

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## MATTHEW 13:1-58

Tom Parker has authored an interesting book, "In One Day: The Things Americans do in a Single Day". Did you know that on any given day...

Americans buy 200 miles worth of neckties, about a quarter of a million ties.

Americans spend \$125,000 on tours and merchandise linked to Elvis Presley.

Americans deliver 100,000 speeches. (If they all stood on the same soapbox the speakers would form a line 28 miles long.)

Every day American golfers score 110 hole-in-ones.

Americans eat 170 million eggs and 12 million chickens.

Americans are X-rayed 650,000 times.

Americans chew 95 tons of sardines.

Two hundred Americans become millionaires.

Americans eat 6.5 million gallons of popcorn.

The federal government issues 100 pages of new rules and regulations.

Americans purchase more than a million boxes of Cracker Jacks."

Every day in America a lot gets accomplished.

As ambitious as this sounds, this is nothing compared to what Jewish theology attempted to cram into a single day. The Old Testament pictured the Kingdom of God coming to earth in one climactic moment. The world changes

overnight...

**In one day** - God rights all wrongs, wipes-out the wicked, eradicates evil, erects a kingdom to rule heaven and earth, and ushers in peace and righteousness.

In just one colossal, breath-taking, dynamic day Messiah would break upon the earth, and suddenly, all Jewish hopes and dreams would be realized. The Jews believed that God's Kingdom and their Messiah would come in a single day!

In fact, read the book of Revelation, and you realize much will be accomplished in a single day. When Jesus returns a second time He'll turn the world on its ear.

The kingdoms of man end, and God's kingdom begins. Jesus will establish an earthly throne and visible Kingdom. All mankind will acknowledge Jesus as Lord and every knee will bow and worship Him. *And it all will happen in a single day!*

But that doesn't mean that in the interim, Jesus is not active every day. We don't have to wait for the Second Coming to become a part of His kingdom.

For Matthew 13 teaches us that before the God's Kingdom comes *visibly, forcibly, physically, tangibly, politically, militarily* – it first comes **spiritually**.

The Jews knew God's Kingdom would come in a day - but Jesus taught that day would be the kingdom's climax – not its beginning. The Kingdom will descend, but today it rises. Jesus planted the seeds of the Kingdom at His first coming – and for the last 2000 years it's been growing subtly, gradually, invisibly, spiritually.

In Matthew 13 Jesus paints a new picture of the Kingdom of God. He reveals truths about God's Kingdom that were hidden from the Old Testament sages.

Verse 11 refers to the chapter's 8 parables as **"the mysteries of the kingdom."**

This is a seminal Scripture. It explains how God's kingdom is *taking shape and shaping the world*. You won't understand God's work today without Matthew 13.

Verse 1 **"On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea..."**

On our visits to Israel we stay at hotels on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. It's a wonderful place to chill and collect your thoughts – especially after a long day.

And it'd been a particularly long day for Jesus... He'd battled with the Pharisees over the Sabbath, delivered a man from demons, defended His ministry from slander, and rebuffed His own family when they tried to pull Him from His calling.

I'm sure Jesus sat down by the seashore to rest, but His day isn't over...

**"And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore."** Jesus is about to teach vital lessons. And remember this before the day of electronic amplification. But Jesus knows His physics. He rows out in boat so His voice will bounce off the lake.

“Then He spoke many things to them in parables...” Here are the first parables mentioned in the Gospels, and the first mention of the word.

"Parable" means "to cast alongside." It's an illustration of a lesson.

This was a popular teaching technique at the time. Many of the Jewish rabbis had begun to teach in parables, but no one used it as effectively as Jesus.

And Jesus said, "Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them." The "wayside" was the hard path that was traveled regularly. It was trampled down by feet, and hooves, and wagon wheels. It was dirt that had become hard and impenetrable.

“Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away.”

There are places in Palestine today where a thin layer of topsoil covers a huge shelf of limestone. Seeds can't sprout and grow in 2 or 3 inches of shallow soil.

“And some (seed) fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good (or fertile) ground and yielded a crop: some a 100-fold, some sixty, some thirty.” Farmers claim a good yield is eightfold, but Jesus promises a spiritual harvest of far greater proportions – up to 100-fold.

Verse 9 **"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"**

Thirteen times in Matthew 13 Jesus uses the word **"hear"**. A parable paints a picture, but the real message lies below the surface. It's figurative. If you're not listening, and paying close attention, you'll hear the story, but miss the point.

Did you know poor listening skills cost American businesses \$10 million per day? People today are so bombarded with noises we're experts at blocking out.

But we need to listen up to Jesus. *Do you have ears to hear?*

**"And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given."**

We think of a mystery as a *who-done-it* story... a story with a surprising plot.

But in the biblical sense a mystery is a truth that can only be revealed by God.

It's beyond the reach of human search or reason. In Old Testament times it was hidden, but has now been revealed. A mystery is the unveiling of *a sacred secret*.

Daniel 2 epitomized the Jewish understanding of God's Kingdom. A rock from heaven strikes the kingdoms of the world. They crumble and form a mountain.

This was history in a nutshell. The rock, the Messiah, will strike and defeat the kingdoms of this earth. And the mountain of God will rise from their ashes.

God's Kingdom is a political and military and institutional triumph.

All this is true. This is how this present world order will end. But part of the story was hidden from Daniel, and the prophets. Before Messiah *smashes* His enemies, He first *sneaks* behind enemy lines to retrieve the prisoners of war. The Kingdom begins with a *covert operation* - not a *frontal assault*.

Later in Luke 17 Jesus is asked about the Kingdom. *When does it come?*

He replies, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!'" For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."

This was a revolutionary insight. Before the King sits on an earthly throne He occupies the throne in human hearts. Before He destroys, He seeks to save.

If you were a Jew steeped in Old Testament theology you would consider this chapter the most revolutionary in the Bible. The Jews at the time of Jesus longed for the final coming of God's Kingdom, but had no idea of its initial invasion.

If Jesus had taught these truths directly they would've been too much for His listeners to handle. Imagine the tension. But Jesus used parables to soften the blow. Let the truths dawn on their hearers rather than slap them in the face.

A parable is like a time-released medicine. Rather than

dumping the drugs into your system all at once – a time released capsule gradually releases its contents.

A straightforward declaration dumps the truth on its hearers, but a parable allows its hearers time to absorb the truth in degrees. You adjust your thinking as you digest the truth. It's a spiritual IV that releases the truth in manageable doses.

“For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.”

In other words, **it takes a spiritual sensitivity to grasp spiritual truths.**

The man who knows God is the man who desires Him. The man who's never met God doesn't know God is what He needs and continues to lack.

Thus, spiritually speaking, *“the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.”*

In verse 13 Jesus says, **“Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.**

**And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled (Isaiah 6:9-10), which says:**

**'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.'** Parables were a spiritual device that qualified the listener.



The parable sailed over the heads of the folks with little spiritual discernment.

It was an indictment if you walked away after hearing Jesus' parable thinking it was just a nice story. The parable had the opposite effect on people with ears to hear. It was a window through which deeper truths and application poured in.

Several years ago a West Virginia mine shaft collapsed. For 3½ days seven men were lost in the darkness. When rescue workers reached the trapped men their lanterns shined into the dark mine. The seven men began to shout for joy.

But during the celebration one of the victims asked, "Hey, why doesn't someone turn on a light!" It was the first time anyone knew that the man had been blinded by the accident. He didn't know he was blind until the light shined into his darkness.

The parables of Jesus were also lights into the darkness. For those who didn't grasp their implications the parables served to prove their spiritual blindness.

But Jesus says to His disciples, "But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it." Jesus is about to divulge truths the OT prophets longed to learn. He's going to reveal the mysteries of the Kingdom...

Verse 18, "Therefore hear the parable of the sower: when anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not



understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.” Notice several truths Jesus tells us about the Kingdom of God...

First, the Kingdom does not begin in the form of a **war**, but a **word**.

Jews thought the reign of God would fall like a *hammer, and pound out God’s will*, but Jesus says God’s kingdom comes as a *seed that’s planted in the heart*. The seed is God’s Word - there’s life in the seed. It grows where it’s received.

*This means the kingdom of God can be resisted.*

To Jews this was a revolutionary notion. In its initial phases the Kingdom will not overtake rebels and shackle them with submission. Jews assumed God’s kingdom would steamroll over man’s will - but amazingly, Jesus says the kingdom requires our cooperation. **The growth of the seed depends on the condition of the heart.**

And the human heart comes in four conditions...

Here he speaks of the seed that was thrown onto the wayside.

The wayside was hard ground – the beaten path. This is the heart where hopes and dreams and optimism have been trampled down. Negativity is habitual.

As soon as the seed hits this ground the birds of skepticism and cynicism eat them up. Satanic vultures devour the seed. The wayside is **a faithless heart**.

Here’s another type of ground. **“But he who received the**

seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.” Here’s a **shallow heart**.

Eternity magazine studied the respondents at a large evangelistic crusade.

In the week of meetings 4,106 decisions were made for Jesus. But within three months, only 3% of the people were attending church. That means 3,981 people came forward, had an emotional moment, but failed to follow through.

This is stony ground. It’s a shallow heart with a superficial faith. It reacts to an emotional stirring, but fails to sink roots and make a genuine commitment.

*And what reveals the depth of our devotion? Whether our righteousness has roots? “Tribulation and persecution...”* When trouble strikes, faith gets tested.

Verse 22 “Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.” Here’s a third type of ground - a **distracted heart**.

Here’s a person who chooses to follow Jesus without choosing to denounce the toys, and pleasures, and pursuits of this world... And he gets sucked back in.

Like Paul’s sidekick, the infamous Demas. He was guilty of backsliding from God. Paul said, "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world..."

The problem with some of us is not that we don’t want God

– we do. But we want other competing attractions. We desire the very bait that'll destroy us.

One author writes, “We want to be a saint, but we also want to feel sensations experienced by sinners - we want to be pure, but we also want to be experienced and taste all of life - we want to serve the poor and live simply, but we also want to the comforts of the rich - we want the depth of solitude, but we don't want to miss anything - we want to pray, but we also want to watch television.”

We live conflicted lives – and in a distracted heart the world wins out.

There's the *hard ground*, the *stony ground*, and the *thorny ground* - the *faithless heart*, the *shallow heart*, and the *distracted heart* – but there's one more heart...

Verse 23 “But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a 100-fold, some sixty, some thirty.”

Notice only one-fourth of the farmer's seed took root.

Don't get discouraged when you share your faith and people don't receive the Good News of Jesus. Our Lord Himself predicted *a one out of four success rate*.

Notice too, the seed that grows here is the same seed that didn't grow earlier. There's nothing wrong with the Word. The problem is not the **seed**, but the **soil**.

This is why Jeremiah told the people of his day “Break up your fallow ground.”

In other words, repent. Plough up your pride - till under your stubbornness, and humble your heart... Fertile ground is the

ground prepared by repentance.

The next parable is known as “The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares...”

Verse 24 “Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.”

The “tares” are probably what the Jews call the “bearded darnel.”

It’s a poisonous rye-grass that looks like wheat until the ear of grain appears. It has the same color, shape, and smell as wheat - but it produces no head of grain.

Often in the Middle East the tares becomes a means of sabotage. Your enemy sneaks into your field, and sows the bearded darnel. It grows up alongside the wheat. But you can’t weed the tares for fear of pulling up wheat by mistake.

The tares suck nutrients from the soil that could be going to feed the wheat.

A farmer has no other choice. He has to let the wheat and tares grow up together until the harvest time. *This is what the farmer in the parable does...*

“But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ “He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ “But he said, ‘No, lest while

you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.” And here’re the farmer’s instructions...

“Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn." Again, this was a novel way of seeing the Kingdom of God. The Jews foresaw instant and absolute judgment.

But Jesus envisions the Kingdom growing up in the midst of an evil world. Before the Kingdom abolishes evil it has to co-exist and fight against the evil.

The wheat and weeds grow side by side. Kingdom living requires patience. It’s not until the end of the age – harvest – that God brings judgment and separation.

Verses 31-32 are “The Parable of the Mustard Seed.”

“Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

The mustard seed was the smallest seed known to Jewish farmers. It was also a proverbial way of referring to a mi-nute quantity, “as small as a mustard seed.” A mustard seed conjured up notions of smallness. It was practically imperceptible.

Jesus is saying the kingdom of God begins small and insignificant. No one notices it growing – it develops below

the world's radar screen.

The world is impressed with flesh and flash - rarely do its headlines showcase God's kingdom. But the kingdom is growing, and will one day fill the whole earth.

As Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "**Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.**" Those who submit to God will one day rule the world.

Think of how the mustard seed grew... Jesus' earthly ministry was limited to a few years, and a few square miles. Jesus was largely overlooked by the Roman historians of His day. Christianity was a *minor movement* in a *secluded corner*.

Jesus left behind no formidable army - just 120 frightened troops. It was a small beginning, but over the centuries Christianity has swept the world and back again.

And this is always how the kingdom spreads. God begins with nothing – *just a man, a vision, some faith - little backing or numbers or publicity* – God grows His work subtly, inconspicuously – under the world's radar – just a seed in the soil.

The kingdom of God will always be an underground movement.

At the end of the age, God's kingdom – the kingdom that began as a bush – will grow into a tree. And the birds of the air will nest in its branches. In other words, one day the world's nations will gather to God and be part of His kingdom.

But the point of the parable is not to describe the kingdom's end, but the nature of its existence in the current age. And for now it continues as a mustard seed.



George Eldon Ladd has a great explanation of this parable, "The Kingdom of God which one day shall fill the earth is here among men - in a form which was never before expected. It is like an insignificant seed of mustard. This tiny thing IS, however, God's Kingdom and is therefore not to be despised."

**“Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."**

Three measures of meal was a daily portion of bread for the average Jewish home. It represented routine, common, colorless living. Jesus promises the Kingdom will act like leaven and permeates and infiltrate the bland bread.

This is what the Kingdom of God does for everyday life. It gives us fullness and meaning. *It injects the eternal into the everyday – and meaning into the mundane.*

**“The Parable of the Leaven”** also illustrates the Kingdom’s inside-out influence.

Earthly kingdoms use laws and legislation to *conform behavior*. God’s kingdom relies on God’s Spirit and His Word to *transform character*. God uses persuasion, not coercion. It’s been said, **“Caesar hoped to reform men by changing institutions and laws; Christ wished to remake institutions, and lessen laws, by changing men.”**

Earthly kingdoms rule from the top down - the outside in. But God’s Kingdom injects the heart with the serum of love that filters through the whole person.

Verse 34 **“All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in**



parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet (here it's Psalm 78:2), saying: "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world."

Peterson puts it, "I will open My mouth and tell stories; I will bring out into the open things hidden since the world's first day." What a privilege to have heard Jesus unwrap truths that had been packaged since the beginning of time.

What a privilege to read them and study them today.

I love the line, "I will open My mouth and tell stories..."

Jesus was quite a storyteller. Jesus did not invent the parable, but He perfected its use. Author Lois Cheney writes of Jesus' storytelling ability.

She says, "Who was Jesus? He was a storyteller. He told stories. He was the world's greatest storyteller. Ask Him a question; He'd answer with a story.

Give Him a crowd of people listening attentively; He told them stories.

Give Him an argument; He'd give you a story.

Give Him a real tricky, catchy question: He'd give you a real tricky, catchy story.

Have you every watched a seven year-old listening - inhaling - a story? Eyes wide, mouth slung open, mind churning, he lives, accepts, and believes. He is totally absorbed. This man-God Jesus. He was a good story-teller.

Jesus knew what He was doing." There's power in a good story.

“Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field."

The idea that evil in the world *could* and *would* co-exist with God's Kingdom - had so troubled the disciples they ask Jesus for a clarification.

“He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one.” Notice the field is not the church!

Nowhere does it say in Scripture that we're to tolerate unrepentant attitudes, and false teachers, and blatant sin in the church. Rather the New Testament tells us to mark such people, and if they refuse to repent... *boot them from the body.*

In the church we need discipline. But with the world we need a tolerance.

Jesus continues “The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.

The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

Notice Jesus' depictions of hell. There's literal, actual pain, and torment, and regret. Hell is not a fairy tale or a figurative use of speech. Hell is a real place.

**“Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”** The Jews thought the Kingdom of God would come with the end of all evil - not so. In this present age the Kingdom of God and kingdom of Satan co-exist. The tares grow alongside the wheat.

Often we wish God would judge the wicked – especially when we’re the brunt of someone’s sin or the victim of evil - but God chooses to wait.

God wants to keep His executioners from making a mistake. Only after Jesus raptures the church - and the wheat is the barn – does He begin to burn the tares. We'll have to wait until the end of the age for the final judgment. In the meantime, don't be confused if you see the wicked prosper.

**"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."** Remember the story of Ruth and Boaz. Boaz was a wealthy landowner.

He redeemed the field of his relative Elimilech - not because he wanted another field. As the family redeemer, he not only could reclaim his relative’s land he could marry his widow – the beautiful Ruth. Boaz bought the field to get the treasure.

This is why Jesus redeemed the world. Not because He needed another planet.

One astronomer calls the Earth, **"a fifth rate planet revolving around a tenth rate sun in a forgotten corner of the universe."** There’s nothing special about the third rock that Jesus would

sell all, even His own life, to purchase it.

But He paid the price because He found a treasure. And the treasure is us. You are the treasure for which Christ sold all He had - and even gave up His own life...

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it." Notice both *the treasure and the pearl* are hidden from view.

The treasure is buried in the field and the pearl is on the bottom of the ocean.

Likewise, don't expect this world to notice your value and worth. The esteem that comes from worldly pursuits is transitory. Our true value is measured by what Jesus was willing to pay to obtain us. He bought the whole world to retrieve you. He sold all He had to purchase you and me. We are of infinite value in Jesus.

There are scholars who view the treasure in the previous parable as Israel.

Throughout the Old Testament Israel is viewed as Jehovah's special treasure. She's been scattered and hid in the Earth for 2000 years, but in the last days Jesus will find gather His people, and redeem the world to rescue Israel.

If the treasure is Israel, then the pearl is probably the church.

The pearl is found in the sea - and throughout Scriptures the sea is symbolic of the vast ocean of Gentile population. Jesus plucks out the pearl from the ocean.

It's interesting that the pearl is the only gem that doesn't need to be cut to bring out its beauty. It grows by irritation... Listen to this description of the pearl's growth,

"A pearl begins as nothing more than an irritating speck of sand in the shell of an oyster. The oyster coats that troublesome speck with layer upon layer of crystalline substance called nacre, which hardens and becomes the actual pearl. The more irritating the grain of sand, the more beautiful the pearl."

This is how we as Christians grow spiritually - through irritation. Seldom do we grow in the good times. It's the trying times and difficulties that cause us to grow.

The one thing that ruins a pearl is human perspiration - and the one thing that will arrest our spiritual growth is to go off in our own efforts and try to sweat it out.

Just remain in the oyster. Trust God. Let *difficulties disciple* and *trials train*.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away."

The seventh parable in the chapter is "The Parable of the Dragnet" - which has nothing to do with *Joe Friday*. If you even heard of Joe Friday or Dragnet...

A dragnet was a fishing net that swept through the water. It caught both edible and inedible fish. When God's Spirit

awakens or works in a community it sweeps through like a dragnet. All kinds of people get caught up in the enthusiasm.

Some folks jump on the bandwagon for the wrong reasons... It's cool, or they want to pacify the wife, or impress a girlfriend, or buddy up with the boss, or they like the music, or it just felt right at the time... but there's no real commitment.

The disciples experienced this firsthand... Judas, was one of their own, but ended up a betrayer. God will sort out the catch at the end of the age.

This is what Jesus tells us in verse 49 **"So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."** Note again, Hell is a place of conscious awareness. Its residents suffer a literal agony.

Here's an interesting thought...

If the treasure is Israel - and the pearl is the Church - then is it possible that the good fish from the dragnet refer to those who are saved in the Great Tribulation.

The Bible teaches there'll be people who miss the rapture. They enter the Great Tribulation and experience many of God's judgments – yet they decide to resist the mark of the Beast - and under the threat of death - they decide to follow Jesus.

In verse 51-52 we find the final Kingdom parable. **"Jesus said to them, "Have you understood all these things?" They**

said to Him, "Yes, Lord." Then He said to them, "Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old."

*Should a homeowner decorate with new or old furniture? Which is right?*

Well, both are right. It's not a right or wrong – either or - situation.

And the same was true of the Old and New Testament understandings of God's Kingdom. Both perspectives are needed to truly grasp the nature of the Kingdom.

In a single day God will establish an earthly, political, tangible, dominating kingdom. But today, a spiritual, invisible kingdom is invading the hearts of men - unnoticed by the world. New ideas and old ideas combine to give a full picture.

Chapter 13 ends with a homecoming of sorts...

Verse 53, "Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from there. And when He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, "Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is this not the carpenter's son?"

Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?" Notice Jesus had at least four half-brothers and two sisters.

Obviously, the Roman Catholic doctrine of the *perpetual virginity* of Mary is false. Mary had at least six other kids. It sounds more like *perpetual fertility*.



Jesus is teaching in His hometown synagogue. His peers are impressed with His wisdom... but they know His brother and sisters. They grew up with Jesus.

They're too proud to think that Jesus is special. That He's anything more than a boy from the hood. As the old saying goes, "Familiarity breeds contempt."

Sadly, pride caused their unwillingness to believe.

Matthew tells us, "So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house."

The pastor who serves faithfully in the same place for years – the husband who is loyal to his spouse – the wife who faithfully serves her family - the employee who minds his business and works hard... *all tend to get taken for granted.*

We grow use to their presence and forget what life would be like in their absence. Often a man or woman of God is without honor in their own house.

Verse 58 is such a sad verse. "Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Jesus was limited by the townspeople's unbelief.

Psalm 78:41 says of Israel. "They limited the Holy One of Israel." This is what hinders God's work in our lives. God refuses to act where there's a lack of faith.

Author Lois Cheney writes of this incident in Nazareth, "There was a place where the unbelief was so great that Jesus – Jesus, the Son of God – could not heal and help,

and so He left them. Has anyone seen Jesus lately?”

Has anyone seen Jesus lately at your house – in this church - in your life?

If not, it's because our faith has grown weak. We need to trust God.

The Kingdom of God is not in hibernation. We are not just waiting for the day when Jesus splits the eastern sky. His Spirit is at work in our lives right now.

The Kingdom comes not just in *one day*, but *everyday* when you have faith!