

<http://www.greater-emmanuel.org/jmw/index.html>

Good morning, Graham. Your question re: Matt. 13:37-42 is a very important one, and, like all of Jesus' parables, requires the Spirit's unveiling of the secret (vs. 35) which it contains. As vs. 11 explains, the secrets of the kingdom are not given to all, to be understood on a surface reading. These secrets (mysteries) are explained to those "who have ears to hear" (vs. 9), and these are those who are at any given time chosen for discipleship, and thus given ears to hear. It is all of His grace, and in His time -- every man in his own class (order): 1 Cor. 15:23. Those He calls, He gives ears to hear. He has called us, we have heard Him, so now we can expect Him to give us the understanding.

Ch. 13 contains various parables of the kingdom, so we must keep in mind that this is the context: the kingdom vs. being outside the kingdom, and the dealings of God with men, in relation to the kingdom. With all of Jesus' parables there is more than one level of interpretation and application. Most of them had a then-present application -- applying to the disciples and to the Jews of His day -- and also a timeless principle which we all can apply to our lives.

The then-present meaning of many of Jesus' parables applied to those chosen to continue living in the "olive tree" (Rom. ch. 11): His disciples and those chosen for salvation in that "generation" who would remain as branches in the tree, and continue being the ones producing the anointing (oil) which would be the light of their world; and then there were the branches which would be broken out in A.D. 70, and the weeping and anguish which would result from the kingdom (the manifest working of God in the earth, through people) being taken away from them and given to others who would be grafted in alongside of the believing branches. The judgment of which Jesus spoke -- on this level of understanding -- referred to judgment once again coming upon His people (Israel; in this case, the Jews) as it had in the past (e.g., through the Babylonians) and now would be accomplished through the Romans. Jerusalem would be burned.

This theme carries on throughout Jesus' teachings and becomes more explicit in Mat. 23-25. The goats (lit. "kids") of ch. 25 represented the Jews who would be pruned in the figurative fires of the coming judgment, due to their lack of maturity in love, to be feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, taking in the stranger, visiting the prisoners and the sick (vs. 35-36). This corrective dealing was for God's people (kids, "goats" were clean animals who were a part of the shepherd's flock [vs. 32-33]) who were not producing the fruit of righteousness (love lived out). Remember that Jesus was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. His teachings applied to them, not to the Gentile world. They applied to those who knew God and had His Word and commandments. If this overall context is understood, then His parables become more clearly seen. Note the quote of Isa. in Mat. 13:13-15. Those who are not productive soil are "this people."

So in ch. 13, keep in mind the other parables of this context. In vs. 18-23 we have the parable of the sower explained. It is clear here (vs. 22-23) that Jesus is speaking of men hearing the Word into the soil of themselves. In vs. 44 we have a treasure hid in a field. In 45-46 we have the acquisition of "goodly pearls." In vs. 47-50 we have a harvest of fish in the end of the age of Law. This now more parallels the sowing of good seed and tares in 37-42, for there is a separating and a decision (judgment) for dealing. With the fish, the good ones are for eating -- they are profitable for the kingdom. The worthless ones could either be returned to the sea (of humanity) or used for purposes other than eating. Once again: the choice is for its value to the kingdom. Those worthless fish were figuratively cast into a furnace of fire for hard, corrective dealings -- things that are common to mankind wherever His grace and mercy are not being presently applied, where His "wrath" is continuously dwelling (John 3:36).

Now to our passage in 37-42. Here the good seed are the "sons of the kingdom" -- or, those having the qualities and characteristics of the heavenly realm -- rather than the seeds being the Word as in the "parable of the sower" earlier in the chapter. On the literal, historical level of interpretation, these represented the

disciples and others chosen to be in Christ at that time. The field into which they were sown was the world (cosmos: organized system) of Israel , or, the Jews -- their religion and culture. The harvest was the time of gathering in the ripened crop of that age of Law. Those who did not have the character and qualities of the kingdom entered into the judgment of A.D. 70 which brought the end of the Jewish religion as it was known. Those thus judged were those who were of their father, the devil -- ones sown into that system which did not yet have the heart of God. Now they were removed from God's kingdom. Yet, recall Rom. 11. All Israel will be saved -- they can be grafted back in again, when their dealings of correction are ended.

So what of its application to us, and to all Gentiles? We see the example of the natural, that happened in the first century. So what is our world? This can be the "church system," or, it can be the "world within," our own system of thinking and living. The sons of the kingdom can be that new creation man which is sown into our hearts, while the tares can be the seeds of carnal thinking and from our harlotry's with religious Babylon . Father leaves them there, both for contrast, and also to be our thorns in the flesh for our child-training. But when that season ("age") comes to a close, He has someone take these away via His fire (testings, trials, cleansing). Note that the figure of planting a crop is the figure of a "seasonal" dealing. And even in harvesting the good crop, there is the process of the threshing floor, to separate away the dead plant from the seed, which is the goal. Recall how John the baptist said that "He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the granary; but He will burn up the chaff (what was once a necessary part of the plant: first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear [Mark 4:28 KJV]) with unquenchable fire" (Mat. 3:12). Now note, that this figure was used to explain a baptism within Holy Spirit and fire (vs. 11).

By no means is this a full explanation of this parable, but I hope that it will assist you as the Spirit continues to speak truth into your heart.

In His grace,
Jonathan