

THE GROWTH AND HARVEST OF THE APPEARANCE OF THE KINGDOM (I)

In the last chapter we covered the growth and harvest of the reality of the kingdom. In this chapter we will cover the growth and harvest of the appearance of the kingdom. The appearance of the kingdom is mainly revealed in Matthew 13 in three parables: the parable of the tares, the parable of the mustard herb becoming a great tree, and the parable of the leaven. These parables cover three very negative things.

THE TARES

First, we need to see some of the verses concerning **the tares, the false Christians**. These are the Christians in name only, the nominal Christians. Today there are very many nominal Christians. However, some people are indifferent, considering that it does not make much difference whether Christians are real or false. This is very serious. Actually, **to be a false Christian is even worse than to be a person without the name of a Christian**. As we have seen in a previous chapter, when the Lord Jesus comes back, the first group of people He will deal with in a severe way will be the false Christians. The Lord Jesus will send His angels to bind the tares into bundles and to throw all of them into the lake of fire. The Antichrist and the false prophet will be thrown alive into the lake of fire, and the fact that the false believers will also be thrown alive into the lake of fire shows how serious a matter it is. The Lord Jesus clearly said He would bind them into bundles and throw them into the fire, which means the lake of fire. **Today many pastors and ministers are indifferent as to whether their members are real Christians or false ones. As long as they have a good membership, a good crowd, and good attendance, and as long as the money is coming in, they are satisfied.** But **we must come to the Word of God to see how serious it is to be a false Christian**.

In the Acts

Acts 20:29-30 says, “I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. And from among you yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them.” Do you think that these are real believers or false ones? The Bible says that they are wolves. Even in the first century during the time of the apostle Paul, he told the elders of the church in Ephesus that some fierce wolves would come in among the church, not sparing the flock. **He said that some of these would even rise up from among them to speak perverted things to draw away disciples after them. Surely these are tares.**

In Romans

Romans 16:17-18 says, “Now I exhort you, brothers, to mark those who make divisions and causes of stumbling contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and turn away from them. For such men do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own stomach, and through smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.” Do not consider that all Christians are sheep; some are wolves. These verses tell us that we need to keep a watchful eye on those who make divisions and causes of stumbling. **By smooth words and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the simple.** Can you believe that these are real Christians? Surely, they must be the tares. They are false, and they deceive others for the sake of their own stomach. **They do not serve the Lord; they serve their own stomach. Their god is their stomach.**

In 2 Corinthians

Let us also read **2 Corinthians 11:13-15**: “Such ones are false apostles, deceitful workers, transfiguring themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself transfigures himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if also his ministers transfigure themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.” These verses say that there are some false apostles. Surely they are tares, and they are ministers of the enemy, Satan. **Some ministers today are not ministers of God but ministers of the enemy.** The word transfiguring in verse 13 means “fashioning.” They fashion themselves into the apostles of Christ. It is not a real transfiguration but an outward fashioning.

The last part of **2 Corinthians 11:26** says, “In dangers among false brothers.” This verse shows that false brothers became a peril to the apostle Paul, and he suffered because of them. **Truly, if we have false brothers in the church, they will really be a kind of suffering and a real peril to us.**

In Galatians

[Galatians 2:4-5](#) also develops this matter of the tares: “And this, because of the false brothers, brought in secretly, who stole in to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into slavery. To them we yielded with the subjection demanded not even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.” **The false brothers stole in secretly like a snake in order to damage and poison.**

In Philippians

Paul mentions the same kind of thing in Philippians: “Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision” (3:2). Who are the dogs mentioned here? **They are false preachers.** In the name of Christ they preached something concerning the circumcision. This means they were dogs, false Christians. [Philippians 3:18-19](#) goes on to say, “For many walk, of whom I have told you often and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their stomach, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.” **These also are false ones. They are enemies of the cross of Christ, and their god is their stomach. All these kinds of people are tares.**

In 1 Timothy

[First Timothy 1:19-20](#) says, “Holding faith and a good conscience, concerning which some, thrusting these away, have become shipwrecked regarding the faith; of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered to Satan that they may be disciplined not to blaspheme.” Do you think that Hymenaeus and Alexander were real Christians? **Even the Bible indicates that they were evil ones.** No doubt they were terrible tares.

In 2 Timothy

Second Timothy 4:14-15 mentions Alexander the coppersmith again: “[Alexander the coppersmith did many evil things to me; the Lord will recompense him according to his works. You also guard against him, for he greatly opposed our words.](#)” **Evil things here means damage**—Alexander did Paul much damage.

In Hebrews

Now let us read [Hebrews 12:15](#): “Looking carefully lest anyone fall away from the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and through this many be defiled.” **The root of bitterness here indicates some persons who may spring up to trouble and defile you. They will become persons of bitterness.** No doubt these are the false ones.

In 2 Peter

“There arose also false prophets among the people, as also among you there will be false teachers, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their licentiousness, because of whom the way of the truth will be reviled. And in covetousness, with fabricated words, they will make merchandise of you, for whom the judgment of old is not idle, and their destruction does not slumber” ([2 Pet. 2:1-3](#)). This is really terrible! Surely these were the false Christians, the tares.

From the same chapter we read verse 15: “Forsaking the straight way, they have gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.” Then verses 17 through 22 say, “These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the gloom of darkness is kept. For uttering great swelling words of vanity, they entice by lusts of the flesh, with licentiousness, those who are barely escaping from them who live in error; promising freedom to them, while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom anyone has been defeated, by this one he has been enslaved. For if, having escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ but having again been entangled in these, they are defeated, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than, knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb: The dog has turned to its own vomit, and the washed sow to wallowing in the mud.” Here are unclean and dirty things: dogs and swine. What awful, terrible, and ugly terms are used to describe these kinds of false Christians: the wolves, the dogs, and the swine. **These three awful things are tares among the Christians. The wolf is so damaging, and the dogs and swine are so dirty.**

In 1 John

The tares are further developed in [1 John 2:18-19](#): “Young children, it is the last hour; and even as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come; whereby we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out that they might be manifested that they all are not of us.” These are the people who are against Christ, so they are called antichrist. There is not only the Antichrist in the future but also some little ones who were there already. Because they went out and did not remain with the early church, it proves they were the false ones, the tares. [First John 4:1](#) says, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but prove the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” If there were many false prophets in the early days, how about today? Do you believe that today there are no false prophets? Surely there are more false prophets now than in the first century.

In 2 John

Now let us read [2 John 7](#): “Many deceivers went out into the world, those who do not confess Jesus Christ coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.” Such persons did not confess that the Lord Jesus was God incarnated to be a man. Today there are also persons just like this. Verses 9 through 11 continue: “Everyone who goes beyond and does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not say to him, Rejoice! For he who says to him, Rejoice, shares in his evil works.” Today some go beyond, not abiding in the teaching of Christ. This means they do not believe that the Lord Jesus is God, that He died on the cross for our redemption, that He was resurrected, and that today He is in the heavens. And, of course, they do not believe that He will come again a second time. **This is very serious, and because they have gone so far, we are told that we should not receive them into our houses to eat with them and even that we should not greet them.** This is quite serious before the Lord. We should not be indifferent concerning such people.

In Jude

The book of Jude also develops the seed of the tares. Verse 4 says, “Certain men have crept in unnoticed, who of old have been written of beforehand for this judgment, ungodly men, perverting the grace of our God into licentiousness and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.” Here the word crept is used. Certain men crept in. Today it is the same. **Some creep into the church life with the intention of damaging the church.** Surely these are the false ones.

Then let us continue in Jude with verses 8 through 16: “Nevertheless in like manner these dreamers also defile the flesh and despise lordship and revile dignities. But Michael the archangel, when he contended with the devil and disputed concerning the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a reviling judgment against him but said, The Lord rebuke you. But these revile the things that they do not know; and the things that they understand naturally, like animals without reason, in these they are being corrupted. Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain and have rushed out in the error of Balaam for reward and have perished in the rebellion of Korah. These are the hidden reefs in your love feasts, feasting together with you without fear, shepherding themselves; waterless clouds being carried off by winds; autumn trees without fruit, having died twice, rooted up; wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shames; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of darkness is kept for eternity. And Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied also of these, saying, Behold, the Lord came with myriads of His saints to execute judgment against all and to convict all the ungodly concerning all their ungodly works which they have done in ungodliness, and concerning all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him. These are murmurers, complainers, going on according to their own lusts; and their mouth speaks great swelling things, flattering persons for the sake of advantage.” Surely all these are tares, and according to the prophecy of Enoch, the Lord will first deal with them.

Then continuing with verses 17 through 19: “But you, beloved, remember the words spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they said to you, In the last time there will be mockers, going on according to their own lusts for ungodliness. These are those who make divisions, soulless, having no spirit.” Again these are the false ones.

In Revelation

Now let us read [Revelation 2:2b](#): “You have tried those who call themselves apostles and are not, and have found them to be false.” Have you ever realized that there are so many verses in the New Testament concerning the tares? There are not only verses concerning laymen as tares but also clergy as tares. In fact, **most of the tares mentioned in these books are in the clerical class, the ministers. They are not the ministers of God but ministers of Satan. In the Lord’s recovery we must be on the alert against this kind of falsehood.** I do hope that the leading brothers in all the churches will read and pray-read these verses into them until they realize the facts concerning the false teachers, prophets, and ministers. Could you imagine that some false ones would even claim to be apostles? All these verses concern the situation in the early church at the time of the apostles. But today surely the situation is even worse.

THE GREAT TREE

Although we will read only a few verses concerning the development of the great tree, they are all very, very significant. First, we need to read [Revelation 2:12-13](#): “To the messenger of the church in Pergamos write: These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; and you hold fast My name and have not denied My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.” Although these two verses do not mention the great tree, they do have the word Pergamos, which means “a fortified tower.” Actually, Pergamos has two meanings: one is “a fortified tower,” and the other is “marriage.” Literally, it means “marriage,” and symbolically, it means “a fortified tower.” These two meanings are very significant. According to church history, the church in Pergamos represents the state of the church beginning in the fourth century. At the beginning of the fourth century, A.D. 313, Constantine, the emperor of the Roman Empire, embraced Christianity as his religion, causing the church to become very great. By the marriage of the Roman Empire with the church, the church increased greatly in both numbers and popularity. Before that time, Satan had persecuted the church, but the way of persecution accomplished nothing. Eventually, Satan realized his tactic was ineffective. The more he persecuted the church, the more he was defeated. So he subtly changed his tactics from persecuting to welcoming. Constantine welcomed Christianity into the Roman Empire. The persecuted church became a welcomed church. The result was that many, many unbelievers were baptized into Christianity, causing Christianity to become a great tree full of false ones. Formerly, it was a mustard herb, small and good for food. From A.D. 313 it became a great tree containing many evil things, evil persons, and even evil spirits. Many evil things come to lodge in the branches of the great tree.

The harvest of the seed of the great tree is in [Revelation 18:2](#): “And He cried with a strong voice, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great! And she has become a dwelling place of demons and a hold of every unclean spirit and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird.” It is very meaningful that the reality of the kingdom ends with a city, and the appearance of the kingdom also ends with a city. [The reality of the kingdom will consummate with a holy city, the New Jerusalem, but the appearance of the kingdom will consummate with a great city, Babylon the Great. Although the New Jerusalem is not small, the Bible does not call it the great city. The New Jerusalem is the holy city, not the great city \(21:10\). God does not care for something great; He cares for something holy. The church should not be great but holy. We are the holy church, not the great church. The New Jerusalem is God’s building, and the great Babylon is the enemy Satan’s building. The great tree in Matthew 13 will be fully developed into that great city, Babylon, which is full of leaven, pollution, corruption, and all kinds of evil things.](#)

(The Kingdom, Chapter 44)