

Adult study of Jesus Christ

We continue with the study of the providence of God as far as Jesus Christ is the gatherer and preserver of the church.

In particular, we previously dealt with the evil of men and the evil of punishment, which God created to punish the wicked and to discipline, redirect, and sanctify the believers.

We dealt with the effectual presence of the Holy Spirit in varying degrees, as the Holy Spirit manages and directs the sanctification of the believers.

We also dealt with the two ways in which God works, namely, immediately and over time and saw that when God works immediately, like when He produced water out of the rock struck by Moses (Num 20:10), He doesn't use means or the order of nature. But when God works over time, He uses the order of nature as found in man and in irrational creation.

The good that unbelievers do, as a result of the Holy Spirit effectually moving closer to them to move them to do good, is counted to them as sin by association because they praise themselves or their false gods instead the God who authored the good works in them.

We also dealt with the cause and effect of Joseph and his brothers.

Today we will look at the point of the spear, so to speak, of the separation of the elect and the reprobate in the ministry of the gospel, which results in the preservation of the church.

The Great Commission (Mat 28:19-20) (19Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age) sends all of us out to make disciples of all the nations and we ought not to try to distinguish who are the elect and who are not. We cannot know and we should not know. God chose his elect and He will deliver them, immediately and over time, as He chooses. We are commanded to bring the gospel to all people so that the elect could hear and be healed; and so that the reprobate would have no excuse when they are found guilty and destroyed.

Let's read Mat 13:10-50.

Mat 13:10 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" ¹¹Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. ¹²"For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. ¹³"Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴"In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE; ¹⁵FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL,

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WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES, OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.' (Is 6:9,10)

¹⁶"But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. ¹⁷"For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

¹⁸"Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹"When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. ²⁰"The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. ²²"And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. ²³"And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."

²⁴Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵"But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶"But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. ²⁷"The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' ²⁸"And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' ²⁹"But he said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰'Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.'""

³⁴All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable.

Mat 13:36 Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." ³⁷And He said, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, ³⁸and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; ³⁹and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰"So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at

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the end of the age. ⁴¹"The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, ⁴²and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³"Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

⁴⁴"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

⁴⁵"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, ⁴⁶and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

⁴⁷"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; ⁴⁸and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away.

⁴⁹"So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, ⁵⁰and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Many things can be said about the passages we have read, but today I would like to focus on only a few items that highlight the way in which Christ preserves the church – preservation through the separation of the elect from the reprobate, especially the separation that occurs in the hearts of men, not by men.

1. Jesus spoke to them in parables.
2. The seed in the parable of the sower.
3. The seed in the parable of the wheat and the tares.
4. What happens when the gospel is discovered in this life.
5. What happens at the end of the age.

1. Jesus spoke to them in parables.

Why? It's a legitimate question. Jesus answers that question by saying, "FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES, OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM."

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But, isn't that what the gospel is supposed to do? opening eyes and ears so that people would understand and be healed? Yes, but let's look very carefully at what Jesus said here, or rather what Jesus didn't say. He didn't say that their understanding would lead to an understanding of "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (Mat 13:11), which is knowing that He is the promised Savior.

To his disciples Jesus said specifically, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted." So, when Jesus says, "OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN" it does not mean that they have been granted the gift of understanding the mysteries of the kingdom. They would never understand that the deliverance of Israel is through Jesus Christ.

But what would they understand with their hearts if Jesus didn't speak to them in parables? What does that mean?

It means many things – and we think about false prophets, false christs, false teachers, wicked men masquerading as angels of light, and so on. Which would be correct. I want to highlight something else here, which is in the same vein as the false teachers and prophets.

Let's read what John wrote in his first epistle:

1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We know that once sins have been forgiven, eternal life is the inescapable consequence because sin is the cause of death. Remove the cause and the effect is also removed.

Which is why it is so important for believers to repent and be forgiven, even though our sinful, corrupt bodies still hold us in this life under the curse of death but Christ's merits cleared the way through death to victory – effectively removing death's sting. We must die under God's just judgment but we will not suffer His wrath – it is a glorious thoroughfare to glory, instead of an end filled with eternal horror.

Would the reprobate be forgiven if he confesses his sins as 1 John 1:9 promises? The promise is clear; surely anyone can claim from Jesus forgiveness if it is prefaced by a confession. But that's not the whole story.

1John 1:6, 7 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; ⁷but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

It's not a mechanical thing – it's a radical change of life, like being resurrected from the dead. Our bodies will die and we will immediately

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proceed to the throne of God. We are to walk that road in this life too, mortify our old nature (kill it) and live a life like that of Christ.

So, the reprobate is incapable of confessing their sins and "walk in the Light". That means even if they confess their sins, they still lack an understanding that Jesus is the Son of God.

We have dealt with the overwhelming proof that the Scriptures are true and unalterable. The reprobate are quick to make nothing of these proofs but they are the first to insist that the courts find someone guilty or innocent based on the testimony of witnesses. One would have assumed that they would act rationally and consider the testimony before them, but, no, they are blind to the obvious.

Even when they face the judgment of God, they refuse to repent.

Rev 9:20 The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk;

Rev 16:9 Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory. ¹⁰Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, ¹¹and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.

So, speaking to them in parables, Jesus protected and preserved the church to prevent the evil one from attacking the infant church.

Rev 12:13 And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. Rev 12:14 But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she *was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.

2. The seed in the parable of the sower.

A rather peculiar word choice is used in this parable. I know one cannot use those aspects of a parable that are not supported in Scripture as doctrine, but this observation is clearly supported by the doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As Jesus explains to them the meaning of the parable of the sower, He uses "the one on whom seed was sown" to indicate that it's about hearing the gospel, or, the gospel being poured out onto them, as seed is strewn onto

the ground. But the sowing of the gospel is indiscriminate, without taking into account anything – elect or reprobate, pious or wicked.

The seed in the parable of the wheat and the tares.

Contrary to the word-choice “the one on whom seed was sown” used in the parable of the sower, here Jesus says uses “a man ... sowed good seed in his field” which indicates the elect and not the gospel.

However, with the good seed, bad seeds (tares) were sown into the field. Now, a tare (Gr. zizanion *dziz-an'-ee-on*) is also called a false grain, which is a kind of darnel resembling wheat. It is a species of rye-grass, of the genus *Lolium* especially *Lolium temulentum*, the seeds of which are a strong soporific (*hypnotic, sleep-inducing*) poison. It bears the closest resemblance to wheat till the ear appears, and only then the difference is discovered. It grows plentifully in Syria and Palestine.”

It is no accident, then, that Jesus used “tares” in this parable, considering that tares look like wheat in the beginning and only after maturity the difference becomes apparent; and that it is an hypnotic drug.

The objective of the parable is to instruct the disciples not to discriminate to whom the gospel is preached because God will judge those on the outside (of the church) at the end of time. And yet, we are to judge those inside the church to keep her pure and free from wicked men.

1CO 5:12, 13 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? ¹³God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked man from among you.”

We ought to, then, administer discipline in the church (as the third mark of the true church) to protect the church from the evil one.

3. What happens when the gospel is discovered in this life.

These parables set the value of the gospel higher than any possession, “he sells all that he has and buys that field.” and “he went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

The kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; ⁴⁸and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away.

4. What happens at the end of the age.

The angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, ⁵⁰and throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.