

# The Kingdom of Heaven is Like...

## Matthew 13

05-31-19

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Part 5, The Parable of the Tares

Welcome back to another Friday, and the last day of May 2019! We are quickly moving toward the summer season. Maybe soon we'll dry out... and then probably bake!

Our theme for May and into June, is "The Kingdom of Heaven is Like..." We are moving through the amazing "Kingdom Parables" that Jesus used to teach the character and function of God's Kingdom.

We have so far studied these important topics: 1) why Jesus taught in parables, 2) the principle of Divine illumination of born-again believers, and 3) the Kingship of Jesus over His present spiritual kingdom.

Last week we jumped into the first parable, the story about the Sower and the Four Soils.

This parable teaches us that God's Kingdom sows (broadcasts) the saving Gospel into ALL the World! But, alas, that "good news" only took root and produced spiritual fruit in the "good soil", i.e., the hearts of men and women who welcomed and cherished that "good news"! Sadly, the Good News of the spiritual Kingdom of Christ will be rejected by the majority. Jesus lamented, *...for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat...* (Matthew 7:13). And why is the Good News rejected? it is rejected, and even mocked, because men love darkness; they love their sin and they do not want to be reproved by anyone... even God! Jesus proclaimed, *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved*



*But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares.*  
Illustration from Christ's Object Lessons by Ellen Gould  
Harmon White, c. 1900

*darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd (John 3:19, 20).*

This week we will look at another agricultural parable: The Parable of the Tares. This parable is found only in Matthew's Gospel and it vividly teaches us that evil not only exists, but is personified in the Enemy (Satan) who opposes and attempts to sabotage the work of God's Kingdom. Friends, there is the Spiritual Kingdom of Christ and there is the subversive kingdom comprised of carnal, worldly, haters of God and all that is good and lovely. John shockingly diagnosed these who sin willingly and do not possess the love of God as *children of the devil* (1John 3:9-11). And Jesus revealed that the Pharisees, some of the religious leaders of Israel, were also demonic. Jesus asked them rhetorically, *Why do ye not understand my speech?* And then He answered His own question, *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do* (John 8:43, 44). Truly there are only two kinds of people in this world: 1) those who are children of God through the new birth, obtained by repentance and faith in Christ's work on the cross and 2) those who are children of the Devil... because they have rejected the wooing of the Holy Spirit and the "whosoever will" grace of God. Again, Jesus said, *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil* (John 3:19).

The Master started this story with a simile: *The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: 25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way* (Matthew 13:24, 25). After some weeks of growth the farmer's servants became alarmed. They could see that mixed in and growing along side the wheat was an abundance of *tares* (dziz-an'-ee-on), which most commentators believe refers to the grass plant historically called Darnel. Modern botanists believe the "darnel" of the New Testament to be *Lolium temulentum*, a variety of Ryegrass. From the scientific sources we read,

"Darnel usually grows in the same production zones as wheat and was a serious weed of cultivation until modern sorting machinery enabled darnel seeds to be separated efficiently from seed wheat. The similarity between these two plants is so great that in some regions, darnel is referred to as "false wheat". It bears a close resemblance to wheat until the ear appears." <sup>1</sup>

and

"For many centuries, perhaps for as long as humans have cultivated cereal grains, wheat's evil twin has insinuated itself into our crops. In a big enough dose, this grass, darnel, can kill a person, and farmers would have to take care to separate it out from their true harvest— unless they were planning to add darnel to beer or bread on purpose, in order to get high. Darnel occupies a grey area in human agricultural history. It's definitely not good for us. When people eat its seeds, they get dizzy, off-balance and nauseous, and its official species name, *temulentum*, comes from a Latin word for 'drunk.'" <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lolium\\_temulentum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lolium_temulentum)

<sup>2</sup> Laskow, Sarah. 2016. "Wheat's Evil Twin Has Been Intoxicating Humans for Centuries". Atlas Obscura. <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/wheats-evil-twin-has-been-intoxicating-humans-for-centuries>

Now, in any farm field one can expect an occasional clump of Johnson grass, Cockle burr, or Canada thistle. But when the field obviously contained as many *tares*, or MORE *tares*, than the planted crop, the farmer recognized that he was the victim of sabotage! He replied to his servants, *An enemy hath done this* (Matthew 13:28). When the servants asked if they should wade into the wheat field and pull up the tares, the farmer wisely replied, *Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn* (Matthew 13:29, 30).

As with the first parable, we are again privileged to have Jesus' interpretation. In Matthew 13:36-43 we read,

*Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. 37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; 38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; 39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. 40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. 41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; 42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

Jesus plainly interprets the parable, but we are left to form the applications. As I stressed in last week's installment, there is only one TRUE interpretation of Holy Scripture. But there can be and there often are, many spiritual applications.

Perhaps this parable's greatest applications are these —

- 1) This present world is inhabited by only two sets of human beings: the children of God and the children of the Devil, but the Devil fights guerrilla-style! He fights "no holds barred" and "without rules".

The fact that there are two subsets of people in this world —the children of light and the children of darkness—should be most obvious to those with spiritual eyes and ears! **BUT, what is not-so-obvious, is the fact that many of those who claim to be children of the Light are really children of Darkness (i.e., children of the Devil)!** These are the tares! They are imposters. The Devil's greatest attacks on the Kingdom of Heaven are made when he successfully infiltrates the Lord's local churches with a Fifth Column of tares, i.e, pseudo-believers. This is the Enemy's style of spiritual guerrilla warfare: divide and conquer.

- 2) Until King Jesus sits on David's throne in Jerusalem, ruling this planet for 1000 years, His present spiritual kingdom will be engaged in spiritual warfare!

Tares have undoubtedly infiltrated ALL local, scriptural, New Testament churches since Christ's very first mobile church. Remember Judas Iscariot! This happens because profession isn't always possession. While God can and does look at the heart (1Samuel 16:7), and while the Son of God Incarnate, Jesus the Christ, knew all men (John 2:24, 25), the children of Kingdom (born-again believers) cannot see inside people's "hearts"; we can't look inside to see if their spirit has been re-birthed and in-dwelt by the Holy Spirit. Consequently, the Lord's true New Testament churches are regularly infiltrated by tares! This really should not be a surprise.

Now there are two sub-sets of tares or pseudo-Christians. There are the Self-deluded Tares and then there are the Wolves; men and women who knowingly USE religion to take advantage of the unsuspecting. Let's first think a bit about these self-deluded tares.

- **Self-deluded Tares** - Some tares (pseudo-Christians) are truly self-deluded; they think or usually just assume they are "Christians", but they are not! Self-deluded pseudo-Christians are produced by pseudo-Christianity! And there are several varieties.
  - Liberal pseudo-Christianity — These tares are the formal religionists. They teach a social-gospel, a tolerance-gospel, a political-gospel, a good works- and good intentions-gospel, formality, and of course, rites and rituals. In fact they teach most anything BUT the True Gospel. These tares believe they are children of Light because they haven't committed murder, because they were baptized or sprinkled, because they have their name on a "church" roll, because they do "good works" (self-defined), and they benefit the poor, the SPCA, and Green Politics.
  - Emotion-based pseudo-Christianity — This group seeks emotional stimulation, sensual highs, and a feel-good religion full of health, wealth, and "happiness". They will not endure sound doctrine because they have ears itching to hear something pleasing and gratifying to their fleshly lusts (2Timothy 4:3). Their "worship" services may more resemble a worldly rock concert than a church service. These services can be full of confusion regarding the misuse of the spiritual gifts. These services are dominated by the "I'm OK, You're OK" mentality.
  - Legalistic pseudo-Christianity — Liberal religion isn't the only arena for error. Conservative religion also hits the ditch when they teach acceptance through rule-keeping, regulations, and adherence to standards. This is Pharisaical religion. Another area where conservative religion has failed is the danger of Easy Believeism. When people are encouraged to raise a hand, or sign a card, or repeat a prayer... and then are declared "saved" by some religious leader—but there was no true repentance and belief, i.e., no new birth—then we have ourselves been guilty of producing another "tare".

Yes, there are, and there will continue to be many who are deluded into believing that they are "Christians" simply because they were or are involved in "religion", or because they have intellectually assented to Jesus being the Son of God. They will proclaim their

“Christian identity”, and some might even semi-successfully act out their “Christian Identity”, but sadly, at the judgment they will discover all too late that they were living a lie! Jesus testified that there will be deluded pseudo-Christian tares who will stand before Him, frantic and panicked, saying, *Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?* And He will, *...profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity* (Matthew 7:21-23). What a horrible, horrible day this will be for millions who lived a self-deluded lie, having only a form of godliness (adherence to religion), but denying the in-dwelt Holy Spirit power thereof!

But, perhaps even more insidious are those tares who KNOW they are tares, and their purpose is to take advantage of people in an attempt to satiate their own carnal desires.

- **Other tares (pseudo-Christians) are tares on purpose; these are spiritual wolves!** The goal of the spiritual wolf is to infiltrate a flock, so as to take advantage. Jesus, Jude, and Peter warn about these empty clouds without water, these false teachers, these wolves in sheep’s clothing, whose purpose is to deceive and use people to gain materially, to gain preeminence, and the most evil of all, to wickedly use people carnally!

Truly, Jesus’ present spiritual kingdom will be engaged in spiritual warfare until His Second Advent.

- 3) The Children of Light do not have the responsibility to separate out and eliminate tares. If we, the Children of Light, were to wade out into Christendom and attempt to separate the wheat from the tares, we would cause much offense and damage, even among among true born-again believers. No, just as Jesus taught, our job isn’t to police the Christian, or so-called Christian world. Our job is to fulfill the Great Commission by the empowering of God’s Paraclete, the Holy Spirit.

Now, obviously this does not mean we cannot or should not be discerning. After all one of the spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to some believers is discernment! Furthermore, it does not mean that we allow heretics to teach and lead in our assemblies. Paul clearly taught that after two reprimands a heretic was to be rejected (Titus 3:10). And one of Jesus’ condemnations to the church at Thyatira was that they allowed a false prophetess to teach in their assembly (Revelation 2:18-22). Finally, this does NOT mean we can’t be fruit inspectors. When people are born-again, they will change! Paul declares, *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new* (2Corinthians 5:17). When a man or woman is born-again spiritually, the indwelling Holy Spirit starts to produce the spiritual fruit listed in Galatians 5:22. And so when people claim to be a Christian, but there is no change in their hearts and behaviors, and there is no spiritual fruit being produced, then we are prudent and wise to be suspicious.

And then a fourth application is this...

4) The Lord Jesus has appointed a separation judgment for Gentiles (Matthew 25:31-46) and a separation judgment for the Jews (Ezekiel 20:33-38; Malachi 3:2-5). These will eternally the wheat from the tares. Jesus says angels will do the separating. The *tares* will be cast into the furnace called the Lake of Fire and the *wheat* will be glorified in their Magnificent Savior.

In closing, perhaps there is a 5th application? Knowing the deception of the Devil, and the terror of the Lord, should not there be some serious introspection? Should not we ask, "Am I really *wheat*, or am I one of those self-deluded *tares*?" Paul knew the danger of Satan's delusions and so he warned, *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates* (2Corinthians 13:5)? And Peter concurred, commanding, *...give diligence to make your calling and election sure...* (2Peter 1:10).

God bless and consider!