

TEACHINGS OF Jesus (34)
The parables of Jesus (3)
The Parable of the Wheat and Tares
Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

As we continue our study of parables of Jesus, today we want to notice the next parable mentioned by Matthew that Jesus taught on that occasion. This is called “the parable of the tares of the field” (13:36). We will first examine the text and then make some applications.

I. The Text

a. The parable - 13:24-30

- i. The kingdom of heaven is like – we know that Jesus is again emphasizing matters related to the kingdom of God
- ii. A man sowed good seed in his field – it was wheat as we find later in the parable.
- iii. At night, an enemy came and sowed tares (a poisonous weed) amongst his wheat.
- iv. When they sprouted, the tares began to appear and were evidently different. Sources reference the “tare” as “bearded darnel grass”. Early on, these weeds would look so much like the wheat that it was difficult to distinguish between them. The tare would have been a poisonous grain that had to be separated or the wheat crop would be ruined.
- v. When the servants came to the owner, it was evident that an enemy had done this.
- vi. The servants offered to begin removing the tares from the wheat.
- vii. The master told them to wait until harvest and then they would be able to distinguish between the two more easily.
- viii. The tares would be separated from the wheat and bundled and burned, while the wheat would be gathered into the barn.
Again, sources say that there would have been 3 ways to separate the wheat and tares.
1) As they matured, the wheat was taller than the weed. So they would harvest the wheat over the top of the weed and then burn the field.
2) As they reaped the field, they would tediously separate the wheat from the tares and deal with them accordingly.
3) Before milled the grains, they would pick out the bad seed from the wheat (useful if there was a small amount).

b. The explanation – 13:36-43

- i. Our text here begins by noting this was after Jesus went back into the house, so His teaching was done that day. His disciples asked Him to explain this parable. Jesus did.
- ii. Like the parable of the sower, Jesus gave an explanation of this parable. Thus we have an understanding of its meaning.
- iii. **Jesus notes who the Sower is here – “the Son of Man”**
 1. “The Son of Man” – this was the preferred reference of Jesus to Himself as Immanuel. A study of its usage indicates that when Jesus used this expression, they KNEW what He meant (equivalent to “Son of God”).
 2. NOTE: In examining parables, similarities in parables do not necessarily mean the same interpretation each time. The sower in the parable of the sower was not defined, and was likely anyone sowing the seed of God’s word. Here Jesus is specified.

3. As such, this parable at least includes rejection of Him by the religious leaders who would later be even more directly singled out.
- iv. **The field is the world** – again Jesus defines this parameter.
We sometimes in this parable speak of it being the church and use it as application that within the church there may be those who are “weeds” rather than “wheat”. And while that may be true, here Jesus identifies this as the world.
NOTE – Jesus is king of all the world – note Matthew 28:18, Revelation 1:5. And Satan has no power over Him as this parable shows – John 14:30
- v. **The good seeds are the sons of the kingdom** – in this case, not the word of God (as in the parable of the sower), but rather those whose good hearts receive the seed.
We are in the world, though not of the world (John 17:14-16)
- vi. **The tares are the sons of the wicked one** – these would be those under the sway of Satan. (1 John 5:19, 2 Corinthians 4:4 – the god of this age, etc.) Recall how Jesus described the corrupt Jewish leaders as children of the devil (John 8:44).
Jesus in vs. 41 described them as those who “**offend and those who practice lawlessness**” – Matthew 18:6-7, 7:21-23
- vii. **The enemy who sowed the seed is the devil** – (Satan, the wicked one – 13:19).
In this we find that he is continually working to gather men to Him – 1 Peter 5:8, 2 Corinthians 2:11, etc.
In everything he does, he is an enemy to God and Christ. Thus, he tries to destroy those who belong to the Lord. It is up to us to resist him – 1 Peter 5:9.
- viii. **The harvest is the end of the age** – a reference to the day of judgment. The Bible speaks of a coming day in which all will stand before Him in judgment – 2 Corinthians 5:10, Acts 17:30-31, John 5:28-29.
- ix. **The reapers are His angels** – angels are messengers and heavenly servants of Gods’ In various judgment scenes, we find that God uses angels as part of that. We may not know much about this, but they will assist in that great day – 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9
- x. **Vs. 40- 42-** further describe what will happen on that day. Jesus describes this as a parable that is ultimately about judgment.
 1. **AT the end of the age, the Son of Man** (Jesus) will send His angels.
 2. **And gather out of “His Kingdom”** – remember we have defined kingdom already as the world (so this parable is not talking about the church, per se) all things that offend and practice lawlessness.
 3. **They will be cast into the furnace of fire** – Jesus describing again the torments of eternal punishment for the wicked. He describes it as unpleasant - “there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”
- xi. **BUT the righteous will shine forth as the son in the kingdom of the Father** – that same day of judgment will be one of victory for the godly. They will finally be in the presence of the Lord where He shines as its light (Revelation 21:22-23, 22:5)
- xii. **He who has ears to hear, let him hear.** Note how this is only mentioned within the explanation. Jesus is telling His disciples to listen!

II. Lessons to consider.

- a. We live in a wicked world, but that does not mean we cannot live godly Christians. We can be the light and salt that Jesus wants (Matthew 5:13-16, Phil 2:15-16).
We can plant the seed of God’s word and seek for good and honest hearts.
- b. We are reminded of the longsuffering of God – why has God allowed this wicked world to last this long? 2 Peter 3:9, Romans 2:4-5. As long as this world stands – there is hope to win another soul, OR for a soul that has wandered away to return to Him.

- c. This parable does NOT teach the removal of church discipline –
 - i. Some have used this parable to say that we should not withdraw from anyone anymore because God will judge in the end. They reason that since the wicked and the righteous dwell together in “the kingdom”, and since the kingdom is the church, then we need not worry about discipline.
 - ii. This contradicts what Jesus taught later – Matthew 18:15-17, and something continually emphasized in the epistles – 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14; Romans 16:17-18, 2 John 10-11, etc.
 - iii. While it may be true that in the church there are some who are hypocrites and others who are persisting in unknown sins, that God WILL on that day judge righteously, that does not exempt a church from taking whatever measures are necessary to keep the church pure.
- d. Other lessons already mentioned –
 - i. There is a day of judgment coming.
 - ii. Satan is at work trying to destroy.
 - iii. There is a place of eternal punishment for the ungodly - a place that was originally prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41)

And thus we can see another parable taught by our Lord. Let us consider these things and realize that while we are living in this world now, there is a great day of judgment coming – are you ready for that day? Think about it!