

Lesson 20

More Kingdom Truths

Introduction:

As Jesus sits in a boat by the shore He tells the multitudes three more parables concerning the kingdom of God: the wheat and the tares, the mustard seed, and the leaven. He then leaves the multitudes and enters a house. Once there He explains the parable of the wheat and tares to His disciples and tells them three more parables: the treasure in a field, the pearl of great price and the dragnet cast into the sea.

Reading The Scripture:

Matthew 13:24-52, Mark 4:30-34

Other Parables Spoken to the Multitudes

Matthew 13:24-30

(Gospels forged together into one seamless story, in collaboration with New American Standard Bible, authored by Michael Gibson, Founder of Spirit & Truth, dba Key 2 Changes: "Follow Me: A Message from God", a Journey with Jesus)

He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed **tares** also among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprang up and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. And the slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' And the slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No; lest while you are gathering up the tares, you may root up the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn."'"

Jesus Explains the Parable of the Tares

Matthew 13:36-43

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Then He left the multitudes, and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." And He answered and said, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then **THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN** in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear."

THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN. Daniel 12:3

Other Parables Spoken to the Multitudes **Matthew 13:31-35 and Mark 4:30-34**

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He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all other seeds; but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants, and becomes a tree, so that **THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES.**" He spoke another parable to them, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three pecks of meal, until it was all leavened." All these things Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable, so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, **"I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN PARABLES; I WILL UTTER THINGS HIDDEN SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD."**

THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES. Ezekiel 17:23

I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN PARABLES; I WILL UTTER THINGS HIDDEN SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD. Psalms 78:2

Other Parables Spoken to the Disciples

Matthew 13:44-52

(Gospels forged together into one seamless story, in collaboration with New American Standard Bible,
authored by Michael Gibson, Founder of Spirit & Truth, dba Key 2 Changes: "Follow Me: A Message from God", a Journey with Jesus)

"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down, and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away. So it will be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth, and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Have you understood all these things?" They said to Him, "Yes." And He said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old."

The Command:

1. He who has ears, let him hear.

The Lesson:

Jesus concludes His interpretation of the parable of the wheat and the tares by issuing a command to His disciples. *"He who has ears, let him hear."* Jesus wants His disciples to firmly grasp what He is saying, because the parable of the wheat and the tares is helpful in confirming the truths gleaned from the parables of the sower and the growing plant. It also provides additional insight and direction to the other kingdom parables.

Since Jesus has given the interpretation in the parable of the wheat and tares already, this lesson focuses on providing insight into the meaning of its terms to clarify your understanding. The

parable begins with the statement, *“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field”*.¹ The following observations can be made from His statement:

1. The expression “kingdom of heaven” is another way of saying the kingdom of God and is used throughout Matthew’s gospel. The word heaven was substituted by Jews to avoid the use of the word “God” in their literature as a pious observance.
2. Jesus interprets the word “man” to be the “son of man.” In a literal sense this can mean any descendant of Adam, however the term was also used as a title of the messiah as derived from the book of Daniel, chapter 7, verses 13-14.
3. From the parable of the sower we learned that seeds represented words. Jesus interprets the good seed as the children of the kingdom of God. The term children can also be read as son, descendant, or offspring. From this we learn that the word of God produces godly offspring. These offspring are created when the word of God is believed in the heart of man. They grow to maturity and produce more seed that can be planted in other hearts.
4. The field is the world. The Greek word for world is kosmos. It doesn’t mean the earth but rather the way all things were created to be. The earth is part of the kosmos. So are the heavenly bodies, plants, animals and the laws of physics, etc.
5. The world, which contains various soils, belongs to the son of man not the devil.

The next lines of the parable read this way, *“But while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprang up and bore grain, then the tares became evident also.”*

1. The term while men were sleeping is just a way of saying men were unaware of what was going on or they weren’t paying attention.
2. Jesus declares that the enemy of the son of man is the devil. The term devil means accuser. The devil is also called Satan, which means opponent.
3. Sowing tares in an enemy’s wheat fields was common practice in ancient times. The tares Jesus is talking about are “bearded darnel” a poisonous rye grass which remains indistinguishable from wheat until the grain appears in the head at maturity. According to the ancients, tares are not a different kind of seed, but only a degenerate kind of wheat. Sowing tares results in a decreased wheat crop, as the tares tend to strangle the wheat and take up the nutrients in the soil. It also demands more work of the farmer to separate the wheat from the tares.
4. From this parable we learn that the devil uses the same method of sowing his seed as the son of man: by speaking. The devil corrupts the earth, from which man is made, by his words. When Satan’s words are believed in the heart of man they produce an offspring of the devil who in turn produces more words to be sown in the hearts of other men. According to Jesus, the devil’s offspring are those who cause others to stumble and those who are a law unto themselves.²

The final line of the parable reads this way, *“Allow the wheat and the tares to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, first gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.”*

1. By allowing the wheat and tares to grow together indicates that good and evil coexist in this world until the harvest.

¹ Matthew 13:24

² Matthew 13:40-42

2. The reapers are described as the son of man's angels. The word angel means messenger. These messengers can be either heavenly or human.
3. Jesus said the harvest is the end of the age (world). The Greek word used for age or world is *aion*. It indicates a period of existence.
 - a. The age ends when the word of God, which has been planted in the heart of an individual, grows to maturity and is harvested. This results in a new creation and is known in Christian circles as being born again.
 - b. In a corporate sense, the age ends when God creates a new heaven and new earth as described in the book of Revelation 20:11-15 and 21:1. This event should not be confused with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ occurring a thousand years previously.

When taken as a whole the five parables that Jesus spoke to the multitudes form a broad view of the kingdom of God. They show how it starts (the sower), how it grows (the growing plant) and how it ends (the wheat and tares). The growth of the kingdom is occurring both visibly (the mustard seed) and internally (the leaven) at the same time.

The Other Parables:

The parable of the mustard seed demonstrates that the kingdom of God starts out extremely small but grows to great size. In Israel, the mustard plant can obtain a height of up to fifteen feet thus giving it the appearance of a tree. It is a well-known fact that birds are attracted to the mustard plant and actually build their nests in its branches. However, Jesus is referring to something else.

Remember, that in the parable of the sower the birds represented Satan. When the kingdom of God is in seed form Satan can easily devour it. But when full-grown as illustrated by the mustard tree he can no longer destroy it. But once the kingdom of God has become large Satan can make his home there and devour the seed that is produced by it. Birds usually build their nests in the forks of a tree or where a new branch is formed. Where division in the Church occurs Satan can be found.

The parable of the leaven illustrates that the kingdom of God changes everything it comes in contact with. Many Christians believe that leaven represents sin. However, there is a more accurate view. Leaven is a change agent. It changes the characteristics of all that it is put into. Jesus would later equate teaching with leaven when He tells the disciples to "*beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees*".³ Teaching, whether true or false corrupts or changes the mind, either for good or evil.

In the parable, leaven was put in three portions of meal. The three portions represent the whole thing that was leavened. The Hebrew standard whole unit of dry measure is the ephah and it takes three seahs to equal one ephah. By this Jesus is indicating that every human being consists of three parts: spirit, soul, and body. When the leaven or the kingdom of God in this case, is introduced into each of the parts the entire nature of the person will be changed.

The parable of the treasure hidden in the field reveals more truths concerning the kingdom of God. Treasure indicates that it is valuable. The field represents the world. The kingdom of God was hidden in the soil of the field, which represents the heart of man. In the parable a man was looking for the treasure, discovered it. The man represents Jesus Christ, the Son of Man. After

³ Matthew 16:11-12

discovering the treasure he hid it again. Then he gave his life, which was everything he had, to purchase the world.

The treasure that Jesus was looking for in the hearts of men was the belief that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus would discover this treasure in the heart of Peter when He asked the disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter replied that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Then Jesus told him, *“Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.”*⁴ Jesus hid this treasure again when He told the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ.

The parable of the pearl of great price establishes the fact that the kingdom of God is the most valuable thing that anyone can possess. A merchant is one who makes a living from buying and selling. He is a savvy businessman and knows the value of his merchandise. When he finds the most valuable thing that he can possess, he sells everything he owns to obtain it. At the moment of purchase the merchant is out of business, he has nothing more to barter with. What would be the sense in selling the pearl of great price to obtain other pearls of less value again?

The merchant represents anyone in this world who is seeking after valuable things in this life. To possess the kingdom of God requires that an individual give up everything he has considered valuable in exchange for it. At that point why should anyone renounce the kingdom of God in order to obtain back the things he had before.

A second interpretation of the parable of the pearl of great price also has merit. In this scenario the merchant is the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is best expressed today as working through the Church. So it might be said that the Church is looking for something to invest itself in or to possess. The pearl of great price represents the ultimate thing that can be obtained. In fact it is so valuable that the Church should be seeking after it. What is it? The patriarch Job gives the answer during his discourse on wisdom in chapter 28 of the book bearing his name. In verse 18 he says, *“Coral and crystal are not to be mentioned; and the acquisition of wisdom is above that of pearls.”* The analogy is clear; the pearl of great price is wisdom! Job concludes his discourse by defining what wisdom is. *“Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding”*.⁵

The parable of the dragnet cast into the sea reveals that the kingdom of God is not selective in this age. In the parable, fish represent people. This conclusion is derived from Jesus’ calling of Peter, Andrew, James and John the four fishermen. Jesus said that from then on they would be catching men. The kingdom of God, as best represented as working through the Church today, draws all kinds of people to itself.

As the net is pulled through the water the fisherman cannot see what is being caught and it is not until the net is pulled ashore that the type of fish can be determined. The Jews would then separate their catch into two groups, those that were clean could be eaten and those that were unclean were discarded. Clean fish were those having both scales and fins while the unclean fish were those that lacked one of these characteristics or the other. Prior to the coming of the next age in which a new heaven and earth will be revealed there will be a separation of individuals drawn into the kingdom of God. The righteous will be preserved and the unrighteous will be discarded

⁴ Matthew 16:17

⁵ Job 28:28

Application:

Bring any questions you have concerning the eight kingdom of God parables that we have previously studied to the next group meeting for general discussion.