

STUDY EIGHT | MATTHEW 13:24-43

THE WEEDS, THE SEED AND THE YEAST

OVERVIEW

In our previous study we learnt that the purpose of the parables was to reveal the secrets of the Kingdom (Matt 13:11) but because of hard-heartedness not everyone receives them (13:13-15). In the second half of Matthew 13 Jesus continues his teaching in parables with the illustrations of The Wheat and the Weeds, the Mustard Seed and the Yeast, all of which reveal a secret of the Kingdom of heaven (v 35).

THE PARABLE OF THE WHEAT AND THE WEEDS (VV 31-32, 36-43)

A sower. A field. Good seeds sown. At night, an enemy sows in the same field. Wheat and weeds sprout together. The servants enquire why and the sower reveals it is the enemy's work.

The servants ask if the weeds should be removed (v 28). The sower says wait till harvest, when the harvesters will reap the wheat and weeds separately. The weeds will be burned. The wheat will be stored in the barn (v 30). There are only two outcomes.

THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED AND THE YEAST (VV 31-32)

These next two parables are best kept closely aligned. The mustard seed is deemed the smallest of all seeds and yet grows to be the largest of garden plants, providing homage for the birds (v 32). It is a picture of Kingdom growth. The seemingly small and insignificant work of Jesus (from a worldly perspective) through his disciples that will bring global growth as the invitation to enter the Kingdom provides a lasting home for all who receive it (v 32). The disciples would come to see the prophetic nature of Jesus' parable in their own ministry. The parable is a depiction of the Book of Acts.

Similarly the parable of the Yeast is about expansion. The spread of the yeast speaks to the influence of God's Kingdom throughout the world. The Apostle captures this in his opening words to the church at Colossae (Col 1:5-6) and Thessalonica (1 Thess 1:8-10). Interestingly Jesus will later use yeast to depict the spread of opposition to his Kingdom (Matt 16:6) strengthening the power of his parable. The gospel is always

'COME UNTO ME'

JANUARY 31

MATT 10:1-31 WORKERS FOR THE HARVEST

FEBRUARY 7

MATT 10:32-42 THE UNDIVIDED DISCIPLE

FEBRUARY 14

MATT 11:1-30 KNOWN & UNKNOWN

FEBRUARY 21

MATT 12:1-14 LORD OF THE SABBATH

FEBRUARY 28

MATT 12:15-37 THE TOUGH & TENDER SERVANT

MARCH 7

MATT 12:38-50 WHO ARE MY FAMILY?

MARCH 14

MATT 13:1-23 THE SOWER & THE SEEDS

MARCH 21

MATT 13:24-43 THE WEEDS, THE SEED & THE YEAST

MARCH 28

MATT 13:44-58 THE TREASURE, THE PEARL & THE NET

RESOURCE

A GREAT LIGHT
DAWNS

PETER BOLT

(READING THE BIBLE TODAY)

about progress and by God's enabling grace Kingdom dwellers are equipped to partake in its spread.

The parables together speak to the triumph (size and spread) of God's Kingdom and prepare for the explanation of the parable of the Wheat and the Weeds that follows.

THE PARABLE OF THE WHEAT AND THE WEEDS EXPLAINED (VV 36-43)

The sower is the Son of Man whom we know as Jesus (Matt 13:40). The field the world. The good seeds/wheat are sons of the Kingdom. The weeds are members of Satan's kingdom, his seeds. At the end there is no room for evil and sin in God's kingdom (v 40), so such people will be judged and excluded (v 42), but the sons of the kingdom will share in the Kingdom's glory (v 43).

God allows good and evil doers to co-exist until the Day of Judgment. He judges according to which kingdom we choose to belong to. He provides a way now of escaping the judgment at the end of the age. Every day that Jesus does not return is an invitation to enter and partake in the Kingdom of heaven (2 Peter 3:7-9). Until that day his Kingdom grows and its influence spreads.

The parable provides an important insight into the existence of good and evil in the world. While even the non-believer would say Amen to the removal of wrongdoing they would not agree with God's plan to eradicate it. Two things are helpful for our understanding of the sinful and broken world we live in:

1. **The existence of sin and evil is not outside God's sovereignty.** While there are many circumstances where we ask what God's purpose was in what we see taking place, *absent* is not the answer. We can be certain that sin and evil will not triumph, and that God will even use them to achieve his purposes (Acts 2:23-24). The wheat and the weeds coexist because Satan continues his influence even though he has been defeated in the work of the cross. But a wounded enemy can often cause greater harm because they have nothing to lose. Injustice will only finally be resolved at the return of Christ. Until that day we are be living for the Kingdom that lasts.
2. **We are called to account for our sinful behaviour.** The seeds in the parable of the wheat and the weeds are people. While there are so many circumstances where we rightly call out injustice they cannot ultimately exclude us from our own accountability for sin. God has promised to deal with the injustice in our world and urges us to reflect his concern for it (Micah 6:8). But his withholding of the final act is ultimately to provide opportunity for repentance. We must have an enduring humility that acknowledges that the problem of sin and evil in the world begins with us and ends with Jesus.

THE PURPOSE OF THE PARABLES (VV 34-36)

Matthew reinforces Jesus' teaching as the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies. The quote from Psalm 78:2 speaks to the revelatory nature of the parables in revealing Kingdom secrets (13:11). The Psalmist's concern is that the teachings of their ancestors about 'the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord' (Psalm 78:4) should be passed onto the generations that follow. Jesus is fulfilling that tradition in his own teaching, the Psalmist also lamenting that because of hardheartedness people will not believe (Ps 78:8ff). We are reminded that the plans and purposes of God in salvation history are never understood and received other than by his grace.

GETTING STARTED

1. What do you think is the most important priority of the church?

INTO THE TEXT

READ VERSES 24-35

2. From Matthew 13:11, what is the purpose of the parables? Reading the parables of the Wheat and the Weeds, the Mustard Seed and the Yeast, what do you believe are the secrets of the Kingdom they may be revealing?
3. Matthew seems to have deliberately arranged his record so that the three parables follow each other. Do you think they are linked? If so, how?
4. Would you say that the parables are more relevant to how we live today, or for our view of the future? Do some reveal more of one over the other?
5. Matthew once again anchors Jesus' teaching in the Old Testament. Considering Psalm 78, what is the concern of its author in vv 4-8?
6. Matthew says Jesus would receive a similar response to his parables in Matthew 13:14-15. What is the antidote to hardheartedness (see also Matt 11:28-30 & 12:50)?

READ VERSES 36-43

7. What does Jesus' explanation of the parable teach us about the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of heaven?
8. Many of us will have called on God to come and deal with the sin and injustices of our world. What does the parable reveal about his timing in doing so?
9. What does the parable imply we should be doing until the return of Jesus the Son of Man (see 2 Peter 3:7-9)?

TAKEAWAY

10. Should I leave judgment to God?

11. How committed should we be to social causes?

12. Should God's ultimate promise and plan to deal with evil and sin change the way I live now?