

Biblical Studies about the Kingdom of Heaven based on the Gospel of Matthew and Its Implication at Borneo Evangelical Mission (BEM) Miri Sarawak Church


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ABSTRACT

The news about the Kingdom of Heaven is the central news in the preaching of Jesus during His life, specifically based on the Gospel of Matthew. The Lord Jesus always preached the news about the Kingdom of Heaven because the news carried by Jesus was not only limited to political or geographical dimensions but also spiritual. The preaching of Jesus about the Kingdom of Heaven brings about an important message, specifically concerning the restoration of the relationship between humans and God. However, this news or preaching seems to be hidden and veiled. Even the values of the Kingdom of Heaven are increasingly unidentified in the form of church service and ministry because the news about the Kingdom of God is less voiced out and disseminated. Based on this, a theological study is very important and necessary to discuss Jesus's news about the Kingdom of Heaven, which can be implied in the Borneo Evangelical Mission church today. The methods used in this study are qualitative research and literature study. Through this study, it can be concluded that the News of Jesus about the Kingdom of Heaven can be implied and applied in the BEM Miri Sarawak church. First, Jesus prioritizes changes of heart and repentance as basic teachings of the Kingdom of Heaven. Second, Jesus emphasized the High Moral Teachings and Ethical Values in the expression of "Blessed or Beatitude" about the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 5: 3–12). Third, Jesus proclaimed Unconditional Love as a basic principle in the Kingdom of Heaven. Fourth, Jesus taught about His Power as evidence of the Presence of the Kingdom of Heaven. Fifth, the Secret of the Kingdom of Heaven is revealed in the form of Parables.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As the title of this article suggests, it is a Theological Study of Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom of Heaven based on the Gospel of Matthew (Daliman & Suparti, 2021). The term "Kingdom of Heaven" in the Gospel of Matthew is the central theme in Preaching Jesus Christ while He was on earth. Because the concept of the Kingdom of Heaven promoted by Jesus is not only limited to political or geographical dimensions but is also spiritual (Coetzee *et al.*, 2023). In Jesus' preaching about the Kingdom of Heaven, he conveys a message about how important it is to restore the relationship between humans and God, which is why Jesus emphasized that the theme "The Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God" can provide a teaching subject that includes spiritual, ethical and social dimensions that can be used as a basis for his followers. Him to live according to God's will (Andrian, 2020).

The idea of the Kingdom of God has existed since the Old Testament, which is the basis for the belief that only one God reveals Himself to humans and has a plan that His people will carry out His Plan through the nation of Israel. For the Israelites, the meaning of the Kingdom of God is very inherent in



their faith, so the prophets always preach the presence of the Kingdom of God in this world (Hornby, 2005). It even exists in Jewish tradition because many prophecies in the Old Testament Bible talk about the coming of the Messiah King and His Kingdom (Purwisasi et al., 2022).

As stated by George Landers who said, “The Kingdom of Heaven, according to Jewish tradition, contains Messianic and Eschatological hopes because, for them, the coming reign of God is to restore Israel because God himself has determined that the line of David will bring peace and justice and the hope of the coming of the Kingdom of God is fulfilled through the Coming of Jesus Christ” (Landes & Holladay, 1973). In the New Testament, the topic of the Kingdom of God is taught by Jesus very consistently so that it can be used as the Actualization of the Church’s Mission, where “the mission of the church is an interactive process that should be used as an implementer of totality in the kingdom of God.” In this case, the church, as an agent and witness of the Kingdom of God, is called to demonstrate the totality of His Kingdom in the context of space and time. Therefore, the concept of the Kingdom of Heaven preached by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew is very appropriate to be applied in the Theological Context, but in fact, why is the news about the Kingdom of God less emphasized in the news and its dissemination in church services.

On the other hand, understanding the concept of the Kingdom of God is also influenced by the theological background, education, and personal experience of the servants of God who are His instruments, so they are less interested in discussing the topic (Andrian, 2020). However, it must be realized that the concept of the Kingdom of God is indeed too complex and abstract to be discussed and studied, considering the diversity of theologies and different denominations, the news about the Kingdom of God has led to many debates from century to century. However, this concept is very important to be applied in the theological context today (Kaariainen, 2023).

Thus, this scientific work aims to explain Jesus’ news about the Kingdom of Heaven. What are the characteristics of the News of the Kingdom of Heaven? And finally, what are the Implications of Jesus’ News about the Kingdom of Heaven for the servants at the BEM Miri Sarawak church?

2. METHOD

The methods and approaches used in this study are qualitative research methods (Moleong, 2012) and literature studies to analyze matters related to the Kingdom of Heaven in the Preaching of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, thus revealing deep theological meaning.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Definition of Terms

First, the term study is the result of the study activity. Studying itself can be understood as an effort to study, examine, investigate, test, and examine a particular subject (Larkin, 2009).

Second, the term Theology comes from the Greek θεός, *theos*, which means God”, and λογία, *logia*, can be interpreted as “words,” “utterance,” or “discourse” or sometimes called religious knowledge is a discourse which means the science that studies everything related to religious beliefs or knowledge about God (Stokes, 2016).

Third, the word “reporting” comes from the word “news,” which in general can be interpreted as a process or method, the act of reporting or conveying information¹. The word “Proclamation” in Greek is used with the word κερύσσω or *kerusso*, which is usually translated as “to proclaim,” to proclaim (as public proclamation), to make an announcement as a spokesman, to be a spokesman, or to serve as a spokesman, and to call out (Ryken & Longman, 1993). So, the word *kerusso* is usually used to announce and publicize the divine truth, namely the Gospel, by preaching.

Fourth, the words “Kingdom of Heaven or Kingdom of God” are written in Greek with the words *basileia (basileia) tou (tou) Teou* (Teon) or *Basileia (basileia) ton (ton) ouranon (ouranon)*, which means “Kingdom of Heaven,” has the same idea as “Kingdom of God” (Ryken & Longman, 1993). The Gospel of Matthew uses the term “Kingdom of Heaven” as a direct substitute for “Kingdom of God.” This is due to Jewish cultural sensitivity to the direct pronunciation of God’s name. The term “Kingdom of God” indicates the authority of God’s government, both in Heaven and on earth. When the “Kingdom of Heaven” declares the residence and reign of God in Heaven, it comes to earth through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns spiritually in the lives of those who believe (Fendy et al., 2024).

Fifth, the word “servant” here means “servants or servants” who are willing to serve themselves to God. The word “servant” in Greek is used with the word “*doulos*.” Literally, the Greek word “*Doulos*” is translated as “servant” or “servant,” which is the same in Hebrew as the word “Eved,” which means

¹ The meaning of the word “Pemberitaan” according to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) Online/Online Dictionary (Online), accessed April 07, 2024.

“to dedicate oneself to others,” for example, to someone with a higher status or position (Siahaan et al., 2022).

Sixth, the Borneo Evangelical Mission Church (BEM) Sarawak is an Evangelical Protestant Church institution in East Malaysia. Organizationally, it was established on November 12, 1928, in Kuching Sarawak by three missionaries from Australia, where in the subsequent development, the Borneo Evangelical Mission church finally had Headquarters and synod in Miri Sarawak.

3.2. Characteristics of Jesus' Preaching about the Kingdom of Heaven

In this section, there are 5 characteristics stated by researchers as Jesus' preaching about the Kingdom of Heaven based on the Gospel of Matthew, including the following.

3.2.1. Jesus Prioritized Change of Heart and Repentance as a Basic Teaching of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 4:17)

The teachings that Jesus prioritized most in His preaching about the Kingdom of Heaven were repentance and a change of heart. Matthew 4:17 says that from then on, Jesus preached: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” This section is the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. In this case, Jesus' preaching repeats John's message about repentance (Matthew 3:2). John the Baptist served around the southern area while Jesus' ministry was in the northern part, namely from Nazareth to Capernaum.

So what exactly is meant by: “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near”? The Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven is near here, which states that the Lord Jesus Himself is the ruler of the Kingdom of Heaven, and when His Power is revealed, then at that time, the “Kingdom of Heaven” is present. In this case, the orientation of repentance and change of heart becomes a basic teaching for the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Heaven. That is why it is said to repent; the Kingdom of Heaven is near. In the Greek text for the word repent, two words are found: “metamelomai and metanoia.” Metamelomai means to regret (to repent oneself). Meanwhile, the word “Metanoia” means a change of mind. This word often indicates a person's repentance, marked by a change of mind. So, in this case, the word “repent” used in Matthew 4:17 means that a person needs to regret himself, leave sin, and change his mind to be better. To understand true repentance, “change must occur”; without that change, it cannot be said to have repented. That is why Rom 12:2 says: “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may discern what the will of God is, what is good and acceptable to God and perfect.” The word used to change is the word “Metamorphoo” or “Be Transformed,” which means change. The change that occurs “is more than or exceeds only external changes but a total change in its entirety (body, soul, and spirit), from the old man to the new (2 Cor 5:17). Of course, this is not a human effort to make changes but a divine work. So, people who repent should experience transformation (metamorphic or be transformed) and will also experience a renewal of mind or renewal of intellect (metanoia).²

The concept of repentance or change of heart, referred to as metanoia, reflects that faith and repentance involve a deeper transformation than just a change in external behavior but a change in character. Therefore, Matthew emphasizes that repentance and a change of heart and mind are at the heart of Jesus' message about the kingdom of heaven (Stevanus et al., 2023).

3.2.2. Jesus Emphasized High Moral Teachings and Ethical Values in the Expression of “Bliss” about the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 5: 3–12)

Jesus' preaching about the Kingdom of Heaven can be seen from the series composed or compiled of the Lord Jesus' sermon on the mount. These eight “expressions about being happy” describe the teachings of life that everyone should have as a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven.

In this section, the researcher only emphasizes the element of “happiness” stated in the Gospel of Matthew as something that needs to be possessed as a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven (Hewitt et al., 1976). The concept of happiness stated in this book is certainly different from happiness in general because happiness, in general, is a feeling and condition that is characterized by sufficiency, comfort, and satisfaction. The word “blessed” comes from the word “makarios,” which, when translated, means “blessed, happy, capable, fortunate, and sufficient” (Fitzmyer & Clines, 1996). So what is meant by the word happiness here according to the meaning of the word is a condition where someone experiences happiness not influenced by the situation or conditions they experience. But the element of “happiness” comes and originates from God. Even happiness describes the inner condition that a follower of Christ should have, which is not limited by any situation or condition whatsoever. So, God wants to show that happiness is not only the nature and behavior of happiness itself but is the basic nature of God's

² The word “μετάνοια–metanoia” appears in the NT approximately 58 times and is always translated “repent”; except in Luke 17:3 (regret) and Hebrews 12:17 (correcting mistakes). The basic meaning of the two words above is a change of heart, namely real repentance in thoughts, attitudes, views with a completely changed direction, turning from sin to God and devotion to Him. This is what is revealed in a person's character or behavior as an impact of the work of the Holy Spirit who regenerates that person. <https://www.sarapanagi.org/tobat-pertobat-vt1186.html> (Accessed November 2023).

goodness that believers should experience. In this case, William Barclay says: “Makarios or happiness expresses joy which contains a secret within itself (Barclay, 2016). This happiness is so deep that situations or conditions do not touch it.” So, this is the teaching about happiness that Jesus expressed in His sermon on the mount. Happiness that comes through suffering is possible, the joy that cannot be touched through sorrow, pain, and other forces. The joy and happiness Jesus provides can shine through tears, which cannot be taken away from humans even through death. This is the kind of happiness that Jesus expressed in His sermon on the hill in Matthew chapter five, an incomparable happiness. In this chapter, Jesus teaches ethical values as a high moral teaching and the basic principle of life for citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

To explain how important it is to have “happiness or Makarios,” then “happiness” must mark the nature and character of a person worthy of inheriting the Kingdom of Heaven. In this case, Leon Morris: “said that “those who have these qualities will enter the Kingdom, poor in spirit” (5:3), sorrowful (5:4), gentle (5:5), hungering and thirsting for righteousness (5:6), kind (5:7), pure in heart and peaceable (5:8–9), persecuted (5:10)” (Morris, 2001). Even the happiness taught by Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount requires ethical values and moral attitudes that the citizens of His kingdom should possess and have eternal impacts. So what kind of happiness should be possessed that can impact eternity? Augustine and Bonhoeffer, in their book, once said: “If you want to find happiness that does not depend on situations and conditions, then we must pursue it and find it in a permanent form.” He also provides a solution: “A happy life is nothing other than having perfect knowledge of God.” Thus, the solution that the researcher wants to put forward here is that permanent happiness can only be found in Christ Jesus. Thus, happiness can have an eternal impact.

3.2.3. *Unconditional Love is a Basic Principle in the Kingdom of Heaven*

Although there is nothing written in this verse about “Unconditional Love,” the narrative that Matthew reveals about love here is oriented towards “Unconditional Love”, namely about “the Father’s perfect love” (Matthew 5:48). The teaching pattern that Jesus taught about this love is so contrasting with the love that we find in the world. Jesus taught us to love enemies and pray for them as members of His kingdom. Do people who hurt and persecute us deserve “our love and prayers” (Ohnsorge & Ford, 2008)? Then what kind of love should be possessed by citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven? In this case, the Bible is always consistent in teaching the principle of love that must be realized in the life of every child in His Kingdom (Harianto et al., 2022).

The principles of the Bible do not just teach love as a desire for good deeds, but love and loving are decisions and actions based on standards that God has set. In Matthew 5: 43–44 which says: “You have heard it was said, love your neighbor, hate your enemy. But I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” A statement that contradicts what we do. But that is what Jesus taught as a basic principle in His Kingdom. Why must we love with this unconditional love? To understand the concept of unconditional love, we must first understand the words used about the word love here. The word used is the word “Agapaw or Agape.” This term is not foreign in Christianity because this agape love is the highest love referred to by the Bible. The love that humans have is limited, but “Agape Love” is that which comes from God, namely love that exceeds human strength, that is, unlimited love or unconditional love. Thus, only with “Agape Love” does love from God allow humans to love unconditionally.

Bulahar says: “If we love with Agape Love, it will lead us to love in difficult places.” This means that we continue to love even though the person we love is not worthy of being loved; that is unconditional love and Agape love that comes from the heart of the giver of love, namely the Lord Jesus Christ (Bulahar et al., 2024). Second, Agape Love can stimulate the process of transformation in humans. When someone feels “Unlimited love or unconditional love,” this is the true value of love that comes from God working in their lives and can change human life. Agape Love can change a person’s thinking patterns, attitudes, and actions so that they can forgive those who are guilty and who have wronged them while also enabling us to love and pray for them. Although the Source of “Agape Love” is God, He also wants humans to have it. That is why Jesus said in Matthew 5: 39–40: “Do not resist those who do you evil, but to anyone who slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other cheek also.” Agape Love enables us to say, “Lord, I forgive them. Rick Warren once said in his book: “There is no growth without change, and there is no change without loss, and there is no loss without pain and suffering.”. Agape Love is a love that makes many changes in human life. This Agape Love can only remain within us who have experienced Transformation in Christ Jesus. Agape Love is a transformational force that can change a person’s heart and life, bringing salvation and healing to humans. Indeed, humans need this Agape Love. The Bible gives many examples of how, when they experienced this “Agape Love,” their lives changed. Just mention the name of the Apostle Paul, a persecutor of the congregation and the most prominent writer in the New Testament. Because of Agape Love, Jesus changed the heart of Zacchaeus to experience transformation so that he was willing to give half of his wealth to the poor

(Luke 19: 1–10). Thus, this Agape Love needs to be proclaimed to everyone. This kind of love is what God wants in the life of His Kingdom.

Third, Agape Love can strengthen and heal. In addition to changing, Agape love can strengthen and heal humans. When humans experience agape love, which is unconditional love, they can experience freedom from sin and spiritual recovery. Several narratives in the Bible show that Agape love has an impact that can provide physical and emotional healing. Psalm 103: 2–3 says: “Praise the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all His goodness. He who forgives all your mistakes heals all your diseases.” In this case, King David expressed that God’s goodness and love could forgive and provide healing for his life. Even the Apostle Paul stated that the power of Agape love can provide calm and comfort amid difficulties (2 Corinthians 11: 23–31). Of course, the strength and comfort that Paul experienced when experiencing various suffering and persecution did not come from himself but the strength that came from love from God, namely Agape Love.

John Stott says in his book *Radical Disciple*: “Being a true disciple of Jesus involves living in agape love because it can affect how we relate to God and others. Because living in agape love can change a person’s character.” Thus, it can be concluded that “Agape love” is perfect love. Agape love is a love that every person needs to have, and unconditional love can change and enable one to forgive enemies and pray for their enemies. This love is the love that is the principle of life in the Kingdom of God.

3.2.4. *Jesus Taught His Power as Proof of the Presence of the Kingdom of Heaven*

In this section, the researcher will study several teachings of the Lord Jesus, who revealed Himself powerfully in all His works. Jesus wanted to state that His power is a sign of the presence of the Kingdom of Heaven. From chapters 8–10, there are several teachings of Jesus as signs and evidence of the presence of the Kingdom of Heaven through power, including Jesus’ teachings about evidence of the presence of the Kingdom of Heaven through the “Power of God” (Ming, 2022). Leprosy, paralysis, and fever were declared cured. In this case, Jesus not only gave signs of the power of His Power but also taught the values and principles of the Kingdom of Heaven, which include love, forgiveness, faith, and service to others. Several things can be learned here, namely about the power of Jesus to heal this disease, that we may understand so that the principles of the Kingdom of God are manifested in our lives as citizens of His Kingdom.

First, Jesus has power over all deadly diseases (Matthew 8:1–4). At that time, leprosy was a type of disease that could kill humans because this disease not only caused the sufferer to suffer physically but also psychologically. At that time, this disease was so frightening that it would cause the sufferer to be ostracized. Even leprosy sufferers were considered an unclean disease, and they had to wear torn clothes, their hair had to be left loose, and they had to shout with unclean words (Leviticus 13:44–46). This shout was a warning so that others would not approach him. As stated by van den End and Weijtens (1999), “the lepers suffer very badly, because the disease will gradually destroy their bodies, they will be isolated and thrown out by society.” Thus, Jesus wanted to declare and teach everyone that His power can cure all kinds of diseases, including deadly diseases. He gives power to the weak and gives life to the dead. So, the principle emphasized in this section is that everyone needs to believe in His power and not be afraid because nothing is impossible for Him.

Second, Jesus has Power over Nature (Matthew 8: 23–27). In this section, Jesus states that His power is not only in healing human diseases but also in gaining power over nature. Jesus has the power to calm the storm with His words. The lesson that needs to be understood through the event of Jesus calming the storm is that Jesus wants to show that His humanity is one with His Divinity. Therefore, Jesus uses the words “rebuked the winds and the sea” (verse 26). The word for rebuke is the word “*epitimaow*.” In English, the word “rebuked” is used.” which, if translated, means: “to rebuke, to forbid strictly, to warn and to punish.” This word is certainly used by a “Ruler who has power over all His creations.” That is why verse 27 says: “What kind of person is this that even the wind and the sea obey Him?” The Lord Jesus wanted to show everyone that Jesus had the power and authority as the ruler of the universe. In this case, John Stott also said, “One of the ways Jesus revealed His identity as the Son of God to His disciples was His action to show that He had the same power as God the Father. That is why Jesus, who stopped the storm, showed His sovereignty, so Jesus had to show that He was not an ordinary human being, but also had divine power.” If so, then His disciples and followers must realize that Jesus is the ruler who has power over all of His creation because everything is under His control, God. So, as citizens of His kingdom, humans need to know about this matter.

Third, Jesus has the power to forgive sinners (Matthew 9:1–8). In this chapter, Jesus ministers in His city, namely Capernaum. Through this healing incident carried out by Jesus, several spiritual principles can be used as lessons. As stated in Matt 9: 2, “So people brought a paralyzed man lying on his bed to Him. When Jesus saw their faith, He told the paralyzed man: “Believe, My child, your sins are forgiven.” The healing that Jesus carried out was more oriented towards healing the spiritual life of this paralyzed person. Why? It turns out that this paralyzed person was sick because of his sin, so Jesus

had to first express “forgiveness” to this paralyzed person. Although not all illnesses are caused by sin, in this case, Jesus stated, “Your sins are forgiven,” emphasizing that Jesus has the power to forgive human sins.

Fourth, Jesus also has the power to give new life (Matthew 9: 9–13). In this section, Jesus calls Matthew, a tax collector, to be His disciple. When Jesus said to Matthew: “Follow Me,” Matthew followed Him. What is the most basic thing to do in Matthew’s life? He will turn the harshest and most sinful people into “obedient.” This shows that the “Kingdom of Heaven” brings transformation and salvation to anyone who receives it. Jesus has the power to change every heart. Thus, Jesus’ call to Matthew “to follow Him constitutes a total change. This indicates that we should not give up on continuing to preach the gospel to everyone because the gospel has the power to save everyone (Rom 1:16). God gives power to humans to be used as an extension of His hands to preach salvation to everyone. Fifth, Jesus Declares His Power to Send Disciples (Matthew 10). In this case, Jesus empowers His disciples to serve and proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven. He gives His disciples the power to heal the sick, cast out demons, and preach the gospel. It is clear that in this teaching, Jesus shows His power to prove the presence of the Kingdom of Heaven among mankind. Jesus shows His power and teaches the values and principles of faith in service. Thus, through His Power, Jesus wants to declare that He has power over all sickness, power over nature, power to forgive sins, also power to give new life, and power to send disciples to do and declare power as evidence of the Presence of the Kingdom of God.

3.2.5. *Jesus Revealed the Kingdom of Heaven in the Form of Parables*

The entirety of Jesus’ preaching about the Kingdom of Heaven in the Gospel of Matthew describes His vision of the presence of the Kingdom of God that affects all aspects of human life. Therefore, this message is the main news that must be conveyed to prepare every citizen of the Kingdom of God to understand the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven. To discuss the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven revealed by Jesus in the form of parables in Matthew 13, it is better for us first to understand what a parable is. According to Neil in his book, “The parable comes from English called “Parables” which can be interpreted as an object placed next to another object for comparison purposes.” So, in this case, the parable is used as an analogical comparison. When Robert said: “The parable can also refer to a metaphor or figurative expression,” As expressed by Jesus in Matthew 9: 16: No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for then the patch will tear the garment and make the tear even worse. This metaphor will describe an implicit comparison between the differences that can be explained.

First, the listeners will understand more easily. Purwisasi states, “The parable makes it easier for the listeners to understand the meaning of what is being conveyed” (Purwisasi et al., 2022). Because the parable involves analogies or images close to everyday life, it can overcome the difficulties of what is unknown and not understood, making it easier to understand. This makes the teachings and preaching of the Lord Jesus about the Kingdom of Heaven understandable to the layman. According to Herbert, by using parables, “a story that is to be conveyed becomes more concrete so that the listeners can use their imagination to make the parable understand effectively.

Second, spiritual truth can be better understood. Jeremias states in his book: “Jesus used parables to communicate with his audience, especially in the context of the agrarian society of that era.” He revealed the Kingdom of Heaven in the form of parables so that His disciples could understand the meaning of the spiritual truth contained therein. In this case, Jeremias also wanted to explain that Jesus’ parables were not only tools for teaching but also a call for His listeners to respond personally and consider the spiritual meaning of Jesus’ proclamation of the Kingdom of Heaven.

So, it could be said that the function of this parable is to stimulate the listeners’ thoughts to make personal reflections and responses to what they hear. That is why sometimes the Lord Jesus used parables to convey spiritual truth to people who were willing to seek and understand while at the same time hiding the truth from those who were unwilling or who rejected His preaching (Matthew 13: 10–17). Third, students are more serious. However, the teachings about the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven are not easy to understand. However, the Lord Jesus tried to help His disciples understand it so that they could understand spiritual concepts and spiritual truths about the work of God in depth. That is why the disciples once asked Jesus: “Why do you speak to them in parables?” Jesus answered: “You have been given the gift to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but not to them. (Matthew 13: 10–11). In fact, at that time, the Lord Jesus was telling a story about the daily spiritual life of humans. Uniquely, the Lord Jesus revealed the truth of the word only to believers, but the secret was hidden from unbelievers. This reveals to the disciples how serious it is for them to understand the Kingdom of God.

The disciples themselves were given the ability to distinguish and choose what came from God and what did not. However, those who came but still “rejected” the message the Lord gave would remain spiritually blind and wonder what the parable meant. In this case, the Lord clearly distinguished

between those who were given “ears to hear” and those who insisted on not believing, even though they had heard. However, they did not understand, and “who, though always learning, never come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim 3:7). The Lord Jesus understood that truth is not interesting to everyone. Moreover, why should there be a parable? Yes, because for those who are truly “hungry” for the truth, the parable is effective, easy to remember, and not easily forgotten. So, the parable is a blessing for those willing to hear and believe, not those who are dull-hearted and slow to hear.

4. CONCLUSION

This study found that Jesus’ preaching about the Kingdom of Heaven includes ethical, soteriological, and eschatological aspects. This teaching emphasizes the importance of repentance, change of heart, unconditional love, and commitment as requirements for entering the Kingdom of Heaven. This study concludes that the concept of the Kingdom of Heaven is parallel to repentance. Repentance is not just about feeling guilty; it also involves real and ongoing life changes in response to the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ. This finding invites continued theological reflection on how this teaching can be applied in everyday life. As his contribution, the theology of the Kingdom of Heaven needs to be disseminated to encourage social change so that the character of living as a citizen of the Kingdom of God can be indicated in the life of society.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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