

## CHAPTER 13



# JOSEPH SMITH'S INTERPRETATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

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**D**uring the second year of Jesus's ministry, as he toured the Galilee with his twelve apostles, a great multitude gathered on the seashore where Jesus sat. He entered a ship, and from the ship he taught them in parables (see Matthew 13:1-3). After the first parable, "when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve, asked of him the parable" (Mark 4:10). After explaining why he spoke in parables, he gave the interpretation of the parable. He then gave three more parables to the multitude and sent them away (Matthew 13:11-36). After entering into a house, Jesus explained the second parable to his disciples and also gave them four additional parables (see Matthew 13:36-52). All eight of the parables that he gave on this occasion were on the same subject, the kingdom of heaven. All of these parables are well known among the Christian world, but have varied interpretations. The Prophet Joseph Smith gave members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints his understanding of these eight parables, but before discussing his interpretation, I will first review his qualifications for expounding on scriptures.

About three months after the organization of the church, the Lord confirmed by revelation that Joseph was "called and chosen

to write the Book of Mormon, and to my ministry” (D&C 24:1; July 1830). Thus the Lord’s verification of the many things Joseph had done for him in these two callings was probably given as an incentive to keep the commandment that he was now given: “And thou shalt continue in calling upon God in my name, and writing the things which shall be given thee by the Comforter, and expounding all scriptures unto the church. And it shall be given thee in the very moment what thou shalt speak and write, and they shall hear it, or I will send unto them a cursing instead of a blessing” (D&C 24:5-6). The Lord then gave Joseph other admonitions and instructions, which included a conditional promise: “Attend to thy calling and thou shalt have wherewith to magnify thine office, and to expound all scriptures” (D&C 24:9). Joseph was certainly blessed at “the very moment” when he expounded the scriptures in word and in writing as he continued his ministry, and those who “shall hear it”—accept and follow his explanations of the scriptures—will also be blessed (D&C 24:6).

I will first give Joseph’s explanation of the Savior’s answer as to why he taught in parables and then his explanation of each of the eight parables. As we examine these eight parables, it will be shown that they begin with the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ through the dispensation of the fulness of times. His discussion of the parables comes from a letter, “To the Elders of the Church of Latter-Day Saints,” written in September 1835.<sup>1</sup> I will use the text of the Inspired Version, or Joseph Smith Translation (hereafter JST), of the parables as another example of his commandment to expound the scriptures. The differences between the JST and the King James Version (hereafter KJV) will be delineated in boldface type.

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1. I will use the version found in *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974), hereafter cited as *TPJS*. The letter appeared previously in *History of the Church*, 2:264-72.

### Why Did Jesus Teach in Parables?

Some claim that Jesus taught in parables to simplify his teachings so people could understand them. However, quite the opposite was true—the Prophet Joseph’s translation of Jesus’s explanation of why he used parables clarifies that view.

8 **Then** the disciples came and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

9 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.

10 For whosoever **receiveth**, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance;

11 But whosoever **continueth not to receive**, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

12 Therefore speak I to them in parables; because they, seeing not, see not; and hearing not, they hear not; neither do they understand.

13 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias **concerning them**, which saith, By hearing, ye shall hear and shall not understand; and seeing, ye shall see and shall not perceive.

14 For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

15 But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. **And blessed are you because these things are come unto you, that you might understand them.**

16 And verily, I say unto you, many **righteous** prophets have desired to see **these days** which **you** see, and have not seen them; and to hear **that** which **you** hear, and have not heard. (Matthew 13:8-16 JST)

The Prophet Joseph Smith commented on the Savior's answer to his disciples' question of why he spoke in parables (Matthew 13:10 KJV; 13:8 JST).

“[I would here remark, that the ‘them’ made use of in this interrogation, is a personal pronoun, and refers to the multitude.] He answered and said unto them, [that is, unto the disciples] because it is given unto you, to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them, [that is, unbelievers] it is not given; for whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.”

We understand from this saying, that those who had been previously looking for a Messiah to come, according to the testimony of the prophets, and were then, at that time looking for a Messiah, but had not sufficient light, on account of their unbelief, to discern Him to be their Savior; and He being the true Messiah, consequently they must be disappointed, and lose even all the knowledge, or have taken away from them all the light, understanding, and faith which they had upon this subject; therefore he that will not receive the greater light, must have taken away from him all the light which he hath; and if the light which is in you become darkness, behold how great is that darkness! [quotes Matthew 13:13-14 KJV; 13:12-13 JST].

Now we discover that the very reason assigned by this prophet, why they would not receive the Messiah, was, because they did not or would not understand; and seeing, they did not perceive [quotes Matthew 13:15-17 KJV; 13:14-16 JST].

We again make remark here—for we find that the very principle upon which the disciples were accounted blessed, was because they were permitted to see with their eyes and hear with their ears—that the condemnation which rested

upon the multitude that received not His saying, was because they were not willing to see with their eyes and hear with their ears; not because they could not, and were not privileged to see and hear, but because their hearts were full of iniquity and abominations; “as your fathers did, so do ye.” The prophet, foreseeing that they would thus harden their hearts, plainly declared it; and herein is the condemnation of the world; that light hath come into the world. And men choose darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. This is so plainly taught by the Savior, that a wayfaring man need not mistake it.<sup>2</sup>

### Parables of the Kingdom

The Gospel of Mark tells us that those who came to him after he had given the first parable were “**the twelve, and they that believed in him**, they that were about him with the twelve, asked of him the parable” (Mark 4:9 JST).<sup>3</sup> The Gospel of Luke tells us why he didn’t give the interpretation to the multitude: “And he said, Unto you [the twelve] it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand” (Luke 8:10). This reason is further clarified by the Prophet Joseph Smith’s comments above.

Regarding the eight parables, the Prophet Joseph Smith remarked: “I shall now proceed to make some remarks from the sayings of the Savior, recorded in the 13th chapter of His Gospel according to St. Matthew, which, in my mind, afforded us as clear an understanding upon the important subject of the gathering, as anything recorded in the Bible.”<sup>4</sup>

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2. *TPJS*, 94-96; first two bracketed remarks are in the original.

3. The KJV of Mark gives the same information, but the JST text is clearer.

4. *TPJS*, 94.

### **The Parable of the Sower—the Earthly Ministry of Jesus Christ and His Apostles**

The Savior gave the interpretation of this parable to the twelve and those who believed. The quotations of Joseph Smith, given below, are evidence of what God revealed to him as he spoke (see D&C 24:6 above). The JST verses are often numbered differently than the KJV.

3 Behold, a sower went forth to sow,

4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up; **and when the sun was up, they were scorched, because they had no deepness of earth** [the KJV reverses the sequence]; and because they had no root, they withered away.

6 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up and choked them.

7 But others fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit; some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, **and** some thirty-fold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. (Matthew 13:3-7 JST; 13:3-9 KJV)

The Savior's interpretation of the parable to the twelve and those who believed follows:

17 Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

18 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth [it deleted from KJV] not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart; this is he **who** received seed by the wayside.

19 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word and **readily** with joy receiveth it, yet **he hath** not root in himself, **and endureth**

**but** for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

20 He also **who** received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

21 But he that received seed into the good ground, is he that heareth the word and understandeth **and endureth** [it deleted from KJV]; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundred-fold, some sixty, **and** some thirty. (Matthew 13:17-21 JST; 13:18-23 KJV)

The Gospel of Mark prefaces the above record of Matthew with a question that suggests this parable is the key to those that will follow. “And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? And how then will ye know all parables?” (Mark 4:13). Whether the question refers to the parables that he will give in this setting or in future times is not clear, but for this setting it supports the sequential nature of the parables of the kingdom given at this time.

The Gospel of Luke identifies the seed that is sown as the “word of God” (Luke 8:11). This identification reminds us of the vision of the tree of life given to Lehi in the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 8). I will not discuss it here, but the message in the two accounts is definitely parallel.

The Prophet Joseph gave us this interpretation of the parable of the sower.

And again—hear ye the parable of the sower. Men are in the habit, when the truth is exhibited by the servants of God, of saying. All is mystery; they have spoken in parables, and, therefore are not to be understood. It is true they have eyes to see, and see not, but none are so blind as those who will not see; and, although the Savior spoke this to such characters, yet unto His disciples he expounded it plainly;

and we have reason to be truly humble before the God of our fathers, that He hath left these things on record for us, so plain, that notwithstanding the exertions and combined influence of the priests of Baal, they have not power to blind our eyes, and darken our understanding, if we will but open our eyes, and read with candor, for a moment.

But listen to the explanation of the parable of the Sower [quotes Matthew 13:19 KJV; see v. 18 JST above]. Now mark the expression—that which was sown in his heart. *This is he which receiveth seed by the wayside.* Men who have no principle of righteousness in themselves, and whose hearts are full of iniquity, and have no desire for the principles of truth, do not understand the word of truth when they hear it. The devil taketh away the word of truth out of their hearts, because there is no desire for righteousness in them [quotes Matthew 13:20-23 KJV; see vv. 19-21 JST above]. Thus the Savior Himself explains unto His disciples the parable which He put forth, and left no mystery or darkness upon the minds of those who firmly believe on His words.

We draw the conclusion, then, that the very reason why the multitude, or the world, as they were designated by the Savior, did not receive an explanation upon His parables, was because of unbelief. To you, He says (speaking to His disciples) it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. And why? Because of the faith and confidence they had in Him. *This parable was spoken to demonstrate the effects that are produced by the preaching of the word; and we believe that it has an allusion directly, to the commencement, or the setting up of the Kingdom in that age; therefore we shall continue to trace His sayings concerning this Kingdom from that time forth, even unto the end of the world.*<sup>5</sup>

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5. *TPJS*, 96-97, emphasis added.

The eight parables thus begin with the preaching of the gospel during the ministry of Christ upon the earth.

### **The Parable of the Wheat and Tares—the Apostasy**

22 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man who sowed good seed in his field;

23 But while **he** slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

24 But when the blade [**was** deleted from KJV] sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

25 So the servants of the house-holder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? [**from** deleted from KJV] whence then hath it tares?

26 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this.

27 **And** the servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

28 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

29 Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the **wheat into my barn; and the tares are bound in bundles to be burned.** (Matthew 13:22-29 JST; the KJV reverses the sequence)

The Gospel of Mark gives an abbreviated version of the above parable (Mark 4:26-29), which some believe is a separate parable. Since Joseph Smith commented only on the Matthew account, I will not consider the Mark text. There is no account in Luke.

Jesus interpreted this second parable to his disciples, after he had “sent the multitude away, and went into the house” (Matthew 13:36).

36 He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man.

37 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked [**one** deleted from KJV].

38 The enemy that sowed them is the devil.

39 The harvest is the end of the world, **or the destruction of the wicked** [**and** deleted from KJV, and JST vv. 38-40 is one verse in KJV].

40 The reapers are the angels, **or the messengers sent of heaven.**

41 As, therefore, the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world, **or the destruction of the wicked.**

42 **For in that day, before** the Son of man **shall come, he** shall send forth his angels **and messengers of heaven.**

43 And they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, **and shall cast them** [**into a furnace of fire** deleted from KJV] **out among the wicked; and** there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

44 **For the world shall be burned with fire.**

45 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. (Matthew 13:36-45 JST)

The Lord revealed a similar interpretation in December 1832, as the Prophet Joseph “was reviewing and editing the manuscript of the translation of the Bible” (D&C 86, section heading).

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servants, concerning the parable of the wheat and of the tares:

2 Behold, verily I say, the field was the world, and the apostles were the sowers of the seed;

3 And after they have fallen asleep the great persecutor of the church, the apostate, the whore, even Babylon, that

maketh all nations to drink of her cup, in whose hearts the enemy, even Satan, sitteth to reign—behold he soweth the tares; wherefore, the tares choke the wheat and drive the church into the wilderness.

4 But behold, in the last days, even now while the Lord is beginning to bring forth the word, and the blade is springing up and is yet tender—

5 Behold, verily I say unto you, the angels are crying unto the Lord day and night, who are ready and waiting to be sent forth to reap down the fields;

6 But the Lord saith unto them, pluck not up the tares while the blade is yet tender (for verily your faith is weak), lest you destroy the wheat also.

7 Therefore, let the wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest is fully ripe; then ye shall first gather out the wheat from among the tares, and after the gathering of the wheat, behold and lo, the tares are bound in bundles, and the field remaineth to be burned. (D&C 86:1-7)

The KJV and the JST identify the sower of the good seed as the Son of man (Matthew 13:37 KJV; 13:36 JST), but the Doctrine and Covenants states that the apostles were the sowers of the seed (D&C 86:2). This is not a contradiction. Jesus began the sowing of the word of God, but after his resurrection, the apostles were commanded to “teach all nations” (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15).

The devil sowing the tares, which looked like wheat but were actually weeds, resulted in what is called the apostasy (Matthew 13:37-38 JST). The Doctrine and Covenants revelation describes how the apostasy did “drive the church into the wilderness” after the apostles had “fallen asleep” or had been killed or died (86:3; see Revelation 12:1-7 JST).

The Prophet Joseph gave this inspired interpretation:

Now we learn by this parable, not only the setting up of the Kingdom in the days of the Savior, *which is represented by the good seed*, which produced fruit, but also the *corruptions of the Church, which are represented by the tares*, which were sown by the enemy, which His disciples would fain have plucked up, or cleansed the Church of, if their views had been favored by the Savior. But He, knowing all things, says, Not so. As much as to say, your views are not correct, the Church is in its infancy, and if you take this rash step, you will destroy the wheat, or the Church, with the tares; therefore it is better to *let them grow together until the harvest, or the end of the world, which means the destruction of the wicked*, which is not yet fulfilled, as we shall show hereafter, in the Savior's explanation of the parable, which is so plain that there is no room left for dubiety upon the mind, notwithstanding the cry of the priests—"parables, parables! figures, figures! mystery, mystery! all is mystery!" But we will find no room for doubt here, as the parables were all plainly elucidated.<sup>6</sup>

That the time of the fulfillment of this parable extended to the latter days was confirmed by the Lord in Section 101 of the Doctrine and Covenants, given to the Prophet Joseph Smith on 16 December 1833, when "the saints who had gathered in Missouri were suffering great persecution" (section heading).

63 Again, verily I say unto you, I will show unto you wisdom in me concerning all the churches, inasmuch as they are willing to be guided in a right and proper way for their salvation—

64 That the work of the gathering together of my saints may continue, that I may build them up unto my name

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6. *TPJS*, 97-98, emphasis added.

upon holy places; for the time of harvest is come, and my word must needs be fulfilled.

65 Therefore, I must gather together my people, *according to the parable of the wheat and the tares*, that the *wheat may be secured in the garners to possess eternal life*, and be crowned with celestial glory, when I shall come in the kingdom of my Father to reward every man according as his work shall be;

66 While *the tares shall be bound in bundles, and their bands made strong, that they may be burned with unquenchable fire*.

67 Therefore, a commandment I give unto all the churches, that they shall continue to gather together unto the places which I have appointed [stakes].

68 Nevertheless, as I have said unto you in a former commandment, let not your gathering be in haste, nor by flight; but let all things be prepared before you. (D&C 101:63-68)

After reading Matthew 13:33-38 (13:32-37 JST), the Prophet Joseph Smith inserted the following comments: “Now let our readers mark the expression—‘the field is the world, the tares are the children of the wicked one, the enemy that sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the world, (let them carefully mark this expression—the end of the world) and the reapers are the angels.’”<sup>7</sup> The Prophet Joseph then gave additional comments on the destruction of the tares (wicked) and the gathering of the wheat (members) in the last days.

Now men cannot have any possible grounds to say that this is figurative, or that it does not mean what it says: for He is now explaining what He had previously spoken in parables; and according to this language, *the end of the world is the destruction of the wicked, the harvest and the end of the*

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7. *TPJS*, 100.

*world have an allusion directly to the human family in the last days, instead of the earth, as many have imagined; and that which shall precede the coming of the Son of Man, and the restitution of all things spoken of by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began; and the angels are to have something to do in this great work, for they are the reapers. As, therefore, the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of the world; that is, as the servants of God go forth warning the nations, both priests and people, and as they harden their hearts and reject the light of truth, these first being delivered over to the buffeting of Satan, and the law and the testimony being closed up, as it was in the case of the Jews, they are left in darkness, and delivered over unto the day of burning; thus being bound up by their creeds, and their bands being made strong by their priests, are prepared for the fulfilment of the saying of the Savior—[quotes Matthew 13:41-42 KJV; 13:42-43 JST]. We understand that the work of gathering together of the wheat into barns, or garners, is to take place while the tares are to be bound over, and preparing for the day of burning; that after the day of burnings, the righteous shall shine forth like the sun, in the Kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.<sup>8</sup>*

On a later occasion, 2 July 1839, the Prophet Joseph quoted Matthew 13:41 (13:42 JST) concerning angels coming down: “All these authoritative characters will come down and join hand in hand in bringing about this work.”<sup>9</sup>

The second event, given in Jesus’s parables of the kingdom (Matthew 13), is the apostasy from the true teachings of Jesus Christ given during his ministry on the earth. The influence of the apostasy will continue on through the time of the foretold restoration of the gospel in the latter days.

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8. *TPJS*, 100-101, emphasis added.

9. *TPJS*, 159.

### The Parable of the Mustard Seed—the Book of Mormon; Angels Restore Keys

30 **And** another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field;

31 Which indeed is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. (Matthew 13:30-31 JST; 13:31-32 KJV)

The parable of the mustard seed is also recorded in the Gospels of both Mark and Luke. I will comment just on Mark's text, but will first acknowledge how Matthew's text was interpreted by the Prophet Joseph.

And again, another parable put He forth unto them, having an allusion to the *Kingdom that should be set up, just previous to or at the time of the harvest* [quotes Matthew 13:31-32 KJV; 13:30-31 JST]. Now we can discover plainly that this figure is given to *represent the Church as it shall come forth in the last days*. Behold, the Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto it. Now, what is like unto it?

Let us take *the Book of Mormon, which a man took and hid in his field, securing it by his faith, to spring up in the last days, or in due time; let us behold it coming forth out of the ground, which is indeed accounted the least of all seeds, but behold it branching forth, yea, even towering, with lofty branches, and God-like majesty, until it, like the mustard seed, becomes the greatest of all herbs. And it is truth, and it has sprouted and come forth out of the earth, and righteousness begins to look down from heaven,<sup>10</sup> and God is sending down His powers, gifts and angels, to lodge in the branches thereof.*

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10. Joseph seems to be alluding to the Book of Mormon prophecies in Psalm 85:11; see Isaiah 45:8.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a mustard seed. Behold, then is not this the Kingdom of Heaven that is raising its head in the last days in the majesty of its God, even the Church of the Latter-day Saints, like an impenetrable, immovable rock in the midst of the mighty deep, exposed to the storms and tempests of Satan, but has, thus far, remained steadfast, and is still braving the mountain waves of opposition, which are driven by the tempestuous winds of sinking crafts, which have [dashed] and are still dashing with tremendous foam across its triumphant brow; urged onward with redoubled fury by the enemy of righteousness, with his pitchfork of lies.<sup>11</sup>

The Gospel of Mark describes the “grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth” (Mark 4:31). There were many records kept by the Nephites and Jaredites who lived upon the American continent. Mormon, a prophet of the Lord there, abridged these many records upon the plates from which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon (see D&C 17:6; 24:1). Mormon repeatedly states that he could not “write a hundredth part of the things of my people” (Words of Mormon 1:5; see Helaman 3:14; 3 Nephi 5:8; 26:6). Nephi, Jacob, and Moroni, the other major contributors to the Book of Mormon, make similar statements (see 1 Nephi 9:3-4; 19:3-4; Jacob 3:13; Ether 15:33). Certainly these statements of the Nephite writers verify Mark’s description of the mustard seed symbolizing “less than all the seeds that be in the earth.”

The third parable of the kingdom is that of the mustard seed (Book of Mormon) being brought from the earth, its being translated by the gift and power of God, its growing into a tree (the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ in the last days), and the

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11. *TPJS*, 98-99, emphasis added.

many angels who came and restored their keys and powers and the gifts of God again upon the earth.

### **The Parable of the Three Measures of Meal—Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon**

32 Another parable spake he unto them, The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

33 All these things spake Jesus unto the multitudes in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them,

34 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.<sup>12</sup> (Matthew 13:32-34 JST; 13:33-35 KJV)

The Prophet Joseph explained: “It may be understood that the Church of the Latter-day Saints has taken its rise from a little leaven that was put into three witnesses. Behold, how much this is like the parable! It is fast leavening the lump, and will soon leaven the whole.”<sup>13</sup> The Prophet’s interpretation is certainly one that is not even considered in the Christian world, but remember the Lord’s promise to give him the words by the Comforter at “the very moment what thou shalt speak or write” as he expounded the scriptures to the church (D&C 24:5-6). This interpretation is consistent with both the New and the Old Testament teachings: “But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established” (Matthew 18:16; see Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15). As

12. The quotation is from Psalm 78:2: “I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old,” which is undoubtedly a poor translation, the Matthew quotation being correct. The Psalmist is probably quoting another prophet, which was the usual procedure in the Psalms.

13. *TPJS*, 100.

identified previously, the woman is symbolic of the church of God (see Revelation 12:1-7 JST).

The fourth parable of the kingdom foretells “The Testimony of Three Witnesses,” which is given in the front of each copy of the Book of Mormon (see D&C 17).

### **The Parable of a Treasure Hid in a Field—the Gathering of the Saints**

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field [**the which** deleted from KJV]. **And** when a man hath found a **treasure which is hid**, he [**hideth** deleted KJV] **secureth it**, and, **straightway**, for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. (Matthew 13:46 JST; 13:44 KJV)

The Prophet Joseph Smith’s interpretation was: “But to illustrate more clearly this gathering [of the wheat]: We have another parable—[quotes Matthew 13:44 KJV]. The Saints work after this pattern. See the Church of the Latter-day Saints, selling all that they have, and gathering themselves together unto a place that they may purchase for an inheritance, that they may be together and bear each other’s afflictions in the day of calamity.”<sup>14</sup> The fulfillment of this parable was the Saints gathering to New York, Kirtland, Missouri, Nauvoo, and finally Utah. After these gatherings, while the headquarters of the church remained in Salt Lake City, Utah, the converts continued to gather together in whatever area or location they were living.

The fifth parable of the kingdom portrays the Saints gathering together in groups or units throughout the world.

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14. *TPJS*, 101.

### The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price—Stakes Surround Zion

**And** again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, **he** went and sold all that he had and bought it. (Matthew 13:47 JST; 13:45-46 KJV)

The interpretation of this parable by the Prophet Joseph Smith was: “The Saints again work after this example. See men traveling to find places for Zion and her stakes or remnants, who, when they find the place for Zion, or the pearl of great price, straightway sell that they have, and buy it.”<sup>15</sup> Although this parable may seem similar to the previous one, it is different. The place “for Zion” was revealed to Joseph on 20 July 1831, while the Saints were gathering to Missouri.

1 Hearken, O ye elders of my church, saith the Lord your God, who have assembled yourselves together, according to my commandments, in this land, which is the land of Missouri, which is the land which I have appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the saints.

2 Wherefore, this is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion.

3 And thus saith the Lord your God, if you will receive wisdom here is wisdom. Behold, the place which is now called Independence is the center place; and a spot for the temple is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse. (D&C 57:1-3)

The Saints attempted to establish the city of Zion during the next three years, but failed. The Lord described it this way:

3 they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I required at their hands, but are full of all manner

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15. *TPJS*, 102.

of evil, and do not impart of their substance, as becometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them;

4 And are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom;

9 Therefore, in consequence of the transgressions of my people, it is expedient in me that mine elders should wait for a little season for the redemption of Zion—

10 That they themselves may be prepared, and that my people may be taught more perfectly, and have experience, and know more perfectly concerning their duty, and the things which I require at their hands.

11 And this cannot be brought to pass until mine elders are endowed with power from on high. (D&C 105:3-4, 9-11)

“The places for Zion” mentioned in Joseph Smith’s interpretation of the parable were the stakes of Zion that were to be built up and surround the city of Zion. Other requirements to precede the building of the city of Zion were revealed in the remainder of the revelation quoted above (D&C 105). But Zion will be built:

17 Zion shall not be moved out of her place, notwithstanding her children are scattered.

18 They that remain, and are pure in heart, shall return, and come to their inheritances, they and their children, with songs of everlasting joy, to build up the waste places of Zion—

19 And all these things that the prophets might be fulfilled.

20 And, behold, there is none other place appointed than that which I have appointed; neither shall there be any other place appointed than that which I have appointed, for the work of the gathering of my saints. (D&C 101:17-20)

The sixth parable of the kingdom predicts the building up of the stakes of Zion to surround the city of Zion, and then those Saints

designated by revelation selling all that they had and returning to build up the temple and the city of Zion.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Parable of the Net—the Cleansing of the Church**

48 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.

49 So shall it be at the end of the world.

50 **And the world is the children of the wicked.**

51 The angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them out into the [**furnace of fire** deleted from KJV] **world to be burned.** There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 13:48-51 JST; 13:47-50 KJV)

After quoting the above verses, the Prophet Joseph explained:

For the work of this pattern, behold the seed of Joseph, spreading forth the Gospel net upon the face of the earth, gathering of every kind, that the good may be saved in vessels prepared for that purpose, and the angels will take care of the bad. So shall it be at the end of the world—the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire, and there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.<sup>17</sup>

The Lord revealed to Joseph Smith at Kirtland, Ohio, 23 July 1837:

16. For a more complete analysis of the building of Zion and her stakes, see Monte S. Nyman, “When Will Zion Be Redeemed?” in *The Doctrine and Covenants: A Book of Answers* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 137-53.

17. *TPJS*, 102.

23 Verily, verily, I say unto you, darkness covereth the earth, and gross darkness the minds of the people, and all flesh has become corrupt before my face.

24 Behold, vengeance cometh speedily upon the inhabitants of the earth, a day of wrath, a day of burning, a day of desolation, of weeping, of mourning, and of lamentation; and as a whirlwind it shall come upon all the face of the earth, saith the Lord.

25 And upon my house shall it begin, and from my house shall it go forth, saith the Lord;

26 First among those among you, saith the Lord, who have professed to know my name and have not known me, and have blasphemed against me in the midst of my house, saith the Lord. (D&C 112:23-26)

Thus the end of the world, in the last days, will begin with the cleansing of the church. There will be wicked people among the members who have gathered, and they will be cast out of the church and burned among the wicked.

The fulfillment of the seventh parable of the kingdom will be the cleansing of the church before the wicked are burned at Christ's coming.

### **The Parable of the Householder—the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times**

52 **Then** Jesus **said** [saith in KJV] unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.

53 Then said he unto them, [**Therefore** deleted from KJV] Every scribe [**which is** deleted from KJV] **well** instructed [**unto** deleted from KJV] **in the things** of the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a [**man that is an** deleted from KJV] householder; **a man, therefore**, which bringeth forth out of his treasure [**things** deleted from KJV] **that which is** new and old.

54 And it came to pass, [~~that~~ deleted from KJV] when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence. (Matthew 13:52-54 JST; 13:51-52 KJV)

The JST rewording of “*well* instructed *in the things* of the kingdom” (v. 53, emphasis added) differentiates between all who are instructed and those who are well instructed. It also distinguishes between worldly learning and the things learned of God. The mercy and justice of God are again illustrated.

Lastly, Joseph interpreted the eighth parable in his letter:

For the works of this example, see the Book of Mormon coming forth out of the treasure of the heart. Also the covenants given to the Latter-day Saints, also the translation of the Bible—thus bringing forth out of the heart things new and old, thus answering to three measures of meal undergoing the purifying touch by a revelation of Jesus Christ, and the ministering of angels, who have already commenced this work in the last days, which will answer to the leaven which leavened the whole lump. Amen.<sup>18</sup>

Joseph commented on verse 52: “And we say, yea, Lord; and well might they say, yea, Lord; for these things are so plain and so glorious, that every Saint in the last days must respond with a hearty Amen to them.”<sup>19</sup>

Finally, the last of the eight parables of the kingdom foretells the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, as prophesied by the apostle Paul: “That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him” (Ephesians 1:10).

An understanding and acceptance of Joseph Smith’s interpretation of these eight parables should bring a “hearty Amen” from the

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18. *TPJS*, 102.

19. *TPJS*, 102.

readers of these parables. The Prophet Joseph Smith was blessed as he expounded on the parables of the kingdom of heaven.

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