

Parables of the Kingdom



Matthew 13

Robert C. Newman



The Parables Listed

- Sower
- Wheat & Weeds
- Mustard Seed
- Leaven
- Treasure
- Pearl
- Dragnet

Interpreted by Jesus?

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----|----|
| ■ Sower | Yes | |
| ■ Wheat & Weeds | Yes | |
| ■ Mustard Seed | | No |
| ■ Leaven | | No |
| ■ Treasure | | No |
| ■ Pearl | | No |
| ■ Dragnet | Yes | |

The Interpreted Parables



Sower, Wheat & Weeds, Dragnet

Parable of the Sower: the Story

Planting by the "broadcast" method:

- Case 1: Roadside & birds
- Case 2: Stony ground & sun
- Case 3: Competition with thorns
- Case 4: Good soil but various yields



Jesus' Interpretation of the Sower

- Seed = the Word (of the Kingdom)
- Soils = different receptions of the Word
- Roadside = doesn't understand
- Birds = Satan removing Word
- Soil over bedrock = no root
- Thorns = worries, deceitful wealth
- Good soil = understands, accepts, holds on

Some Lessons from the Sower

- Not all will accept (or retain) the Gospel.
- Some won't understand, respond, remember.
- Others will fall away in persecution.
- Others will be distracted by the world.
- Others will show salvation in their lives, but even here there will be real differences.

Parable of the Weeds: the Story

- Owner plants good seed (wheat).
- Enemy plants bad seed (weeds).
- Weeds eventually become obvious.
- Slaves want to uproot weeds.
- Owner forbids: let both grow together till harvest.
- Then there will be a separation.



Jesus' Interpretation of the Weeds

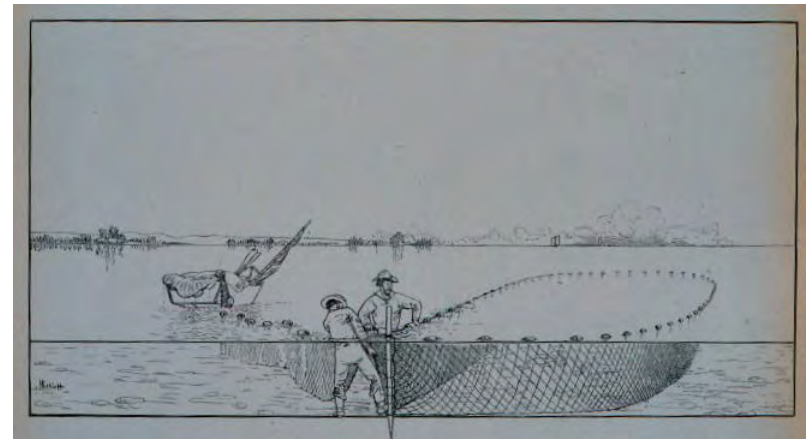
- Owner is Christ, field is the world.
- Seed here is not the Word, but people.
- Enemy is the Devil.
- Harvest is the end of the age.
- Wicked will be cast into furnace.
- Righteous will shine forth in the Kingdom.

Some Lessons from the Weeds

- Satan will follow the Gospel with 'gospels' and 'Christians' of his own.
- It will not be possible to destroy these without drastic disruptions.
- But they will finally be destroyed at the judgment.
- Though believers often seem to get lost in this confusion, they will shine in God's kingdom.

Parable of the Dragnet: the Story

- A dragnet is a long, rectangular net with floats on one side, weights on other.
- It is set out to enclose a region of water near the shore.
- It is drawn in with all the fish trapped.
- The fish are sorted into marketable and worthless.



Jesus' Interpretation of the Dragnet

- Fishermen = angels
- Fish = righteous & wicked
- Drawing the net = end of the age
- Sorting fish = separation of righteous/wicked
- Good into containers is parallel with wheat into barn.
- Bad thrown away = wicked into fire, weeping.

Lessons from the Dragnet

- There will be no escape from judgment at the end of the age.
- There will be a complete and accurate separation of righteous & wicked.
- The fate of the wicked is terrible – burning, weeping, being thrown away.

The Uninterpreted Parables



Mustard & Leaven, Treasure & Pearl

Some Divergent Views

- These form two pairs of parables.
- Mustard & Leaven
 - Some see growth of both as good.
 - Others see growth of both as bad.
 - We suggest one good, one bad.
- Treasure & Pearl
 - Some see T & P as Christ/Gospel, for which believer gives up everything.
 - Others see T & P as Israel/Church, for which Christ gives up everything.

Method

- Use interpreted parables to help understand uninterpreted.
 - Context
 - Symbolism
 - Chronological structure?
- Use OT and NT background.
 - OT have similar figures?
 - NT have similar figures or interpretation?

Structure to Whole Series?

- Sower Planting
- Weeds Planting Growth Harvest
- Mustard Growth
- Leaven Growth
- Treasure Finding
- Pearl Finding
- Dragnet Harvest

Mustard & Leaven: the Stories

- Both rather common in NT times
- Mustard seed:
 - Very small seed → large herb, small tree
 - When large enough, it attracts birds
- Leaven:
 - Making bread by sourdough method
 - Amount of dough large, but has biblical precedent



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Interpreting Mustard & Leaven

- Controversial
 - Covenantal – good
 - Dispensational – bad
- Context:
 - Sower & Weeds – planting good/bad
 - Weeds – growing good/bad
 - Weeds & Dragnet – harvesting good/bad
- Figurative use elsewhere:
 - Tree/birds – Ezk 31, Dan 4
 - Leaven – OT liturgy, Jesus, Paul



Interpreting Mustard & Leaven

- We suggest that the growth of the mustard plant pictures the growth of the Gospel or church in a society. When it becomes big enough, the "birds" move in.
- We suggest the growth of the leaven then pictures not the spread of Christianity internally, but the spread of unbelief within the church.

Lessons from Mustard & Leaven

- Despite a small start, the church will often grow to dominate the society it is in.
- Once it begins to dominate, people will begin to join for wrong reasons.
- False teaching will then be able to work far more effectively within than it could before, often coming to thoroughly permeate the church.

Treasure & Pearl: the Stories

- Two specific incidents of finding & buying
- Treasure:
 - Found accidentally by tenant/farm laborer
 - Sells all to get clear title to land
- Pearl:
 - Found intentionally by a pearl merchant
 - Sells all to have pearl as his own



Interpreting Treasure & Pearl

- Controversial – Treasure & Pearl is:
 - Christ/Gospel – believer gives all to have
 - Church/Israel – Christ gives all to have
- Context:
 - If parables form a chronology, the 1st is right.
 - Fits scheme of salvation history.
- Figurative use elsewhere:
 - Yes, we can't buy salvation.
 - But we must give up all to follow Christ.
 - Gospel is a treasure (2 Cor 4:7).

Lessons from Treasure & Pearl

- When false teaching has done its work, the Gospel may be hard to find.
- Still, some will find it.
 - By accident
 - By looking
- Both will recognize its surpassing value.
- Both will give up all to have it.
- Both will realize this is a great bargain.



Summary on Kingdom Parables

- Sower – various responses to Gospel
- Weeds – false gospels of Satan
- Mustard – growth of the church
- Leaven – growth of error in the church
- Treasure – Gospel found by accident
- Pearl – Gospel found by search
- Dragnet – God will judge, separate

Summary on Kingdom Parables

- Chronological, but not a single progression
- Shows the typical progress of the Gospel in a particular society, ethnic group, etc.
- Probably cycle starts over in some sense when God sends a revival.
- In societies with no state church, various groups will be in various stages of cycle.

The End



Is coming!

May God help us to be discerning!