

The Unbelief of the People, despite the Lord's Wisdom and Miracles

Matthew 13:51-58

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⁵³ Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from there. ⁵⁴ When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, "Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? ⁵⁵ Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? ⁵⁶ And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?" ⁵⁷ So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house." ⁵⁸ Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief."

Background Notes

When the Lord finished giving His seven parables of the Kingdom, He asked the disciples in if they understood what He had taught them. *"Jesus said to them, "Have you understood all these things?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord" (v51).* Do you think that they really understood *"all these things"*? Probably not! They probably thought that they knew more than they really did!

That reminds me of some of my Old Testament Survey students at the beginning of the course. (Some of you here in this audience have taken that course, and you know what I'm saying!) When they start the course, many of my students think that they don't have to study much because, "Hey, this is just a Survey course! I know all those Bible stories from Sunday school!" Well, (as I say to them), "I'm so sorry!" It doesn't take long for them to realize that they don't know nearly as much as they thought they knew!

So I think that's what was going on with the disciples. The disciples certainly understood some things, and they thought they understood it all, but they certainly didn't **fully** understand what was involved in the Kingdom of heaven parables. Even though the disciples didn't understand everything about the Kingdom at this point, they certainly knew more than they had known before. And they certainly understood more than the Jewish scribes and Pharisees who prided themselves on their knowledge!

The Lord said that He purposely taught in parables to the scribes, to the Pharisees, and to the multitudes. He did this so that unwilling and unrepentant believers would hear but would not understand. *“Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand” (v13).* Then He said to His disciples that they, the disciples, would hear and understand. *“But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear...” (v16).*

The disciples many not have understood everything about the Kingdom of heaven, but they certainly knew more than the unbelieving scribes and Pharisees knew! In fact, their minds were being opened to truth that even the Old Testament prophets didn't fully comprehend. *“For assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it” (v17).* Further truth was being revealed for the first time through the parables of the Kingdom of heaven.

Doctrinal Points

1. A scribe brings out the new and the old from his treasure.

“Then He said to them, ‘Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old’” (v52). The “scribe” who is mentioned here is not one of the religious Jewish leaders - the unbelieving “scribes and Pharisees” who opposed the Lord. No, this scribe, a teacher of God's Law, had become a disciple of the kingdom. In fact, some Bible versions translate “scribe” as “disciple of the kingdom” here.

Now in what way is a disciple of the kingdom like a householder who “brings new and old things out of his treasure”? Many truths about the Kingdom are contained in the Old Testament Scriptures, but the Lord was revealing new truth about the Kingdom. That fact that the Kingdom of heaven would contain the “wheat and the tares,” or the true and the false, between the two advents of the King was not revealed in the Old Testament. These facts, as well as other mysteries of the Kingdom, were now being revealed - in New Testament times. Look back at verse 11: *“He answered and said to them, ‘Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.’* Remember, the term “**mystery**” as it is used here does **not** mean weird or mysterious, or a detective mystery. Rather it means **truth that had been concealed but was now being revealed.**

The disciples had the responsibility to pass on this further revelation, along with what was already known. They were to be *“...like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.”* We have that same responsibility today, because true believers today are “disciples of the kingdom.” We are to go to the treasure of Scripture and draw out truth from both the Old and the New Testaments. We're like a homeowner who brings out and shows all his treasured possessions to friends. We are to draw out and show treasures from the both the Old and the New Testament Scriptures.

The Old Testament Scriptures are foundational to the New Testament, and they must be interpreted through the further truth revealed in the New Testament. We must interpret the Old Testament Scriptures in light of the New Testament. But now that we've learned the further truth revealed in the New, we don't throw the Old away! We draw out the treasured truths from both "old and new" Scriptures.

So the Old Testament truth is foundational for the New Testament, but the Old Testament truths must be interpreted in light of the further revelation that we have in the New Testament. Disciples of the kingdom, both then and now, must be like good scribes, or good teachers of God's Word. They must be like householders who "bring out of the treasure things old and new." A good scribe teaches things new and the old from the Word of God.

2. A prophet is not without honor - except at home!

"Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from there. When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, "Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works?" (v53-54).

The Lord returned to his hometown of Nazareth, the Galilean town where He grew up. On a previous visit to Nazareth, the people didn't receive Him, and tried to throw Him over a cliff! (Read about that in Luke 4.) On this occasion the people of Nazareth at least acknowledged His wisdom and His miracles - but they still wouldn't accept Him as the Messiah! To them, He was only the carpenter's son. *"So they were offended at Him" (v57).* As a result of their unbelief, the Lord didn't do many miracles there in Nazareth: *"Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (v58).*

In verse 57 the Lord made this statement: *"A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house."* How true that is then and today – *"A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house."* A few years ago I preached at an Easter conference in Canada with hundreds of people in attendance, and the people were very appreciative of the ministry. I must admit I was feeling great, but I was about to learn what the Lord meant by verse 57: *"A prophet is not without honor except in his own country."* I flew back to my Bible college students in Chicago, and in my very first class on Monday morning a student asked me a question – and he fell asleep while I was answering! What a humbling experience! (It says a lot about my answer too, doesn't it?) But to this student who heard me teach day after day, I was "a prophet without honor" in my own classroom!

"A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house." It's important for all of us to remember this truth. We all tend to take spiritual gift for granted, and not give appreciation where honor and thanks are due. The Lord has blessed your church fellowship with wonderful men and women who have significant spiritual gifts and abilities. Don't take them for granted! Don't forget to honor them. Very often a "prophet is not without honor" - except at his or her home church!

Practical Application

Is Jesus more than a carpenter to you?

Look at what the people of Nazareth said about Jesus: *“He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, “Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?” (v56-58).*

Many people today look at Jesus in just the same way. They admit that Jesus was a real person who lived in history, and they admit that Jesus was a carpenter by trade. They admit that Jesus was a good man, and that He showed outstanding wisdom. They may even admit that He did miracles. But they will not acknowledge that Jesus was **more** than a carpenter and **more** than a good man. They will not acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God.

What about you? Have you acknowledged that Jesus is more than a carpenter? Jesus was not only a perfect Man - He is the Son of God! He went to the cross and paid the penalty for our sins. He rose from the dead, and He is alive today.

Have you committed your life to Him as your personal Savior and Lord? Is Jesus **more** than a carpenter to you?