

THE KINGDOM OF GOD sermons by Rev. George R. Fiddes

Sermon 7 - APPRECIATING THE KINGDOM

The Mysteries of the Kingdom Revealed

We have so far dealt with the proclamation, nature, establishment, blessing, entrance, and righteousness of the Kingdom. We now come to one of its unique features: the mystery, by which is signified an open secret for the initiated but it is totally incomprehensible to those outside.

The Mysteries of the Kingdom can be divided into three. The Kingdom **Itself**, the **Disciples** of the Kingdom and the **King** of the Kingdom.

1. The Kingdom Itself

The Growth of the Kingdom In a climate where we seem to be seeing the decline of the church there is a great deal of interest, at least in certain parts, as to how to make the church grow. There are any number of conferences and courses. But, the church grows organically.

The parable of the mustard seed (Matt. 13:31) talks of small beginnings that spread to far greater things. It is something that spreads like yeast or leaven (Matt. 13:33), where you may not see it happening but none the less it is going on all the time, permeating the whole. It is connected to the Word and the proclamation of the word and often in a way that we don't understand, but is real none the less. It spreads despite Satan's efforts (Matt. 13:24). The parable of the wheat and the tares elaborates on that.

The Value of the Kingdom Two parables, the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price, demonstrate the principle of value, where the Kingdom is concerned.

The Beneficiaries of the Kingdom. There will be a separation, for not everyone will enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 13:24ff). Despite bearing appearances, only the genuine will benefit from being in the kingdom. The parables of the wheat and the tares, and the dragnet indicate that some will benefit while others definitely will not. The kingdom will be taken from those who should have received it and given to those who deserve it (Matt. 22:1-14) as seen in the parables of the Wedding Feast, and the Great Supper.

2. The Disciples of the Kingdom

The Behaviour of the Disciples. Discipleship depends on appropriate behaviour. True disciples are those who have ears to hear and who do the will of their Father; who bear fruit for the Kingdom as in the parable of the Sower (Matt 13:3).

Or, those who prepare for the Lord's return and work for the kingdom, as in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, or the parable of the talents. (Matt. 25)

Or, those who live the right way, as illustrated in the story of the Good Samaritan. (Luke 10)

The Attitude of the Disciples Various parables show that attitude is important. For example, they are to be merciful as God is merciful, grateful for their Salvation (the Two Debtors: Luke. 7:41 Luke 12 & 16) Now is the time to sort things out and have the right priorities and to have a spirit of humility (the Rich Fool, Lazarus and the Rich man, the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. (Luke 18) And, to know that what they

do is only what is their duty. (Luke 17) and at best they should only regard themselves as Unprofitable Servants.

3. The King of the Kingdom

Yet other parables illustrate the characteristics and standing of the King of the Kingdom. For example, His great love for the lost is amply illustrated in the three stories of the Prodigal Son, the Lost Coin and the Lost Sheep in Luke 15.

Other parables highlight His role in the coming judgement where the wheat and the tares are gathered and sorted; or the fish are separated in the dragnet; or the servants are held to account, and are dealt with accordingly, as in the parable of the talents.

To the uninitiated these are mysteries: to those who have entered they are enlightening and motivating as they see how the Kingdom operates and appreciate its values and distinctives, the kind of secrets Peter had in mind when he encouraged the persecuted Christians to *be prepared to give a reason for the hope that is in you.* (1 Peter 3: 15).