

Kingdom In Matthew 13:41

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Jesus said, “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity.” To what does the “kingdom” here refer? At first glance one wants to say, “the church” since this verse relates to a “kingdom parable” and since the most common usage of “kingdom” in the New Testament is in reference to the church.

However, upon closer examination, it is apparent that “kingdom” is used in a broader sense here.

1. The good seed and the tares were both sown in “the field” (vv. 24, 27).
2. “The field” is identified as “the world” (v. 38).
3. The area to be harvested of both good and evil is “the kingdom” of the Son of man (Christ) (v. 41).

If the area where the seeds were planted was the world (and it is), then the area which was harvested is also the world (here called “the kingdom”) and not merely the church.

This understanding removes what would seem to be a problem in Jesus’ instruction (earlier in the parable, vv. 29–30) to let the tares grow with the wheat until the Judgment. If the kingdom (v. 41) refers only to the church, then the Lord would be forbidding that which He elsewhere commands—purging the church of impenitent sinners by withdrawing fellowship from them (Mat. 18:17; Rom. 16:17–18; 1 Cor. 5:5, 7, 9–13; 2 The. 3:6, et al). Indeed, some weak-kneed brethren have used this false view of the parable as an excuse to avoid corrective church discipline. However, if the kingdom refers to the world instead of the church, the Lord is simply teaching (vv. 29–30) that His people have no authority to forbid the proclamation of error in the world, nor to remove it violently from the world. This I believe to be the case.

If Christ here identifies the world as His kingdom, this passage powerfully teaches the sovereignty of Christ over all men—including alien sinners. Those who deny that alien sinners are accountable to any of the Law of Christ except the plan of salvation sometimes ask, “Where does the Bible say that Christ is ‘King of the world’”? I suggest that Matthew 13:41; is one place. Of course, it just corroborates numerous other declarations of His universal authority (e. g. Mat. 28:18; John 17:2; Rev. 17:14; 19:16, et al). Surely, Christ is Head of His church (Eph. 1:22–22), but He is also “... far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named . . .” (Eph. 1:21). It is most dangerous heresy to teach that alien sinners are accountable

only to a tiny portion of the law of Christ until they are baptized! Christ is indeed “King of the world”.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Edifier*, weekly bulletin of Pearl Street Church of Christ, Denton, TX, February 25, 1988, of which I was editor.]

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