

UNDERSTANDING DISCIPLESHIP ISSUES IN OUR TIMES

Part I: Understanding And Adjusting To The Two Covert, Warring Discipling Agendas (Matthew 13:1-33)

I. Introduction

- A. The men of Issachar in 1 Chronicles 12:32 understood their times to know what Israel ought to do.
- B. Well, we Christians today increasingly sense the need to understand what is going on in Christendom, and desire to know about our times so as to adjust to them well and enjoy God's blessing.
- C. Christ provided prophetic insight to meet this need in Matthew 13, and we begin to view it in this lesson:

II. Understanding And Adjusting To The Two Covert, Warring Discipling Agendas, Matthew 13:1-33.

- A. The **day** Israel's leaders claimed He performed miracles by Satan's power, Jesus began to withdraw and postpone His offer of the Kingdom, cf. Matt. 12:24-37; 13:1 with Bible Knowledge Com., N. T., p. 48.
- B. However, such a **withdrawal** would have created a vacuum in **understanding** for Christ's disciples; they expected the Messiah to establish His reign when He **first** appeared to the nation, cf. Matthew 11:2-6.
- C. Thus, Jesus gave **NEW** insight on spiritual events in parables so only the **godly** could **discern** their times and **adjust** to enjoy God's **blessing** (Matthew 13:10-16). We now view the **first part** of those parables:
 1. The **Parable of the Sower** (Matthew 13:3-23) - Jesus revealed most who will hear God's Word will **initially** seem to respond well to it. Yet, varying degrees of their yielding to Satan (the hard ground and birds), the sin nature (via faithlessness, the stony ground) and the world (the thorny ground and the lusts of the flesh, eyes and pride, 1 Jn. 2:15-16) will lead **long-term** to only a **minority** being disciplined, and even a **smaller** minority will ever **fully** mature due to personal variations of victory over Satan, the world and the sin nature (some thirty, some sixty and some an hundredfold, Matthew 13:23).
 2. The **Parable of the Wheat and Tares** (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43) - Jesus revealed Satan would take advantage of this mixed response to plant unsaved "moles" in groups of believers under the guise of being weak believers. In response, God will let the "moles" stay put until the judgment to protect weak believers from discipling harm (were He abruptly to uproot the "moles" from the discipling groups).
 3. The **Parable of the Mustard Seed** (Matthew 13:31-32) - Christ revealed God's decision not to check Satan's "mole" program in discipling groups would lead to an unchecked **visible** growth of the groups.
 4. The **Parable of the Leaven** (Matthew 13:33) - Since leaven occurs in Matthew elsewhere **only** in Matthew 16:6-12, and **there** it represents **false doctrine**, the visible growth of these groups where weak believers and Satan's "moles" coexist will eventually cause such groups to go doctrinally errant.

Lesson: *Jesus revealed that, as happened in His own earthly ministry [seen in His being slandered by Satan's "moles" in Matthew 12], (a) only a minority of hearers will respond WELL long-term to the Word taught by His disciples, and those who respond FULLY will be an even SMALLER minority due to the degrees their hearers will gain victory over Satan, the world and the sin nature. (b) Accordingly, taking advantage of such mixed responses to the Word, Satan will plant unsaved "moles" among God's people under the guise of being weak believers. (c) Since the discipling of weak believers in such groups would be upset by the shocking, abrupt removal of these Satanic "moles," God will let them function unchecked among weak believers until the final judgment. (d) With Satan's efforts to pollute such groups going unchecked, they will externally greatly expand, (e) only to turn doctrinally errant.*

Application: *(a) We should RESPOND WELL to our OWN exposure to Scripture, for then we hinder Satan's agenda to counter true group discipling. (b) Since abruptly forcing weak believers out of errant associations can disrupt their discipling, WE must NOT FORCE weak believers out of even errant discipling groups; that must come from GOD'S discipling of THEM. (c) WE must NOT make EXTERNAL group growth OUR priority, for doing so only plays into Satan's agenda. Rather, we must let GOD expand our discipling groups, Acts 2:42-47a, 47b! (d) We must not be stunned to see doctrinal failure EVENTUALLY arise in ANY discipling group! (e) God's servants and true believers who are ignorant of the facts given in this lesson can be harmfully disillusioned by TRIALS that arise when the TRUTH is given in their groups; we must thus edify them by explaining these facts to them, 13:51-52.*