

RIGHTLY RESPONDING TO OUR APOSTATE ERA

Part III: Rightly Responding To Our Apostate Era's Great Group Growth And Doctrinal Corruption (Matthew 13:31-33)

I. Introduction

- A. The great rise in spiritual error in today's world can leave an uninformed believer confused and unsettled if he does not understand God's plan for him in this notably apostate era.
- B. Christ gave important teaching in parable form in Matthew 13:1-52 to inform believers on how they are to think and to act so they can be settled and productive in this apostate era, so we view it for our edification:

II. Responding To Our Era's Great Group Growth And Doctrinal Corruption, Matthew 13:31-33:

- A. After teaching in the Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23 Parable of the Sower that there would be mostly negative responses to Scripture in our era, and after giving the Matthew 13:24-30, 34-43 Parable of the Tares where Satan would take advantage of these negative responses to hide the lost amid weak, carnal believers to disrupt their discipleship, Jesus gave the Matthew 13:31-33 Parables of the Mustard Seed and of the Leaven.
- B. We know the parables of the Sower and of the Tares are meant to affect how we interpret the Mustard Seed and Leaven parables, for Matthew 13:51 reveals that the Matthew 13:52 Parable of the Householder at the end of the Matthew 13 parables on the kingdom is based on the cumulative instruction of all the previous parables.
- C. Thus, in view of what Jesus taught in the parables of the Sower and of the Tares, the parables of the Mustard Seed and of the Leaven predict Satan's promotion of great growth in groups of believers along with doctrinal corruption in these groups all to thwart God's discipleship of believers through His Word (as follows):
 - 1. Since the Parable of the Tares predicts Satan's planting of unbelievers amid groups of believers where there are weak and carnal believers who partly poorly respond to Scripture presentation as predicted in the Parable of the Sower, the Parable of the Mustard seed predicts Satan will support a massive growth of such mixed groups further to counter the true discipling of believers, complicating the work of God's servants.
 - 2. This move by Satan is clarified by Christ in Matthew 13:31-32 as follows:
 - a. Jesus claimed the kingdom of heaven is like a tiny mustard seed that a man sows in his field, Matthew 13:31. Though the mustard seed is not the smallest of all seeds, the Orchard seed being smaller, it was the smallest of the garden seeds known to Jesus' hearers, and the phrase, "'small as a mustard seed' was a proverb by which people then referred to something unusually small," Bib. Know. Com., N. T., p. 51.
 - b. Though this is the least of all garden seeds, when the mustard grows up, it becomes a small tree in which even the birds of the air lodge in its branches, Matthew 13:32. Similarly, though Jesus' disciples would start out as a very small group of people, that group would grow greatly, unchecked even by Satan due to his plants of unbelievers in their midst to where the birds of the air, what in the Parable of the Sower represent Satan (Matthew 13:4, 19), lodge in its structure. Hence, Satan would even promote the rapid, expansive growth of groups of believers infiltrated with the lost to corrupt the organizations involved so much that even parties influenced by demons and Satan would reside in its system!
 - 3. However, further to try neutralizing the discipleship of believers and so further complicate the work of God's servants, Satan would corrupt these large growing groups by introducing errant teaching into them, leavening the whole group with error, what Christ foretold in the Matthew 13:33 Parable of the Leaven:
 - a. Leaven elsewhere in Scripture typifies "the presence of impurity or evil" (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Matt. 13:33), and elsewhere in Matthew's Gospel it refers only to errant teaching, Matt. 16:6, 11-12.
 - b. In view of Satan's work not only to infiltrate groups of believers with the lost, but to cause their groups to expand so greatly that they come to include workers of evil and Satan, the Evil One will introduce the thoroughly permeating leaven of errant teaching in groups of believers further to thwart true discipleship!
- D. Accordingly, true believers and God's servants who minister His Word in groups due to these efforts of Satan must be all the more careful to heed what Scripture teaches in their own lives and ministries in accord with the Parable of the Sower that they not be distracted or dismayed from being productive for the Lord!

Lesson: *In view of Satan's efforts to infiltrate groups of believers with the lost, to push those groups to expand so greatly that even Satan's agents lodge in its structures while Satan then introduces errant teaching in the groups all to thwart the discipleship of people, God's truly saved people and messengers must be all the more careful that they watch how well they heed Scripture (Parable of the Sower) to guard their thinking and ministry efforts.*

Application: *May we watch that we stay responsive to Scripture versus every obstacle that we face to the contrary.*