

## Matthew 13:24-43 – “Satan Pushes Back”

(Pew Bible Page: 818-819)

**Intro: Matthew 13:34–35 - 34** *All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. 35 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: “I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.”* Jesus fulfilled prophecy by speaking to the crowds in parables as we are reminded in these verses, and we’ve already noted that only Jesus’ disciples would understand the message. In the three parables we’ll look at tonight, that point will be especially important, for in these parables Jesus warned His disciples that Satan would push back hard against the Church’s invasion of his Kingdom. The big idea tonight is:

**Proposition:** Satan will not permit his Kingdom to be invaded without resistance, so we must be prepared to face pushback as we seek to extend the Kingdom of God in this world.

Before we begin our study of the text, it will be helpful for us to distinguish between two distinct entities that are often confused: The Church, and The Kingdom of God. Contrary to what many believe, the two are not the same. Jesus came announcing that the Kingdom of God was at hand. Later He assured His disciples that He would build His Church, giving them the keys to the Kingdom. Many miss the distinction between these two entities. Let’s unpack it a little. We have been saying for the past several weeks that “The Kingdom of God is the sphere in which the Kingly rule of God is gladly accepted.”<sup>1</sup> Notice that what is being spoken of is a “sphere” – a domain in which God’s rule is received with joy by that domain’s inhabitants. The Kingdom then is a “sphere,” a domain, a place belonging to the King. But who accepts His reign? His subjects, of course, and that is what the Church is. The Kingdom is a place, but the people of the Church are its citizens. The distinction is important because ever since the Garden of Eden there has been a fierce struggle on earth between two competing Kingdoms: The Kingdom of Satan and the Kingdom of God. The earth belongs to God by right of creation. This place is His place, and He entrusted its care to Adam. Adam was His steward, charged to care for the goods of his Master. But when Adam fell into sin, Satan usurped God’s territory, setting up a Kingdom of his own, and taking the inhabitants of the Garden prisoners and enslaving them to sin. God immediately responded by declaring that *“the seed of the woman will crush the serpent’s head.”*<sup>2</sup> Ever since that day, a mighty conflict has been raging on planet earth: the Godly line of Seth that led to Jesus has been opposed and persecuted by the ungodly line of Cain. The battle reached its tipping point at the cross where Jesus defeated the World, the Flesh and the Devil, passing sentence on them – a sentence that is now in suspension until the Kingdom of God is finally and forever in possession of earth at Christ’s return. Until that time, the battle continues to rage. The Church, the people of God, are charged with the task of taking back planet earth for its rightful King. Jesus commanded, **“Matthew 28:19–20 - 19** *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* Those are our marching orders. We are on a mission to plant our King’s flag in as many places on earth as we possibly can before He returns to set up His Kingdom finally and forever. Why is this important? It is important because it explains why conflict is inevitable between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan. Wherever the Church goes, pushing back the boundaries of the usurper’s Kingdom, turbulence, resistance, and violence will inevitably occur. Any boundary between these two opposing forces is naturally a zone of conflict. Jesus told His disciples three parables, warning them to expect resistance, and advising them of the tactics the enemy would employ against them. That is what we have before us tonight.

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<sup>1</sup> Alistair Begg

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 3:15

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Billboard:	(vv.24-30 & 36-43)	False Brethren
	(vv.31-32)	False Doctrine
	(v.33)	False Living

(vv.24-30 & 36-43) False Brethren – The first weapon that Satan uses against the invaders of his Kingdom is revealed in these verses. **Matthew 13:24–30 - 24** *He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, **25** but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. **26** So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. **27** And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’ **28** He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ So the servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ **29** But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. **30** Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, “Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.”’* Here is another agricultural story meant to convey a spiritual lesson. Like the first parable in the chapter, we encounter a Sower – a man who goes out into his field sowing good seed. We may be tempted to leap immediately to the assumption that the Sower is Jesus, and as later verses will tell us, that is correct. Here, we’ll simply observe that the field already belongs to the Sower. Not only does the field belong to this Man but so do the servants, and the good seed is His as well. Unlike the previous parable, the “good seed” here is not the gospel of the Kingdom, but those who have received that gospel – the “good seed” here are the people of God. Here is a picture of this world, and Christ’s church in this world. After the Man has sown his field, his servants are evidently charged with the responsibility of keeping an eye on things, but the servants went to sleep. They only realized that something has gone wrong a long time after the crop begins to grow. What has gone wrong? An enemy of the Sower has secretly sown “weeds,” bad seed, among the good seed in the field. The kind of seed this enemy has sown is probably “darnel,” a wheat-like weed that is nearly indistinguishable from wheat in its early stages. In other words, the enemy has sown counterfeit wheat. This bad seed doesn’t become distinguishable from wheat until the time of fruit bearing comes; then it can be easily distinguished from true wheat. When the servants realize what has happened, (and they realize because the master has made it known to them), they offer to go into the field to pull up the weeds, but the master refuses to permit this, telling them to “**30** Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, ‘Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’” Now, there is no need to speculate on the meaning of the parable since Christ has revealed it in verses **Matthew 13:36–43 - 36** *Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” **37** He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. **38** The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, **39** and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. **40** Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. **41** The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, **42** and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **43** Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.* (At this point Christ and His disciples have gone back into the privacy of the house, so evidently, I’ve misunderstood His movements that day! Mia culpa!). Once in the house Jesus unpacked the parable’s full meaning to His disciples: The devil is resisting Christ’s advancing Kingdom by infiltrating the professing Church in the world with counterfeit disciples. In the early stages, these folks are indistinguishable from true believers, but when the time of

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fruit bearing comes, their false nature becomes evident, because *“by their fruits you will know them.”*<sup>3</sup> As we saw in the third of the soils of last week’s parable, fruit bearing always accompanies genuine faith. Given that these people are evidently known to be false seed, why doesn’t Christ allow His servants to uproot them? **Matthew 13:29 - 29** *But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. The roots these folks have put down in the visible church are entangled with true believers, and in pulling up the weeds, some of the wheat will be uprooted with them. No, He said. He will let this mixed condition continue in His Church until the time of the harvest comes. When the final harvest comes, the angels will separate out the weeds, and gather the wheat into His barn: **Matthew 13:39–43 - 39** ... *The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. 40 Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, 42 and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.**

[DOCTRINAL POINT] The first “push back” by the devil is sowing counterfeit believers among God’s people.

[ILLUSTRATION] A *false flag operation* “is an attack or other hostile action that obscures the identity of the participants carrying out the action while implicating another group or nation as the perpetrator.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, when a false flag is flown, the chaos, violence, and damage inflicted by the infiltrators looks like it is being done by its innocent victims.

[APPLICATION] How much damage is done to Christ’s Church every day by counterfeit Christians? What incredible damage is being done to Christ’s reputation before an unbelieving world today by “well intentioned dragons”<sup>5</sup> planted among Christ’s people – self-deceived church members used by Satan to hinder the advance of Christ’s Church in the world? Dear ones, we must not go to sleep in this matter. We should be on guard to resist the infiltration. But we must also recognize that false brethren will hinder the Kingdom’s advance until the time of harvest comes.

(vv.31-32) False Doctrine – The second way Satan pushes back against the advancing Church is through false doctrine. This is pictured in parable number two: **Matthew 13:31–32 - 31** *He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. 32 It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”* I am aware that many commentators believe that the point of the parable is that the Kingdom starts small, then grows to something large in this world by the time the harvest comes. Granted the truth of that proposition, I side with the minority opinion who believes that misses the point. I am in good company in my opinion: Warren Wiersbe and C. H. Spurgeon hold as I do that the true meaning of the parable lies in that last phrase of verse 32: *“When it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”* Wiersbe explains it well when he argues that since Christ did not interpret the parable for his disciples our best understand will come from returning to a previous parable Christ did interpret: the Parable of the Soils. In that parable’s first type of soil, the

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 7:20

<sup>4</sup> An online dictionary

<sup>5</sup> Marshal Shelley

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“birds” are identified as “*the evil one [who] comes and snatches away what has been sown,*” i.e., the good seed of God’s Word. If this is intended, the point of the parable is:

[DOCTRINAL POINT] As the Kingdom advances, we should expect infiltration by those teaching false doctrine.

[ILLUSTRATION] Even a cursory examination of Church History will satisfy us that this isn’t simply a theoretical possibility – it is a cold hard fact. Before the ink had hardly dried on Matthew’s gospel, the apostles Paul, John, and Jude were writing epistles containing strong warnings against infiltrators teaching devilish doctrines to new believers. Our Lord Himself warned against the encroaching acceptance of false teaching in chapters 2 & 3 of Revelation. Sadly, infiltration by false teachers continues in our own day.

[APPLICATION] We are warned to be on our guard against Satan’s push back through false teachers. Today the false teachers of the Prosperity Gospel are overturning vast numbers of professing Christians in our own nation and around the globe. Other false teachers are capturing souls for Satan’s kingdom teaching crazy eschatological schemes and conspiracy theories. Still others are preaching moral perversions that would have made believers of yesterday turn away in disgust; but these things are now being taught as being perfectly acceptable to Jesus. How many heresies are being taught today? Only the Lord knows! Frankly, I marvel at the naivete of many professed believers in our day who can’t seem to smell the rotting fish of heresy when its placed right under their noses! What has gone wrong? We have to conclude that it is this: If you don’t know the truth, you’ll be captured by any type of lie. This is a characteristic of the last days, we are told. Listen to the words of Paul in **2 Thessalonians 2:9–12** - **9** *The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, 10 and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, 12 in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.* Dear ones, the remedy for this is the teaching of strong doctrine to those who profess to be believers. A watered down, “do your best and God will be ok with you,” gospel will never do. False teachers will be with us until the harvest comes. We must oppose them with strong doctrinal teaching.

(v.33) False Living – Satan’s third strategy for hindering the Kingdom’s advance is to encourage moral laxity among God’s people. This is demonstrated in parable number three: **Matthew 13:33 - 33** *He told them another parable. “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened.”* Again, I am aware that many commentators see the point of this parable as being: The Kingdom is like a secret power that infiltrates the whole world gradually. Maybe so, but again, others argue convincingly to me at least, that “yeast” is almost everywhere taken for a symbol of evil in Scripture. It would seem very strange to see it here as somehow a symbol of God’s secret power at work in the world. To my mind, at least, it seems better to understand this as another tactic of Satan opposing the advance of Christ’s Kingdom: Teach them to relax their moral standards he whispers, and they will lose their power to advance. Again, the New Testament epistles bear witness to the fact that from the earliest days of the Church, this has been a well-used strategy of the enemy to hinder the Kingdom’s progress.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] As the Kingdom advances, we should expect to encounter a growing trend toward moral laxity.

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[ILLUSTRATION] The Bible says that it is useless to set a trap if the bird is watching you set it. Oh, that this were true among so many professing Christians in our day!

[APPLICATION] It is astounding the number of professed believers today who will give their minds and hearts continually to movies, television programs, secular novels, internet websites, news casts, and godless musical options in the name of Christian liberty. Someone should rush these people straight to the Book of Proverbs, drown them in it and not let them come up for air until their souls are thoroughly disinfected. In the name of “grace” the necessity for “obedience” is being crisply set-aside daily among many who call themselves Christians. Perhaps we need to hear the words of the stewardess on our flight to Orlando as hurricane Ian approached Florida: “What is wrong with you people. Run!” Dear ones, “*Be holy, for I am holy,*”<sup>6</sup> is still in the Bible and that means it is still our calling. God’s people must be holy or our effectiveness and power to advance the Kingdom in this world will come to a halt.

**Conclusion:** Jesus taught His disciples in parables, so that those to whom He had given “*ears to hear*” would be ready to advance His Kingdom until it filled the earth. Tonight, He warns us of Satan’s push backs. If we have ears to hear, let us take heed and listen as we seek first the Kingdom of God.

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<sup>6</sup> Leviticus 11:45