

Weeds and Hidden Treasure (13:34-46)

About Teaching in Parables (13:34–35)

Some believe that “this little “prophecy” is placed here because Matthew wants the church to know that not only were Jesus’ birth, ministry, and death all prophesied beforehand in Scripture but even the fact that the Messiah would teach in parables was miraculously predicted.”¹

Matthew 13:34 All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable.

“In readiness for the transition from crowds to disciples, Matthew offers a summary statement and identifies the use of parables as yet another way in which Jesus fulfills scripture.”²

he said nothing to them without a parable.... Up to this point, Jesus did not use a lot of parables; he will use more in the months ahead. It “does not mean that he told nothing but parables to the crowd but that he said nothing to them without using parables. In short parables were an essential part of his spoken ministry.”³

In this verse, Jesus **said nothing to them without a parable. This is because of the events of chapters 11 and 12, it is no longer safe to speak openly.**

Matthew 13:35 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: “I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.”

This verse is found in Psalm 78 and was spoken by Asaph.

“I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old,” (Psalm 78:2, ESV)

“The point is that though the history of the Jews, which Asaph relates, is well known, the psalmist selects the historical events he treats and brings them together in such a way as **to bring out things that have been riddles and enigmas “from of old.”** The pattern of history is not self-evident; but the psalmist will show what it is really all about.”⁴

fulfill.... “...as Psalm 78 recounts Israel’s history, so Jesus is presented as the one who is the supreme embodiment of Israel and her history, the one who fulfills all the patterns of the OT regarding Israel.”⁵ **Jesus “fills up” with new meaning what the prophet said in earlier years.**

¹ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 38.

² Nolland John, “Preface,” in *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 555.

³ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 320). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

⁴ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 321). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

⁵ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 322). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

parables.... "...a *parabolē* [parable] is an utterance which does not carry its meaning on the surface, and which thus demands thought and perception if the hearer is to benefit from it."⁶

I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.... "That is to say, he intends to utter no commonplace, but things that God has revealed. That they have never been known from the beginning of the world indicates that **they are not attainable by human search.**"⁷ "...the unavoidable implication being that **those hidden things are no longer hidden since Jesus has revealed them.**"⁸

I will open my mouth.... As the Sermon on the Mount was a unique revelation of God, so are the parables.

"And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:" (Matthew 5:2, ESV)

in parables.... "The psalmist teaches...by opening his mouth "in parables" (i.e., by comparing various things)"⁹ "**Comparing various things**" is a perfect explanation on what a parable does. Jesus compares various things in his parables just as Asaph did in Psalm 78. **Asaph's purpose was to recount known things, the history of Israel, for the purpose of explaining what was not clearly known or believed. Jesus does the same thing with his parables.**

what has been hidden.... It "has been hidden" but no longer is so because Jesus is now revealing them in his parables. **"...what are these "hidden things" Jesus is now uttering? In Psalm 78 they are "the righteous acts of God in redemption.... Likewise that is what Jesus is now revealing—the righteous acts of God in redemption taking place in his teaching, miracles, death, and resurrection."**¹⁰ For most, they are still hidden.

"...the parables have the effect of illuminating the subject of the kingdom for those who are willing to accept the message and of darkening it for those who reject the message of the present reality of the kingdom."¹¹

"And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, so that "they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven." " (Mark 4:10–12, ESV)

Explanation of the Parable of the Weeds (13:36–43)

⁶ France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 502). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

⁷ Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary (p. 355). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

⁸ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 321). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

⁹ D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (ed. Frank E. Gaebelin; vol. 8; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 8321.

¹⁰ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 322). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

¹¹ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* (vol. 33A; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 390.

Matthew 13:36 Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field."

the crowds.... The crowds have been the audience of Jesus' parables to this point. It appears that in Jesus ministry "parables are for the crowd, explanations for the disciples."¹²

into the house.... In 13:1, Jesus went "out of the house." Now in 13:36 Jesus went "into the house."

"That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea." (Matthew 13:1, ESV)

The section in the middle (13:2-13:35) was primarily public preaching for the crowds, the section in which he spoke almost entirely in parables. The next section (13:36-43) is private instruction for his disciples.

Explain¹³.... The disciples "are not distinguished from the crowds by their instant and intuitive understanding but by their persistence in seeking explanations."¹⁴ Such a persistence today would be demonstrated in a passion to study those parables as well as all the word of God. We also should be asking God, "Explain to us...." Are you?

the parable of the weeds.... It is called the parable of the weeds, not the parable of the wheat. "The title, 'the parable of the weeds', shows us that Matthew is thinking primarily not of the salvation of the righteous but of the wicked and their terrible fate."¹⁵

Matthew 13:37 He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.

The one who sows.... Each element is identified by Jesus, here the one who sows is the Son of Man, Jesus Christ.

Matthew 13:38 The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one,

The field is the world.... "What sort of "kingdom" was this that allowed opposition to continue unchecked? Why did God not straightaway destroy the "sons of darkness" and so make his world a place fit for the "sons of light...."¹⁶ In fact, he will do just that one day. But there are many good seeds yet to be added to his kingdom.

¹² France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 534). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

¹³ *Explain διασαφέω* "...to make an obscurity clear by a thorough explanation—'to make clear, to make evident, to explain.'" Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 404). New York: United Bible Societies.

¹⁴ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 325). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

¹⁵ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (vol. 2; International Critical Commentary; London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 427.

¹⁶ France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 533). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

good seed is the sons of the kingdom.... The last time we saw the phrase “sons of the kingdom” used, it applied to the lost.

“while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 8:12, ESV)

So, how has it now come to mean the opposite? It was used in chapter 8 as “an ironic appellation for Jews who will be cast out into the darkness.”¹⁷ In some external sense, they were sons of the kingdom; but not internally. The point? External membership in Israel or the Church is no guarantee of salvation, “the use of the one title to tag two different groups should warn church members that they, like unbelieving Jews, can lose their privileged status....”¹⁸ **Some church members will also be cast out.**

The weeds are the sons of the evil one.... There is an evil one and he does have sons; we see them all around us, they act like their father.

Matthew 13:39 and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels.

An explanation of the elements of the story continues, the enemy—the devil, the harvest—the end of the age, the reapers—the angels.

the enemy ... the devil.... “To depict Satan as a spiteful enemy trying to spoil the good work of the land-owner and ruin his harvest expresses graphically his status in biblical literature: he is a spoiler, not a constructive authority in his own right.”¹⁹ And that is the role he seeks to play in your life—to spoil and ruin your life. And so we pray:

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil (the evil one).” (Matthew 6:13, ESV)

But the devil is God’s devil and when he has served God’s purpose:

“and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” (Revelation 20:10, ESV)

harvest is the end of the age.... This story will take us into the distant future. We are not told which “age” is under discussion. There are many ages that come to an end in scripture—and yet only one of them will bring the final-end of all things. But clearly the “end of the age” spoken of here is in fact *the* last day.

“So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous” (Matthew 13:49, ESV)

the reapers are angels.... The elect are the objects of God’s loving attention.

¹⁷ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (vol. 2; International Critical Commentary; London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 428.

¹⁸ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (vol. 2; International Critical Commentary; London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 428.

¹⁹ France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 535). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

“And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” (Matthew 24:31, ESV)

Matthew 13:40 Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age.

In verse 40, the natural elements are addressed; ***weeds*** are ***gathered*** and ***burned with fire***. But the phrase ***“so it will be at the end of the age”*** prepares us for a more detailed explanation.

“Now that the symbolism has been clarified, the significance of the parable can be drawn out in more general terms, with the emphasis on its final scene of judgment.”²⁰

Matthew 13:41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers,

It is the ***Son of Man***, Jesus, who is in charge on the last day. “One of the most significant details in Jesus’ parables is the way key images ***that in the OT apply exclusively to God***, or occasionally to God’s Messiah, ***now stand for Jesus himself***.”²¹

“The “one like a son of man” in Dan 7:13–14 was a figure of universal authority and sovereignty, and it is in accordance with that vision, and its context of judgment (Dan 7:10, 22), that the Son of Man is here presented (as he will be also in 19:28 and in 25:31–46) as executing the final judgment (sending out *his* angels) and thus ***standing in the place of the divine judge himself***.”²²

And on that day, the Ancient of Days will sit on his throne.

“A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.” (Daniel 7:10, ESV)

There is not simply one book opened, there are books. There is another book that will also be opened on that day, the book of life.

“And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.” (Revelation 20:12, ESV)

out of his kingdom.... As defined here, the kingdom has both believer and unbeliever in it at this point. But this will not last forever. At some point the two will be separated for their separate eternal destinies.

²⁰ France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 535). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

²¹ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 325). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

²² France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (pp. 535–536). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

all causes of sin²³ or [all who cause sin] The next phrase defines this statement.

law-breakers.... “The wicked here are the “lawless,” those who subvert the true meaning of God’s law (5:19; 23:28; 24:12)”²⁴ **This is not a phrase that our modern church would be pleased to hear, for after all “we are not under law but under grace.”** That is of course true but not the way modern dispensationalists understand it. What is clear here is that the “law” is still binding, as explained and modified in the New Testament, and we will in fact be judged by it on the last day.

“And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’” (Matthew 7:23, ESV)

“So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.” (Matthew 23:28, ESV)

The charge of being a law-breaker necessitates the enduring, binding authority of God’s law as taught and modified by Jesus and his disciples.

Matthew 13:42 and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Jesus spoke of this final judgment in chapter 8.

“while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 8:12, ESV)

He will continue to speak this way in the chapters following.

“Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’” (Matthew 22:13, ESV)

We learned earlier that the **weeds are the sons of the evil one** (13:38). And in 13:40, we read the **weeds are gathered and burned with fire**. Here the symbol of weeds is done away with and Jesus tells us directly that they are people and that they are in fact **thrown into the fiery furnace** and that in this furnace there is **weeping and gnashing of teeth**. There is no question that he is talking about hell as the destiny of the lost.

Matthew 13:43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

In verse 38, the “good seed” was identified as “the sons of the kingdom.” Here in 13:43, we read of their fate.

²³ *all causes of sin* [or all who cause sin] *σκανδαλον*.... “...that which or one who causes someone to sin—‘that which causes someone to sin, one who causes someone to sin.’” Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains*. New York: United Bible Societies.

²⁴ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 389.

“And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” (Daniel 12:3, ESV)

“Verses 37–43 (together with the parallel explanation in vv. 49–50) provide us with one of the most explicit accounts of final judgment and of the ultimate fates of the bad and the good which we find in the gospels.”²⁵

Three Further Short Parables (13:44–50)

The Parables of the Treasure and of the Pearl (13:44–46)

The parables of the treasure and of the pearl “are about enthusiastic and whole-hearted commitment to the kingdom of heaven, with the secondary theme of costly renunciation for the sake of the greater good.”²⁶

The Parable of the Treasure (13:44)

Matthew 13:44 “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

treasure hidden in a field... There were no banks or secure places to store wealth. For the very rich, a Temple in the community often served as a bank. However, governments knew this and periodically raided them for their wealth. Therefore, gold, silver and precious stones were often hidden in one’s house. Yet, in time of war, the invading armies would tear down every home looking for this treasure—they knew it was there. Thus, some would hide their wealth on their farm or in some other desolate area. Many people would not survive this war or simply passed away without sharing this critical information, therefore, they would never return to obtain this treasure. So, it would sit there indefinitely, unless someone would stumble across it quite unexpectedly. We still read to this day of treasure found in fields by farmers or treasure hunters with metal detectors.

²⁵ France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 533). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

²⁶ France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 539). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.



“We are no doubt to assume that any possible link with the original owner of the treasure has long been lost from sight.”²⁷ “That the field’s original owner sold it to the peasant indicates that the owner had not buried the treasure and was unaware of it, hence was not the treasure’s original owner.”²⁸

But, “ownership of the field does not come easily. It involves a total reordering of priorities, since to achieve ownership the finder must first liquidate all his or her assets. Everything must be focused on the single goal of owning the field in which the treasure is to be found. Nothing less will suffice.”²⁹

The value of the kingdom of heaven is illustrated in this parable. Everything is secondary and must be disposed of that one may possess this treasure. Many profess loyalty to the kingdom, but little in their lives illustrate this loyalty. “Although this treasure, like the kingdom, was hidden to most of the world, the man not only recognized that its value outweighed all he had, but he *acted accordingly*.”³⁰

The Parable of the Fine Pearl (13:45–46)

Here we leave the idea of planting something of value into the ground or bread dough or finding something in a field. But, we still have “something of value” that requires our attention.

²⁷ Nolland, J. (2005). *The Gospel of Matthew: a commentary on the Greek text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary (p. 563). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

²⁸ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 391.

²⁹ Nolland, J. (2005). *The Gospel of Matthew: a commentary on the Greek text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary (p. 564). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

³⁰ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 391–392.

Matthew 13:45 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,

merchant³¹ One who buys and sells.

fine pearls.... “This merchant is after pearls, which were more highly valued in the ancient world than now.... And this merchant operates at the quality end of the market: he is after *fine* pearls.”³²

Matthew 13:46 who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

and sold all that he had and bought it.... “For him this will be the business deal of a lifetime! But to buy such a pearl will stretch his resources to the limit: only by liquidating all his assets can he raise the capital to close the deal. The opportunity is too good to lose: he acts decisively and secures the pearl.”³³ The reward awaiting this deal is immense.

We are again instructed in the immense value of the kingdom, as the pearl was worth **all that he had**, so is the kingdom of heaven. There is nothing of greater value, if it cost us everything that we own, it is the deal of a lifetime! Jesus “is saying that the person whose whole life has been bound up with “pearls”—**the entire religious heritage of the Jews?**—will, on comprehending the true value of the kingdom as Jesus presents it, gladly exchange all else to follow him.”³⁴ This statement anchors our story in the context of Israel.

It would be helpful to put ourselves in the place of “the crowd” that heard these parables. Like so many that visit our churches, they are interested in hearing more about this kingdom. And here Jesus describes its worth. Would they see it this way as well? Would they leave all and follow him?

“Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.””
(Matthew 19:21, ESV)

“One who was unwilling to sacrifice everything else for the kingdom, who did not believe its reality sufficiently to stake all one’s future on it, was unworthy of it (19:21).”³⁵

“... Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with

³¹ *merchant* ἔμπορος “In the NT, ἔμπορος means a merchant, trader, one who trades with foreign countries by sea or land on a large scale, a wholesale dealer....” Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

³² Nolland, J. (2005). *The Gospel of Matthew: a commentary on the Greek text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary (p. 566). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

³³ Nolland, J. (2005). *The Gospel of Matthew: a commentary on the Greek text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary (p. 566). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

³⁴ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelien (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 329). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

³⁵ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 392.

the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.” (Hebrews 11:35–38, ESV)

These saw the treasure hidden in the field and the pearl of great price—and sold all that they might possess him.