Divided Kingdom
Matthew 13:24-43

Intro

In the Old Testament book of 1 Kings, we read that when King Solomon died, his son Rehoboam took over…

- And as you may remember, King Solomon *started well* but he *didn't finish well*…

And among the things that King Solomon did poorly was that he greatly increased government spending — and this, of course, led to higher taxes…

- So, when Rehoboam became king, he had a change to move in a different direction — to cut taxes and be a blessing to the people…

Unfortunately, Rehoboam chose to double down and actually ***increase*** taxes — which led to rebellion against Rehoboam…

- Ten tribes sided with a man named Jeroboam and they became the N Kingdom of Israel and two tribes remained with Rehoboam and they became the S Kingdom of Judah…

This split became known as ***the Divided Kingdom*** — because the kingdom was split in two — North vs South — 10 vs 2…

- But if we really think about it — this was not the beginning of ***the Divided Kingdom***…

The Divided Kingdom actually goes back much further…

- You see a kingdom is the range of one's effective will — the area where a person's will is done…

Now, the Bible makes it absolutely clear that God Himself is the King of Kings — that everything that is made is His Kingdom…

- But the Bible also tells us that there is a being called the Devil who, though a created being, rebelled against God's rightful authority and then led Adam & Eve into that rebellion…

So, I think it is safe to say that God's rightful kingdom was divided long before the days of King Rehoboam…

The kingdom has been divided ever since the fall of the Devil…

- And because of the fall of Adam and Eve and the continual sinfulness of human beings, the kingdom remains divided…

This is a very important truth to consider because the parables that we will consider this morning speak of a divided kingdom…

- These parables speak to the fact that things are not always what they appear to be on the surface…

Not everyone who claims to be a part of God's kingdom is actually loyal to the King…

With this in mind, let's move into our first section…

<u>1) Parable of the Wheat and the Tares</u> (vs 24-30)

24 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who <u>sowed good seed</u> in <u>his field</u>;
25 but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.

<u>kingdom of heaven</u> — *or kingdom of God — professing Christianity…(not the Heaven that believers go to when they die)*

Now, please notice that the man *sowed good seed in his own field* (similar to the Parable of the Sower) but an enemy came and sowed tares in that field…

<u>tares</u> — *probably darnel, a poisonous plant related to wheat and virtually indistinguishable from wheat until the kernels develop…*

As we consider the situation, it is clear that the enemy is malicious — that he wants to destroy the crop of the man who owns the field…

26 But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared.
27 So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'
28 He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.'
The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?'

29 But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.

The wheat and the tares are so intertwined that if the workers tried to uproot the tares they would uproot the wheat as well…

30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."""

The separation of the wheat and the tares will not take place until it is time for the harvest…

- At that time the tares will be bundled and burned but the wheat will be gathered into the owner's barn…

Now, we will see the explanation of this parable at the end of our study — so for now let's move on to our second section…

<u>2) Parable of the Mustard Seed</u> (vs 31-32)

31 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field,

Once again, God's kingdom is compared to a seed being planted in by a man in his own field…

But this time it is a mustard seed that is being planted…

32 which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

The idea is that the mustard seed is very small but it grows into a plant that is large enough for birds to nest in its branches…

Now, I believe that there are a couple of things that the Lord Jesus is communicating through this parable…

First of all, God's kingdom as brought through the Lord Jesus Christ would have very humble beginnings — it would start small — and then it would grow beyond all expectation…

- [ex. Book of Acts — 120 to 3000 to 5000 and on and on…]

With that said, in this parable I also believe that the Lord Jesus is communicating that *God's Kingdom will be a divided kingdom*…

- As we saw in the Parable of the Sower, **the birds of the air** represented demonic powers…

Likewise, I believe that the birds here in the Parable of the Mustard Seed represent demonic influence…

- You see, if you study church history you realize that demonic powers began to influence the Church very early in its history…

The apostle Paul warned the Ephesian elders about this reality in…

Acts 20:28-31 (NKJV) *[please turn there]*

28 "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

29 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears."

Paul also warned Timothy (in both of his letters to Timothy) about the danger of false teachers coming into the church…

To see this, please turn to…

1 Timothy 4:1-3 (NKJV)

1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

3 forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

Now to…

2 Timothy 4:1-5 (NKJV)

1 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

And this reality of demonic influence in the Church reminds us of why it is so important to know the truth…

- Because as we know the truth we will not be deceived by the false teachers who infiltrate the Church and nest in its branches…

With this in mind, let's turn back to Matthew 13 as we move into our next section…

<u>3) Parable of the Leaven</u> (vs 33)

33 Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."

Now, many understand this parable to mean that the kingdom of heaven — God's kingdom in this world — will start small (leaven or yeast is very small) but it will permeate and spread throughout the world…

- That the church will have influence far beyond what anyone could have imagined…

But others see this as a parable of the unnatural growth of the Church in the world — especially the corruption of the church that took place when it was joined with the pagan Roman Empire…

- You see, Bible commentators note that three measures of meal is a highly unusual amount of meal for making bread — this would be enough to feed 100 people…

And the fact that she hid yeast in it — when yeast is often a symbol of sin in the scriptures — leads some to believe that this is another picture of a divided kingdom…

This brings us to our next section…

4) Prophecy and Parables (vs 34-35)

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

In this season of Jesus' ministry, He spoke to them in parables as a way of separating out those who were unwilling to seek understanding…

35 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying:
"I will open My mouth in parables;
I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world."

Jesus' speaking in parables was a fulfillment of prophecy and in His parables He was revealing things that had been kept secret from the foundation of the world…

- And I think the primary secret that He revealed was the establishment of the Church — that both Jews and Gentiles who place their faith in Christ would form one body of believers…

This brings us to our final section…

<u>5) The Wheat and the Tares Explained</u> (vs 36-43)

36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field."
37 He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.

So, the Lord Jesus Himself is the Man who **sows the good seed**…

38 The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one.

The field is the world, the **good seeds** are believers — **sons of the kingdom**, and the **tares** are unbelievers — **sons of the wicked one**…

Now, this is a difficult teaching for people to accept — but a person can have ***only one of two spiritual fathers***…

Either God is your Father or the wicked one is your father…

You see, people often say that all human beings are children of God but that is simply not true…

Now, it is true that all human beings are ***created in the image of God*** but that is ***not the same as being a child of God***…

- The difficult truth is that we all come into this world as children of the wicked one — *and if you do not believe this then spend some time around a group of 2-year-olds*…

With that said, there is good news!…

No one is required to remain a son of the wicked one — anyone can become a child of God through entering into a person relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ…

To remind ourselves of this wonderful reality, please turn to…

John 1:10-13 (NKJV)

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Let's turn back to Matthew 13 as we move into vs…

39 The enemy who sowed them is the devil,

The enemy of the Lord Jesus **is the devil** and one of the primary strategies of the devil is to plant tares — false believers — in true churches…

- And this is a vital truth because it sheds light on one of the biggest complaints about churches — that churches have hypocrites in them…

Now, we must admit that churches do have hypocrites in them — *just like the Lord Jesus said they would — because the enemy sows tares among the wheat…*

At the same time, we must realize that ***the hypocrite complaint is simply an excuse***…

- Because if we want to avoid hypocrites then we must avoid all society — because hypocrites are everywhere…

And we will even have to avoid society with ourself because there is hypocrisy in us…[expand]

Now, as we move on in vs 39-42 we see the harvest of separation…

the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.
40 Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.
41 The Son of Man will send out <u>His angels</u>, and they will gather <u>out of His kingdom</u> all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness,
42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

*At the end of the age, there will be a **<u>separation</u> of the wheat and the tares***…

The tares will be taken and burned in the furnace of fire — and there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth — speaking of the eternal conscious judgment of hell…[expand]

Now, please notice in vs 41 that the **angels** will remove **all things that offend and those who practice lawlessness**…

That is wonderful news —that is a day to look forward to!…

But it also reminds us that until that day, there will be things that offend and those who practice lawlessness in the kingdom of God — in the churches that profess Christianity…

Now, what we see in the parable of the wheat and the tares is very similar to what the Lord Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount in…

Matthew 7:21-23 (NKJV) *[please turn there]*

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

What we see in Matthew 7 and in Matthew 13 is that practicing lawlessness — unrepentant disobedience — is a primary characteristic of a tare — of a son of the wicked one…

On the other hand, the primary characteristic of a son of the kingdom is obedience…

John 14:15 (NKJV)
"If you love Me, keep My commandments."

1 John 2:3-4 (NKJV)

3 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Let's turn back to Matthew 13 as move into our final verse…

43 Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

This is the bright future — literally — that is awaiting the sons of the kingdom…

And it reminds me of what the Prophet Daniel wrote in…

Daniel 12:3 (NKJV)
Those who are wise shall shine
Like the brightness of the firmament,
And those who turn many to righteousness
Like the stars forever and ever.

But as we begin to wind down our time together, I want you to know that this ability to shine as lights is not only for eternity future — *it is also for right now — in this life*…

Conclusion

So, before we move into our time of communion, I will read some verses that remind us that as children of God, we are to shine as lights — right here, right now…

Matthew 5:14-16 (NKJV)
14 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.
15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.
16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

Ephesians 5:8 (NKJV)
For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light…

Philippians 2:14-15 (NKJV)
14 Do all things without complaining and disputing,
15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world…

Colossians 1:12 (NKJV)
…giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

1 Thessalonians 5:5 (NKJV)
You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

1 Peter 2:9-10 (NKJV)

9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

1 John 1:5-7 (NKJV)

5 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Let's pray…

Matthew 26:26-28 (NKJV)

26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you.

28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."