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#SS27

The SECRETS of the KINGDOM of the HEAVENS

by Otis Q. Sellers, Bible Teacher

FOREWORD

by David R. Hetteema

Many theological writers over the past century have attempted to present a studied treatise on the thirteenth chapter of Matthew's gospel. Of the many writings and commentaries available to Bible students, none have given a satisfactory exposition of what can be learned from the seven parables in this chapter. Many capable teachers have earnestly tried but they just did not possess the key that would unlock what Jesus Christ called **The Secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven**.

In the early 1940's Otis Q. Sellers began to set forth in his writings and teachings what he had uncovered in his Bible study. He was mindful of the numerous promises of future blessing for the nation of Israel that filled the Old and New Testaments. There was no place in time for their fulfillment according to the prophetic schedule that Bible teachers were setting forth then and are still proclaiming today.

Mr. Sellers uncovered from the scriptures a lengthy period of time set forth that precedes the great tribulation, (ed-and then, after that,) the second coming of Jesus Christ, his parousia, when He comes to be personally present upon the earth for one thousand years. This period begins (ed.- at the end of our present time), when God intervenes in the affairs of men and rules the nations of the earth by His Spirit in righteousness and justice. He fulfills every promise to the nation of Israel. He brings in a world of peace, perfect health, and the abundance of a curse-free earth. The resurrections of many of the dead takes place in this period and the eonian life flowing out from God is the portion of "those that shall be accounted worthy to

obtain that world and the resurrection of the dead." The scriptures call this period of time The Kingdom of Heaven, and in Matthew 13 the Lord began six of the parables recorded there with "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto.... "

Having some knowledge and enlightenment of this time called The Kingdom of Heaven will give earnest students of the Bible a key, a key that will open their understanding to these parables called "The Secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven."

Among the many scholars and teachers of the Bible who have recognized the many problems of this portion of Scripture is Sir Robert Anderson. He was a capable and knowledgeable Bible student and teacher, a Lawyer by profession and also the Head of Scotland Yard in the time of the infamous "Jack the Ripper" case. Sir Robert Anderson is on record as saying that no greater contribution has ever been made to Theology than will be his who fully and intelligently elucidates the teaching of the thirteenth chapter of Matthew.

If there are honors to be derived from Sir Robert Anderson's statement, let them be directed to the late Otis Q. Sellers, the author of this book. Otis never sought for honors. He would also deflect this one, but I would be joined by many others of his long time students who have read each of his studies and listened to his teaching over the years in expressing our gratitude for not only this "great contribution" but for all the others, especially the greater contribution of uncovering the truth of the "Kingdom of God."

It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honor of kings is to search out a matter. Proverbs 25: 2

THE PREMILLENNIAL KINGDOM

It is the testimony of the Word of God that there will yet be divine government and universal blessing upon the earth. The will of God shall some day be done upon the earth as it is in the heavens. The unfolding of this truth is by means of a great body of Scripture that runs through the Old Testament and into the New. If one reads the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, he will find that it reveals that God will ultimately triumph over all sin and will be all in all. The fullness of this triumph is reached in the new heavens and new earth when the earth will be restored to its original blessedness.

The Bible reveals that the restoration of the universe to its original conformity to God is not something that is immediately accomplished. It could be if God willed it that way, but He has revealed that it will be otherwise. There are those who believe that the next prophesied event to take place is the second coming of Christ and that this

will be followed immediately by the great white throne of judgment and the new heavens and the new earth. But this is not the testimony of the Word of God, for it reveals that this glorious consummation is reached through various stages or aspects. Before the final aspect of the kingdom of God is reached, there is to be a thousand year period during which Satan is bound and great companies of redeemed live and reign with Christ. This thousand year period is **commonly called the millennial kingdom of Christ**, a very apt designation, even though the word millennial does not appear in the Bible. Words fail us when we attempt to describe the glories of this millennial kingdom since there is so little now to which we can liken it. The prophets use every superlative when they write of that time "when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously." Isaiah 24:23. Nevertheless, this millennial kingdom is only a step toward the goal. It will be superseded by that time of blessedness which transcends all others, the new heavens and the new earth.

Many there are who believe that the next great event of prophecy is the rapture or catching away of all living believers, followed by the resurrection of the dead in Christ, this to be followed by the great tribulation upon the earth, the second coming of Christ, the millennial kingdom, then the new heavens and the new earth. This, in brief, is the position held by most dispensational fundamentalists..

However, it is my conviction that this system has failed to recognize those prophecies which reveal an aspect of the kingdom of heavens which precedes the millennial kingdom, and, therefore, precedes the second coming of Christ. This I call the premillennial kingdom of the heavens since it precedes the millennial kingdom.. The truth concerning this can best be approached through an Old Testament avenue.

The King and the Kingdom

The Old Testament sets forth two great lines of prophecy which are closely related, yet are distinct. For purposes of designation these are usually called the prophecies of the King and the prophecies of the kingdom. It is of the greatest possible importance that we recognize that in both of these lines of prophecy there was an element that greatly puzzled the very men who were inspired by God to write them. Their prophecies of the King seemed to contradict when they spoke of the sufferings and glory of Christ. They searched diligently in the hope of solving the mystery of their conflicting witness. However, they lacked the truth that explained and clarified all the truth of two comings, one related to His suffering and one related to His glory. See I Peter 1:10-12. In the Old Testament all prophecies concerning Christ are blended. No individual from Adam to Christ had any intimation that there would be two advents of Christ. Yet these two advents are clearly discerned now.

This same puzzling feature existed in regard to the second great line of prophecy, that of the kingdom. The prophets spoke of great blessing and followed in the same breath with prophecies of great tribulation. See Jeremiah 30:3-8 for an example of this. Note the blessing recorded in verse three and the tribulation in verse eight. Again they spoke of great tribulation followed by great blessing. They spoke of blessings that were to precede the great and notable day of the Lord (Joel 2), and tribulation that was to come with that day. That this seemingly contradictory testimony greatly puzzled them is revealed by our Lord in Matthew 13:17:

For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

This statement followed His setting forth of the great parable of the sower (Matthew 13:3-9). The disciples asked Him bluntly why He spoke to the multitude in parables. His direct answer was: **Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries (secrets) of the kingdom of heaven but to them it is not given.** Matthew 13:11.

The word mystery in this verse is not a translation. It is a transliteration; that is, a carrying over of a Greek word into the English. This is at times a wise procedure, especially so where there is no word in English that fits the Greek word. But there was no need for it in this passage as an acceptable English word was available that fully expresses the Greek word **musterion**. It is the word secret.

Thus, the things being revealed to them, the things hid from the multitude, the things that prophets and righteous men had desired to see and hear but could not, are the secrets of the kingdom of the heavens.

In the parables of Matthew we have certain truths concerning the kingdom of the heavens which were hidden or secret before the first advent of Christ, but which were made known to his disciples. These "secrets" provide the key that clarifies the Old Testament prophecies of the kingdom. Again and again we read "**the kingdom of heaven is like..**" and these words are followed by a parable which reveals a truth concerning the kingdom which hitherto had been a secret. When these truths are fully examined, there is only one possible conclusion. They reveal an aspect or phase of the kingdom of heaven which precedes the millennial kingdom, and which also precedes the second coming of Christ.

Since this precedes the millennial kingdom, it is most fitting that it be called the premillennial kingdom of the heavens. And just as the millennial kingdom is a step toward the goal of the new heavens and new earth, this premillennial kingdom is the fore-runner of the millennial kingdom and a step toward it in the program and purposes of God.

That "the kingdom of the heavens" delineated by the parables of Matthew 13 precedes the millennial kingdom is not a new or radically different idea. This is the position of almost every expositor of the dispensational- - fundamentalist school of thought. They hold almost as a unit that there is a phase of the kingdom of heaven that precedes the millennial kingdom, and this phase is usually called by them "the kingdom of heaven in its mystery form." They teach that this aspect of the kingdom began when Jesus went out of the house as recorded in Matthew 13: 1, that it continues without interruption until it is superseded by the millennial kingdom, and that this kingdom of heaven is Christendom. To quote Arno C. Gaebelein, an able expositor of this view:

In one word "the kingdom of the heavens" in Matthew is equivalent with "Christendom." It includes the whole sphere of Christian profession saved and unsaved, so-called Romanists and Protestants, all who are naming the name of Christ. Therefore, the church is not the kingdom of the heavens, though the church is in the kingdom of the heavens. The Lord teaches in the seven parables how matters will go in the earth while He is not here, and what men will do with that which He brought from heaven and left in the hands of men. Gospel of Matthew, page 263.

This interpretation has had wide acceptance, but it will not stand the test of critical investigation. All one needs to do is to substitute the word Christendom and the idea it represents in any passage where "the kingdom of heaven" occurs and he will find that it creates nothing but confusion. The reader may try this himself in Matthew 13: 11, 44, 45. The interpretation breaks down at every point.

When these parables are carefully considered, it will be found that they reveal an aspect of the kingdom of the heavens which is still future. The present parenthesis in God's dealing with the world is no part of this. Some truths in these parables can be applied to the present time, but to interpret them as picturing the present time cannot be honestly done if we take each statement at its face value.

THE SECRETS OF THE KINGDOM

In the thirteenth chapter of Matthew's Gospel our Lord began to reveal certain truths concerning the kingdom of the heavens which hitherto had been kept secret. The revelation of these truths permitted His disciples to enter into an understanding of the secret workings of God's government when it became a reality in the earth. The multitudes had their own ideas concerning the operation of God's government. They thought that "**the kingdom of God should immediately appear**" (Luke 19: 11), that is, that it should suddenly loom up and become manifest. Our Lord made no attempt to correct these false impressions. He spoke in parables so that His own would know the secret of how God's government would be established upon the earth.

The parables of Matthew 13 are called "the secrets of the kingdom of the heavens" (Matthew 13: 11), and it is also there declared that our Lord spoke in parables so that his true disciples would know these secrets.

The Sower

The first parable uttered is that of a **sower** going forth to sow seed. This parable is not prefaced by the words "the kingdom of heaven is likened unto," as are all the other parables in this chapter. But it reveals a secret of the rule of the heavens, and it deals with the four classes of hearers who heard "the word (message) of the kingdom" (Matt. 13: 3-9) in the period before the death of Christ. Some of the seed had fallen on good ground. The word of the kingdom had been heard by some who understood it. There were 120 of these present on the day of Pentecost, and before the day was over, they had increased to 3,120. Truly they did bring forth "some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matthew 13:23).

But we are not primarily interested just now in the men who heard the message of the kingdom. Our special interest is in those parables in Matthew wherein our Lord said, "the kingdom of heaven is likened unto," or in the companion parables in Mark and Luke where He said, "**the kingdom of God is likened unto..**" We can learn more about the kingdom of the heavens in these parables than anyplace else in the Word, and yet these great revelations of truth have been almost universally ignored, misapplied, misinterpreted, or explained away. In dealing with these parables it will be my purpose to take God at His word and think accordingly. When it says "the kingdom of heaven is likened unto," then that parable is going to be rigidly interpreted as being a likeness of the kingdom of the heavens. I refuse to even consider it as a likeness of the gospel, the church, the world, the believer, Christendom, or Israel, no matter how apropos such an application may seem to be. God gave these parables to teach us truth concerning the kingdom of the heavens, and we make void His word when we use them as likenesses of other things.

The Tares Among the Wheat

As already stated, the first parable of our Lord concerned a sower who went forth to sow. This is followed by a second parable concerning a man who sowed good seed in his field followed by an enemy who sowed tares. These two parables are often needlessly confused, and the interpretation our Lord gave of the first parable is often applied to His second parable, which has its own interpretation. This is a serious mistake, since there are two distinct parables and two distinct interpretations.

Some of these parables deal only with the beginning of God's government in the earth. Others deal with one feature of it, and others deal only with the close of the first great period of heaven's government. The parable of the tares among the wheat deals with that period of time when the Lord establishes (plants) the sons of the kingdom in

the world, and continues until He appears and severs the wicked from the just at the time of His second coming. There can be no question but that this parable reveals that the role of the heavens as set forth by Matthew precedes the second coming of Christ and His millennial rule. This parable and its divine interpretation fall automatically into three sections.

PARABLE: The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field. Matt. 13:24.

INTERPRETATION: He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children (sons) of the kingdom. Matt. 13:38.

It is to be noted that this parable does not deal with the producing of the sons of the kingdom. God's government, once it is established in the earth, will soon produce men who have the stamp of His rule upon them. Only the kingdom can produce sons of the kingdom. All governments seek to mold men to their character, and heaven's government will seek to mold its subjects to the character of God as revealed in Christ. It will not fail, for God's government will never fail in any detail. This will not be a quick process. The kingdom of the heavens does not loom up suddenly, and neither will the sons of the kingdom. But when they are produced they are to be established or planted in this world.

In harmony with God's great purpose to establish His beneficent rule in and over the earth, the Son of man will someday plant this world with men who have the kingdom character, men whom the kingdom has produced.

Thus we see in one great declaration three great symbols-- sower, field, and seed--are positively identified so that no question can ever arise as to their meaning. Therefore, if any think or say that maybe the sower is the preacher and the seed is the gospel, we can only leave them to flounder in their own lack of faith. The sower is the Son of man, the field is the world, the good seed are the sons of the kingdom. God has spoken. Let us take Him at His word. Let us not be slow to believe what He has spoken.

Before the good seed, the sons of the kingdom, can be planted in this world, the field must first be cleared. But John the Baptist declared, "He will thoroughly purge His floor," so we can rest assured that this will be done. He will never plant His good seed among tares. Let us not change this parable. The wheat is not sown in a tare field. The tares are sown in a wheat field. There has been nothing in the past, and there is nothing in the present that corresponds to the truth of this parable. Much good seed is seen in the Acts period, but not one of these sons of the kingdom was planted or established in the earth during that time.

The peculiar construction of the Greek word which is here translated "is likened" (**homoiōthe**) has led some to think that the Lord was indicating a condition that had already taken place, and that He had already sown the world with the sons of the Kingdom, and consequent upon the rejection set forth in chapter twelve. He could say that the enemy had sown the counterfeit sons, the sons of the wicked one. All this is based upon translating homoiōthe "has become like." This is translating badly and interpreting worse. A. T. Robertson states that this word is "timeless, aorist, passive." In view of this it is not right to inject a time element into this verb, then build an interpretation upon it. Let us consider the next section.

PARABLE: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. Matt. 13:25.

INTERPRETATION: The tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil. Matt. 13:38.

Again by means of a positive and simple declaration our Lord positively identifies the tares and the enemy that sowed them.

Since the days of Cain there has never been a time when Satan did not have his sons upon the earth, planted, rooted, established, and growing. They are men whom he has produced, men who have his character. "**Ye are of your father the devil,**" was our Lord's words to one company of Satan's sons. (John 8:44). Therefore, any idea of Satan slipping in while men are asleep and sowing tares among the wheat seems almost preposterous in view of the world being already filled with such weeds. In view of this, and since this parable is in fact a prophecy, it can never have any fulfillment until such time as the world has been thoroughly purged of tares, then planted with the wheat, following this an oversowing of the wheat with tares while men drowse. The idea of Satan sneaking in and sowing a few more weeds in a weed field is ludicrous. And yet that is what he is supposed to have done by those who see this parable as having been fulfilled in the past..

It seems almost unbelievable that after God has brought His rule (kingdom) into the earth and has established in the world those whom His rule has produced, that men would ever again become careless and let Satan enter and sow tares. But they do, for it is while men drowse (the Greek word means lounged or to place oneself in a comfortable position), the enemy came and sowed tares. A few more facts about the kingdom of the heavens will make this clear.

It needs to be carefully noted that after Christ has purged the world of wicked men only two classes will be left. These are disciples of the kingdom and sons of the kingdom. All men must begin as disciples (learners) but those who do learn go on to

become sons. It is the sons of the kingdom who are established (planted), not the disciples. This will mean that every position on earth where a man's work touches the lives of others will be filled by a son of the kingdom. Any disciple can go on to maturity and become a son, but alas some never do. It is from these disciples that Satan in the end produces a new company of sons. These take on his character. An illustration of this is seen in the twelve disciples of our Lord. Eleven of these men went on to maturity, and when we see them in the Acts period, each one has the kingdom character. However, Judas Iscariot never advanced to maturity, and when the test came he quickly developed into a true son of Satan. We will now consider the third and last section of the parable.

PARABLE: But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them Up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. Matt. 13:26-30.

INTERPRETATION: The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them, which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Matt. 13:39-42.

It is to be noted that the truth revealed by this parable comes up to the second coming of Christ, but does not go beyond it. Also that at the conclusion of this eon the Son of man sends forth his messengers and they gather out of His kingdom all things that offend and those who do iniquity. This kingdom began in a different manner, as recorded in Ezekiel 11: 17-21. **Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; I will even gather you from the people (peoples, meaning nations) and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. But as for them whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things land their abominations, I will recompense their way upon their own heads, saith the Lord God.**

This passage sets forth what takes place when God's benevolent government begins in the earth. Matthew 13:41,42 reveals a purging that takes place at the end of the first eon of God's rule. It is a far more radical cleansing which takes place at the close. The first is done by men acting for God. The last is done by angels acting for God. The first precedes the kingdom of the heavens and is introductory to it. The second precedes and introduces the millennium, called here the "kingdom of their father." See Matt. 13:43. As a result of the first cleansing, men will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. This will bring a long era of peace. Later they will be called upon to beat their plowshares into swords and their pruning hooks into spears. See Joel 3:9, 10, and compare Isaiah 2:4. As a result of the second cleansing there will not be a spear or sword left to be converted into farming implements. The angels have purged from under His rule all such things. Without a doubt, the parable of the wheat and tares belongs to the premillennial kingdom and not to the millennial kingdom.

The Grain of 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. Matt. 13:31,32.

This second great likeness or similitude of the kingdom of the heavens is in harmony with all the truth that the Bible reveals concerning it. I question the honesty of purpose of those who interpret this parable by rewriting it, as if the Lord did not know what He wanted to say. This parable is declared by Him to be a likeness of "the kingdom of the heavens." It is not a likeness of "the church," "the gospel," or of "Christendom." This parable is a likeness of the same kingdom of the heavens that John declared was "at hand," which the Lord had heralded, and which He sent forth His disciples to do the same. With all my heart, mind, and soul I repudiate the idea that the term "the kingdom of the heavens" suddenly changes its meaning beginning with Matthew 13 and from that time on means "Christendom." The "heavens" never produced the frightful mixture that today is called "Christendom." Christendom is not the rule of the heavens.

The first two parables of our Lord are quite true to nature. That is, they are in harmony with the normal actions of men. Nothing about them is incongruous with normal life in Palestine where these words were spoken.

In the parable that is before us the actions are incongruous, as a careful reading will show. The picture our Lord paints in His words is that of a man taking one tiny grain of mustard seed and planting it in his field. This is not the ordinary way a man would do it. He would at least take a small quantity of the seed, plant this in one corner of his field, then later pull out and discard the weaker plants until only the strongest one remained. The picture here shows a man who sowed too sparingly and who failed to make proper use of his land. Nevertheless, this is exactly the picture our Lord desired to paint, for incongruous as this man's actions may appear to be, they give a true likeness of the kingdom of the heavens. It is to be noted that a man acting in this manner must have had only one grain of seed, that he was sure of its fertility and ability to produce, and that he must have highly prized the seed since he gave it his entire field in which to grow.

In its beginning God's government in this earth will compare with a single grain of mustard seed. To men this seems so insignificant that they would not be inclined to bother with it, and anything that small could easily be ignored and lost. A man could have a grain of mustard seed in his pocket and not even know it was there. Our God takes His government and puts it into the earth, primarily in His own field, the land of Palestine. He can depend upon this seed. He knows it will grow speedily until all other governments are overshadowed by it.

Many will want to know the significance of the "birds of the air" which find lodging in the branches of the mustard tree. Some will insist that since the "fowls" of the first parable represented "the wicked one" that this must be followed out and here too the "birds of the air" must represent the wicked one. In view of this two great principles should be kept in mind as we consider other parables.

I do not agree that once an object has been used as a symbol, likeness, metaphor, or illustration that this fixes its meaning in such a manner that it will always mean the same. Some things are inherently bad and are never used to illustrate what is good. Some things are inherently good and are never used to illustrate that which is evil. Other things are neutral and may be freely used to illustrate that which is bad or that which is good. For example, a lion is neither good nor bad. Lions can be either good or bad. Therefore Jesus Christ is called "the Lion of the bride of Judah" (Rev. 5:5), and in 1 Peter 5:8 we read "your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." Thus it is evident that a lion can be used as a symbol of Christ and as an illustration of the work of Satan. In view of this, the birds of the first parable (the sower) need not have the same meaning as the birds in the parable of the mustard seed.

The second principle is that every detail in a parable is not necessarily significant. This is shown in our Lord's interpretation of the parable of the wheat among the tares. He attached no significance and made no explanation of "the servants of the

household" who came to him saying, "Sir didst not thou sow good seed in thy field?" These men were incidental to the illustration, and, I believe the birds of the heaven are also incidental in the parable of the mustard seed.

In *The Study of the Parables* A. R. Habershon quotes Francis Roberts: "In a sword there's hilt, and back, and edge, but only the edge cuts. In an instrument there's wood, and brass, and belly, and frets, but only the strings do make the melody. So there are many passages in parabolic Scriptures subservient to the main scope, which must only be understood with tendency and reference thereto. The scope of a parable is the key of a parable. "

These two principles are of major importance in considering the parable which follows.

The 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, until the whole was leavened. Matthew 13:33.

In regard to the interpretation of this parable men hold such fixed opinions that I ask for openness of mind as we reconsider this great likeness of the kingdom of heaven.

The great controversy between the pre- and postmillennial schools of thought has died down until there is not much left but the embers. The postmillennial view is that the millennium is yet future, and that it will come upon the earth as the result of the efforts of present gospel agencies, and that the second coming of Christ will follow this man-made millennium. Today, so far as I know, there is no living voice that expounds or defends this theory. Not one Scripture was ever produced which proved a millennium before the second coming, or that proved a second coming of Christ after a millennium. It is my firm belief that the second coming of Christ precedes the thousand year period set forth in Revelation 20: 1-7. This period is the result of His second coming, and it is not the result of the spread of the gospel.

Throughout the great controversy that raged for so many years, the postmillennialist held that the world would grow better, that the church would increase in strength until righteousness and peace reigned upon the earth and that these conditions would persist for a thousand years. The premillennialist held that the world would steadily grow worse until finally the Lord would remove all His own and then deal with the world in justice and wrath.

In relationship to the idea that the second coming of Christ precedes the thousand year period spoken of in Revelation 20: 1-7, I am premillennialist. But this does not

mean that I accept every detail of premillennial teaching. I am not in any position in connection with the premillennial school of thought where I must "take it all or nothing." As a student of the Word, I consider all facts and come to my own conclusions, ever seeking to "prove all things, hold fast to that which is good."

Much of the controversy in years past between the pre and postmillennial schools of thought, one holding that the world would wax worse, the other holding that it would grow better, seemed to center in the parable of the leaven. The postmillennialist, ignoring the words of the Lord that this is a likeness of the kingdom of the heavens, insisted that the leaven was the gospel, that the woman was the church, and that the meal was mankind. From this they agreed that the gospel preached by the church would someday convert the whole world.

The premillennialist, likewise ignoring the plain words of our Lord that this is a likeness of the kingdom of the heavens, made it to be a likeness of Christendom, declared that the leaven stood for evil, that the woman represents evil workers, and that this evil represented by the leaven would work busily until the whole of mankind became ripe for the wrath of God. One of the strongest points in this argument is that leaven is as a rule used as the symbol or illustration of something evil.

We need to be prepared to set both of these ideas aside in order to take an unprejudiced look at this parable. The idea that leaven here does signify something evil is pretty well fixed in the minds of most premillennialists. This idea determines in advance their interpretation of this parable. I believe it is wrong to fix this meaning upon leaven.

I am convinced that an honest answer to one simple question can clear up and settle forever the question of whether leaven here means something good or evil. This question is, "Is the kingdom of God a good thing or an evil thing?" If the answer is "a good thing," and it must be, for no other answer is possible, then how, if leaven symbolizes evil, could the Lord say this in the parallel parable?

And again He said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measure of meal, till the whole was leavened. Luke 13:20, 21.

From this it is plain that if leaven is evil, then the kingdom of God is like something that is evil which when placed in the earth will so permeate it until the whole becomes evil. Perish the thought!

The previous parable, the grain of mustard seed, emphasizes the seemingly insignificant character of the government of the heavens as it begins on earth among men. One declaration from God is all that is required for the heavens to begin their

rule. If He at this moment should say, "Let there be light, " the divine processes would begin which in time would roll back all present darkness and result in that state of affairs set forth in I John 2:8, "**the darkness is past and the true light now shineth.**" No such majestic event as the second coming of Christ is required for the heavens to resume their rule. No such tragic event as the great tribulation needs to precede it. It begins like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. I believe that our Lord is represented by this man. He alone can place God's government in the earth.

In the parable of the leaven, our Lord is represented by the woman in the illustration. If any think it strange that a woman should be used to represent a man, then let them learn from the Word that this is not unusual. Our Lord once likened Himself to a mother hen (See Matthew 23:37). Paul used a nursing mother to illustrate himself (See 1 Thess. 2:7), then changed the figure and used a father to illustrate his solicitude for the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 2:11).

The woman and the three measures here are only incidental to the story or illustration. The woman is mentioned because baking was done by women rather than men. Three measures are probably mentioned because this would be an average baking for an average family.

The leading truth taught by this similitude of the kingdom of the heavens is that when God's government by means of the heavens is placed in the earth it will reach out until the whole world is brought under the government of the heavens. From other passages we know that this will be accomplished by a process of elimination as well as by incorporation. Everything that remains upon the earth must be incorporated into God's government. His rule will be like leaven in meal. It will change the character of the whole earth.

The Treasure Hid in a Field

The preceding four parables were spoken in public. We now come to those which were spoken to the disciples inside the house after the Lord Jesus sent the multitude away. These are all introduced by the familiar words "the kingdom of the heavens is like." As these parables spoken in the house have, in my judgment, a higher spiritual content than those spoken to the public, there are certain truths related to the kingdom of the heavens which we will need to know and consider before we can fully appreciate these parables.

I have already shown in previous studies that the Greek word translated "kingdom" is properly abstract and that it means government. The word heavens stands here for that place and the beings who occupy that place (the angels or hosts of heaven). Both of these were created "in the beginning" and are set in God's order for rule or government. "That the heavens do rule" was a truth that Nebuchadnezzar had to learn,

and it is a truth that many more need to learn today. See Daniel 4:26.

Therefore the kingdom of the heavens is in reality heavens government. A small measure of heavens government has been seen in times past in connection with certain things, and more of it was seen in the thirty-three years of the Acts period than at any other time since sin entered the world. At present heavens' government is suspended in its entirety. It is not seen in any detail of human experience. The earth does not now enjoy the benefits of heavens' glorious rule.

The Old Testament predicted that someday heavens government would be imposed upon the earth, beginning first with the seed of Abraham. John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus both announced that heavens' government was at hand, meaning by this announcement that God was about to impose His government upon the earth. For it must be carefully noted that when this government is called "heavens' government" it is not that in an absolute sense. For if we should ask the heavens concerning their right to govern, or if we should ask concerning the source of their principles or laws, they would point us to the one who is the God of the heavens and who is also among the heavens.

The answer to every ill that afflicts mankind is government by the heavens, of the heavens, for the benefit of the human race. It is only under heavens government that the world can ever realize and experience the glorious benefits that were purchased by the first coming of Jesus Christ. There is no moral, spiritual, social, economic, national, international or governmental ill that afflicts the world today which heavens government will not alleviate. With these facts before us, let us consider the likenesses of heavens' government which our Lord gave to His disciples inside the house.

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. Matthew 13 :44.

Since many likenesses of the kingdom of the heavens are given, each parable deals with a different aspect of heavens' government. A parable may be presented as a likeness of heavens' government, yet when examined may deal with those who are governed, that is, the subjects of the kingdom. See Matthew 25:1 for a clear example of this. Since in one place it is said to be like leaven, something very cheap, then again like a pearl of great price, something very valuable, the only way we can understand these diverse parables is to recognize that they set forth different aspects of heaven's government.

In the parable of the treasure hid in the field, our Lord gives us one more likeness of the kingdom of the heavens. Now it is useless and fruitless to interpret this as a

likeness of Israel, for Israel was not the kingdom of the heavens. Neither is it of any value to interpret this as a likeness of Christ, making Him to be the treasure, as many do. The Lord gave this as a likeness of heavens I government, and faithful men will believe this without reservation and interpret it accordingly. This parable tells us of the value of heavens government.

In spite of all the rich blessings that the rule of the heavens will bring, there are many features about it which make it unacceptable to the average man. He simply cannot see government by the heavens. Men speak today in glowing terms of government of the people, by the people, and for the people. And, as stated in the majestic words of Lincoln, men will go to any length to see that such government "shall not perish from the earth." Even though it has long been demonstrated that men cannot and will not govern themselves, men are loathe to give up this idea. Therefore, they cannot be expected to look favorably upon a government which is of the heavens, and by the heavens. In fact, under the kingdom of the heavens, government of the people and by the people will actually perish from the earth.

Man likes a government which he can resist, and which he can change when his whim or need so dictates. He likes laws which he individually can evade, or laws that can be nullified or repealed as the occasion demands. But heavens' government permits no resistance; its laws cannot be evaded or ignored. Not one precept laid down can ever be nullified or repealed. Under it there is no freedom of speech, for men will have to give an account of every idle word. No man will be free to hate his brother. There is to be no freedom of worship or of service. He must worship the Lord God and serve Him alone, and all worship and service must be in harmony with the divine order that will be made known to men in that day. Features such as these will make heavens' government repugnant to many. In fact, apart from a divine work, described by the Lord as being "born from above," no man could ever see the government of God. The Pharisees could not see it, for they had nothing that would give them a place in it. The rulers could not see it for they did not want to abandon their rule for the rule of the heavens.

In view of these facts, when I hear some men pray, "Thy kingdom come," I would like to answer, "It's coming, but I don't think you're going to like it."

These truths shed light on the parable we are considering. When men discover the true nature of heavens' government, when they realize that those features which seem to be so severe are for man's highest good and God's glory, then nothing can hold them back, from becoming willing subjects under this government. They will gladly surrender every right, privilege, and liberty in order to come under this government. Heavens government to them will be like a treasure hid in a field. Once they have found it, they will give up all to possess it.

When God again places His government in the earth, men will need to discover it is there and then they will need to recognize its value. They can discover it is there through the open work that God will do. They can know its value through the divine light that God will give them concerning it. From that time forth their attitude toward God's government will be a matter of life and death. If they seek to resist it, they will be purged. If they seek discipleship, they will become citizens of God's kingdom. This is not truth for today. It is not true in this dispensation of Grace. It will be true when God establishes the government of the heavens in the earth. This precedes the second coming of Christ. It is the fruit of the first coming.

If any have ever wondered how the divine restoration of Israel to the Land will be accomplished, they have their answer here. Many have been puzzled as to what force would cause an Israelite, living in wealth and comfort in the United States, to pack up, turn his back upon it all, and return to the land of Palestine. He will do this without hesitation when he realizes the value of heavens' government, and that the only place he can come under this is in the land God gave to his fathers.

A word of warning needs to be sounded lest some seek to force meaning into every detail of this parable. They would make the field to be the world, then ask if one must buy the world in order to enter God's kingdom. This man bought the field because that was the only way he could get the treasure in it. When a man has seen God's government, he will do whatever he needs to do in order to secure it for his life.

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.

At the risk of being tedious, I must again say that this parable is not a likeness of Christ, of the church, of Israel, of the remnant in Israel, or of the gospel. It is a likeness of the kingdom of the heavens. Keep in mind that the central object in each likeness stands for heavens' government, and that the parable reveals a certain aspect. We have seen a man sowing good seed in his field, a grain of mustard seed, leaven, and a treasure hid in a field. Now the central object is a pearl of fabulous price, and next it will be a drag net cast into the sea. The pearl in the parable stands for heavens' government. If not, then the parable is no likeness of the kingdom of the heavens.

In understanding this it will help if we remember that good governments have always been the desire of good men. Bad men favor corrupt governments, since they can profit from such corruption, but good men have always sought for the best

possible government, one that would assure and have as its end the virtue of its citizens, the welfare of its people, peace, prosperity, security, and the culture of its subjects. To this end men have long debated as to which is the ideally best form of government, and the world has had opportunity to observe many forms. There have been monarchies, autocracies, and democracies in endless variations. Some today contend for a capitalistic form, others for a socialistic, and still others for communistic. The most rabid exponents of these various forms of government declare that one or the other is that which will solve all of man's problems and deliver him from all his ills.

Honest men who make a study of government and who seek its best form are indeed like the merchant man seeking goodly pearls. But they find some without flaw, none that has not been tried and discarded as imperfect. They cannot now find heavens' government for it is not available. Some day God is going to reveal it. And when He does, if these men are honest and unselfish in their search, even if one be the most rabid exponent of the communistic form of government, he will purge himself from every other idea and declare that he has found the one pearl of great price. This is what God did for Paul on the Damascus road. This is what God can do for every Israelite on earth. May God speed the day when heavens' government will again be a reality and men are brought to see its value and perfection. There is no hope in human government. There is hope in heavens' government.

The Drag Net

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.

We must avoid extremes in interpreting this parable. The central figure is a dragnet, and this is set forth as a representation of heavens' government. This has never yet been cast into the sea. Even though the Acts period was part of heavens' government, the work was not comparable to a net cast into the sea. It was to the Jew only from chapters 1 to 10 and to the Jew first from 10 to 28. But when heavens' government does move with power into the sea, it will gather in of every kind.

In the case cited in the parable, the net gathered in all kinds, some which were good (edible) fish and some which were bad (inedible). When the eon of heavens' government comes to its conclusion, the angels will come forth and sever the wicked from the just. It must be kept in mind that this parable does not present a complete

picture; it does not reveal all the truth, but only certain aspects.

When the heavens resume their government, it will reach out to embrace all mankind. It will ask no permission; it will accept no repudiation. The fisherman does not ask the fish to come into the net, nor will men be invited to come under heavens' jurisdiction. Some men will be eliminated at once, even as a fisherman might destroy a shark caught in his net. This is revealed in such passages as Ezekiel 20:38 and Matthew 3: 10. These are the openly rebellious. Nevertheless, many will come under heavens government, pledge allegiance to it, but will never be assimilated into it. They yield only feigned obedience, and they become followers of Satan in the end. They are able to maintain their place in the kingdom, due to the restraining influences that will be present, but the moment these restraints are relaxed, they turn to Satan and become the sons of the wicked one, whom he establishes or plants among the sons of the kingdom. When the restraining influence is removed, they come out in open rebellion, but the rebellion will be short lived. The angels come forth and sever the wicked from the just. This severance is identical with that of Matthew 13:41.

This parable, above all others, proves that the kingdom of the heavens precedes the millennium.

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