PARABLES OF JESUS

THE PARABLE OF THE WEEDS, MUSTARD SEED AND LEAVEN - MATTHEW 13:24-43

A. The Parable of the Weeds Presented (24-30)
   1. The former parable is the setting for this parable (24), ***He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field,***

      a. Literally, the kingdom of heaven *has become like,* the emphasis is a change in the kingdom program because of Israel's rejection of Jesus.
      b. J. Dwight Pentecost, *Since Christ through "the sons of the kingdom" (Matt. 13:38) is active in the world sowing the Word of God, what will be Satan's activity during the course of this age? Are those who sow the seed to anticipate freedom from opposition by the evil one? Such questions find their answer in this parable.*

   2. An enemy of the sower sowed weeds while men slept and weeds appeared with the wheat (25-26), ***but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. 26 So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also.***

      a. The weed was probably darnel which looks like wheat when the plants are young.
      b. Thomas Constable, *The roots would intertwine with those of the wheat, but when the two plants reached maturity it would be clear which was which.*
      c. R. T. France, *Roman law dealt specifically with the crime of sowing darnel in a wheat-field as an act of revenge.*

   3. Questions of the servants to the master with his responses (27-30)
      a. Why have weeds appeared in the field? (27-28a), ***And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.'***

         1) The servants thought good seed was sown but there were weeds in the field.
         2) The master said that the weeds were sown by an enemy.

      b. Do you want us to gather the weeds? (28b-30), ***So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' 29 But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'***

         1) Workers asked whether they should remove the weeds.
         2) The master did not permit removal at that time because workers could injure the wheat.
         3) Separation would take place at the time of harvest.
            a) Weeds would be bound into bundles and burned.
            b) Wheat would be gathered into the master's barn.

   4. Jesus interpreted the parable to His disciples later in verses 36-43.

B. Jesus presented another parable, The Mustard Seed (31-32)
   1. The kingdom of heaven is compared to a mustard seed sown in a field which becomes large enough for birds to nest in its branches (31-32), ***He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."***

      a. J, Dwight Pentecost, *Because of Satan's opposition to the sowing of the Word and his activity of disseminating evil, the question had to be faced as to what would come of the kingdom. Christ answered this important question in the parable of the mustard seed.*
      b. The mustard seed is smaller than other seeds.
         1) The diameter of a mustard seed was viewed as the smallest measurable.
         2) The weight of the mustard seed was seen as the smallest amount that could be weighed using a balance (it takes 20,000 mustard seeds to weigh 1 oz).

c. The mustard seed grows into a tree.
   1) The Oriental mustard plant in one season can reach the height of a tree, growing up to 10 feet in 2 weeks.
   2) It is able to support nesting birds with a number of Old Testament passages use the illustration of birds resting on the branches of a tree as representing a great kingdom.
      a) Psalm 104:12-13, *Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell; they sing among the branches. From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.*
      b) Ezekiel 17:23-24, *On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bear branches and produce fruit and become a noble cedar. And under it will dwell every kind of bird; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest. 24 And all the trees of the field shall know that I am the LORD; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it."*

2. Similarities of the kingdom of heaven to the mustard seed.
   a. Tremendous growth
      1) As seen in the numbers
         a) Eleven men met with Christ on the eve of His crucifixion.
         b) 120 gathered to pray between His ascension and the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost.
         c) In Acts 2, 3,000 were gathered into the church.
         d) In Acts 4, 5,000 more were added to the church.
         e) Colossians 1:5b-6, *...the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth,*

      2) As seen in the parable
         a) N. A. Dahl, *The contrast between an unusually small beginning and a large mature plant is the point of this parable.*
         b) Mark Bailey, *Jesus' ministry was despicably small in the eyes of many Jews. Nevertheless from this small beginning would come the worldwide kingdom predicted in the Old Testament.*

   b. Great blessing
      1) In the vision of Nebuchadnezzar, the tree represented his kingdom and the birds and the beasts represented those nations that received benefit from his rule, Daniel 4:10-12, *The visions of my head as I lay in bed were these: I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. 11 The tree grew and became strong, and its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth. 12 Its leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, and the birds of the heavens lived in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it.*
      2) The kingdom of heaven will grow to great proportions and provide blessing for the many people touched by it, despite its small beginning and opposition from Satan.

C. Jesus presented a third parable, The Leaven (33), ***He told them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."***

1. J. Dwight Pentecost, *The parable of the weeds sown among the wheat (Matt. 13:24–30) raised the question of whether Satan can interrupt the progress of the kingdom. The answer is to be found in a study of the nature of yeast.*
2. The kingdom of heaven is likened to leaven
   a. Leaven (yeast) is placed in a large quantity of dough.
   b. All the dough was leavened despite the small amount of leaven that was used.

3. This parable emphasizes the uninterrupted progress of the kingdom.
   a. The leaven was hidden in the flour but its impact will one day be plain to see.
   b. The kingdom of heaven is established and maintained by the internal power of God's Spirit.
   c. J. Dwight Pentecost, *Christ taught that this new theocracy will be established, not by external power or discernible might, but rather by a quiet working from within.*

4. Practical applications of this parable for today, Mark Bailey
   a. Believers should depend on what God is doing through His Spirit in this present age.
   b. Christians should be suspicious of any manmade structures that say they are the manifestation of God's kingdom.
   c. Believers must be cautious about setting dates about when this age ends.
   d. Regardless of any current perspectives, the kingdom of God has a glorious future.

D. Jesus' use of parables discussed in Matthew (34-35)

1. Jesus spoke to the crowds only in parables (34), ***All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable.***

   a. Jesus began speaking in parables when Jesus' offer of the kingdom was rejected by the nation of Israel.
   b. He communicated through parables in order to continue revealing truth to the disciples but keep the truth from those who rejected the kingdom, Matthew 12:11-12a, And he answered them, *To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance,*

2. The use of parables fulfilled Old Testament prophecy (35), ***This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world."***

   a. Jesus quoted from Psalm 78:2, *I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old,*
   b. Asaph revealed things previously unknown by comparing various incidents in Israel's history.
   c. The ultimate purpose of a parable is not to keep people in the dark but to reveal truth.
   d. Thomas Constable, *Jesus was bringing together pieces of previous revelation about the kingdom and by combining these was teaching the people new things about the kingdom. He was throwing new light on the kingdom with His parables.*

E. The Parable of the Weeds Explained (36-43)

1. Jesus returned to the house where His disciples asked for an explanation of the parable of the weeds (36), ***Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field."***

   a. Jesus left the boat and went back into the house.
   b. The disciples followed Jesus into the house and asked Him to explain to them the parable.

2. Jesus explained the parable to the disciples (37-43)

   a. Identification of those in the parable (37-39), ***He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels.***

      1) The sower of the good seed is the Son of Man.
      2) The field is the world.
      3) The good seed represents sons of the kingdom.
      4) The weeds represent the sons of the evil one.
      5) The enemy who sewed the weeds is the devil.
      6) The harvest is the end of the age before the establishment of the millennial kingdom.
      7) The reapers are the angels of Christ.

   b. Destiny of the weeds (40-42), ***Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, 42 and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.***

      1) Weeds will be burned with fire at the end of the Church Age, culminating in Jesus' second coming.
      2) The weeds represent those who rejected the kingdom message.
      3) Unbelievers who are born during Jesus' millennial kingdom, which begins when He returns to earth at His second coming, will continue to live in the earthly kingdom until the end of Jesus' 1,000 year reign when unbelievers will be separated from believers.
      3) They will be removed by the angels of Christ and will be put into the fiery furnace.
         a) Weeping suggests sorrow and grief (emotional agony of the lost in hell).
         b) Gnashing teeth suggests pain (physical agony in hell).

   c. Destiny of the wheat (43a), ***Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.***
      1) The wheat will reside in the kingdom of God.
      2) They represent the righteous ones who accepted the kingdom message and have become children of God.

d. Time-frame for the destiny of the weeds and the wheat
   1) It is a matter of patience because the separation will not take place until the end of the age.
   2) Those who accept the kingdom and those who reject the kingdom will live side-by-side until judgment.

e. Jesus exhorts all to hear (43b), ***He who has ears, let him hear.***
   1) The words of the parable need to be heard.
   2) A response to the parable demands understanding.

F. Eschatology: the study of future events
1. Basis for interpreting Scripture concerning End Times
   a. God will keep unconditional covenants made to the nation of Israel.
   b. Necessity of a literal interpretation of Scripture.

2. Dispensational
   a. That God's work in humanity is evident in three specific systems.
   b. Key dispensations: Law (Pre-Church), Gospel (Church), Kingdom
   c. In each dispensation, salvation is by grace through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

3. Premillennial
   a. Millennium - 1,000 years during which Christ will reign on earth, Revelation 20:1-6.
   b. Purpose
      1) Promises made to the nation of Israel will be fulfilled in the Millennium, Jeremiah 31:31-34.
      2) The kingdom promised David will be instituted, Revelation 19:11-16.

4. Pretribulational
   a. Definitions
      1) Pretribulation - all Christians will be raptured by Christ to Heaven before the Tribulation.
      2) Rapture - instantaneous gathering up of the entire church to meet Christ in the air by resurrection of the dead and translation of the living from the earth.
      3) Tribulation - 7-year period before 2nd Coming of Christ during which there will be great suffering on earth.
      4) Second Coming of Christ - bodily return of Christ with His church to the earth in glory.

   b. The Church and the Rapture
      1) It is a comforting hope, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.
      2) It is imminent, James 5:8.
      3) It is not a reward for faithful service but the fulfillment of Christ's redemptive work, Philippians 3:20.

   c. Purposes of Tribulation
      1) Prepare the nation of Israel for her Messiah, Deuteronomy 4:30-31
      2) Bring Gentiles saved through preaching of saved remnant into Kingdom, note Rev. 7:13-14.
      3) Pour out judgment on unbelieving people and nations, 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12..

   d. The Church and the Tribulation
      1) The church is saved "away from" the coming wrath, Revelation 3:10.
      2) There is no reference to Church in Revelation 6-18, chapters dealing with the Tribulation.
      3) The restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit will be removed from earth before Tribulation necessitating the removal of the Church, 2 Thessalonians 2:7-8.

5. Order of future events
   a. Increase in apostasy as the Church Age draws to a close, 1 Timothy 4:1-3.
   b. The rapture of the dead in Christ and those still alive, 1 Corinthians 15:20-50; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.
   c. 7-Year Tribulation on earth, Revelation 6-16.
      1) Judgment Seat of Christ, 1 Corinthians 3:12-15.
      2) Marriage of the Lamb, Revelation 19:7.

   d. Battle of Armageddon and the end of the Tribulation
      1) Christ comes with His own, Revelation 19:11-16.
      2) Israel will be re-gathered and judged, Matthew 24:37-25:46.
      3) Gentile nations will be judged, Matthew 25:31-46.

e. Millennial reign of Christ
   1) Before it begins, Satan will be bound in bottomless pit, Revelation 20:1.
   2) After 1,000 years, Satan will be loosed for a short time, Revelation 20:7.
   3) Satan will deceive people, lead a revolt against God, be defeated by Christ who will cast Satan into the lake of fire, Revelation 20:10.

f. Great White Throne Judgment - unsaved of all ages will appear and then be cast into lake of fire, Rev. 20:11-15.
g. Creation of a new heaven and a new earth, Revelation 21:1.
h. Eternity, Revelation 22.