

STUDY ON THE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

Parables on the Work of the Enemy

Read Matthew 13:24-43; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-21

We will be following the Matthew rendition of these 3 parables that reveals the intent in the heart of God for His kingdom – the Kingdom of Heaven – and the plans of the enemy in attacking these plans. These parables should reveal to us that the devil is active and looking to kill, steal, and destroy God’s kingdom on earth, and our understanding and perspective will enable us thwart his plans as we advance the Kingdom of Heaven.

The 3 Parables are:

1. The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares
2. The Parable of the Mustard Seed
3. The Parable of the Leaven

The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares

“Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So, the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.”””” (Matthew 13:24-30)

Interpretation

“Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.” He answered and said to them: “He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore, as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” (Matthew 13:36-43)

As we look at this parable, we see that the interpretation was given to those who were hungry to know and those who were not hungry were sent away – just hearing a story but no application. This confirms the lesson from the last parable we studied.

In this parable:

- The Sower is the Son of Man – Jesus
- The field is the world (including the church)
- The Good Seeds are the Sons of the Kingdom
- The tares are the sons of the wicked one (or those who are yielded to the devil)
- The sower of the tares is the devil

- The harvest is at the end of age (or at the time each person expires from the earth)
- The reapers are angels (the angels of the Lord)

This is the warning from this parable:

“The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire” (vv41-42)

Jesus did NOT say: *“The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all TARES (i.e. those planted by the devil), and will cast them into the furnace of fire” BUT “all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness”*

I have seen in my time shepherding the sheep of the Lord, good seeds of the Lord get corrupted, offended, and become ineffective because of the effects of the tares. I have heard words like... “so and so did this to me so...”

Points to Note from this Jesus Parable:

1. Satan is mixing his people among true Christians and it would be foolishness to ignore this fact:

Jesus is giving us a heads-up on the plan of the enemy. There is no church, fellowship or gathering of believers that the devil is not looking to infiltrate and plan his own people. We will also be deluded to think that we can always recognise them. We will not until they are fully grown and do not look like the true seed.

Paul warned us in 2 Corinthians:

“And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.” (2 Corinthians 11:14-15)

We are not just talking about “members” but the devil could equally provide ministers who transforms themselves into ministers of righteousness... only to lead many astray.

2. The mixture of the wheat and tares (true believers and the devil-implants) should not be an excuse for unbelievers to refuse to come to Christ.

Amid the mixed congregation, it is important that unbelievers are given the opportunity to come to Christ as most of them are not devil-implants but genuine lost souls seeking to know their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Jesus reiterated His assignment in Matthew 9:13 *“... For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”*

3. The ultimate harvest day will come.

This parable confirms that a day is coming “by and by” when the ultimate harvest will take place. We can call it the Rapture, the 2nd Coming of Christ etc. but the day will certainly come.

“The day of the Lord will come and take everyone by surprise—as unexpected as a home invasion. The atmosphere will be set on fire and vanish with a horrific roar, and the heavenly bodies will melt away as in a tremendous blaze. The earth and every activity of man will be laid bare. “Since all these things are on the verge of being dismantled, don’t you see how vital it is to live a holy life? We must be consumed with godliness while we anticipate and help to speed up the coming of the day of God, when the atmosphere will be set on fire and the heavenly bodies consumed in a blaze.” (2 Peter 3:10-12 TPT)

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

“Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.”” (vv31-32)

In this parable, Jesus qualified the “seed” as “mustard seed”. In the parable of the soils, it was just called “seed” and in the parables of the wheat and tares, the “good seed” is qualified as “wheat”.

Jesus did not give an interpretation to this parable perhaps, because no one asked. We will interpret comparing like with like and following Matthew’s rendition of these parables, they followed in sequence.

- The “mustard seed” is the “word of God” or a person/principle that belongs to God
- The Man in this parable will be Christ
- The field will be the “earth” as mentioned in the previous parable.
- Birds of the air represents the devil and his demons as we see in the parable of the soils:

“A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it.” (Luke 8:5)

“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.” (Luke 8:11-12)

Interpreting this parable:

Understanding the parable of the soils and the parable of the tares, we see that the Son of Man – Jesus Christ – sows the seed which can be the word of God or person / principles of God in His field (this would represent the earth, world, or the church) and although, the word, person or principle seem insignificant, it would grow and be more impactful than anything else.

The bigger it gets, the more it attracts the birds of the air. The “bird of the air” is a symbol of the devil and his demons. The enemy is always attracted to anything God is doing and is growing or meant to grow.

The birds of the air come and nest in its branches. This is not speaking of you or any godly person. I am yet to find scripturally where godly people are referred to as birds of the air. This term is usually reserved for the wicked one and his cohorts.

Once we know this, the ministry of intercession begins to make sense and becomes crucial for any serious church or ministry.

The Parable of the Leaven

“Another parable He spoke to them: “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.”” (v33)

Again, Jesus did not give an interpretation to this parable. We will use scriptural parallel to interpret this parable.

In this parable, like the parable of the mustard seed, reveals the work of the enemy.

- Biblically, leaven or yeast represents something negative and not of God.

In the Old Testament, yeast is a symbol of evil. It was excluded from all sacrifices unto the Lord. There is the feast of the unleavened bread that the Lord requests that all Jews should thoroughly clean their houses and there must be no trace of yeast or leaven anywhere.

“So, this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but that which everyone must eat—that only may be prepared by you. So, you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore, you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.”” (Exodus 12:14-20)

Jesus speaking about the Pharisees and Herod also used leaven / yeast in a negative format:

“Then He charged them, saying, “Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.”” (Mark 8:15)

- In this parable, Jesus used a woman rather than a man that He had previously used. We cannot claim this to be the Son of Man but the opposite of that.
- She puts the yeast in 3 measures of meal (or flour) until it was all leavened.

Interpreting this parable:

The kingdom of heaven is always in contention as the yeast (leaven) of the devil is being placed amid God’s setting hoping to have it all contaminated.

“... Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?” (1 Corinthians 5:6)

“A little leaven leavens the whole lump.” (Galatians 5:9)

As we see in the scriptural references above, the use of leaven (or yeast) is in the negative and it affects the whole lump if not dealt with.

Conclusion

These 3 parables reveal that the enemy either depicted as tares, birds of the air, or yeast is against the Kingdom of Heaven with its physical expression as the Church. We cannot stop the enemy attacking, otherwise, these parables are unnecessary however, we will overcome these attacks because Jesus has won the battle for us. We just must enforce it.

“Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.” (2 Corinthians 2:14)

“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:57)

