

The Kingdom of God

When you visit churches, evangelical or not, you will often hear people talking about the Kingdom of God. That's nice, isn't it? But do you know what the Kingdom of God is? Do you understand what Jesus was telling us?

Jesus Himself spoke much about the Kingdom of God, so why shouldn't we? Even more, Jesus told the people that He came to this earth especially for that reason.

43 But he said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." (Luke 4:43, NIV).

Later Jesus said that this gospel of the Kingdom of God shall be preached till the end.

13 but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

(Matthew 24:13-14, NIV).

When is that end? In this context the end is when Jesus comes back.

22 All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

23 When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

(Matthew 10:22-23, NIV).

We have a responsibility to preach that gospel of the Kingdom of God, till the end, till Jesus comes back. It is important that we learn exactly what we have to preach. For this I can recommend a good book. It explains everything we need to know about the Kingdom of God: The Bible.

Additionally, it's important to know what we're talking about. Jesus encouraged us to seek the Kingdom of God first before doing anything else.

33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

(Matthew 6:33, NIV).

Before we start this bible study I want to emphasise that it is not just knowledge what we are seeking. Lots of people are reading books or doing bible studies just to find the answers to their questions, especially as a daily guide. That's not my intention. Of course I need answers to my questions. But do you know what is most important to me? I want to know my Lord better. I want to know what He thinks, what His plans are, not just for me, but for the world, and all people.

Studying His Word, His Love letters to us, I'm growing closer to Him. My love for Him grows. My relationship with my Father becomes deeper as I better understand His deep thoughts. I hope you will all grow in your relationship with Him and not just gather knowledge during these bible study sessions.

Jesus often spoke in parables. The disciples asked Him why.

10 The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?"

11 He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.

12 Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance.

Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.

13 This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand." (Matthew 13:10-13, NIV).

So, the disciples were given the knowledge of the secrets of the

Kingdom of God. But their questions were no witness to that knowledge. They didn't understand what Jesus was telling at the time. After Jesus' suffering He explained them for forty days things about the Kingdom of God. Even then they did not understand everything. They asked: Lord are you at this time going to restore the kingdom of Israel? (Acts 1:3, 6.)

I'm happy they didn't understand as Jesus then explained a few parables. This helps us begin to understand this very important subject.

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Jesus explained only a few parables. Like nothing happens by accident in the bible, this neither. These few parables contain keys to understanding everything we need to understand.

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So, when we want to understand the parables, the deeper meaning of God's message to us about the Kingdom of God, we need to turn to Jesus. With an open heart we can understand God's deeper inner feelings and thoughts. Let's start with the first parable.

The parable of the weeds

This is a very good parable with which to start. Why? **Because Jesus Himself explains what it means. So, this is a piece of cake, don't you think so?**

Let's see.

24 Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25 But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. 26 When the wheat sprouted and formed ears, then the weeds also appeared.

27 "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

28 "An enemy did this," he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'" 29 "No," he answered, "because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'" (Matthew 13:24-30, NIV).

Later when everyone went home the disciples asked Jesus to explain this parable. *36 Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field." 37 He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sows them is the devil.*

The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. 40 "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age.

41 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. 42 They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of

teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear. (Matthew 13:36-43, NIV).

This should be clear now. Is it? Let's review these verses.

The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. For most of us it's clear that the 'Son of Man' is Jesus. This can be confirmed through bible verses. You can write them down, otherwise we lose too much time in this kind of detail. Here they are: Matthew 9:6, 12:40, 16:13-15, 20:18, 26:2 and finally for now Luke 22:47-48.

OK we now know that Jesus is the sower. The field is the world and the good seed stands for the sons of the Kingdom.

Easy isn't it? Or.....?

Who are these sons of the Kingdom? When you read deeper you will see that it is the righteous ones. (vs.43)

So, now we know that the righteous ones are the sons of the kingdom. But... who are the righteous ones? Most times I get the answer: This is us. Not because we did it all right, but through the blood of the Lamb. But then this leads another question: Was it possible for the disciples to understand this at that time? They didn't understand a thing about the 'the blood of the Lamb' then. You see, not everything is that easy to understand. We will leave this point for the moment.....

Who are these sons of the Kingdom?

25 But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. (Matthew 13:25, NIV).

The explanation:

38 The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sows them is the devil. (Matthew 13:38-39, NIV).

That is something! The devil has his own sons and he sows them amidst the sons of the kingdom. I have been told that the weed is very difficult to distinguish from the corn. You have to be a specialist to see the difference. The corn, the good seed, grows. But the weed also grows. Now we see something very interesting. The owner's servants recognize the weed and want to pull it out. but the owner, Jesus,

doesn't want that. What did He say? "No, because while you are pulling out the weeds you may uproot the wheat with them." Isn't that remarkable? The servants can recognize the weed, but are not specialized to pull it out without the chance of pulling out the good seed as well.

30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"
(Matthew 13:30, NIV).

When you think this over, all kinds of questions arise.

Why doesn't Jesus tell the angels, as they are the servants, to let the weed grow and maybe it will become corn (wheat)?

After all, the wheat, that is the children of the Kingdom, must go out to tell everyone the gospel? Who else do they tell but the weed? That is what you expect, isn't it?

Why do we speak about conversion? In this parable this option is excluded. The weed will stay weed and will never become corn. Why doesn't this parable speak about conversion? (Open question)
The corn will be collected and brought into the heavenly barn. vs.43.

When you want to find an answer, it is good to make a Thesis. From that thesis you try to proof what you think is true or false.

In the parable it is not told that we, Christians, are the sons of the Kingdom. We assume this is right. It could be right, but at the same time it may not. Suppose we are the children of the kingdom. In that case we have to find verses in the bible which say this. Where can we find verses about the gathering, the caught up, the rapture of the saints? We can start with: 1 Thessalonians.

15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to

meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord for ever. 18 Therefore encourage each other with These words.
(1 Thessalonians 4:15-18, NIV).

First the dead in Christ will rise! The rest of the Christians who will live at that time will be caught up at that same time and we will all meet our Lord in the sky. At home you can read two other verses which speak about the same things. 1 Corinthians 15:51-54 and Mat 24:40-41.

So, what we see is that the believers will be caught up, out of the world, while the unbelievers will stay behind.

Now, back to the parable. Jesus told the people that the servants will first collect the weeds. Then the weeds will be tied in bundles. The wheat and the corn will be gathered and brought into His heavenly barn. Isn't that strange? This doesn't fit! What is it that doesn't fit, what doesn't seem right? Is it

possible that the gathering of the saints, the Christians, is not the same as the harvest?

What is the harvest and when will that be? Jesus explains that the harvest is the end of the age. (vs 39.) When is the end of the age? Is that at the time the believers will be caught up to Jesus? And what will happen after that enormous event?

Revelation speaks about these things. Not everything written in Revelation is easy to understand, but I think you

will basically understand chapter 20 and 21. Let's read that.

1 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations any more until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. 4 I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned

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with Christ for a thousand years. 5 (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

7 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth--Gog and Magog--to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore.

9 They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them.

12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.

13 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.

14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." 5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this

down, for These words are trustworthy and true." 6 He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. 7 He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. 8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars-- their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death."

(Revelation 20:1-15, 21:1-8 NIV).

What a story. This is not a minor subject but something very big. The first earth and heaven, where we live now, shall perish. A new earth shall be created. And God will live between His people.

But before all we just read occurs there will be many problems. For instance: the great tribulation. Lots of people who don't want to worship the beast will be killed. As we just read: they will come to life in the first resurrection and will reign together with Christ for a thousand years. Wow!

The first earth and heaven, where we live now, shall perish. A new earth shall be created. And God will live among His people.

Since we read about a first resurrection it follows that there must be at least a second resurrection. As we read, this resurrection will be at the end of the thousand years. This part of chapter 20 tells us about judgment day. All those who are resurrected will be judged by what was written in the books - according to what they had done.

How will we, believers, be judged? Will it be according to what we have done? I'm grateful to understand that it will not be like this. There are many verses which explain this point. I choose a few verses of Romans 5:

8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

(Romans 5:8-9, NIV).

We are justified by the blood of Jesus and saved from God's wrath through Jesus.

Thanks to the blood we will not be judged at judgment day, but we will participate in the first resurrection. After that first resurrection there comes a period of a thousand years of peace. Jesus will sit

on His throne in Jerusalem and together with all the saints He will reign over the world. (Think of this: A thousand years is for God as one day. After 6000 years of working, 6 days, the Sabbath comes!)

Let's go back to the parable, but keep your finger at Revelation 20.

Jesus explains: *40 "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. 42 They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* (Matthew 13:40-42, NIV).

We read something similar in Revelations 21:8:
8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death."

In the parable Jesus explains that first the weed will be gathered to be burned and after that He will bring the good wheat into His barn. This will all happen at the end of the ages, or as we also say: at the end of times.

I want to ask you again the question: Who are the children of the Kingdom? Is it right and easy to say: that are we, the believers?

I think that our Thesis turned out not to be true. We, believers, will not be gathered at the end of the ages, but a thousand years earlier, at the first resurrection.

Who are the children of the Kingdom? We can find an answer to that in the bible, but before we do we must dig a little further. First, let's study a few more parables.

Let's summarize what we have found up to now. We made the Thesis that we, Christians, in the parable of the weed in the field, are the children of the Kingdom. That's what most of us have always been taught, so why not? We found out that the children of the Kingdom are gathered just before the coming of a new heaven and a new earth. Above all this we have seen that the weed is to be pulled out first. This doesn't match with what we know about the raising of the dead believers and the changing of the living believers. When this rapture happens, the 'other' people will be left. I think it is clear now, that the

children of the Kingdom, which will be gathered a thousand years later, are not the same as the Christians.

The question: "Who are they?" isn't answered yet. The question which comes up now, "How do we see ourselves" isn't even asked. We will talk about these questions. But first we will dig into some other parables.

Review of the first bible study

Let's review what we read last time. We spoke about the parable of the weed in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43. Reading this parable thoroughly, we've seen it isn't as easy to understand as we thought. Lots of questions arose. This parable speaks about the harvest where the angels will come and collect the weed first to throw it in the fire. Then they will bring the sons of the Kingdom into God's heavenly barn.

We read in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 that the believers who died will be the first to be resurrected. Then in the wink of an eye the still living believers will be changed. And finally we will all be caught up in the sky to meet our Lord. The other people, the unbelievers, will stay behind. This isn't exactly the same as we read in the parable.

I noticed that everyone did not understand this. We didn't have the time to straighten this out before. We will do this in a moment. To start to see when the harvest is, the end of the age, we read a chapter of Revelations.

It speaks about:

- ★ there will be a first resurrection,
- ★ then there will be a the thousand years of peace when Jesus will reign from Jerusalem over this world. The devil will be captivated in those thousand years,
- ★ at the end of those thousand years the devil will be set free for a short time and will seduce people to stand up against Jerusalem,
- ★ the result is a great war where Jesus will conquer,
- ★ a great white throne will be visible,
- ★ all people who are not resurrected at the first resurrection (thousand years earlier) will be resurrected and will stand before the white throne,
- ★ several books will be opened, one of them is the book of life, all those people will be judged by what is written in the books,
- ★ a new heaven and a new earth will be created, the old ones will vanish,.
- ★ the new Jerusalem will come down from heaven and God will dwell among men.

I know there are people who think differently about the millennium. I believe the bible literally. So, for the

moment, let's stick with what we read in Revelation 20 and 21. For me it is as simple as that.

Not only because I read it here in Revelations, but I can read about this event in several parts of the bible.

The more you see the picture of God's plan with this world, with us people, the more you will understand how things fit in the big puzzle.

The harvest will be at the end of the age.

When will that be?

When the angels will weed out everything that causes sin and is doing evil.

What happens with that weed?

It will be thrown into the fiery furnace.

All of those whose names were not found in the book of life were thrown into the lake of fire.

A new heaven and a new earth will be created. The One Who is on the throne is telling us: *'He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.'* But.... all the others, *'the weed'*, their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur.

So, it must be clear now, the harvest is just before this world will be done away. In the parable the sons of the Kingdom will be gathered at the harvest.

We read some verses in 1 Thessalonians. The dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet our Lord in the air.

One will be taken and the other left. So Jesus is not talking in the parable about us, who are also sons of God. He speaks about another group of people who are called sons of the Kingdom. This group was called sons of God a long time before we Christians came in the picture.

Who are they? To understand this, we will read another parable.

The Parable of the net

The second parable concerning the Kingdom of heaven explained by Jesus is the parable of the net.

47 "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish.

48 When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. 49 This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and

separate the wicked from the righteous 50 and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

51 "Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked. "Yes," they replied. 52 He said to them,

"Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."

(Matthew 13:47-52, NIV).

With the knowledge we picked up by studying the parable of the weeds, we can already understand a few things when we read this parable of the net. Jesus speaks about the lake. What did he talk about in the parable of the weeds which is comparable?

The lake is comparable with the earth.
 What is comparable with the bad fish? The weed
 What about the good fish? The children of the Kingdom.
 The net that was let down in the lake? The harvest.
 The fisherman are not mentioned, but they must be there, with whom can we compare them? The angels.
 In this parable we see the same structure as in the parable of the weeds. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them in the fiery furnace.

These are two parables with the same meaning. The first parable, of the weeds, is the first of six parables. The last parable of the six is the parable of the net. Is it reasonable to think that the parables in between have a total different message? The first and the last parable don't speak about us, Christians. Is it

logical that the other parables are talking about us, Christians?

I don't think so. But you don't have to believe me. Let's listen to God. He speaks to us through His word, the bible. When we want to understand Gods deeper feelings and thoughts, we must study his

Word. Jesus explained, as we read in Luke 4:43, He was sent by God to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God. That must be an important message. Important enough to study this subject, even when we, Christians, are not mentioned in these parables which are speaking of the Kingdom of God.

We have read some verses in Revelation where we saw that we have something to do with the Kingdom of God. There are many other verses that explain that we are not set aside. We will study those verses later. We must not be disappointed we are not the main subject in the parables. More important is that we can see and understand what God wants us to tell about His Kingdom.

Jesus was sent by God to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God. That must be an important message. Important enough to study this subject even when we Christians are not mentioned in these parables that are speaking of the Kingdom of God.

The parable of the tenants

We've learned a few things about the Kingdom of God. Can we say everything is clear now? I'm afraid not. So we have to dig a little more into the bible to find answers. Let's read the parable of the tenants.

33 *"Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a wine press in it and built a watch tower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. 34 When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. 35 "The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. 36 Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them in the same way. 37 Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. 38 "But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' 39 So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. 40 "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" 41 "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time." 42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? 43 "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. 44 He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed." 45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them.*
(Matthew 21:33-45, NIV).

It isn't so difficult to see who is who in this parable. Here Jesus used the expression 'fruit' for the children of the Kingdom. Or as it is written in Matthew 23:37 'the children of Jerusalem'.

The tenants are the leaders of Israel. They understood that too.

The son is of course Jesus.

The vineyard was rented by God to the tenants, but they didn't give God what was His.

God, the owner of the land, sent his servants to collect his fruit. But they were killed.

Are these the angels, like in the other parable?

No, because angels can't be killed. These servants were the prophets.

Jesus says:

37 *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the*

prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing."
(Matthew 23:37, NIV).

They didn't kill just the prophets, but they killed the greatest prophet that ever lived, the Son of the Landowner.

To whom is Jesus speaking in this parable?

He spoke to the Jews. He spoke especially to the chief priests and the Pharisees as though they understood. What was the punishment for not being faithful to the landowner?

"Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit."

(Matthew 21:43, NIV)

In the parallel parable in Luke 20, they answered: *'May this never be!'* (Luke 20:16)

They understood what Jesus was telling them. They also knew what Paul later wrote in Romans 9.

4 *"the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises."*

(Romans 9:4, NIV).

The Kingdom of God was promised to them.

But the Kingdom of God shall be taken away from them.

To whom will the Kingdom of God be given?

Do we easily say: "To us?" Or are we now a little more careful?

We have to dig a little deeper to find an answer to that question.

The parable of the Wedding Banquet

We've seen how Jesus speaks to the Jews in parables. They did not understand everything He was telling them, but when He told them the Kingdom of God shall be taken away from the tenants they understood perfectly clear that He was talking about them.

Like Paul said it so clearly in Romans 9:4
"the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons."

So, Jesus spoke to the Israelites. They were predestined to be sons of God. But Jesus told them the Kingdom shall be given away to other people.

There is another parable which speaks about that.

It's the parable of the Wedding Banquet.

1 Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: 2 "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son.

3 He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

4 "Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.'

5 "But they paid no attention and went off--one to his field, another to his business. 6 The rest seized his servants, ill-treated them and killed them.

7 The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. 8 "Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. 9 Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.'

10 So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes.

12 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless. 13 "Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 "For many are invited, but few are chosen." (Matthew 22:1-14, NIV).

Jesus spoke to the Israelites. They were predestined to be sons of God. But Jesus told them the Kingdom shall be given away to other people.

As we've seen before, it is very important to read carefully. What is written?

Where in the bible can we find verses which speak about the same things?

Where can we find verses about this wedding?

It's in Revelations 19.

7. ...the wedding of the Lamb has come...

9. ...Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb...

When will that wedding be? What will happen what is written in verse 6b.

"our Lord God Almighty reigns."

Our Dutch translation is (in English): The Lord, our "God, the Almighty, has accepted the kingship." So, after the Lord, our God, has accepted the kingship, the wedding of the Lamb has come. See the study about the Bride of Christ.

For those who doubt Jesus isn't reigning yet, I recommend to read Revelation 11:15-19. We will read these verses later when we talk about the second coming of Jesus. For those who want to be sure Jesus is the bridegroom, read Matthew 9:14-15.

Back to the parable of the Wedding Banquet in Matthew 22.

When the son, who is the bridegroom, is Jesus, then the King must be God the Father. God sent his servants to those who had been invited.

Who are those servants?

Again we read Matthew 23:37 37

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. (Matthew 23:37, NIV).

Is the bible accurate? We can find all the answers to our questions. It is not always easy, but possible.

In the other parable we read: *"Last of all, he sent his son to them. They will respect my son, He said"*

(Matthew 21:37)

They didn't!

11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

(John 1:11, NIV).

They killed Him too.

We can recognise that the first group of invited people are the Jews.

Then who are the second group of people who are invited?

Generally it is assumed that these are the pagans, who later will be called: New Testament believers.

But is this right?

A long time I thought: I belong to that second group of guests, but, the more I saw details which didn't fit in the total picture of God's acts, the more I had to use 'oil' to loosen those rusted presumptions.

I read this parable from verses 1 through 6 and further as follows: *6 The rest seized his servants, ill-treated them and killed them. 8 Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. 9 Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.'*

(Matthew 22:6-9, NIV).

Do you see how I read it?

Of course I read verse 7, but it didn't tell me a thing. It was blocked out in my mind. Still that verse was there and wasn't to be erased.

7 The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

After the Israelites had killed the prophets and finally The Prophet -Who was the Son-, the King was enraged. (KJ 'wroth' which is in Greek close to 'wrath').

The bible speaks several times about 'a day of wrath'. We shall read some parts.

9 See, the day of the LORD is coming--a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger--to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. 10 The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. 11 I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless.

12 I will make man scarcer than pure gold, more rare than the gold of Ophir.

13 Therefore I will make the heavens tremble; and the earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the LORD

Almighty, in the day of his burning anger.

(Isaiah 13:9-13, NIV).

12 I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red,

13 and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig-tree when shaken by a strong wind. 14 The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

15 Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains.

16 They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

(Revelation 6:12-17, NIV).

There will be, just before Jesus returns, a day (or period) of God's wrath. This day is also called: 'day of the Lord'. It is the beginning of the last day of God's acting with people on this earth. It is the beginning of the last thousand years of this earth. Luke also said something about this event. The important thing is that these verses link really well to Matthew 22:7. (the army that burned the city).

20 "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city.

22 For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. 23 How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people.

24 They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

25 "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. 26 Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. 27 At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

(Luke 21:20-28, NIV).

That day the Father of the bridegroom will be enraged and send his army to destroy those murderers and burn their city. It will be just before Jesus returns on the clouds, as we read. The logical conclusion in verse 7 of Matthew 22 must still be fulfilled. Unfortunately Jerusalem will be under attack. But, there is hope as well.

Of course I know, Jerusalem is destroyed at 70 after Christ, but what happened then isn't the same as that written by Luke. The coming of the Lord on the clouds is coupled to the surrounded Jerusalem.

But if verse 7 isn't history and still must be fulfilled, then verses 8-10 have nothing to do with us Christians. Do they? These verses explain what will happen in the thousand years of peace.

There are many things in this parable we didn't discuss. The wedding clothes, the bride (the woman of the Lamb) and of course the second group of guests. Who are they?

Summary

Studying the first parable, about the weed, we learned that the Christians are not mentioned in that parable. Studying the parable of the tenants, we learned that Jesus was speaking to the Jews and told them that although the adoption of sons was originally for them, the kingdom of God shall be taken away from them.

Studying the parable of the wedding banquet, we learned that the Jews didn't want to enter the wedding hall. Again we learned we are not mentioned in that parable.

The question: Who are the sons of the Kingdom in the parables is not yet answered. Although we are not the main subject till now, we have to seek the Kingdom of God. And that's what Jesus told us to do. A lot of statements from God are universal. For example the ten commands as well as this encouragement to seek His Kingdom.

Home work

You will come to the conclusion that the kingdom of heaven is exactly the same as the kingdom of God. Why the difference? Matthew wrote his gospel mainly to the Jews and is using the Jewish custom not to use the name of God often. Some will never use the name of God.

For those who want to find out: is there a difference between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God, read the next passages side to side.

Matthew 4:17	Marc 1:15
Matthew 5:3	Luke 6:20
Matthew 11:11	Luke 7:28
Matthew 10:7	Luke 9:2
Matthew 13:11	Marc 4:11 and Luke 8:10
Matthew 13:31	Marc 4:30 and Luke 13:18
Matthew 13:33	Luke 13:21
Matthew 19:14	Marc 10:14 and Luke 18:16
Matthew 19:23	Marc 10:23 and Luke 18:24

The parable of the yeast

33 *He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."*

(Matthew 13:33, NIV).

This parable is one of the parables which lies between those parables explained by Jesus. Both parables spoke about the good and the bad, which were together till the harvest, till the end of times. Don't you think we have to see this parable the same way?

What is the meaning of yeast?

Is it the work of the Holy Spirit, as I'm often told? Why doesn't the bible speak about this in that way? Why would the bible explain just the opposite and give an explanation which has no biblical ground? All these questions are not easily answered. The best thing we can do is open our bible and ask God to guide us through His word. Sometimes the bible is like a puzzle. You have to find the pieces which give you the whole picture.

This is one of the reasons to read your bible daily. Just read the bible. The Holy Spirit will help you to understand when it is His time.

A concordance is a very good help, but you often don't see the spiritual meaning. It's very important to open your spirit to the Holy Spirit.

The question was: What's the meaning of yeast? Let's first read a part of Leviticus 23. It's about the feasts of God. Again a very interesting subject embedded in this site.

4 *"These are the LORD's appointed feasts, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times: 5 The LORD's Passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month.*

6 *On the fifteenth day of that month the LORD's Feast of Unleavened Bread begins; for seven days you must eat bread made without yeast.*

(Leviticus 23:4-6, NIV).

OK, we see God appointed the times of the feasts. The first is Passover. The second is the feast of unleavened bread. When we want to know more we can read Exodus 12:1-14. In my bible (Dutch) we can

find footnotes which explain where there are more bible verses about this subject. It is very convenient. There are so many details in this part of the bible that are very interesting, but we will stick with the yeast part.

15 *For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast. On the first day remove the yeast from your houses, for whoever eats anything with yeast in it from the first day until the seventh must be cut off from Israel.*

16 *On the first day hold a sacred assembly, and another one on the seventh day. Do no work at all on these days, except to prepare food for everyone to eat--that is all you may do. 17 "Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. 18 In the first month you are to eat bread made without yeast, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day. 19 For seven days no yeast is to be found in your houses. And whoever eats anything with yeast in it must be cut off from the community of Israel,*

whether he is an alien or native-born. 20 Eat nothing made with yeast. Wherever you live, you must eat unleavened bread."

(Exodus 12:15-20, NIV).

Immediately after the feast of Passover an animal was killed instead of the people. The blood was put on the sides and tops of the door-frames of the houses. The feast of the unleavened bread had to be kept. The Israelites have to eat unleavened bread for seven days. Not even a crumb of yeast must be found in their houses.

This was not a minor command. Death was the penalty for its violation. Why was this so important? Is God so worried about yeast that He will kill someone who just has some yeast in his house?

The seven feasts of the Lord are not just feasts that are remembering things that happened ages ago, but also look forward and have a spiritual meaning.

Let's look a little further to this. The Passover remembers the Israelites of the Lord, Who passes over the Israelites when He struck the Egyptians. (Exodus 12:24-27.) But it is not only remembering. See the new testament. 6 *Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? 7 Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast--as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore*

Is God so much worried about yeast that He want to kill someone who has some yeast in his house?

let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.
(1 Corinthians 5:6-8, NIV).

A little bit of yeast works through the whole batch of dough. Yeast must be done away with. In God's eyes we're without yeast. Why? Because our Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ, has been sacrificed. The Passover is a sign that points to Christ. He made us to God fresh dough, without yeast. That's why we have to get rid of the yeast of malice and wickedness.

So yeast is a symbol of the old life, of malice and wickedness. That's why the Israelites had to get rid of every piece of yeast in their houses. Those seven days of being free from yeast are symbolical for a whole life without 'yeast'. After we've accepted the Passover Lamb as having died for us we have to clean up our lives and our heart from everything that has to do with malice and wickedness. When we think this is not important we're the same as the weed or the bad. We know what will happen to them.

After we've accepted the Passover Lamb as died for us, we have to clean our lives, our heart, from everything that has to do with malice and wickedness.

Something in between.

I don't know how you celebrate the holy communion. But, after what we've learned it will be clear that the bread, which is a symbol of Jesus' body, must be without yeast. He was the only one who ever lived without sinning.

Is there any reason to see the work of the Holy Spirit as yeast?

I can't find a text in the bible which explains anything like that. We have to see the yeast in the parable to be as the bad, the weed.

This bad yeast is taken by a woman and mixed into a large amount of flour. Because we now know that yeast is not the good, we can understand that we can't see the woman as an image of Jesus.

It is not the Son of men who is doing this.

The woman is connected to the bad. She takes the symbol of badness, yeast, and puts it in the flour.

In Revelation we can read about a woman who is connected to the bad. It's the great prostitute. She's the big city, who rules over the kings of the earth. You can read this in Revelation 17 and 18.

This prostitute is not literally a woman, but the great city Babylon. This example shows us that we see the woman in this parable figuratively.

Because she is connected to the bad, we know she's a tool of the devil.

Only one other place we can read in the bible about three seahs of fine flour is when God visits Abraham. (Genesis 18).

Sara was told to bake some bread. Bread is life. But it is also written, "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the God." (Matthew 4:4.)

The yeast that the woman will take shall affect the word of God in such a way that people will think the yeasted word is the real word of God. They will believe the lie and surround the camp of Gods people, the city He loves.

9 They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them.

(Revelation 20:9, NIV).

The Parable of the hidden treasure

44 *"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.*
(Matthew 13:44, NIV).

There are many explanations about this parable. Most state that we, Christians, found something very special. One of the explanations tells us that Jesus is that hidden treasure. Another tells us that this hidden treasure is the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Suppose the first explanation is the right one. That implies that we can buy Jesus.???

In the second explanation it seems possible that we can buy the Kingdom of God, or at least we can buy our place in that kingdom. The only thing we have to do is to give up everything and then the rest will become all right.

Is this what the bible teaches us? Can we do something to participate in the Kingdom of God? Doesn't the bible teach us that we can't do anything ourselves. Jesus did it all!

Isn't it strange we always look to biblical themes from our point of view?
Isn't that selfish?

Jesus tells the people parables and the first thing we think is: That's for us. I'm not saying we can't learn something from those parables, but we have to see things in perspective. His perspective, His point of view.

In the first parable Jesus explains: the field is the world. He is the sower. That's His job. He's doing this with the purpose of bringing the corn into His heavenly barn. Does this parable speak about something total different?
I think Jesus shows us another view of His story. In this parable He is not the sower, but the man who finds a hidden treasure.
Where does He find that treasure? In the field.
Where was the good seed sowed? In the field.
What then is the hidden treasure? The children of the kingdom.
In the first parable Jesus sowed the children of the kingdom in this world. In this parable Jesus shows us that these children of the Kingdom are like a treasure to Him. He gave up His divine glory and

gave His life on the cross! That is really selling everything to buy this world.

He bought this world free from Satan. Isn't this a much nicer, a much more logical explanation?

We learn to see things from God's perspective. Isn't that much more interesting?

The parable of the Mustard seed

31 He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. 32 Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches."
(Matthew 13:31-32, NIV).

Who do you think that man is?
And what is that field?
So, when the planter is Jesus, is the mustard seed the good seed or the bad, the wicked?
The good seed will grow and becomes a tree where the birds of the air can perch in it's branches.

To find out the meaning of that mustard seed which becomes a big tree we have to dig into the bible. We have to find verses that speak about a mustard seed and verses which speak about a big tree.

Do you know of a verse that speaks about a mustard seed? A familiar verse is Matthew 17:20 He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."
(Matthew 17:20, NIV).

What does this verse speak about?
Faith!
Who is important in the bible when it comes to faith? Abraham.

Let's read a few verses from Hebrew 11. 8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. 9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 By faith Abraham, even though he was past age--and Sarah herself was barren--was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. 12 And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. 13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them

and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. 14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. 15 If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 Instead, they were longing for a better country--a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. (Hebrews 11:8-16, NIV).

And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand at the seashore. And this goes on and on, even today. Isn't that a big tree?
Abraham and his descendants were longing for a heavenly country. And God has prepared a city for them! Speaking about a heavenly Kingdom!

To understand a little more about that image of the tree we have to find verses that speak symbolically of a tree

There is more.

In the parable Jesus tells us about a big tree. He's not talking about a real big tree like we can see outside. This tree is an image of something, a symbol.

To understand a little bit more about that image of the tree, we have to find verses which speak to the symbolism of a tree.

I found two bible references. The first is found in Daniel 4. It is the story of Nebuchadnezzar who had a dream. 10 These are the visions I saw while lying in my bed: I looked, and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its

height was enormous. 11 The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth. 12 Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all. Under it the beasts of the field found shelter, and the birds of the air lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed.
(Daniel 4:10-12, NIV).

This dream has a great similarity to the parable of the Mustard Seed. Although it seems that it is more or less the same story, it isn't. This can be seen by looking at the rest of the dream and its interpretation. But we can also learn something else. It's the principle. Let's read a bit more of that chapter. We read the part where Daniel explains the meaning of the tree.

20 The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth, 21 with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the beasts of the field, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds of the air-- 22 you, O king, are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth. (Daniel 4:20-22, NIV).

What does that tree depict? The kingship and the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar. This is the Divine explanation through the mouth of Daniel. Now we can see that the tree, which grew out of the mustard seed, is probably an image of the Kingdom of God.

The other Old Testament book that speaks about a tree in the same way is Ezekiel. It is a very interesting part of the bible. The Lord gives Israel an allegory. He does this through a parable. It has to do with the kingship over Judah. It's about the throne of the house of David. There were lots of kings after David. And finally there was a king, his name was Zedekiah, who was the last king to reign over Judah. Nebuchadnezzar appointed him. Zedekiah made a covenant with Nebuchadnezzar under oath. Then we read in Ezekiel 17 how he breaks his oath. And God isn't pleased with that. (Ezekiel 17:18-20) But, before God is saying those words through Ezekiel He gives the house of Israel a parable. In this parable the Lord tells us about an eagle that broke a little branch of the top of a cedar (that's a big tree.) When you read the whole story you will understand that this branch is King Jehoiakim who is kidnapped by Nebuchadnezzar. King Nebuchadnezzar told Zedekiah to be king over Judah. This is all a very interesting subject, but too much for now. It is not only history, but has also to do with the future.

The throne didn't stop with the kingship of Zedekiah. That's the lesson of Ezekiel 17. It's a little bit too much to read the whole chapter now but you can read it at home. For the moment it is enough to read the last verses of this chapter.

22 "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will take a shoot from the very top of a cedar and plant it; I will break off a tender sprig from its topmost shoots and plant it on a high and lofty mountain. 23 On the mountain

heights of Israel I will plant it; it will produce branches and bear fruit and become a splendid cedar. Birds of every kind will nest in it; they will find shelter in the shade of its branches. 24 All the trees of the field will know that I the LORD bring down the tall tree and make the low tree grow tall. I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. "I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it.'" (Ezekiel 17:22-24, NIV).

In these verses we're not only seeing that the Lord Himself will take a shoot from the very top of the cedar and plant it (this has to do with the throne of the house of David), but we also see that there is a great resemblance with the parable of the mustard seed. This time it is not a resemblance like the resemblance with the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, but in my opinion, at the end, this is the same story as the parable of the mustard seed. I can prove this. The bible study about Israel is covering this subject.(Embedded in this site.)

I think it is clear now that the tree which grew out of the mustard seed has to do with faith of believers, with Israel and with the throne of the house of David.

To round off this part of our bible study of the parable of the mustard seed, we will read a few verses in Luke.

30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. 31 You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; his kingdom will never end." (Luke 1:30-33, NIV).

Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; his kingdom will never end.

Enter the Kingdom of God.

I know that the parable in Ezekiel and its meaning isn't easy to understand. That's why I want to explain a few things before we go on. To begin this small excursion let's read a few verses of Matthew 19.

23 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 25 When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?" 26 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." 27 Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?" 28 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. 30 But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first. (Matthew 19:23-30, NIV).

In the first verses we see something interesting. What is it? Jesus said that it is very difficult for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of heaven.

The disciples answered, "Who then can be saved?" Attention! In biblical sense these two things are equal: "Enter the Kingdom of heaven" and "be saved". There is another interesting point.

Jesus said, "At the renewal of all things, when the Son of man will sit on His glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The disciples will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. That isn't so special! There are twelve tribes. Oh.... where are these twelve tribes? Are those twelve tribes not the Jews? Jews are Israelites, aren't they? That's correct. Jews are Israelites, but are all Israelites Jews? To see this clearer, America has 50 states. One of them is Texas. Are all the Texan people Americans? And are all the Americans Texans?

I'm not sure how much you know about the Old testament, but you are probably aware that at a certain point the Israelites wanted a king. Their first king was....? Saul. Their second king was?

David. Their third king was....? Solomon. What happened then? The mighty kingdom of Israel was split in two. Let's read about this in 1 Kings 11. We read some verses.

6 So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done. ...9 The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. 10 Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the LORD's command. 11 So the LORD said to Solomon, "Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates. 12 Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. 13 Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen." 14 Then the LORD raised up against Solomon an adversary, Hadad the Edomite, from the royal line of Edom.

...31 Then he said to Jeroboam, "Take ten pieces for yourself, for this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'See, I am going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hand and give you ten tribes. 32 But for the sake of my servant David and the city of Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, he will have one tribe.

...35 I will take the kingdom from his son's hands and give you ten tribes. 36 I will give one tribe to his son so that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I chose to put my Name.

37 ...you will be king over Israel.

(1 Kings 11:6, 9-14, 31-32, 35-36, end 37, NIV).

So the house of David will still reign over Judah, but the 10 tribes which are torn away will have their own king. From that day on there will be two kingdoms in the land of Israel. One is called Israel, the other Judah. You can read all about this in the books of the Kings and the Chronicles.

In the second book of the Kings, chapter 17, we read about the last king of Israel and Israel's exile to Assyria. They never returned.

That's history you think.

Let's see what the bible thinks about that.

Ezekiel was a prophet who lived about 130 years later. God told him to prophesy about two nations, Israel and Judah.

16 "Son of man, take a stick of wood and write on it, 'Belonging to Judah and the Israelites associated with

him.' Then take another stick of wood, and write on it, 'Ephraim's stick, belonging to Joseph and all the house of Israel associated with him.' ...21 and say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from all around and bring them back into their own land. 22 I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. There will be one king over all of them and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms. 23 They will no longer defile themselves with their idols and vile images or with any of their offenses, for I will save them from all their sinful backsliding, and I will cleanse them. They will be my people, and I will be their God. 24 "My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees. 25 They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children will live there for ever, and David my servant will be their prince for ever. 26 I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them for ever. 27 My dwelling-place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. 28 Then the nations will know that I the LORD make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them for ever.'" (Ezekiel 37:16, 21-28, NIV).

These two nations that are not united will be united. I don't know how and I don't even know where the ten tribes are, but I'm sure God kept His bookkeeping right.

25 second part :

David my servant will be their prince forever!

Who is that servant David? This is something special: David was the king who was beloved by God. God promised David, as we just read in the book of Kings, his throne will endure forever. Jesus will sit on that throne when He returns. David is a Hebrew name. "Dawid" means my beloved. So it is perfectly legal to read the verse like this: and my beloved servant will be their prince forever.

32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, (Luke 1:32, NIV).

That's one thing we have to remember.

The other is: These two nations which are never united will be united.

I don't know how and I even don't know where the ten tribes are, but I'm sure God kept up on His bookkeeping. This gives a whole new perspective to bible verses like Hebrew 8:8-10 and hundreds of other verses that say the same thing.

When we talk about Israel, we have to remember there are twelve tribes. Benjamin and half of the tribe of Levities went with the the tribe of Judah. Later they were called Jews. The other 10 tribes are still 'lost'. They are somewhere, God knows where. With some bible study we can find some hints where and who they are, but that's not important for this bible study.

About entering the Kingdom of God, it is good to know: With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.

Summary

The parable of the mustard seed tells us about a very small seed which becomes a big tree. Israel started with one man, and he as good as dead, as the bible tells us, Abraham. His grandson Jacob received the name Israel from God along with twelve sons. They became the twelve tribes of Israel. Later they were split into two nations, Israel and Judah. One nation, Israel, went into exile in

Assyria. The other nation, who has the throne of the house of David, went into exile in Babylon. The throne of David stopped as it seemed. But the parable God told to Ezekiel tells us that God took one branch of the top of the cedar and planted it somewhere else. That means the throne of Israel is still somewhere and will come to Jerusalem when Jesus returns because He will sit on the throne of his father David.

At that time the 10 tribes will no longer be lost. They will know who they are and go to the land of Israel to be united with the rest of the tribes, the Jews. God will forgive them their sins and He will be their King.

Two lines in the bible

You thought during this bible study, very interesting, but how do we Christians fit into this picture? A logical thought!

We have to realize that God is working out His plans almost always in two ways. He shows people His plans. Then those plans are fulfilled literally. We, as Christians, can see there is often a spiritual fulfillment as well. The other way around is also possible.

A well known example is the Passover. The lamb is slaughtered, the blood is put on the sides and tops of the doorframe as a sign to the angel of death, and the Israelites leave Egypt on their way to the promised land. In the New Testament we learn that this Passover has its real fulfillment in Jesus Christ. He died for us.

We left the world (Egypt) and are on our way to the promised land, where Jesus is. We also read about Adam, Joseph, and David.

They are all types of Jesus, shadows of the reality. Let's read two parts of the New Testament to see what I mean. They are only indirectly connected to our seeking of the kingdom of God. But when we understand these verses we will also better understand how we, believers, can better understand the meaning of the kingdom of God.

We are going to study the story of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. At the last day, the fiftieth, of the Israeli feast of weeks, there were 120 Jews gathered together in a room.

That day they expected the gift of God Jesus had promised (Acts 1:4). *2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.*

3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

(Acts 2:2-4, NIV).

This wasn't something that happened in a back room. Many Jews heard the noise but didn't understand a thing about it. Peter then stood up and spoke to them:

16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.

18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 20 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. 21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' (Acts 2:16-21, NIV).

Peter quotes, led by the Spirit, a prophesy of Joel and explained to everyone that this is what was prophesied by Joel. But, when I read this prophesy well, I ask myself, did God change His plan?

Is everything He told, through the mouth of Joel, about the moment of outpouring of His Spirit, not applicable anymore?

Joel speaks clearly, God will pour out His Spirit on all people. Let's read that again: *28 "And afterwards, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.* (Joel 2:28, NIV).

'I will pour out My Spirit on all people'

When will that happen? It will be after what is written in Joel 2. First a large and mighty army comes (2) Verse one tells us it is the day of the Lord, a day of darkness and gloom. After the definition of the armies, the Lord declares: (12) *return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.*

Then there is a call to the Lord:

(17) spare your people, O Lord. Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn, a byword of the nations.

Then we read the answer of the Lord: (18) *Then the Lord will be jealous for His land and take pity on His people. ... (23) Be glad, o people of Zion, rejoice in the Lord your God, for he has given you the Teacher for righteousness.* (This verse can be read like this as well. All Dutch translations have it that way.)

(27) Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the Lord your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be shamed. (28) And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

When I read this prophesy well, I ask myself, "Did God change His plan? Is everything He told through the mouth of Joel about the moment of outpouring of His Spirit not applicable anymore?"

So, according to Joel, God will pour out His Spirit after a great war, and after He has given the Teacher of righteousness. Then Israel will never be shamed. Jesus will be in the land of Israel. Other bible parts are confirming that. (Ezekiel 37:27-28 and 39:22-29) This last verse says: *I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord.*

There is another thing that needs our attention. Peter quote the prophesy of Joel which speak about *wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.*

Isn't that strange? We can't find prophesies like that in the story that is told in Acts 2. Beyond that we know that the day of the Lord still has to come. Yet the Holy Spirit leads Peter to talk about this prophesy. This prophesy tells what happened to the 120 people in that place. Does this mean we can easily take all prophesies, which were spoken to Israel, and make them applicable for us Christians? No, but we can learn something in the way this prophesy is used. When we compare Acts 2 and Joel 2, we can see that Joel speaks about the time the Lord will be King in Israel. He is Israel's Messiah and He will pour out his Spirit on all Israelites after they convert themselves. The story in Acts tells us something similar. The Lord is King in the heart of the Christian after he is converted. Then He pours out His Spirit. Joel speaks about a pouring out of God's Spirit on all people (of Israel) when the Messiah will be king in Israel. Acts speaks about the pouring out of God's Spirit on every Christian who has accepted Jesus in his heart as King.

Because Peter told the whole prophesy of Joel we now understand that what happened at Pentecost is kind of a pre- fulfillment. It is not a poor fulfillment, but a spiritual one. And it is real! Thanks to God.

There is another bible reference in the New Testament that clearly shows that the new Testamental believer has received blessings which were promised to Israel. We didn't receive them all yet, but it will happen one day.
8 But God found fault with the people and said: "The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. 9 It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my

covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. 10 This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 11 No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. 12 For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."
 (Hebrews 8:8-12, NIV).

We can find this prophesy in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Again we see a prophesy, spoken to Israel that is used to teach us Christians a New Testamental truth. When you read chapters 30 and 31 of Jeremiah, you will see it's about the restoration of Israel. When the Messiah (Jesus) will be King in Israel He will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. (33b)

The next text makes it clear this prophesy is meant for the future, still today. Because it is clear, not everyone knows the Lord. Bible studies are not necessary anymore at that time.

We, Christians can say: God is our Father and we can also say we are one people. (see 2 Corinthians 6:16). We also know that the Lord tells us: *I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.* (see also Hebrew 10:16).

Yet this is as partly fulfilled as the prophesy of Joel. Both prophesies are meant for the last days, to be more precise: when the Lord comes back. Both prophesies have a pre- fulfillment in the believer. Both are meant for those who are accepting Jesus Messiah as King, the Israelites, when Jesus comes back, and the Christians now, in their heart.

There is another example of pre- fulfillment. I will just name it. You will understand it yourself when you think this over. It's about the renewal of all things when the disciples will sit on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel.

Jesus is using these words in Matthew 19:28. As you know we Christians are renewed too, born again. Jesus, King in our renewed heart, is somewhat hidden from the world. Jesus, King on the Throne in Jerusalem at the moment of renewal of all things will be seen by all people.

Summary

The parables are teaching us: Jesus speaks to the Israelites. Jesus spoke to Jews, but in the parables He spoke about all Israel, the two nations, Judah and Israel. He spoke not only in the parables.

He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."
(Matthew 15:24, NIV).

And when Jesus speaks about His being a Shepherd, He said: *I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.*

(John 10:16).

The two nations will be one nation.

We learned there are often two lines in the bible.

There is a natural line and there is a spiritual line. It also happens in another way. First a pre- fulfillment of a prophesy, and then later the real fulfillment.

A natural example: the people of Israel coming out of Egypt, going through the sea, eating the manna. The spiritual fulfillment: we gentiles, becoming believers, are coming out of the world, are baptized and eat of the spiritual food, which is Jesus, the Word.

A pre-fulfillment example: The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost upon believers. The fulfillment of the original prophesy: The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all Israel.

Salvation has come to the gentiles

Jesus was a Jew. He walked in the midst of the Jews. He talked to Jews. He spoke to them in parables too. He told the majority of Jews: the kingdom shall be taken away from you. We've seen in some of the prophecies how the Israelites will be forgiven by God and how God will be their King. So it must be clear now that the Kingdom of God has a lot to do with Israel. It was meant for them, but then they rejected Jesus as King and even killed the Son. And doing this they (the natural branches of the olive tree) were broken off the cultivated olive tree.

What now?

Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery?

We will see God is not like that.

Read Romans 11 to learn more about this.

The part of Israel that rejected Jesus is broken off. We, gentiles, have been grafted in. They were broken off because of unbelief. We are standing by faith. Now we're one with that part of Israel that stands by faith. Before Jesus came to the earth we were not adopted as sons, we didn't have a covenant with God. We have to *remember that formerly we were gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" at that time we were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.*

You can find this in Ephesians 2. Let's read that and a few verses more.

11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)--

12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For

through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow-citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

(Ephesians 2:11-22, NIV).

Now we both share the nourishing sap from the olive root. That root is Jesus. (Revelation 22:16)

What about the Israelites that are living at the time Jesus returns? Paul wants us not to be ignorant of this mystery. He explains: *Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved.*

Where will the Gentiles come in? Where will we, Gentile believers come in? In the Kingdom of God! Paul writes to the Christians in Derbe: *We must go through many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God.* (Acts 14:22)

Then will happen what Isaiah prophesied.

19 From the west, men will fear the name of the LORD, and from the rising of the sun, they will revere his glory. For he will come like a pent-up flood that the breath of the LORD drives along. 20 "The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins," declares the LORD. 21 "As for me, this is my covenant with them," says the LORD. "My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and for ever," says the LORD.

(Isaiah 59:19-21, NIV).

This is the beginning of the Kingdom of God on earth. When Jesus comes back we believers will be there too.

All who have part on the first resurrection will reign with Jesus Christ (Messiah) for a thousand years. The twelve disciples will judge the twelve tribes of Israel which shall live in the Holy land at that time. These are the two nations, which are mentioned in Ezekiel 37:15-28.

They will no longer be unbelievers, because *all Israel will be saved.*

The coming Kingdom of Peace

Now that you better understand many things you probably want to know a few more things about that Kingdom of peace. We will read some scriptures to get an impression of what the bible has to tell us about that Kingdom of Peace.

1 This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: 2 In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. 3 Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 4 He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war any more. 5 Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD. (Isaiah 2:1-5, NIV).

We can find the same picture of this Kingdom of Peace where wars do not exist and that will be reigned by the Lord in Micah 4:1-5. We read on in chapter 5.

1 Marshal your troops, O city of troops, for a siege is laid against us. They will strike Israel's ruler on the cheek with a rod. 2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." 3 Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labour gives birth and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. 4 He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. 5 And he will be their peace. When the Assyrian invades our land and marches through our fortresses, we will raise against him seven shepherds, even eight leaders of men. (Micah 5:1-5, NIV).

The One who came forth out of Judah and was born in Bethlehem shall be ruler over Israel. We read earlier that will be Jesus. (Luke 1:32-33). And when Jesus reigns verse 3b of Micah 5 will be fulfilled: "...and the rest of his brothers return to join the the Israelites."

Do you remember that there were two kingdoms in Israel? The ten tribes: Israel, also called Jacob or Samaria after their capital, or Ephraim after their leader tribe. And Judah or the Jews, so called after their leader tribe Judah.

The rest of his brothers,

Whose brothers? The brothers of the Jew Jesus. All Jews that are not yet in the land of Israel will return to join their brothers the Israelites. Isn't it amazing how accurate the bible is? Although no one knows exactly where these Israelites are God is mighty to know and He will make it happen.

Jeremiah also speaks about that time.

"6 During the reign of King Josiah, the LORD said to me, "Have you seen what faithless Israel has done? She has gone up on every high hill and under every spreading tree and has committed adultery there.

7 I thought that after she had done all this she would return to me but she did not, and her unfaithful sister Judah saw it.

8 I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery.

9 Because Israel's immorality mattered so little to her, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and wood. 10 In spite of all this, her unfaithful sister Judah did not return to me with all her heart, but only in pretense," declares the LORD.

11 The LORD said to me, "Faithless Israel is more righteous than unfaithful Judah. 12 Go, proclaim this message towards the north: "Return, faithless Israel,' declares the LORD, 'I will frown on you no longer, for I am merciful,' declares the LORD, 'I will not be angry for ever. 13 Only acknowledge your guilt--you have rebelled against the LORD your God, you have scattered your favors to foreign gods under every spreading tree, and have not obeyed me,'" declares the LORD.

14 "Return, faithless people," declares the LORD, "for I am your husband. I will choose you--one from a town and two from a clan--and bring you to Zion.

15 Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding.

16 In those days, when your numbers have increased greatly in the land," declares the LORD, "men will no longer say, 'The ark of the covenant of the LORD.' It will never enter their minds or be remembered; it will not be missed, nor will another one be made.

17 At that time they will call Jerusalem The Throne of the LORD, and all nations will gather in Jerusalem to honor the name of the LORD. No longer will they follow the stubbornness of their evil hearts.

18 In those days the house of Judah will join the house of Israel, and together they will come from a northern land to the land I gave your forefathers as an inheritance. (Jeremiah 3:6-18, NIV).

Again verse 17. *at that time they will call Jerusalem The Throne of the Lord.*

When is that, at that time?

That is, like we read a few verses earlier, when the Lord will take *-one from a town and two from a clan- and bring you to Zion.*

We're talking about faithless Israel and her unfaithful sister Judah. At the time Jerusalem will be called The Throne of the Lord Israel and Judah will be united in the land of Israel.

(18) *In those days the house of Judah will join the house of Israel, and together they will come from a northern land to a land I gave your forefathers as an inheritance.*

The prophet Ezekiel is very clear too: [Ezekiel 37:15-28](#) We read this before but it is good to remember.

What we've seen is this:

- Jerusalem will be the Throne of the Lord
- Jesus, who is the Messiah, will be the King in Jerusalem.
- In those days all Israelites will become one nation again.
- The Israelites will live in the land God gave to Jacob.
- The Kingdom of God will be a kingdom of peace, there will be no wars anymore.

To end this part we will read some verses in Isaiah.

1 *A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.*

2 *The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him--the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of*

knowledge and of the fear of the LORD-- 3 and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; 4 but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. 5 Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash round his waist. 6 The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down

with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. 7 The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. 8 The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. 9 They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. 10 In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious. (Isaiah 11:1-10, NIV).

The shoot which comes up from the stump of Jesse is Jesus. Jesse is the father of David. Jesus is not only the offspring of David, He is also the root. (Rev .22:16).

The Spirit of the Lord is resting on Him (2). He will be the ruler who is sitting on The Throne in Jerusalem, the throne of David. Everything will be changed, even how the animals will be.

At the end of Isaiah we can read more about the Messiah kingdom of Peace.

18 *But be glad and rejoice for ever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. 19 I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. 20 "Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed.*

21 *They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. 22 No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands. 23 They will not toil in vain or bear*

children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them.

24 *Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. 25 The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD. (Isaiah 65:18-25, NIV).*

All believers of all times, who died in Christ, will, together with the believers who are living at the time Jesus returns, be changed.

People will be old, as old as the trees. People have to work, but God says, "My chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands". Also children are not born to misfortune.

And the believers?

And what about the believers in the kingdom of Peace? All believers of all times who died in Christ will together with the believers who are living at the time Jesus returns, be changed. That will be at the last trumpet (that is the seventh trumpet) *50 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.*

(1 Corinthians 15:50-52, NIV).

And so changed, we will always be with the Lord. There are a few bible verses, which we have already read that connect very well to these we just read:

15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.

16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord for ever.

(1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, NIV).

That last trumpet is the trumpet of Revelation 11.

11 But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. 12 Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on. 13 At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. 14 The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon. 15 The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever." 16 And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshipped God, 17 saying: "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,

the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.

18 The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great--and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

19 Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm.

(Revelation 11:11-19, NIV).

When this trumpet sounds, Jesus will come back and accept the Kingship. As we read this time of peace will endure for a thousand years. (Revelation 20). I don't see any reason not to read this literally. The devil is still going around and not bound. We still have to resist him.

This is not all. Jesus is the first of many brethren.

(Rom.8:29). *14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*

15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. (Romans 8:14-17, NIV).

We are sons of God and no longer slaves. So we became co-heirs of Jesus. When He reigns we will reign as well. *11 Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him;*

12 if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us;

(2 Timothy 2:11-12, NIV).

It isn't as easy as it seems. The word "if" is used a few times. "If" we died with Him, we will live with Him. To live with Him, we have to bury our old life. We have to leave that in the (water) grave. And then we have to live a life that is focused on Him. A life through the Spirit. That's a life focused on God. And "if" *"we succeed, we will rule together with Christ as kings.* Our God is a wonderful God. He loves us. And before Adam and Eve were created He worked out His plan about the Kingdom. And through His love, through Jesus Christ, He made it possible for us to share in that enormous plan of God. This is amazing. What a mighty and wonderful God we have!

Summary

The bible gives us a wonderful preview of this time of peace. War doesn't exist anymore for a thousand years. People will be as old as the trees. Jesus will be the teacher of righteousness. God will bring all Israelites and all Jews back to their land and He will be their King. They are the children of the Kingdom. And we Christians will be changed when the trumpet sounds. And we will meet our Lord in the sky. We will be with Him when He comes to Jerusalem to reign and we will reign with Him.

The gospel of the Kingdom of God

We are not mentioned in the parables as they were spoken to the Jews. Does that mean that this gospel was only for the Jews? Jesus told the disciples the gospel of the kingdom will be preached till Jesus comes back.

14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:14, NIV).

It is a testimony to all nations. Acts tells us the apostles were preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God too. *12 But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. (Acts 8:12, NIV).*

22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. (Acts 14:22, NIV).

8 Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. (Acts 19:8, NIV).

24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me-- the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. 25 "Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. (Acts 20:24-25, NIV).

23 They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. (Acts 28:23, NIV).

30 For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. 31 Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 28:30-31, NIV).

When we read the first and the last verse, we can see Philip and Paul preached the good news of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.

When we read the first and last verses we see that Philip and Paul preached the good news of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. When we read these verses thoroughly we will see they are preaching two gospels. **One is the good news of the Kingdom of God and the other is the good news of the name of Jesus Christ.**

Is there a difference? I'll try to explain this through an example.

We all live at the moment at a certain place on the earth. Suppose we read something very special about a city in another part of the country. (the Kingdom of God).

It is amazing what we read. We want to be there, we want to share all those wonderful things we heard about. But unfortunately there is no possibility to go there because an enemy did something terribly wrong. Suddenly someone comes with the good

news, a gospel, so we can go to that other place. It appears that someone constructed a road to that city. So it is now possible to go to that other place and share all those nice and wonderful things. The only problem is that this road is not visible, yet really there. When we believe this road exists we can go to that other place. That

is, of course, a wonderful message, it's really good news.

It's the good news, or the gospel, of 'the way'.

It will be clear that the gospel of the Kingdom of God is another gospel than the gospel of the Name of Jesus, who is The Way. And it will also be clear that just listening to the gospel of the Kingdom of God isn't enough. We can't do a thing with that gospel when there is no way to enter that Kingdom.

God had, and still has a plan for this world and for the people on this world. That plan has everything to do with the Kingdom He wants to establish. God gives people the opportunity to become sons of Him. He will also give them the opportunity to become heirs, Heirs of the Kingdom. But people sinned and their punishment is death. God is a righteous God, and He loves us. That's why He gave Himself on the cross. He died instead of us. He reopened the way to the Kingdom. He Himself became The Way.

It will be clear. The gospel of the Kingdom of God is another gospel than the gospel of the Name of Jesus, who is The Way.

The whole story in short

Thinking about God, we have to ask our self, “ Why was it necessary for the great King of the universe to become a human being?”

Before man was created something happened with far-reaching consequences. God created angels. One was called Lucifer. Sons of God they were called. (Job 2:1 and 38:7). This Lucifer (Light barrier) was very highly placed. He was the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. He was on the holy mount of God. God appointed him to be the ruler over this earth. He was blameless in his ways till... Till wickedness was found in him. He said: I will make myself like the Most High. (Ezekiel 28:11-19 and Isaiah 14:12-15).

This Lucifer became God’s adversary, diabolos, the devil. His kingship was taken away from him. The earth became formless and empty. (Genesis 1:2).

God made a new beginning. **The Word recreated the earth.** Adam and Eve were created. The great King appointed Adam as ruler over this earth. (Genesis 1:28).

Adam was the king over the earth, but he had to obey God. God wanted Adam to rule, but also to obey. That is why He commanded Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and bad. God gave Adam the opportunity to disobey. By making the right choices Adam’s character would have been formed, a king who can make the right decisions.

Then God’s adversary came. Not with honest arguments, but with sly lies. Adam did not have enough character. At that point it seemed God’s plan was blocked, for the penalty of sin was death. Eternal death, separated from God for ever. No sonship, no heritage.

Adam was appointed by God to be the ruler over this earth. However he obeyed Gods adversary and disobeyed God. That’s how he became a slave of Satan. (2 Peter 2:19). And Satan became in this sly

way again the ruler of the earth. Adam gave it to him by obeying Satan.

God didn’t think it a pity and think that now he had to start all over again. He had already another plan. We can read in the bible He had this plan already before men were created. God told the snake (Satan) he will be cursed: *And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.* (Genesis 3:15)

God couldn’t cope what Adam and Eva did nor his former angel. Both must be convicted and the power over the earth must return to God. God is a God of justice. But above that he loves men, So He had to come as King and Judge of the universe with a Royal and righteous solution to solve this problem. The death penalty for men was fulfilled at the cross where He died for us. At the same time Jesus, Who is the offspring of Eve, dethroned the devil. And when Jesus comes back He will crush the offspring of Satan, the son of perdition (see KJ and Greek). But before this is going to happen, many other things must happen

God called Abram to go from Haran to another land: Canaan. Genesis 12:1-3, 7 God promised Abram to make him into a great nation. In Genesis 22:18 God promised Abram again that all nations

will be blessed through him. But this time God adds, “Through your offspring.” The New Testament explains in Galatians 3:16 this offspring is Jesus. So, Abram became Abraham and the father of Isaac. Isaac became the father of Jacob. Jacob became the father of twelve sons and one daughter. On a certain night Jacob wrestled with God.

Genesis 32:22-30

There he was given his new name, Israel. The twelve sons of Jacob became the twelve tribes of Israel. Later they moved to Egypt. First everything was fine, but then they became oppressed. Moses took them out of Egypt through the desert. This really happened and has a spiritual meaning to us.

1 Corinthians 10:1-11

God wanted Adam to rule, but also to obey. That’s why He commanded Adam not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and bad. God gave Adam the opportunity to disobey. By making the right choices Adam’s character will be formed. A king who can make the right decisions.

These things occurred as examples to us. The Old Testament isn't just history. We can learn a lot from it. Above that there are so many prophecies, short term and long term. And many of them are not yet fulfilled. Because they are not yet fulfilled they become very interesting to those of us who are interested in God's plan for this world and for men.

Joshua was Moses' aide. Joshua is a Hebrew name. It means 'Jahweh is salvation.' In Greek it is Jesus. Joshua was the one who brought the Israelites into the promised land. Joshua is a type of Jesus.
Joshua 1:1-6

After some time the people of Israel demanded a king so they could be like the other nations. Samuel wasn't very pleased and he prayed to God.

1 Samuel 8:6-8 and 12:17-23
For the sake of his great name the Lord will not reject His people, because the Lord was pleased to make you his own.

The Lord was king over Israel. They were his people. They rejected Him and wanted a king like all the other nations.

So Israel's first king was Saul. David was the second king and a man loved by God. David's son Solomon was the third king. God spoke to him:

1 Kings 9:4-5

We just read God promised David: *You shall never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.* How tragic it was. King Solomon, to whom God appeared twice, sinned in such a way that God had to tear apart his kingdom. We studied this subject briefly.

From that time on there were two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. Later Israel went into captivity and never returned to the land God had given them. We did see how God will bring them together again when Jesus returns. They are not lost and they will repent and will be forgiven. The Jews, during Jesus' days on earth, were the first group in the parable of the wedding banquet. They rejected His call. They even killed Him. The Kingdom of God is taken away from them. Not from all of them for at the present time a remnant remains which has been chosen by grace.

This is the time all people, also called Gentiles, can become believers. When that number of the gentiles who became believers is full and going into the Kingdom of God, God will fulfill his prophecies about Israel and Judah.

After Jesus died and was resurrected God almost stopped all of his acting with Israel. This is a time of approximately 2000 years. This is the time we are living in now. This is the time all people, also called Gentiles, can become believers. When that number of gentiles who become believers and will be going into the Kingdom of God is fulfilled, God will fulfil his prophecies about Israel and Judah. After the holy city Jerusalem has been attacked all the Israelites will be coming to the land of Israel.

All parables that speak about the kingdom of God are speaking about that time. That time, which is also called the millennium, will be a time of 1000 years of

peace. Jesus Christ will reign from the throne of his father David. And all of those who are resurrected in the first resurrection and all believers who are changed at that same time will be kings in that Kingdom.

But before this happens we will see Jesus return to this earth. Before He was born, the angel Gabriel told Mary: *He will be great and called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of*

his father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; his kingdom will never end. (Luke 1:32-33).

Jesus went out and told everyone the gospel of the Kingdom of God. He used parables to explain the things of the Kingdom.

At that time it was theoretically possible for the Jews to accept Jesus as their Messiah. But they didn't and because of their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. (Romans 11:11).

Salvation from **eternal death**.

14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. 16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. (John 3:14-18, NIV).

This gospel of the name of Jesus must be preached all over the world, but if we want to show the whole picture of God's wonderful plan we have to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God as well. Then people will understand why Jesus had to come to the earth and die. He did this to make it possible for God's plan to be fulfilled. God wants sons to be heirs in his Kingdom. The only way to become an heir is through Jesus.

So salvation came to us who are the Gentiles We're grafted into the cultivated olive tree, which is Israel. (Romans 11:17-20). God knew it beforehand and that is why Paul wrote to the Ephesians:
In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ.
(Ephesians 1:5).

That was a mystery until Jesus died and rose from the grave. *6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.* (Ephesians 3:6, NIV).

We, who became believers, are sons of God. God gave us His Spirit, *Who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance*
(Ephesians 1:13-14)
Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God....Now if we are children, then we are heirs - heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ....
(Romans 8:14-17).

This Kingdom of God will be established on earth. To make it possible to establish this Kingdom the ruler of this earth, Satan, had to be conquered. Satan tried to seduce Jesus to get the power the easy way. *5 The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. 7 So if you worship me, it will all be yours."*
(Luke 4:5-7, NIV).

Remember Adam gave his authority to the devil. Now the devil tried to get what he always wanted, to be more than God. Jesus only answered: *It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only'.* (8).

God had a better plan. *8 None of the rulers of this age (the devil and his king-demons) understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*
(1 Corinthians 2:8, NIV).

When Jesus died it was D-day (decision day), but the enemy was still there. Jesus dethroned the devil, but he is not yet captured.
(Hebrew 2:14- 15).

The devil is dethroned, but still prowls around like a roaring lion. In the Old Testament and in the New Testament it is clear the powers of darkness and the heavenly armies are making war. If you want to know more about it read Daniel 10.

We Christians are also involved. We are sons of God and have his Spirit, so the devil and his demons are against us as well. That's why we have the full armor of God.

Paul says *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*
(Ephesians 6:10-12).

We can take our stand against the devil through the power of the Holy Spirit and the sword Jesus used against the devil, the Word of God, the bible. We believe Jesus will be coming back soon. And *Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, 2 not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come.*

3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. 4 He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.
(2 Thessalonians 2:1-4, NIV).

Before the day Jesus comes back the son of the devil, the man of lawlessness, will reveal himself. He will set himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. Like father, like son. Jesus will overthrow him with the breath of his mouth and he will be destroyed by the splendor of Jesus' coming.

All believers who died in Christ will be resurrected and the believers who are still alive at that time will be changed and we will all meet our Lord in the air. What a wonderful time that will be. Then Jesus will sit on his throne and will reign together with all the saints over this earth for a thousand years. The devil will be bound for this thousand years. After the thousand years he will be released from his prison and he will go out to deceive the nations. Again the nations will come to the city of Jerusalem to fight.

They will surround the camp of God's people, the city He loves. They will not succeed. The devil will be thrown into the lake of burning sulphur.

(Revelation 20:7-10).

All believers who died in Christ will be resurrected and the believers who are still alive at that time are changed and we all will meet our Lord in the air. What a wonderful time will that be.

After that the great white throne will be seen. Books are opened and everyone who was not resurrected 1000 years earlier will be resurrected at that time. They will be judged by what is written in the books, by their deeds. The ones who lived according to God's will will enter eternal life.

To understand what deeds, see Matthew 25:31-46.

Finally Jesus will *hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.*

26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For he "has put everything under his feet". Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. 28 When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

(1 Corinthians 15:24-28, NIV).

A new heaven and a new earth will be created. The Holy City, the New Jerusalem, will come down from heaven and God will live with his people for ever.