

MT. 13 PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM PART 1



We now come to a very important part of the Scriptures—the parables of Jesus Christ about the kingdom of God. The term *parable*, from the Greek word, *parabolais*, literally means to “throw beside.” *Vincent’s Word Studies* explains, “A parable is a form of teaching in which one thing is *thrown beside* another. Hence its idea is of a *comparison*.”

Barnes Commentary adds, “The word ‘parable’ is derived from a Greek word signifying “to compare together,” and denotes a similitude taken from a natural object to illustrate a spiritual or moral subject. It is a narrative of some fictitious or real event, in order to illustrate more clearly some truth that the speaker wished to communicate. In early ages it was much used. Pagan writers, as Aesop, often employed it. In the time of Christ it was in common use. The prophets had used it, and Christ employed it often in teaching his disciples....The ‘design’ of speaking in parables was the following:

1. To convey truth in a more interesting manner to the mind, adding to the truth conveyed the beauty of a lovely image or narrative.
2. To teach spiritual truth so as to arrest the attention of [simple] people, making an appeal to them through the ‘senses.’
3. To convey some offensive truth, some pointed personal rebuke, in such a way as to bring it “home” to the conscience. Of this kind was the parable which Nathan delivered to David in 2 Sam.12:1-7, and many of our Savior’s parables addressed to the Jews.
4. To ‘conceal’ from one part of his audience truths which he intended others should understand. Thus Christ often, by this means, delivered truths to his disciples in the presence of the Jews, which he well knew the Jews would not understand; truths pertaining to them particularly, and which he was under no obligations to explain to the Jews.”

It is quite important to note the fourth point, for mainline Christianity doesn’t emphasize it since they want the parables to be understandable to

everyone and in that way have this be “the only day of salvation.”

We read, “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. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them’. But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it” (Mt. 13:11-17).

We thus see the biblical truth that in general, God is not opening the eyes of the world, rather only to those He is now calling. As Christ said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up in the last day” (John 6:44).

In a sense, the entire Bible is this way, for spiritual truth is mostly hidden to the world.

The parable of the sower

Let’s study the first parable: “Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some *seed* fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty,

some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Mt. 13:3-9).

In Mark 4, we read, "But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to those who are outside, all things come in parables....The sower sows the seed....The seed is the word of God" (Mr. 4:10). So the sower is God that sows mainly through His ministry, although members can also be used to call others through their examples and answers.

Next, combining all three Gospels about this parable we read, "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand *it*, then the wicked *one* (Satan) comes (immediately) and snatches away (the word), what was sown in his heart (lest they believe and be saved). This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places (on the rock), this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For (in time of temptation) when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles (falls away). Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches (and the desires of other things entering in) (and the pleasures of life) choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful (and brings no fruit to maturity). But he who received seed on the good ground is he who (having heard the word with a noble and good heart), (accepts it) and understands *it*, keeps it and bears fruit with patience), who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Mt. 13; Mr. 4; Luke 8).

This first category of those called is **the seed sown in the wayside**. This describes the person that hears the message of the kingdom of God and how he can be a part of it, but then something quickly hinders him from acting on it.

Satan knows this is the best time to get at him, before his convictions sink its roots, so he devises some temptation, persecution or trial to discourage, distract or frighten him into inaction. It can also be through laziness, or a comment someone who supposedly "knows" some negative gossip about the church or of some member and

ridicules anyone following the church. The point is, for some reason, the person rejects God's calling before it can take root.

The second category, **the seed sown in rocky ground** is the person who lasts longer in God's way than the first, and does act on God's truths with enthusiasm. He begins the conversion process, yet, eventually, a severe trial knocks him off God's way since he had not deepened his roots, (he lacks spiritual maturity) and the trial is too much for him so he quits.

The third category is **the seed sown among the thorns**. This is the person who is converted, produces spiritual fruit, but lets the cares, riches or pleasures of the world choke his conversion. As *Robertson's Word Pictures* says, "Lust for money and care go together and between them spoil many an earnest religious nature. The thorns flourish and the character sickens and dies, choked to death for lack of spiritual food, air, and sunshine."

The last category, **the seed sown in good ground**, is the person who, with a good and noble heart, accepts God's truths, lives it, stays close to God and endures trials and temptations to the very end of his life, producing abundant spiritual fruit.

The parable of the wheat and tares

The second parable says, "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'" (Mt. 13:24-30).

Again, Christ only explained the meaning to His disciples. "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 (see 1 Jn. 3:4), 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!" (Mt. 13:36-43).

Robertson's Word Pictures explains, "The enemy deliberately sowed 'the darnel' (*zizania* is not 'tares,' but 'darnel,' a bastard wheat) over (*epi*) the wheat, 'in the midst of the wheat.' This bearded darnel, *lolium temulentum*, is common in Palestine and resembles wheat except that the grains are black. In its earlier stages it is indistinguishable from the wheat stalks so that it has to remain till near the harvest.

Barne's adds, "An enemy came 'in the night' when it could not be seen and scattered bad seed on the newly plowed field, perhaps before the good seed had been harrowed in. Satan thus sows false doctrine in darkness. In the very place where the truth is preached, and while the hearts of people are open to receive it, by false but plausible teachers he takes care to inculcate false [doctrine]. Often it is one of his arts, in a revival of religion, to spread secretly dangerous notions of piety. Multitudes are persuaded that they are Christians who are deceived. They are awakened, convicted, and alarmed. They take this for conversion...All these may exist, and still there be no true love to God or Christ, and no real hatred of sin and change of heart. An enemy may do it to deceive them, and to bring dishonor on religion.... Even the farmers, who in this country generally 'weed' their fields, do not attempt to separate the one from the other. They would not only mistake good grain for them, but very commonly the roots of the two are so intertwined that it is impossible to separate them without plucking up both. Both, therefore, must be left to 'grow together' until the time of harvest. Thus, 'tares' aptly represented hypocrites in the church. Strongly resembling Christians in their experience, and, in some respects, their lives, it is

impossible to distinguish them from genuine Christians, nor can they be separated until it is done by the Great Searcher of hearts at the day of judgment. An enemy, the devil, hath done it. And nowhere has he shown profounder cunning or done more to adulterate the purity of the gospel. 'And went in his way.' There is something very expressive in this. He knew the soil; he knew how the seed would take root and grow. He had only to sow the seed and let it alone. So Satan knows the soil in which he sows his doctrine. He knows that in the human heart it will take deep and rapid root. It needs but little culture. [God's way] needs constant attendance and care. Error, and sin, and hypocrisy, on the other hand, are the native products of the human heart, and, when left alone, start up with deadly [multiplication]."

Thus, this parable can be applied in two ways. The tares can be found outside of the church in the many counterfeit religions Satan has spawned, or inside the church itself. In the first manner, it illustrates how Satan plants false religions in the world, and God has allowed this to happen. He will not act to root out these false religions until Christ comes in His kingdom and the "veil" of religious deception will be removed (Is. 25:7).

Secondly, It can be applied to what happens inside the church throughout the ages. As Peter said, "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words, for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber" (2 Peter 2:1-3).

Jude adds, "For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4).

Christ told us to be wary and make sure you carefully examine the fruits – the long term results of the faith – and not let the appearance of things fool you (Mt. 7:20). Remember to apply Pr. 18:17 and see both sides on an issue before deciding.