

## FIRST THOUGHTS

Nobody who sins thinks he or she will be caught. We think we're pretty smart. Who's to know? Well, God does. Scripture says we all have sinned and fallen short of His standard (Rom. 3:23). It declares the result of sin is death, which includes separation from God now and in eternity. The Bible is clear: Judgment is coming. Accountability is inevitable. The good news is that God's free gift is eternal life through Jesus (Rom. 6:23). As we repent of sin and place our faith in Christ, we receive forgiveness from sin and eternal life with Christ (John 3:16-18; Acts 3:19).

## UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

Everyone loves a good story, but Jesus's parables were more than interesting tales. Fulfilling Psalm 78:2, they challenged His listeners' hearts and minds with truths about God's kingdom. Crowds following Jesus didn't just want to see His miracles. They also wanted to hear Him teach. In this scene, so many came that He had to speak from a boat while the people stood on the shore. When His disciples asked about the parables, Jesus both explained them and shared why He used them. Some in the crowds did not understand because they were not interested in biblical truth. Others comprehended the teaching, but didn't apply it to their lives. Jesus used a parable to illustrate this point.

## WHEAT OR WEEDS (MATTHEW 13:24-30)

As the Master Teacher, Jesus used stories known as parables to connect His listeners with spiritual truth. With an agricultural illustration, He shared **another parable** that His listeners could grasp. "Parable" translates a term that means "laid alongside." These stories set an everyday occurrence (like farming) alongside a spiritual truth to illustrate the point.

In this parable, a farmer **sowed good seed in his field**. "His field" indicates that this man owned the field. Meanwhile, "sowing" emphasizes his labor, and "good seed" points to his quality investment. However, the landowner had an **enemy**. Using the pronoun **his** specifies how the devil is the personal enemy of Christ. Just like Satan, this enemy came when individuals were *sleeping* or had their guard down. He **sowed weeds among the wheat**. The strategy was to mix a counterfeit product among the good seed.

No one noticed what had happened until the **plants sprouted**. As expected, the good seed **produced grain**. But the **weeds also appeared**. Similarly, godly and ungodly people populate the same community. They may look similar on the outside; but, in time, each one manifests its true nature (1 John 3:10).

When the weeds were discovered, the **servants** notified the landowner. Notice they acknowledged the landowner as their Master. The field belonged to him, and he had sown **good seed**. All should have proceeded well. Naturally, they had a question: **Where did the weeds come from?** Since the landowner planted good seed in good soil, the source of weeds was obvious: **an enemy did this**. Like the weeds among the wheat, one of Satan's strategies involves substituting imitations for the real thing. Fake doctrine. Fake pleasures. Fake believers. The landowner wisely knew the dangers of acting

prematurely in pulling up the weeds, so he told them to wait. He didn't want them to **uproot the wheat** accidentally while attempting to **pull up the weeds**.

Our Lord is more patient than we are. The landowner told the servants to wait **until the harvest**. Judgment would come in its time. When the proper season arrived, the ones doing the reaping could **gather the weeds** and **tie them in bundles to burn**. Believers will also be gathered; but unlike the **wheat** collected into a **barn**, they will dwell in the Master's house forever (John 14:2).

### **JESUS OR THE DEVIL (MATTHEW 13:36-39)**

Away from the crowd, Jesus's disciples **approached him**. They took the initiative in learning more. They wanted a better understanding of what the stories meant, so they asked Jesus to **explain the parable of the weeds**. To their credit, they had been listening; and, to their credit, they came to Jesus with their questions.

As noted, parables compare something familiar with a spiritual truth. In this case, **the one who sows the good seed**, the landowner, was the **Son of Man**. Jesus often used this messianic title when referring to Himself. While on the earth, Jesus sowed kingdom seed wherever He went. When He returned to heaven, He appointed His disciples with the task of being His witnesses (Acts 1:8).

The **field** signifies **the world**. "World" can have several meanings. Here, it applies to the world population. The **good seed** represented the **children of the kingdom**. Christ's gospel was never intended for just one people group. His followers should be working throughout the world, encouraging people to respond to His message of salvation.

In contrast, the **weeds** correspond to the children of the evil one. Many mistakenly believe that everyone is a child of God. While we all are God's creation and carry His image (Gen. 1:26-27), only those who are born again through faith in Jesus become God's children.

The **enemy** was **the devil**. Whenever we encounter evil in the world, we need to identify the correct adversary. The enemy (Satan) **sowed** corrupt seed that resulted in weeds (children of the evil one). Each person has to make the choice between trusting Christ as Savior and continuing in sin. Putting off the response to Christ means risking eternity without Jesus, without God, and without hope (Eph. 2:12).

Jesus promised a **harvest** at the **end of the age**. This phrase refers to Christ's return and the final judgment of the world. Looking forward to the end times does not minimize the immediate judgment that occurs at death, but it does remind us that judgment awaits everyone at some point. Jesus identified the **harvesters** as **angels** who participate in the gathering.

### **HEAVEN OR HELL (MATTHEW 13:40-43)**

Jesus concluded with a warning and a promise. **End of the age** refers to the final era before Christ's judgment. It will be delightful for saints but terrifying for non-believers. Jesus compared the destiny of the lost to the **weeds** that were **gathered and burned in the fire**. Many people don't like to think about the graphic images in this analogy, but ignoring the truth can lead to greater harm for unbelievers.

At Christ's command, angels will **gather from his kingdom** all unbelievers. This does not suggest that unbelievers are part of God's kingdom in the same way as believers. Instead, Jesus emphasized His rule over all the world. The Greek wording for "gather" means to pluck, just like the weeds were plucked from among the wheat.

Once the unrighteous are removed, genuine Christ followers ***will shine like the sun***. They won't be righteous because they kept certain rules but because they entered ***their Father's kingdom***. The phrase "their Father" emphasizes the personal relationship they have with God through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Each day of believers' lives can be spent in close fellowship with their heavenly Father. At death, each person who receives Jesus as Savior goes immediately into His presence (John 1:12; 2 Cor. 5:8). Ultimately, they will enjoy the Lord's presence alongside believers who are alive at Christ's return (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

**Next Week – Courage, Matthew 14:22-33**

