
The Parables of Jesus

Session 3 – The Parable of the Tares and the Wheat – Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

[Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43](#) | The Parable of the Tares and the Wheat

Matthew 13:24-30 | The parable of the Tares and the Wheat

- Verses 24-25 –
 - Note again that this parable (as all parables - see vv. 10-11) is about **the kingdom of heaven**. When one tries to associate this parable with any other matter, a false application will result.
 - At this point in the parable, it would be fruitless to attempt to interpret the parable, because parables contain **mysteries**, and thus require interpretation (not speculation). The mystery of this parable will be revealed beginning in verse 36. All we know so far is that **a man sowed good seed** and **his enemy came and sowed tares**. We do not yet know who the man is, what the seed is, the identity nor meaning of the men who slept, who the enemy is, etc.
- Verses 26-29 –
 - Note that the problem was not noted until the wheat **brought forth fruit** (yet not ready for harvest - see v. 30). The **tares** are a similar looking plant, yet the grain is worthless.
 - While the seed is growing, before the harvest, there is no ability to “build the kingdom” by removing the tares without doing harm to the whole.
- Verse 30 –
 - The kingdom would come **in the time of the harvest**. At that time, **the reapers** (whose identity is unknown) will **bind** (the tares) **in bundles to burn them** while they will **gather the wheat into my barn**.

Matthew 13:36-43 | The interpretation of the parable of the tares and the wheat

- Verse 36 –
 - The fact that the disciples had to ask for a meaning is indicative of the *mystery* nature of a parable. When we make up our own interpretation, we will misunderstand.
 - Note that the first definition in the Oxford English Dictionary for the word **declare** is “To make clear or plain (anything that is obscure or imperfectly understood); to clear up, explain, expound, interpret, elucidate.” This is in opposition to John A. Broadus (famed Southern Baptist theologian) who said, “**Declare, explain** is doubtless the correct reading (x first hand, B, Origen,) having been changed to make it agree with 15:15.”¹ Such an explanation is built on the concepts of the critical text of scholars rather than the received text of the church.
- Verse 37 –
 - The **Son of man** is a title used of the earthly reign of the Messiah, who, in this case is **he that soweth**.
 - The identity of the sower is not revealed in the parable of the sower and the soils, but it does not appear to be the **Son of man** Himself.
- Verses 38-39 –
 - In verse 19, **the word of the kingdom** was the seed. Here, it is **the children of the kingdom**.
 - In the parable of the soils, **the wicked one** (v. 19) would **catcheth away that which was sown**, while in verse 39 the **enemy that sowed** is **the devil**, not taking away, but sowing. His tares are **the children of the wicked one** (v. 38).

¹ John A. Broadus, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, American Commentary on the New Testament (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1886), 299.

- Note that Matthew 8:12 mentions **children of the kingdom** who, in that passage, will be **cast into outer darkness**. These are the same children, those who are the *offspring of the Messianic promise*. Therefore, **outer darkness** in that passage cannot mean the **furnace of fire** in this passage (v. 42).
- Verses 40-42 –
 - Just prior to the establishment of the Kingdom there is a judgment.
 - This is consistent throughout Scripture. Jesus says that this judgment will come **in the end of this world**. The Greek is αἰών [aion], from which we get *eon*, and refers to *the world as we know it*, or “this age.”
 - Note that in verse 38, **the field is the world**, the word is κόσμος [kosmos] which is the physical world.
 - The **reapers** (v. 30) are here revealed to be the **angels** of the **Son of man** and the tares are revealed to be **all that offend, and them which do iniquity**. This judgment is also found in verses 49-50.
 - Note that this judgment is based on the *works* of the tares.
 - It is a judgment of those who have not been included in the rapture.
 - This is consistent with the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 24:38-42, in which those who are *left behind* are the ones who receive the blessing, and those that are removed receive the judgment, just as in the days of Noah.
 - The Matthew passage is *not* about the rapture, as many teach.
- Verse 43 –
 - Those who remain are **the righteous** who will **shine forth as the son in the kingdom** which will then be established.
 - This aligns with Matthew 5:5, because **the righteous** are the same as **the meek** who will **inherit the earth**. See also Psalm 37:10-11.
 - Closing thoughts on the Parable of the Tares and the Wheat:
 - It is a parable that contains no rapture of believers. Those who mix kingdom and church will inevitably teach a post-tribulational rapture, or no rapture at all.
 - It is a parable which doesn’t allow for “building” or “advancing” the kingdom.
 - If one makes “the Kingdom” to be “the church,” then this parable allows for a church theology in which no effort is made to have a regenerate and holy church membership.
 - This parable reveals the *mystery* that the Messianic reign will not come immediately. It does not, however, reveal anything about the age of the church, which was a mystery still hidden at this point.