

3. The Parable of the Weeds in the Field and Others in Matthew 13 (Matt 13:24-33, 36-52)

After the parable of the sower, Jesus follows with several parables, each of which extends the characteristics of the kingdom of heaven (God). Just as Jesus did with the parable of the sower, he follows the parable of the weeds in the field with a clear explanation of its meaning. In this case, as with the sower, Jesus explains each part of the parable and the overarching meaning of the parable. This lesson will follow the parable of sower, presented in lesson 2 with the rest of the parables of Matthew 13.

The Parable of the Weeds in the Field

Matt 13:24-30: 24 Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25 But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. 26 When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

27 "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

28 "'An enemy did this,' he replied.

"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

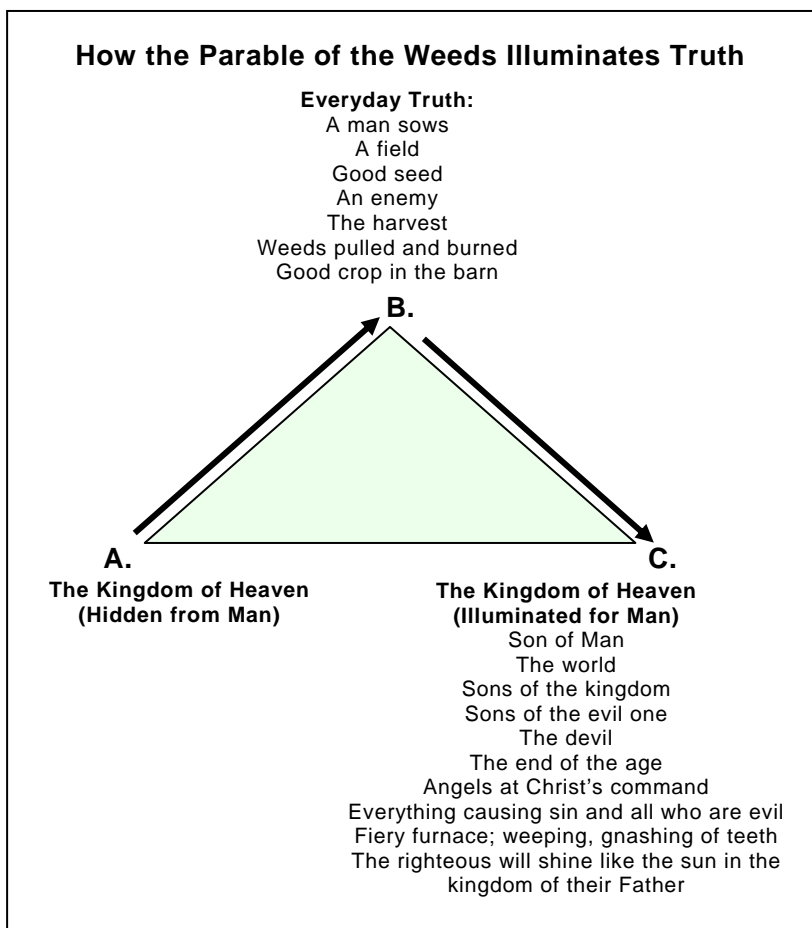
29 "'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"

Jesus introduces the parable of the weeds with the pointed comparison characteristic of all parables, "The kingdom of heaven is like." Even though the word *like* usually signals a figure of speech called a simile, in the case of parables the figure is more like an extended metaphor. Each part has meaning, and each parable has an overarching meaning coming from the sum of all the parts. In the parable of the weeds, Jesus tells us exactly what he means.

Matt 13:36-42: 36 Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."

37 He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

40 "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. 42 They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there



will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

The Lord's explanation is so clear that it needs no further explanation. Since it is so straightforward, the explanation is useful to illustrate how parables work. Using the paradigm presented in the study of the parable of the sower, the above illustration shows how parables illuminate spiritual truth. There appears to be no middle ground between the sons of the kingdom and the sons of the evil one. Neither is there a middle ground in the fate of these sons. Jesus expressed this same teaching in John 8:44, "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him."

The parable also makes clear when *the end of the age* is to be. Some say it will come at a restoration of a kingdom here on earth. Some say it came at the destruction of Jerusalem, c. AD 70. This parable teaches that the end of the age will be at the final harvest of God, rewarding the good and punishing the bad. The parable is in harmony with Paul's teaching in 1 Cor 15:23-24, "But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power." The parable itself uses *kingdom of heaven* and the *kingdom of the Father* interchangeably, eliminating any doubt that they are the same. The righteous are now *sons of the kingdom*; and at the end of the age, we will *shine like the sun in the kingdom*, making the kingdom the same now and forever.

The Revelation describes the harvest in detail in Rev 14:14-20:

14 I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one "like a son of man" with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. 15 Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." 16 So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.

17 Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. 18 Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because its grapes are ripe." 19 The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath. 20 They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia.

The Other Parables of Matthew 13

Matt 13:31-33; Matt 13:44-50; Matt 13:52: 31 *He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. 32 Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches."*

33 *He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."*

44 *"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."*

45 *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. 46 When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."*

47 *"Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. 48 When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. 49 This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous 50 and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

52 *He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is*

like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."

These other parables of chapter 13 fill in many details about what the kingdom of heaven is like. Consider these parables as a group:

- The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed: From planting the least bit of the word of God, the kingdom will grow larger and larger.
- The kingdom of heaven is like yeast: Get the kingdom started, and it will spread throughout the world.
- The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure found in a field: Once we find the true kingdom of heaven, we will give all that we have for it.
- The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant finding a pearl of great value: Once we find the kingdom of heaven we will give up all that we have for it.
- The kingdom of heaven is like fishermen who separated their fish: This parable repeats the lesson of the weeds. At the end of the age, the wicked will be thrown into a fiery furnace.
- The owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old: The teachers who instruct in the law must incorporate the new teachings of Christ with the teaching of the law and the prophets.

Conclusion

The parables of Matthew 13 begin to illustrate the spiritual nature of the kingdom of heaven. These parables teach among other things that the master is always the Lord, the seed is the word of God, good plants are sons of God; bad plants, sons of the devil. The sons of God will shine like the sun, and the sons of the devil will be in outer darkness. The enemy is the devil. The end of the age will be when judgment comes. Once a man understands with ears that hear, he will give all that he has for the kingdom of heaven. However, many there will be who do not hear, and even hearing, they do not understand.

Study Questions

1. What is the seed of the kingdom? _____
2. What is the field? _____
3. Who is the owner? _____
4. When is the end of the age? _____
5. Who are the sons of the kingdom? _____
6. Who is the enemy? _____
7. How do parables illuminate spiritual truth? _____
8. Once one truly understands the kingdom of heaven, what will he give for it? _____
9. How must a teacher of the law deal with the teachings of Jesus on the kingdom of heaven? _____