

NOON BIBLE STUDY: MATTHEW 13 (PART 3)

Q - What are some of the purposes of Jesus' use of parables?

Matthew 13:24-30 - Wheat And Tares

v. 24 - good seed & v. 25 - tares

“Tares” are weeds that closely resemble wheat as they both grow, until close to the time of harvest when the wheat heads distinguish themselves from the tares. The wheat heads are heavy and cause the plant to begin to bow before harvest while tares are lighter and remain upright.



WHEAT: before it is fully ripe.



TARES: Lolium Temulentum

While these two plants look similar while they grow, they are very different. Wheat, as you know is a critical resource for basic food and nutrition. On the other hand, many types of tares are actually harmful to humans if eaten.

NET Bible Note - The Greek term ζιζάνιον (*zizanon*) refers to an especially undesirable weed that looks like wheat but has poisonous seeds.



Matthew 13:36-43 - Explanation Of The Wheat & Tares

This parable gives understanding into the state of the world today, prior to the return of Jesus. Both good and evil people are living together and affecting each other. But at the end of the age, Christ will charge his angels to gather the righteous like wheat collected at the harvest time. At the same time, the evil people will be gathered, like weeds at time of cultivation, and be thrown into the fires of judgement.

Q - What is Jesus teaching us through the parable of the wheat and the tares?

- Gives explanation of the existence of good and evil people living together and that there will be a judgement day.
- Also, considering the imagery of the wheat and tares, it speaks to the fact that we may not know who all is good or evil in this life now.
- There are evil forces at work in the world with deceptive and sinister objectives

It's also notable that in the telling of the parable, the slaves of the landowners are eager to remove the tares which they recognize shouldn't be in their master's field, but are told not to because they do not have the ability to precisely tell the difference between the two plants until it is harvest time. If they remove the tares prematurely, they risk removing wheat.

Matthew 13:31-32 - Mustard Seed

The parable itself identifies the mustard seed as one of the smallest of seeds (v. 32) but when planted and growth occurs, it becomes a large tree that eventually provides a place for the birds to nest. In the Old Testament a tree often represents strength and longevity and at times is used of royal lineages or kingdoms (ex: Isaiah 10-11, Ezekiel 31, Daniel 4). The phrase "cut down", used of a nation or king being judged, is probably referencing this sort of imagery. Did you notice the Old Testament quote in verse 32? Jesus is referencing a number of passages which speak of God's kingdom growing and enduring. Here is one from Ezekiel 17:

Ezekiel 17:22-24 (NLT) - "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will take a branch from the top of a tall cedar, and I will plant it on the top of Israel's highest mountain. 23 It will become a majestic cedar, sending forth its branches and producing seed. Birds of every sort will nest in it, finding shelter in the shade of its branches. 24 And all the trees will know that it is I, the LORD, who cuts the tall tree down and makes the short tree grow tall. It is I who makes the green tree wither and gives the dead tree new life. I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will do what I said!"

Q - What is Jesus teaching us through the parable of the mustard seed?

- The parable of the mustard seed teaches us that the kingdom of God starts small (in seed form) but over time becomes large and strong. At first it could be dismissed, but in the end it is unmistakable.
- For those waiting for the kingdom, this parable can give us comfort to help us remember that like the growth of a seed, God's kingdom doesn't all happen at once.

Matthew 13:33 - Leaven

Leaven is "a substance, typically yeast, that is used in dough to make it rise (Oxford Dictionary)." Usually leaven/yeast is a living substance that produces a reaction when mixed with water and

the elements in the dough. This reaction creates air bubbles that affect the dough by making it lighter and fluffier.

In modern bread baking, the amount of yeast used to make a loaf of bread is only about 1-2% of the total ingredients - yet the presence or absence of yeast is obvious in the final product. Yeast has a powerful impact on the bread and permeates every part of the dough.

In the parable, Jesus says that even though the woman used a small amount of leaven, it affected a rather large amount of dough (approx. 47lbs!). This would have been enough bread for over 100 people.

Q - What is Jesus teaching us through the parable of the leaven?

- Though the leaven is a small part of the bread recipe, it's a powerful part that affects everything else in the mix. It's hidden and unseen, but its effects are not.
- The Kingdom of God in its current form is not obvious, but it's impactful. It's not something that everyone is seeing and aware of, but the power of the Kingdom is beginning to have a reaction that is changing things.

I think the three parables in this section have a lot to tell us about the impact of the Kingdom of God. Jesus uses three examples to speak to the nature of the kingdom - it's something that is happening at the same time evil is happening (wheat/tares), it starts small (mustard seed), it is easy to think it's insignificant (leaven) - and yet in the end it will be large and strong (tree) and impact everything (risen bread). As sons and daughters of the kingdom now, we co-exist with evil and darkness - but that's the way it is until the harvest. In the meantime we stay faithful and endure, and let the Lord be the keeper of his field.