

## THE WHEAT AND THE TARES.

**MAR. 13. – MATT. 13:24-30,36-43.**

**"He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man." – Matt. 13:37.**

COMMENTATORS in general notice that the cluster of our Lord's parables, one of which is dealt with here, all relate to "the Kingdom of Heaven." Yet strangely enough they almost all ignore this Kingdom feature in interpreting these parables. Of this one, for instance, it is customary to say that God began sowing the good seed, the "wheat," in the Garden of Eden; and that there also shortly after Satan sowed the "tares." Their difficulty seems to be a failure to apply rules of order and logic – they fail to rightly divide the Word of truth. Certain false principles of theory and interpretation are at the bottom of their difficulty. It is essential that we empty ourselves of the many false doctrines "received through the traditions of the elders" and from the dark ages, if we would hear (understand) the Word of the Lord – if we would be taught of him.

The gospel of the Kingdom was not preached in Eden. It was implied but not clearly stated in the promise made to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." This Kingdom was hoped for and expected by Israel, because they were the natural seed of Abraham. The Kingdom which began in Israel with the reign of Saul, succeeded by David and Solomon, and reached its climax in the latter and thenceforth deteriorated, never was the Kingdom of God in the full sense of the promise to Abraham. At the very most it was a *typical* Kingdom of God, in the hands of a *typical* people of God – Israel after the flesh. The Israelites themselves recognized this fact and waited for Messiah the great King, to come and establish his Kingdom and to rule the world. Consequently there could be no proper application of these Kingdom of Heaven parables, in any manner or degree, previous to that event.

On the contrary, when our Lord began his ministry, the message sent forth was, "The Kingdom of Heaven is *at hand*" – "is come nigh unto you." The commission to the disciples was to proclaim Jesus the King and to announce that he was ready to establish his Kingdom. Yet his ministry with that nation closed a few days before his crucifixion, when he, weeping, uttered the solemn denouncement, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." (Luke 13:34.) The literal seed of Abraham having thus failed to accept the Kingdom (as God foreknew and foretold through the prophets), the next step was to find another nation more worthy than the Jews.

But no other nation could be found suitable to God's purpose, and hence a new nation was to be formed: and this has been the work of the Gospel age, to call out "*a holy nation*, a peculiar people" from every nation, kindred, people and tongue, to constitute this Kingdom of Heaven. The "Israelites indeed," but a small remnant of the Jewish nation, were attracted by the truth and were the first accepted members of the "holy nation," at Pentecost. They in turn as ambassadors for God, were sent with the King's good tidings of the coming blessed Kingdom to us Gentiles, – to gather from all nations, kindreds, peoples and tongues a sufficient number to complete the "holy nation," "*worthy*" to be the Kingdom of Heaven and as such to bless the world. – Rev. 5:9,10.

It is this "holy nation" in its preparatory and embryotic condition that is referred to in the parables of the Kingdom of Heaven. These parables of the Kingdom, therefore, gave prophetically the Church's experiences from various standpoints, – from the time the work of selecting began, to the time when that work will be completed: when the full number of the elect "little flock" will have been called, found faithful under the tests and disciplines and polishings of the great Master. Then as a whole it shall be glorified, and shine forth a

glorious Kingdom, full of the excellency and power of God and in every way fully qualified to fulfil the original promise to Abraham, by blessing all the families of the earth with the true light, and drawing them all (through a knowledge of the truth) to the great Life-giver, that whosoever will may take of the water of life freely. [R2276 : page 78]

Our Lord tells us why he uttered his teachings in parables; – that it was because the truths he taught were intended only for the Kingdom class, not for the average hearer; and his words are very plain to this effect: "To you [my believing and obedient disciples] it is given [granted] to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God; but to all those who are without [outside – strangers to God and unconsecrated] all these things are spoken in parables: that seeing they might see and not understand, and hearing they might hear and not believe." In this instance our Lord, we are told, first dismissed the general multitude and then expounded the parable to his disciples privately. And this was his general custom – "Without a parable spake he not unto the [general] people." – See verses 10-16.

Our Lord himself "*soweth*" this good seed of the Kingdom, which germinating constitutes his Church, spiritual Israel. This is shown in his exposition (vs. 37), "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man." The good seed itself, we are told, was the message respecting the Kingdom – "the *word* of the Kingdom." (Vs. 19.) This word, or message of the Kingdom was planted by our Lord and his servants the apostles, as it is written, "Which at the first began to be spoken by our Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders." – Heb. 2:3,4.

So long as our Lord lived, the Adversary, Satan, found no opportunity for sowing the seeds of error amongst the seeds of truth: our Lord declares, "While I was with them in the world I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept." (John 17:12.)

And so long as the apostles lived the Church was similarly protected from the errors which the Adversary fain would sow: the apostles for this very purpose, we understand, were specially holden and guided of the Lord, so that whatever they bound on earth might be understood as having the full confirmation in heaven, and whatever things they loosed or abrogated or set aside on earth, might be understood as having the full heavenly sanction. And the Church did recognize this divine supervision and accepted the apostolic rulings as inspired and authoritative. – See Acts 15:24-29,31.

"But while men slept" – after the apostles had fallen asleep in death, Satan, the great enemy, found little difficulty in sowing the seeds of error, – false doctrine. And as the true doctrine produced *true children* of the Kingdom only, so the false doctrines introduced produced *false children* of the Kingdom only. The wheat seed could not produce tares; the tare seed could not produce wheat.

The difference between wheat and tares is very great. Wheat is the standard food of the world and is said to contain the elements of nutrition in the best proportions for man's use: how apt a symbol the Lord chose when he would represent the truth, the whole truth, and the children of the truth – the children of the Kingdom. The tare as a symbol is likewise very appropriate. It resembles the chess or cheat of America and the darnel of Europe. The tare seed is poisonous and acts as an emetic, causing vomiting; and it occasions the husbandman great annoyance, because it must be thoroughly separated from the wheat before the latter can be used. The statement here in the Greek implies that the tares were *over*-sown – intentionally, maliciously sown in the midst of the wheat, for the very purpose of damaging or totally spoiling the entire crop. Such malice would probably be understood very well by our Lord's hearers, even if they did not comprehend the *import* of the parable. Professor Shaff mentions a similar act of malice in Ireland, where an out-going tenant, in spite, on account of his ejection, sowed wild oats in the fields which ripened and seeded before the crops and caused great difficulty to the

farmer. Wheat and tares, while growing, look [R2277 : page 78] exactly alike until they head out: then the difference is very apparent. The wheat heads, full of heavy wheat, bend over with the weight, while the tares are very erect and have the appearance, where they are thick, of being the superiors, the masters of the field. What a beautiful illustration of the modesty and meekness of the true and fruitful Christian, and of the proud boastfulness of those who are Christians in association and outward appearance only.

As in the parable the servants inquired of the Master whether or not the seed sown had been good (pure, free from weed and tare seed), so to-day and all down through the Gospel age, the Lord's people have sometimes wondered how it comes that the Church is, and always has been from the first, infested with a class of people who have a form of godliness, but not its power and spirit. They have wondered whether or not the truths sown by the great Teacher could possibly produce such a varied crop as is seen in the church which nominally is his Church. The Lord answers our question, assuring us that the seed truths which he planted were pure, good, and that the tare seeds were planted by his enemy, Satan. And looking over the field, the world of mankind (the *kosmos*, not the *ge*, the earth, nor the *aion*, the age, tho both of these are often elsewhere improperly translated "world"), we can readily see its wheat-field, – the field wherein the truths and the errors respecting the Lord's coming Kingdom have been planted, – where these plantings have brought forth correspondingly, a true and a false Kingdom class.

The *kosmos*, the world of mankind as a general field, was all more or less adapted to use as a wheat field; but it was not all planted with the good seed: the good seed was planted in Palestine, Asia-Minor and Europe, and from thence has spread to America and to some slight extent elsewhere. But, strictly speaking, Europe and North America are the wheatfield in which grows side by side, intermingling, and often with their roots tangled, the wheat, the children of the Kingdom, begotten of the truth, and the tares, children

of the evil one, begotten of error; and the name of this wheat field in common parlance is "Christendom," – *i.e.*, Christ's Kingdom; for the "tares" claim to be the true Kingdom class and that the "wheat" are fanatics.

The fact that the wheat-field was not free from tares was not discovered by some of the faithful servants (and indeed was difficult to discern) until the fruit began to appear; – then the question was, How should the matter be dealt with? Any attempt to root out the tares – to separate between the children of God, the children of the truth, and the children of Satan, the children of error – any attempt at positive judgment [R2277 : page 79] along these lines was positively forbidden; the instruction being, "Let both grow together *until the harvest.*" While therefore God's servants were not to attempt the separation, the true from the false, throughout the Gospel age, they nevertheless were to understand that the mixed condition would not be permanent – *that a time of separation would surely come* – in the harvest, in the closing time of the Gospel age.

Apparently the tares have grown more thriftily than the wheat; no doubt indeed the intention of the Adversary was to utterly choke the true wheat, and hence he has sown the tares with extremely liberal hand, so that our Master informs us that out of the entire wheat-field, he looks only for a small harvest of good, fully ripe wheat. – "Fear not, *little* flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give *you* the Kingdom." By reason of the choking influence of the tares, however, there will apparently be much of the true wheat not fully ripe for the harvest – not "overcomers," but merely "babes in Christ."

It would be a great mistake to suppose that the "tares" of Christendom are merely the murderers, thieves, knaves, etc., morally corrupt: on the contrary, the "tares" are not on the low level of the field, but rise *up out of* the field (the world) as does the wheat, proclaiming that they are Christians by associating themselves in religious institutions, and with much profession holding their heads

higher, and making their boasts louder than the true "wheat" class. They are generally moral people: this is implied in their association with the wheat class, they have "a form of godliness." Are we not told by the Lord that such people are "children of the wicked one?" Does not this seem rather harsh, considering that none of them sprang from the good seed of truth, but that they were all *begotten of error* – with which fact they themselves possibly had little to do?

The general view of this matter is, we think, not only unkind, but unjust and unscriptural. To our understanding the whole world of mankind (excepting the true Christians), born in sin and shapen in iniquity, aliens and strangers from God, may be spoken of as "children of the wicked one," because they came into their condition of alienation from God more or less directly through Satan's instrumentality. And considering that merely nominal Christians were brought into Christian profession not by the truth but by falsehood, by Satan's misrepresentations and perversions of the truth, and that deluded by these errors many of them are what they are in all good conscience – we can think of them sympathetically; for they do not appreciate the hopes and aims and sentiments of the true "wheat" class, but think of these as deluded, fanatical, over-enthusiastic, visionary zealots. The "tares" consider themselves to be the real Church, the real crop, sown by the Master, and look with pity often upon the true "wheat" class, considering them abnormal growths of piety and superstition. The "tare" idea of religion is that it is for the restraint of vice, for the promotion of civilization and for the cultivation of social qualities in humanity. This is the Kingdom by which now and for centuries past the "tare" class has sought to rule the world – with sword and gun and prison, in concert with the preaching of good morals, to be preferred when they do not cost too much. The "tares" are far too respectable a class of people to have been planted by the great Enemy, for any other purpose than to act as a powerful antidote or offset to the influence of the truth and the true children of the Kingdom. Had he been *able* to keep the world in the darkness of heathen superstition, he never would have planted so

respectable and orderly and moral a class as the "tares" – imitations of the "wheat:" but seeing the influence of the truth in the world, Satan sought heroically to counteract it along advanced lines. In this he is true to his Scriptural character – ready to wear garments of light, as represented in the sciences, etc., and to put upon his faithful the same.

With this view of the "tares" we may look upon them with respect and realize that altho they can never hope to enter the Kingdom, and altho they must be *destroyed as "tares"* in the fiery times of the day of vengeance just at hand, yet this need not suggest their utter destruction in the second death as human beings, nor that they will have no hope of any blessing under the Kingdom, when it shall be established in power and great glory. On the contrary, the "fire" of this day of wrath (into which we are already entered) is as symbolic as the "tares" it will burn. It will destroy the "tares" as *"tares"* – as pretended children of the Kingdom, of which really they never were a part, but intruders, deceived. It will still leave them as members of Adam's race, bought with the precious blood, amenable to the conditions of the New Covenant, and to all the blessings of the Kingdom, as they shall flow to all the families of the earth, after the *true* "wheat" class have been separated and caused to "shine forth as the sun [with their Lord Jesus] in the Kingdom of their Father."

To our understanding of the Scriptures,\* we are already in the "harvest" time of this age. The great Chief-Reaper, the Lord Jesus, is now, through his messengers or servants, gathering the harvest of the Kingdom truths which he sowed 1800 years ago; and very soon the last of the ripe wheat will be gathered into the "garner" (the glorified state – the heavenly condition – "changed") and then, very quickly, the sons of God will be manifested and their great work of blessing the world will begin. (See Rom. 8:21,22.) This Sun of Righteousness, composed of Christ our Lord and all the faithful overcomers of this Gospel age glorified, shall "shine forth" as the prophet has declared,



with healing in its beams – provisions of mercy and restitution for all mankind.

\*MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOLS. II. and III.

The furnace of fire in which the tares will be destroyed (*as "tares,"* and fully and freely confess that they and their institutions are not the Kingdom of God, that they have neither part nor lot in that matter, but were mistaken) is the great time of trouble, the day of vengeance; the day of the overthrow of Satan and his representatives; the day of Satan's binding that he shall deceive the nations no more; the day when the rod of divine vengeance shall smite and break the systems of earth as potter's vessels, preparing the world of mankind thereby, for the blessings and favors which divine grace has provided in Christ Jesus our Lord, who gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in *due time*.

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