

7. The Parable of the Weeds

Matthew 13:24-30
The Parables of Jesus

²⁴Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. ²⁷“The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ ²⁸“An enemy did this,’ he replied. “The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ ²⁹“No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn’” (Matthew 13:24-30).

In this parable taught by the Lord Jesus, we read of a problem some farmers faced if they were known as unfriendly or unjust in their business dealings. An enemy would sow weeds in their fields, which would take years of work to eliminate, even if they could. The English word *weeds* or *tares* in the KJV is a translation of the Greek phrase *zizanion*. This weed is a plant with the same sort of stalk and green color as wheat while growing, but when full grown and ripe, it has long ears and produces black and poisonous grain.¹ Of course, if the grain were allowed to ripen fully, the seeds would fall into the soil and produce another crop of poison the following year.

With harvest time not far off, the servants working in the fields began to notice that as the crop came to the last stage of its growth, some began to look different as the heads began to form and grow longer than the wheat. They quickly told the owner and master of the field that they must get busy and weed out the *zizanion* before the seeds develop. The problem, though, is that the weeds are rooted into the same ground as the wheat and pulling up the weeds would damage the growth of the wheat. The problem was resolved by the master's decision to wait until the harvest, and then the separation of the wheat and the weeds would come.

The Parable of the Weeds follows right after the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:3-23). That parable was about the work of the evil one seeking to hinder a person from coming to fruitfulness in the kingdom of God. The seed sown represented the Word of God planted in the ground of a person's heart and his response to it. The disciples were puzzled, though, by the parable of the weeds because it sounded similar to the Parable of the Sower. When they got Jesus away from the crowds, they didn't ask Him to explain any other parables, but the parable of the weeds intrigued them. Let's read Jesus' explanation:

³⁶Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.” ³⁷He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, ³⁹and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. ⁴⁰“As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age.

¹ Finis Jennings Dake, *Dakes Annotated Reference Bible*, Dake Bible Sales, Inc. Lawrenceville, Ga 30246. Page 14.

⁴¹The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴²They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear (Matthew 13:36-43).

What did Jesus say the things in this parable represent? How is it different from the parable of the sower in the first part of the same chapter?

In the Parable of the Sower, those sowing the seed of the Word of God are a picture of those who share the Gospel (good news). The ground or soil represented the hearts of those hearing the Word of God and the response. The difference we see in the Parable of the Weeds is that the sower is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 13:37), and the field is the world (v. 38). The good seed represents all who believe and trust Christ, they are seen as wheat, while the weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy that sows them is Satan (v. 39). Harvest time is a picture of the approaching end of the age, with the harvesters being the angels. The parable is about the struggle between two opposing forces: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.

In the early 1900s, the prevailing thought of church leaders in the USA and Europe was that, because the Church had sent missionaries to places all over the earth, the world would be "Christianized" and these evangelistic efforts would eradicate the evil in the world by bringing all to Christ. Although that would be an incredible turn of events, it is not valid. The closer we get to the end of the age, the eviler and more depraved the world has become, and I believe it will get worse as we get closer to the time. The plants of the evil one is becoming more clearly seen in the days in which we live. Jesus said that by their fruits, you would know them (Matthew 7:16).

As we have said, there are only two kingdoms at war on planet earth. There may be many nations and religions, but behind these different philosophies and religions, there is an invisible enemy at work to subvert the work of Christ. Satan is not a little red man with horns and a pitchfork. He is a powerful, invisible, created being that has an army of spiritual beings at his disposal to influence the course of human history:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:12).

From the unseen lower heavenly realms that intersect this planet, the enemy engages in a war of control over the minds of men. A human lifespan of only 70-90 years does not frustrate him, for he is an eternal being and cannot be killed but instead will be cast into the Lake of Fire at the end of the age (Revelation 20:10-15). Satan has been fighting this war of deception and control since the Fall of Man in the Garden of Eden. At that time, God said that a state of hostility would exist between the forces of God and the forces of darkness. Who was the serpent that brought about the Fall of Man? Scripture tells us who he really is: "that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray" (Revelation 12:9). Here are the Lord's words to the enemy:

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between **your offspring** and hers; he [speaking of the Lord Jesus] will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:15).

Through the centuries, Satan has used flesh and blood individuals he has raised up against the kingdom of God. There was the story of Pharaoh killing the Israelite babies upon birth (Exodus 1:22). Then Herod tried to exterminate the children under three years of age in the city of Bethlehem, hoping to kill the baby Jesus (Matthew 2:16). Haman also tried to wipe out the Jewish race in the book of Esther (Esther 3:5-6). We could also talk about those opposed to the ministry of Jesus; they were bound and determined to crucify Him. Christ said to them at one point:

⁴³"Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word.
⁴⁴"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:43-44).

Who Are the Weeds Sown by the Enemy?

Why would an enemy want to ruin a perfect crop of wheat by sowing weeds? What do you think the enemy was trying to accomplish against the field owner?

Why would an enemy want to ruin a perfectly good field by sowing weeds? There is the thought of hatred of the field owner, with the desire to spoil His harvest. Through his poisonous plants, the enemy wants to gain control of the field; in other words, the world.

Just as God has His servants to accomplish His purposes, Satan also seeks to employ individuals for his aims and goals. The most effective way he can destroy the plans and intentions of God is to infiltrate, deceive, and ultimately destroy. Our enemy does his best work when undetected (linked to the symbolism of sleeping at the beginning of verse 25 in our parable). Satan's most effective strategy is to appear as an angel of light where people are deceived into thinking he will do good when he plans to do evil. He presents himself as one that looks like a savior. However, there is one thing he cannot accomplish. He cannot produce good fruit. In the end, his deception will be apparent when the fruit of the weeds is exposed. There is a product or an outcome of his work that will yield a bitter crop.

William Barclay, in his commentary on the book of Matthew, has some interesting observations about the origin of the weeds:

The tares and the wheat are so like each other that the Jews called the tares "*illegitimate child wheat*." The Hebrew word for tares is *zunim*, whence comes the Greek *zizanion*; *zunim* is said to be connected with the phrase *zanah*, which means to commit fornication. The popular story is that the tares [weeds] took their origin in the time of wickedness which preceded the flood, for at that time the whole creation, men, women, animals, and

plants, all went astray and committed fornication and brought forth contrary to nature. In their early stages, the wheat and tares could not be safely separated when both were growing, but in the end, they had to be separated, because the grain of the bearded darnel [zizanian] is slightly poisonous. It causes dizziness and sickness and is narcotic in its effects; even a small amount has a bitter and unpleasant taste.²

This strategy has always been the enemy's plan to permeate, intermingle, infiltrate, and control the world system and man. Here lies the thought of intermingling the root structure of the weeds with the wheat. The weeds will grow together with the wheat undetected until things happen on the world scene. These events, some referred to in the prophetic Scriptures, will make it evident to discerning believers in Christ, those manipulating world events and referred to in Scripture as “weeds.”

Many do not have the time to stop their daily lives enough to think critically about how the world system is set up today. We blindly accept the spoiling of our time, labor, and energy for the big corporations and the money men who steal from the poor to enrich those hidden behind the curtain.

Who would be the people that look like wheat today but could be perceived as “weeds”?

There are evil spiritual entities influencing people through the world system of today—deceiving spirits and using human beings to teach things taught to them by demons:

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons (1 Timothy 4:1).

Over hundreds of years, Satan has planted men bent toward evil in positions of authority worldwide. He now has control of banking systems, politics, movies, entertainment, music, educational systems, health systems, the legal system, the police, food, energy, and even church and denominational structures. We should not be disheartened, though, for, in every structure, God has His people there, too. We often see things in the news and going on around us as people doing foolish things, but do not be deceived; there is an evil plan to put a man into position as overlord of the whole earth, a man called the lawless one (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10), or the Antichrist (1 John 2:18). His agenda is to control the thinking of all people all over the earth. I believe that Satan plans that those who consent and buy into his world system to have an implant into the brain that would give access via a version of Bluetooth into the “cloud” that makes one who goes along with the agenda to be “superhuman.” This is why Hollywood puts out so many movies about superhumans to our young. It’s to put into their minds a desire to be Humanity 2.0, one with the superfast capability to think.

As the poisonous weeds could only be seen close to the harvest, as we approach the end times, people are beginning to see the level of control over a full spectrum of daily life. Satan would prefer to keep humanity in the dark as to his intentions, but the only way to do that is to hinder the message of the Bible being taught. God will call and empower those who stand against

² William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible, The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2*, Published by Saint Andrew Press. Page 73.

tyranny, and demonic spirits will try to motivate his people to impede the advance of the truth. Will that consistently work against the kingdom of light? No, the flood of awareness or awakening from spiritual sleep, I believe, will come, and the enemy's work will be made manifest for all to see. The enemy was busy working while people slept: **"But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away"** (v. 25). We should not be naïve to how the enemy works; Jesus told us to be wise as serpents and harmless as a dove.

How do people in positions of power use their influence for Satan's plan?

There is coming a time when the enemies of the human race will be clearly seen. The Bible points out those who are tools of Satan: **"Your merchants were the world's important people. By your [Satan's] magic spell all the nations were led astray"** (Revelation 18:23).

The Time of Harvest

Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn (Matthew 13:30).

We find it difficult to see the forest when we daily look at the trees. Life may look to us as if things do not change, and we can get discouraged if we are daily getting news from those organizations that have been bought out and controlled by those signed on to the evil plan we see manifesting before our eyes. Behind the scenes, God is at work fulfilling prophecy and bringing His Word to all men in all countries. The harvest time will not come until **"this gospel will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come"** (Matthew 24:14).

We should not make judgment calls against those around us, either in our work or play—those whose roots are interwoven with ours, for God often calls a Saul that looked like a weed to the early church, but God called him out of the world system and used him as the apostle Paul. **"God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his" (2 Timothy 2:19).** I believe there will be many raised up in the days, months, and years ahead that God will use.

There will come a day when the harvesters, the angels, will be sent to separate the wheat from the chaff. This is the same metaphor that John the Baptist used when calling people to repentance before this day of evil draws to a close. John said of the coming of the Messiah, **"His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire"** (Matthew 3:12). We speak of this time as the rapture of God's people, a time of separation of the wheat and the chaff or weeds.

I want to close our study with three main points that William Barclay makes:

1) How hard it is for us to determine who is in the kingdom and who is not - be careful; God will judge. Some of God's greatest servants, I'm convinced, are yet to have their eyes opened and

enter into the war against the weeds.

2) Judgment will come. In this life, evil people may seem as if they are escaping the consequences of their actions, but there is a life to come, and those who have determined to walk with the enemy will be judged in the court of heaven. There is a new world to rectify the balance of the old.

3) In the end, the only one fit to judge is God, and it is a warning that at the end of the age, the judgment of God WILL come.³

We live in a day when we will start to see things come into focus. The darkness is going to get darker. The light will shine brighter. The fruit will be more visible; there will be polarization. All of this will increase until the time of the harvest. Again, I would share the Scripture:

¹"Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

²"For behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; but the LORD will rise upon you, and His glory will appear upon you (Isaiah 60:1-2).

Prayer: Thank you, Father, for Your promise that we, the wheat, shall be gathered into Your barn (Matthew 13:30) at some point in these last days. Thank You, also, that You have not left us alone but are with us, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). Protect us from the evil one and use us to be lights in the world to those still in darkness. Amen!

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³ William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible, The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2*, Published by Saint Andrew Press, Page 74.