**WESTMINSTER BIBLE SCHOOL; THE PARABLES AND METAPHORS OF OUR LORD - THE TEACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**7. THE GENERAL SCHEME**

 *… Matthew Chapter 13*

*"Jesus spoke all these things in parables to the multitudes; and without a parable, he didn't speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet, saying, "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world."*

*Matthew 13:34,35*

THIS chapter contains at some length our Lord's explanation of His reason for using the parabolic method, and it is of vital importance and interest Chronologically in the ministry of Jesus the record in this chapter marks a stage in that ministry when our Lord turned largely to the parabolic method when dealing with the multitudes, employing it also with His own disciples. This chapter contains eight parables, all delivered on the same occasion, though not as one set discourse. That fact is proven by the fifty-third verse. This study then is of the nature of a general survey, important to a more detailed consideration.

At the seaside Jesus gave the first complete parable, that of the sower, and He gave an explanation of that. parable in answer to the request of His disciples, doubtless also given in the hearing of the multitudes. Following that explanation, He uttered three other parables, still by the seaside, sitting in the boat, while the multitudes thronged the shore. At the thirty-sixth verse we see that He left the multitudes, and went into the house. The first thing that happened in the house was that again, in answer to the request of His disciples, He explained one of the parables, the second that He had uttered in public. Then He gave to them, in the house, four other parables.

To take a general survey. We find in these parables the King's own view of His Kingdom as to its history in the age which He had then initiated. These parables, pictures, stories reveal His view of the Kingdom, not in its eternal and abiding sense, but in its history in the age which He had initiated by His coming into the world.

The first of these parables simply reveals the nature of His mission. It is the parable of the sower. The second parable begins with the words, "The Kingdom of heaven is likened unto." The first parable has no such reference, and He never again used this particular phrase in this chapter, but said, "The Kingdom of heaven is like." Here in the second parable the phrase might be rendered, The Kingdom of heaven has become like. In that introduction the phrase shows our Lord was thinking of the Kingdom of heaven as an abiding fact, but that changed in its conditions and in its expression. The Kingdom heaven has become like; there was a change through His own coming, and He shows the nature of the change.

Then the next five parables, two uttered in public and three in all begin, "The Kingdom of heaven is like." Here is the general character of the change, and the result thereof. These are the pictures of a definite period. The limit is found in two verses, thirty-nine and forty-nine, when our Lord spoke of the end of the age, not of the world, an unhappy translation. When some people talk of the end of the world they mean a cataclysm, an annihilation, and a ceasing to be. That is not what our Lord meant. He spoke of "the consummation of the age." A period of time was in His view.

Our Lord spoke here to illumine, not to becloud, to illustrate, and to lure men towards the mystery through the symbol. Therefore these parables should be considered on the simplest level. Taking the symbols, and mastering them, we touch the sublime.

The second canon is that the application should be restricted to the period of time which was in view. To fail to do that is to fail to understand what our Lord was intending to teach. They are pictures of one age, beginning with His first advent, and ending with His second advent, of the period in which we are living to-day. This restriction of application will save us from stupid blunders being made to-day about the work of the Church, and of the condition of the world.

Again in studying the figurative teaching of Jesus, we find His consistent use of such figurative terms. They are never mixed. I would go further and say that applies to the whole Bible. The figurative language of the Bible is always consistent with basic principles.

In our general survey of these parables in this chapter, the Kingdom is viewed in its progress in this age among men. Those spoken to the multitude present the Kingdom process from the human viewpoint. In the second group of parables, spoken to the disciples, the same age is in view, but the Kingdom is seen from the Divine aspect.

In the first four parables, those presenting the human viewpoint, our Lord described two antagonistic forces at work in human history. He not only referred to these forces, but He made it perfectly clear that there would be long and continuous conflict between them. Taking those four parables, the apparent issue is the victory of evil, on the earth level, and the human standpoint. Remember, He was looking at the processes of the Kingdom as He saw them, and portraying God's vision of that period.

In the parable of the sower and the seed, the work of the King is seen, scattering men of the Word in order to produce Kingdom results. Sons of the Kingdom are scattered, in whom the Word is incarnate, so as to produce Kingdom results; and the results of victory seem to be very small; for there is the work of the enemy, the injury of the seed through the soil, to prevent the fruit of the Kingdom.

In the next parable there are two sowings. Again the King is the Sower, sowing His field with the sons of the Kingdom. At the same time the work of the enemy is that of sowing the field with sons of the evil one. Wheat and darnel, that weed of the East so alike in its growth to wheat that experts can hardly detect the difference in its early stage.

In the third parable the Kingdom is presented as a mustard tree, an unnatural growth, a manifestation of earthly greatness which is not in harmony with the intention of the King, in the false values that will be manifested.

Once more, the leaven in the meal, the introduction of a principle of decomposition and disintegration, with the result of external corruption and paralysis. Those are our Lord's four pictures of Kingdom processes, spoken to the crowds; and that view harmonizes with the history of nineteen hundred years, and all the newspapers of to-morrow morning.

When we turn to the second group of parables, after He had gone into the house, we find Him talking to the men immediately round Him, who were to be responsible for His enterprise in the world, and He was showing them the Kingdom as viewed from the Divine stand-point. Here the one activity running through them all, and in every case the complete success of that activity, both in the ending of the age which He was initiating, and in the processes Of the Kingdom which He was describing. Then that which in evil had seemed to be victorious is destroyed; and that which has been the purpose of the King is brought to a glorious finality and realization.

The parable of the treasure in the field, the latent possibilities of the field. The field is the world. There is the purchase of the whole field at cost. That is the Divine attitude. The pearl in the field, with its latent possibilities, and amid the treasure, one supreme treasure; and there is a personal sacrifice in order to secure possession of that treasure. Again that is the Divine outlook. Some of us have sung in old days, with much enjoyment,

"I've found the Pearl of greatest price!

My heart doth sing for joy;

And sing I must, for Christ is mine!

Christ shall my song employ."

That is beautiful and very true, but that is not what this means. Christ here is not the pearl. His Church is the pearl. Remember, this man, this merchant sold everything in order to possess the treasure. What have we to sell that is worth anything? Nothing! Again, the parable of the drag-net. No hand is spoken of as flinging out that drag-net. It swings in the tide. That is the Divine action, and He is flinging out drag-net. That is the method of the age, and all conditions of people are included therein, all sorts of fishes; but there is a final discrimination. In each case when referring to the consummation, or final discrimination, our Lord shows the finality will be supernatural. It will not be in men's hands at all, but in the hands of angels. Angels are the reapers. Angels pull in the net and sort the fishes. At Caesarea Philippi when Jesus first told His disciples about His Cross and His Church and His coming, He said that the Son of man should come in the clouds with all the holy angels. There is a supernatural ending for the age, in which angels actually take part under His direction, in the affairs of men.

When He had finished His seven parables, He looked at that little group of men and said, Have you understood these things? They said, Yes. They evidently understood in such a measure as to make it possible for Christ to utter one more parable, showing their responsibilities about all these things, as scribes, instructed to the Kingdom of heaven.

It was a great day when He began uttering parables: four to the crowds, and four to His own. The first four revealed the processes of the Kingdom through an age, on the human level. Three revealed the processes of the Kingdom from the Divine viewpoint, of the Divine purpose and standard; and the final one showed the responsibility of His own in view of that view of the Kingdom.

If any should believe that the whole world is to be converted and changed, and presently be transformed as the result of their work, they are blind. Christ is against such a belief, History is against it. The activities in the world to-day are against it. When we see this movement through this age from the Divine standpoint, then the heart is at rest as to the issue. The final parable here reveals the importance of the fact that we are scribes, instructed in the Kingdom of heaven. We must have the Master's conception if we are to serve the Kingdom without fret, without fever, without failing in quiet calm strength.