

SHORTER PARABLES IN MATTHEW 13

(PART 1)

Jon Macon

Matthew chapter 13 emphasizes the parables of Jesus Christ. Verse 3 says, “And he spake many things unto them in parables.” In fact, Matthew 13:34-35 says, “All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.” The purpose of parables is explained by Christ in this chapter (Matt 13:10-17). There are two extensive parables in Matthew 13: the parable of the sower (Matt 13:3-23), and the parable of the wheat and tares (Matt 13:24-30,36-43).

The parable of the mustard seed

In Matthew 13:31-32, Jesus put forth another parable, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof (see also Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19). In the parable of the mustard seed, the church, though small in its beginning, becomes great as it spreads everywhere. The kingdom of God, which is the church (Matt 16:18-19), started off small, but grew and grew and became very great. From its beginning with about 3,000 members (Acts 2:37-47), the church grew until it destroyed the Roman empire by converting the people and then it became a great mountain which filled the whole earth (Dan 2:31-45). Even today, in so many places the Lord’s church is growing like the mustard plant. Its members will always be few compared with the general population (Matt 7:13-14), but God’s word still has the power to convert many more people to Christ.

The parable of the leaven

Matthew 13:33 says, “Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid

SHORTER PARABLES IN MATTHEW 13

(PART 1)

(continued)

in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.” Again, this parable speaks of the kingdom of heaven, the church of Christ. “A little leaven leavens the whole lump” (1 Cor 5:6; Gal 5:9). As in the parable of the mustard seed, the church, though small in its beginning, becomes great as it spreads everywhere.

The parable of the treasure

Jesus taught this parable in Matthew 13:44: “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man has found, he hides, and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field.” This is another parable about the church. The “things concerning the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3; 8:12; 19:8) include the gospel of the kingdom (Matt 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; Mark 1:14-15). The gospel is the entire New Testament, which is the “royal law” (Jas 2:8-12). This is the law which is written in the hearts and minds of the citizens of the kingdom, Christians (Heb 8:10-11; 10:16). This is how the kingdom of God is *within* us (Luke 17:20-21). The kingdom of God does not pertain to earthly things such as food and drink, but spiritual things such as righteousness, peace and joy (Rom 14:17). These are the unseen, eternal things that we look to (2 Cor 4:18; 1 Tim 6:6-11). This parable of the treasure demonstrates the eternal value of the spiritual things that pertain to God’s kingdom and the price we must pay to obtain these things. Like the man in the parable who sold all that he had in order to buy the field with the great treasure, being a disciple of Christ, a citizen of God’s kingdom, has a cost. The cost is forsaking all that we have (Luke 14:33). It is possible to forsake our possessions and still have them (Matt 4:18-20; 8:14; 19:27-29). But we must not seek or serve, or love anything of this world (Matt 6:24-34; Luke 12:13-31; Jas 4:4; 1 John 2:15). The world must be crucified to us and we to the world (Gal 6:14). Jesus says, “Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that fails not, where no thief approaches, neither moth corrupts. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Luke 12:33-34; see also Matt 6:19-21).