

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT MYSTERIES

Part VII

by Thomas Ice

“Have you understood all these things?” They said to Him, “Yes.” And He said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old.”
—Matthew 13:51–52

Previously we began a look at the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven or kingdom of God as noted in Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8. I have also gone over the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:1–23 in which the parables were called “mysteries” of the kingdom of God. Therefore we learned that during the interim period between the two comings of Jesus,¹ the parable of the sower indicates there will be varied responses to the proclamation of the message, which is the gospel.

There are eight parables in Matthew 13 that teach new revelation regarding the kingdom of God. The first one was the parable of the sower teaching that there will be varied responses to the gospel between the two coming of Christ. I have already dealt with that one. I think the eighth parable is a summary conclusion of the previous parables. This means the six parables sandwiched between the first and last parable provide the primary mysteries about the kingdom of God that Jesus is disclosing.

PARABLE OF THE HOUSEHOLDER

Since the eighth parable is an explanatory conclusion parable it is important we understand its meaning up front. The householder passage is only found in Matthew’s account. Stanley Toussaint notes, “This parable, strictly speaking, is not a parable of the kingdom.”² The parable of the householder (Matt. 13:51–52), speaks of the fact that; some aspects of Christ’s teachings on the kingdom are already known by the Disciples since they were revealed in the Old Testament. This is the meaning of the householder bringing out of his treasure things old. The new things brought out of his treasure are a reference to the mysteries Christ is teaching in these parables. “The use of the neuter adjectives ‘old’ or ‘warn out things’ and ‘new’ or ‘fresh things’ is very fitting in this connection,”³ observes Toussaint.

The meaning is that the previous revelation concerning the kingdom has not changed at all as represented by the old. However, the old is to be combined with the new revelation relating to the kingdom. The major point is that Israel’s kingdom is being postponed until the return of Messiah because of overall Jewish rejection in Christ’s day. This is an important point for believers to keep in mind in order to understand the purpose of the current Church Age in which we live. Our purpose is to call out through the global preaching of the gospel in order to find out who will makeup the Church, the Body of Christ (Matt. 28:19–20) and to then make disciples of those who believe. The Church’s destiny is to reign with our Lord and Saviour in His Millennial Kingdom after the Tribulation (Rev. 3:21). Our current Church Age is not the kingdom, not even a spiritual form of it, nor an “already” phase of the Millennium. Today the Lord’s Body is the Church!

PARABLE OF THE SEED AND TARES

In Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43 Jesus reveals the parable of the seed and the tares. Once

again, this parable is only found in Matthew. "He presented another parable to them, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprang up and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. And the slaves of the landowner came and said to him, "Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?" And he said to them, "An enemy has done this!" And the slaves said to him, "Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?" But he said, "No; lest while you are gathering up the tares, you may root up the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn'"'"' (Matt. 13:24–30).

This parable is very clear, even before Jesus' explanation in verses 36–43. First, we see that the seed is the word of God, the gospel. Second, the enemy is the devil who began his counter-sowing immediately after the field was sown with the good seed. Third, the landowner is the Lord who tells His servants to let both the good seed grow and the tares grow until the harvest and then they will be able to separate the good from the evil. Fourth, the separation of the wheat from the tares will take place at the end of the age.

Later in Matthew 13 Jesus departs from the multitude with which He was speaking parables and enters into a house. Jesus did not explain the meaning of any parables while with the public. Once He enters the house, His disciples say, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field" (Matt. 13:36). "And He answered and said, 'The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; and *as for* the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil *one*; and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall 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, let him hear'" (Matt. 13:35–43).

Christ's private explanation more clearly identifies the "who", the "manner," and the "when" of the parable. The Son of Man, Jesus, is the one who sows the good seed. The focus in this parable is on the quality of the seed and not the soils. The good seed is God's Word about the kingdom, which would include the gospel of grace. The emphasis is upon it, not men, doing its work and producing good fruit. However, just a few days later, Jesus said that the devil counter-sows bad seed into the field, which refers to the world. Thus, the scope of what Christ is talking about is not the church, but the entire world, since the gospel will be proclaimed into the entire world. It is true that during most of the inter-advent age Christendom¹ will contain both true believers and false professors within its sphere. Because the world will include a mixture of believers and unbelievers there will be a need to separate the two kinds into two groups amounting to the saved and the lost. This will occur at the end of the seven-year tribulation period, after Christ second coming during the separation of the sheep (believers) and the goats (unbelievers) (Matt. 25:31–46).

The mystery taught by this parable is that during the inter-advent age, there will be a spreading of the good seed throughout the world. The good seed will yield its fruit of those who come to trust Jesus Christ as their Saviour. At the same time, there will be a

sowing of a false message throughout the world as well. The false message is called by Paul: “the mystery of lawlessness is already at work” (2 Thess. 2:7). A constant appeal in the New Testament Epistles to the Church’s leadership is to protect the flock from the intrusions of the false message coming into the church. Therefore, as we are diligent to spread the good news of the gospel, we are to be equally prepared to deal with the false message of Satan among the flock.

CONCLUSION

We see a summary of the parable of the good seed and the tares means the good seed will spring to life of its own accord, inexplicably, the growth of the seed does not depend on the sower but the quality of the seed, which is the Word of God. Next, the sowing of the good seed is to be followed by a false counter-sowing from the devil. The two seeds will be left alone in order to see what kind of fruit they produce during the growing season. When the harvest time arrives, which is parallel to the end of the age when God will judge mankind, the tares are separated from the wheat and cast into the fire of judgment. The wheat is gathered and goes into the Millennial Kingdom that will be established at that time in history. Maranatha!

(To Be Continued . . .)

ENDNOTES

¹ The period between Christ’s two comings includes the current Church Age and the Tribulation. This will be referenced throughout these essays by the term “the inter-advent age.” Note: the Church Age will be the primary period making up the inter-advent age, but the Tribulation Period is also included since Christ’s second coming will occur at the end of the Tribulation. The rapture of the Church, will take place at the end of the Church Age but before the beginning of the Tribulation, has not yet been introduced by Jesus at this point in His ministry. Jesus introduces the Rapture of the Church in the Upper Room Discourse in John 14:1–3 the night before His death.

² Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold The King: A Study of Matthew* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1980), p. 185.

³ Toussaint, *Behold The King*, p. 185.

⁴ Christendom is a broad term referring to all within the sphere of Christianity, including false professors, false views of Christianity, Christian cults, the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Churches, liberal Protestants, and true believers.