

The Wheat and the Tares

Matthew 13:24-30 & 36-43

Introduction

During the days of Jesus' earthly ministry, He told a number of parables to the people who came to hear Him speak. Several of those parables are about the Kingdom of God, and are called "Parables of the Kingdom." One of these kingdom parables is called "The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares." In this message, I would like to go through this parable and see how Jesus describes and illustrates how the devil is working to keep hold of his domain, his kingdom of darkness in this present age, as the gospel of the Kingdom advances in the world, invading the devil's territory and setting his captives free. Our passage is found in Matthew chapter 13 beginning at verse 24.

Our Text (NKJV)

24 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; **25** but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. **26** But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. **27** So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' **28** He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' **29** But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. **30** Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn." ' "

I. THIS PARABLE IS DIFFERENT THAN THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

I want us to consider first of all, that the parable that Jesus told just before this one, was "The Parable of the Sower." For your reference, Jesus explains that parable to His disciples in verses 18-23. In that parable, as you will recall, the seed that is being sown by the Sower represents the word of God. The story is about the work of evangelism in the preaching of the gospel and how it is received or not received in the human heart which is depicted by the four different types of ground. In the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, the seed that is sown does not represent the word of God, but it represents the believer.

24 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field;

The "good seed" that produces the crop of wheat in the field are God's chosen people, those who have received new birth and believe in Jesus. They are the sons of the kingdom who have been made holy in the blood of the Lamb.

It's important for us to remember that the Kingdom of Jesus Christ is spiritual and is found in the hearts of faith of the believers. One Day, His kingdom will be consummated with His return in glory and the resurrection of the sons of the kingdom to eternal life in the new heavens and new earth. Until that Day, we are still living in our earthly bodies in this world. This will be the circumstance of all the believers until the end of this present evil age. Remember how Jesus prayed for His disciples about their being in the world?

In John chapter 17 Jesus said,

"They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world." – John 17:16. We are no longer *"of the world,"* because we are *"in Christ,"* but we are still living in the world, and this is an important fact concerning believers that unfolds in this parable.

II. THIS PARABLE REVEALS THE ACTIVITY OF GOD'S ENEMY THE DEVIL AND GOD'S ANSWER

Our enemy the devil is operating in the world in this present age, but Jesus didn't move us physically out of this world (John 17:15), instead, He is setting up His spiritual kingdom in His people (the wheat in His field) right under the nose of the devil. In this, He is showing forth His sovereign power to deliver His people from the devil's domain, to love and protect them from him, and to bring forth their maturity in Christ in spite of the devil and his deceitful works, and in fact, God in His wisdom makes use of this situation in the lives of His people to make them more than conquerors in Christ and so to bring Himself praise and glory. (Romans 8:28-39)

SO, HERE IS THE SITUATION. Since God's field, in which He has sown His good seed is found in this world, then we find as believers, that we will encounter and experience other people even among us who are not believers, even if they at first appear to be.

25 but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.

26 But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared.

I know that some translations have replaced the word *"tares"* with the word *"weeds"* and that is unfortunate as we study this text. A *"tare"* is a specific type of weed. I've read that it is called a *"bearded darnel."* When the tare (the darnel) is a young fledgling plant it is said to be almost indistinguishable from a young wheat plant. This fact will prove important to us as we come to the lesson of this parable.

But where did the *"tares"* come from? **Verse 25**, above, tells us that they were sown by *"his enemy."* And so, here is a lesson for us revealed in this parable:

The wheat and the tares look the same at first,
just as **false brothers hold to an appearance of Christianity.**

III. THE PRESENCE AND ACTIVITY OF FALSE BRETHREN

False brothers are found right where believers are growing..... in God's field. They receive the same sunlight and the same rain that the good seed receives.

Paul said that in the nation of Israel itself, there were both believers and non-believers. From outward appearance, they all looked to be "Israel" but they were not (Romans 9:6). Again, in this parable, just as the wheat and the tares all received the same sunlight and the blessings of rain, Paul writes about Israel,

"{They}.. all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness." – 1 Cor.10:3-5

This circumstance in which the enemy plants his worldly seed among God's good seed is found not only in God's people in O.T. Israel, but also in God's people, the church.

Jude writes to the N.T. people of God about these tares planted by the evil one, who appear to be brothers, who participate in the fellowship of the believers but under false pretenses, for they are there only to indulge themselves. Jude says, *"These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, **servicing only themselves.**"* – Jude 12

You find in the testimony of Scripture that where you have the wheat (the good seed), you will find the devil's tare planted nearby.

Where there was **Able**, there was **Cain**. Where there was **Jacob**, there was **Esau**. What did John say about Cain? *"Cain was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous."*

- 1 John 3:12

What did Paul say about Esau? *"Lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright."* – Hebrews 12:16

This is the circumstance of God's kingdom people who live by faith in the world, as the parable demonstrates, the believers will experience the presence and activity of false brethren and this will continue until the end of the age. This is our situation because God is building His spiritual kingdom right in the field of this world, this present evil age.

It is because of this situation that Jude wrote his letter to the believers, in order to uphold and encourage every believer in their faith in Jesus.

He writes, *“ Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men who turn the grace of God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”* -Jude 3,4

Take note of the phrase, *“For certain men have crept in unnoticed,”* from the above verse and consider what is said in our parable, **25** *but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.*

IV. AS BELIEVERS LIVING IN THIS PRESENT WORLD WE WILL NEED TO KEEP HOLDING TO THE TRUTH

After writing about and exposing the false brethren who masquerade as fellow believers in the church fellowship, Jude writes,

“ But you beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” – Jude 20,21

V. JESUS WILL HAVE THE LAST WORD ON THIS PARABLE.

36, Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, “ Explain to us the parable of the tares in the field.” **37** He answered and said to them: “He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. **38** The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. **39** The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. **40** Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. **41** The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, **42** and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. **43** Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

~ pastor Mike Galus, 01-28-24