

**SUMMARY OF THE MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION**

<b>CHURCH</b>	<b>CHRIST</b>	<b>COMMENDATION</b>	<b>COMPLAINT</b>	<b>THREAT</b>	<b>PROMISE</b>
Ephesus "Beloved" At the end of the Apostolic age	Holds the seven stars, walks in the midst of the lampstands.	Works, labor, endurance, testing false prophets, hating the Nicolaitans	Loss of putting Christ first. Their love for Him had faded.	Removal of the Lampstand.	Access to the tree of life in Paradise.
Smyrna "Myrrh" Great Persecution	The First and the Last who was dead and is alive	Works, tribulation and poverty for Christ's sake.	None	None	Crown of Life and no second death
Pergamum "Married" Constantine Era	Has a sharp two-edged sword.	Faithful even in the face of martyrdom.	Tolerated those who taught the doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitans.	Will war against the church with the sword of His mouth.	Feed with hidden manna, given a white stone and a new name.
Thyatira "Sacrifice" Purple Fabrics Dark Ages	Eyes like a flame of fire and feet like fine bronze.	Love, service, faith, and patience. Lots of activity but not much fruit.	Tolerance of false prophets. Corrupted by Papal dominion.	Casting the prophets and her children into the Great Tribulation.	Authority over the nations and rule with Christ in the millennium
Sardis "Remnant" Reformation Era	The possessor of the Seven Spirits and the Seven Stars.	A few who have not defiled their garments.	A reputation for life with signs of death.	Christ will come as a thief.	Clothed in white, in the Book of Life, will be confessed before the Father.
Philadelphia "Brotherly Love" Missionary Era	The One having Supreme Authority "Key of David"	Faithfulness to the Word of God.	None	None	An open door, deliverance from the Great Tribulation, permanence in the temple of God.
Laodicea "People Judgment" The apostate church of the last days.	The Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the beginning of the	None	Luke warmth and an over-estimate of status before God.	Expulsion from the mouth of the Lord.	Close relationship and rule with Christ.

REVELATION 2 AND 3  
Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia

Ephesus, 2:1-7, represents the very earliest Christian churches. From the days of Pentecost and into great persecution under the Roman emperors Nero 64-68 and Domitian 95-96. The Pentecostal church was on fire, loved the Lord and went into all the world spreading the gospel. The parable of the Sower relates to this church

Smyrna, 2:8-11, is the church that suffered much persecution under the following emperors: Trajan (104-117) had Ignatius burned at the stake; Marcus Aurelius (161-180) had Polycarp killed; Severus (200-211); Maximinus (235-237); Decius (250-253); Valerian (257-260); Aurelian (270-275); Diocletian (303-313) was the worst emperor of all. This church was rich spiritually and received no complaint or threatened judgment from Christ. The parable of the enemy planting bad seed among the good seed (Wheat and Tares) applies to this church.

Pergamum, 2:12-17, is the church that took in the world. Constantine did not do a work of God when he caused unbelievers to be baptized into the church. Because of this, there was great external growth to the church. The parable of the Mustard Seed applies to this church period.

Thyatira, 2:18-29, is the church during the Dark Ages when Roman Catholics controlled Christian religious expression. Jesus is the Son of God, but they called Him the Son of Mary. Leaven always represents corruption and this church is represented in the parable of Leaven.

Sardis, 3:1-6, is the church of the Reformation. Sardis means remnant, and God always has a remnant that remains true to Him. In Sardis, there were a few who had not spoiled their garments, but they were marked by outward ritualism and inward deadness. God always has a remnant in Israel. Israel is the Hid Treasure of Matthew 13.

Philadelphia, 3:7-13, is the church of the great missionary effort. They are judged faithful and Christ has no condemnation of them. This is the true church of believers and they will be taken out of the earth before the time of tribulation. They are the Pearl of Great Price.

Laodicea, 3:14-22, is the unbelieving church that is on earth during the last days before the rapture. They do not realize how poor, wretched, and blind they really are. They think they are doing good and they have everything they need. This church will be on earth during the tribulation time and will be in the great dragnet at the end of time. The parable of the Dragnet applies to this church.



move the lampstand from them. In Revelation 1, Jesus identified the lampstands as the churches. Therefore, if He removes the lampstand, they will no longer be light unto the world. In their favor, was the fact that they hate the practices of the Nicolaitans. The Nicolaitans elevated the clergy above the people, making them rulers of the congregation with absolute authority. This is the beginning of elevating the priesthood in church hierarchy. The early church at Ephesus hated this philosophy and so did Jesus. Jesus ends this letter with the warning to hear what the Spirit says to the church and that to those who overcome, He will give the right to eat of the tree of life. The tree of life is in heaven at the close of Revelation, it is in the New Jerusalem, so the promise is eternal life with Jesus to all that overcome the failure of the church at Ephesus.

At the close of the first century, the church at Ephesus that once was "on fire" is **beginning to cool off**. Next week we will study the parable of the Wheat and the Tares and see how it represents the church at Smyrna, a church that had many members who were actually children of the devil. In addition, this church suffered horrible persecution under the Roman emperor Diocletian.



## Kelham Baptist Church Men's Bible Study January 15, 2023

### THE PARABLES OF MATTHEW 13 AND THE CHURCH AGE Lesson 1

In Matthew 12:24, the Pharisees blasphemed against Jesus and from this point on, Jesus begins to turn toward the formation of His Church, which He will refer to as "**The Kingdom of Heaven**". Matthew 13 contains seven kingdom of heaven parables.

Revelation 2 and 3 contains letters to seven **historical churches** of Asia. Prophetically, these seven churches represent the character of every church from Pentecost until the second appearance of Christ. This period of time is divided into seven epochs, named for the dominant church during that period. The first parable is **The Sower** that spreads the seed. The first letter is to the **church at Ephesus** which represents the apostolic church that took the Gospel to all the known world during the time period from Pentecost until about A.D.100.

The first four parables are spoken by the seaside to a great multitude, but the last three are spoken



to the disciples in private.

**READ MATTHEW 13:1-9.** The disciples asked Jesus why He spoke to the people in parables (mysteriously). Jesus answered, “Because it is given unto you to know the **mysteries of the kingdom of heaven**, but to them it is not given” (verse 11). The disciples did not understand the parable and Jesus explains it to them in verses 19-23:

1). The seed is the **Word of God**. Some seed falls on the hard packed wayside that represents a person with a hard, non-receptive heart. The birds, that eat the seed, represent fallen angels (demons) snatching away the Word from the hardhearted.

2). Some of the seed falls on stony ground (shallow soil) and that is like a person who is willing to listen to the Word. They are even excited about hearing the Word, but because they are not grounded and rooted in the scripture, they do not hold on to it when others begin to mock and question them.

3) The seed that fell among thorns represents people who receive the Word, but will not allow it to grow in their lives because of worldly cares and possessions.

4). Some of the seed falls on **prepared soil**. This represents the person whose heart has been prepared by the Holy Spirit. They receive the Word, understand it, and they nourish it

through prayer and hearing the Word as often as possible. These seeds **grow and reproduce**. In each case, the seed is good: it is the character of the **soil** (human heart) that determines the growth of the seed.

This parable pictures the apostolic church that began spreading the Word. The early church (from Pentecost until about 100 AD) took the gospel to all the known world, planting the seed. Some produced 100%, some 60, and some 30. At the close of the first century, persecution increased, and many churches had lost their zeal.

**READ REVELATION 2:1-7.** Ephesus is the “**sowing and planting**” church. Ephesus means “beloved”. Jesus commends this church because they broke the ground, sowed the seeds of the gospel and carried the message to the known world. They loved Christ and wanted to accomplish His will in the world. Everywhere they went the Jewish leaders sent men to counter the teachings of Paul and the other missionary leaders. Both the Jews and the Romans persecuted the early church and by the end of the first century Roman persecution was very heavy. The early Christians had a sincere love of Christ; they endured hardships and continued to start new churches. Jesus commends them for this good work, but points out that they had lost the zeal for Christ they had in the beginning. They had cooled off and began to depend more on the organization and the leadership of men rather than the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Jesus warns that if they do not repent, He will re-



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.



# 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



to being a Christian and ordered all his armies to be baptized. This resulted in a large influx of unbelievers being baptized into the church. Thus fulfilling the parable of the small herb that grew to be a great tree that nurtures and shelters unbelievers. Some historians teach that Constantine did a great work for God and a big victory for Christianity. Nothing could be further from the truth; he brought the world into the church.

The parable of the Mustard seed pictures the church of Pergamum during the epoch of approximately A.D. 313—A.D. 600. The church of the third parable is married to the world and permitted immoral practices, mixed marriages, and they tolerated establishing a ruling class of clergy.

Next week we will study the fourth parable that is of the leaven and pictures the church at Thyatira.



## Kelham Baptist Church Men's Bible Study January 29, 2023

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

#### Lesson 3

**READ MATTHEW 13:31 - 32.** Following the pattern Jesus set, the man who sows the mustard seed is Christ. The field is the world. The construction of this parable implies that the mustard seed is an herb (a small garden plant). The expectation is that this seed will produce a small garden size plant. However, this plant has unnatural growth and develops into a tree instead of an herb. The plant gives shelter to the birds of the air. In the parable of the Sower, the birds are demons that come to take away the seed that was sown. Many times in the bible, the birds of the air represent birds of prey and usually picture the work of the devil.

In this parable, Jesus is picturing what happens in Christendom while He is absent: The organized church grows very large and becomes a place of shelter and nourishment for demons.



Not all theologians agree with the above interpretation. In fact, most consider this parable as showing how Christendom grows into a large organization that is a good influence in the world. In order to justify their view, they claim that during the first century in Palestine, the mustard plant was a tree. Careful reading of the parable shows that Jesus considered the mustard plant as an herb because He says it grows greater than the herbs. If the mustard plant were a tree, there would be no need for Him to say it grows greater than the herbs.

The parable of the mustard plant pictures Christendom becoming very large and infiltrated by unbelievers. It pictures the church at Pergamos, the compromising church that is “married” to worldly things. The word Pergamos means “thoroughly married”. Pergamos was the main city for Roman emperor worship and contained pagan temples and altars to false gods. Jesus said Satan’s throne is at Pergamos. When the Persians conquered Babylon, Satan moved his throne to Pergamos through Attalus III, a priest-king of the Chaldeans. With all the evil influence, Pergamos was a city where it really was “tough” to be a Christian and Jesus understood this.

**READ REVELATION 2:12 – 17.** After addressing this letter to the messenger, Christ identifies Himself as having a sharp two-edged

sword. This sword is the Word of God that cuts asunder. The devil is always defeated when up against the Word of God. Jesus says He recognizes their good works even though they live where Satan has his throne. Christ commends those who did not renounce Him when many of their members were martyred. Antipas was only one of many. Christ acknowledges that Pergamos is a hard place to remain true to Christian ideals. They were under pressure, but they kept their testimony alive and won many to Christ. However, Christ had two things against this church: The doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. The doctrine of Balaam sanctioned immoral practices and mixed marriages. The doctrine of the Nicolaitans established a ruling class of clergy. The church at Ephesus hated the Nicolaitans; the church Pergamos tolerated them. Satan comes into the church at Pergamos and becomes a part of it.

Christ calls for repentance or He will come quickly to judge with the Word of God. To those who overcome, He will feed them with “hidden manna”. Christ is hidden from the world today, but Christians are to feed on Him. Those who feed on Him will be given a “white stone” that will have a personal meaning to each believer.

Constantine became the Roman emperor about A.D. 306 and wanted to conquer the whole world. In 312, he saw a “cross” in the sky and took this as a sign that he would achieve his goal of ruling the world if he would become a Christian. He professed