

## **The Wheat and the Tares** (subtitle: The Parable of the Tares)

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 (New American Standard Bible, my emphasis in bold)

<sup>24</sup> Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed **good seed** in his field. <sup>25</sup> But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed **weeds** among the wheat, and left. <sup>26</sup> And when the wheat sprouted and produced grain, then the weeds also became evident. <sup>27</sup> And the slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? **How then does it have weeds?**’ <sup>28</sup> And he said to them, ‘**An enemy has done this!**’ The slaves \*said to him, ‘**Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?**’ <sup>29</sup> But he \*said, ‘**No; while you are gathering up the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them.**’ <sup>30</sup> **Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and at the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the weeds and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.”**”

<sup>36</sup> Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” <sup>37</sup> And He said, “The one who sows the good seed is **the Son of Man,** <sup>38</sup> and **the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the weeds are the sons of the evil one;** <sup>39</sup> and **the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels.** <sup>40</sup> So just as the weeds are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. <sup>41</sup> The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, <sup>42</sup> and they will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup> Then the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. **The one who has ears, let him hear.**

### **Introduction**

Our sermon series on the Kingdom of God continues. As before, in today’s parable, Jesus brings up the consistent theme of God’s Kingdom. First, God’s Kingdom will be fully realized on earth in God’s appointed time, Kairos. Jesus calls it the harvest. Next, every tribe and nation will be gathered before God’s judgment throne, and the children of the kingdom and the children of the evil one, the devil, will be separated. Each group will go into their respective place, either into the presence of God or into the furnace of fire.

Remember? Last time Jesus explained the kingdom mystery with the dragnet illustration because some of the audience were fishermen and their families.

This time He compares the Kingdom of God to the wheat harvest, because some of the audience came from farming community. They well understood the concept of planting, the problem of weeds, waiting for the harvest, sorting out the grain and the weeds, gather the wheat into the barn, and burn the weeds.

Before I go on, let me tell you about ‘the weeds’ (τα ζιζανια---pronounced: tah zi-zah-nih-ah): It appears 8 times in the New Testament, all in today’s parable. In KJV, it is translated as ‘tares.’ In NASB, it is translated as ‘weeds.’

What exactly do ‘the weeds’ refer to here? *“It is darnel, a cheat and troublesome weed in the grainfields, resembling wheat”* (A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition by William F. Arndt & F. Wilber Gingrich, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1979, p. 339).

Here’s more information on ‘darnel.’

*“Darnel comes from the French language, meaning "drunkenness," having earned this name as a result of its intoxicating effect when consumed.*

*When darnel is ground into flour, baked in bread, and consumed while hot, the eater may experience symptoms similar to drunkenness, including trembling, followed by an inability to walk, hindered speech, and vomiting. In addition, darnel is commonly infected by the ergot fungus, which can cause hallucinations when consumed in small doses, but in large doses can do heavy damage to the central nervous system. The Greeks and Romans supposed the darnel and the fungus to cause blindness. The Romans even crafted an insult from darnel, lolio victitare, "to live on darnel," a phrase applied to a dim-sighted or shortsighted person.”*

(<https://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Topical.show/RTD/cgg/1D/5075/Darnel.html>).

## **Content**

In today’s parable, the field is the world. The Son of Man, Jesus Himself, plants the ‘good seeds,’ the children of the Kingdom. The devil also plants ‘the weeds,’ the children of the evil one. So, the world is full of good and bad people, all living together. It has been that way and it will be so. In this world, the Lord Jesus diligently creates His children, but so does the devil. The most puzzling thing to me is that the Lord our God doesn’t remove the evil ones right away against my wish and prayer. Indeed, there’s so much evil going on in the world right now beyond our comprehension. That’s one of God’s mysteries.

This morning, we will think about the problem of evil. Although no one can fully explain the problem of evil to our satisfaction, Jesus gives us a glimpse of God's perspective on evil in today's world.

Three things He points out: 1) The origin of evil. 2) The existence of evil. 3) The end of evil.

1. Verse 27 explains who's responsible for evil. The slaves asked their master saying, 'Sir, *did you not sow good seed in your field? **How then does it have weeds?***' In my opinion, the last sentence 'How then does it (the field) have weeds?' would have been better translated: **From where** do the weeds come? (**ποθεν** ουν εχει τα ζιζανια).

'ποθεν' is a Greek interrogative that is translated best in English: whence, or, from what origin or source. The same interrogative was used in the following: E.g., the Samaritan woman asked Jesus *from* where He would get living water without a bucket to draw water from the well (John 4:11). The disciples also asked Jesus *from where* they would get bread to feed the multitudes in the wilderness (Matthew 15:33, Mark 8:4, John 6:5).

**The enemy did it**, the master replied (**εχθρος ανθρωπος τουτο εποιησεν**). Likewise, when we cry out, 'Where does evil come from?' Jesus points out to the evil one, a.k.a. the devil. Indeed, the enemy is responsible for all the evils in the world. Furthermore, the children of the devil (that is, his followers) also multiply evil in the world. The enemy, the source of evil, wants nothing but to steal, kill, and destroy us (John 10:10).

2. Verses 28-30 explain why evil co-exists with good. Many of us wonder: "Why so much evil in today's world? Why does God still allow evil in the world?" Because it is not time yet to eradicate all evil. God will do it, though, in His perfect time, Kairos.

Look at verse 28. The workers/slaves asked their master saying: 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' In verse 29, <sup>29</sup> But he \*said, '**No**; while you are gathering up the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. One of the Bible commentaries explains well the reason for the master to allow both to grow together: "because wheat and darnel are exact in their appearances during growth. Both plants are lush green and can be distinguished only when they mature and produce fruit: Wheat berries are large and golden, while darnel berries are small and gray. Thus, if the farmer attempted to uproot the tares before maturity, he would wreak havoc on his wheat. Today, modern harvesting equipment easily sifts between the two because of their different sizes" (ibid.).

Be assured that God can and will remove every form of evil from the world, but not right now, because in the process of doing it, some good people may get hurt. Better wait to be safe than sorry.

E.g., from time to time, I try to remove gray hair from my head. Most of the time, I am successful, but occasionally, I end up plucking a perfectly good black hair instead of the gray one. I feel sorry about that. Mistakes are bound to happen. Here's another one. I thought I have plucked the gray one, and lo, and behold, the top of the hair was gray alright, but the bottom part was black! Left alone, it would have turned out perfectly fine black hair!

Likewise, Jesus says, it is unwise to separate good and evil right now. If God gathers up the evil ones before the proper time, there may be some innocent casualties among the good ones. So, He will wait until the harvest time. Until then, both good and bad will co-exist. In verse 30, the master said, ***“Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and at the time of the harvest, I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the weeds and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.””*** Please note here that **the time of the harvest** is Kairos, that means, God decides.

If you have been crying out for God's justice to be served and to end the evil in the world right now, you are not alone. Even God's special people, whom we call martyrs, have been crying for the divine vengeance for centuries. They too hardly understand why the Lord still tarries. Again, it has everything to do with God's timeline. E.g., Revelation 6:9-11 explains well. Apostle John witnessed in Heaven the following: *“<sup>9</sup> When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been killed because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; <sup>10</sup> and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who live on the earth?” <sup>11</sup> And a white robe was given to each of them; and they were told that they were to rest **for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers and sisters who were to be killed even as they had been, was completed also.**”*

3. The Harvest is coming. That will bring to an end to evil and restore justice and peace in the world. The devil and his children will be thrown into the eternal fire and the children of Kingdom will enter eternal life.

## Conclusion

God's Word prophesies this: "*In the last days, difficult times will come*" (2 Timothy 3:1). We witness evil after evil in the world today. Don't be alarmed, though. We are living in the end times. Evil has been around from the beginning of human history. Remember the Great Flood during Noah's days? The wickedness of people was so overwhelming that God had to start all over again with Noah's family. Remember also that the Lord is not incapable of removing evil once and for all. Rather, He is waiting for the right time. Let us, therefore, trust in Him and His judgment, and His timing. Christ will make all things right in His Second Coming. Amen.