

Catford Lectures 2014-2015

Part 10

Speaker	M. Best; Michael Vogelsang; Nick Fleet; Andrew Poots; Simon Attwood; Paul Dronsfield; Michael Hardt; Geoff Hawes; Robert Wall; Catford Lectures Conference
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[00:00:01] I hope that what it is on my heart to speak about this evening will, in some respects, dovetail with the word that was brought to us by our brother Jeff this afternoon. I want to speak about three of the parables of the Kingdom of the Heavens in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 13.

But in order to help us in the understanding of this expression, the Kingdom of the Heavens, I want to turn you first of all to the Gospel by Matthew, chapter 3.

[00:01:02] Matthew's Gospel, chapter 3, verse 1. In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye for the Kingdom of Heaven, or the Kingdom of the Heavens, is at hand. Verse 7.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Verse 11.

I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance. But he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and fire, whose fan is in his hand, [00:02:04] and he will thoroughly purge his floor and gather his wheat into the garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. And now in chapter 8. Verse 5.

And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum there, came unto him a centurion beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. [00:03:01] The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof, but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me, and I say to this one, go, and he goeth, and to another come, and he cometh. To my servant do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, he marveled, said to them that followed verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Joseph in the kingdom of heaven. [00:04:02] But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And now in chapter 13, verse 44, these three well-known parables.

Chapter 13, verse 44. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field, which when a man hath found, he hideth. For joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant, a man seeking goodly pearls. When he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. [00:05:08] Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea and gathered of every kind. Which when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world, the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, shall cast them into the furnace of fire. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. In order that there may be a kingdom, there must be a king.

[00:06:11] And there must be a domain where the rights of the king are acknowledged.

The Gospel by Matthew shows us both these things.

It shows that the Lord Jesus is the king, God's king, and that he has a kingdom.

Matthew begins by telling us that this Gospel is the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, [00:07:09] the son of David, the son of Abraham. So that the Lord Jesus, as David's heir, has title to the throne of Israel.

And as the son of Abraham, he is the one through whom every promise that God made to Abraham concerning Israel is going to be fulfilled.

In chapter 2, you remember, the only Gospel that notices their visit, there were the Magi, the wise men who came from the east [00:08:03] and they went to Herod and they asked, where is he that is born king of the Jews?

That's a remarkable question.

Because at that time, Joseph, our Lord's legal father, was still alive.

But the Lord Jesus had an infinitely superior claim to the throne of Israel than Joseph did.

Because in chapters 1 and 2, he's presented to us, as we all know very well, [00:09:02] he's presented to us as Jesus, Jehovah, the Saviour.

He's presented to us as Emmanuel, God, the mighty God, with us.

And further down in chapter 2, we read that out of Egypt, God called his son.

Egypt provided shelter for the son of God.

When Herod sought his life, and our brother Jeff was reminding us this afternoon of the blessing that is to come upon Egypt in that time to come, [00:10:08] when our Lord comes to reign.

In the verses that we've read at the beginning of chapter 3, the context shows us precisely what the character of this kingdom of heaven is.

It's the millennial kingdom.

That's what John the Baptist was preaching about. That's what the Lord began to preach about in chapter 4, verse 17. Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. [00:11:06] The king has come, and he needs only to be received by the people who take their proper place in the dust. It's altogether unworthy of such a king and such a kingdom. And we know, again our brother Jeff this afternoon was making it clear to us from the chapters in Isaiah to which we turned, that this millennial kingdom is introduced by divine judgment.

[00:12:03] It's one of the things that the first Psalm shows us.

So clearly, that if the righteous in Israel are to be blessed, if the godly are to be blessed under the reign of Messiah, then the wicked in Israel, the unbelieving portion of the nation, must be dealt with in judgment.

The wicked aren't like the godly, the psalmist says, but are as the chaff which the wind driveth away.

And they are driven away by the wrath of which John spoke here in verse 7, [00:13:11] all generation of vipers who have warned you to flee from the wrath to come. It's talking about earthly governmental wrath that will make room for the Lord Jesus that will prepare his way before him. And then lower down in verse 11 he says, I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire, [00:14:02] whose fan is in his hand.

And he will thoroughly purge his floor, gather his wheat into the garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Here we see the end of the unbelieving portion of the nation.

Their lot will be found in the Gehenna of fire, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. There is only never-ending judgment.

I want to ask you.

[00:15:04] Most of you I know are believers on the Lord Jesus, but I want to ask you, where you are in your soul in relation to the Lord Jesus?

Have you believed on him?

Have you received him by faith into your heart?

And are you seeking day by day to follow him, to please him in all things, as one who is one of his subjects, [00:16:05] as one who is under his divine authority as Lord?

He wants to bless you.

He wants to fill your heart and your life with his joy, to make you happy in a way that nothing else can.

There are a thousand and one things that the devil in his wiles would dangle before us, [00:17:04] by

which he would seek to distract us and draw us away from the Lord and the place of blessing that is known at his feet. Don't be drawn away.

Don't be distracted, but keep your heart above all that is guarded, for out of it are the issues of life.

So John says of the Lord Jesus that he shall baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. It's not to be confused with what is brought before us in Acts chapter 2, when the Spirit came and it sat upon each of the disciples and appeared as a cloven tongue of fire.

[00:18:08] There is that in us which is sinful and which needs to be sat upon and kept in its place by the Spirit. The cloven tongues in that context speak clearly of the going out of the Gospel not only to those who were of the nation of Israel but to those also who were Gentiles and a blessing reaching the Gentiles. And this is something that we will see as we think about the other verses that have been read. So the kingdom of the heavens here in this context is the millennial kingdom [00:19:05] and when the Lord Jesus takes that kingdom the link between the heavens and the earth will be restored again. Hosea speaks of this at the end of chapter 2 in his book where he says that Jehovah will hear the heavens and the heavens shall hear the earth and the earth will hear the corn and the new wine and the oil and they shall hear Jezreel. Jezreel is a name of Israel.

It's a name which means God's souls. And Israel then will be altogether [00:20:03] or the remnant of the nation that come into the place of the nation will be there altogether as the product of Jehovah's sowing as the product of his working in the hearts of the remnant.

Now I read the verses in Matthew chapter 8 because they bring before us a most significant turning point.

And the occasion of our Lord's words was the coming to him of a centurion about his servant.

And he owned that he wasn't worthy that the Lord should come under his roof. He had faith to say that the Lord only needed to speak the word [00:21:07] and his servant would be healed.

And it says in verse 10 when Jesus heard it he marveled. He wondered, he marveled at the faith which this Gentile demonstrated, a faith that went way beyond the faith of any in Israel who had come to him. And I say unto you that many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The Lord Jesus was referring to the fact that [00:22:05] there was going to be a change of dispensation.

That the millennial kingdom wasn't going to immediately appear.

But the children of the kingdom, the Jews who had a natural claim as regards a place in it, they would lose their place. They would lose their claim because they were rejecting the king.

But into their place there would come instead like this centurion who is a picture of Gentiles [00:23:08] coming from the east and west and lying down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of the heavens. Their lying down I think is to be taken as a figure. And I think it's right to connect this passage and our Lord's words with what is further opened out by the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Romans chapter 11 where he speaks about the olive tree. And he speaks about some of the

natural branches being broken out and he speaks about the Gentiles, a wild olive tree being grafted in [00:24:04] and partaking of the fatness of the root.

And the root in this context is Abraham and the promises made to Abraham since the millennial kingdom is postponed.

The promised blessing is now going to reach Gentiles in the kingdom of the heavens.

And we find the most solemn thing said about the children of the kingdom in verse 12 They shall be cast out into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. [00:25:04] This is an expression that we find six times in the Gospel by Matthew. On every occasion it relates to people who have enjoyed a place of privilege but have been unaffected by it.

They've missed the blessing because of unbelief. In the other five occasions where you get the expression it is always applied to those who are within the Christian profession but who have no real link with the Lord Jesus.

When we come to the parables of the treasure of the pearl [00:26:11] and of the net, the sane net, the drift net all said to be parables of the kingdom of heaven I am aware and many of you will be aware that there are differing interpretations as to in particular what the treasure signifies also what the sane net and the fish that are caught in it signify I remember as a young believer reading a certain brethren writer [00:27:01] who pointed out that Matthew writes dispensationally and he suggested that the treasure is Israel, the pearl is the church and that the fish that are caught in the net represent Gentiles blessed in the time to come.

That seemed very acceptable to me at the time.

I remember picking up a copy of Kelly on the Gospel by Matthew turning to the comments on Matthew 13 and here the editor had included a printed footnote in which he actually commended the view that I've just set out and I'm sure Mr. Kelly would have been extremely upset [00:28:12] to know that such a footnote had been inserted in his book because whilst on the face of it this interpretation seems to hold water in fact on closer examination we can see that it is not scriptural. One of the reasons that is put forward that the treasure is Israel is because Israel in the Old Testament is called a peculiar treasure. I think we get the expression about eight times in the Old Testament and the first is in Exodus 19 where crucially when you look at the reference [00:29:04] you find that it is conditional and Jehovah says to the children of Israel if you keep my covenant then you'll be a peculiar treasure unto me.

But the whole tenor of the Old Testament is that they had not the ability to keep the law and we know from the council in Acts 15 that this was a conclusion that the apostles and elders came to and formally announced in a letter that was sent out.

[00:30:04] The last reference to Israel as a peculiar treasure is in the book of Malachi chapter 3 where Jehovah speaks about their being such in the day when he makes up his jewels and within the context of that chapter that day is clearly the future day the millennial day when God as we have seen already from Hosea chapter 2 will sow Israel so as to produce a people that are fit for the kingdom of the heavens when it is set up on the return of the Lord Jesus. But here what this chapter

is showing us is that there is a kingdom of heavens now a kingdom of the heavens now and that you and I are a part of it. [00:31:07] We've seen in chapter 8 that the Lord speaks about the bringing in of the Gentiles lower down in that chapter the Lord speaks about himself as the son of man for the first time when a scribe came to him and said he would follow the Lord wherever the Lord went except the Lord said the foxes have holes the birds of the air have nests but the son of man hath not where to lay his head. And were we to look in detail at chapters 11 and 12 of the gospel we have in those two chapters I think at least seven things that show that the Lord Jesus was rejected. [00:32:07] His forerunner John the Baptist was in prison.

And the cities of Galilee where most of his mighty works were done refused.

The ministry of both John and of the Lord Jesus and the Lord has to upbraid them on that account. He speaks of Capernaum being exalted to heaven being brought down to Hades because of their unbelief.

And then as we read on in chapter 12 [00:33:05] when the disciples walked through the cornfields and were hungry and began to rub the corn between their hands and to eat of it and the Pharisees confronted the Lord about what they had done because it was the Sabbath day. The Lord Jesus speaks about what David did when he was rejected how he ate of the showbread.

And when the Lord on the Sabbath day healed the man with the withered hand. We read that the Pharisees went out and took counsel against him how they might destroy him. But the Lord Jesus continued in his ministry of grace he healed [00:34:04] all them that came to him charged them straightly that they should not make him publicly known. And in this connection Isaiah 42 is quoted he shall not strive or cry out nor shall anyone hear his voice in the streets a bruised reed shall he not break smoking flax shall he not quench until he bring forth judgment unto victory and on his name shall the nation's hope. Lower down he speaks about when they come after all the signs that the Lord Jesus had given them. When they came and asked him for a sign he said no sign shall be given but the sign of the prophet Jonas who was sent you remember to preach to the Ninevites.

[00:35:01] And we find this wonderful grace of the Lord Jesus going out to the Gentiles.

Chapter 13 begins with the fact that the same day went Jesus out of the house and sat by the seaside. And this is a most significant movement.

It shows us the Lord Jesus quitting the house of Israel and turning now to the Gentiles in order to carry on a work among them as a sower.

And so there are two other references in the chapter which I think show beyond all doubt [00:36:12] that the treasure here is not Israel.

And the first is in verses 10 and 11 of chapter 13.

His disciples came and said unto him why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven but to them it is not given. And this word mystery that occurs some 27 times in the New Testament always speaks about something that wasn't revealed in the Old Testament. [00:37:05] And of course the place that Israel as a nation is to have is clearly shown us in the Old Testament. But now the kingdom of

the heavens takes a spiritual form that was not previously revealed in the scriptures of the Old Testament. We have the same thing substantially lower down in the chapter in verse 35. Verse 34. These things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables and without a parable spake he not unto them that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet saying I will open my mouth in parables I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. [00:38:02] So the treasure is not Israel but the treasure represents every individual believer on the Lord Jesus during this church age. Every real Christian forms a part of this treasure.

And the Lord says the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hidden a field the which when a man hath found he hideth and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth the field. In his explanation of the parable of the wheat and tares in this chapter and he gives us the explanation in verses 36 down to verse 43.

[00:39:05] The Lord gives us keys to the interpretation of all the parables of the kingdom of the heavens. And he says that the man in verse 24 in the parable of wheat and tares who sows good seed is the son of man. And that clearly is the Lord Jesus in verse 44 which when a man hath found he hideth.

We know that it does not yet appear what we shall be that apart from our behavior which should be very different morally to the behavior of the world [00:40:08] there is nothing outwardly that distinguishes us from other people. And if we were to go to them and say I'm a child and a son of God I'm blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ they'd be very surprised to hear what we have to say. Their reaction might be a mocking one.

But this is because the time of our manifestation as the sons of God has not yet come because the time for his manifestation, for his appearing has not come. [00:41:07] He hideth and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth the field. The Lord Jesus tells us in his explanation that the field is the world. And we think of the Lord Jesus coming from heaven and laying aside every claim that he had in relation to Israel and going to the cross and paying the price there in his work for the purchase of the world and for the purchase of everything that is in the world. [00:42:03] It's clearly not in this verse the idea of redemption but of this price that the Lord Jesus has paid that the world and everything in it might belong to him that he might have rights of ownership over it. And then we come to the parable of the pearl and I'm not aware that there are other interpretations of this parable than that the pearl represents the assembly, the church. The only other place that we read about pearls in the New Testament apart from where the Lord speaks about not casting our pearls before swine not speaking about the precious truths that we have found in the word of God [00:43:13] to those who are incapable of enjoying them or appreciating them. The only other time that we read about pearls is in connection with the heavenly city the bride, the lamb's wife and it has 12 gates, each severally of one pearl and the reason that the number 12 is prominent in that connection and is found again and again in Revelation 21 after verse 9 is that in the world to come it is the center of divine administration [00:44:09] and in connection with each of the gates there is a name of one of the tribes of Israel and it shows that there will, in that coming day, in the millennial day there will be that communication between the city and the earthly Israel and then we come to the, and again the Lord Jesus when he had found one pearl of great price went and sold all that he had and bought it [00:45:02] it had such value in his estimation that he was prepared to give everything that he had that this pearl might be his and then we have the parable of the seine net I think the reference to the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens and in verse 35 to things kept secret from the foundation of the world shows again that the parable of the seine net and the fish that are caught in it does not refer to the

blessing of the nations in the millennial age but it's talking about the gospel the Christian gospel of the grace of God being preached [00:46:04] and of those that are reached by it those that are affected by it one should say because when it was full they drew it to the shore it says and sat down and gathered the good into vessels but they cast the bad away and the gospel net does that it gathers of every kind I think the same word kind is elsewhere translated nation so you get the idea of the gospel going out worldwide and of souls responding either truly or falsely and there are those that are concerned with gathering the good into vessels ensuring that those that are caught that are really the Lords are taken care of [00:47:06] and that they are brought to the place of God's assembly that they are encouraged to go on and to grow as Christians and are helped in this process so shall it be at the end of the world the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just and shall cast them into the furnace of fire there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth again we find that there is judgment for those who are not real what a solemn consideration that is living as we do on the very threshold of the Lord's second coming [00:48:02] and yet this must be the portion of all those who make a profession of faith and yet aren't really the Lords well may the Lord bless his word and our consideration of it help us in our further contemplation of the scriptures that have been before us and of this wonderful subject of the kingdom of the heavens I'd like us to conclude by singing number 449 Lord Jesus come and take thy rightful place Son of man of all the theme come Lord to reign all supreme Lord Jesus come number 449