

The Wheat and the Tares

by John Edmiston

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Matthew 13:24-30, 36- 43 EMTV *Another parable He set before them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man sowing good seed in his field. (25) But while the men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went away. (26) But when the stalk had sprouted and produced fruit, then the tares also appeared. (27) So the servants of the master of the house approached and said to him, 'Sir, was it not good seed you sowed in your field? From where then does it have tares?' (28) "He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Do you wish then that we should go and gather them up?' (29) "But he said, 'No, lest gathering up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. (30) Leave both to grow together until the harvest; and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares, and bind them into bundles to burn them, but gather together the wheat into my barn." '....*

Then having dismissed the crowds, Jesus went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." (37) He answered and said to them: "He that sows the good seed is the Son of Man. (38) And the field is the world, and the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the evil one. (39) The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. (40) Therefore just as the tares are gathered and burned with fire, thus it will be at the end of this age. (41) The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who work iniquity, (42) and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (43) Then the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Jesus tells us that the field is the world – not the Church! This world contains both the sons of the Kingdom and the sons of the Devil. The Church is meant to only contain the sons of the Kingdom (but some children of the Devil sometimes sneak on in!). At the end of the age there will be a separation, in this world, between God's children and the Devil's children. It will be light and dark!

Notice that the angels take the Devil's children (the tares) first. It is the children of the Kingdom that are left behind! Then they reign and rule on the Earth with Jesus for a thousand years. Let's look at what Paul says about the timing of the resurrection, the man of lawlessness and the rapture of the saints to be with Jesus:

2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 EMTV *(1) Now, brothers, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we beseech you, (2) not to be*

quickly shaken from your mind, nor be disturbed, neither by spirit nor by word nor by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ has come. (3) Let no one deceive you by any means; for that day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is unveiled, the son of perdition, (4) who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or every object of worship, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God....(8) And then the lawless one will be unveiled, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth, and will destroy by the brightness of His coming,

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 EMTV (15) *For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord shall by no means precede those who are dead. (16) Because the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. (17) Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. (18) So then comfort one another with these words.*

- a) The rise of the man of lawlessness and the great apostasy precedes the resurrection of the dead. (2 Thessalonians 2:3 above)
- b) The resurrection of the dead precedes the rapture of those who are alive at the return of Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:15-16)
- c) Paul included himself among 'those who remain alive' as he thought Christ might come in his lifetime. He anticipated being raptured AFTER the resurrection of the dead. (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
- d) Thus Paul did not think he would be raptured before the rise of the man of lawlessness but rather that he would go through this period and still be alive when Christ returned.
- e) The man of lawlessness tries to deceive the elect, but fails and is destroyed by the brightness of the coming of the Lord. (2 Thessalonians 2:7-12)
- f) So Paul anticipated seeing events in this order – the rise of the man of lawlessness, the tribulation, the return of Christ, the slaying of the Anti-Christ, the resurrection of the dead, then he would be raptured among those who were alive and then he would be with Christ.
- g) Paul is very definite that no one who was alive would precede those who were asleep in Christ. "Shall by no means precede" (1 Thessalonians 4:15). So there is definitely no rapture of living saints prior to the resurrection of the dead. And since there is no resurrection of the dead until after the tribulation, then the saints who are alive must pass through the tribulation.
- h) The man of lawlessness is not the Roman general Titus in 70 AD or any historical Roman emperor because he has to fulfill at least three conditions 1) He must be seated in the Jewish temple claiming to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:4) 2) He must perform great miracles signs and wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10) 3) He gets

slain at the glorious return of Christ and does not die an ordinary death like Titus or the Roman emperors. (2 Thessalonians 2:8)

Thus the wheat remain until after the tares have been dealt with. The sons of the Kingdom meet Christ in the air and then come with Him in glory (Jude 1:14) to rule and reign on the earth. The saints take over the field – which is this world, while the tares are removed completely from the field and cast into the fire and consumed.

Thus the lesson of the parable of the wheat and the tares is that the sons of the Kingdom will have to share this world (the field) with the sons of the Devil for a long while. In fact right up to the time of the total maturity and perfection of God's people amid the severe testing of the Tribulation.

God will NOT intervene and remove all evil because he wants His Church to grow to full maturity. God wants people of all tribes, nations and tongues to hear and be saved. If sinners are to be saved, then the sinners must be allowed to exist for a while in the first place! The saints also need to have their love and patience tested and strengthened by the trials and tribulations of this life. So while God is growing and perfecting his Church the tares are allowed to exist.

Some may cry out - "But we are not made for God's wrath!" - and indeed that is so:

1 Thessalonians 5:9 MKJV (9) *For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,*

Indeed the saints do not experience the wrath of God but they do experience the wrath of the Devil!

Revelation 12:12-17 MKJV (12) *Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and those tabernacling in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and in the sea! For the Devil came down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has but a little time. (13) And when the dragon saw that he was cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who bore the man child. (14) And two wings of a great eagle were given to the woman, so that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the serpent's face. (15) And the serpent cast out of his mouth water like a flood after the woman, so that he might cause her to be carried away by the river. (16) And the earth helped the woman. And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth. (17) And the dragon was enraged over the woman, and went to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

The Devil comes down with great wrath and makes war on the saints. The woman is still on the earth when she is persecuted - because the earth helps her! God thus preserves His saints on earth for the first three and a half years of the Tribulation and in the final three and a half years of bitter persecution the saints are slain. Yet

the martyrdom of the saints is not to be viewed as a sign of God's wrath. It is in fact the Lord appointing them to a place of great glory!

Revelation 14:13 MKJV *And I heard a voice from Heaven saying to me, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, they shall rest from their labors, and their works follow them.*

Now the saints are yet kept from God's punitive judgments. The severe bowl judgments of Revelation 16 are only poured out on those with the mark of the Beast. This is similar to the plagues in Egypt that only fell on the Egyptians, but spared God's people. The Anti-Christ will be like Pharaoh and God's people will suffer from his cruel persecution but not from God's wrath.

I am aware that this directly contradicts much popular teaching in churches today. But if there was to be a secret pre-tribulation rapture for the holy saints then surely Paul would have qualified for it! But instead Paul sees saints like himself being around until after the return of the Lord, after resurrection of the dead, and after the slaying of the evil one, therefore after the Tribulation.

God does not promise us total comfort at all times. Much of the Church is being severely persecuted today, and that has been the case throughout Church history. As Tertullian said: 'the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church'. But persecution is not the wrath of God. It is the wrath of the Devil as he loses ground to the Kingdom of God! It is a sign of the destruction of the wicked and of our ultimate victory and triumph (see v. 28 below)!

Philippians 1:27-30 ESV *(27) Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, (28) and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. (29) For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, (30) engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.*

Verse 29 above tells us that it has been granted to us not only to believe – but also to suffer for His sake. Indeed it is the children of God, the children of the Kingdom, who suffer for the sake of the gospel:

Romans 8:16-17 ESV *The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, (17) and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*

So it seems we will have to endure the presence of wickedness until the very end; and then we shall be saved and glorified and become heirs with Christ. We will shine with glory, indeed we will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of the Father!

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