

## **Bible Prophecy and the book of Revelation, Lesson 8**

### **7 Letters to the 7 Churches, The Kingdom Parables**

↪ As a footnote to our study, we will consider the parallels between the 7 letters and the 7 kingdom parables of Matthew 13.

☑ **First we need to review in general what we've seen thus far in the 7 letters.**

We have seen that these are very carefully organized letters with every detail of the letters supporting a central theme. We have seen that these have 4 levels of meaning or application: Local, All churches, Individual, Church age.

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- ✓ **Ephesus:** Commends this church seven different ways and then says, "Nevertheless" devotion is more important than doctrine. It was the age when the gospel spread rapidly, but all the doctrinal attacks and heresy hunting caused them to lose their first love.
  - ✓ **Smyrna:** Letter of death; represents over 200 years in which the church suffered persecution from Roman emperors. Jesus promised to be with them, but not rescue them.
  - ✓ **Pergamus:** Church marries the world; name means perverted marriage. Here the doctrines of paganism begin to be mixed with Christianity.
  - ✓ **Thyatira:** Church is in a full-blown affair with pagan doctrines and practices, and a woman "Jezebel" is the leader in this immorality.
  - ✓ **Sardis:** Had a name but was dead. The Protestant movement took place during this time period; however, they fell back into many of the practices of the Roman church, but unlike that church, they had Bibles in their laps as they did it.
  - ✓ **Philadelphia:** Missionary age of the church characterized by seemingly weak churches that had a door held open to them that no one could shut. They were persecuted but unstoppable.
  - ✓ **Laodicea:** Jesus is on the outside of this church who does not need Him. This church is self-sufficient. Unlike all the others, Jesus does not hold out hope for its repentance as a body, but only to the individual.
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- ✓ **Matthew 13:1-2:** Situation – Gives 7 Kingdom Parables; interprets 2 of them for us. Leaves 5 without interpretation because the keys to interpreting them are given to us in the two He does interpret.
  - ✓ **Matthew 13:34-35:** Hidden things? Things not spoken of in the O.T. The church is not mentioned in the Old Testament; Paul calls it the mystery of the Church. **Romans 16:25, Ephesus 3:2-6**
  - ✓ Old Testament; is full of prophecy, but it all sounds like this: **Isiah 61:1-2** Jesus quotes verse 1 in the synagogue. **Where is the church age in this prophecy?**
  - ✓ **Parable # 1: V. 3-9:** Remember the birds; "He that has an ear..."? **Verses 18-23** Birds are demons or the devil himself.
  - ✓ Seed is the "word of the kingdom." Field is the world.
  - ✓ **Parable #2: Verses 24-25:** Notice the enemy is involved here again; the enemy has a leading role in the story of the Kingdom. **Verses 26-30** Does not remove them from the evil till the end. **Verses 36-43** Notice the seed/plant and field and the enemy are the same. The sower is Jesus. The same closing phrase: "He that has an ear..."
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- ✓ **Parable #3: Verses 31-32:** Who's the Man? What is the seed? What is the plant? This one is left without interpretation, so, we have historically mishandled this one, without following the rules of interpretation:
    - 1) Keep it in context
    - 2) Read it as if you were the original hearer; any interpretation they would not have made in their cultural and biblical context, you shouldn't make.
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- ✓ Who were the original hearers? How many of you have ever seen a wild mustard plant? We usually interpret this parable as saying that the church will grow large and spread all over this world.
  - ✓ Mustard plants don't grow into trees, ever!!!! Mustard plants are yellow flowered bushes you see all over Israel and the Middle East. They grow to a maximum of 3-4' and never any bigger!
  - ✓ Jesus is describing something that is not right; this is not a good thing! This bush is some kind of mutant that has gotten way out of hand. What are the birds? What does this mean?
  - ✓ **Parable #4: V. 33** Must obey the rules of interpretation, in context and in the culture. Who's the woman? Up until now, it has been a man who was Jesus. Every time a woman is used symbolically in reference to religion in the Bible, she is always a symbol of evil. **Zechariah 5:5-11**
  - ✓ What is the Leaven? Most interpret it as the good influence of the church or that the church will spread throughout the world in a hidden way. Rules of interpretation demand that we see it very differently.
  - ✓ Leaven when used symbolically refers to something evil 100% of the time!! **Exodus 12,13,34; Amos 4; Leviticus 2, 6, 10, 23.** Jesus told the disciples, "Beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees and Saducees." The Feast of Unleavened Bread is to symbolize the fact that Jesus has removed sin from us.
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- ✓ What does this mean? Something improper is being introduced into the kingdom by a woman. Parallels the fourth letter to Thyatira in which a woman is introducing false doctrine and idolatry into the church.
  - ✓ **The 3<sup>rd</sup> parable parallels the third letter to the church at Pergamum where the church marries the world.**
  - ✓ Christianity becomes socially acceptable after 2 centuries of persecution. Finally, it becomes mandatory, and the Roman emperor forces all Romans to become Christian, filling the churches with unconverted pagans.
  - ✓ The church grew to an enormous size over-night, but she was a mutant whose size was used for the introduction of pagan doctrine and practices. **The church becomes enormous, and evil lit in her branches!!**
  - ✓ **Parable #5 Verse 44** Has been interpreted as, "nothing is more important than the kingdom, so if you have to sell it all, do it." Can you buy salvation? You can if you are Jesus!
  - ✓ The "field" is the world; the "Man" is Jesus (**Verse 24**). Huge field with a treasure hidden somewhere in it, so He buys the whole thing to get the treasure. **John 3:16** "For God so loved the "field" that He gave..."
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- ✓ The fifth letter is to the church at Sardis, which means remnant. "There are a few in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes and they will be dressed in white for they are worthy."
- ✓ **Parable # 6 Verse 45** The "Merchant" is Jesus. Pearls were not initially valuable to Jews because oysters are not kosher. Pearls were originally Gentile gems.
- ✓ The sixth letter was to the church at Philadelphia, a missionary church, the only church that Jesus promised to remove before the Tribulation. The door was opened so no one could stop the growth of their mission. A pearl is formed by introducing an irritant into the oyster such as sand; it grows by increments. An oyster hates it, but its efforts to remove the irritant only serve to make the pearl bigger. In the end, it is removed from its place to be a jewel for the one who found it.
- ✓ **Parable #7 Verses 47-50** Parallel to Laodicea: the call in that letter is to the individual and here the fish are drawn out individually. Some go to heaven and others don't.
- ✓ **Parable #1** The letter to the Ephesians is a time of super abundant growth.
- ✓ **Parable #2** Tares are left with the wheat, and they are not rescued until the end like the Smyrna church.
- ✓ **Seven churches written to in the New Testament with these same characteristics or combinations thereof.**

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