

STUDY ON THE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

God's Kingdom Consummated - Parable

Looking at the parables in Matthew 13 which are the kingdom parables, we see Jesus making key points about the kingdom of God. He taught in the first parable on the different types of soil and in the second parable, the work of the devil against the kingdom of God in sowing tares among the wheat. The parable of the mustard seed and that of the leaven repeats the same theme of warning of the works of the devil against God's church.

The parables we learnt last week – parables of the hidden treasure and pearl of great price gives us the perspective of true God's people or kingdom people who for the salvation that Jesus brought, and all the kingdom of God has to offer leaves everything to obtain it. They recognise the value of what they had found.

The Parable of the Dragnet

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels but threw the bad away. So, it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Jesus said to them, “Have you understood all these things?” They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.” Then He said to them, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.”” (Matthew 13:47-52)

This parable reiterates that of the parable of the tares of the field (Matthew 13:24-30). The point is remarkably similar.

- Once there was a field, here there is the sea
- Once there was a crop, here there are fish
- Once there were reapers, here there are fishermen
- Once there was a barn, here there are vessels

It is obvious is that Jesus puts this parable last almost as a repetition of a previous parable on purpose. No doubt it was important to Christ that we understand the point here. It was not repetition for the sake of it but that we might know the importance of the point and order our lives accordingly. The fact that He repeats this truth is an indicator to us to pay special attention.

Jesus tells the Parable of the Dragnet, or the Parable of the Various Kinds of Fish. Jesus prefaces the parable by saying it illustrates an aspect of the kingdom of heaven. The story concerns fishermen using a dragnet, a weighted net dragged along the bottom of a body of water to collect an assortment of fish.

In the parable, the dragnet is cast into the sea and pulled onto shore full of all kinds of fish. Then the fishermen sat down to the business of sorting the fish into the “good” and the “bad.” The fish worth keeping were gathered into containers, but the rest were tossed away.

Jesus then interprets the parable for His disciples: “This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”

We can list out the key elements of this parable:

- The sea is the world.

- The net is the church.
- The enclosed fish of "every kind" are members of the church.
- The good fish are the truly spiritual children of their Father.
- The bad fish are like the tares, sons of the evil one.
- The fact that both kinds are in the net shows the proximity of the good and bad in the kingdom, who are all accounted by men to be "in" it, but some of whom are wicked.
- The beach or shore represents the end of time.
- The net's being "filled" shows that God will attain his full purpose in the redemption of men.
- The sorting of the fish represents the judgment of the last day. The sorters are the angels.
- The casting away of the bad is the casting of the wicked into hell.
- The gathering into vessels represents the salvation of the godly.
- The vessels represent heaven.

This parable like the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares concerns an end-times sorting, aided by angels, when believers will be separated from unbelievers once and for all.

Beloved, the end is coming! Jesus is warning us about it. Watch what you copy! Watch what is acceptable to you and it is not acceptable to the Lord! Guard your hearts.

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

“Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Saviour, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” For this they wilfully forget that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” (2 Peter 3:1-7)

Please note the points from this parable:

- ***Just as the net was cast into the sea drawing many fish, the gospel message is spread into the world, drawing many people to it.***

Q: What is the relationship between “Grace”, “Faith” & “Repentance”?

- ***Just as the net gathered all types of fish, regardless of their value, so the gospel attracts many people who neither repent nor desire to follow Christ.***

Q: What attracts people to the gospel or the church without the need for repentance or relationship with Christ?

- ***Just as the fish could not be sorted until the net was pulled ashore, so false believers masquerading as true Christians will not be made known until the end of the age.***

Q: Why is Jesus warning us of the “children of the devil” that is among “God’s children”?

Q: How can you fully recognise the “children of the devil” from among “God’s children”?

These “bad fish,” or false believers will end up in the lake of fire. No one will fully know these “bad fish” enough to rid them from the “good fish” until the end of times. However, at the time when repentance is still available, they both will be subject to the same gospel of Jesus which involves repentance and relationship at the core of it. The “good fish” will accept and change, and the “bad fish” will remain unchanged.

“The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Revelations 20:13-15)

The sobering main point of the parable can be stated thus: “A day of reckoning will come in which God will separate the true believers from mere pretenders, and those found to be false will be cast into hell or lake of fire.”

Conclusion to all Matthew 13 Parables:

“Jesus said to them, “Have you understood all these things?” They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.” Then He said to them, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.”” (vv51-52)

Christ's putting this question to the disciples, shows that the message is delivered although they had some difficulty in them; that they were of importance to be understood.

Jesus was concerned that they should understand them and perhaps, if they had answered no, then He would have gone over them again. IT IS THAT IMPORTANT THAT THEY GET IT AND WE GET IT!

After the disciples claim they understood the parables, now He responds by referring to scribes, who, at that time, were Israel's teachers of the law. They studied and interpreted Scripture and told the people the proper way to live by it. In a very meaningful sense, these disciples are being taught deeper truths by Jesus, and so are like “[scribes] trained for the kingdom of heaven.” As such, the disciples' work would be to teach these truths to others (Matthew 28:19–20), both “old” and “new.”

The image Jesus creates is that of someone wealthy who presents the treasures of his household. Some of those items are old. We might think of antiques and family heirlooms. Some of the treasure is newly acquired, but still greatly valuable. Jesus pictures teachers of these great truths as those who show both God's revelation in the Old Testament Scriptures and the new revelations of God's truth through Jesus Christ. Those teachers would need to show how these treasured truths fit together.