

RIGHTLY RESPONDING TO OUR APOSTATE ERA

Part IV: Responding To Our Apostate Era's Discouraging Discipling By Focusing On Eager Hearers (Matthew 13:44-46)

I. Introduction

- A. The great rise in spiritual corruption in today's world can leave an uninformed believer confused and unsettled.
- B. Christ gave the Matthew 13:1-52 parables to inform the godly on how they are to think and act so they can be settled and productive in this apostate era between Christ's Matthew 12 withdrawal of His offer of the Messianic Kingdom and His institution of it after the Great Tribulation, so we view it for our edification:

II. Responding To Our Era's Discouraging Discipling By Focusing On Eager Hearers, Matthew 13:44-46:

- A. In Matthew 13:1-43, Jesus gave four parables that could discourage God's messengers from ministering:
 - 1. First, Jesus taught in the Parable of the Sower that there will be mostly negative responses to the ministry of God's Word (hard, rocky, weedy soils), and even those who did heed it would do so in varying degrees of production due to varying degrees of faith in Scripture (hard soil), of relying on God for victory in trials (rocky soil) and of victory over worldliness (weedy soil).
 - 2. Second, Jesus taught in the Parable of the Tares (Weeds) that Satan would plant unbelievers amid groups of believers to counter God's discipling of groups of such weak and carnal believers.
 - 3. Third, in the Parable of the Mustard Seed, Jesus taught that Satan would promote the rapid growth of groups of believers mixed with the lost to promote further blockage to true discipleship of weak believers.
 - 4. Fourth, Jesus taught by the Parable of the Leaven that Satan would introduce errant beliefs into these massively growing groups further to complicate the discipleship process.
 - 5. The challenges to discipling foretold in these parables could thus discourage messengers of God's Word!
- B. Jesus then gave the parables of the treasure and pearl to counter such discouragement in God's messengers:
 - 1. I once held the view that the hid treasure parable teaches God's salvation of Israel and the pearl of great price parable His salvation of the Church (B. K. C., N. T., p. 51-52), but I have since noted the treasure is accidentally found where the pearl is found by searching, but God seeks the lost of Israel in Luke 19:9-10!
 - 2. Another view has these parables teaching men will give all their possessions to gain eternal life (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Matt. 13:44-45), but Ephesians 2:8-9 claims that salvation is not by works.
 - 3. Rather, the context reveals both parables teach the marvelous **reception** of some to the **truth** of the God's Word regarding the Kingdom, **receptions** that *encourage God's servants to keep ministering His Word*:
 - a. Jesus preceded His giving of the hid treasure and pearl parables by His explanation of the Parable of the Tares (Matthew 13:36-43) with His last comment there alluding to the Daniel 12:3 prediction of the wise who turn many to righteousness as shining with God's rewarding glory in the Kingdom, Matthew 13:43.
 - b. That Daniel 12 context at verse 4 adds that Daniel's prophecy will be understood by many in the Great Tribulation, and that many will then move about to find explanations to the severe trials they face in their troublesome era, a mobile search akin to that of the merchant in the Matthew 13 parable of the pearl!
 - c. Also, Judaism metaphorically calls a valuable saying a pearl, and the old form of Jewish preaching with its many references to Scripture was likened to a string of pearls, Theol. Dict. of the N. T., v. IV, p. 473.
 - d. In addition, the hid treasure is an old valuable buried in the past while the pearl is a new, unused jewel.
 - e. Thus, the Matthew 13:44-46 parables of the treasure and pearl expand on the Daniel 12:3-4 teaching (as follows): (1) in our apostate era between Christ's Matthew 12 withdrawal of the Kingdom and the Great Tribulation, some men will accidentally discover precious Old Testament prophecy on salvation by faith in Christ (Isaiah 53) while (2) others will seek for wisdom in various sources of the world or in Scripture and thereby find priceless New Testament truth on Christ's salvation and His coming Kingdom. Men in both groups will give up all they have of this life to trust in Christ for salvation and entrance into His Kingdom!
 - 4. Thus, in a lesson that applies to God's messengers throughout this whole apostate era, to counter the lure to be discouraged over obstacles to discipling others, God's messengers must focus on the blessed reality that some hearers will respond greatly to the presentation of God's Word, and that such responses will be richly rewarding in this life besides bringing God's rich eternal rewards to His messengers for their ministries!

Lesson: *God's servants in this apostate era must avoid getting discouraged over obstacles they face in ministering His Word by focusing on the blessings that arise from those who will richly respond and on God's eternal reward.*

Application: *May we be encouraged by Jesus' Matthew 13:44-46 insight to keep serving God in discipling others.*