

THE PARABLE OF THE WHEAT AND TARES

By Wm. Dwight McKissic, Sr.
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Matthew 13:24-30, 36-42

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“A Kingdom Community”

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In Matthew 13, eight parables are recorded. The first extensive parable recorded by Jesus in Matthew’s gospel is called, The Parable of the Sower. The second parable recorded in Matthew is often called, The Parable of the Wheat and Tares. These two parables are related. Both parables are designed to unveil or reveal mysteries concerning the kingdom of heaven to the twelve disciples. Consider the question the disciples asked Jesus about His parabolic teaching methodology (Matthew 13:10,11).

“And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” He answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given” (Matthew 13:10, 11).

The “mysteries of the kingdom” unveiled to the disciples in the first parable (The Parable of the Sower) was simply this: The word of the kingdom will be rejected by the majority, yet it will be gladly and genuinely received by many (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23). The good news of the gospel of the kingdom will be rejected by most people.

The “mystery of the kingdom” unveiled to the disciples in The Parable of the Wheat and Tares is simply this: Jesus taught that the sons of the kingdom and the sons of the wicked one will coexist until harvest time. People with genuine faith and people with a false profession of faith will exist together between Christ’s first and second coming.

I. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

“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” (Matthew 13:24-26).

Jesus introduced this parable by saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like...” (Matthew 13:24b)

Why did Matthew frequently use the term “kingdom of heaven” where Mark, Luke, and John used only “kingdom of God” and never “kingdom of heaven”? Is there a distinction between the “kingdom of heaven”

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and “the kingdom of God”? The standard answer is no, there is no distinction. Most scholars say that Matthew used the term “kingdom of heaven” as a softened reference to God, so as not to offend the Jews, who were very particular about how the name of God was used. Most scholars believe the term “kingdom of heaven” and “the kingdom of God” are synonymous; and indeed to a certain extent they are synonymous terms.

Yet, a distinction seems intended: The “kingdom of God” never includes unsaved people, but the “kingdom of heaven” includes both saved people and others, those who profess to be Christian kingdom citizens, but are not. This distinction is seen in the Parable of the Wheat and Tares, the Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13: 31-35), and the Parable of the Net (Matthew 13:47-52).

II. THE MEANING OF THE PARABLE OF THE WHEAT AND TARES

Jesus spoke the parable of the sower to teach His disciples that there would be diverse responses to the kingdom message. Jesus spoke the Parable of the Tares to teach His disciples to recognize the fact that the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven faces a constant enemy, that requires an awareness of a dual reality or mixed congregation in the kingdom of heaven on earth. At the “end of the ages,” the angels will separate the “tares” or false professions from the “kingdom of heaven” and deliver the true “sons of the kingdom” unto the “kingdom of God”.

Listen to what the Apostle Paul said about the “end of the age”:

“Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death... Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

The kingdom of God is now and not yet. The kingdom of God is here and hereafter. The kingdom of God was inaugurated when Jesus burst on the scene in Galilee, but it will not be consummated until He returns.

The kingdom parables recorded in Matthew 13 are designed to teach Jesus’ disciples the realities and expectations of what lies ahead in the kingdom enterprise.

The man who sowed good seed in His field is Jesus Himself (Matthew 12:37).

The good seed are the sons of the kingdom (Matthew 12:38b).

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The seeds were sown in “his field” (Matthew 13:24b).

The field is the world (Matthew 13:38a).

The enemy is Satan (Matthew 13:39).

The tares are the sons of the wicked one (Matthew 13:38b).

III. THE PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS OF THIS PARABLE

- A. The kingdom enterprise will have to interact with dual realities and a mixed composition until Jesus returns (Job 1:5, 6; 2:1). Matthew 7:21, John 6:70, Jude 5, Mark 1.
- B. The kingdom of God will have to engage in spiritual warfare until Christ returns (Matthew 13:27, 23: 3:12).
- C. Although the field is the world and the “sons of the wicked one” are planted in the field, they manage to make their way into the church and disguise themselves as saints. Appearing among the sons of the kingdom are also the sons of the wicked one (Matthew 13:28b).
- D. It is difficult to distinguish the sons of the kingdom from the sons of the wicked one. There are tares in the pulpit, choir stand, ushers fellowship, etc.
- E. If you remove the tares, you also uproot the wheat, therefore you must let them grow together (Matthew 13:29, 30).
- F. The Lord has an appointed time to separate the wheat from the tare (Matthew 13:30, 39-40). The angels will do the separating.
- G. The future of the sons of the kingdom is glorious. The future of the sons of the wicked one is judgment and destruction (Matthew 13:40-43).

Summary

Jesus taught that the kingdom of God faces a constant enemy, that requires an awareness of a dual reality and ultimate separation. Awareness of this dual reality requires that kingdom souls develop wisdom and warfare skills, in order to advance God's kingdom. The sons of the kingdom and the sons of the wicked one will coexist until harvest time. When harvest time comes there will be great separation.

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