

Episode #811 Matthew 13 Part 4-Mustard, Leaven, and Tares

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. In Matthew 13, the Lord had taught the Parable of the Sower and the Parable of the Tares of the Field. Now, He was teaching the Parable of the Mustard Seed. This is another likeness of the kingdom of the heavens. A farmer sows a single grain of mustard seed in a field. This is far more sparing than normal, showing how he must prize this seed and be sure of its fertility.

III. The Parable of the Mustard Seed. Matthew 13:31-32.

A. Verse 31. A mustard seed is miniscule. The Lord planted a very small seed, just 120 men on Pentecost, yet it had grown to 3,120 by the end of that day, and it continued to grow. When God lifts His suspension of the kingdom, it will continue to grow until all other governments are put into the shade.

B. Verse 32. The first two parables were in harmony with the normal activities of men and of nature. Yet this parable is not! Are the birds the wicked one, like in the first parable, verse 19? No! Once a thing has been used as a figure, that does not mean it will always be used that way every time afterwards. Some things are inherently good or bad, but some things are neutral and can illustrate a thing good or bad. For example, Rev. 5:5, Christ is a lion, but in I Peter 5:8, the devil is a lion. Notice too that not every detail in a parable is significant, as can be seen from Christ’s interpretation of the parable of the growing grain, as the Lord in His interpretation gave no significance to the servants. These birds may well symbolize the trust men will place in the greatest of all kingdoms of the earth when God plants this kingdom.

IV. The Parable of the Leaven in the Meal. Matthew 13:33.

A. This was a key parable in the controversy between the pre and post millennialists. The post crowd insisted the leaven is the gospel, which they believed would eventually convert the world. The premillennialists insisted it is a likeness of Christendom, that the leaven stood for evil, the woman stands for evil workers, and that this evil would work subtly until all mankind was ripe for the wrath of God. One of the strongest points of this argument was that leaven is generally used as a symbol for something evil. The idea leaven signifies something evil is fixed in the minds of most premillennialists. Clearly leaven is used in some cases for something evil. Yet one simple question can clear this up: Is the kingdom of God something good or something evil? Luke 13:20-21 is parallel, and it compares the kingdom of God to leaven. If leaven is evil, then the kingdom of God is like something evil that, when it is placed in the earth, will permeate it until the whole becomes evil. Perish the thought! Impossible. Leaven is something that is known to work in a thing until it conforms that thing entirely to itself. Evil works that way, but this is not a symbol of something evil. God’s kingdom, with all His power behind it, works this way as well.

B. The woman is used to represent the Lord Jesus. It is not strange to Scripture that a woman would be used to symbolize a man. A woman is used because they were the ones who do the baking.

V. More About the Lord Using Parables. Matthew 13:34-35.

A. Verse 34. This does not mean that every word He spoke every time was a parable, but that he no longer spoke to them without using at least one parable in His exposition.

- B. Verse 35. Again notice the word “fulfilled” or filled full does not necessarily indicate a prediction fulfilled, but that He acted in harmony with this prophecy. In Psalm 78:2, the psalmist (Asaph) is talking about what he is about to write in his psalm. He was not making a prophecy at all! Notice a psalmist is also called a prophet. Remember, a prophet is anyone who spoke God’s words. *Katabole* means “to cast down,” but down along certain lines, like casting metal in a foundry. This word does mean “foundation.” The “world” is a system, order, or arrangement, and does not mean “the earth.” The foundation of the world is not necessarily the creation of the earth. In this case it could mean the foundation of Israel, or of the world of mankind on earth with Adam. This phrase occurs 7 times, “before the foundation of the world” 3 times.

VI. Interpretation of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. Matthew 13:36-43.

- A. Verse 36. Those who make a big deal about Him leaving the house and going to the seaside make nothing of Him going back into the house.
- B. Verse 37. Some of these parables in Matthew 13 deal with the beginning of God’s government in the earth, another will deal with one feature of it, and others will deal with the close of the first period of God’s government. The parable of the tares among the wheat deals with that period of time when the Lord establishes or plants the sons of the kingdom in the world and continues until He appears and severs the wicked from the just at His second coming. There can be no question but that this parable reveals that the kingdom of the heavens as set forth by Matthew precedes the second coming of Christ, that period of time when He will be personally present on the earth. In the parable of the sower, the sower could have been the Lord, His twelve, His seventy, or the Divinely-appointed or inspired witnesses of the Acts period. But that does not apply here. The Sower here is only the Son of Man, of course Jesus Christ. Someday, the Son of Man will plant the kingdom with men that have the kingdom character, as we see in the next verse. Those who say, “Maybe the sower is the preacher and the seed is the gospel” will just have to founder in their unbelief.
- C. Verse 38. The field as the world is clearly defined. Not some part of the world, but the world without limitations.
1. The sons of the kingdom are not the gospel, the word of the kingdom, or the word of God. The kingdom of God once it comes to earth will produce men with the stamp of the kingdom upon them. All governments seek to mold men to their character. God’s government will seek to mold its subjects into the character of God as revealed in Christ. It will not fail, but it will not be a quick process. When the sons of the kingdom are produced, they will be established and planted in the world. The dispensation of grace will never produce sons of the kingdom. This world is full of people who are not sons of the kingdom. He will first clear the world to make room. Ezekiel 11:17-19. After Christ has purged the world of wicked men, II Timothy 4:1, the only classes left will be disciples of the kingdom, children of the kingdom, and sons of the kingdom. Everyone begins as a disciple. The sons of the kingdom are established in the earth. Every position wherein a man’s life touches others will be filled with sons of the kingdom. These take on the character of Jesus Christ. The twelve disciples of our Lord are an example. Eleven went on to maturity, and in the Acts period they had developed the kingdom character.

2. The tares are the sons of the wicked one. They show up in the kingdom like Judas showed up among the disciples. Since the days of Cain there has not been a time when Satan did not have his sons on the earth; planted, rooted, established, and always growing. Satan produced them and they have his character. The Lord describes them as of their father the devil. Any idea of Satan slipping in while men are asleep and sowing tares among the wheat seems almost preposterous in view of the world already filled with such weeds. It is not wheat being sowed in a weed field, but weeds being sown in a wheat field. This prophecy can never have a fulfillment until this world is completely purged of tares and then planted with wheat and then following this an oversowing of the wheat with tares while men drowse. The idea of Satan sneaking in today and sowing a few more tares in a weed field is ridiculous. It seems strange that men would after God's rule begins ever let Satan enter and sow tares, yet that is what He says. Today we are almost surprised when we meet up with a believing Christian who loves God and Jesus Christ. In our time a few grains of wheat are struggling not to be choked out by weeds. This parable happens during the kingdom of God. There is nothing in the past or present that fits this. This shows that the kingdom of the heavens will precede the second coming of Jesus Christ!
- D. Verse 39. Of course the enemy is the devil or Satan. The "end of the age" is better translated "the consummation of the eon." "End" is *sunteleia*, meaning an expected end or consummation. A pregnancy may end in a miscarriage, but it only consummates in a birth. A courtship may end in a breakup, but it only consummates in a marriage. The kingdom of God consummates in Christ's return to earth. The harvest period is to get people ready for Christ to arrive for His personal, Parousia presence. Angels are messengers who are Divinely commissioned.
- E. Verse 40. "The end of this age" is "the consummation of this eon."
- F. Verse 41. "Send out" is *apostelei*, He commissions with authority. Notice that this is His kingdom/government. "All things that offend" is *skandalon*, all things that cause to stumble. There will be no tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the millennial reign of Christ. Then, once those who practice lawlessness are also purged, we have a kingdom purged of all its enemies.
- G. Verse 42. Wailing stands for sorrow and gnashing of teeth for repudiation.
- H. Verse 43. "The kingdom of their Father" is another name for the thousand years of the Parousia of Christ found in Revelation. This is the third and last occurrence of "he who has ears to hear, let him hear!" in Matthew. Only our Lord used this phrase.

VI. Conclusion: The kingdom of heaven, God's great future government, starts small like a mustard seed, but it is highly prized by God, and grows beyond all expectation into a great tree that all nations can trust in. The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, so that when it is mixed into the earth, it conforms the whole world to its own character. The Lord spoke these parables, revealing secrets kept hidden since He had founded the world. Yet we have these secrets here revealed to us. Do we long for the great, coming government of the heavens?

VII. Conclusion. The parable of the tares reveals that this world, before Christ's second coming, is going to be purged of wicked men and sown with those who represent God's kingdom in their character. The devil, however, sows his own representatives into the kingdom. At the consummation of the eon, Christ at His second coming will send His agents out into His world to

gather out of it all things that would cause stumbling, and all who would do wrong. The thousand years of Christ's presence will be like the Garden of Eden with no tree of the knowledge of good and evil and no serpent. Then indeed the righteous will shine forth in a glorious world, as God always intended it to be! May that day come soon.