Lord, with great anticipation, as we open Your Word to learn about the family, that we might worship You in the obedience of leadership in our homes. Take this day, Lord, and make it Your own, bless it abundantly. And every person who turns to You, may they know the fullness of blessing beyond their greatest expectation. For Christ's sake we pray, amen.

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