

## Episode #809 — Matthew 13 Part 3: The Parable of the Tares of the Field

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. In Matthew 13, the Lord began to teach the multitudes in parables, some of which He interpreted to His disciples. Last time we examined the interpretation of the Parable of the Sower. Today, the Lord gives the important parable of the Tares of the Field.

III. One more word on the interpretation of the Parable of the Sower.

A. The interpretation the Lord gave is the interpretation, and should not be treated as a second parable. The seed on the wayside is not the word sown by John the Baptist, the seed on the stony ground that sown by the Lord, the seed on the thorny ground that sown by the apostles during Acts, and the seed on the good soil the word proclaimed by “the church” today. This treats the Lord’s interpretation as not the interpretation, and we have the right to further interpret it. This is not honest Bible exposition, and is a rascally way to treat the Word of God.

B. Not all fruit bearers bear the same amount of fruit. Some bear a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. The point is to be bearing fruit, not judging how much is born.

IV. The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. Matthew 13:24-30.

A. Verse 24. “Another” parable introduces the parables outside to the multitude; “again” the parables inside to the disciples.

1. The kingdom of the heavens is a literal government on earth. This emphasizes the source from which that government comes. This phrase, full of meaning, cannot describe Christendom today, as some like Schofield claim. (Try this in verses 44 and 45.) The Bible knows only one kingdom of the heavens, and it is good and only good. This cannot describe Christendom today, something that is predominantly evil. This is the first parable that begins with these words. The interpretation of this parable will help us with the others.

2. “Likened unto” makes this a similitude or comparison. Used in the house on the rock and the sand (Matthew 7:24-27), the children in the market (Matthew 11:16-18), and the later parables in Matthew 18, 22, and 25. We need to keep the picture as the Lord painted it. The meaning is beyond dispute, since the Lord interpreted it Himself. This illustrates what the kingdom is like in its initial form. This parable is often confused with the Parable of the Sower, but this is wrong, as these are two distinct parables.

3. The farmer sows in a field, a plot of ground selected and prepared for the purpose. He was not a foolish farmer who sowed his seed haphazardly.

B. Verse 25. “While men slept” is a figure of speech meaning at night or under cover of darkness. Do not criticize men for sleeping at night, a normal and natural thing that the Lord did not criticize. The blame must all go on the enemy. “Tares” are Greek *zizanon*, often said to be darnel, but more likely zewan. Bullinger, “While growing it looks like wheat, but when full grown the ears are long and the grains almost black. Each grain of zewan must be removed before grinding wheat, or the bread is bitter and poisonous. Wheat is golden; but tares show their true colour as they ripen.” The wheat was sown first; the enemy oversows. The wheat must be much more than the

tares or the statement tares were sown among the wheat would be false. The enemy goes his way, confident his false wheat would do its work.

- C. Verse 26. They looked the same while growing, and no distinction could be made until the wheat appeared, Greek *phaino*, shined forth, were visible.
- D. Verse 27. The servants are *douloi*, slaves. *Kurie* is “Lord” or “Master.” They know he sowed good seed! Even today many are puzzled when they see tares in the world, failing to distinguish the work of the enemy.
- E. Verse 28. The householder is not puzzled and does not question the quality of the seed. He knows what has happened. A man, an enemy, did this. They ask if he wants, *theleis* desires or wills, them to gather up the tares?
- F. Verse 29. The wheat and the tares appearing very similar, it would be almost impossible not to make mistakes at this early stage. However the master does not plan ultimately to ignore these tares. Note his solicitude: he does not want to lose a single grain of the good wheat!
- G. Verse 30. The tares do not die out on their own! “Reapers” is related in Greek to harvest, “harvesters.” First priority is to gather or collect the tares in order to carry them off. The second is to collect the wheat. The one is gathered to be destroyed, the other to be accepted. Burning was a common method of destruction.

#### V. The Parable of the Mustard Seed. Matthew 13:31-32.

- A. Verse 31. The second likeness of the kingdom of the heavens. Are those honest who interpret this parable by rewriting it? Instead of the kingdom, they make it out to be a likeness of the church or Christendom. Yet the title “the kingdom of the heavens” could never be applied to the frightful mixture we see on every hand that is called Christendom. Sowing a single grain is far more sparing than normal! A man who acts like this must have only one grain, and be sure of its fertility and ability to produce. He also must highly prize it, giving it a full field in which to grow. Most people would not even bother to plant a single grain of mustard seed.

VI. Conclusion: The Parable of the Tares of the Field presents an interesting picture of an enemy sowing tares among the good wheat of a field. The parable of the mustard seed shows God’s dedication to the kingdom of the heavens and how much He values it. We should look forward to God’s great plans for His earthly government someday.