

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Kingdom and the World

Scripture: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Code: 2300

We come now to the thirteenth chapter of Matthew. I trust that you have your Bible ready and your mind is open, your heart available to the Lord because we have some marvelous, marvelous things that God will show us as we look at the second parable in Matthew 13. And it is a parable about judgment, a parable about judgment.

To set our thinking in motion, we need to be reminded that the Lord is the King of the earth. The Lord Jesus Christ is the ruler over this earth. As the Old Testament tells us that God is King of the universe, that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, so we affirm that Jesus Christ is the King of this earth. Within that kingdom, the Lord Jesus obviously allows Satan a certain amount of freedom. He allows sinners a certain amount of freedom. And, yet, over it all He is still the King. He is still ruling.

Every phase of human history, then, marks some facet of the rulership of Jesus Christ, the rulership of God in the world. There is no period of time when the kingdom of God is not in effect on the earth. God mediates His rule on the earth through men. Initially, God mediated His rule on earth through Adam. Adam was His agent. Adam was His vice-regent, if you will. And then there were the patriarchs, through God...through whom God mediated His rule. And then the monarchs, and then the priests and the prophets, and then the incarnate Lord Jesus Christ.

And then in a very real sense, God mediated His will and His rule through the apostles who, overlapping with Jesus Christ in the early church, were the very source by which God brought revelation to man about His kingdom. There's coming a future time when God will again bring His rule to earth as mediated through the living, exalted, glorified, incarnate Lord Jesus Christ and that we know as the millennial kingdom. And then, finally, the earth and the heaven will be merged in the eternal kingdom when the universal kingdom and the mediated kingdom on earth become one and the same.

And the Bible delineates very clearly all of these elements of God's rule in the earth. And there's one more that we left out in our little recounting there, and that is the period of time from the rejection of Christ to the return of Christ, the age in which we live. That, too, is ruled by Jesus Christ. This, too, is a form of His kingdom.

The Bible designates it in the New Testament as the mystery form, that which was not seen in the Old Testament. That which was not revealed in the Old Testament. That period of time not really delineated, but now, through the New Testament teaching of our Lord and, particularly, the expanded teaching of the apostle Paul, clearly defined for us. We are living in that era.

Jesus in Matthew 13 tells us what it will be like. He defines for us in seven parables, the character, the extent, the value, and the consummation of this period known as the mystery form of the kingdom. God is mediating His rule on the earth through His church, through believers, indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Now, the disciples didn't see this period of time as the prophets of old didn't see it either.

So, when the Messiah arrived, they thought immediately He would establish His kingdom. And when He established His kingdom, immediately all the rebels and unbelievers would be destroyed and holiness would fill the earth and righteousness would fill the earth, and the kingdom would be as it was predicted to be by the prophets of old. And so they were always concerned about the kingdom and its character and its power and its consummation.

Even after Jesus died on the cross, they were still curious about the kingdom. That's all He ever really talked to them about, really. Before His death it was the kingdom, and after His resurrection, it was more about the kingdom. And it led them to ask Him, in the first chapter of Acts in verse 6, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom?" Is this the time?

"To which He replied, 'It's not for you to know the times, or the seasons which the Father has put into His own power.' " That's not your business.

They were always concerned about the kingdom. He said, "It's not for you to know." But the angel said, "This same Jesus who's taken up from you shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go." The kingdom will come, they said, but it won't come until He comes back in its fullness. The kingdom you're looking for, the kingdom of glory and righteousness and absolute holiness, the kingdom where the Lord Jesus rules with a rod of iron and tolerates no evil, that kingdom that is that fully anticipated by the prophets, awaits His return.

But in the meantime, in the meantime, there is a form of the kingdom and that form is described as the mystery. Now, this was very hard for the disciples, I think, to understand. Because they didn't see this. They only saw the full and glorious consummation. Now, remember last time, Jesus begins to tell them parables here in Matthew 13 to help them to understand the nature of this intervening period in which we live. It isn't ended yet because Christ hasn't come yet.

And He begins to describe it to them and the first thing He says is a parable of soils. And He told them there were four kinds of soils: the hard, resistant soil the seed never even penetrated. And then there was the rocky ground soil where the seed went down a little ways, sprung up for awhile, and then died because there was no depth. Then there was the thorny or weedy soil where the seed went

down, began to grow, but was choked out by the weeds and thorns that occupied that soil. And then fourthly, and finally, there was the good soil where there was real fruit.

And Jesus is saying an amazing thing. He is saying, "In this form of the kingdom, not everybody believes, not everybody's genuine, not everybody is bearing the fruit of righteousness." Now, I can only help you to understand and probably not fully understand what a devastating truth this would be to the disciples. They saw no such form of the kingdom, no such mingled kingdom, no such kingdom with good and bad tolerated. They didn't see that.

They saw a kingdom of righteousness, a kingdom of holy glory where unbelievers were devastatingly judged, punished, put out, destroyed. They saw what Barclay calls, "a new and stainless humanity being brought to existence in the kingdom. And the enemies being destroyed." So, having heard the first parable, they probably would have thought to themselves, "Well, there's going to be then three kinds of rejecters and one kind of true and genuine fruit-bearing soil. What's going to happen to the rejecters?"

And I can think it in my own mind; they must have been saying in those blasphemous Pharisees in chapter 12 who accused Jesus of being of Satan, "What are You going to do to them? What's going to happen to the rejecters? Are they going to get it? Are they going to get blasted away?" And, they had good reason to think that because they had been listening, no doubt, to the instruction that came from the mouth of John the Baptist who said, "When He comes, He will baptize you with fire," and fire being symbolic of judgment. "His fan is in His hand, He will purge the floor. He'll gather the wheat to the grainery and burn the chaff with unquenchable fire."

And here's John the Baptist, the immediate forerunner of Jesus Christ, and he doesn't even see this interim period. Here is the immediate forerunner saying, "When He gets here it is going to be fire and burning up of all the chaff and only the wheat will be kept." So, it's very obvious that they would have thought this. And all of this, too, was based upon the Old Testament prophets. Listen to just a selected portion from the prophets and it's going to come by quickly, so just jot the Scripture down if you want to keep them.

Isaiah chapter 2, and as Isaiah looked at the kingdom, it says, "It shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills and all nations shall flow into it. And many people should go and say, 'Come ye and let us go to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob and He will teach us His ways and we will walk in His paths.'" And then verse 4, "He will judge among the nations, He will rebuke the peoples." So, they see the law of God and the Word of God and the righteousness of God in the words of Isaiah, dominating the earth. Everybody accepting the law of God and judgment and rebuke to those who reject.

In the eleventh chapter of Isaiah in the third verse, when the Messiah comes and the kingdom comes, it says, "He shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, not superficially, nor after the hearing of his ears, but with righteousness shall He judge the poor. He will reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. He will smite the earth with a rod of His mouth and with the breath of His lips will He slay the wicked, and righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins." In other words, righteousness and the slaying and the destroying and the devastation of the wicked.

Now, if you come to Jeremiah 31, you find in the words of Jeremiah the same kind of prophecies. In chapter 31, verse 33, "When the Lord comes to build His kingdom with Israel He will make a covenant." He says, " 'I'll put My law in their inward parts. I'll write it in their hearts. I'll be their God and they'll be My people. And they'll teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother saying know the Lord for they'll all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,' says the Lord. 'I'll forgive their iniquity; I'll remember their sin no more.' " And so Jeremiah effectively says the same thing, it will be a kingdom of righteousness, a kingdom of glory, a kingdom of virtue, a kingdom of holiness.

In the 20th chapter of Ezekiel, this prophet says the same thing. "I will bring you out from the peoples; I'll gather you out of the countries with a mighty arm, an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out." And this is the fury, verse 38, "I will purge out from among you the rebels and them that transgress against Me." Now, that's just sample. You have it again in the 14th chapter of Zechariah.

The prophecies all come together to say that when the Messiah comes, He will be the King, He will establish a kingdom, He will purge out the ungodly, purge out the rebels, rebuke the unbelievers, establish righteousness across the face of the earth. Everyone will believe; everyone will walk in His law. And so the immediate problem the disciples have is, "Look, if three kinds of people in this world aren't going to believe, are You going to blow them away right on the spot? Is this the time?"

And very likely in Acts 1:6 when they said, "Is this the time You'll restore the kingdom?" they were really saying, "Is this the time You're going to blast away the unbelievers? Is this the time for their devastating judgment?" That's really what they're asking. And so, the Lord needs to explain to them, then, what He's going to do with the unbelievers who are in the earth during this mystery form of the kingdom.

And He does that in parable number two. He answers their question, "What happens to unbelievers during this age?" And that parable begins in verse 24 of Matthew 13. And, again, I confess to you that with infinite omniscience, and that's redundant in itself, but I don't know of any other way to emphasize it, does the Lord Jesus Christ tell a simple story, the truth of which is absolutely infinite. I mean, my mind was bursting. I couldn't even keep up with myself.

And I'd get one great thought, and no sooner did I get it then another thought would push it out and I'll never recover. I've lost all the greatest thoughts probably. It was coming so fast and furious there is so much in this parable and I am only going to scratch the surface. But let's look at three things: the narration, the interpretation and the application. And we need no more outline than that because the story carries itself.

Verse 24, "Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man who sowed good seed in his field.'" Now, this is a parable, then, about the kingdom of Heaven. And that's synonymous with the kingdom of God, the kingdom ruled by God from heaven. What form of it? The mystery form. But it even extends beyond that, in a sense. It...certainly what is taught in this parable is true of the past and it also will be true even of the millennial period. So, it's a rather sweeping perspective.

But it's a parable about God's rule on earth during this period and He likens this to a man who sowed good seed in his field. Now this man owns the field, his field. Keep that in mind. He's not borrowing the field. It's his field. And he sows good seed, not mediocre seed, or average seed, but good seed, really good seed. Now this is a very routine thing in that part of the world. Galilean farmers plowed their field, cleaned out all the weeds, turned over, if they were wise farmers, all of the rocky places so that the seed would find good root and bring forth fruit.

And the man does that, sows good seed in his field. Seed that he gained from the crop past, the best of the seed for the crop of this year. Then verse 25, "While men slept – " And this indicates that he had a crew to help him. He must have been a wealthy man. He had a lot of folks helping him with the sowing, and they were sleeping. It isn't because they were lazy, it's because it was night. And a man who works hard has the right and the privilege to enjoy his sleep. And so at night – "his enemy came and sowed tares," literally *zizania*.

They knew it as a darnel, which is the common term for it rather than tares. "But he sows darnels among the wheat – " and the word "among" there is in a very strong Greek expression, I mean, he sowed them all throughout – "and then went his way. Now, you say, "What in the world is this guy doing?" Well, it tells us he was an enemy. And one good way to ruin a man's crop is to sow his field full of weeds. You say, "Did they do that very often?" Common enough so that the Roman government had a law against it which prescribed a certain kind of punishment if you did that.

That was a really great way to ruin your neighbor, just oversow his field with weeds. And that is exactly what this enemy did. And then he stole off into the night. He went his way. He was a subtle man who operated in stealth and secrecy and he did an awful thing. By the way, the word there in the Greek has a sort of a Hebrew equivalent. As far as some are concerned, *zizania*, some associate with *zanah* in Hebrew, which means to commit fornication. And so this became known as bastard

wheat.

And its amazing property is that you can't tell it apart from wheat. It looks exactly the same until the head finally matures. And so, full of envy and bitterness and anger and hatred, this man oversows the field. And verse 26 says, "When the blade was sprung up and brought forth fruit, when the head appeared, then appeared the darnel also." It became obvious at one point in the growth that this was not wheat.

"So, the servants –" these are men who no doubt work for the man – "came and said, 'Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From where then hath it tares?' " Now, they're shocked. And they wouldn't have been shocked if there were just a few of these darnels because they were common to the area. It's a grassy kind of weed, and it grows wherever it wants to grow. And they wouldn't have been shocked if there were a few of them because they always had a few weeds in the crop that they had to deal with. But they were shocked because the whole thing was full of them.

And he said, "Here's where it came from –" verse 28 – "An enemy has done it." And so the servants, wanting to defend the crop and their master and their own livelihood as well said, "Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?" Now, we can recognize them now because the heads have matured and we can tell the difference. The color was even different; they were a slate gray color by now. And so, they said, "We can tell them apart, we'll go through the field and we'll tear them up."

"But he said, 'Nay.' " They were so full in the field, and so close to the wheat, he said, "You're liable in gathering up the darnels to root up the wheat with them, so don't do anything." Verse 30, "Let them grow together till the harvest and in the time of the harvest, when that comes, I'll tell the reapers to gather the darnels, bind them in bundles to burn them and gather the wheat into my barn." Now, that's the narration. A very simple story, easy to understand. But what does it mean? Well, that's what the disciples wanted to know.

Look at verse 36, and later on, after He's given a couple of other parables in between, it's time to explain the parables. And as we learn from the other gospels, He explained all of them to them because they, on their own, could not fully understand them. But verse 36 says, "Jesus sent the multitude away." Now that is most important. He sent the multitude away. Why did He do that? Go back to verse 10. The disciples had said to Him when He began to speak in parables, " 'Why are You teaching in parables? He answered and said to them, 'Because it's given to you to know about the mystery form of the kingdom, but to them it is not given.' " "

Why? Well, because of verses 13 to 15. They do not believe, they do not see, they do not hear, they do not understand. Their hearts are fat, their ears are dull, their eyes are blind. In other words, because they don't believe in Me, I will not explain the truth to them and that is why I'm talking to them in parable. "But to you –" verses 16 and 17, He says – "it is given to know these things. Blessed

are your ears for they...your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear.” And you’re going to understand.

So, He takes them apart from the rest, just the disciples; went back into the house. What house? The house He came out of. Very likely Simon Peter’s house in Capernaum. They went back in the house. The disciples came and they asked, “Explain to us the parable of the darnels of the field.” They wanted to know that. Now they’re back in the house, just those apostles, and Mark 4:10 says, “those who also followed them, or believed.” So the only people there are the believers. They’re the only ones that get an explanation. And that’s the way it is. God only reveals His truth to His own, and He answers their question.

Now, note the question they asked. They identify the story, He doesn’t. He doesn’t give it a title, they did. The title they gave it was the parable of the darnels. So they knew that was the main feature. They knew the story was about those things that didn’t belong in the field and how in the end they were going to get burned up. They knew that. That was the feature that they attached importance to. And so after they are together and they ask the question, the Lord answers the question. And they really needed an answer because of the confusion over the form of the kingdom in which they were existing.

You know what their reaction would have been, just as a footnote? If you’d have said to them, “Now look, we’ve got these three soils that don’t believe and we’ve got this one soil that really does, what do you want to do with the three soils?” I know what they’d say. And I can even guess who’d say it. James and John. And you know what they’d say? “Send down fire from heaven and burn ‘em up.” How do you know they’d say that? They said that before once already. You see, they reacted in that manner to unbelief.

And that was a sort of a proper zeal. Just burn them up, Lord. And they thought they stood on pretty good ground. John the Baptist said when He’d come He’d do that. Have you ever felt that about the unbelieving world? God, wipe ‘em out. And so that’s where they are in their thinking, you see. “God, we’ve got a great idea, burn ‘em all up and give us the kingdom.” Let’s go for the whole thing. And so they needed a little help. So He explains to them what’s going to happen to the darnels, those that aren’t wheat.

Let’s look at the interpretation in verse 37. “He answered and said, ‘He that sows the good seed is the Son of Man.’ ” Now, who’s the Son of Man? Christ. Christ is the Son of Man. That’s His common title for Himself. He uses that more than any other title to refer to Himself. In fact, only one time in the New Testament is that phrase ever used by anybody else of Him. Every other time it’s His phrase for Himself. And He uses it because it identifies Him in His incarnation. It identifies Him in His humanness.

It identifies Him as He truly participates in our life. It identifies Him to be all that a man could be, the perfect man. It identifies Him as the second Adam the representative of the race. It is His unique incarnation term. But it is also Messianic. In Daniel 7:13, the Messiah is said to be called the Son of Man. So He is identifying Himself as the Messiah, God incarnate, in that title. It's a marvelous title.

The Jews knew that it was a Messianic title and we know that from Luke 22:69. Jesus before the Sanhedrin says, "Hereafter shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God." And they said, "Art Thou, then, the Son of God?" He said He was the Son of Man, they said He was the Son of God. They must have known the Son of Man was a Messianic reference. And so, we see that the sower is the Lord Jesus Christ. He's the farmer sowing the seed.

Now, what does this tell us? There's some lessons here, we're going to get some lessons as we go through. It tells us that the Lord is sowing seed. Where? In His field. In His field. Now if you'll notice it says in verse 38 the field is the world. So, the Lord is sowing seed in the world. And may I hasten to add that the world is His field. It belongs to Him. He is sovereign. He is monarch. He is King of the earth.

He holds in His hand the title deed even though He hasn't really laid claim to it fully as He will in Revelation 6 when He unrolls the scroll that's the title deed to the earth and takes back the earth. It is His nonetheless. It is His nonetheless. And all creation – " by the way – "groans, – " doesn't it, Romans 8, waiting for Him to take possession of what is rightly His?

So we see, then, the Lord is sowing seed in the world which belongs to Him. It's His field. It's His kingdom. I mean, He made it, didn't He? And He planted Adam and Eve in it. And Satan came along and usurped everything. But it's still His. He created it and He will reclaim it, and it's His in the meantime. So the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, sows in His own field.

Now what does He sow? Well, it says the good seed are the children of the kingdom. What this means is that the Lord puts the children of the kingdom in the world. Very simple. You'd be amazed how complex people have made this parable. I've heard people...well, most commentators that I read...and I read probably 20 different books on this particular passage...most of them said the field is the church. And that the...in the church the wheat and the tares grow together. And you've all heard that, that's been the common interpretation. Jesus said in verse 38, "The field is the world."

Now, it doesn't seem too difficult, does it? You say, "But you have to interpret what He meant." No, He just interpreted what He meant. First of all, the field was a field, just a field with a guy sowing. And then He said the field means the world. And now, you say the world means the church. Somebody else might come along in the next generation and say the church means the Baptist church. And then the next generation it means the Baptist church in the corner over...you can't do that. You just leave it

where it is. The Lord said the field is the world and He knows the word “church,” and if He wanted to use it, He’d have used it. The field is the world.

What is it saying? God sows His children of His kingdom throughout the world. Now, the disciples could handle that. Sure, it’s going to be an earthly kingdom. God is going to put His people all around the world. We don’t have a problem with that. By the way, if you make it the church, you will wind up with such chaos in trying to interpret the parable that it’s hopeless.

Because later on when the servants say, “Can we pull out the darnels?” and the Lord says, “Don’t pull them out, let them grow together,” if that’s the church then we have no right to church discipline, we have no right to expose a heretic, we have no right to deal with the sin. And that’s not what the epistles tell us. If you make this field the church, you’ve really got problems. Leave it the way Jesus interpreted it. It’s the world.

So, you have believing people. Now, by the way, that phrase children of the kingdom is a marvelous phrase. We are children of the kingdom. We are the subjects of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have been planted in the world, His world. This is a picture, not of the world in the church, but the church in the world. And we are placed within the world’s system. We who genuinely love the King, who genuinely affirm His Lordship, who truly are subjects of His sovereignty, we are planted in the world.

That’s a great thought, you know, that we’re not here by accident; we’re planted by the Lord. Isn’t that great? In the place He wants us in the world. That also tells me that we’re not to be out of the world. We’re not to be off in a monastery somewhere, in a cubicle, that we’re not to live in a holy house in a holy city somewhere. I remember a guy down here, Orwell Jagers; sold land out in Palmdale, was going to build a sinless city, holy city, put a wall around it and keep sin out. And I know a lady who bought a piece of that property. I went to school with her son.

But we’re not called to do that. We’re not called to isolate ourselves. We’ve been planted in the world. So, in this kingdom, we’re going to be planted all throughout the world and we’re there for many reasons. First of all, we’re there to be matured by the trouble the world gives us, right? First Peter 5:10, “After you’ve suffered a little while, the Lord will make you perfect.”

“In this world you’ll have tribulation but be of good cheer –” John 16:33 – “I have overcome the world.” And James said that that trial and that trouble and those things that happen in the world are what mature you and build you up. So the Lord plants us there so we can develop. He also plants us there...are you ready for this...so that we can influence, so that we can influence.

Now, a parable can only go so far and then it breaks down as an analogy of spiritual truth. And this is the point at which it breaks down, but I want to introduce the thought. We’re in the world to influence for good the darnels or the tares. Did you know that everybody who is wheat was once tares? True?

We were all bad seed before we got converted, right? Somebody said, “Well no, if you take this in a Calvinistic predestination sense, we were planted as good seed and we just grew as good seed.” No, no, no. No matter what you believe about the sovereignty of God, no matter what you believe about predestination, we were all bad from the beginning.

So the Lord puts us in the world not only to be perfected and to be matured by the pressure that it brings, but to influence the tares into becoming wheat like we did. Our redemption must be at work and that’s why Jesus said in John 17, you see, “I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world but that when they’re in the world Thou shouldst keep them from –” what? – “the evil one.” You can’t take them out; we’re supposed to be in the world.

Now, who are we within the world? Well, verse 38 says the darnels or the tares the *zizania*, are the children of the wicked one. That’s *ho ponros* again, the wicked one, the devil. It says in verse 39, “The enemy that sowed them is the devil.” He is the wicked one. He is called that several different places in the New Testament. The wicked one. And the article there is emphatic. He is the utterly wicked one, the absolutely wicked one, *the* wicked one of *all* wicked ones.

The very ground of whose being is wretched, he is unmitigated darkness. He is unalleviated error. And anybody who is not a child of the kingdom is a child of the wicked one. There are only two kinds of people in the world, children of the kingdom, children of the wicked one.

And if you’re not a child of the King through your submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, you’re a child of the devil; it’s that plain and simple. You are on his team; you are functioning under his control. Ephesians 2 said “You are directed and moved and motivated and guided by the prince of the power of the air who works in the children of disobedience.” If you will not obey the Lordship of Christ then working in you is Satan.

John 8:44, Jesus said to those leaders of Israel, “You are of your father, the devil.” In I John 3, John contrasts the children of God and the children of the devil and those are the only two kinds there are. Now, there is relative evil within that children of the devil category, but they’re all children of the devil. Some worse than others, all bad, and all representative of Satan himself. That’s what it means in I John 5:19 when it says the whole world lies in the lap of the wicked one, the whole world.

And there’s an interesting statement, I think, made in 5:37 of Matthew that easily gets overlooked. Here in chapter 5, you know, the Lord is contrasting righteous behavior with unrighteous behavior. And He sort of sums it up at the end of verse 37, “Whatever is more than these comes from the evil one.” In other words, if you go beyond or in contradiction to God’s law, it proceeds from the evil one. And that is a monumental theological statement. The origin of evil is from the evil one.

God is not the author of evil. Evil proceeds from the evil one. He is the enemy who...watch this...oversows in the good field. You see it in creation, chronologically. God sowed, didn't He, children of the kingdom, Adam and Eve. And then came the enemy and in the fall he oversowed, and the two continue through all of human history. And so, Satan is the origin of evil. "Whatever is not of God – " it says in 5:37 – "cometh from the evil one. People always ask the question, "Where did evil come from?" That's where it came from. The evil one.

And so then, back to Matthew 13, the Lord sows believers, subjects of the King, in the world and Satan oversows his own children. So the world, then, is comingled: subjects of the King, the subjects of the usurper, the marauder, the enemy, the devil himself. And by the way, devil in verse 39, *diabolos*, means enemy, adversary. So, we're mingled in the world. Now that's very important. This is how it has been and this is how it will be in the mystery kingdom, a commingling.

Now there's several things we need to note. Satan...it says that the enemy when he came and sowed, "he sowed among." And he uses a very, very strong term, very comprehensive thought, everywhere. And we have to just note here that Satan really has his people everywhere. I mean, he is really sowing them. In fact, in some parts of the world they are the whole area. You would look a long time to find in there some wheat. So there's a massive sowing, and he likes to sow them as close to the wheat as he can.

And he does sow them in the church. He does sow them in the church. Because it says in Matthew 7, "Depart from Me – " those who say we did this, we did this in Your name – "Depart from Me ye that work lawlessness, you who work iniquity." He's got his iniquitous workers sown right in the church. Now, when we find them here, we do have biblical instruction to put them out. The New Testament is clear on that. So, Satan is oversowing what God has done. And that's the history of the world, people. There you've got it. God sows good seed, and Satan sows the bad and that's the way it goes throughout all of human history.

And when we come to the mystery kingdom, it's going to be that way. There will be Judases right among the apostolate. Now, what is it trying to say to us? It says we exist together. We breathe the same air, we eat the same food, we drive the same highways, we live in the same neighborhoods, we work at the same factories, we go to the same schools, we visit the same doctors, we entertain ourselves with the same entertainment, we're under the same sky, we enjoy the same warm sun, we breathe the same air. The just and the unjust are rained upon in this era because it's all comingled until the end.

And that's where we come to verse 39, very important. "The harvest is the end of the age." Why does He say that? Because, you see, the disciples were ready to put in the sickle right now. And I get that way, I confess. Sometimes when you see the wickedness and the rejection and the unbelief and the grief that the world causes the church, and the Lord's purposes and people, you just say, "God, would

You just come down and wipe it out.” And you understand David, don’t you, when he cries for God to destroy His enemies? And you understand those people under the altar pleading with God to do something.

But here the Lord says, “Don’t be impatient; the harvest waits till the end of the age.” A very important phrase used several times in Matthew, speaks of ultimate consummation in judgment, speaks of that final time when God judges. Now at this juncture, we would interject the part of the story where they said - “Do you want us to pull the weeds up? We can see who they are now, they’ve grown up, we see the manifestation and we know who they are, you want us to yank them out? And the Lord says, “No, don’t do that.”

Because if you yank out the darnels, you’re liable to do what? Yank out some wheat also. You say, “What in the world is He saying? What is He saying?” I think He’s simply saying if you go about trying to judge the world, without divine insight, you’re going to wind up condemning the Christians. You say, “Wait a minute, what does that mean?” Let me explain. Do you know what the church has done throughout its history? Just that.

The Roman Catholic Church, for example, could well be described by these guys. “Hey, we’re going to clean out all the ungodly out of the world.” And by their own definition they were the godly, and so they persecuted the true believers. They went out and slaughtered the true believers. You can’t do that. God didn’t call the church of Jesus Christ to judge the world. God doesn’t want us in a position of political power, destroying unbelievers because we don’t have the discernment to know what’s going to go on in reality anyway.

That is not the church’s function to go around ripping out the tares and the darnels of the world. That’s not what we’ve been called to do. We are not to attack the world. God hasn’t given us that ministry. We’re going to grow together and Satan is going to sow and oversow even in the church ‘because he loves imitation. But it’s not for us to go ripping the tares out. And wherever in history the church became a political power, it invariably was prone to corrupt that power, to destroy, quote/unquote, “the apostates.”

Think about the inquisition. Have you ever read *Fox’s Book Of Martyrs*? All of those martyrs of Christ that were slaughtered were slaughtered by quote/unquote “Christians.” They claimed that anyway. Read the Crusades, one of the most abysmal points of human history. Crusaders, in the name of Jesus Christ in Europe, were going to go to take the holy places of Israel back from the Turks. And in the process they massacred people all across Europe. In one village alone, they trampled with their horses three thousand Jews because they said they were apostates.

This is not the age of judgment. What was the Lord Jesus Christ’s attitude toward those people? Simply ask yourself this. How did He treat publicans and sinners? With meekness and love and

kindness, right. How did He treat Judas? And Judas was there in His presence and He didn't devastate, He didn't go "whoosh," and blow him over with fire. He was patient. And this is the time of patience. He was tolerant. And this is the time of tolerance. He was gracious. And this is the time of grace.

And while some people are running put trying to destroy the darnels, they may be forgetting the fact that they were once a darnel and maybe God knows they need time enough to become wheat, see. If we go out destroying everybody, we may be totally out of line with God's plan. You see, the Lord knows how many people belong in the kingdom. And He, like He said in the book of Acts, "Thou hast much people in that city." He knows who it is to believe. And that is working its way out.

And if we acted as a church against the ungodly of the world, we would be interfering with God's patient, gracious waiting for those people to come to Him in His good time. That's not our calling. We are not to do that. And the spirit of that means we are not to damn the unbelievers of the world either. We are not to pray that God would destroy them. We're to pray that God will what? Save them, that He'll save them, that He'll redeem them. That's the only proper attitude.

That was the attitude of the Lord Jesus Christ the night in which He was betrayed. He took the sop, which was a sign when you gave it to the person next to you that this person was the honored guest, and who did He give it to? Judas. He was still wooing Judas with love. Judas and Jesus, an illustration of how it is in the commingling in the age of grace.

We cannot act as executioners. We must be lovingly, patiently, graciously tolerant like our Lord was. And you know something else? If we tried to act in judgment, we might be sparing some of that rocky soil stuff and some of that weedy ground stuff because we can't tell the difference, and we might be uprooting the real stuff. So, we have a heart of compassion, not a heart of condemnation.

You know, you could take it a step further. We can't apply spiritual principles that we live by in the kingdom to the rest of the world. You can't say, "We ought to get rid of these people, they're messing up our world." They're just doing what comes naturally. I mean, you cannot walk up to these people and say, "I wish you people would do what you should do." And that's impossible for them, because they're doing the only thing they know how to do, that's behave as the children of the devil.

And if you go and try to enforce upon the world our standards, you are casting your pearls before what? Swine. Remember that in Matthew 7, where He talks about in the first six verses of Matthew 7. He talks about how we are not to judge one another but we're to be careful that we look at our own lives. And before we get a splinter out of another guy's eye, we get a two-by-four out of our own eye. And then He talks about how we deal with each other and how we treat each other and so forth.

And then He says right in the next verse, “Don’t bother to try this stuff on the world, that would be casting your pearls before swine.” And you can back up and take the whole Sermon on the Mount there and what He’s saying is, “Don’t take these principles of the Sermon on the Mount and try to enforce them on a society of ungodly people because they can’t handle it.” And so we don’t damn them when they don’t do it, You understand? We love them. And we call them to Christ.

Salvation, then, calls us to a place that is, in a sense, precarious because we’re commingled in the world. But listen to this very carefully. I don’t think the Lord is greatly disturbed by that because the nature of the wheat is that it cannot be changed. We may be next to the darnels, but they can’t change our nature if we’re wheat, right? But the converse is not necessarily true. Their nature can be changed by the influence of godliness. And so, we are called, then, to be patient.

Now, that brings us to the climax in verse 39. Remember in the parable He said, “Just let it go until it’s time for the harvest, and the reapers will come and they’ll do the separating.” And verse 39 says, “The reapers are the angels.” Now listen to me, angels are called to judgment. Christians are called to righteous influence. We are not called to judgment. We are not called to condemn the world.

Now we want to preach against its sins, we want to preach against its evils. But we want to love its sinners and evil doers and be gracious and patient with them. We are not God’s executioners. That is not our task. We have an inadequate knowledge in the first place; we might wind up making terrible mistakes, as has been done so much in history.

So the Bible is saying God’s going to judge. He’s going to judge in the end of the age, and the angels are going to be the reapers. And you can see over and over again in the New Testament, from Matthew to Revelation, how that God has called the angels to reap. In Matthew 16:27 it says, “He’ll come in glory, the glory of His Father with His angels.” In Matthew 24...I think it’s verse 31, “He’ll send His angels to gather the elect,” and so forth.

The gathering process of the elect, and the gathering process of the...of those to be judged is to be done by the angels. You see it, also, in Revelation as you read the fourteenth chapter, particularly, and then the nineteenth chapter, that angels are God’s agents of judgment, not men. That’s not our task. So, He says to these guys in the parable, “You’re the sowers; I’ve got some other folks for reapers.” Verse 40, “When the angels come – ” the reapers – “therefore, the darnels are going to be gathered and burned in the fire and it will be that way in the end of this age.”

We have to wait until the King comes back with His angels for this to happen. And, by the way, that’s precisely what II Thessalonians 1:7 says. “When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels and flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.” When’s that going to happen? When He shall come to

be glorified in His saints. He'll come to be glorified in His saints and when He comes at that time, with His holy angels, He'll burn in unquenchable fire all those children of the wicked one.

Now, notice verse 40. It shows us the darnels are gathered out and burned. That's the picture. And verse 41 explains it. "The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, they shall gather out of His kingdom." And there the term "kingdom" sees the whole world, it's all His field, and He pulls in the net, as it were.

Pulling them all in together, like unclean animals and clean in the same ark, goats in the same pasture with sheep, bad fish in the same net with good fish, chaff on the same floor as the grain, vessels to dishonor in the same house as vessels to honor. He pulls them all in and "all that offend and all that do iniquity –" or do lawlessness, the same phrase as Matthew 7:23, those that do lawlessness – "pulls them all in, and all of them –" verse 42 – "are cast into the furnace of fire." And their reaction to that is "wailing and gnashing of teeth."

And so there's coming an inevitable judgment when the Lord sends His angels, pulls all of them out of the kingdom that offend Him. And anything that is sinful, unbelieving offends Him. All those who work iniquity...just two ways of defining sinful people...and they're all thrown into a furnace of fire. Now, fire is the most horrible death that man ever experiences. And fire is the imagery of eternal hell. It speaks of the terrible and everlasting doom of the unrighteous, the sons of Satan. It's used again and again in Scripture.

We read in the Scripture about weeds being burned, about chaff being burned, about barren branches being burned, even in the Old Testament of trees being burned. And here we see the darnels being burned. The idea that the ungodly will be consumed in fire. It pictures the same thing...the furnace of fire does...as the lake of fire of Revelation 19, of the unquenchable fire of Mark 9, the everlasting fire of Matthew 25.

It is the consuming burning fire of hell. It is the same fire of Malachi 4, the same devastating judgment fire that Daniel alludes to in Daniel 12 verse 2. It's eternal punishment in hell. And the reaction in verse 42 is so frightening. Grinding of teeth and piercing shrieks is what it really says. That's the reaction, grinding of teeth and piercing shrieks.

People think they're going to be in hell and everything is going to be fine. They're going to be with their friends and they'll love it down there. And this verse tells us that not only is hell a fire, but it tells you what your reaction is going to be. Grinding teeth and piercing shrieks. Painful, eternal, inevitable, inescapable judgment. And the Lord is saying to the disciples, "Look, for now wait, for now be patient, for now influence, for now coexist while the plan is working out.

And finally the judgment will fall. And after it falls, verse 43, “Then – ” mark that word – “Then – ” not now, but “Then shall the righteous shine forth.” Then comes the holy glory, you see. Then comes the anticipated kingdom. Then comes the righteous Shekinah, lighting the face of all the saints for all the ages. “They’ll shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father,” then. So, He says, “That’s part of it’s future.” But it is coming, just as surely as the judgment. In fact, Daniel 12:3 says “They’ll shine like stars. They’ll shine as the brightness of God’s glorious, marvelous heaven.”

The last point is the application, verse 43. “Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” That’s the application. You say, “What does it mean?” Simply it means what I use to hear a schoolteacher say when I was little, “Johnny, you better – ” what? – “listen.” You better listen. You better listen. What are you listening to?

Well, ask yourself this, first. Are you wheat? I mean, you ought to know that to start with. Are you wheat? Or are you darnel, are you tares? Are you a child of the kingdom, or are you a child of the enemy? If you’re a child of the enemy, then listen. This is a time of patience, this is a time of grace, but judgment is inevitable, eternal, painful. You better check and you better listen.

You say, “I’m not a darnel, I’m wheat.” Then you better listen to this. You’re to coexist in this world and you’re to influence the world for good, not be influenced by it. You’re to be used by God to reach that darnel near you that’s going to become wheat. So use it as an opportunity. Not to condemn the world, not to blast the world, not to judge the world. That’s God’s business. But to love them while condemning their sin and loving the sinner. That’s the plan. Are you doing that? Are you planted in the world for good and for God and for salvation?

Well, let’s pray. With your head bowed for just a moment, if you look in your own life and you know that you don’t know the Lord Jesus Christ or you wonder whether you do, then think deeply about the fact that if you are not a child of the kingdom, submitting totally and completely to the Lordship of the King, you are a child of the wicked one, and you will be gathered and burned forever.

That need not be. The Lord Jesus Christ will transform you right now and make you a child of the kingdom. He can make that transformation. He has called us out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son, Colossians 1. He can make the transformation and He will. That’s why He waits, He waits for you.

And if you are wheat, are you influencing the world for good and for God? Is your attitude one of love, rather than one of condemnation? It’s so easy to sit back and condemn sinners and speak evil of them and blast away at them because we have cause due to their sin. But somehow in the process we begin to want to call down damnation on them. Maybe we need to ask God to give us greater grace toward them—the grace that Jesus had toward Judas.

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