

THREE BARELY-DISGUISED REFERENCES TO KINGDOM POSTPONEMENT IN MATTHEW 13/P SALM 78

One of the hallmarks of traditional dispensationalism is the assertion that Israel's rejection (Matt.12) of Jesus' offer of the Old Testament 's earthly, Messianic Kingdom (Matt. 4) led him to postpone the Kingdom to await a responsive generation of Israelites (Matt. 21).¹ Advocates hold that the Kingdom Parables of Matthew 13 which immediately follow Jesus' Kingdom postponement do reflect clearly this postponement (from the human perspective) of the Davidic Messianic Kingdom.² As well they often mention the Kingdom's postponement as an important reality for understanding those passages.³ Yet, traditional dispensationalists typically refrain from listing the Kingdom parables among the Scriptures that they believe directly *teach* Kingdom postponement, instead drawing inferences for the Kingdom postponement from combinations of passages that do not include Matthew 13.

Charles Feinberg for example lists several Scriptures as together teaching Kingdom postponement, but excludes Matthew 13: "He came to His land, His throne, and His kingdom (John 1:11)"⁴ and "He offered Himself as King (Mt. 21:1-5) and was rejected in His kingly offer (Jn. 18:37; 19:14-15)"⁵. "Moreover, other Scriptures confirm the validity of the postponement of the kingdom. . . . To the Hebrews who were expecting a king on David's throne, yet had rejected Him in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the sacred writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, emphasized the session of Christ at God's right hand (1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:20). With every mention the writer points out Christ as seated elsewhere than on His earthly Davidic throne."⁶

J. Dwight Pentecost in his magisterial *Things to Come* mentions often that Matthew 13 reflects the impacts of Israel leadership's rejection of Jesus as Messiah upon God's "kingdom program."⁷ But in his extended teaching upon the kingdom parables of Matt 13 Pentecost does not once mention "postponement."⁸ When he does mention Kingdom postponement on adjacent pages, he gives Matthew 23:37-39 as the reference.⁹

¹ In so doing, Jesus maintained and reinforced the promise-keeping veracity of God and of the Old Testament. Thus, the Kingdom postponement issue is theologically significant, speaking to the character of God as well as to the infallibility of the Old Testament's promises.

² The "Davidic Messianic Kingdom" is heretofore the "Kingdom."

³ E.g. Mark L. Bailey, "The Parable of the Sower and the Soils," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155 (1998): 172, and "The Parables of the Dragnet and of the Householder," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156 (1999): 289.

⁴ Charles Feinberg, "The Eternal Kingship of Christ," *Jesus The King Is Coming*, Charles Feinberg, ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1975) 186.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁷ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965), 141.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 138-149.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 142.

Stanley Toussaint has written that Matthew 13 parables do teach Kingdom postponement.¹⁰ Yet an examination of his argument shows that “teach” must be taken in an indirect sense: One should infer from the parables, in combination, that there was now to be an ongoing age prior to the eschatological judgment that the parables describe, so that this *judgment* has been postponed. Toussaint surfaces no direct assertion within these parables that the *Kingdom* has been postponed, nor does he surface in Matthew 13 the premise needed to complete the desired syllogism that concludes “Therefore, postponement of the eschatological judgment necessarily indicates postponement of the Kingdom’s inauguration,” the premise missing in Matthew 13 being that “Eschatological judgment immediately precedes Kingdom inauguration.”¹¹ In addition, Toussaint makes no suggestion that Matthew 13 offers a direct teaching regarding Kingdom postponement in parabolic form, such as offering a parable portraying Kingdom postponement as its central message, or offering a parable character who experiences within the parable’s plot some kind of postponement which could represent Kingdom postponement.¹²

A striking omission of Matthew 13 as a Kingdom postponement passage appears in the chapter “Prophetic Postponement in Daniel 9 and Other Texts” within *Issues in Dispensationalism*, a 1994 Traditional Dispensationalism apologetic. In that chapter J. Randall Price provides an encyclopedic survey of passages throughout the Bible that speak to “prophetic postponement” due to “unfulfilled aspects of the messianic program for national Israel.”¹³ He references well over 100 passages from over twenty different Bible books that he views as directly relevant, including Matthew passages (from chapters 16, 17, 19, 23, 24, and 25), but does not mention Matthew 13.

It seems that for many or most Traditional Dispensationalists, while the Kingdom Parables do represent Jesus’ teaching response to the just-postponed Kingdom by way of parabolically presenting some *outcomes* and *consequences* of that postponement, the parables do not discuss the Kingdom postponement itself. This article will however argue that within Matthew 13 there are

¹⁰ Stanley D. Toussaint, “No, Not Yet: The Contingency Of God’s Promised Kingdom,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 164 (2007): 138, and Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1980), 170.

¹¹ Given that most non-dispensationalists are fine with the eschatological judgment being postponed but are definitely “not fine” with the Kingdom being postponed, this ironclad, chronological linkage between the eschatological judgment and the Kingdom assumed by Toussaint in which Kingdom inauguration *follows* the eschatological judgment is not a minor detail.

¹² Similarly, in his popular Matthew commentary Toussaint asserts in introducing the Kingdom Parables that “. . . the King by means of parables instructs His disciples about the postponement of the Kingdom.” Yet in his commentary proper regarding the Parables, the word *postpone* (or any of its variants) appears but once near the close, when Toussaint regarding the Parable of the Dagnet indicates that the prior parables taught that “a new age was to intervene prior to the coming of the kingdom,” which one might consider an *indirect* teaching regarding Kingdom postponement, with neither the Scriptures nor Toussaint using the phraseology of postponement. Then Toussaint states that the Dagnet parable *does* teach directly regarding postponement, but of the great *judgment*, not the Kingdom: “This parable taught that the expected *judgment* (emphasis mine) would be postponed . . .” (Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King: a Study of Matthew* [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1980], 170, 185.)

¹³ Randall J. Price, “Prophetic Postponement in Daniel 9 and Other Texts” in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, eds. Wesley R. Willis and John R. Master (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 133–166.

three direct references to general, *eschatological* postponement that represent barely-disguised presentations of specific, *Kingdom* postponement. The first is found in the middle of Jesus' initial presentation of the Parable of the Wheat and Tares (Matt. 13:28b–29), the second is found within Psalm 78 which Matthew introduces editorially (Matt. 13:35), and the third is found within Jesus' interpretation of the Parable of the Wheat and Tares (Matt. 13:43).

THE FIRST BARELY-DISGUISED REFERENCE TO KINGDOM POSTPONEMENT: MATTHEW 13:28B–29

In the Parable of the Wheat and Tares Jesus introduces to His listeners the truth that counterfeits will be allowed to co-exist among Jesus' followers throughout this present age, such that there will be a time interval between the beginning of their false participation and the time of their removal at the end of the age. Jesus presents this time span by inserting into the middle of the parable a discussion between “slaves,” who have just discovered the weeds, and the “landowner,” who already knows of both the weeds' presence and the timing of their future removal from the grain. This short dialog enables the parable audiences (both listeners and readers) to learn of the presence of the weeds and of the timing of their removal at the same time that the slaves learn of them, as if the parable's audiences are themselves bystanders “standing inside the parable” and listening in.

However the news for the slaves and for the parable's audiences regarding a time interval between discovery and removal of the weeds, encompasses but half of this dialogue between landowner and slaves, with the remaining half devoted to a related yet different topic relative to the time interval. At this juncture it is necessary to consider the “psychology of postponement”¹⁴: A person experiences or judges there to have been postponement when the actual time span between events proves to be longer than one's internal, subjective *expectation* had been.

While we tend to think of postponements as purely externalized, objective affairs—“Postponement happens when the announced date x for event y is re-announced for a later date z ”—postponements actually reside “in the eye of the beholder,” being essentially subjective affairs. Even something as objective and external as a revised date can be either a postponement or non-postponement, depending upon the internal expectations of an observer—God for instance with His exhaustive foreknowledge has never experienced postponement, even with the millions of announced date changes to which He has been subjected across human history. This is because the original dates never for God led to *internal expectations* that those events would arrive on those announced dates—God always knew better.

In contrast to God, the rest of us have internally experienced postponements many *more* times than the number of times we have experienced the external phenomenon of an event date first announced and then revised. That is because not only are postponements not *essentially* announced date changes, postponements do not even *require* announced date changes—one experiences genuine postponement even when one proposes only to oneself, and internally creates a private

¹⁴ The label “psychology of postponement” is not uncommon in the literature put forth by the discipline of clinical psychology, but there it is invariably a euphemism for the “psychology of procrastination,” discussing the tendency for humans to put off disliked tasks and medical procedures.

expectation for, an arrival date for an impending event for which no date has been externally announced. That is, the experience of postponement may or may not involve external “props” in the form of announced, then delayed, event dates. As well, announced event dates that are revised later *may or may not* create postponement for everyone since some might “know better” that an initially-announced event date is unfeasible, and therefore will not create for themselves the internal expectation for the event’s arrival which all postponement experiences require.

The reality that postponement is at its core an internal, subjective experience is further validated by the dynamics of the *undated* future event. In this common scenario one observer can surmise, and thus create an *expectation* for, the event’s arrival which later proves to be incorrect, while a second person with more information *expects* the timing of that undated event to be further distant, and thus harbors a correct expectation of the event’s timing, as is often God’s experience. The former observer is going to report experiencing postponement once their *expectation* fails. Yet the latter observer while experiencing the exact same timing for an undated event’s timing will not have experienced a postponement since for that person the event took place “*as (they) expected.*” This two-pronged scenario is precisely the one Jesus created in His Parable of the Wheat and Tares, in which a “landowner” knows the timing of an undated future event and experiences *no* postponement, while the landowners’ “slaves” assume incorrectly the timing of the undated future event and *do* experience a postponement. It is here that Jesus presents what amounts to Kingdom postponement in this parable.

It is an easy matter for a writer or speaker of narrative to create an *objectively-driven* experience of postponement for narrative characters via use of a *dated* event, that the parable hearer or listener will then note—the writer needs simply to manufacture within the narrative a dated, pending event of concern to characters within the narrative, which subsequently within the narrative either fails or is revised to a later date. But creating a *subjectively-derived* experience of postponement for an *undated* event (such as the postponed Kingdom) among narrative characters is much more involved, because the narrator must surface to the hearer or reader the *internal thought process* of those who are internally, subjectively, forming incorrect expectations for the timing of this future, undated event. That is, the narrator is going to have to inform the audience as to what the characters are thinking, or, more specifically, are *expecting* regarding the timing of the impending, undated event. Without the resulting insight into the characters’ internal, incorrect expectations regarding the timing of the event thus surfaced for parable audiences, this internally-derived “postponement” would remain “unseen” by them.

This surfacing of the thought-processes of those narrative characters who are about to experience the postponement of an undated, future event is precisely what Jesus the narrator deftly accomplishes in the Parable of the Wheat and Tares by the way He constructs the second half of the dialogue between landowner and slaves regarding the eventual removal of the tares—Jesus exposes to the original hearers and subsequent readers an *incorrect expectation* harbored by the slaves by way of the words Jesus places in their mouths regarding the timing of the tares’ removal. From this incorrect expectation on the part of the slaves arises the internal experience of postponement for the slaves (but not for the landowner, who has no such incorrect expectation). Note the place and function of the “postponement” segment of the dialogue between landowner and slaves as highlighted in the following table:

Table 1: The Parable of the Wheat and Tares (Matthew 13:24–30)¹⁵, Without and With Its Postponement Segment

Hypothetical “Wheat and Tares Parable,” Presenting Only a Time Interval (bold type) between Planting and Gathering	Actual Wheat and Tares Parable, Presenting Both a Time Interval (bold type) and a <i>Postponement (italics)</i> between Planting and Gathering ⁴
<p>²⁴Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and left. ²⁶And when the wheat sprouted and produced grain, then the weeds also became evident. ²⁷And the slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’ ²⁸And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!</p>	<p>²⁴Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and left. ²⁶And when the wheat sprouted and produced grain, then the weeds also became evident. ²⁷And the slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’ ²⁸And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’</p> <p><i>The slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’</i> ²⁹<i>But he said, ‘No; while you are gathering up the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them.</i></p>
<p>³⁰Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and at the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the weeds and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.” ’ ’</p>	<p>³⁰Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and at the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the weeds and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.” ’ ’</p>

In the left column above, note that the hypothetical parable with its truncated dialogue still fully presents the time interval between the current discovery of the tares and their future gathering. The excised dialogue within verses 28–29 between landowner and slaves in this hypothetical, shortened parable is not required for the purpose of presenting the time interval, nor does it seem to be required for narrative flow or other literary purposes—the parable proceeds seamlessly in the absence of the excised verses. But Jesus was not satisfied with presenting only the bare fact of a time interval between discovery and removal of the tares, and so included the “postponement segment.”

¹⁵ All Scriptures are taken from the NASB 2020 Bible version (*New American Standard Bible* [La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 2020]. Exported from *Logos Bible Software*, June, 2022.

In the right column, note that the content of Jesus' postponement segment supports the internal psychology, the thought-process, that goes along with an undated event's postponement: Jesus successfully exposes to the hearer and reader an internally-derived, incorrect expectation for an undated event on the part of the landowner's slaves. Their internal expectation is that, though the event of the removal of the tares was yet-undated, the timespan between discovery and removal of the tares would be brief. This creation and surfacing of an internal, incorrect expectation on the part of the slaves Jesus accomplished by crafting and inserting a dialogue between slaves and landowner that verbalizes the slaves' internal expectation for that timing, followed by the landowner altering their expectation by expanding (from their perspective) the timespan until the tares' removal. Thus the internal experience of postponement has been created within the minds of the slaves by Jesus, and broadcast to Jesus' audience.¹⁶

This parable thus informs its interpreters that a full-scale separation of the living, ungodly from the living, godly will take place later rather than sooner. (In Jesus' own explanation of the parable recorded by Matthew He specifies that this separation of the two groups will take place "at the end of the age," another undated event.) This reality is contrary to the expectation of at least those whom the "slaves" in the parable represent, who seem to disappear from the narrative once their experience of postponement has been presented.¹⁷

¹⁶ Dispensationalist J. Dwight Pentecost comes close to reflecting the subjective psychology of postponement in his commentary on the Matthew 13:28b–29 interchange between "servants" and "owner," without labeling it a postponement: "In the parable the servants suggested that they go through the field and pull up the weeds. It seemed to them a wise plan to try to separate the wheat from the weeds as soon as it became evident that there were weeds in the field. However, the owner of the servants instructed them to let the wheat and weeds grow side by side. The separation was not to be made until the harvest itself . . ." (*The Parables of Jesus*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 55).

Non-dispensationalist Craig Blomberg comes perilously close to acknowledging the presence of an eschatological postponement in the parable with his use of the term *delay*, in spite of minimizing the significance of the dialogue between landowner and slaves: "From the actions of the farmer and the fate of the wheat and weeds, one learns that God will permit the righteous and wicked to coexist in this age but that he will eventually separate the wicked, judge them, and destroy them, while gathering the righteous together to be rewarded by enjoying his presence forever. . . Jesus' principle here applies in every age to the question of why God allows evil and suffering in the world. His creation can be purged of all evil only through the judgment and re-creation of the universe at the end of the age because evil resides in *every* (emphasis his) person. God's *delay in bringing the end of the world* (emphasis mine) is thus entirely gracious, giving people more opportunity to repent (2 Pet 3:9)" (*Matthew*, vol. 22, The New American Commentary [Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992], 219).

Dispensationalist Tom Constable states that the conversation between landowner and slaves is of minor importance at best: "The good seed represents the sons of the kingdom, namely believers in Jesus (cf. 8:12 where the sons of the kingdom are Jewish unbelievers). The weeds are sons of the evil one, namely Satan (cf. John 8:44; 1 John 5:19). The devil is the enemy, the harvest is the end of the age (9:37; cf. Jer. 51:33; Hos. 6:11; Joel 3:13), and the harvesters are angels (24:30–31; 25:31; cf. 18:10; Luke 15:7; Heb. 1:14; 1 Pet. 1:12). *Obviously several elements in this parable have significance. However note that many others do not (e.g., the conversation between the man and his servants, the servants' sleep, the order of the sowing, etc.)* (emphasis mine)." (*Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* [Galaxie Software, 2003], Matt. 13:37.)

¹⁷ Given the fact that all humanity's genuine followers of Jesus are represented by the wheat, it would seem some group of angels might be representing in the parable all those for whom the separation of true from false followers of Jesus has been experienced as "postponed."

Because of this postponement segment within the parable, the parable explicitly teaches the existence of a postponement affecting the “kingdom of heaven.” It must be noted however that in this parable the postponement is explicitly connected to the eschatological harvest, the judgment of living, true followers of Jesus and living, false followers of Jesus, and not to other eschatological events such as the arrival of the Kingdom. Yet, if arrival of the Kingdom is to immediately follow the eschatological judgment of living, false followers as is taught by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:7–11), Zechariah (Zech. 14:1–9), and others, then Jesus in teaching the postponement of eschatological judgment has taught by necessary implication the postponement of the Kingdom. That is the sense in which the Parable of the Wheat and Tares has brought a “barely disguised” teaching of Kingdom postponement to its audiences.¹⁸

THE SECOND BARELY-DISGUISED REFERENCE TO KINGDOM POSTPONEMENT: PSALM 78:21–29 (MATTHEW 13:35 QUOTES PSALM 78:2)

Early in the sequence of Kingdom parables Jesus used an Old Testament quotation from Isaiah 6 to explain His strategy for employing parables in His teaching. Similarly, Matthew later inserted an Old Testament quotation between parables as his own editorial comment regarding Jesus’ parables: “All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables, and He did not speak anything to them without a parable. This was so that what was spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled: ‘I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN PARABLES; I WILL PROCLAIM THINGS HIDDEN SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD’” (Matt. 13:34–35, quoting Psalm 78:2). Most commentators presume that Matthew used Asaph the psalmist’s quotation to broadly characterize the nature and function of Jesus’ parables as hidden and/or wise sayings¹⁹ But difficult questions arise that put this elementary explanation for the quotation into doubt. First, this view of Matthew’s purpose for the quotation provides no good answer to the question as to why Matthew did not employ a more suitable quotation for this alleged purpose of characterizing parables, such as Ezekiel 18. That Scripture provides a similar quotation, but most importantly follows it immediately with an actual example of a parable-length analogy, while Psalm 78 continues on with simple, direct,

¹⁸ As well, this “bare disguise” disappears altogether when the data from Jesus’ interpretation a few verses later in Matthew 13 is collated with the parable proper.

¹⁹ The comments of Louis Barbieri (Louis A. Barbieri Jr., “Matthew,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 [Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985], 51) and Craig Blomberg (Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, The New American Commentary [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992], 221) provide typical examples of this approach.

Commentators are in more agreement that in using פְּזָזִים which the NASB20 in Psalm 78:2 translates “parables,” Asaph is referring to “wise sayings,” more narrowly “imaginative comparisons or analogies.” See James Swanson, “5442 I. פְּזָזִים ,” *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997); Wilhelm Gesenius and Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, *Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2003), 517; Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 605.

Likewise, in using מְתֵיבִים which the NASB20 in Psalm 78:2 translates “riddles,” Asaph is referring to “hidden sayings,” that is, “enigmatic sayings and indirect teachings.” See Edwin Yamauchi, “616 מְתֵיבִים ,” ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 267; James Swanson, “2648 מְתֵיבִים ,” *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

non-figurative prose. Secondly, why did Matthew with no explanation label the psalmist Asaph a “prophet,” when in the Old Testament it is his rarest moniker?²⁰ Thirdly, with the alleged, elementary purpose for Matthew’s editorial use of this Psalm’s introductory verse, what is he contributing to the reader beyond what Jesus had already taught the hearer and reader regarding parables in His earlier, more-detailed editorial comment (Matt. 13:11–17) using Isaiah?

All these questions seem to have a straightforward answer when one allows that Matthew’s purpose in quoting the introduction of Psalm 78 was to put before the reader the psalm in total.²¹ The fact that Matthew quoted the introductory verse of the psalm increases this likelihood that Matthew wanted his readers to consider the whole of the Psalm and the primary points it makes. A cursory read of the Psalm raises one’s awareness that Asaph’s “wise sayings” and “hidden sayings” involve reviewing Israel’s history along with God’s reactions, so as to surface new lessons to be gained by the reader regarding the present and future for at least national Israel, if not for others.²² Essentially Asaph’s review of Israel’s history surfaces an updated, more elaborate version of the “cycle of Judges” with some additional elements inserted into the cycle. In doing so Asaph prophesizes, thus teaches indirectly, that this expanded cycle is an ongoing, unfortunate reality for his own generation of Israel and for generations of Israel beyond. Matthew likely recognized that in fact Asaph’s new, additional steps within the cycle were actually in play when the Kingdom was rejected and postponed in Matthew 12 and 13.

This revision Asaph made upon the Cycle of Judges involved three strategic expansions. The first is an expansion of the single phase in the Judges cycle in which God responds to unrepentant rebellion by Israel with temporal, national judgment, into three distinct subphases, the first two of which are new and describe a postponement on God’s part. The second strategic expansion is of the single phase in the Judges cycle in which Israel repents, which becomes for Asaph two distinct subphases, the second of which is new, and again, describes a postponement on God’s part. The third strategic expansion involves the addition of a new final resolution to the cycle which breaks the cycle altogether, involving the arrival of the Kingdom. These expansions are highlighted in the table below:

²⁰ While the OT almost always refers to Asaph as a musician or music director, in the following two exceptions 1 Chronicles 25:2 reports that Asaph “prophesied” under the direction of the king, and 2 Chronicles 29:30 labels Asaph a “seer.”

²¹ Stuart K. Webber suggests, “Often when a New Testament author quoted from the Old Testament, he intended to bring to the minds of his educated readers the larger original context of the quotation. Psalm 78 is by Asaph, the leader of choral worship under David (1 Chron. 15:17, 19; 16:4–5). Verse 2 is part of a lengthy introduction, calling Israel to learn from the lessons of the nation’s past, which he will put into story form.” (*Matthew*, vol. 1, Holman New Testament Commentary [Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000], 200.)

²² Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 13:35. Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 221.

Table 2: The Expansion of the “Cycle of Judges” by the Prophet²³ Asaph in Psalm 78

The “Cycle of Judges” (Judges 2:11–19, 3:7–12)²⁴	Asaph’s Expansion of the Cycle of Judges, Reflecting Multiple, Divine Postponements (Psalm 78:9–39; 68–72)²⁵
1. Israel <i>sins</i> or rebels through idolatry or apostasy (2:11–13, 17; 3:7, 12)	1. The Exodus generation of Israel ignores God’s commands and forgets His past deliverances (9–20)
	2a. God internally experiences righteous anger (21–22)
	2b. Yet, God continues to provide still more, multiple blessings to Israel, thus postponing the appropriate judgments [and subsequent cycle elements] (23–29)
2. Israel falls into <i>servitude</i> to foreign peoples due to retribution from the Lord (2:14–15; 3:8)	2c. Later in the Exodus, God (in the absence of repentance) suddenly changes from blessing to pouring out postponed judgment in the form of temporal discipline, up to physical death (30–33)
3. Israel exercises <i>supplication</i> or repentance (3:9a; cf. 2:18)	3a. Israel turns to and seeks God, but half-heartedly (34–37)
	3b. In compassion, God again postpones the deserved judgment for partial repentance [and the subsequent cycle element] (38–39)
4. Israel experiences <i>salvation</i> (military deliverance) and restoration to favor by the Lord through a Spirit-empowered deliverer (judge; 2:16–18; 3:9b–10)	4. God’s final resolution (yet-partial for Asaph’s generation) to the cycle: the inauguration of the Davidic King and the Davidic Kingdom (68–72)
5. Israel experiences a period of <i>silence</i> when the people and the land has rest, that is, cessation of war (3:11)	

When one compares the cyclical behavior of the Exodus generation (Psalm 78) to the behavior of Jesus’ generation of Jews, then the genius of Matthew employing Psalm 78 as his commentary upon the Kingdom Parables, as well as upon the generation of Israel who are their hearers, becomes clear:

²³ As per Matthew, in Matthew 13:35.

²⁴ Adapted from *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* [Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985]. Vol 1 pp. 382–83. Exported from Logos Bible Software, 5:07 PM June 14, 2022).

²⁵ Psalm 78:40–67 reexamines in an extended analysis the ongoing interactions between Israel, Egypt, and God immediately before, during, and after the Exodus, offering more insights into the interplay between Israel’s rebellions, Israel’s acts of repentance, God’s blessings, deliverances, postponed judgments, and actualized judgments.

Table 3: The Import of the Psalm 78 “Expanded Judges Cycle” for Jesus’ Kingdom Parables and Immediate Hearers (Matthew 12–13)

Asaph’s Expansion of the Cycle of Judges, Reflecting Multiple, Divine Postponements (Psalm 78:9–39; 68–72; postponement elements in bold)	Matthew 12ff – The fulfillment/application of this cyclical interaction to the Israeli generation listening to Jesus (Matthew 12ff; postponement elements in bold)
1. The Exodus generation of Israel ignores God’s commands and forgets His past deliverances (9–20)	1. By way of their religious leaders, Israel rejects Jesus’ teachings and warnings regarding the impending arrival of the Kingdom (Matt. 12)
2a. God internally experiences righteous anger (21–22)	2a. Jesus warns Israel re: their rejection of Him and faithlessness toward God, declares the Pharisees guilty of the unforgivable sin (but enacts no immediate judgment; Matt 12)
2b. Yet, God continues to provide still more, multiple blessings to Israel, thus postponing the appropriate judgments [and subsequent cycle elements] (23–29)	2b. Rather than enact the judgment, Jesus graciously continues to teach for those able to hear, including teachings regarding postponed judgment and the postponed Kingdom (Matt. 13)
2c. Later in the Exodus, God (in the absence of repentance) suddenly changes from blessing to pouring out judgment in the form of temporal discipline, up to physical death (30–33)	2c. Israel continues to reject Jesus (Matt. 14ff); Jesus declares, and God enacts within the same generation, a temporal judgment of military invasion and destruction (Luke 13:34–35, 19:41–44; Matt. 23:37–39)
3a. Israel turns to and seeks God, but half-heartedly (34–37)	3a. {Given the unnerving parallels Psalm 78 surfaces between the Exodus generation and Jesus’ generation, Psalm 78:34–37 offers the latter a warning: will they offer Jesus the same half-hearted acceptance given to God and Moses, and gain the same result?}
3b. In compassion, God again postpones the deserved judgment [and the subsequent cycle element] (38–39)	3b. God will cause the Gentile world to bring Gentile converts to Jesus, creating godly jealousy among the Jews, who will also eventually convert (Rom. 11)
4. God’s final resolution (yet-partial for Asaph’s generation) to the cycle: the inauguration of the Davidic King and the Davidic Kingdom (68–72)	4. God’s final resolution: the inauguration of the Davidic King and Davidic Kingdom (Isa. 2, 11; Matt. 13; Rev. 19–20)

In addition to creating an urgent call for repentance before a patient God from Matthew’s contemporary Jewish readers, his use of Psalm 78 within chapter thirteen should alert later readers that God because of His great mercy will often postpone judgment, and therefore will as well be postponing His actions immediately subsequent to judgment due Israel. Readers of the Kingdom Parables therefore should be alert to indications of the postponement of judgment and Kingdom

postponement within Jesus' immediate response to Israel's rejection of His offer of the Kingdom captured by Matthew 13. The fact that Matthew inserted his comments regarding Psalm 78 *immediately prior* to Jesus' explanation of the Parable of the Wheat and Tares seems particularly strategic for this specific purpose, given that this parable in particular puts divine, eschatological postponement of judgment and the subsequent Kingdom inauguration front and center.

Thus, in addition to whatever additional senses were meant by Jesus "fulfilling" Ps 78:2 via His parables in the view of Matthew, Jesus fulfills the point the prophet Asaph was making that there is often a postponement, a hesitation on the part of God out of His mercy, between the times Israel fails to follow God and God's administering of the appropriate Mosaic Covenantal curses which as described by Moses are immediately due. The Parable of the Wheat and Tares indicates that Israel was in fact at that moment enjoying one such postponement of judgment: from the threefold prophecy of Jesus (Matt. 23:37–39, Luke 13:34–35, Luke 19:41–44) and from history we know that the judgment through the Roman general Titus would arrive some forty years later.

THE THIRD BARELY-DISGUISED REFERENCE TO KINGDOM POSTPONEMENT: MATTHEW 13:43, QUOTING DANIEL 12:3

Following Jesus' presentation of the Kingdom Parables to the crowds he and his disciples retired to the house where this "Long Day" had begun, and the disciples asked Jesus to explain the "Parable of the Tares." In responding Jesus added a new, crucial, strategic piece of evidence regarding Kingdom postponement. By inserting, and thus chronologically locating, the eschatological resurrection and judgment of the righteous and unrighteous *dead* of Daniel 12:3 into the chronology of eschatological events that the parable had described, Jesus provided several pieces of strategic information regarding Kingdom postponement. First, it is now verified by Jesus that Daniel's eschatological resurrection and judgment of the righteous and unrighteous *dead* of Daniel 12 is coextensive with Jesus' judgment of the righteous and unrighteous *living* described within the parable proper.

The fact that the judgment that Jesus describes in the parable is chronologically simultaneous with the judgment that Daniel describes in Daniel 12 means, in addition, that all the end-times events that Daniel specifies to take place prior to the judgment, likewise take place prior to the arrival of the judgment Jesus mentions in his parable (Matt. 13:30, 41–42). So for example, *it is now known that the judgment of the tares is immediately preceded by the resurrection of the dead, itself immediately preceded by the career of the king of the north (Antichrist) of Daniel 11.* Because of Jesus' strategic quotation from Daniel 12 within his parable explanation, one can safely conclude that the judgment of the tares is not only "later than expected" as Jesus' parable indicates, it is *much* later, being preceded by a lengthy complex of end-times events detailed in Daniel and elsewhere in Scripture.

A third piece of strategic information made available by way of Jesus' insertion of the Daniel 12:3 judgment into the chronology of events of the parable is that the Kingdom is indeed inaugurated immediately subsequent to the (postponed) judgment of the tares, not before, as Daniel clearly indicates in the remainder of Daniel 12. This means that, *for however many years that are to intervene between the discovery of the tares by the slaves in the parable and the (postponed)*

judgment of those tares, is the same number years that the Kingdom has been postponed. The multiple presentations by Daniel of the sequence of events in the end-times, which consistently place the arrival of the Kingdom immediately after the eschatological judgment, which itself immediately follows the age of the revived Roman empire and the career of the Antichrist, should be a formidable discouragement to those students of Scripture who attempt to locate the arrival of the Kingdom to earth elsewhere than Daniel (and the rest of Scriptures) locates it, such as sometime during Jesus' earthly ministry. It cannot be understated how powerful was the move by Jesus in his expansion upon the Parable of the Wheat and Tares to enable, via his use of Daniel 12:3, the parable hearer and reader to confidently collate together the end-time events detailed by the Book of Daniel with the end-time events mentioned within the parable.

CONCLUSION

Jesus and Matthew between them offer within Matthew 13 three barely-disguised references to the postponement (from the perspective of humankind and possibly the angels) of the Kingdom which was one an immediate outcome of the climactic verbal confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees recorded in Matthew 12. The first appears in the Parable of the Wheat and Tares, within which Jesus chose to insert a conversation between the "landowner" and the "slaves" who had observed tares in his fields. By way of this conversation Jesus skillfully created the internal phenomenon of postponement on the part of the slaves regarding the timing of the tares' removal: though the future removal of the tares was an undated event, they had developed the expectation that it would commence immediately. For them then, the removal of the tares at a much later date than expected constitutes a postponement. For the parable audiences, the removal of the false members of the kingdom at a much later date than expected, likewise constitutes a postponement of that judgment event. The ironclad linkage between this judgment and the inauguration of the Kingdom, such that the postponement of the former means the postponement of the latter, was made soon after via Jesus' interpretation of the parable.

Matthew himself provides the second barely-disguised reference to Kingdom postponement via his editorial insertion of the "prophet" Asaph's Psalm 78 into the sequence of parables. In the psalm Asaph reviews early history of the nation of Israel, using a revised form of the "Cycle of Judges" to show that this cycle was in action as early as the Exodus, and in his prophetic role implies that the cycle has and will continue to describe Israel's unstable and fickle relationship with God. Most crucial for Matthew's purposes is the main element of Asaph's revision to the cycle: when Israel is disobedient, God's righteous anger is appropriately triggered, but God does not immediately respond with the appropriate discipline as laid out in the covenantal curses of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Rather, God often postpones His judgment, and continues to bless Israel for a time in spite of their lack of repentance. In Matthew's view, the expanded cycle beautifully describes the contemporary situation that exists between God and Israel at the very moment that they through their leaders have rejected Jesus' offer of the Kingdom and stand listening to Jesus' Kingdom parables: Israel has earned immediate discipline from God, but God again is unexpectedly postponing judgment to a later date, in this case to the end of the age. Again, the third reference to postponement which immediately follows this editorial insertion by Matthew makes the necessary, iron-clad linkage between eschatological judgment postponement and Kingdom postponement.

The third barely-disguised reference to Kingdom postponement appears in Jesus' interpretation of His Parable of the Wheat and Tares, in which Jesus declares to be simultaneous the two events of judgment of all the living taught in the parable proper and the judgment of all the dead taught in Daniel 12:3. A significant consequence of this chronological linkage of these two judgments is that all the end-times events specified by Daniel to take place prior to the Daniel 12 judgment, such as the career of the later "king of the north" (antichrist) detailed in Daniel 11b, likewise take place prior to the judgment in the *Matthew* parable: the judgment of the tares is immediately preceded by the resurrection of the dead, itself immediately preceded by the career of the antichrist, for example. Thus, because of Jesus' use of Daniel 12 in Matthew 13 one can safely conclude that the judgment of the tares is not only "later than expected" as Jesus' parable indicates, it is *much* later, being preceded by a lengthy complex of end-times events detailed in Daniel and elsewhere in Scripture. As well, this chronological linkage of Daniel 12 with Matthew 13 brings to bear the repeated teachings of Daniel that the inauguration of the Kingdom is subsequent to the Matthew 13/Daniel 12 judgment—to whatever degree the judgment is postponed, the Kingdom is likewise postponed so that the inauguration of the Kingdom remains subsequent to the judgment, not prior as reflected in most eschatological models outside of Traditional Dispensationalism.