

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

For reply: Email: truthfortoday@aol.com

Broadcast Date: 18 March 2012

No. T0720

Speaker: Mr. David Pulman

A Study of Scripture Sevens: The Parables of the Kingdom Part 2: Matthew 13:36-52

Introduction

Good morning. Our talk this morning covers the second part of the "Kingdom of Heaven" parables in Matthew 13. We will commence with the Lord's explanation of the second parable, the good seed and the tares, since this had to wait until the Lord Jesus was inside the house with His disciples. Then we will look at the remaining three parables, also spoken in the house. These are:

- The Treasure in the Field;
- The Pearl of Great Price; and
- The Net.

Finally, we will consider what the Lord has to say about the householder.

The Explanation of the Good Seed and the Tares (Matthew 13:36-43)

Let us read Matthew 13:36-43, *"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, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will 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 to hear, let him hear!"*

The Lord Jesus now enters a house and the disciples follow Him inside seeking an explanation. Tares (or darnel) are a type of weed which is very similar to wheat. The plants are so similar that it is not until maturity, when the wheat is ready for harvest, that the difference between them can be seen in the seed heads. Wheat grain is light in colour, whereas tares produce black seeds.

The good seed are God's people, children or sons of the kingdom, the field is described as the world and the tares are the children or sons of the wicked one, Satan. This parable adds to the teaching of the first parable and shows that basically people either hear and respond positively to God's message of salvation or they hear and respond negatively, reject, or sadly just neglect to take on board God's message of salvation. We all start out as sinners under condemnation and that is where people remain if they do not obey the message of salvation. The wicked one has sown lies to deceive, to turn people away from the truth of the Gospel.

The first parable (Matthew 13:1-9) looks for growth and fruitfulness in the lives of those who have received the truth. In this parable the Lord is giving more information as to the harvest and the end of the age. Both the sons of the kingdom and the sons of the wicked one are allowed to exist until harvest time. It is then that separation in judgement takes place. The angels are the active agents in separating the two. The tares are gathered for burning but the wheat are declared righteous; these will now be seen in splendour and shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The parable does not give details as to when the separation and judgment takes place but rather an overview of coming events.

Let us go back briefly and consider the Lord's own assessment of the tares. They are going to be gathered out of the kingdom at the harvest because they offend the Lord by being a hindrance in the kingdom to those that are true. They are also those who practice lawlessness. In other words not only have they rejected God's word but they live godless lives. There are only two types of people, sons of the kingdom or sons of Satan as we see from this parable. The tares are cast into the furnace of fire, a place that has been specifically made for the burning of the tares yet there is no end.

The “*wailing*” (Matthew 13:42) would signify anguish and “*gnashing of teeth*” (Matthew 13:42) the despair of eternal punishment. We are reminded that “*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*”, Hebrews 10:31.

Satan, hell and the eternal judgement of the lake of fire are not to do with fairy stories as many would like us to believe but are real and serious issues that need to be resolved before we die!

The Treasure in the Field (Matthew 13:44)

In this parable the Lord Jesus concentrates on what is of value. Let us read Matthew 13:44, “*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field*”.

There are two parables which concentrate solely on what is of value, the treasure of this parable and the pearl in the next. Again we have a field which represents the world. In the world there is a hidden treasure and there is a man who finds that treasure and keeps it hidden. Why did He keep the treasure hidden? Because He needed to purchase the field! This man is none other than God who in the Person of the Son paid the price. The full price had to be paid to repurchase what had been stolen away by Satan. In John 3:16 we read that, “*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*” Here we have the scope of redemption and the means whereby it can be achieved. In Romans 3:22 we have stated, “*The righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe*”. In this we see God’s righteousness available to all - unto all, but it is only on all who believe. Everyone in the whole world can be made righteous in God’s sight if they will believe. What was the selling of all that He had? In 2 Corinthians 8:9 we read, “*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich*”. How did our Lord Jesus Christ become poor? It was the leaving of heaven’s glory. He veiled His own glory that He might become man and live in this world. When the Lord Jesus was challenged about paying taxes He had to ask some one to give Him a coin. The Lord of glory had no wealth, not even a penny, in order to explain what was due to the governments of this world and what was due to God (see Mark 12:13-17). So in our parable we see how it is true of Jesus that He sold all that He had, He impoverished Himself, in order to pay the purchase price for the whole world. No one is excluded from salvation. Christ’s death on Calvary is the greatest price that God could pay and such a price is sufficient to redeem all, if all would come. The treasure are the redeemed, those whom God sees of great value, the value being measured by the price paid.

It is interesting that the Greek word translated “treasure” is the same word from which we get “thesaurus”. Just as a thesaurus is a treasury of words and indispensable for the crossword addict, so this treasury in the field is a treasure trove for which God was willing to pay the ultimate price, His Son at Calvary.

There is a true story about a very wealthy land owner who became soundly saved by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. He decided he wanted to do something for his tenant farmers on his estate and, at the same time provide an illustration of how to obtain salvation. So he sent out a notice to all the tenants that on a certain date, between the hours of 9 am and 12 noon, whoever came to his office and asked for his farm to be given him as a free gift the land owner would sign over the farm to him. It is reported that on the appointed day the tenant farmers started to gather outside the office but they seemed hesitant to go in. There was one tenant missing and just before noon he came hurrying to the gathered crowd. He said, “Have you been in to get your farm?” They all answered “No”. Without stopping he hurried into the office. Everyone could see but not hear what appeared to be much activity. Then suddenly just before noon he came out, smiling and holding a document in his hand. He shouted to the others, “It’s mine!” As the other tenant farmers surged forward, the estate clock struck noon and the land owner was seen locking the door. The others knocked and shouted but the open sign was turned from “open” to “closed”. They were too late. It is just like God’s offer of salvation; it is free for the asking but some day it will be too late.

The Pearl of Great Price (Matthew 13:45-46)

In this parable the Lord Jesus is again concentrating on what is of value with a slight difference to the previous parable. In the previous parable we see the price paid has covered the whole world although it was to obtain the treasure that was hidden. In this parable we are concentrating on the treasure itself in the form of a pearl. Let us read Matthew 13:45-46. “*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it*”.

The parable indicates that there are many valuable things, the “*beautiful pearls*”. But this merchant was looking for that which was special, termed the “*one pearl of great price*”. In the previous parable it was a treasure, many valuable items. Here it is a single pearl. This speaks to us of the completeness of the one true church from its commencement at the day of Pentecost through to the rapture - not so much of individual believers but the one complete whole. The treasure indicates how valuable God sees each precious soul. In fact there is joy in heaven when a sinner is saved (Luke 15:7). However, we get an indication of the preciousness of the whole church from Ephesians 5:25-27, “... as

Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for [it]; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish". Both this scripture and the parable indicate the cost, "gave Himself for [it]" (Ephesians 5:25) and "sold all that He had" (Matthew 13:46).

Why does the parable use a pearl as the illustration? It brings to mind suffering. A pearl naturally comes about because the oyster is suffering due to foreign material having found its way inside the shell. The oyster covers the particle with a substance called mother-of-pearl. It is the same substance that is on the inside of the oyster shell. The church of God is the product of Christ's suffering and He brought the church into being. Sins forgiven are only due to Christ paying the ultimate price.

The Net or Drag-Net (Matthew 13:47-50)

In this parable we are once again confronted with the reality that in the "Kingdom of Heaven" there are good and bad. As we commenced this talk we considered the good seed and the tares, good and bad. As the net is pulled to land the fisherman finds in the net good fish and fish that are unsuitable for consumption. The "Kingdom of Heaven" illustrates profession which might be real, a person has truly trusted Christ as Saviour and Lord, or it might not be real. Such a person may outwardly conform to Biblical truths but their heart has not been touched by Christ's love and no real commitment has been made.

Many years ago, as a young boy on holiday in Northumberland, I witnessed a fishing boat which had such a large catch that it could not lift the net into the boat. The skipper decided that at high tide he would sail directly for shore dragging the net as far as he could until both boat and net grounded in the sandy bay of Beadnell. As the tide slowly went out, the boat stuck fast and the net became exposed. The crew and their wives started work on the large catch of fish. The fish were gutted, cleaned, stored in boxes and transported away by horse and cart. Much to the delight of the gathered crowd of youngsters, unwanted fish was thrown aside. There were plenty of holiday people who had fresh fish that day for tea! In this story, the unwanted was not bad as such but had no market value. In our parable, the bad or unwanted fish illustrate those who are not believers in the kingdom of heaven; they were only pretending to be believers. The good fish are preserved. Let us read the parable, "*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away*", Matthew 13:47-48. This parable is considering the whole scope of the kingdom of heaven, from commencement to its end.

Just as with the tares in an earlier parable, so here the parable goes on to talk about the "*end of the world*". Let us read Matthew 13:49-50, "*So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth*". With this explanation we move from tares or bad fish to consider "the wicked". It is people that the parable is talking about and the challenge comes to us all. Am I a true believer or am I just "along for the ride", because it seems a good thing to do? No one can afford to leave things undecided. To die loses the opportunity to make decisions; our destiny becomes fixed. So whether they are referred to as bundles of tares or the bad fish, all are gathered by the angels and cast into the furnace of fire. It is in the parable that we see God employing angels to carry out the actual work of casting the unbelieving into the fire of judgement.

The parables are good stories but each one has a very serious message. As I said earlier, God's judgment and the lake of fire are not fairy stories even though Satan and many people would like us to believe that and pooh-pooh this Biblical teaching. There is a serious message from a holy God who does not want people to go wilfully or by neglect to hell.

At the end of Matthew 13:50, we have the expression "*wailing and gnashing of teeth*". This is the weeping and despair that accompanies the realisation that their fate is the just reward for what they are as unrepentant sinners and the punishment for lives lived that a holy God finds offensive. At this court of law the judgement is final. There can be no appeal to a higher court, for there is no court higher than God's!

The Householder (Matthew 13:51-52)

In Matthew 13:51 the Lord Jesus asks His disciples, "*Have you understood all these things?*" Now whether they had truly understood or not remains unknown but they all say "*Yes Lord*". It is possible, and I think we are all guilty, to answer positively when maybe we have not fully understood a thing. I think this is especially true when considering Scripture. We see from Matthew 16:5-12 and the reference to leaven that the disciples had not grasped all that Lord Jesus had said. How often we read God's word time and again and keep gaining a better understanding than on our previous reading! This is part of the wonder of God's living word that it keeps speaking to us again and again. Believers today have an advantage over the disciples at this point in Matthew. We have the Spirit of God dwelling in us (John 14:17) and He is the Spirit of truth who guides into all truth (John 16:13).

Finally, let us read Matthew 13:52, “*Then He said to them, ‘Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.’*” The Lord Jesus takes them up on their answer and gives a challenge not just for the disciples of old but for all who know Him as Saviour and Lord. The instructed scribe is the person who truly understands the parables and rightly discerns the teaching that the Lord is intending to convey. As that teaching is made known to others it is like a person with a treasure chest. The word “treasure” is the same as that mentioned earlier, the word for “thesaurus”. There are many things in this treasure chest and some relate to what is old. These are things that are already known and found in the Old Testament about the Kingdom. Things that are new are what the Lord is teaching in these parables and go further than what has been revealed in past times.

To Conclude

As we leave the parables of Matthew 13, let us all be challenged to dig deeper into the scriptures to understand a little better what our Lord and Saviour is seeking to convey so that we become more firmly grounded in the word of God, just like the house built on the rock. Matthew 7:24-25, “*Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock*”.

Let me close with a few verses from a well known hymn by John Newton, 1725-1807:

*How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.*

*It makes the wounded spirit whole,
It calms the troubled breast;
'Tis manna to the hungry soul,
And to the weary rest.*

*Blest Name, the rock on which we build,
Our shield and hiding-place;
Our never-failing treasury, filled
With boundless stores of grace.*

Thank you for listening and may the Lord bless and encourage you today.

Please Note:

We encourage you to use this transcript for your personal or group Bible studies. This material should not, however, be used in any publications without the express permission from Truth for Today, whose contact details can be found on page 1. Large Print copies of this document are also available upon request.