

THE PARABLE OF THE WHEAT AND TARES

Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43

I. INTRODUCTION

A. One of the most heated and debated subjects among men is: How is the world going to end? By atomic explosion, by overpopulation, or by a great interplanetary war? Men of the world will continue to argue this subject, but Christians have been given the answer in the Holy Scriptures, especially in this Parable of the Wheat and Tares.

B. Our Lord gave these parables in Matthew 13 to describe the age in which we live which explains the mysteries about the kingdom of heaven. This present age began at the first advent of Christ and continues until the second advent of Christ. This period has already lasted almost twenty centuries. With the King absent and His earthly kingdom in abeyance, the kingdom now takes on spiritual characteristics. The kingdom is operative in the hearts of all true believers and will be a reality sometime in the future.

C. The Parable Of The Sower, the first parable, was designed to teach us about the different responses to the message of the kingdom or the gospel when it is preached. The second parable is designed to teach us about the counterfeits to true Christianity in the world and what the final outcome will be for these false or counterfeit Christians.

II. THE PARABLE 13:24-30

A. Verse 24: Our Lord says the kingdom of heaven “is likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field.” The words “is likened” should be translated “has become like” (aorist passive). The kingdom of our Lord has taken on a new form of new characteristics while the King and His physical kingdom is absent from this earth. Many of the principles of the kingdom are operating even though the King is absent.

B. Before we begin the interpretation, we must make the proper identifications: (1) The Lord is the Sower; (2) The world is the field; (3) The sons of the kingdom are wheat; (4) The sons of the evil one are tares; (5) The enemy is the devil; (6) The harvest is the consummation of the age; (7) The angels are the harvesters; (8) The barn is the future manifestation of the kingdom.

III. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PARABLE 13:36-43

A. Verse 36: The Lord spoke this parable to the multitudes but He did not interpret it for the multitudes because He spoke in parables to conceal truth from unbelieving hearts. However, Christ also spoke in parables to reveal truth to true believers; that is, those who are receptive to truth. Our Lord gave the interpretation of this parable to His disciples in secret because it is truth that only those who are truly born again can understand. The Lord reveals this truth to his disciples that they might learn about things that have been hidden for ages (Matthew 13:34, 35). NOTE: If this parable is a mystery to you or if you are bored with the contents of it, you may well fall into the category of an unbeliever because you have no real spiritual capacity to understand spiritual truth (I Cor. 2:14).

Matthew 13:34, 35: All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a

parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

B. Verse 37: The sower is Christ, who often referred to Himself as “the Son of man” so as to identify Himself with man. Christ sows “good seed” which is interpreted for us as “the children of the kingdom” (13:38). The sowing here is not the word of the kingdom as it was in the Parable Of The Sower; it is not the sowing of ideas, not the words of the gospel nor is it the word of scripture. The sowing is people; it involves real believers in Christ. There is a link between the Parable Of The Sower and this parable, for only the fourth soil represented a truly saved person, for that person opened up his heart honestly and accepted Christ as his Lord, Savior and King and brought forth Holy Spirit produced good works to prove and demonstrate that he was a true believer. The Lord Jesus as sovereign head over the kingdom takes these true believers and scatters them throughout the world. Christ Himself is placing every child of His kingdom in this world for a purpose. The Lord of His children has sovereignly placed each Christian in this world by design and plan. NOTE: Wherever you are, as a child of the King, you have been put there by the Lord Jesus. He has sown you and put you where you are. As a believer, you are to gather with the Church for instruction in the Word, to observe the Lord’s Table, to pray and to fellowship but then you are to go out into the place that Christ has put you in the world and be a witness to it, serving your Lord in faithfulness and obedience. When Christ gets ready to sow you somewhere else in the world, He will, but until then your job and my job is to serve the Lord where He has placed us.

C. Verse 38:

1. Christ clearly identifies the field as “the world.” The field is not something that takes place inside the visible church but it is the world in general. The wheat and the tares grow up in the world.

2. The good seed, which are the children of the kingdom in that they are true believers in Jesus Christ and acknowledge Christ’s Kingship over their lives and are loyal subjects of His kingdom until He returns in His second advent. NOTE: The wheat then represents the true, invisible church that is in the world.

3. The tares are the children of the devil; those who reject Christ, the King and His kingdom and follow Satan and His kingdom of darkness. NOTE: The “tares” are a plant which we call today a “darnel.” It is a poisonous plant which looks very much like wheat. In fact, when it first starts to grow not even an expert can distinguish it from wheat. But as it grows, it begins to change. When finally it comes to harvest, even a child can tell the different between wheat and tares. NOTE: Tares are false believers, counterfeits, phonies of the real thing. They represent the false, professing church in the world.

D. Verse 39a:

1. The enemy that sows these tares in the world is the devil. The devil is sowing false believers in this world and strategically placing them so as to further his kingdom of darkness. The Greeks says that Satan “oversows”; that is, he sows many more counterfeits than Christ sows genuine Christians (Matthew 7:14). NOTE: Satan comes at a time when men sleep (13:25). Because the non-

Christian would cares nothing for spiritual things and are constantly lulled to sleep by Satan's subtle devices, Satan is given a free hand to sow his evil workers wherever he pleases in this world. Out of sheer malice and hatred of Christ, Satan sows his own kingdom of evil in the world. NOTE: The tares are counterfeits of Christianity. Satan is the master deceiver and what better way to trick the masses than to set up a false, professing church right along side the true, possessing church. At first, the tare-counterfeits are indistinguishable from the wheat-genuine believers. But with growth and time the counterfeits flag their colors and prove to be rank rejecters of the truth (Matthew 13:26). The Bible tells us that we can know unbelievers by their fruit (Matthew 7:15-20). NOTE: The tares, then, are professing believers and groups who claim to be Christians but are not. They are false believers who give the appearance of being true believers. These are liberals, modernists, non-liberals, neo-orthodox, existentialists and others who claim that they are true Christians and represent true churches but are false because they deny true Biblical and historical Christianity. The tares would also include the cultists such as Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, Christian Science, Unitarians and so on. These groups outwardly look and act in many ways like true Christian churches but when you get on the inside you find the poison of false teaching everywhere. The true church has been warned about false teachers (Acts 20:29-30). NOTE: These false Christians, going under the guise of religious appear to be religious and righteous. Yet they are counterfeits. Christ is sowing true believers in this world by scattering men committed to the truth in order to produce more men like Himself. However, Satan is also scattering men committed to a lie to produce men like himself. ILLUSTRATION: Nice Heretics

Matthew 7:14: Because straight is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Matthew 7:15-20: Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Acts 20:29-30: For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

ILLUSTRATION: These false Christians are counterfeits of the real thing. They are usually very nice people. How simple it would be if evil people would only look evil. If hypocrites would only snarl and growl a little bit it would help so much. But they always look so pleasant. They always talk so sweetly. They are such nice people and that is why it is so hard to detect they are giving false teaching.

2. This parable implies that the servants of Christ's household became disturbed by the sign of these tares in the field (13:27). They were surprised at the great number of tares among the wheat. NOTE: In our day, we as God's people, are utterly amazed at the departure from true, Biblical and historic Christianity. Heretics have a free reign in most all churches and no one raises

even an eyebrow. NOTE: The normal reaction of the servants was to root up these false believers and churches and get rid of the phonies (13:28). It is normal for Christians to want to fight, attack and slander all enemies of the truth. But our Lord says to leave them alone and let them grow side by side with the true church (13:28). The reasons they are to be left alone are (1) you cannot change apostates; (2) they will be judged by Christ; (3) to pull up the tares (false believers) would mean also to root up the true wheat. This would mean persecution for the true church which would hinder its effectiveness to the world. NOTE: Church history is filled with incidents of heretic hunts, for while heretics were burned at the stake, put to death or socially persecuted, so were true Christians. NOTE: It is true that persecution always purifies the church but it also brings death, separation of Christian families, loss of possessions, heartaches and sadness to the true church. NOTE: Christ says that Christians are to leave the false, professing church alone and that true Christians are to separate from apostasy (Romans 16:17, 18; II Cor. 6:14-18). True Christians are to separate from and avoid false organizations and false teachers like the plague. We are to expose false teaching and to meet it positively with truth but we can never drive out the false teaching of apostates because Satan has his preachers and his churches. NOTE: While it is true that no local church can be free of unbelievers, it is the task of every local church to maintain as pure a local church as possible. True believers are to separate from the false church and band together in true local churches to be an effective witness to the world. ILLUSTRATION: Judging Denominational Churches.

Romans 16:17, 18: Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

II Cor. 6:14-18: Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

ILLUSTRATION: We must never judge a local church by its denominational label. Just because it is Baptist, Brethren, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Methodist, Mennonite or Independent does not make it a sound church. Each individual church must be tested by what it teaches. There are true churches and true ministers in every denomination, but in some denominations they are hard to find.

E. Verse 39b: Our Lord tells us that there will be a great harvest in the end of the world, literally this should be translated “the end of the age” and this present age ends at the second advent of Christ, and then He will judge this world (13:30). Those who will gather in the harvest will be angels.

F. Verse 40: Christ will take care of the false church in His own time and by His own omnipotent hand of judgment. The true church does not have to raise the arm of the

flesh to subdue the false church. Christ will do that as Judge at the second advent.

G. Verses 41, 42:

1. The false church will be gathered out of Christ's kingdom and judged. This does not mean that the false church was ever in the true spiritual kingdom of Christ, but they made the claim that they were in Christ's kingdom. They were really "doers of iniquity" and "offended" Christ by their scandal of sin. At the judgment, they will be shown to be phonies, unreal, lovers of sin, children of darkness, haters of Christ, rejecters of the Bible. Christ's omniscient eye will judge them through and through and condemn them forever, and Christ will exclude them from His kingdom.

2. These false believers shall be cast into a furnace of fire which is a symbol of eternal punishment. Hell will be total separation from God and a place of eternal torment, for there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Hell will be an awful place to reside, for it will be a place of constant torment.

ILLUSTRATION: Be With My Buddies.

ILLUSTRATION: So often I hear people make a mockery of hell by saying, "Well, if I go to hell I will be there with all my buddies. We will mess around together, drink together, play poker together. We will have a great time in our sins!" Oh, no, my friend, you will have no time for pleasure in hell, for you will be suffering always the eternal pangs of hell's punishment.

3. Verses 41, 42 gives us the answer to the question: How is the world going to end? This present evil age is going to end in judgment at the second advent of Christ. The sovereign Christ will judge this world by His holy nature, and He will leave no stone unturned or overlook any sin of man!

H. Verse 43: After the judgment, "then" the "righteous" or the "children of the kingdom" shine forth in the kingdom of their God. True believers in Christ will go into Christ's kingdom and rejecters of Christ will be excluded. The second advent of Christ will bring the gathering of Christ's elect into the kingdom (Matthew 24:31). NOTE: What a wonderful day that is going to be for real believers in every age. Each one shall be ushered into Christ's kingdom by an angel. There will be trumpets blaring; there will be great joy, much shouting with excitement and constant praise. What a day this will be! Even so come Lord Jesus!!

Matthew 24:31: 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.

IV. CONCLUSION

A. Notice how this parable ends: "Who has ears to hear, let him hear!" The message of the parable is quite clear. It states there are just two types of people in this world - believers and unbelievers. Those who truly believe in Christ are saved and shall enter into Christ's kingdom. Those who do not believe are lost and shall be judged and put out of Christ's kingdom and punished for all eternity.

B. Are you saved or lost? Are you a child of the devil or a child of the King? Are you a true Christian or a false Christian? Are you in Christ's kingdom or in Satan's

kingdom? Only you can answer these questions. Yet, I am constrained to warn you that if you do not have Christ as Savior and Lord, you shall perish in the certain judgment to come.

C. Yet, if you have Christ as your Lord, Savior and King, you shall not perish but you shall shine as the sun for all eternity in Christ's kingdom (John 3:16).

John 3:16: For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.