

#1. These mysteries, these parables have been around a long time. Look at verse 35:

*Matthew 13:35 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from **the foundation of the world.***

Things that are mysterious to us in this life are not a mystery to God. Paul over and over in the book of Ephesians says, "I'm going to share something with you and you've never heard it before because God just revealed it to me." Jesus is speaking about the year 28-29 AD in this passage and He has no issues saying that things that have been around for 4,000 years plus are being revealed by Him.

And I think that there is a great application here for us because in verse number 30 we're told that the field is the world. And I mentioned last week that if you have a King James in your lap this "world" is actually the word *kosmon*, which refers to the creation, and not the *aiōn*, the age, which is seen in the other words translated "world" through the rest of this parable. "What are we saying?" Well, contextually you have to understand that Matthew is using words on purpose. Words that he heard Jesus use, yes, but he's not using all the words Jesus used because there are many things Jesus said that are not recorded. The book of John says if we were to record everything that Jesus both said and did, the planet couldn't hold the books. So, if that's true, then we should not be looking passed any of these very important words in the text.

#2. God permitted Satan. We all want answers and perhaps one of the biggest mysteries is why God even allowed Satan to occur. And I can sit up here and theorize and philosophize with you as to why that is, but I want you to see in the text that the enemy came and sowed tares, in verse 25, among the wheat. I ask you, can the Lord of all the Earth stop the enemy from sowing tares? It's His field. I promise you, He could have stopped the numbskull from sowing tares.

We have this false dichotomy in Scripture, this false sort of battle going on between Satan and the Lord. Be aware, at any point that the Lord deems fit He could put a lump on Satan's head so big he'd have to climb the universe to get to the top of it. We are not going to put God in such a small box that we're going to make Satan His archenemy. Every time we find Satan battling anyone in the Bible it's an angel. Zechariah chapter 3: it's an angel. Jude verse 9: it's an angel. Revelation 12: an angel. Daniel 10: an angel. Job: he's bowing before God asking for permission to bother Job.

God permitted Satan. And you say, "Would have sure been a lot easier on the earth and on people if God would have just stopped the devil from getting in the garden, where he started sowing tares among the wheat." Yeah, you're right. But God is not interested in what's easy. God is interested in His glory. He is absolutely, positively egocentric and He should be. When you have no one with which to compare yourself, I say that you should have a good self-esteem. When He allows Satan in the garden you understand that the end game is Hebrews 2:10:

*For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings, in **bringing many sons unto glory.***

It's debatable as to whether or not there would have been anyone brought to glory, to share in the glory of the triune God, if there were not first a fall. Because the pre-fall Adam was not in Christ. The pre-fall Adam was not in God. And those of us who are redeemed, we have a distinction.

God permits Satan to keep working even after people are aware of his work. "Would you that we gather them up?" verse number 28. And the Lord said, the Man who is sowing seed in the field, who we find out in verse 37 is the Son of Man says, "Nope. Harvest is coming." Oh, I know. It looks like the world is out of control. Oh, I know what we're thinking.

#3 There are those who saw tares (13:27). Now I've already told you that I don't know who the servants of the householder are, but I have a feeling that when I read Acts 20:28 and I find out that the Holy Ghost

made overseers for the church which Christ purchased with His own blood, and later in that verse when Paul warns those Ephesian elders that there are wolves among them, I feel like that is a great parallel to this passage. It seems like, there are people who are aware of the tares and the wheat. They're aware of them and guess what they're doing? They're pointing them out to the Lord.

Where are they? According to 13:38, they're in the world, yes, they're in the world, but where else are they? They are, in verse 41, in the kingdom. The tares are raveled up in the wheat to the point where, in verse number 29, it says we can't yank them yet because they are bound up with the wheat.

Apparently they are stealing the sun energy, that photosynthesis energy, from the wheat. They're stealing energy from the wheat, taking moisture from the wheat, taking that food in the soil from the wheat, and the servants of the householder know they're stealing from the wheat. And those servants of the householder just get so fired up. We're so sure someone's a tare that oftentimes when we're trying to yank them out in our own wisdom, we're hurting the wheat. You can see them. They're in your Sunday School classes, they're in the water cooler discussions at your workplace, they're claiming to be Christian and they're f-bombing, they're claiming to be Christian and they're shacking up, they're claiming to have the same Jesus you do. And there's some wheat in that crowd, and if you spend energy battling with all the tares, I'm afraid you're going to hurt your ministry to the wheat. Just wait until the end of the harvest. We're told yanking the tares out is the job of someone else.

#4 In 13:41, the kingdom is the field. You have wheat and tares sown in the world and in verse 41. It's called "the kingdom." That should tell you that the Lord's kingdom, for now is spreading around the *kosmon* and in answer to our prayer, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven," God is gaining influence through the preaching of His gospel.

*13:31 The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. 33 Another parable spake He unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*

When you're out there in the world, the *kosmon*, you need to know that it's God's place, it's His kingdom. He's removing tares. Are there holes? Sure! But one thing I do know: somehow the kingdom of heaven is like leaven. It is permeating the whole.

This passage seems to be saying that this kingdom influence is increasing with "the seed that is sown in the field" (same parallel). Somehow, just like the seed that has grown in the field has wheat that soon outnumbers the tares, so also the good seed becomes a tree that the birds of the earth come and nest in. And that good seed is like leaven that permeates the whole lump and I would say that it is both expectation and promise. That those who are committed to preaching the gospel will see the world soon tackled by its influence. I believe that. We're not allowed to sit back and be passive when you have the most powerful message in the universe! We have the most earth shattering message that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. And that is enough to break hard hearts. And somehow we believe that enough to keep preaching it. God is not American, and if America hits the tub tomorrow, the Kingdom of God is still like leaven in the lump.

"Are you post-millennial?"

I don't particularly care what label you throw on me. I believe the Scripture says if you preach the gospel it will spread through the entire lump, the entire lump. I'm not so sure that the gospel is being preached as it ought to. It hasn't lost its power; it's losing its mouthpieces. So if you're frustrated that the gospel is not being believed and people are not being converted, be frustrated that in Sandy Ridge Baptist Church we typically have 95% of a membership that has never personally given the gospel to anybody. Yes.

#5 The order of the tares and wheat is not significant. There are many people that have built theology out of the fact that the tares are removed first, verse 30, and then the wheat is gathered later on. "There'll be this big finale. The angels will storm down from the sky and gather up the tares and then throw them right in the lake of fire and then they'll gather the wheat." I think you need to be aware that that is not a consistent order. Look at verse 47.

*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and **gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.***

What's gathered first in that parable? The good. So you see the order is based on the articles He's using in the parable, not necessarily a doctrine He's establishing.

#6. The furnace is not symbolic (verses 42 and 50). I wish it were. I was hoping there was another explanation. Are you ever that human, where you wish the Bible said something different than you've always been told it said? Verse 42 says that these tares will be cast into a furnace of fire, and in verse 50 they're going to cast something from a completely different parable into this furnace of fire. What is it? It is the "bad" pulled out of the net. The furnace I'm afraid is not a symbol. It is reality. Two separate parables with different things in them. I wish it wasn't true. And all it makes me want to do is preach the gospel more, and the gospel is that Christ died for sinful men. Matthew 20:28:

*The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.*

So we are aware that the gospel is Christ died for people that didn't deserve it, died for all their sins, all of them, rose again the third day according to Scriptures, and will save all who believe on Him. If all I had was the warning of a furnace of fire, I would preach it.