

Matthew 13 – The Parables of the Kingdom

I. Gibson (Jan 2011)

Parable 2: The Wheat & Tares (v24-30, v36-43) – The Admixture of the Kingdom

Interpreted by the Lord Jesus in private at the request of the disciples in the house; a warning for the servants in the kingdom, for “*while men slept*” (v25) the devil sows the tares among the wheat. We are warned to be awake to the character of this present age, and the activity of Satan to imitate what is real and so corrupt the kingdom of God.

The 2 different sowers & 2 distinct seeds:

1. The sower who sows good seed in the wheat field is identified as “*the Son of man*” (v37).

Only deity can actually sow “*children (sons) of the kingdom*”; salvation is of the LORD (John 17v2).

He sows in “*his field*” (v24); this world belongs to the Lord Jesus (Ps 24v1) by creatorial right & by right of purchase. Hence, He alone will be worthy to take the book (Rev 5).

He alone sovereignly sows the sons of the kingdom in His world; as sons, true believers should show in their lives morally & spiritually characteristics of the kingdom & the King.

2. The “*tares*” are sown by a trespassing enemy, i.e. the devil (v39).

This is not harmless; the enemy’s motive is to spoil the crop, simply out of malign hatred.

The devil is busy sowing his own substitute/imitation/counterfeit “*the children of the wicked one*” (v38), producing a confusing admixture of the false among the real in the kingdom.

The climax of Satan’s imitation will be the counterfeit antichrist (Rev 13v11).

Counterfeits among the early Church:

- Acts 8, Simon the sorcerer looked like the real thing, but ultimately was shown to be false.
- Paul warned the Corinthians about infiltration by false ones who were of Satan, yet not easily recognised; “*For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ ... Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness*” (2nd Cor 11v13-15).

The serpent moved into the garden of Eden intent upon marring God’s creation; in this age, he moves into God’s kingdom, seeking to mar the work of God in new creation.

- 2nd Peter 2 & Jude v12-13 speak very descriptively about unbelieving & ungodly ones who were feasting with the believers at their love feasts. These men propagated false doctrine as well as lascivious practice among God’s people.

In Christendom today, a terrible confused mixture of saints & sinners, and the false will seek to lead the true believers astray, both doctrinally & morally.

The warning for us today:

We must be cognisant of what the devil is all about in this age, and as stewards of the things of God, we must be watchful and not be careless or indifferent or sleeping.

Jude v3 exhorts “*earnestly contend for the faith which was once (for all) delivered unto the saints*”.

We need to be alert to the reality of what exists in the sphere of Christian profession all around us, and appreciate the distinctiveness of the assembly.

v28-30: Ultimately the separation of the wheat from the tares & the judgment of unbelievers must be a divine work (see 1st Cor 5v12-13).

"Let both grow together" (v30) is in the field of the world, not in the Church, i.e. the character of the kingdom in profession & God's governmental & sovereign dealings in the world.

The Bible teaches that in the Church & local assembly, light cannot have fellowship with darkness; *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"* (2 Cor 6v14)

The doctrinal & moral purity of the testimony must be preserved, e.g. Pergamos (Rev 2v12-16).

v39-42: The final harvest & judgment is at *"the completion of the age"*, i.e. after the rapture.

NB. The rapture is not in the synoptic gospels, only in John's gospel.

This is the return of the King back to this earth, the day of His revelation, when He sits on the throne of His glory judicially, when He will *"judge the (habitable) world (of living men & women) in righteousness"* (Acts 17v31), when He will *"judge the quick, i.e. the living"* (1 Peter 4v5), prior to the establishing of His millennial reign.

Similar to the preaching of John the Baptist, who likens the Messiah to a great harvester; *"Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire"* (Matt 3v12).

The direct executors of the judgment are angelic; *"the reapers are the angels"* (v39).

In Matt 24v31, the Lord's appearing & His coming in power & glory to this earth; *"And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other"*.

But here in Matt 13, His angels will first execute judgment upon the tares.

All unbelievers are gathered up first and taken away for judgment, leaving the righteous ones, the multitudes of saints who have been saved during the period of tribulation (see Rev 7v14), to go on into the manifested kingdom on earth.

v43: The righteous subjects of the kingdom will know kingdom blessing; they shall *"shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father"*, i.e. shine in all the reflected glory of the Lord.

Daniel 12v3 *"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament"*.

Parable 3: The Mustard Seed (v31-32) - The Growth of the Kingdom

The man plants the mustard seed deliberately in a place of his choosing; so God determined the geographical starting point for the kingdom, i.e. *"beginning at Jerusalem"* (Luke 24v47).

A single very small mustard grain, *"the least of all seeds"* (v32), speaks of faith (Matt 17v20), the bedrock principle of the kingdom in mystery.

But there is abnormal & disproportionate growth, Luke 13v19 *"it grew, and waxed a great tree"*.

The tree in Scripture is a symbol of worldly & human power (see Ps 37v35, Daniel 4, Ezekiel 31).

From very small beginnings, the kingdom in profession & what we recognize as Christendom, under Satanic influence, has grown into a very large & perverse thing, human organizations with much earthly wealth & influence & political power, but not bringing forth fruit for God.

Satan has a foothold, *"the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof"*; i.e. evil teachers & ungodly men, emissaries of the evil one, who occupy high offices in Christendom.

It is all leading up to what is described in Revelation 17 as religious Babylon.

We must walk a narrow path of separation, keeping faithful to God's Word (see 2nd Tim 2v20-21).