

## **Voices of the Tribulation**

We've studied six parables in Matthew 13. The seventh and final is the parable of the net.

*47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: 48 Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. 49 So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, 50 And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 51 Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord. 52 Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.*

The kingdom parables cover two time periods. Notice that closing verse refers to "things new and old". The "things new" refers to events occurring in the dispensation of the Church Age. The "things old" refers to events occurring in the dispensation of the Jews. With this in mind, let's briefly review the previous six parables.

The sower and the seed refers to the Church Age, or "things new". This represents evangelism during this time. The wheat and tares describes an event that will occur during the Tribulation, which is the close of the Jewish Age, so it is a discussion of "things old". Then we switch back to "things new" in the parable of the mustard seed, which represents the Church. The leaven, then, is also "things new" since it refers to satan's internal attacks upon the Church. In last month's issue, we discussed the treasure and the pearl. You'll recall the treasure refers to Israel ("things old") and the pearl represents the Church ("things new"). Now the seventh parable, describing the Tribulation, is "things old".

In this parable we have a description of fishermen fishing with nets. Now it's important for us to understand that they didn't go fishing with a pole and a worm, but rather went out in ships and threw a net into the water. They would drop the nets in

and what- ever happened to be where the net was got caught in with all the other fish.

Once the net was slowly and carefully drawn to shore, the fishermen would sort their catch, keeping only the good fish and throwing back everything else that couldn't be sold for profit.

When does this sorting take place? We see in verse 49 of our text that it comes at the end of the world. A better translation for "world" here is the word "age". There is never going to be a time when it is the end of the *world*. The world will always be here. We'll have a new heaven and a new earth one of these days, but there will never be a time when it is literally the end of the world.

But there are dispensations that close. We're in the sixth dispensation, the Church Age, and it started on the day of Pentecost and will end at the rapture of the Church. That exciting event will usher in the Tribulation, which is the close of the fifth dispensation, the Jewish Age.

You see, the Jewish Age never finished; it simply stopped when Jesus was offered as the final sacrifice for sin. That dispensation will resume when the Church is removed from the earth. Seven years later, at the end of the tribulation, the final dispensation, the Millennium, will begin.

So the fifth dispensation, the Jewish Age, was interrupted by the insertion of the sixth dispensation, the Church Age, almost as if it were inserted in parentheses. Then the Jewish Age will resume for seven years (the Tribulation) and come to a close at the end of the Tribulation.

It is precisely this point in time that the parable of the net illustrates: the transition from the Tribulation to the Millennium (that's the seventh dispensation). And we have the analogy of fishermen sorting their catch. What does this parable illustrate about the transition?

Jesus will be returning with ten thousands of saints to establish righteousness on the earth. These saints are the ones who were raptured at the end of the Church Age,

as well as all the believers who died prior to that time. Every eye will see Jesus at this return, both believer and unbeliever, and it will be too late for the unbeliever to make a decision for eternal life.

When Jesus returns at this time, he will also be accompanied by millions of angels. They will literally take the unjust off the earth - like bad fish out of the net - and "cast them into the furnace of fire" as we read in Matthew 13:50, our text for this lesson.

This is just the opposite of what happens at the Rapture of the Church. The Rapture happens seven years prior to the event we just quoted, and the *just* are "severed" from among the *wicked*. The just go to heaven and the unjust are left on the earth for the seven years called the Tribulation. During this time, evangelism explodes and millions are swept into the kingdom of God. Those who get saved remain on the earth and move right into the Millennium along with all the saints who returned with Jesus from heaven.

Let's look more closely at the Tribulation for the remainder of this lesson. Psalm 2 discusses this time period, the final seven years of the Jewish Age. The Tribulation is God's final attempt with mankind to show him the folly of rejecting God. It is Satan's last effort to try to win the world over and to usher in his own kingdom. It is man's last effort to try to save himself through uniting together in one world government, promising peace forever.

Yes, there will be many terrible things that happen, but there will be many miracles and many souls saved. The world will go from zero saved to total evangelization in seven years. *Everyone* will hear the gospel and will make the decision for or against Jesus. And we will be watching from heaven, like the witnesses in Hebrews 12:1.

Psalm 2 can be described as the "Voices of the Tribulation". It can be divided up this way: verses 1-3 is the voice of the unbeliever; verses 4-6 is the voice of God the Father; verses 7- 9 is the voice of Jesus, and verses 10- 12 is the voice of the Holy Spirit.

*1 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, 3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. 4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. 5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. 6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. 7 I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. 8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. 9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. 10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. 11 Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. 12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*

Let's take this chapter a verse at a time. In verse one, we see that the heathen nations will be in a rage, an actual outrage against the Lord.

Sinners believe that there is a God. Most of them believe that he is just and right, and that he will win out in the end. But strangely enough, many of them will fight him to the very end. They have a rebellious attitude. But God is absolute and righteous, and one day the final line will be drawn. Then it will be too late to soften those hardened attitudes. God is going to win and those who fought all the way, fighting as if their efforts would stop God, will suddenly discover it's too late to admit their wrong attitude and change their heart.

This first verse also tells us that the people imagine a vain thing. That word "imagine" means to meditate, the same word used in Psalm 1:2. What is meditation? It is using your imagination to picture yourself in a particular situation, either good or bad. Believers discover a promise in the Word and imagine themselves in that promise

- healed, prospering, guided, in daily affairs. Unbelievers also use this principle, but so often they paint a picture for themselves of poverty, lack, sickness, and despair.

So what are the heathen meditating on in this first verse? They are trying to devise a way to rule the world without God; they want to establish one world government, solving man's problems with man's efforts. But God calls this *vain*. They are meditating on a "vain thing".

In verse two, we see this attempt made by individuals ("kings of the earth") and as a group ("rulers take counsel together"). Can you picture a group of intelligent men coming together to draw up a plan to overthrow God? Talk about meditating on an empty thing!

Verse three is also the voice of the unbelievers, the voice of the heathen leaders. They are saying that salvation by faith isn't necessary; they have their own religion. Everything the Bible teaches will be cast away as it says in the second half of that verse. They will have total disregard for all that Christianity represents.

What does God think about all this? His voice is heard in verses four through six. Notice in verse four that God laughs about this foolishness. As the leaders of the world are gathering to overthrow God and nullify salvation by faith, God just begins to laugh, "Derision" in this verse literally means to mock or make fun of someone.

The next verse tells us what God does when he's finished laughing. His wrath rises up against the heathen nations. During the Tribulation not only does Satan display his wrath, but God pours out his wrath also. It will be one of the most intense times the earth has ever encountered. During the Church Age, God is holding back his wrath. He is operating in grace. God *never* pours out his wrath on his children. He disciplines them in love, not in wrath. But when we're all taken to heaven and only the heathen are left on the earth, God's wrath will be displayed.

My friend, is God laughing at you? If you haven't accepted Jesus Christ you need to think about that. Have you thought you can run your own life? That makes God laugh. Will you have to face his wrath? Not if you have accepted Jesus. There was a

day that God poured out his wrath on his son Jesus. So when we accept Jesus as our Savior and Lord, we can enter into God's favor and we can be assured we'll never have to face his wrath.

Even during the Tribulation, a time of God's wrath, we can still see his patience and love demonstrated. Verse six tells us this. In verse six, God the Father refers to his Son as the means of salvation. Jesus is the king set on the holy mountain, elevated for all men to see.

Now in verse seven Jesus begins to speak. He quotes his Father first of all. Why is Jesus qualified to be the king on that holy mountain? He came through the virgin birth; he was born without that blemish that all mankind has. He was born without the nature of the flesh. Therefore he was qualified to be the redeemer of the world, Jesus as a man is superior to all men. God the Father had begotten Jesus so he could redeem us.

In verse eight, we find another qualification of Jesus: He was obedient to the death on the cross to purchase our redemption. There Jesus reconciled man to God and all the heathen became his inheritance.

Jesus tells us in verse seven what God the Father told him in the cradle, and in verse eight, what God the Father told him at the cross. God told Jesus to ask him for the heathen as an inheritance. And Jesus received that inheritance as the Son of God.

That last verse that is the voice of Jesus is verse nine. It refers to a future event when Jesus will prove himself to be the only one qualified to stand on the hill of Zion because he is going to come and judge the unrighteous. Those kings and rulers back in the first three verses will look like fragile pottery next to Jesus, whose truth is as strong as iron in comparison. They will just crumble; all their boasting and mighty efforts will be as dust.

In the final three verses of Psalm 2 we hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. These words are not only directed toward the heathen leaders during the time of the Tribulation, but they are also directed toward us today. Today is the day of salvation. Don't wait until the Tribulation to heed the words of the Holy Spirit. Why wait until the

Tribulation to heed the words of the Holy Spirit. Why wait when peace and eternal life can be yours right now? So in verse ten, we're admonished to be wise and be instructed.

How can we be wise? Job 28:28 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." When you respect God, you are wise. And the first step of respect is to submit to his saving grace. Open yourself up to him.

What is the second step? Be instructed, as it tells us in verse ten of our text. Instruction comes after the new birth. Being born again and walking in the instruction of the Lord equips you to be a good ruler. You can rule wisely over the daily matters that concern you.

Notice what comes next. In verse 11 the voice of the Holy Spirit admonishes us to "serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." You can't *serve* (verse 11) until you're *instructed* (verse 10). Find out what God wants you to do, then serve him respectfully, diligently.

Now a better translation of "trembling" is the word *anticipation*. The second half of verse eleven tells us to rejoice with anticipation. Why? Because redemption is drawing near. What are we anticipating? The Rapture of the Church; the fact that Jesus is coming back for his own. During the Tribulation, those who get saved will be anticipating the Millennium, when Jesus returns to rule the earth with peace for a thousand years. That's when all the unrighteous will be shattered like pottery; they will be sorted out and thrown away like bad fish from the net.

How can you serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with anticipation? The final verse of Psalm 2, verse 12, tells us how: "Kiss the Son." You see, salvation has been the same, whether in the Old Testament or the New Testament. It's by making peace with Jesus, or "kissing the Son." Jesus is the object of salvation.

What happens if you don't kiss the Son? God's wrath will be kindled. A better translation of the end of that sentence is, "when his wrath is kindled in but a little while." My friend, it is not long until the wrath of God is going to be kindled. You are

still living in the time of grace but in just a little while, Jesus will return. Notice that all those who are trusting in him are described as "blessed".

In closing, let's mention the four things a kiss represents. First, this kiss has already been initiated by Jesus. Imagine, if you will, that He is already "puckered up", just waiting for you to do your part. Jesus' lips were "puckered", so to speak, on the cross. He's ready for all mankind to come kiss him; to receive what he's offering them.

Next, a kiss represents trust. Kissing someone is a sign of trust in that person. Put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. He will never let you down.

Thirdly, a kiss represents surrender. Why should you surrender? Because you've been fighting him too long. If you don't quit fighting, he is still going to have the final victory - and you *don't* want to be on the losing side of *this* "battle". Join the winning side; join Jesus.

Finally, a kiss means desire. Jesus wants you to desire Him today. He desires you greatly. Respond to his "pucker", put your trust in him, surrender to him, and discover his desire for you.

Now look back at the closing verse of the parable of the net. Jesus addressed his hearers, and likened them to a householder. A householder is a responsible party. That's where the buck stops. In a family, it's the father. In a local church, it's the pastor. In the universal Church, it's Jesus Christ. Every person who understands and comprehends the Word of God is like a householder, and becomes responsible for what he's learned. Be a doer of the Word, not just a hearer. Put the Word into action. Get born again. Receive instruction. *Do it*, and you'll be blessed!

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