

THE PARABLES OF JESUS, #015

A Chronological Study

"To Him who opened His mouth in parables and uttered things hidden since the creation of the world."

Psalm 78:2



"The Tares Among the Wheat"
The Mysteries of the Kingdom
Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43¹

¹ All scriptures are from the NASB unless otherwise noted.

INTRODUCTION

This lesson falls right on the heels of the last lesson, "The Sower, The Seeds, and The Soils," and is a continuation of Jesus' teaching from a boat just offshore from His very large gathered audience. He's just been teaching about the sovereignty of God and the two basic kinds of people who hear the Word of God. Those who allow it in their hearts and believe... and those who don't.

Now Jesus begins a lesson on the devil's work among those who believe and gather together. As in many things in the Scriptures, its number is important. It is the second parable in Chapter 13 which has 7 parables, the perfect number. As number 2 its number often represents division or contrast. This parable is about contrast - the contrast of the first parable in the chapter, about the perfect work of God and then here is the contrast... the introduction of evil into the system. This particular lesson is still as critical today as it was then. Not everyone who calls themselves a believer actually believes... but they are in the group, synagogue, church for reasons of their own - even the reasons of the devil himself. Both the good and the evil exist alongside each other.

Matthew 13:24-30 Tares among Wheat The Text

*Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while his men were sleeping, his enemy² came and sowed tares³ among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat⁴ sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' And he said to them, 'An enemy⁵ has done this!' The slaves *said⁶*

² nemy - Literally "enemy man"

³ Tares - Darnel, a weed resembling wheat.

⁴ Wheat - Literally "grass"

⁵ Enemy - Literally "enemy man"

⁶ Historical Present Tense.

*to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' But he *said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn."'"*

Then Jesus gets out of the boat and moves away from the crowd with His disciples into a house and explains the parable to them there. We'll incorporate Jesus' answers into the parable as we travel along. We'll cover the verses of Matthew 13:31-35 in a later separate study.

Jesus Explains Matthew 13:36-43 The Text

Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." And He said, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons⁷ of the evil one; and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness⁸, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

⁷ "Sons of the evil one," consider that they gather and work together in the same patterns as do the "Sons of the Kingdom."

⁸ As in, against God's Law.

The Kingdom of Heaven

“The Kingdom of Heaven” [The Kingdom of the heavens] is a term that is used for any type of rulership God may assert on the earth at a given period. Most notably is the predicted **covenant** kingdom promised to the nation of Israel through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The nation never fully received that promised kingdom in totality. The Gospels often speak of the “kingdom of heaven” being “at hand.” Jesus spoke of the kingdom being at hand when He was physically present - but He was rejected. According to the clear teachings of the Bible it, the kingdom, will only be realized in connection with the second advent of Jesus Christ. According to Matthew 13 the present gospel age represents the mystery form of the kingdom – Jesus’ disciples asked Him, “Why do you teach in parables?” and He answered, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.” The revelations of the Gospels and the epistles give the fuller descriptions of these mysteries as Jesus is revealed. The full revelation of this earthly kingdom will be made upon His return and His rule. You should see that this, and all the kingdom parables, move through time and history from His dealings with the nation of Israel in the past, the life and ministry of Jesus on earth, the Church age, on through the tribulation and even has application at the end of the Millennium Kingdom – as each age involves the sovereignty of our Lord in each application of “The Kingdom of Heaven.”⁹

So, what will this kingdom be like? In this parable Jesus says, [Mt 13:24a] “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man.” This is the key to understanding these “Kingdom” parables. Who is that man... here He is Jesus¹⁰, the God-man, who rules as King in the coming Kingdom. Therefore, the Kingdom parables are about defining Jesus and His role as King, and what He is like. This particular parable occurs only in the Gospel of Matthew. Now let us focus upon these verses.

⁹ Kingdom of God, Kingdom of Heaven – see Merrill F. Unger, The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary, Moody Press, Chicago 1987, p. 740

¹⁰ But often that man is just a man. Keep a critical eye out for who is that “man” in each case.

The Farmer The Text:

[Mt 13:24b] *"a man who sowed good seed in his field."*

Jesus, the King, sowed good seed in His field. In the previous study, "The Sower, The Seed, The Soils," the illustration used is of a farmer. We said "The farmer owns the land, he tills the land for an expected crop yield, he sows the seed, he waters and weeds for the whole growing season, and then he harvests the full yield, separating the good from the bad... therefore, Jesus, the King is the farmer in the illustration. He sows the Word of God upon the soils (men, women, children who believe and who don't), the result will be His harvest. In [Mt 13:37-38] Jesus makes it very clear that He is the one who sows the good seed, *"And He said, 'The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.'"* He then defines the good seed as *"these are the sons of the kingdom."* So, in His explanation the seed has matured and become believers – seed bearing plants if you will. I particularly like the term "Sons of the Kingdom," as it re-affirms the believer's position of being a son of God, brothers and sisters of His Son, Jesus, and the believer's place in the Kingdom.

In this parable a slightly different situation from the *Sower* parable is presented. The farmer has workers. The context of the Gospels indicates that the "farmer's field" was the covenanted nation of Israel and his workers were the leadership, priesthood, and people of that nation, and then the whole world. In [Mt 13:36-43] Jesus moves away from the crowd into a house and explains the parable to them there. We should be reminded by this that the meaning of His messages was not for everyone, just His disciples. We'll incorporate Jesus' answers into the parable as we travel along.



The Sleeping men

[Mt 13:25a] Jesus goes on to say, "But while his men were sleeping... ." Now we can gather that Jesus is indicating that the members of the Nation of Israel were "eyes closed, ears dumb, minds turned off" to the things of God. They should have been awake, but they were not. At the time of the parable Jesus was telling His disciples about the current state of the nation. But His statements broaden as He tells His disciples of the state of the world and its future.¹¹

¹¹ For the disciples it was their "today." For us... it is our "today>"

The Enemy

[Mt 13:25b] *"his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away."* The evil one, the devil, entered into the farmer's field (the Nation of Israel) and sowed tares, darnel, which is a non-productive weed that looks like wheat... [Mt 13:39a] *"and the tares are the sons of the evil one;"* teachers, rabbis, scribes, Pharisees, leaders, etc., who looked like the real thing, but were, in fact, individuals placed in those positions by the evil one for his purposes – the rebellion of Israel against their covenanted God. They looked like the real thing... but were evil fakes. And then the evil one removed himself from their presence so no-one would know that he did this.

One of my favorite Bible teachers, it's not the one you're thinking of, tells his congregation, "Open your Bibles and look for yourselves. Make sure that I'm teaching you what it says there – don't just take it for granted that I'm telling you the truth!" This is such an amazing statement. As a member of the Body of Christ it is my duty to make sure that my Sunday-school teacher is teaching what the Bible teaches, my Pastors are teaching what the Bible teaches, and that goes for children's classes, adult fellowship groups, and home small groups. And, of course, that I am teaching you what the bible teaches. Open your Bibles, fact-check, be knowledgeable in the Word of God – for so many are so easily led astray. In Jesus' case, the majority of a whole nation were completely led astray – to the extent that they put their Messiah and savior, to death. They believed their leaders, scribes, Pharisees who said that Jesus was of the devil and was a blasphemer and needed to be killed.

The Kingdom of Heaven

[Mt 13:26a] Once again it is important to remember that we are talking about the description of the King of the Kingdom of Heaven... Jesus and His coming Kingdom. So as we look at the words please keep them in context.

Jesus' words were spoken for the disciples' ears – and those who could “hear” God's Word – including we who have the recorded scriptures. They were looking at their then current situation, and we are looking back at their situation. As they looked around they became aware of the difference between those who “heard” Jesus' messages and those who did not “hear.”

The Tares Became Evident

[Mt 13:26] *“But when the wheat [lit. grass] sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also.”* Time passes and the differences between tall grass and fruit bearing wheat, the differences between the false seed and the true seed become more apparent.

In Matthew's description, that time came with the first advent of Jesus as He came into His public ministry. It took time for the evil ones to grow and mature and when they did... those who could see and hear, saw and heard them for who they were. For many, back then, it would be after the death and resurrection of Jesus for them to fully see the difference between the evil ones and those who were indeed In-Christ.



“The burning of the Tares”

The Slaves

[Mt 13:27] *“The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’* Jesus speaks of the “slaves” of the landowner. Who are the slave-servants of God? The angels would be primary, and then all those who “Hear” the word of God and believe. They asked the question, “Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?” Isn’t that a question you have asked? Lord God, why is there evil in this world?” Why are there so many who hate the Word of God and try to destroy the Body of Christ? It is also important that each individual in the local Church be kept on guard as to the teachings of all involved there. We are not exempt today from the introduction of wrong and / or evil teachings in our local assembly. It is so easy for many to be led astray through the influence of our digital age – the internet and its many outlets of misinformation. Stay on guard.

The Enemy Has Done This

[Mt 13:28a] *"And he said to them, 'an enemy has done this!'"* The farmer's answer to his slaves, not the workers in the field, is that an enemy has done this. The original refers to "an enemy man," a single enemy of the farmer. So, you probably get the point... who is the single one enemy of the Christ as God? He is Satan, the devil, the evil one. He comes and sows his seed... and they grow and become bearers of seed themselves, and then the evil one disappears and lets his minions do his work.

Gather Them Up?

[Mt 13:28b] *"The slaves *said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?'"* Again, it's the slave-servants who speak to the farmer, not the workers. Can you imagine Jesus, on the Mount of Olives that last night just before His capture, praying to His heavenly Father, the angels surrounding Him – even asking the question, "Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up (the evil scribes, Pharisees, rulers)? "Father, no, I wish to do only Thy will, and Thy will only."

So, in the parable, Jesus responds, **[Mt 13:29-30]** *"But he *said, 'No, for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First, gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.'"*

Take a moment and think about the grace of God. He, the farmer, tells his slaves not to gather the good and the bad at the same time, before they're grown up – because some of the good might be damaged if you do that. Now you know why God just doesn't send His servants to remove the evil ones in our world – to do so might harm those who are good. This life can be hard and

disturbed by much evil and evil ones, but the end result, including the hard and the evil, together, will yield the best crop. He allows us to grow until "the time of the harvest," and then He separates the good from the bad.

In the parable Jesus speaks of the ultimate harvest [Mt 13:40-42] *"So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom [all the evil ones,] the stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* – that time when all of the evil, including the evil one, will be gathered up and sent to be burned. Then, and only then, [Mt 13:43] *"Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear."* - will He, in His mercy and grace, "Gather," not bundle up, His beloved "wheat" into His barn. What a wonderful picture of how God, The King, will end the age of evil upon this world and usher those who see, hear, and believe into His kingdom forever.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

1. In this parable, who is the **farmer**? Who is the **enemy**? Who is the **sower** of the bad seed? Who are the **workers**? Who are the **slave servants**? Who are the **reapers**? What is the **field**? What is the **barn**?

King Jesus is the **farmer**.

Satan, the devil, is the **enemy**.

The **workers** are those who were supposed to guard the field but fell asleep.

The **Slave-servants** are the **Angels and believers**.

The **Reapers** will certainly be **Angels** (the Angel of death for instance).

The **field**... In Jesus time it was the covenant nation of **Israel**; in our time it is the age of the **Church**; in the coming age it will be

Christ's Kingdom on earth.

The **Barn** is the **safety** of the Kingdom of God and Christ.

2. Who are the wheat? Who are the tares?

The Wheat is those who are born into the Kingdom of Heaven through the sowing of the Word of God – The Fruit of the seed. The Tares are those who the devil has spawned in order to “choke-out” believers and the works of God within a covenant relationship.

3. What is the problem between the wheat and the tares?

Until they mature – you can't tell one from the other, and the tares will have no wheat seeds, no multiplied product – worthless.

4. Why doesn't the farmer want the harvesters to uproot the tares before the harvest?

Because "uprooting" them may harm the Wheat. [think witch hunt]. Until the wheat is mature it is dangerous to uproot those alongside. It's also possible that some of the tares (unbelievers fooled by the devil) may be repentant and turn to Christ before harvest time.

5. What will happen to the tares at harvest?

They will be cut down, bundled up, and burned. Their destiny will be eternal fire.

6. What will happen to the wheat at harvest?

They will be gathered and taken to the farmer's barn [taken to the King's home].

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Jeremiah 18:15

"Don't stumble from the Ancient Path"

2025-08-15 updated