

The Mustard Seed & the Leaven

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(Matthew 13:31-35)

In the last session we discussed the *Parable of the Wheat & Tares*, which was the first parable in the series identified as being about the “kingdom of heaven.” In that parable, Jesus began to share some of the “mysteries of the kingdom” which He had promised in Matt 13:11. These are prophetic glimpses into the characteristics of the time period between Israel’s rejection of her King and their eventual acceptance of Him at His second coming in glory. There were two main lessons from the *Parable of the Wheat & Tares*. First, the kingdom would not come until the time of the harvest at the “end of the age.” Second, there would be good seed & bad seed which would grow side by side until the end of the growing season.

This session will cover the next two parables that Jesus gave to the multitude on the beach as He taught from the boat. Just as when He shared the *Parable of the Wheat & Tares*, Jesus did not provide any explanation of the parables when He was speaking to the crowd. It was only when Jesus retreated into the house that He shared an explanation of the *Parable of the Wheat & Tares* privately with His disciples. In the two brief parables we will discuss today, Jesus did not give any interpretation at all – either to the crowd or to His disciples.

Because Jesus did not give an explanation for the intended meaning of these parables, the task of interpreting them is much more challenging. One thing we cannot do is to insert our own meanings into these parables. Since Jesus did not explicitly tell us what He was thinking, we need to rely on the context for clues that will help to determine His meaning. Ultimately we should not say anything beyond what is justified by the text of the parables. It is always safer to state what the text says, rather than venturing into speculation which might add meanings that Jesus never intended.

There are several principles of interpretation to help us. First, “**Context is King.**” Even if the meaning of a Bible passage is unclear, often the immediate context of the unclear passage will shed light on its meaning. Second, “**Scripture interprets Scripture.**” When we come across a Bible passage that is unclear, there may be a similar idea in a similar context that can shed light on the meaning of the unclear passage. Third, “**What does the text say?**” In other words, Scripture itself is our sole authority, and we should be cautious whenever we try to use our own flawed human logic to make inferences about the meaning of unclear passages.

Rational powers are God-given, and our commission is to study thoroughly so that we may correctly handle the Word of God with no need to be ashamed. ... Since revelation is limited...it may be legitimate to logically deduce the missing elements. But if Scripture is our sole authority, we may not invest [our own] logical deductions with divine authority.

... Most of the great controversies on Christian doctrine have grown out of attempts to define what is left undefined in Scripture.¹

This is very wise counsel from a seasoned Bible interpreter. In the case of these two unexplained parables, their immediate context as well as a cross-reference from a similar context will help to determine the meaning. But we must acknowledge that there may be aspects of these unexplained parables which we must simply hold in an open hand – allowing God to have His mysteries, and being content with the sure Word of truth that God has permitted us to understand. Concerning our approach to these two parables, one writer says:

We must be suspicious of any interpretation of one parable which contradicts that of any other. We may take it for granted that Christ is consistent in His teaching. Hence the value of the fact that the first two parables were explained by the King Himself. From these explanations we may proceed to an examination of all the rest. Once again, we must remember the consistency of our Lord's figures. He does not confuse them in His use. The sower of the different parables always represents the same person, and so throughout. When He has given us the explanation of a figure we may apply that explanation uniformly.²

Since Jesus gave all of these parables in one sitting, we can be confident that the elements of His overall message will be consistent rather than contradictory. The parables of the *Mustard Seed* and the *Leaven* appear in the context where Jesus illustrated some of the “mysteries of the kingdom” for the multitude. He explained the first of these parables – the *Parable of the Wheat & Tares* – privately to His disciples, so that first “kingdom parable” and its explanation should provide the pattern for interpreting the two unexplained public parables.

Matt 13:31 - He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field;

Jesus is still teaching from the boat and addressing the multitude who stood on the beach. In this new parable, Jesus uses another illustration from agriculture. The story tells of a man who took a mustard seed and planted it in his field. Notice that he planted a single mustard seed, since the Greek word for **seed** (*kokkos*) is singular in number. This is not the picture of a man scattering handfuls of seed across his plowed field. What we see here is more like a gardener who plants an individual seed in an herb pot or in a prepared garden bed.

Matt 13:32 - and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES."

A mustard seed is extremely tiny. When Jesus says that it was “smaller than all other seeds” He is referring to all of the other common garden plants that were familiar to the people He was speaking to on the shoreline. One of the keys to interpreting this parable will be to learn more

¹ Robertson McQuilkin, *Understanding and Applying the Bible*, Moody Press (1992): 235.

² G. Campbell Morgan, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, Fleming H. Revell Company (1907): 94.

about the mustard plant that Jesus was referring to. Just as it was important to understand the characteristics of the dandelion in the *Parable of the Wheat & Tares*, the same is true in this parable. The normal characteristics of the common mustard plant hold the key for interpreting the parable. A standard Bible plant reference has this to say:

There has been much discussion and argument as to what the mustard plant of Jesus' parables really was. The Greek word in the original texts is *sinapi*. Most modern commentators agree that it was the ordinary black mustard, *Brassica nigra*. This plant is extensively cultivated for its seeds, which are not only ground up to produce the mustard paste, but also yield a useful oil similar to colza oil. ... While these mustards do not usually grow more than 3 or 4 feet tall, plants have been found to be 10 and even 15 feet tall, with a main stem as thick as a man's arm. Although they are only annual plants, their stems and branches in autumn become hard and rigid and of quite sufficient strength to bear the weight of small birds that are attracted by the edible seeds. ... It is perhaps worthy of note that the seeds of *Brassica* are small, and were probably the smallest seeds known to the common country folk comprising Jesus' audience in Galilee. ... *Brassica nigra* did become one of the largest annual herbs in the region. ... Some commentators are of the opinion that the passage implies that birds built their nests in the branches of the mustard. The Greek word employed has no such connotation; it merely means "to settle or rest upon." ... Nor is it justified to suppose that the expression "fowls of the air" denotes large and heavy chicken-like or hawk-like birds. It seems most probable that the word was used to denote the common insectorial (perching) birds of the region, like linnets and finches. Small sparrow-like birds perched on the branches of the mature mustard plants in order to eat the seeds in the ripening pods.³

Jesus could have chosen any number of plants for this parable, but He chose the mustard plant for a specific reason. First of all, the characteristics of this common plant were well-known to His listeners. He is not relying on some mysterious quality of this plant in order to make His point. Everyone knew how small the mustard seeds were. In fact, Jesus used the small size of these seeds in order to make a different point in Matt 17:20 when He said to them, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you." So, the small size of mustard seeds was common knowledge.

Another aspect of the mustard plant was that it grew very quickly to become a small bush within just a few weeks, and by the end of the growing season some mustard plants could grow to a height of 10 or 15 feet. This engraving from a 17th century Bible shows a mustard plant that is typical of the one Jesus was talking about. He said, "when it is full grown, it is larger than the **garden plants**" (*lachanon*), which is the common word for a potted herb. So the mustard plant in Jesus' parable was the familiar garden plant that had characteristics which were well known to the people in His audience. There are at least four of these characteristics that are important for interpreting this parable.

³ Harold N. Moldenke and Alma L. Moldenke, *Plants of the Bible*, Chronica Botanica (1952): 59,61.

1. The mustard plant had very small seeds.
2. It was an annual plant that could grow to a large size by the end of the growing season. As one expositor has said, "Although belonging to the class of herbs, it becomes a plant like a tree."⁴
3. When fully grown it produced seed pods that attracted all kinds of small birds. **Birds** (*peteinon*) can represent any winged creature, and the most common birds of that region were small finches and sparrows whose main food was seeds.
4. At the end of the annual growing season the seeds would be harvested to make useful products for both food and medicine.



Out of all the possible plants that Jesus could have chosen, the mustard plant was probably the best example to illustrate the striking contrast between the small beginning and the large result within a single growing season. As one scholar expressed it,

Here, therefore, what is pictured is not a field of wheat developing from the seed to ripe fruit, as in the first parables, but the process of growth of a mustard plant. And the peculiarity pointed out in the growth of such a plant consists, on the one hand, in the diminutive smallness of the mustard grain, which has passed into a proverb, and on the other hand in the astonishing, tree-like magnitude of the plant springing from it, a magnitude excelling that of all plants of like kind.⁵

The NAS95 Bible says the birds would **nest** in the branches. The word for **nest** is the Greek word *kataskēnoō* which means "to rest, live, or settle among the branches." **Branches** (*klados*) are shoots or twigs, so this language does not require the branches to be very large. And the mustard plant does not become something different than or outside of its original nature. Some commentators claim that this mustard seed morphed into something else entirely. For example, one writer has said,

That which Christ here describes is a monstrosity. We are aware that this is denied by some, but our Lord's own words are final. He tells us that when this mustard seed is grown it is the "greatest among herbs, and becomes a tree" (v. 32). "Herbs" are an entirely different specie from trees. That which distinguished them is that their stems never develop woody tissue, but live only long enough for the development of flowers

⁴ Siegfried Goebel, *The Parables Of Jesus: A Methodical Exposition*, T&T Clark (1883): 95.

⁵ Ibid: 96-97.

and seeds. But this "herb" became a "tree;" that is to say, it developed into something entirely foreign to its very nature and constitution.⁶

This comment seems to take the growth of the mustard plant beyond what is warranted by Jesus' description in the text. In order to avoid extremes it seems best to stay within the realm of the facts that Jesus' audience would have known about the common mustard plant.

There are other commentaries that emphasize the size of the tree, as if the mustard plant became a mighty spreading oak or cedar. Several Old Testament passages do use the metaphor of a large spreading tree with birds flocking to its branches to illustrate a kingdom that is perceived as great and powerful (Judges 9:15; Ezekiel 17:22-24; 31:3-14; Daniel 4:7-23). However, we should use caution when appealing to cross-references from different contexts in Scripture in an effort to justify an interpretation of a particular passage. But, based on these types of cross-references, many commentators claim that the *Parable of the Mustard Seed* pictures a powerful worldly empire of Christendom which develops during the inter-advent age. For example, one writer has said,

In the parable of the mustard seed, the tree symbolizes growth, greatness, and prominence. Judged by the world's standards, its size and influence make it important so that now it is popular to find shelter in this religious monstrosity. Even the worldly and wealthy are being drawn to it. We can see here a kingdom spreading and flourishing, but it is not the kingdom of God. ... I can think of no better descriptive term for this religious abnormality than *Christendom*. It is not Christianity; it is an imitation of Christianity, but it is religious.⁷

Is it true that religious apostasy will run rampant in the last days? Yes, this is absolutely true, and there are many Bible passages which describe the development of this coming apostasy (2 Thess 2:3-12; 1 Tim 4:1-3; 2 Tim 3:1-7, 4:3-4; 2 Pet 2:1-3, 3:3-4; Rev 17). But, although there is quite a bit of later New Testament revelation about the last days apostasy of the Church and the false religious system established by the devil during the end times, reading all of that later revelation back into the *Parable of the Mustard Seed* does not appear to be justified. Is it possible that Jesus was prefiguring those later truths in this parable? It is possible, but the text itself does not contain evidence to indicate that was Jesus' intended meaning.

One other aspect of the *Parable of the Mustard Seed* that many commentators emphasize is the symbolism of the birds. Typically these commentators represent the birds from the previous *Parable of the Wheat & Tares* as "agents of the devil" who snatch up the gospel from unresponsive hearts. In order to apply the elements of the parables consistently, they then identify the birds resting in the mustard tree as "agents of evil." One writer stated:

But we do not have to go outside of Matthew 13 itself to discover what Christ referred to under the figure of these "birds." The Greek word in verse 32 is precisely the same as that which is rendered "birds" in verse 4, which are explained in verse 19 as "the

⁶ Arthur W. Pink, *The Prophetic Parables of Matthew 13* (1928), https://www.gracegems.org/Pink/prophetic_parables_of_mat_13.htm (accessed Jan 2024).

⁷ Lehman Strauss, *Prophetic Mysteries Revealed*, Loizeaux Brothers (1980): 63,69.

wicked." How, then, can this great "tree" represent the true Church of Christ, while its branches afford shelter for the Devil and his emissaries? ... Satan now moved worldly men to seek membership in the churches of God. These soon caused the Truth to be watered down, discipline to be relaxed, that which repelled the world to be kept in the background, and what would appeal to the carnal mind to be made prominent. Instead of affections being set upon things above, they were fixed on things below. Soon Christianity ceased to be hated by the unregenerate: the gulf between the world and the "Church" was bridged.⁸

Again we can ask, is this description true, both of the Church today as well as of what it is predicted to become in the last days? Yes, this description is absolutely true, and we could refer to the Bible passages listed earlier to confirm that all of this is true. But, is there evidence in the text of the parable to indicate that this is what Jesus intended to communicate in this brief story? Are the birds symbolic of "evil" or are they simply behaving as normal seed-eating birds? We know that birds typically look for their food in fields where seeds lay exposed on the ground, or in bushes and trees which have produced seed pods at the time of the harvest. One scholar expressed the issue this way:

This picture of "birds" and a "tree" to symbolize something evil is not a consistent pattern in Scripture. The examples often cited (Daniel 4:11-12; Ezekiel 31:6) do indeed depict great pagan kingdoms of the earth (i.e. Babylon and Assyria), but the stress seems to be more upon the greatness and scope of these kingdoms rather than upon the evil character thereof. The conclusive proof of this assumption is found in Ezekiel 17:22-24. Note how closely this description of the Messianic kingdom parallels the parable of the mustard seed. ... Thus the figure of birds or of the tree here does not demand an evil or sinister interpretation. The Lord may very well have had this passage in mind as he delivered the parable.⁹

So, a garden tree where birds are active does not necessarily represent anything other than what is described in the text. The birds are behaving exactly as we would expect birds to behave. As was mentioned previously, if Scripture itself is our sole authority, then we should be cautious whenever we attempt to make inferences about the meaning of elements in parables that have not been explicitly interpreted for us by Jesus.

One example of the most common interpretation of the *Parable of the Mustard Seed* is expressed by this commentator who said, "The kingdom of heaven, though now very small and seemingly insignificant, would one day grow into a large body of believers. That is the central lesson of this parable. ... His kingdom on earth was, figuratively, and relatively speaking, much smaller even than a mustard seed. But the kingdom that started very small would one day become very large."¹⁰ Another writer has said, "The scope of this parable is to show that the beginnings of the gospel would be small, but that its latter end would greatly increase. In this

⁸ Pink.

⁹ Jeffrey R. Benson, "The Kingdom Parables Of Matthew Thirteen," *Central Bible Quarterly*, vol 22 (Spring 1979): 12-13.

¹⁰ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 8-15*, Moody Press (1987): 370.

way the gospel church, the kingdom of God among us, would be set up in the world.”¹¹ Yet another writer has said, “The introduction of the tiny mustard seed points to the beginnings of the kingdom from a small remnant of believing Jews and Gentiles until it embraces the entire world.”¹²

The majority of modern commentators equate the growth of the mustard plant with the progress of the gospel or the kingdom in the world during the present age. But we should remember that the kingdom of heaven was rejected by the nation of Israel and that these parables deal with the intervening age during which the establishment of the kingdom is delayed. We have God’s promise that the kingdom will be a future reality, but it is not in existence today. Jesus did not establish His kingdom – not even in some kind of spiritual or “mystery” form in the present age.

So what can we say about the interpretation of the *Parable of the Mustard Seed*? What information do we have from the context that will help us to determine the meaning which Jesus intended to communicate? As was mentioned previously, since Jesus did not explain the meaning of this parable, we need to go back to the first “kingdom parable,” the one that He did explain, in order to find clues to help us determine His meaning. One Bible scholar has expressed it this way:

The controlling factor here is the parable of the tares, whose presentation introduces the group of three parables and whose interpretation concludes them. That parable has two key elements with respect to the activities of the present time, one good and one evil. It is not a stretch exegetically to see that Jesus gives these two parables (mustard seed and leaven) to illustrate the two elements of good and evil. In this light, the period leading up to the kingdom will see many come to Christ, but will also see many reject Him as well. Each of the two parables illustrates one-half of the description given by the parable of the tares.¹³

The main message from the *Parable of the Wheat & Tares* was that the kingdom would not come until the time of harvest at the “end of the age.” When we look at the *Parable of the Mustard Seed* that is exactly what we see, too. Jesus illustrated this truth using a tiny seed which was familiar to His audience, that when fully grown became a small tree where the birds could perch and where they could feed on the seed pods which had ripened for the harvest. This explanation seems to be the most likely meaning for the *Parable of the Mustard Seed*.

If we want to see Scriptural support for this interpretation, we can review other statements of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, especially those in which He used the metaphor of a tree to illustrate His point. For example, in Matt 24:32-33 He said, “Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; ³³ so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at

¹¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, e-Sword edition.

¹² Ronald N. Glass, “The Parables of the Kingdom: A Paradigm for Consistent Dispensational Hermeneutics,” *Michigan Theological Journal*, vol 05 (Spring 1994): 117.

¹³ Michael D. Stallard, “Hermeneutics and Matthew 13: Part 2,” *Conservative Theological Journal*, vol 5 (Dec 2001): 353.

the door.” In that context Jesus was talking about the end of the age and His coming to establish the kingdom, which is almost identical to the context of the *Parable of the Mustard Seed*.

It seems clear that in the *Parable of the Mustard Seed* Jesus is teaching a similar truth. Just as when using the characteristics of a fig tree to predict the coming of summer, the same concept applies to the mustard plant. When you see it fully grown with the birds perching in its branches while they feed on its seed pods, you know that the end of the season is near. We might paraphrase this possible interpretation of Jesus’ parable by saying, “So, you too, when you see the gathering birds and the ripe pods on the mustard tree, recognize that He is near – that the time for the kingdom to be established is right at the door.”

As in the previous parable, in this parable we see something that starts insignificantly, like the beginning of the age after Jesus’ rejection as Messiah and the postponement of the kingdom. But over the course of time, the progress of this age continues until it finally reaches the end of the growing season. At that time the harvest will occur and the ripe seed pods will be gathered. We also know from the *Parable of the Wheat & Tares* that at that time Jesus will judge the nations and He will inaugurate His kingdom. This seems to be the clearest interpretation for the *Parable of the Mustard Seed*, and it is also consistent with the message of the *Parable of the Wheat & Tares*.

Matt 13:33 - He spoke another parable to them, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened."

The word **leaven** is the Greek word *zumē* which comes from the word *zeō*, meaning “to be hot or to boil.” *Zumē*, then, means to ferment, picturing the bubbling effect of a leavening agent such as yeast in the dough. Leaven has been commonly used in households throughout the world, so the way it worked would have been common knowledge to Jesus’ audience. He said that a woman took the leaven and hid it in the milled grain or flour. This pictures the common practice of a woman going about the daily task of making dough and baking bread.

Jesus said that the woman used “three pecks of flour.” A **peck** translates the Greek word *saton* which was a dry measure equal to about 3 gallons or 14 liters in modern terms. This is probably the same amount of flour that Sarah used as she made bread for Abraham when the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre (Gen 18:6). One commentator has said, “Three measures of meal would be about 40 litres, which would make enough bread for a meal for 100 people, a remarkable baking for an ordinary woman, but it makes the point vividly!”¹⁴

We see that the woman **hid** leaven in the flour, and this is the Greek word *egkruptō* which is where we get our English word “encryption.” It can mean “to conceal or hide” as well as simply “to mix or to mingle one thing with another.” So the use of this word may not indicate anything beyond the normal process of mixing leaven into a large batch of dough.

As we seek to understand the meaning of this parable, the main element we see is the **leaven**. Many commentators have struggled to determine whether the leaven in this parable represents

¹⁴ R.T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Intervarsity Press (1985): 227.

something good or something evil, and there is about a 50/50 split in opinion. One scholar has said, “Many contend that the leaven is used here in a good sense and pictures the spread of the gospel throughout the earth. Others state that the word represents evil and is used to illustrate the growth of evil within the group which professes to inherit the kingdom. This latter interpretation has the strongest support.”¹⁵

When we look at the sayings of Jesus in the Gospels we see that He used “leaven” only in a negative sense. He constantly warned His disciples to beware of the “leaven” of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and Herod. As one commentator has said, “The immediate context supports an understanding of the parable of the leaven as...in harmony with Matthew’s association of the term *leaven* with the evil of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 16:6-12).”¹⁶ Also, we see in later New Testament revelation that the apostle Paul used “leaven” solely in a negative sense (1 Cor 5:6-8; Gal 5:7-10). So the biblical evidence lends support for the use of “leaven” with a connotation of evil or corruption.

Here in the *Parable of the Leaven* we see another small beginning with the introduction of a piece of leaven into a very large batch of dough. Then over the course of time, the progress of the age continues until the dough finally reaches the state where (as Jesus said) “**it was all leavened.**” The condition of the fully leavened dough is comparable to the state of the full grown mustard plant, as well as to the status of the mature wheat and tares at harvest time. In each case, the end of the growing season had finally come.

As mentioned previously concerning the *Parable of the Wheat & Tares*, a second important truth was that the good & bad seed would grow side by side until the time of the harvest. Similarly, here in the *Parable of the Leaven* it seems that there is also a corrupting influence which spreads through the dough over time. One commentator expressed it this way: “This parable reveals the fact that evil will run its course and dominate the new age. But it also indicates that when the program of evil has been fulfilled, the kingdom will come.”¹⁷

So, like the *Parable of the Wheat & Tares* as well as the *Parable of the Mustard Seed*, the *Parable of the Leaven* illustrated the period of time between Israel’s rejection of their King and His eventual return at the end of the age to establish His kingdom. This intervening period would be a time when good and evil would coexist over the course of the age. When the end of the season finally comes, there will be a judgment event followed by the establishment of the kingdom by the glorified King.

Matt 13:34 - All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable.

At the end of this section Matthew gave a brief statement concerning Jesus’ use of parables to teach the multitude. This verse and the one that follows are a fitting conclusion for Jesus’ public teaching to the people on shore while He was sitting in the boat that day. Matthew tells us that during this entire sermon Jesus spoke to the crowd only in parables. In the second session of

¹⁵ Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King*, Multnomah Press (1980): 182.

¹⁶ Stallard, 353.

¹⁷ Toussaint, 182.

this series we discussed the reason why Jesus taught the multitude using only parables. Here in this verse Matthew confirms that this is exactly the method Jesus used that day, and which He would continue to use in His public ministry because of Israel's rejection of Him as their Messiah and King.

Matt 13:35 - This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: "I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN PARABLES; I WILL UTTER THINGS HIDDEN SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD."

In this verse Matthew says that Jesus' teaching in parables corresponded to what the psalmist Asaph wrote in Psalm 78:2. We could say that what Asaph wrote in that psalm was well suited for describing Jesus' teaching method to the multitudes. Here Matthew identified Asaph as a **prophet**, and we see this fact confirmed in 1 Chron 25:2 where it says that Asaph "prophesied under the direction of the king."

The first phrase, "**I will open my mouth in parables,**" is almost identical to the wording in the Greek translation of the Hebrew text (LXX). The second phrase, "**I will utter things hidden since the foundation of the world,**" is an expanded version of the Septuagint text. Here under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Matthew elaborated on the words of Asaph in order to emphasize that Jesus was sharing "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" as it says in Matt 13:11. This helps us to understand that those mysteries were indeed some of the secret, eternal counsels of God which had remained **hidden** and unrevealed since the foundation of the world.

Summary

In these final two public parables Jesus provided consistent predictions about the extended period of time between Israel's rejection of their King and His eventual appearance to establish the kingdom. The fact that there would be a long period of time between these two events was a truth that had not been previously revealed in the Old Testament. An intervening age must come before the millennial kingdom is inaugurated. In all of these public parables Jesus taught that the kingdom will not be established until the end of that age. These parables also illustrated that there would be an uneasy coexistence of good and evil growing side-by-side throughout this intervening period, so we should not be surprised when we see this during our own lifetime.