

Sunday September 4th, 2005

Matthew 13 Part 4
The Mustard Seed – Part 1

1). Mt 13:31 *Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like (the proclamation and offer of the kingdom of the heavens continues like) a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, 32 "which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."*

2). Remembering that the word ‘parable’ means to draw along side that which has gone before. We will understand that the parable of the mustard seed gives us additional information, a commentary if you will, on the parable of the Wheat and Tares, which in itself gave us commentary on the fourth part of the previous parable that of the sower.

3). In the parable of the wheat and Tares we learned that Satan had sown individual Christians with a contrary mindset with regards to the word of the kingdom, in amongst those Christian who had heard, understood the word – overcome the world, the flesh and the Devil, and were now producing fruit – in order to try to stop them from producing fruit.

a). What we now see in the parable of the mustard seed is the consequences of the action taken by the tares.

4). Hard though it may be to imagine today, at the inception of the church (remember why the Church was brought into being) at the beginning of the dispensation, the word of the kingdom was the message of the hour. It was universally preached and taught and understood resulting in Christians producing the fruit of the kingdom.

Ac 1:3 to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

Ac 8:12 But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.

Ac 20:25 "And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.

Ac 28:23 ¶ *So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.*

Ac 28:31 *preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.*

a). This is the message that Paul refers to as ‘my gospel’ – Romans 16:25, ‘our gospel’ – 2 Corinthians 4:3, and ‘the gospel of the glory of Christ’ 2 Corinthians 4:4

b). This was a message preached first to the Jews, an already redeemed people, and then to the Gentiles once they had heard and received the gospel of grace.

5). To counter this, as we have already noted, Satan sowed tares in the midst of those hearing this message, and scripture is full of warnings at the very beginning of the dispensation concerning these tares who are identified as false teachers and apostates.

a). 1Ti 4:1 ¶ *Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 3 forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.*

b). Ac 20:29 *"For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. 31 "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.*

c). 2Pe 2:1 ¶ *But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.*

d). Jude 1:4 *For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ..... :16 These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.17 But you, beloved, remember the words which were*

spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: 18 how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. 19 These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.

e). *2Ti 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

16 But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. 17 And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, 18 who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.

f). *2Pe 2:14b... They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. 15 They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16 but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. 17 These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. 18 For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. 19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. 20 For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.*

6). Apostate – to stand away from a place in which one previously stood.
Explain this.

7). And this is exactly what we find recorded in scripture – a standing away from the truth concerning Christ's return after six days, six thousand years – the very foundation of God's dealing with a fallen creation set out in Genesis 1.

a). *2Pe 3:1 ¶ Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), 2 that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, 3 ¶ knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the*

fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."

b). We should note that a denial of the return of Christ after six days, denies the coming of a literal seventh day. It denies the outworking of the Judgment Seat of Christ with its blessings on the one hand and its age lasting destruction on the other. It denies the Judgment of God in relation to sin and Christians and denies the salvation of the soul. The ramifications of such a message are enormous.

8). And this is exactly what the parable of the Mustard Seed lays out for us.

a). The mustard seed which is sown is not individuals, but rather a collection of individuals, the fruit producers of the parable of the Sower – in a general sense the Church.

b). Hearing, understanding and applying the word of the kingdom brought about a proper germination of this seed that started to grow in the way it was supposed to –

i/ Ac 2:44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

c). These Christians moving from immaturity to maturity in relation to the word resulting in producing fruit. And had this normal and natural growth continued the mustard plant was destined to be ‘greater than the herbs’ –

Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

d). But because of the work of the tares, the apostates, the plant began to grow unnaturally becoming a tree. Something it was never supposed to be. (In the natural a bush from a mustard seed grows to between one and three feet tall – never into a tree).

e). Not only did this unnatural growth result in barrenness, but it also provided a home for ‘the birds of the air’ – the same birds seen in the parable of the Sower devouring Christians – Remember - 1Ti 4:1 ¶ *Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons*

f). In other words the contrary message brought by the apostates gradually found acceptance and adherents within the Body of Christ so that these ‘sons of the wicked one’ not only had a safe haven within the Church, but also found themselves leading, directing and establishing the church on a completely wrong foundation – one in keeping with the desires of Satan – stopping the fruit.

g). As they continued they reproduced after their own kind producing teachers who continued, developed and added to their destructive heresies, leading to the place we are now where their message is now the message of the hour and the word of the kingdom is hardly to be found – and where it is found it is rejected, attacked and reviled.

9). There are very obvious examples of the outcome of the work of the enemy – the JWs / Mormons / Adventists.

a). But consider also the teaching within the mainstream – eternal salvation by works / no literal kingdom / the kingdom is now / the soul and the spirit are one and the same / eternal bliss begins with our death or at the rapture / there is no consequence to our actions – grace covers all / the acceptance of homosexuality even within the ministry / the performing of gay marriages / the prosperity doctrine of you can have it all now / even to the only reason to win the lost is to keep them out of the lake of fire / everyone is already saved anyway / Genesis is just mythology / no virgin birth / no literal resurrection. The list is endless.

10). This then is the picture given to us by Christ of Church history throughout this dispensation before the Church was brought into being. Christ again outlines the history of the Church to the Apostle John in Revelation, in the early years of the dispensation and we find exactly the same picture from a slightly different perspective.

a). Ephesus shows us the church at the beginning of the dispensation (Talk about Ephesians)

b). Re 2:1 ¶ *"To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: 2 "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; 3 "and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. 4 "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent. 6 "But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."*

c). They left their first love – that surrounding the offer of the kingdom

d). To the Laodicean church, the 7th of the 7 churches shows us the church at the end of the dispensation.

e). Re 3:14 ¶ *"And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: 15 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.*

17 "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' --and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked-- 18 "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. 19 "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.

Therefore be zealous and repent. 20 "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. 21 "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 22 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

11). And this is where we find ourselves today at the end of this dispensation with the Church as an entity completely lukewarm in respect of the word of the kingdom.

12). Just as at Christ's first coming there were individuals within the nation of Israel who heard understood and produced fruit, so is it now within Christendom – there are individuals who have heard His voice and opened the door and he has come in to them.

13). And what should we do in relation to this condition within the church?

a). As far as the church as a whole there is nothing to be done as it is and will be just as scripture describes.

b). In respect of individuals we should seek to do two things

i/ Win the lost with a view to establishing them in the word of the kingdom – leading to the salvation of their souls.

ii/ Work with saved individuals wherever they may be, who are willing to hear the word of the kingdom with a view to them working for the salvation of their souls

c). And in respect of ourselves we would do well to hear the admonition given in Jude - Jude 1:3 ¶ *Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*

d). 'contend earnestly' = Greek - epagonizomai, = to struggle, literally (to compete for a prize), figuratively (to contend with an adversary), or genitive case (to endeavor to accomplish something):--fight, labor fervently, strive.

I/ We must strive with every fibre of our being to compete for the prize.

Ii/ We must strive with every fibre of our being against our adversary

Iii/ We must fervently strive with every fibre of our being to accomplish the end of our faith – the salvation of our souls.

14). We will continue this next week