

## Matthew 13:37-42

### Hell, Fire, and Brimstone

We are continuing in Matthew 13:24-43. I'll give you the title for today's message, in case you might want to leave now. It is not on tithing, so you don't have to worry about that. The major theme for today's study is Hell, Fire and Brimstone. Hell, Fire and Brimstone. It's a real subject. It's a real teaching in Scripture, and a serious one at that.

For our introduction this morning, verses 34, 35, and 36. Jesus has just given four parables to the general public. And Matthew is very pointed to emphasize to us, for a second time in verse 34, that **Jesus spoke in parables**, and in fact, **He spoke all things in parables to the crowds, and without a parable He was not speaking to them**. This is a turning point in the Lord's ministry, where the public ministry of Christ, and His teaching, and His truth would be hidden to the general public but revealed to the disciples when they came to seek out what Jesus had to say and what He meant.

Verse 35 tells us that the Lord spoke in parables in fulfillment of Psalm 78:2. Earlier in the chapter, we saw that He spoke in parables in fulfillment of Isaiah 6:9-10. So, it was a planned design to reach a certain point where there would be very few public miracles, very few public messages, where the general public would easily understand, and at the same time God's Spirit would draw those who belong to Christ to Him privately, in order to find out the things that He was teaching.

So, verse 36 tells us, **After Jesus sent away the crowds, He came into the house and the disciples came to Him saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares (or darnel) of the field."** I emphasized to you that He gave The Parable of the Sower in verses 1 through 23, and at that time the disciples came in order to get explanation as to what Jesus meant by The Parable of the Sower. Then Jesus gave three more parables. The first one of the three being The Parable of the Wheat and Tares, the second one being The Parable of the Mustard Seed, and the third one being The Parable of the Leaven. But I point out to you that when they came to Jesus after the next series of three parables, they only asked explanation for one, not all three. It is because they understood the explanation and the meaning of the other two. If they could just fit The Parable of the Wheat and Tares into the other two they would have complete understanding.

So, in verse 37, we have The Characteristics of the Wheat and Tares. Jesus now explains to them the wheat and the tares. There are seven characteristics of The Parable of the Wheat and Tares:

- (1) He says, **He that sows the good seed is the Son of Man.** Identifies for us who the one is going out and sowing the seed in the field.
- (2) Verse 38, **And the field is the world.** Not the church. That's very important. The field is the world.
- (3) **And the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom.** So, the good seed that the Son of Man is planting is people, God's people, sons of the kingdom. I find it interesting

as the Scripture teaches, that seed grows and bears fruit and now the fruit is presented to be people. Seed now produces people.

In I Peter 1:23 it says that **We have been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever.** We have been born from out of the seed of the Word of God. And the seed of the Word of God has grown and produces fruit. And that fruit produces fruit in others as well as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

(4) **But the tares** (or the darnel) **are the children**, or literally, **sons, of the evil one.** So that is interesting, and we looked ahead when we did take the parable to show you that when the wheat and the tares were growing together this was God's people and the people of Satan growing together at the same time. And when the servants and slaves in the parable came and asked the Master, "Should we take away the tares from away from the wheat?" He says, "No, let them grow together because you might damage the wheat because the root systems are now intertwined, and if you pull out the tares you might pull out some of the root system of the wheat as well. So, let them grow together and in the end they will all be cut down and then they will be separated. The wheat into My barn, and the tares (or the darnel) will be burned." So now, He's identifying the tares for us as people. The field is the world and God's people are intermingled with the evil one.

(5) Verse 39, **And the enemy who had sowed them** (that is sowed the tares) **is the devil.** So, he is also sowing seed, but he is sowing seed of evil.

(6) **And the harvest is the end** (or completion) **of the age.**

(7) And lastly, **And the reapers who reap the harvest they are angels.** They represent angels.

So, it is interesting that just by one parable all three could be understood. You see, the disciples being Jewish they knew about the mustard seed, and the birds coming and lodging in its branches, because in chapter 13 verse 4 Jesus identified the birds as coming and removing the seed which is the Word of God from people's hearts. And in verse 19 He identified the birds as being of the evil one. So then, everybody knows what the birds mean. And if He says, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that starts small and grows big and the birds come and lodge in its branches," they understand that in God's kingdom there is also going to be evil mixed. That's what we have here, the wheat and the tares are mixed and not separated.

So, you understand that the kingdom of God encompasses the whole world. Not talking about the church, talking about the whole world. That is where He ruled. But He's allowing the evil to be and to function, for now, as is until judgment comes. You see it's not time for judgment, that's why God's not judging it. It is the time of grace, where God is reaching out to help people and to save people in the midst of evil.

But it is interesting, that The Parable of the Leaven, all Jews know that leaven represents evil. So, The Parable of the Leaven is where the woman put leaven in three measures of meal

and it grew and expanded. Again, that's expansion of the mustard plant, and the expansion of evil and its influence around.

But they didn't quite put together the meaning of the wheat and tares, so they asked for this one parable. So, when it says, at the end of verse 38, that "the darnel (or tares) are the sons of the evil one," this is the same as the birds in The Parable of the Sower coming to take the Word of God away from God's people. It's the same as the tares in our parable. The birds and the tares line up together. The same as the birds in The Parable of the Mustard Seed lodging in the branches, same as the tares, same as the birds and The Parable of the Sower. And lastly, the same as leaven in The Parable of the Leaven in verse 33, the evil element there and expanding.

So, He explains to them, which is a wonderful explanation to know, especially in light of what He's going to tell us now in verses 40 through 43, The Completion of the Age. Now, He says, "The end (or completion) of the age is the end of the age." It is the time of harvest. It is the time of judgment when the angels will come and reap the harvest and the wheat and the tares will be divided.

Verse 40, **As therefore the tares are gathered together and are being consumed (or burned) in the fire, so it will be in the end (or completion) of this age.** It is not the word *world*, it's the word *age*. **The Son of Man will send out (or send forth) His angels and they will gather from out of His kingdom** (Notice it, that's very important if you're highlighting or taking notes) **taking from out of His kingdom those who are offending, and those who are practicing lawlessness.** In His kingdom, because the world is His kingdom. It's not the church. His angels will gather out of His kingdom all the things that are offending. **All the ones who are offending, (and secondly) and those ones who are practicing (not doing *iniquity*) those who are practicing lawlessness.** It doesn't mean that they have no respect for law and order. It means that they refuse to be under the rule and law of God.

Now, it's interesting that the tares are now presented with two characteristics, these people who are the tares:

- (1) First of all, they are offenders. They are offensive people. Not in a human sense. The Greek word is **σκάνδαλον** (skandalon), where we get our word *scandal* from. And it means *to be an offense or put something in someone's way to hinder them*. They use it for a stone in the path, or a log, or a tree that had fallen across the pathway that hindered people from going down the path. So, the tares are presented as people who hinder other people from going down the path of truth. Guiding them in a different direction. Things that are not true. They could be religious people. They could be using Scripture, but they are offending.
- (2) And secondly, they are ones who are practicing lawlessness. They refuse to be under the law of God, under His rule and under His law.

So, what do the Angels do? They gather them out of His kingdom, these tares who are offending and who are practicing lawlessness. **And the angels will throw them into the furnace of fire; (verse 42) there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.** (Verse 43) **Then the**

**righteous ones will shine out like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The one having ears to hear,** (and realize that this is a command) **hear.** It's not an invitation. He is not saying, "Let him hear." The ones who have ears to hear, hear.

And we will be taking verse 43 next week, on the provision and destination of God's people, but we have a subject before us in verse 42. **The tares will be thrown into the furnace of fire where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**

Someone made a comment, publicly, a few weeks ago, that you don't hear preaching on hell much anymore. The Hellfire and Brimstone preachers of the past have seemingly disappeared because people just are not interested in hearing that kind of thing. It's not very pleasant. But the truth of the matter is whether you want to hear about it from the Bible or not, people are making life choices that will cause them to wind up there. And according to God's word it's very, very serious and very, very important to understand.

In speaking to God's people about those who are persecuting them, in II Thessalonians 1:8-9, he says that God is going to take these people and, **In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, that do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.** It's a serious thing. This is serious business. So serious that Jude, only one chapter in Jude, so Jude verses 22 and 23 said that we should approach some with compassion, making a distinction. Making a distinction because others we should save with fear, that is instill fear in them, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. So, there is some with compassion who are just ready to receive Christ, ready for help. With them you don't heap hell, fire and brimstone messages on them, you reach out in compassion and with mercy and grace and lead them to Christ. But then there are others that you have to instill fear in them, pulling them out of the fire, so to speak, hating even the garments spotted by the flesh. How we compromise and take it easy on people because we don't want to offend them. The text in Jude is saying, "Use wisdom. Some people have compassion on them. Other people you have to impress upon them the seriousness of the direction in which they are heading and where their life is going to wind up."

According to the teaching of Scripture, I am just going to touch on it this morning, according to the teaching of Scripture, judgment and hell is part of a life choice direction. Jesus said in Matthew 16:25-26, **For whosoever should will to save his life** (that is, preserve it) **he's going to lose it.** You don't want to surrender it to Christ, you want to preserve it, save it from being surrendered to Christ, you're eventually going to lose your life. **And whoever should lose his life for my sake, he will find it. For what man is profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?** (What have you profited?) **Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?**

It boils down to this, all the allurements of the world are there to show us the good life, the best life. Whether it be money, or whether it be material things, or whether it be location, or whatever it might be. Job and career, ambitions, what we desire to be and accomplish in this life. They all have roads to them.

I saw myself as a young person, and I see young people today doing the same thing, trying to figure out what they're going to do in life. What career choice am I going to make? What do I want to be? Where do I want to go? What do I want to accomplish? There are many different roads and you choose a road. When you choose a subject and a direction you're choosing a road. And whichever looks good, sounds good, seems good, whatever is going to satisfy me personally, I make those choices. The problem is at the end of each one of those roads is the inheritance of hell. Period. It might look good.

The other day somebody said something about playing soccer on a soccer field and that we ought to probably set up a soccer field out here for barbecue. And then somebody else mentioned, "Yeah, except for when the ball goes over the side into the creek." We got a problem when people are running and all worked up and then what happens if somebody decides that they want to go in after the ball, without stopping? See that's the way the world is.

I keep having a reoccurring dream and I don't mean to be mystical, I have it and it means something to me. I'm a conceptual person, so I'm a conceptual learner. I keep approaching a painter to paint me a picture of a stream, a river that's heavily flowing down, and there are little tiny islands on this stream that have people on them. One little island it's only big enough for like four people. They're barbecuing. The guy's got the cook's hat on, got the barbecue going, got picnic table out. But this little island is flowing downstream and they're just going for the ride, but they're paying attention to the barbecue. Other people on other little islands and their experiencing whatever they are, excepting the fact that they're going downstream. But none of them realize that the end of the stream are the waterfalls, where it goes down. And the gospel message is on the side of the stream ready to throw a life preserver saying, "Here! There's a waterfall down there and you're going to die. Here, here's a life preserver." But they are having too much fun. They are too much into it. It's too enjoyable.

When I talk to young people nowadays, and I've talked to a few because Sarah went to VCA for the last few years, is that young people decide, "I'm having too much fun, I don't want to give up the life that I have, I'll deal with all that later." The Bible says you have to deal with it now because later might be now. You never know. There's only one road, only one road that does not lead to hell and that's through Jesus Christ, surrender to Christ.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:13 that the road is wide, the gate is wide, the road is wide that leads to destruction; but the road that leads to life the gate is narrow and the road is straight but there's very few that find it. It's not appealing. So, the Bible says, "Then you need to take and consider the end result." If you go for that allurement, or that thing that looks good, the end result of what you inherit, what your benefits are, your soul could be in destruction throughout eternity.

There are four words in the Bible, four words, both Hebrew and Greek, one in Hebrew three in Greek, that reference hell, that are translated *hell* in English:

The first one is SHEOL, that is a Hebrew word. It is the only Hebrew word in the Old Testament used for *hell*, and it's the word for *grave*. The sheol, the grave.

In the New Testament there are three Greek words:

(1) Ἅδης (Hades) which means *the place of unseen spirits*. Hades. Mentioned 10 times in the New Testament.

(2) The next word is the word γέεννα (Gehenna). Mentioned 12 times in the New Testament and the word literally means *the Valley of Hinnom*, which was right outside of Jerusalem. It is where the Jews used to come and dump the garbage and the valley would be constantly burning, because of the garbage being thrown in and destroyed. Gehenna another word for *hell*.

(3) Then there is another word, that is only used once in the New Testament: ταρταρόω (tartarus), which is very Jewish. It means *the very depths of hell itself, the deep recesses of hell*.

All of these have a meaning. These words are used to describe two places. There's two places that are described and translated as *hell* with these various words. The first one is in the heart of the earth. It is called Hades and Gehenna, the heart of the earth. The second place that's termed as hell is the final destination of those who reject Christ, it's called the lake of fire. It's mentioned in the book of Revelation.

First of all, the first place that is translated *hell* in English is the heart of the earth. We see that description in Luke 16:19-31 in the story about the rich man and Lazarus. Lazarus was a poor man and, of course, the rich man was very rich. And Lazarus used to wait at his gate for food, extra food if he had any. Well, Lazarus died, and he woke up in Hades in Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died but he woke up in another place in Hades in a place of torment. And so, the rich man calls over to Abraham that has Lazarus in his bosom and said, "Send Lazarus and have him dip his finger in some water and have him come over and touch my tongue for I'm tormented in this flame." And Abraham says, "There is a chasm that is fixed here in Hades and we cannot come over to you and you cannot come over to here." So, in Hades there's two compartments, with a chasm dividing the two. One is a place of torment, the other is a place where the Old Testament saints, prior to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, where the Old Testament saints were waiting for the coming of Messiah and for them to be freed and taken up to be with the Lord.

Over on the rich man's side in the place of torment there is another compartment that's even darker and deeper and in more serious darkness than even the rich man was, it's called Tartarus. According to II Peter 2:4 is that the angels who had sinned are chained there and they are being reserved for the judgment day. Angels who have sinned are there and are waiting for the judgment day.

So, there are two compartments in Hades, one for the Old Testament saints, one for those who have rejected the hope in Messiah. And on the side where there's torment there are two compartments, one for the chained angels who had sinned in the deep recesses of hell, and those who have rejected Messiah also.

Now on Abraham's side, it is kind of interesting because the Bible tells us that when Jesus, after He died, He descended and went down into the recesses of the heart of the earth. Ephesians 4:9 tells us that He went down into the heart of the earth. And in I Peter 3:19-20, it tells us He went down there to announce the victory and to announce the accomplishments of the cross to those who are in Hades. And we see in Matthew 27:52-53 at the resurrection of Christ many of the Old Testament saints were raised from out of the graves and were seen walking through the streets of Jerusalem. In other words, that part of Hades where Abraham was and all of the Old Testament saints it was emptied out. That's why Jesus went down there and announced the victory to tell them it was their release. They were released and many of the Old Testament saints were seen walking through the streets of Jerusalem. That's given to us in Matthew 27:52-53.

So, we have this place called Hades which still exists. Except Paul tells us that nowadays when you receive Christ and you die, you go directly into the presence of Christ. "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." But those who reject Christ still go to Hades. Hades is not the final destination called *hell*, it's just a place called *hell*. It is like a holding area.

The second reference to hell in the Scriptures is the Lake of Fire, mentioned five times in the New Testament, all in the book of Revelation. It is the final destination in which people, death, Hades, everything is put into the Lake of Fire at the final judgment, which brings me to three points in closing. Three things we need to know about hell. That's the explanation of hell. It exists.

I have a message that I gave to young people. It was down in Lakewood Municipal Auditorium where a bunch of youth groups came and I gave a message out of Luke chapter 16, the rich man and Lazarus. And how the rich man wanted Lazarus to come over and touch his tongue with some water that Lazarus had gotten on his finger. I told those young people, I says, "Right now you're experimenting with drugs and alcohol." In fact, the brother that came with me to this meeting, we were sitting up front and all the young people were coming into this big auditorium, and I leaned over to him and I asked him, "Would you go down to the liquor store and buy me a bottle of booze?"

And he goes, "What?"

I said, "Not only a bottle of booze, but buy me a pack of cigarettes."

He says, "Is this a joke?"

I said, "No."

So, he gets up and he goes. Got to give him credit for that. He came back, and it was in a bag, so no one would know what it was, and I had it up there with me. I had it up there with me, but when I was talking with the young people I was showing them this bottle, sloshing the alcohol back and forth. I took the cigarette and broke it in half. I said, "This represents chemicals that you're becoming reliant on and addicted to, but I want to share with you," and I'm giving you just a summary statement, "I want to share with you that hell is a very real place and that when you wind up there, what is hell about it, what is torment about it, is when you desire and need the very things, the very drugs, the very chemicals that got you through this life and it's not there anymore. And you crave for it, but there's nothing to satisfy the craving."

By time we were through, and I didn't know how this was going go, by the time we were through, and at those at those times we gave invitations for people to come down and pray, for somebody to pray with them to receive Christ. The biggest complaint of the whole night, about three quarters of that auditorium emptied out and came forward, and the biggest complaint we had that night was that the whole auditorium was littered, the ground was littered with drugs, where kids just dumped their drugs and came up to receive the Lord. I don't know whether they got saved or not, but that's what they came up to do.

I've come to realize that all of these allurements are given to us to help us through this earthly life because people find the stress and the emptiness and the loneliness and the only way to fill it is with alcohol or with drugs or something. And they don't realize that hell is a very real place where you still have those desires of the flesh that are there, and they are addicting and addicted to these things and they crave them because they need them to get by, but they're not there anymore. Can you imagine that kind of torment forever?

Three things about hell I want that want to leave you with. First of all, Mark 9:44 says that the fire of hell is unquenchable. It never goes out. Never. That's Mark 9:44. Secondly, the fire of hell is eternal. It lasts forever. Matthew 25:41. And thirdly, and this is very, very important, the suffering of hell is eternal, it's forever. Some people believe you get cast into hell and you die there, and you don't feel a thing. That is not what the Scripture says. In Revelation 19:19-20, this is at the judgment day, John said he heard about the beast and his prophet. The beast is the antichrist and the prophet is his prophet that goes out to deceive the whole world during the tribulation period. **I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.** (That would be Christ.) **And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that worked signs before him, in which he deceived all that had received the mark of the beast, and those that worshipped the image. These both (the beast and the prophet) these both, were cast alive into the lake of fire, burning with brimstone.**

The next chapter, Revelation 20:10, it says about the devil, **And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever.** It is not a one-time painful experience. The torment of this place is day and night forever.

And then lastly, in Revelation chapter 20 again, in verses 14 and 15. So, not only was the prophet and the beast thrown into the lake of fire, not only was the devil thrown into the lake of fire, now only were all those who gave in to the deceptions of antichrist thrown there, it says, **And death and hades were cast into the lake of fire.** So, everybody in Hades is going to be emptied out into the lake of fire, along with death. After this moment death will be no more. **Death and hell, that is hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.** People die the first death, they wind up in Hades, and then they wind up in the lake of fire, which is the second death. **And whoever is not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.** The final destination. The fire is unquenchable. The fire is eternal. The suffering is eternal.

I consider that to be serious stuff that no matter how long we live here on the earth, whether it's 50 years or 60 years or 70 years or 90 years or 100 years, what is that compared to eternity? And that's why Jude said, "Some with compassion, minister to them the things of Christ, but others do it in fear pulling them out of the fire, so to speak, hating even the spots of corruption in their clothing." You've got to hate sin. You have to hate what sin is doing to people.

And when you come across people - and I'm guilty of this myself, but thankfully the Lord is changing a lot of things in me - that when I see people happy, when I see people enjoying what the world would call the good life, the material things, and the finances, and yet at the same time I know that they have not received Christ, instead of saying, "Oh well, they are happy. They are at peace. One day maybe they'll realize." But that burden in my heart was not there in a lot of ways to say, "But the end result of your life, if you reject Christ, the end result is this place of torment. Satan is lying to you. It's not the good life, because it leads to hell. There's only one road that leads to heaven and leads to life and that is through Jesus Christ."

Well on that note, next week we will finish out this section with the destiny and the provision for God's people. Nicer note than this one.

Let's close with prayer.