

# Kelham Baptist Church

## Men's Bible Study

### January 22, 2023

#### THE PARABLES OF MATTHEW 13 AND THE CHURCH AGE

##### Lesson 2

**READ MATTHEW 13:24-30.** The disciples did not understand this parable. Later, when they were in the privacy of a house (verse 36), they asked Him to explain it to them. From Jesus' explanation, we learn that the Sower of the seed is Christ. The field is the world, and the good seed are Christians. The bad seed are unbelievers. Christians and non-Christians both are in the world, and it is hard to tell them apart. The time of the harvest is when Christ returns to earth with His mighty angels at the end of this age: --*"When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (represented by the tares). Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power"* (2 Thessalonians 1:7 - 9). This is when Jesus will say to the righteous (represented by the wheat),

*“Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34).*

To interpret these parables, always follow the pattern given by Jesus: Any parable that has a man in it, the man is always Jesus. If a field is in the parable, it represents the world. This parable shows that both good and bad seed grow together in the Kingdom of Heaven. The Kingdom of Heaven in this world is the whole realm of Christendom, which includes all the local Christian churches. Christian churches of all denominations contain both wheat and tares. Many children of the devil are church members. They look like Christians, act like Christians, and some are teachers and even preachers. It is difficult to discern true believers from false believers, but when Christ returns and separates the wheat from the tares, the tares will be burned in everlasting fire and the wheat will inherit the kingdom Jesus has prepared for them.

The parable of the wheat and tares is a picture of the church at Smyrna, the persecuted church that is described in Revelation 2:8 – 11, the most prominent church during the approximate years of A.D. 100 to 312.

**READ REVELATION 2:8 – 11.** Smyrna gets its name from myrrh, an expensive spice used in embalming. Myrrh only gets its wonderful



aroma after it has been beaten and crushed. This church has been beaten and crushed with terrible persecution from the Roman emperors insisting upon emperor worship. Jesus says they will suffer persecution for ten days. Some scholars point out that there were ten emperors from Nero to Diocletian and that each day represents one emperor. Other scholars point out that the worse emperor of all was Diocletian, who ruled for ten years (303 – 313) and each day represents one year of suffering under Diocletian.

Christ identifies Himself as the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. He commends this church because even though they suffer afflictions and poverty, they are spiritually rich! The enemy (the evil one) is attacking this church with persecution and putting non-Christians in the church. The children of the devil look and act like Christians, but in their heart, they are against Christ. **Jesus does not condemn this church**, He comforts them by telling them to not be afraid of what they are about to suffer, but remain faithful, even to the point of death and He will give them a crown of life. The letter ends like the others, “He who has an ear, let him hear” - - . The overcomers will not be hurt at all by the second death, which we learn in Revelation 20, happens to all whose names are not written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

I should remind you that the seven churches of Revelation were real churches in Asia during the

time that John wrote the book. Each church had the characteristics listed in the letter to it. These letters are prophecies of what the character of the predominate church will be during future epochs that cover the entire sphere of Christendom from the apostles to the second coming of Christ. However, all seven churches are existing during each epoch. Today, churches of all seven characteristics are present with the Laodicean church being the most prominent and perhaps the Philadelphia church being second.

The parable of the Wheat and Tares pictures the church at Smyrna. The time period for this epoch is approximately A.D. 100 – A.D. 312.

Next week we will study the parable of the Mustard Seed that pictures the church at Pergamum, which is in the epoch of approximately A.D. 313 – A.D. 600.

