

TARES AMONG THE WHEAT

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In one of his parables, our Lord taught, “The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also” (Matt 13:24-26). After Jesus sent the multitude away, he went into the house, and his disciples asked him to declare the meaning of the parable (Matt 13:36). By listening to Christ’s teachings about the tares among the wheat, we can learn some crucial lessons about how to please the Lord and not depart from following him.

Who the tares are

Jesus began his explanation of the parable of the wheat and tares by saying, “He that sows the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but *the tares are the children of the wicked one*” (Matt 13:37-38). Christ is the sower, and his gospel is sown throughout the world (Isa 2:3; Matt 28:19; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; Rom 16:25-26; Col 1:5-6,23; Rev 5:9; 7:9-14; 14:6), the world being the field in this parable. Christians are the “children of the kingdom” because the kingdom of heaven is the church of Christ (Matt 16:18-19). Thus, Christians are the wheat. This also agrees with Acts 2:47, which tells us that the Lord adds the saved to His church. But while the Lord is working to save men, “his enemy” is sowing tares *among* the wheat. “The enemy that sowed them is the devil” (Matt 13:39). This parable teaches us that there are tares among Christians in God’s kingdom. Matthew 13:41 says that the tares are *in the kingdom*. Therefore, the tares are also Christians, but they have obviously become unfaithful and are now “children of the wicked one.” The tares would be represented by the stony and thorny grounds of the parable of the sower. Christians who become unfaithful do so either because of lacking the root they need to sustain them through the fiery trials and persecutions that all Christians will face (the stony ground, Matt 13:20-21), or because they become choked by a love of this world (the thorny ground, Matt 13:22). While this world stands, there will be tares among the wheat in the church. There are lukewarm, materialistic Christians (Rev 3:14-19). There are Christians whose “manner” is to forsake the assemblies (Heb 10:24-25). There are Christians who will not stand with the faithful in trying times (2 Tim 1:15-16; 4:10-11,16). There are Christians who turn to wickedness and immorality (1 Cor 5), and

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(continued)

Christians who become false teachers and many who follow them (2 Pet 2).

The burning of the tares at harvest time

In this parable, Jesus focuses on what will happen at the end. “So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then has it tares? He said unto them, An enemy has done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

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”

(Matt 13:27-30). In his explanation of the parable, Jesus said that “the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. *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; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.* Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their

Father. Who has ears to hear, let him hear” (Matt 13:39-43). There will always be problems in the Lord’s church and certain members who turn to serve the devil instead of the Lord. But these tares will not remain among the wheat in eternity. At the end of the world,

Jesus will return with his angels and separate the wheat from the tares (or the sheep from the goats, Matt 25:31-46). The wheat, *righteous* and *faithful* Christians, will be rewarded with eternal life and shine like the sun in heaven. According to Matthew 13:41, the tares include Christians who “do iniquity” and those who “offend” (a

word that means to trap or ensnare someone else). Thus, Christians who are guilty of committing sin, and those who cause other

Christians to go astray (which includes all false teachers) will be removed from the Lord’s kingdom at the end of the world. They will be cast into hell for eternity. The parable of the tares totally refutes the false doctrine of “once saved always saved,” and encourages us to be righteous, diligent and faithful servants of the Lord all of our

days.