

The Parable of the Wheat & Tares

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Parables were a hallmark of Jesus' teaching style. He used relatable illustrations to express deeply profound spiritual truth. In Matthew chapter thirteen, Jesus taught a series of parables about the Kingdom of Heaven. Each of the stories conveyed an aspect(s) of the nature of the kingdom. These details include but are not limited to the following:

- 1. Jesus is bringing new creation.** Jesus' agricultural references coincide with the Bible's broader theme of new creation.
- 2. The power of God's seed.** God's seed is unstoppable. It grows and transforms.
- 3. The kingdom is worth our sacrifice.** The value of the kingdom is priceless. We must be willing to give up the sins that are preventing us from receiving its blessings.
- 4. The kingdom has an enemy.** The devil seeks to destroy the kingdom of God. He works by deception to convince us to renounce our citizenship in the kingdom of Heaven.
- 5. The world is headed to harvest.** Judgment is coming for everyone. Those who have refused the rule of the king will be punished eternally. Those who have obeyed the king will shine like the sun.

About the Parable

One of the more challenging parables Jesus taught on this occasion was the Parable of the Wheat and Tares (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43). This parable considered the implications of the Kingdom of Heaven growing in the world.

Jesus spoke about a man who sowed good seed in his field. While the man and his servants were sleeping, an enemy sowed tares or weeds in the man's wheat field. In time, both the wheat and the tares sprouted. The servants were surprised by the tares. They asked if they should uproot the tares. The master told the servants to allow the wheat and tares to grow together. Pulling the tares would also uproot the wheat. Instead, they were to allow the wheat and tares to grow together until the harvest. The tares could then be separated from the wheat and burned.

Try as they might, the disciples could not figure out what Jesus meant. After Jesus finished teaching and the crowd dispersed, Jesus and the disciples went to someone's house. The disciples asked Jesus to explain what He meant by the parable of the tares. Notice His response:

The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age.

The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear (Matt. 13:37-43).

Lessons from the Parable

1. The Son of Man sows good seed. A few minutes before this parable, Jesus taught the Parable of the Sower. Farming analogies were common in Jesus' parables; however, agricultural images fit the broader framework of God's project of new creation.

In the Parable of the Sower, the good seed was the word of God. In this parable, the good seed represented the sons of the kingdom. God's seed is good. God's seed produces healthy, nutritious crops. God's seed cannot be stopped from growing. The kingdom was coming and there was nothing that the enemy could do to stop God's new creation.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it (Isa. 55:10-11).

2. The difference between wheat and tares. The difference between wheat and tares is subtle. Without a lengthy explanation, wheat and tares (darnel) look similar. However, darnel is poisonous when consumed. The enemy does not sow good seed. The enemy sows seeds of death.

The devil has sown false teachers, false Messiahs, imposter Christians, a perverted gospel, and a counterfeit Church (Matt. 7:15; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Thess. 2:7-12). We must be discerning between what the Son of Man sows and what the enemy sows. Ultimately, Jesus is going to save His Kingdom and uproot what has been produced by the poisonous lies of the devil (Rev. 21:8).

3. Growing, not uprooting. The master's servants were ready to uproot the tares. Much to their surprise, the master stopped them. The primary lesson is that uprooting or passing judgment against the world is not our job. That will happen in the harvest: the end of the age. Judgment belongs to the Son of Man. Our job is to grow and fill the earth with God's glory.

Conclusion

The parables of Jesus are significant. Through them, Jesus revealed deep truths which otherwise would have never been made known. If we want to understand the truth of the parables, we can. Let us be wise to the pearls of the parables and seek the kingdom of Heaven.