

The Parable of the Wheat and Tares;

We have been discussing the kingdom parables which begin in the thirteenth chapter of the Book of Matthew. This chapter is also the turning point of Matthew. In the first twelve chapters, Jesus had been preaching in the major cities of Judea where He made many converts. However, the majority of them were Gentiles because, as a whole, the nation of Israel rejected Him.

In chapter thirteen, Jesus begins to teach in parables. The disciples were amazed, for until this time, Jesus' teachings had been straight-forward. The reason He now uses parables is so that the hearing ear can discern and understand the mysteries of the parables, while those who have rejected Him can hear the same thing but not be able to comprehend it.

In our last issue, we took up the Parable of the Sower and the Seed which was about evangelism during the Church Age. Now let's look at the second parable, the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares which is about evangelism during the Tribulation.

In the Parable of the Sower and the Seed, Jesus talked about "things new." In the second parable, He talks about "things old." This is because evangelism during the Tribulation is well-documented in the Old Testament, thus it is not a completely new subject like the Church Age was.

The second parable is found in Matthew 13:24-30.

24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: 25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. 26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. 27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? 28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? 29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say

to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

Verse 24 sounds very much like the first parable; however, there are dramatic differences between the two. For example, in verse 25, "while men slept" refers to the attitude of all man-kind toward the Gospel during the Tribulation. As a whole, mankind will be cold concerning God. Even though the miraculous power of God will be in demonstration, the miraculous power of satan will also be in demonstration through lying signs and wonders. False christs and false prophets will arise and they are going to do many things to deceive the people. Though earthquakes, wars and rumors of wars, tribulation, and famine will be going on, in general, the heart of man-kind will be apathetic toward the things of God. Men will be sleeping.

We see seeds of the Tribulation beginning today. I don't believe that after the Church is raptured, the Tribulation is going to come suddenly. I believe that right now we are seeing a transition period. Although the Church is getting stronger, we are finding that the world is getting worse. We have miraculous powers, signs, and demonstrations occurring today, but the ways of God's glory are going to be even greater before we are raptured out. Even so, some people are going to be so apathetic that they won't care. As these people go into the Tribulation, they will be the ones who are referred to as sleeping.

Verse 25 and 26 tell of the enemy sowing tares among the wheat and that the two grow up together. Wheat and tares look very much alike, but the difference is that the wheat produces fruit while the tares cannot. This idea of fruit is used in Matthew 7:15, when Jesus refers to false prophets, He calls wolves in sheep's clothing and says, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." In other words, they look so much like sheep, that for awhile, it's hard to tell the difference, but stick around long enough to see what the fruit is. The same is true here, the tares look like the wheat, but in the end do not produce fruit. In verses 27-30 the "harvest" is the Second Advent of the Lord. "Gathering the wheat into the barn" refers to the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ and the believers who will go into it.

Let's take a look at what Jesus tells them in Matthew 13:37-43.

If you will remember, in the Parable of the Sower and the Seed, believers are the sowers during the Church Age, but in this parable, "...He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;" (Matthew 13:37). Since the believers have been raptured off the earth, there is no one left to do the work of sowing, so Jesus becomes the sower during the Tribulation.

Actually, there are four different ways the gospel will be spread during the Tribulation. Evangelism is going to be more miraculous during the Tribulation than it is now. God is going to shift into high gear simply because the floodgates have now been opened. I believe that the Church is the dam that is holding back the flood tides of satan. One of these days the dam is going to be lifted, and the flood tides are going to come across this earth. But, when satan comes in like a flood, the Spirit of God raises up a standard. God has not appointed us unto wrath. A lot of people focus on the doom and agony of the Tribulation and neglect the fact that it will be the greatest time of evangelism the world has ever seen, because where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound. Here are the four types of evangelism that will prevail during the Tribulation.

1. The 144,000. According to Revelation 7:1-8, this 144,000 is made up of 12,000 sealed out of each of the twelve tribes of Israel. You say, "How do they get born again?" I have to take it from this verse of scripture that if the sower at that time is the Son of Man, they must receive supernatural intervention. They must have angelic appearances, or Jesus must appear and personally preach the gospel to them so that they all become born- again and start the ball of evangelism rolling. The main ministry of the 144,000 will be to preach during the first half of the Tribulation.

2. The two witnesses. The bulk of their ministry is during the second half of the Tribulation. This is found in Revelation 11:1-14.

3. The Tribulational saints. Once a person is born-again and equipped, he, too, will be preaching the Word of God. This is found in Revelation 14:12, 13. Tribulational saints will be ministering the gospel of the kingdom.

4. Angels (Revelation 14:6-7). There are occasions told about in the Word where angels have preached, but they are rare. However, because of the intensity of the time, angels will be preaching the gospel during the second half of the Tribulation.

Let's continue with Jesus' interpretation of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares and find out where these sowers are going to sow. "The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked *one*;" (Matthew 13:38). The word "world" is from the Greek word "kosmos." It more accurately means the world system or the world's order. Thus, the field is not literally the ground you walk on; it is the world system which is dominated by satan. II Corinthians 4:4, says that satan is the god of this kosmos, this world system which is wrapped up in darkness. But, one day Jesus came to this world system of disorder and darkness. Now He is the Light of the World!

There is another use of "world" found in Matthew 13:39. "The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels." The Greek word used here is "aion," and is better translated as "age" What He is saying is that the harvest is the end of the age. This does not refer to the Church Age, for the Rapture is the end of the Church Age. Rather, this harvest is the end of the Jewish Age. The Tribulation makes up this seven years of the Jewish Age. When Jesus went to the Cross, the Jewish Age which began with Abraham, came to a skidding halt, even though it still had seven years left which had to be fulfilled. The Church Age, which began at the Cross and will end with the Rapture, has been inserted between the first part of the Jewish Age and these last seven years. When the Church is raptured, the earth will again enter back into the Jewish Age. This shift back to the Jewish Age is one reason why it would be impossible for the Church to be on the earth during the Tribulation. The Tribulation is also called "Jacob's troubles." Jacob is the nation of Israel, so Jacob's troubles specifically refers to unbelievers of Israel. This is God's wrath on a Christ- rejecting world.

In verse 40, Jesus is still speaking of the Jewish Age when He says, "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world." Remember, the time at which Jesus actually spoke these words was still the Jewish Age.

They had not yet entered into the Church Age, so when He says "this age," He means the Jewish Age.

In Luke 21:12-24, Jesus is telling His disciples of tragedies which will come upon the nation of Israel and He says in verse 24, "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled." We are living during the closing moments of the Age of the Gentiles when the "times of the Gentiles" will be fulfilled. The Rapture of the Church will indicate that the time of the Gentiles is over.

Luke 21:25, tells us about the Tribulation which comes after the Rapture. "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring." "Distress of nations" means anguish for the moment. "Perplexity" means anguish for the future. In other words, not only will they be disturbed about what is going on around them, they also will not know what the future holds. The sea and the waves referred to are the nations. The Gentile nations will be roaring and in waves and tumult because of the anguish and because of the judgments that are the earth.

Luke 21:26-27, tell us more about the Tribulation. "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the power of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." This is not talking about the Rapture, because at the Rapture only the Church sees Jesus. But verse 27 says that all the nations will see Him. The seas and the waves that are rolling will see Him returning with power and great glory at the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus. Until the time of the Second Advent, people will have the opportunity to receive Christ as their Savior; however, at the Second Advent, it will be too late! At this time the curse will be lifted off the earth and the last enemy that will be put under foot will be death!

Because physical death will be eliminated, sinners will be running around begging the mountains to fall on them and kill them but they won't be able to die. Instead, they are going to have to face Jesus at His judgment when He divides and sets all the nations before Him. He will set the goats on one hand and the sheep on the

other; the wheat on one hand, the tares on the other. As He divides up the nations of the world, they are going to come before Him and say, "We know you, Jesus," and He is going to say, "Depart from Me, ye workers of iniquity, for I never knew you" (Matthew 7:22-23 paraphrased). They will be tied into bundles as tares and they will be cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. But the wheat will go on into the glorious millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ!

As we finish the interpretation of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, let's look at Matthew 13:40-41. "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity." The Second Advent which is spoken of here is the exact opposite of the Rapture. At the Rapture all the *believers* are taken off the earth and into heaven, but at the Second Advent of the Lord, all the *sinners* are taken off the earth and raptured into hell. Angels come and literally take all things that offend off the earth. Furthermore, at the Second Advent of the Lord, ten thousands of saints will be returning with Jesus. All the unbelievers will be gone, so the righteous coming from heaven will rule and reign for a thousand years with the righteous who are on the earth. What a honeymoon Jesus is going to throw!

In Matthew 13:42, we find out what the angels do to those who do iniquity, "And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

John the Baptist prophesied of this in Matthew 3:11-12. He said that this time was going to come. Let me give you a little background to these verses. John the Baptist has been prophesying that Jesus was going to come. He had people turning away from their evil ways and turning toward the Lord. While he was baptizing these believers in the wilderness, the religious leaders came along. They began to make fun of him and mock him, so he turned to them and preached to them. He called them vipers and snakes. "You generation of vipers. What did you come out here for?" He called them a generation of vipers because they were of their father satan, the big viper.

As we come to verse eleven, we find two groups of people - the still wet, newly baptized believers and the scribes and Pharisees who are grumbling against John

because he is attracting the crowds out of the synagogues. As he speaks to them, he includes both groups in one statement, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire:" (Matthew 3:11), When he says, "I indeed baptize you with water," he is speaking to believers. And when he speaks of being baptized with the Holy Ghost, he is speaking to believers. But, the baptism with fire is directed only towards the unbelievers, the scribes and the Pharisees! They will be among the ones who are wailing and gnashing their teeth.

Verse 12, goes on to say, "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

A fan is a grain shovel or a winnowing fork that is used to throw the grain into the air to separate the wheat from the chaff. The floor is symbolic of the earth. The wheat which will be gathered into the garner is made up of believers who will be burned up with unquenchable fire. This is a warning John is giving to those who keep resisting God.

These are the same people spoken of in Matthew 13:42, who do iniquity and are cast into a furnace of fire. On the other hand, the righteous have not been appointed unto wrath and we learn what will happen to them in Matthew 13:43. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Aren't you glad that you are the wheat and that you do not have to be cast into the fire, but will shine forth with Jesus throughout eternity!

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