

Parable of the Wheat and the Tares

Matthew 13:11—43

Jesus' prime mission during His public ministry was to call believing Israel unto Himself so that they would be prepared to go through the Tribulation and finally into the Kingdom. We know His ministry was restricted to Israel (Matthew 10:5—6) and that He, John and the Disciples all preached the good news of the soon-to-come Kingdom (Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 10:7). They knew the Kingdom was at hand not only because Jesus told them, but also because prophecy had already laid out a timeline that they could follow to see what events were to happen and when. This is why Peter, on the day of Pentecost, could reference Joel 2 and say that they were now in the last days.

As Jesus went through Israel many responded and believed. However, many more rejected His call to repent and be baptized so as to bring in the times of refreshing as Peter preached in Acts 3:19. Peter also, of course, preached the Gospel of the Kingdom because this is what Jesus told him to preach (Matthew 10:5; 28:18—20; Acts 1:6). Prophecy is clear that only a remnant of Israel will believe (Isaiah 10:20—22). We see the beginning formation of this remnant when John began to preach. This remnant carries through the Gospels and into Acts where we see the Holy Spirit given to the believing remnant of Israel.

Those who have rejected the Kingdom message will not be given more light. Jesus is turning away from them and in Chapter 13 of Matthew we see Jesus beginning to speak to the unbelievers in parables. When the Disciples asked Jesus why He was suddenly speaking to the crowd in parables He said it was not granted for them to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom.

The mysteries of the Kingdom

The mysteries of the Kingdom were going to be given only to the Disciples and to the believing remnant (verse 11). Those who are believers and are following the Light will be given more light. In this case they will be given the keys to understanding the parables contained in Matthew 13. Those who have knowledge will be given more knowledge while those who have rejected Christ will have little understanding of the Kingdom (verse 12).

These mysteries of the Kingdom were actually things the prophets looked into and wondered about (verse 17). These prophets wrote about the future Kingdom but would not experience the joy and excitement of seeing the Messiah come to this earth and begin pulling His Little Flock of believers together in preparation for the Kingdom. They would love to sit under Christ's teaching as He expounds the mysteries of the Kingdom to them. These mysteries are mysteries only because they have not been revealed yet. These mysteries concern the Kingdom and therefore do not apply directly to the Church, the Body of Christ.

Christ revealed additional information about the Kingdom to the Disciples and believing remnant. They are the ones who have ears to hear and eyes to see. They have accepted His teaching and therefore they will receive more. As He is telling parables, He gives the remnant the keys to interpret these parables. The first two parables in chapter 13 are explained and from this information it will be possible to correctly understand the other five parables. It is to the wise that Jesus is speaking and the wise will be given more understanding. Proverbs 1:1—7 spells out the wisdom that comes from the fear of the Lord. According to verse 6 they will be able to understand a proverb, figure of speech or a riddle. I believe this proverb is written specifically to the Righteous Remnant of Israel who will be going through the Tribulation (see verses 26—29) but certainly can be applied to us today.

The Parable of the wheat and the tares (verses 24—30; 36—43)

This parable, like the parable of the sower, comes with a key to understanding it. After Christ presented this parable to the crowd, the Disciples privately ask Jesus exactly what he meant by these parables. After deciphering the meanings, the Disciples and believing remnant will have the necessary tools to understand the other five parables that are not explained. Remember, these parables are specifically about the Millennial Kingdom and so are not directly applicable to the Body of Christ.

In the parable of the wheat and tares, a man went out to sow good seed in his field. The two plants grew up together until the wheat brought forth fruit and then it was obvious to the servants that an enemy had sown bad seed amongst the good seed. They ask the master if they should pull up the tares but are told to wait until the harvest. At the harvest the tares will be cut, bundles and burned after which the wheat will be gathered and put in his barn.

Verse 36 shows how interested the Disciples were in understanding the things that Jesus had talked about. Their ears, eyes and heart were open to hear, see and understand what He was presenting to them. They had the ears to hear (verse 9, 43). It was to them that would be given more knowledge and be revealed the mysteries of the Kingdom (verses 11, 12).

Christ clearly explains each object in the parable in verses 37—42 so we can correctly interpret what He was saying. Christ = Sower; field = world; good seed = children of the Kingdom; tares = children of Satan; harvest = end of the world; reapers = angels; burning = Lake of Fire. By plugging each interpreted object back into the parable we will see how this all fits into the Kingdom.

Christ (the man) is sending (sowing) the believing remnant (good seed) out into the world (field). They and those who believe the Gospel of the Kingdom are the wheat. When it is nighttime (remember this) Satan comes and sends (sows) unbelievers amongst the believers. It is only after these believers begin to bear fruit that it is evident that these unbelievers are intermixed with the believing remnant. The tares produce a kernel that is bitter and poisonous, very distinct from the wheat kernel that sustains life. The servants of Christ were going to rip out the tares but Christ says to wait until the end so that there is no chance of destroying the believers in the process of ripping out the unbelievers. At the end of the world (the harvest), the angels will go throughout the world and pull out the unbelievers (all that is an offence to the Kingdom) then throw them into the Lake of Fire. The believing remnant will be brought into the Kingdom.

Prophetically accurate

Since we are dealing with God's Word, this parable should conform to prophecy. First we must understand that this will happen in the Tribulation. We know this because it takes place in darkness, after Christ is gone and the Tribulation will happen soon after (John 9:4—5; See also Matthew 24:43; Mark 6:47—52; Luke 17:34; John 6:16—21; 1 Thessalonians 5:2). According to this parable it is during the Tribulation that Satan will come and infiltrate the remnant with unbelievers (Matthew 24:11, 24; Mark 13:22; 2 Peter 2:1; Jude 4). Obviously this is a tactic of Satan throughout history but he will be especially persuasive during the Tribulation. 1 John was written so that the remnant during the Tribulation would be able to discern believers from unbelievers. Judas seems to be an example of a tare sown among wheat.

In the end comes the harvest of the unrighteous (Revelation 14:14—19) followed by the gathering of the righteous (Matthew 24:31). The unrighteous will be judged then thrown into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:11—15) while the righteous will be ushered into the Kingdom (Revelation 20:4—6).

The key to understanding the parables

Now that we have the keys to unlock the mysteries of the Kingdom, we should be able to read the next five parables and correctly interpret them. God didn't give us things that couldn't be understood and applied, however, we do need to rely on the Holy Spirit as we read and meditate on God's Word and depend upon Him to show us how we apply these truths to our everyday life.

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