

The Parables of Jesus: Parable of the Wheat & Tares (2 ways to live) Faber McMullen © 2019 Matthew 13:24-30



This morning we will look at another parable of Jesus. It is the parable of the wheat and the tares. It is a picture of two ways to live out one's journey in life. It also is a picture of the one decision in a person's life that has the greatest eternal consequence. Let's review for moment just exactly what is meant by a parable. You will remember that in Greek a parable literally means something that is "cast alongside" something else. Jesus would "cast" a parable alongside a truth to illustrate that truth. It was a common way for rabbis to communicate a spiritual truth to their audience. It is a literary device that can be used as a teaching aid to clearly communicate a spiritual truth. Sometimes parables are referred to as 'earthly stories with heavenly meanings.'



There are basically 35 parables recorded in the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). When Jesus began to use parables, his disciples were a little confused as to why He began speaking in that manner (see Matthew 13:10). Jesus explained in the earlier part of Matthew 13 that the use of speaking in parables had two purposes: (1) To reveal truth to those that truly wanted to know the truth, and (2) to conceal truth from those who really had no desire to know the truth. Jesus describes those who truly and diligently seek the deeper truths of God as those who have ears to hear. These are those who REALLY hear and comprehend what is being communicated. Likewise, those who have eyes to see are those who REALLY see, understand, and perceive what the things of God are all about. My prayer for myself and each of you is that we will continue to dig in and understand what God wants for each of us, and my prayer is that we will know His voice and obey!

The parable we will read in a moment is explained by Jesus. More often than not, the parables are not explained. Please open your Bibles to Matthew chapter 13, stand, and read along with me our key passage of this morning.

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.'" (Matthew 13:24-30, NKJV).

THE KINGDOM OF GOD - What is it?



There is a whole lot going on in this parable. In this parable and many others Jesus talks about the "Kingdom of God" or the "Kingdom of Heaven." He is saying, "The kingdom of God is like" Then He gives the parable. Let's talk about that for a minute. What exactly does that mean? In a nutshell, the Kingdom of God means something like "God's way and God's order of handling things and looking at things." The "Kingdom of God" is different from the kingdoms of men. It is discussed in multiple scriptures (Mark 1,10,15, Luke 17, Acts 28, Romans 14, 1 Corinthians 15). The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven are one and the same. There are three ways that scripture deals with the idea of the Kingdom of Heaven:

1. In the broadest sense, the Kingdom is the rule of an eternal, sovereign God over all of the universe. In the end of all things, He is sovereign over all. (Psalm 103:19, Daniel 4:3, Romans 13:1)
2. In a more narrow sense, the Kingdom of God is the spiritual rule over and in the hearts and lives of those who are submitted to God's authority. Those who are rebellious and defy God's authority and who refuse to submit to Him are not part of the Kingdom. Jesus was clear that His Kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). He was clear that repentance is necessary to be part of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 4:17). Jesus also said that in order to be part of God's Kingdom we must be born again. (John 3:5-7).¹
3. Lastly, in a literal sense, one day Jesus will come as Messiah, and He will literally rule the world with righteousness (Daniel 2, 7, Obadiah 1, Habakkuk 2, Micah 4, Zechariah 14). Joel Richardson documents this with scripture in his book entitled, "*When a Jew Rules the World*".² It is exciting for me to think of heaven as right where I live, tending my garden and enjoying the nature that surrounds me. Wow! For me, that beats the idea of sitting on a cloud and playing a harp.

**FAITH IS A WAY
OF LOOKING AT
THE WORLD
FROM GOD'S
PERSPECTIVE.**

RICK WARREN



THE KINGDOM OF GOD - The Universe from God's Perspective

In speaking of the kingdom of God, Jesus is trying to communicate the way things are from God's perspective and what is going on in us, through us, and around us. In this particular parable, Jesus is saying that the people of

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/kingdom-of-God.html>

² <https://www.jewishvoice.org/watch/when-jew-rules-world-part-1-0>

the world are divided into two groups: (1) those who know Him, love Him, and serve Him and (2) those who don't know Him who live by a set of standards other than God's standards. Jesus says that the Kingdom of God is like a man who is out sowing good seed. The good seed makes its way into the ground and it begins to come up and is fruitful. Then another wicked person shows up while the sower's workers are asleep. These workers are not being vigilant, and so this other evil person sows "tares" among the wheat. The online dictionary tells us that a tare is an injurious weed that looks like wheat.³ So here among the good seed are evil seeds that are sown by an "evil man," and the little plants that come up look a whole lot like the wheat, but they aren't wheat at all.

The good planter's servants ask how in the world this field has become so contaminated and compromised with these weeds. The explanation is that an enemy that has come and planted these tares. The man in the parable then explains that they should be left alone until the time of the harvest when the tares will be separated out, bundled, and burned. He that has ears to hear let him hear!

THE PARABLE - Interpreted

This parable is one of those that Jesus interprets for us.

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 of 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! (Matthew 13:36-43, NKJV).

So in summary, the wheat represents those who have believed in and trusted Jesus as their Savior and are in step with God and the things of God. The tares are those who have not put their faith in Jesus, and they are basically in step with the world.

Jesus ends the parable speaking clearly about the outcomes of living in the world or being secure in the Kingdom. During Jesus' ministry He really didn't talk a lot about hell, but He sure seems to be doing so here. He says that at the end of the ages there will be a great harvest. In that harvest those of the Kingdom will be separated out from those of the world. The tares will be separated from the wheat. I do not know what exactly hell will be like, but I do know that it will be eternal misery. You don't find "wailing and gnashing of teeth" and the concept of "burning" in a safe good place. Hell is called "gehenna" in the Bible because it was the name of the valley on the side of Jerusalem where the kings of Judah had sacrificed their children on the fiery altars of Molech (Jeremiah 7:31). This valley was a hated place with an evil history. By Jesus' time,

³ <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&q=what+is+a+tare>

the valley had become a dump where garbage was burned continually. The thing that should frighten one the most about hell is the separation from God. That is the source of the misery. Those who are not of the Kingdom of God are not promised an eternity in God's presence, but rather, they are promised eternal separation from God by their own choosing. You see, I think what will happen is that if a person rejects God in his or her lifetime, God will continue to honor that rejection in eternity. God is a gentleman and He will honor this decision of rejection for all time and eternity.

Another Life Application of this Parable - How do You Really Want to Live - Kingdom Living or Worldly Living (driven by the world, the flesh, and the devil)?

I would like to introduce a concept that is clearly not the immediate meaning of this parable, but it helps those of us who are believers to do a spiritual self-check today. You can sort of put the Parable of the Sower together with this Parable of the Wheat and Tares. Beyond the idea of the unsaved being the tares, is the idea that each of us is like a field or even a garden. When we allow the Lord to till us, tend us, manage us, and care for us, we have a life that is productive like a field of wheat or a productive garden.

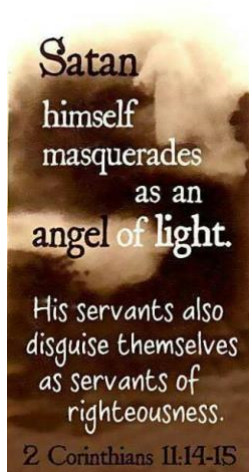


In this parable Jesus is explaining the world in which we, as believers, find ourselves. The Kingdom of God is like a field of wheat. As believers, we should seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto us (Matthew 6:33). We are surrounded by those who are disobedient and who live lives of sin and self. Those are the tares. They have no real interest in God or the

things of God. Although believers will not be "pulled out" at the end and be burned with the tares, we are subject to attacks from forces outside of the Kingdom. This battle is with, what my mother called, "the world, the flesh, and the devil".

Although believers are "wheat" (saved), they are continually assaulted by the world, the flesh, and the devil; as we learned in the Parable of the Sower. As review, the "**world**" consists of the cares and the worries of this life. I had an old pastor who called those worries the "details of life." They rob us of joy and make us spiritually unproductive. The world attacks our joy by telling us that we gain value and worth by things other than God's love for us. The world attacks our joy by telling us that the need to be loved and accepted can be filled by another human, when, in fact, only God can truly fill that deep need in each of us.

The "**flesh**" is the physical desires that cry out to be satisfied in ways contrary to God's ways. They are held at bay through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Bible tells us to feed the Spirit. Don't feed the flesh! Even when we are in Christ there is an old sin nature that lingers and lurks in the heart of each of us, and it originates in ourselves (James 1:13-15). It is the Holy Spirit of God that gives us spiritual weaponry to take captive the flesh (2 Corinthians 10:5). The tares of this world don't know of this weaponry, and they give in to both the world, the flesh, and often without knowing so they even give in to the devil.



SATAN WANTS TO DESTROY GOD'S PERFECT WILL FOR EACH PERSON ON EARTH

Let's talk for a minute about the **devil**. Jesus is clear that the devil is real and that his mission is to kill and destroy. He seeks to blind people to the truth of the gospel so that they will be eternal tares. He can't have the soul of the believer so he seeks to steal your joy! Satan is not some ugly being with a red suit and horns. He is beautiful beyond description. All that he offers looks beautiful at first glance, but don't believe it for a minute! Jesus gives us specific insight into the motivation and modus operandi of what the Bible calls the Angel of Light (Lucifer). Jesus said, *"¹⁰ The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. (John 10:10, NKJV).*

In contrast to the one who offers emptiness, Jesus comes that we might have life and have it more abundantly. We fight a spiritual battle and we have access to all the weaponry we need to wage war in the spiritual realm. (Ephesians 6; 2 Cor 10:3-5)

THE SAFEST PLACE TO BE IS IN THE CENTER OF GOD'S WILL



There will be a great harvest. Along the way, the happiest believers are those submitted to the Holy Spirit rather than to the world, the flesh, and the devil. In this Parable of the Wheat and Tares, Jesus goes on to say that those who are part of the Kingdom of God will "shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father" (Matthew 13:43). That's where I want to be. I want to be with Him forever. I also want to

close by saying that we don't have to wait until the end of the ages to experience heaven or hell. Life can be heaven or hell right here on earth. I know life is very difficult in this world. I wish I could explain why we go through so many hard things. In spite of these difficulties, I choose to believe that God is good, and I choose to trust the promises of God. I believe that He will never leave me or forsake me. I choose to trust Him with all of my heart and to not lean on my own understanding of things. Here in this sinful, broken world we have sickness, disaster, poverty, suffering, and every kind of difficulty imaginable, but the safest place to be is in the center of God's will. That's where I want to be. That is the **ONLY** place I want to be. That is being wheat in the Kingdom of God. With a simple turn of your intellect and a change in your heart you can become the wheat among the tares. You can be secure in the Kingdom of God. He says that those who have put their faith in Him will "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of your Father."

Let us pray.

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