



Research article

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REVEALING THE KINGDOM: AN EXAMINATION OF JESUS' ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

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ABSTRACT



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This paper argues that in Matthew's Gospel Jesus is portrayed through his miracles, parables, and teachings to be the promised servant of YHWH in Isaiah 61. This paper will explore Matthew's use of his source material to highlight Jesus' role as the representative of YHWH and mediator of the Covenant. This paper will conclude that Jesus's miracles and teachings demonstrate the "first fruits" of the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven. Finally, the paper will demonstrate that Jesus's teaching explores the "already but not yet" tensions present in the prophecies of Messiah as the servant of YHWH which will only be realized in the eschaton.

Keywords:

Matthew's Gospel, Isaiah 61, YHWH, Messiah, Prophecies.



1. The Old in the New Revealed: Foundations of the Kingdom

This paper will examine several elements of the Kingdom of God as presented in Matthew's gospel. Both the nature and scope of the Kingdom of God as proclaimed by John and Jesus in Matthew. Emphasis will be given to which aspects of the kingdom promises in Isaiah were accomplished in Jesus' earthly ministry and which remains to be established in the eschaton. I will begin by discussing the Old Testament basis for the proclamations of Jesus and John and proceed to talk about the unique role of both miracles and parables in this proclamation within the book of Matthew.

1.1 Old Testament Antecedents for John and Jesus' Message of the Kingdom Matthew 3:2, 4:17

John's proclamation of the Kingdom of God in Matt 3:2-3 anchor the message of the Old Testament prophets. In Matthew the terms the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven seems to be used somewhat interchangeably¹ to refer not only to the reality of God's rule over the nation of Israel and the world at large, but also to the promised coming of the Servant of YHWH to establish this rule upon the earth as proclaimed by Isaiah in chapters 40, 42 and 61. Jesus demonstrates himself as the servant in Isaiah 61 throughout his ministry, in Matthew his credentials are rooted in the eternal kingship of YHWH and this is demonstrated through miracles. It is through miracles, in Matthew, that Jesus verifies his role as the mitigated agent of the covenant in Isaiah 42 and the servant of Isaiah 61. As I will discuss below Jesus in the triumphal entry claims to be the promised Davidic king of Zechariah 9, but his authority as this king will be rooted in YHWH's authority over the nations. Though YHWH's authority over the nations is a common theme in the Old Testament, it is a major theme in the book of Daniel. Daniel at several points connects this authoritative rule with miracles. For example, Daniel chapters 2 through 7 show God's authoritative rule over the kingdoms of the world as shown by his demonstrated superiority over three world rulers: Nebuchadnezzar, whom he struck with boanthropy, Belshazzar, whom he overthrew by

¹ I say somewhat interchangeably because, as Luz notes, there could be a slight difference in emphasis between the two terms but it is unlikely that they have a marked difference in the theology of the book. Ulrich Luz, James E. Crouch, and Helmut Koester, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 153.



invasion, and Darius, who YHWH thwarts in saving Daniel from the lions.² Then, in Daniel 7, is Daniel's vision of the four beasts, which demonstrates not only YHWH's foreordination of world political systems but also his authority over them. The quintessential statement in Daniel for understanding of the connection of YHWH's eternal rule and miraculous signs is Darius' proclamation in Daniel 6:26-7,

Daniel 6:25–27 (NET)

^{6:25} Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and language groups who were living in all the land: “Peace and prosperity! ^{6:26} I have issued an edict that throughout all the dominion of my kingdom people are to revere and fear the God of Daniel.

“For he is the living God;

he endures forever.

His kingdom will not be destroyed;

his authority is forever.

^{6:27} He rescues and delivers

and performs signs and wonders

in the heavens and on the earth.

He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions!”

This statement of YHWH's authority and power not only over the Jewish nation but over all the people of the earth is foundational to Matthew's presentation of the message of Jesus and John. Upon this foundation is John's message of repentance, which is also shown by Matthew to be a fulfillment in of Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 40:3 concerning the establishment of the reign of God on the earth. By referencing this passage in Isaiah, Matthew is invoking the near fulfillment of the promised nearness of God in the passage. The

² Joel B. Green, “Kingdom of God/Heaven,” ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, *IVP Bible dictionary series*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 473.



Evangelist will flesh out this kingdom proclamation throughout his gospel. In Isaiah 40, God is pictured not aloof but coming as a victorious warrior (40:10), a shepherd (40:11), and being present among his people (40:9). Because both in Daniel and Isaiah the proper response to God's eternal kingship is repentance and humility. The eternal reign of YHWH also forms a portion of the basis of the moral repentance called for in Jesus' and John's proclamation.

An overarching theme in the book of Daniel is recognition of the reign and authority of YHWH over the nations through repentance in humility and recognition of this authority. In Daniel, both Nebuchadnezzar and Darius demonstrated this recognition, yet Belteshazzar, who rejects and even mocks YHWH's reign by using YHWH's sacred objects of worship for feasting in honor of pagan gods, was overcome in divine judgment. Thus the book of Daniel urges the reader to respond to YHWH's authority in acknowledgment and repentance.³

Similarly, Isaiah's prophecy is given in the context of assurance for Hezekiah that, despite the coming discipline of his line because of his pride in seeking honor for himself by demonstrating his wealth in front of the Babylonian messengers, YHWH would provide a time of eschatological peace for the nation where warfare would cease and that YHWH would visit his people and be among them. This, according to Isaiah's prophecy, will follow the preparatory work of a messenger urging the nation to prepare for YHWH's coming (Isa 40:3-4). This preparatory work is described as preparing a road. This road is to benefit the coming of YHWH as a king, leveled and prepared for his arrival. This road metaphor refers to an attitude of reception for the king of moral preparation for his coming.

In Matthew, both John's ministry⁴ (Matt 3:2-3) of the kingdom and required preparatory repentance and Jesus's message (Matt 4:17) are based on this stream of Old Testament theological thought. Both Jesus and John are proclaiming that the time when God is going to come near as proclaimed in Isaiah 40 is approaching and that moral repentance is required to escape eschatological judgement.

³ This theme of repentance in Daniel flows from Nebuchadnezzar's repentance and restoration and juxtaposed to Belteshazzar who is destroyed. The message presented is that even world rulers who do not heed the will of YHWH undergo his judgement.

⁴ Another aspect of Matthew's presentation of John is his pedigree as a prophet not only from Isaiah 40:3 but also from allusion to him which reflect description of Elijah in 2 Kings. Luz, Crouch, and Koester, *Matthew 1-7*, 137.



However, as the gospel of Matthew proceeds this eternal kingship of YHWH is further clarified by the identification of Jesus by Matthew with both the servant of Isaiah 61 and the Davidic king of Zechariah 9. So, while the eternal reign of YHWH is the starting point, Matthew will end with the theme of the mitigated reign of YHWH through Jesus as the promised Davidic king and servant of YHWH who is the covenant mitigator. From the end of the book of Matthew looking back, it is clear that Jesus proclaims both the eternal kingship of God as described in Daniel and YHWH's coming among his people promised in Isaiah 40, but also that Jesus is YHWH's representative, the servant of Isaiah 61 and one who will be the mediator of YHWH's kingdom when his kingdom comes with fulness on the earth.

1.2 A Universal Kingdom or a Mediated Kingdom on Earth?

Though different theologians use different terminology and definitions for these concepts, the categories of God's universal kingdom and God's mediated kingdom are straightforward. God's universal kingdom is God's eternal rulership over all his creation.⁵ The mediated Kingdom is the concept that this eternal rule of God is mediated on earth through a human agent (e.g. the priesthood, the Davidic king, the Messianic king). Regarding the proclamations of Jesus and John, the question is whether they are announcing simply that God's eternal kingship warranted the people's repentance, or that the agent of his rule predicted in the prophets was about to come as a mediator of the covenant signaling the arrival of the eschatological blessings and curses of the prophets. The agent would be the servant of God according to Isaiah 61; the re-established Davidic king. Matthew clearly considers Jesus to be both the servant of God in Isaiah 61 and the promised Davidic heir. Matthew more than any other evangelist presents Jesus as the Son of David, a title reflecting Matthew's emphasis of Jesus' status as the rightful Davidic king.⁶ This presentation in Matthew as the legitimate Davidic king is bolstered by his presentation of the triumphal entry and quotation of Zechariah 9:9. A peak of literary irony is reached in chapter 27 as having been rejected by the nation as its king and handed over to be crucified, the Roman official, a gentile, makes a public proclamation of Jesus kingship over the nation through the sign hung

⁵ Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: BridgePoint, 2000).

⁶ Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Title 'Son of David' in Matthew's Gospel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95, no. 4 (1976): 596.



over his cross (Matt 27:37). The subtext is clear, even the gentile invaders accepted his kingship, yet the nation rejected him.

Regarding the prophecy given in Isaiah 40, I believe there is an element of blurring between the universal reign of God and a coming restoration of God's reign through the Davidic king. There is also an eschatological element to this passage. The eschatological motif in Isaiah often links future blessings on the faithful with future judgments on the wicked. This idea is the concept of the Day of the Lord in which YHWH will mete out restoration to the righteous and judgment to the wicked.

While the message of Jesus from the start was that he was the covenant mediator promised and that he was there to establish the kingdom, there is a decided tension in Jesus' proclamations in Matthew between the current and future aspects of the kingdom. I think it is reductionistic to see a need for all the promises to arrive at the same time. The eschatological nature of Isaiah's prophecy makes it more plausible that there are different aspects to be fulfilled at different times because prophecy often conflates different time periods.⁷ This seems to be Matthew's thesis throughout several parts of the book and Jesus's discussion and parables recorded in the book.

I believe that from Matthew's point of view the Kingdom, as proclaimed by Jesus and John, is both God's universal kingdom, that of his rulership over all creation, and the promised of the mediated kingdom in the restoration of the Davidic King.⁸ Matthew takes great pains to connect Jesus with the Davidic dynasty in the genealogy of chapter 1. I think it is likely that, in John the Baptist's mind, this was both the mediated and universal kingdom together as the two are blurred in Isaiah 40. I think this perspective on John is validated by his doubts during imprisonment as to whether Jesus was really the promised mediator. This doubt was based on the fact that Jesus did not secure John's release from political imprisonment, in essence not setting John a captive free when Messiah was promised to set the captives free. John may have assumed that, since Jesus was the one coming as said to Hezekiah by Isaiah, the fulfillment of all of Isaiah 40's prophecy was imminent. However,

⁷ A well-known example of this argument is the prophecy of the child Immanuel in Isaiah 7:14 and its proposed double fulfillment in both the time of Isaiah and the time of Jesus.



Matthew himself finished his book with the command to proclaim the Kingdom to the whole world. This proclamation according to Jesus in Matthew (24:14) must come before the eschatological aspects of the Isaiah prophecies and the full establishment of the kingdom.

1.3 The Kingdom at Hand Matthew 3:2, 4:17

That phrase “at hand” idiomatically means that there is imminence to the fulfillment of the coming of God among his people foretold in Isaiah 40 and 61. The nearness of the coming of the Kingdom is, in John’s view, the motivational force for repentance. The prophecies in both Isaiah 40 and 61 regarding the coming of YHWH among his people contain elements referring to the judgment of wickedness, both John and Jesus are urging repentance so that those they are speaking to might avoid that judgment. The nearness of the Kingdom and its king is the motivation for repentance.

2. First Fruits: Miracles and Parables Demonstrating the Kingdom

2.1 The Relationship Between “the Gospel of the Kingdom” and the Miracles Jesus Performed (Matthew 4:23-25)

Christ’s miracles were powerful proofs of him as an authentic representative of YHWH who proclaims the kingdom. As stated above, Darius’ proclamation in Daniel 6 is a testament to the nature of God’s eternal kingship and its signs. In particular, signs and wonders are a powerful demonstration of God’s kingship and authority. This is seen in Daniel 6:27 (NET), “He rescues and delivers and performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions!” Not only is there a connection of supernatural signs with the eternal reign of God but also with the coming of the YHWH in Isaiah 35:4-6 (NET)

35:4 Tell those who panic, “Be strong! Do not fear! Look, your God comes to avenge! With divine retribution he comes to deliver you.” 35:5 Then blind eyes will open; deaf ears will hear. 35:6 Then the lame will leap like a deer, the mute tongue will shout for joy; for water will flow in the desert, streams in the wilderness.”



Jesus' ministry of miraculous healing was a direct indicator of the coming of YHWH to be among his people in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies. Matthew carries this theme of the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies through miraculous healing throughout the book. Perhaps the most explicit reference is in Matthew 12 with Matthew's lengthy quotation of Isaiah 42:1-4. This quotation by Matthew invokes the content of Isaiah's whole oracle in Isaiah 42. Considering that this quotation is bracketed on either side by miraculous healings of the withered hand and the demon-possessed deaf-mute the rest of the oracle is particularly illuminating, particularly Isaiah 42:6,

42:6 "I, the Lord, officially commission you;

I take hold of your hand.

I protect you and make you a covenant mediator for people,

and a light to the nations,

42:7 to open blind eyes,

to release prisoners from dungeons,

those who live in darkness from prisons.

Considering Jesus himself regards the healing of the demon possessed man as an act of freeing (carrying off what once belonged to the enemy in Matthew 12:29) it is not reading too much into Matthew's reference of this passage to assume that he is attempting to portray Jesus as the Servant, the appointed covenant mediator who draws miraculous power from YHWH as his agent.



2.2 The Prayer of Jesus Contributes to our Understanding Matthew 6:10

The statements in the LORD's prayer in Matthew 6:10 (NET) "may your kingdom come, may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," relate to the eager expectancy of Jesus' followers. This eager expectancy is for the total fulfillment of the kingdom promises given in the prophets. For example, Isaiah 61 promises eschatological blessing and restoration of the rule of God not only spiritually but also tangibly in the world political system; a time when the eternal reality of YHWH's rule over creation is reflected in every aspect of physical existence and rebellion against his rule is finally crushed.⁹ As stated above, there is tension in Matthew's presentation of the Kingdom which many have deemed the "already but not yet" status of the kingdom."¹⁰ While some aspects of the kingdom have come, such as God coming to be with his people in the incarnation and demonstrating his divine power in miraculous signs, the full restoration of the rule of YHWH upon earth through Jesus as his agent is not recorded in Matthew and has not yet come to pass. Instead, Matthew finishes much as it began, with a call to the continued proclamation of the coming kingdom and the king who has come and will come again.

2.3 The Religious Leadership and Jesus' Healing of the Demon-Possessed, Blind, and Mute Matthew 12:22-24

The religious leadership of the nation in 12:22-24 responds to Jesus's miraculous healing of a demon-possessed man with suspicion and false accusations. The charge they bring against him is that it is by the power of the enemy, Satan, that he can order these spirits to leave. In other words, they accuse him of practicing sorcery. As discussed above, this account is preceded by a quotation from Isaiah 42, in which Matthew identifies Jesus as the servant who is commissioned with YHWH's power. Matthew demonstrates this rejection of Jesus's healing power as the power of YHWH over the demonic to be abhorrent. He portrays the leaders as rejecting clear evidence of the coming of the Kingdom, not only refusing to accept

⁹ Matthew does not recount the Lukan account of Jesus reading Isaiah 61 and interpreting the first one and a half verses as being fulfilled. Though this does not bear directly on Matthew's presentation of the kingdom, it is helpful to note that Jesus seems to indicate a partial fulfilment of Isaiah 61 by stopping in the middle of a strophe before the pronouncement of judgement. Many take this to indicate Jesus himself indicating that the Isaiah 61 passage encompassed more promises than were to be fulfilled in the first coming. This would mean that the remaining promises of Isaiah 61 are still to be fulfilled.

¹⁰ George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1959), 73.



the proof before them of the pedigree of Jesus's authority but even going a step further to attribute miraculous signs to the enemy in an attempt to discredit Jesus. They are hardening their hearts against the servant YHWH has sent.

2.4 The Meaning of Jesus's Statement, "surely the Kingdom of God has come upon you" Matthew 12:28

Jesus challenges the leader's rejection of him with the statement that it is ludicrous to think that demonic forces would cast out their own. He also makes the statement that if he casts out demons by the Spirit of God (and he did) then the kingdom has come. So, in Matthew Jesus himself considered the Kingdom of God (the mediated kingdom with himself as the mediator) to have come as evidenced by signs of God's eternal kingdom.

2.5 The Clarity of a Parable and the Unpardonable Sin Matthew 12:39-37

The parable in 12:29-20 clarifies that Satan has already been shown to be inferior in power to Jesus through the temptation of Jesus. Jesus' rejection of the tempting power and lies of Satan gagged this enemy and demonstrated that the demonic is no match for YHWH's servant. The parable also clarifies that those who do not side with Jesus as the servant of Isaiah's prophecy are rejecting him as the covenant mediator who has been sent, as the servant is described in Isaiah 42:6. The leaders are placing themselves on the side the Satan and rejecting this mediator. Therefore, there is no mediation for them before YHWH because they have sided with YHWH's enemies and rejected the road for mediation YHWH has provided. This is truly the unpardonable sin because they are rejecting the road by which to seek pardon. Those who reject Christ will not be pardoned because he is the only means to pardon. It is not necessarily that those who reject Christ cannot by God's will turn from this rejection to acceptance, but that purification from sin and acceptance before YHWH cannot be found outside of the appointed mediator.

2.6 The Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven Matthew 13:1-51

The mysteries of the kingdom as told in the parables of Matthew 13 are three-fold. First, there is an element of maturation to the Kingdom between its establishment and its full manifestation. This is seen in the repeated references in parable to the growth of the kingdom, likening it to the growth of planted seeds (13:3-9;24-20) and yeast (13:33). Second, the Kingdom is worth everything one must forsake to possess it. This is seen in the parable of the



treasure in a field (13:44) and the costly pearl (13:45-6). Third, in the fullness of the kingdom, there will be a separation between those who belong in the Kingdom and those who do not. This is seen in the parable of the weeds (13:24-30) and the parable of the Sower (13:18-23).

The concept of the Kingdom is developed in Matthew 13 to be more nuanced than the simple pronouncement of chapters 3 and 4. The nuances, as I stated above, involve the idea of growth and maturation. While the proclamation of the kingdom by John and Jesus in chapters 3-4 could seem to be a flattened proclamation of the kingdom, I believe that Matthew's understanding of Jesus' message is more sophisticated. Through the selection of these parables, Matthew highlights the kingdom as something that will start small, as shown in the parable of the mustard seed, and get bigger. This is in line with the "already but not yet" nature of the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy I stated above. The Kingdom is clearly present in the ministry of Jesus in Matthew, yet, according to the parables of chapter 13, more of its fulness remains to come in its maturation.

3. The King Returns: Anticipating the Kingdom

3.1 Jesus' Announcement of the Son of Man Coming into His Kingdom Matthew 16:28

This proclamation of Jesus sheds light on Jesus' perspective of the coming of the Kingdom as given by Matthew. Jesus says that it will be in the lifetime of some of those present for his proclamation. It is here again where I think we see a nuanced difference between the establishment and the total fulfillment of the promised Kingdom of God on earth. By the end of Matthew's gospel, Jesus will come fully into his role of mediation through death and resurrection as the promised covenant mediator of Isaiah 42. Jesus will also fully receive authority as the Messianic king as indicated in his statement in Matthew 28:18.¹¹ It is based on this received authority that Jesus sends his followers out to proclaim the gospel. This gospel is that he, as the promised king and mediator, has come into his kingdom, a kingdom the disciples are to expand through discipling others and baptizing them into it. Therefore, what Christ is indicating in his statement in 16:28 about some present not

¹¹ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2007), 640-1.



seeing death, is that the mediated kingdom and its king Jesus as the covenant mediator, the servant of YHWH, will be established in their lifetime and the king will receive his authority. However, there is still a proclamation of this kingdom to be accomplished before the rest of the prophecy of Isaiah 61 is to come. So, the kingdom is established in the lifetime of those hearing but will, in the future, be fuller than it is at the close of Matthew.

3.2. The Transfiguration as First-Fruits Matthew 17:1-21

The transfiguration, as described in Matthew 17:1-13, is a foretaste of Jesus' true nature as the king. His kingship and role as covenant mediator will be established through the crucifixion and resurrection, but here Matthew allows the reader to glimpse Jesus' supernatural identity and divine status in his supernaturally transformed appearance and his conversation with the two figures. These figures are Moses, the one who received the covenant from YHWH on behalf of the nation, and Elijah, who defended the covenant in the face of idolatry. In 17:14-21, Jesus starts broadening his disciples' understanding of himself as covenant mediator and the fact that that political conquest is not his current path as the servant of YHWH. As the mediator, Jesus must undergo crucifixion. The path to come into his kingdom leads through the cross and not political rebellion. Chapter 17 continues to expand Matthew's presentation of a kingdom with complexity; that the full establishment is not flattened into a single event but will be accomplished over a period of growth.

3.3. The Meaning of the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem Matthew 21:1-11

Matthew presents Jesus in chapter 21 as orchestrating his entry into Jerusalem by sending his disciples to fetch a donkey for him to ride. This triumphal entry into Jerusalem is designed by Jesus to fulfill prophecy. Matthew, in describing it, connects it with the prophecy given in Zechariah 9:9 regarding the Davidic king coming by riding a donkey. By identifying himself with this prophecy, Jesus is claiming he is the fulfillment of that prophecy, the promised reestablishment of the Davidic line of kings.

3.4. The Disciples' Questions and the Coming of the Kingdom Matthew 24:1-3

The disciples' questions to Jesus in Matthew 24:1-3 relate to the eschatological elements of the promised establishment of the Kingdom of God in Isaiah 40 and 61. These elements are the political restoration of the Nation and the establishment of God's reign upon the earth



through the reestablishment of the Davidic kingship. The disciples are asking when Jesus will fulfill the remainder of the prophecies since he has yet fulfilled only a portion of them. Jesus responds in 24:14 that the good news about the establishment of God's rule upon earth must be preached throughout the world before the prophecies will be fully completed.

3.5 Miracles and the Gospel of the Kingdom Matthew 24:14

The gospel of the kingdom is the proclamation to the world of two key elements. The first is the eternal kingship of YHWH as creator and sustainer, a fact which was and is yet still unknown in parts of the world. The second element is the mediated rule of YHWH through Jesus as the king, son of God, and the one who is the mediator between God and humanity. I believe that in the book of Matthew this gospel message draws on miracles for verification that it is from God. Chief among these miracles is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead whereby Jesus is confirmed to be the Son of God. This gospel in the book of Acts goes on to continue to be established through miracles (e.g. the healing of the man at the temple gate in Acts 3:1-16). It continues to be confirmed by divine supernatural power in the modern era as attested by the accounts of the global Church who have seen miraculous healings accompany faith in places where the good news of the kingdom is being preached.

Four Parables Revealing the Kingdom Matthew 24:45 -25:46

These four parables expand the concept of the kingdom as Matthew presents it. The biggest emphasis in these parables is that the eschatological aspects of the promised kingdom will come at an unknown time. Though Jesus provides indicators in Chapter 24 of what events will characterize the time of his return, he is not specific as to the exact time of his return. This unknowability of the time of Jesus' return is emphasized by the parables in 24:24-23-46. In each one there is an element of being caught unaware by the return of a person with authority. The emphasis in each one is slightly different in its warnings to those who wait for the return. The emphasis of the first is faithfulness in conduct (parable of the slaves in 24:45-51), the second is being filled with the spirit of God and ready for his return (25:1-12), the third being faithful in the stewardship of entrusted resources while the master is away (parable of the talents. 25:14-31), and the fourth is a repetition of the separation of the wicked from the righteous in the Messiah's return (parable of the sheep and the goats. 25:32-46). Each presents the unknowable hour of the Messiah's return. Each one emphasizes



the importance of faithful action in the interim. These parables underscore not only that the hour of complete fulfillment of Messianic prophecy cannot be known by humanity, but that humanity is responsible for faithfulness to God in the interim.

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