

“WE The Kingdom Of God”

Parables of the Weeds & the Drag-Net

Matthew 13: 24-30; 36-43; 47-50

December 11, 2022

VIDEO: “Where Are The Christians?”

INTRO: *How would you answer: Who are you? Who are we?*
Matthew 13 & Acts 19 reveal how important this question is!

PREVIEW: ...this is a change of order but it’s helpful...

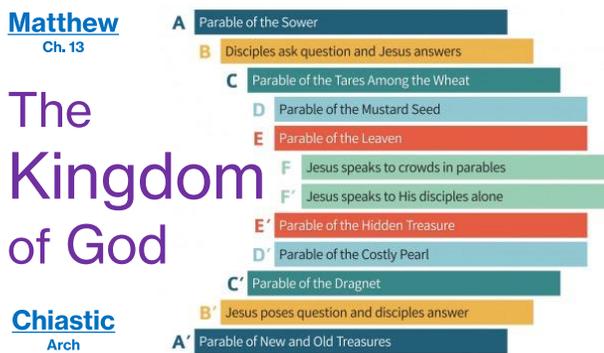
- A. FOR What?
- B. SO What?
- C. NOW What?

I. FOR What?

A. Context

~ Series: SEE The Kingdom Of God

~ Scripture: Matthew 13



~ Specifically: “the kingdom of God/heaven” (161X)

~ So-far: SEE, BE, QUERY... the kingdom of God
~ So what? Today... WE the kingdom of God!

“From the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus preached about this kingdom (**4:17**), and it was an important topic in His Sermon on the Mount (**5:3, 10, 19, 20; 7:21**). With this parable, however, the kingdom becomes the major focus in His parables.” - **Sproul**

Matthew 4:17 = start of Jesus’ public preaching
Matthew 13:1 = start of Jesus’ *parable preaching*

B. Confusion / Conundrum for the corrupt...
Remember Matthew 12... they basically called Jesus Satan!
The “*mysteries*” of 13:11 are bound up...

C. Confidence / Curriculum for kingdom kids...

II. SO What?

BIG IDEA: The kingdom of God is REAL... and really under attack... BUT...the eternal END to these battles is drawing NEAR... & WE WIN because our King has already WON the **WAR!**

A. Parable of the Weeds

24He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, **25**but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds (almost certainly bearded darnel) among the wheat and went away. **26**So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. **27**And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’ **28**He said to them, **‘An enemy has done this.’** So the servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ **29**But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. **30**Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, “Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.””

B. Explanation of the Parable of the Weeds

36Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” **37**He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. **38**The field is the world, (see the [Great Commission here](#)) and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom (see the [Acts 1:8 family of God here](#)). The weeds are the sons of the evil one ([cf. John 8:44; & 1 John 5:19](#)), **39**and the enemy who sowed them is the devil (cf. [1 Pt. 5:8; 2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Cor. 2:14](#)). The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels.

(The identification of the actors is over, and the description of the action begins.)

40 Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, 42 and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

VIDEO: *"My Uncomfortable Question"*

C. Parable of the Drag-Net

47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. 48 When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. 49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous 50 and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

It's almost as if Jesus were saying in this parable, "**Just wait.**" - Platt

III. NOW What?

What is Jesus teaching us? What does He want us to learn?

1. Who is who?
2. War is war...
3. We will win!

A. We need to know WHO is WHO?

If you don't know who **you** are... you can't know who **we** are

If you don't know who we are...

you can't know who "they" (the enemy) are...

If you don't know who you, we, & the enemy are...

What are you really doing... & how do you know?

*While inspecting spiritual soil is dirty work...
Differentiating the difference between wheat & weeds
is downright dangerous! - JDP
(It can be like mushrooming, the tiniest mistake can kill you!)*

T/S: Who is who and war is war are very similar...

TARES Look **IDENTICAL** To **WHEAT**



WHEAT: before it is fully ripe.

TARES: Lolium Temulentum

In the beginning, all of the sprouting plants looked the same, so the naked eye could not discern the presence of the tares among the wheat. But as the plants matured, the weeds became readily apparent.

We saw Jesus' dreadful warning in the Sermon on the Mount: *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven"* (7:21a).

- a. The Land-Owner
- b. His enemy(s)

Satan cannot uproot the plants (true Christians), so he plants counterfeit Christians in their midst.

Wherever Christ sows a true Christian, Satan comes and sows a counterfeit. - Weirsbe

Satan has counterfeit Christians (2 Cor. 11:26) who believe a counterfeit gospel (Gal. 1:6–9). He encourages a counterfeit righteousness (Rom. 10:1–3), and even has a counterfeit church (Rev. 2:9). At the end of the age, he will produce a counterfeit Christ (2 Thes. 2:1–12).

We must also stay awake to make sure that Satan's ministers do not get into the true fellowship and do damage (2 Peter 2; 1 John 4:1–6).

It is when God's people go to sleep that Satan works.

c. The wheat (2 Corinthians 13:5)

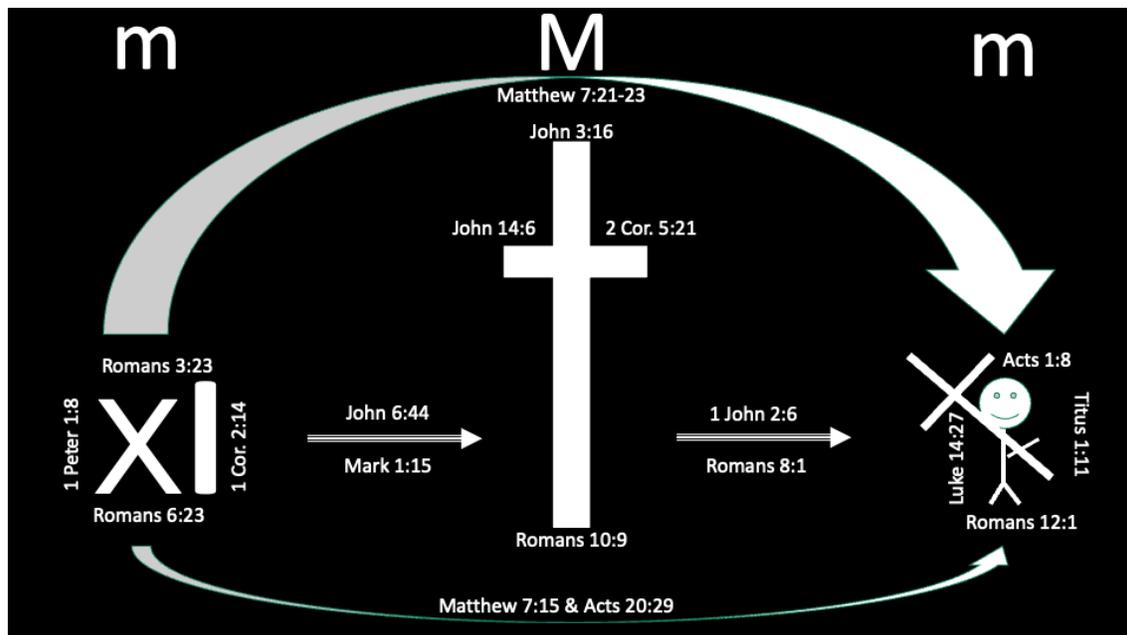
- i. Jesus is the standard...
- ii. Apostle Paul...
- iii. Brother Sunil...

d. The weeds

- i. Judas & Demas type people
- ii. Deceiving Dividers & Destroyers
- iii. 1st John's "children of the devil"

It is important to note that the devil does not have to plant fresh seed to thwart and obscure the presence of the kingdom of God in the world. The tares are already covering the world.

Jesus was saying that Satan strives to undermine the kingdom by planting tares **in** the church!



Augustine introduced the very important distinction between the visible church and the invisible church.

We look on the outward appearances, but God looks on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). He knows those who are His.

If we are in the invisible church, God charges us to make our membership visible.

“By their fruits you will know them” (Matt. 7:20).

B. We need to know **WAR IS WAR...**

VIDEO: *“It’s Not Safe”*

a. SEE the war!

i. Integrity vs. Impurity

ii. Identity vs. Inauthenticity

iii. Intensity vs. Insanity

i. Changing definitions

ii. Changing descriptions

iii. Changing history

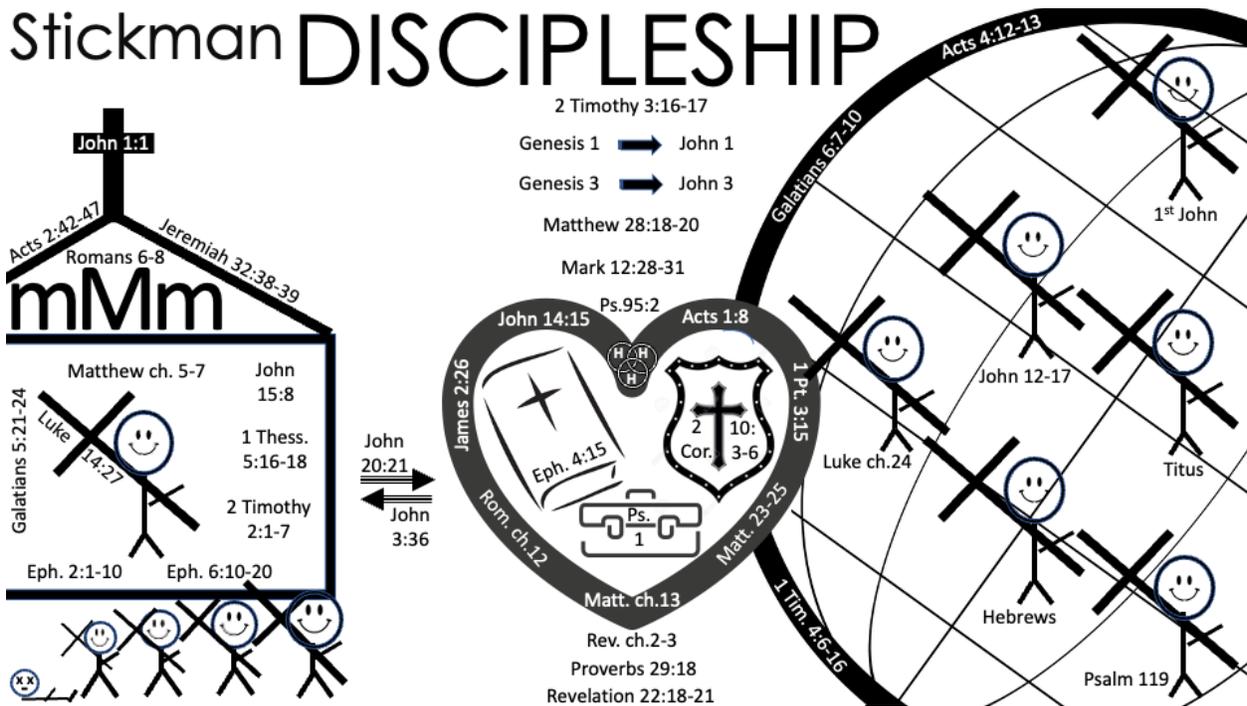
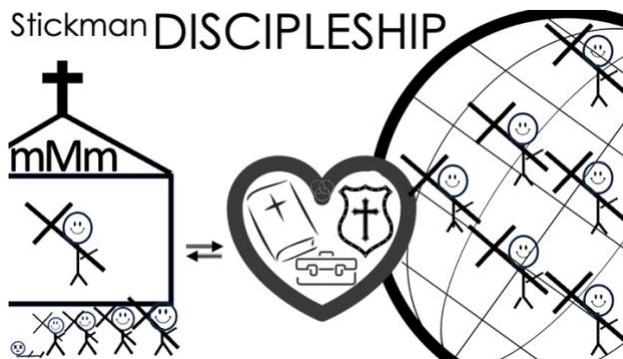
iv. Changing acceptability

v. Changing authority

C. We need to know **WE WILL WIN!**

The parable of the drag-net is an exhortation to BE biblically ready for Christ's (and His kingdom's) SUDDEN, all-inclusive, FINALITY! - JDP

- BE ready!
- Imagine a fish swimming prior to the net...



- c. We want to sprint THRU the finish line...
- d. What if you were to meet Jesus in one week?
- e. ALWAYS BE on MISSION!
- f. Kingdom culture calls, commands, and commissions us to BE the essence & aroma of Christ's truth in love, locally, regionally, & globally – no matter what!

CLOSE:

[Philippians 3:12-21](#)

Straining Toward the Goal

12Not that I... am already perfect, but I press on... because Christ Jesus has made me his own. **13**Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, **14**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. **15**Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. **16**Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

17Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. **18**For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. **19**Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly

things. [20](#)But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, [21](#)who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

For the faithfully fruitful, biblical citizens of THE kingdom of GOD, the promises and provisions of eternal life with Christ in heaven are beyond our wildest imaginations – Amen. And, at the same time, as John MacArthur puts it:

“The dragnet of God’s judgment moves silently through the sea of mankind and draws all men to the shores of eternity for final separation to their ultimate destiny ... believers to eternal life and unbelievers to eternal damnation”

For the hard, superficial, and divided hearts who did not embrace Christ as King, His coming wrath is unimaginable.

Let’s PRAY

WORSHIP: *“God Is On The Throne”*

RESEARCH NOTES:

SEE The Kingdom Of God 4

WE The Kingdom Of God

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43, & 47-50

The parable of the weeds (13:24–30)

This parable occurs only in Matthew.

For the reasons why its interpretation (vv. 36–43) is separated from it, see above on 13:3a regarding the structure of the chapter. A few (e.g., Manson, *Sayings*, p. 143) have argued that this parable is not authentic but a creation of Matthew, constructed out of the parable of the seed growing quietly (Mark 4:26–29). But the similar language on which this theory is based owes more to the common agricultural setting than to borrowing. Though many affirm the authenticity of the parable but deny the authenticity of the interpretation (Dodd, *Parables*, pp. 183–84; Jeremias, *Parables*, pp. 81ff.; Kingsbury, *Parables*, pp. 65–66), the criteria for such distinctions are faulty (see on 13:3a); and specific arguments can be advanced to defend their joint integrity in this case (see on vv. 36–43). David R. Catchpole (“John the Baptist, Jesus and the Parable of the Tares,” *SJT* 31 [1978]: 557–70) unwittingly supports the view that the parable and its interpretation stand or fall together when, in the course of defending his reconstruction of a much shorter parable (vv. 24b, 26b, 30b) that Matthew allegedly expanded, he expresses dissatisfaction with this parable because it includes elements that invite the “allegorizing” interpretations of vv. 36–43.

The parable of the sower shows that though the kingdom will now make its way amid hard hearts, competing pressures, and even failure, it will produce an abundant crop. But one might ask whether Messiah’s people should immediately separate the crop from the weeds; and this next parable answers the question negatively: there will be a delay in separation until the harvest.

24 Jesus *parethēken* (“told”) the people another parable (lit., “he set another before them”).

This verb is used in the NT only here and in v. 31 in the sense of teaching though that meaning is attested elsewhere.

“Them” must be the crowd, not the disciples (cf. vv. 34, 36).

The kingdom of heaven is not “like a man” but “like the situation of a man who ...”: the “is like” formula reflects an Aramaic idiom meaning “It is the case with X as with Y” (cf. Jeremiah *Parables*, pp. 100f.; Zerwick, par. 65).

But...

the peculiar tense used here (cf. Notes) also implies that the kingdom has become like the situation of a man who, etc.

The thought is intriguing; for whereas Judaism was accustomed to delays in waiting for the coming of Messiah (cf. R.J. Bauckham, “The Delay of the Parousia,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 31 [1980]: 3–36), what...

Jesus argues is both that the kingdom has come (see 4:17; 12:28) and that the Parousia is still delayed (i.e., the kingdom has become like ... a parable dealing with the *delay* of the kingdom’s arrival).

25–26 *“Sleeping”* (v. 25) does not imply that the servants were neglectful but that the enemy was stealthy and malicious.

What he sowed was *zizania* (“weeds”)—almost certainly

bearded darnel (*lolium temulentum*),

which is botanically close to wheat and difficult to distinguish from it when the plants are young. The roots of the two plants entangle themselves around each other; but when the heads of grain appear on the wheat, there is no doubt which plant is which (v. 26).

This weed the enemy sowed “among the wheat”; the Greek suggests thorough distribution. *The growing plants gradually become identifiable, and the servants tell their master about the weeds.*

27 For *oikodespotēs* (“owner”), see on 10:25; 13:52. The servants are not identified; their function in the parable is to elicit information from the owner. In v. 27 *kyrios* (“sir”) has no special significance; but later Christian readers doubtless saw in it further evidence that the owner is the “Lord” Jesus.

The interrogative pronoun *pothen* (“where”) can refer to a person as well as to a location (cf. use in 13:54, 56; 21:25), as Jesus answer (13:28) presupposes.

28–30 The owner blames (v. 28) an enemy (lit., “a man [who is] an enemy”: the construction occurs again in v. 52). But the owner forbids his servants from attempting to separate weed from wheat till the harvest (v. 29). Then, as the workers reap the field, only the wheat will be gathered; the weeds, apparently so plentiful they must first be gathered up and burned (v. 30—though nothing is made of this point in vv. 40–42), contaminate the wheat no longer.

“Harvest” is a common metaphor for the final judgment (see on 9:37–38). In this light the “good seed” (13:24) cannot be the “word” or “message” of vv. 19–23 but people who must face final judgment.

An astonishing number of scholars treat this parable as if there were behind it a Matthean church riddled with problem people, perhaps even apostates. So Jesus’ answer in Matthew becomes, in effect, advice not to try to have a pure church, because the Lord will make the right distinctions at the end (most recently G. Barth, “Auseinandersetzungen urn die Kirchengzucht im Umkreis des Matthäusevangelium,” ZNW 69 [1978]: 158–77). But this is a major error in category.

Nowhere in Matthew does “kingdom” (or “reign”—see on 3:2) become “church” (see on 16:18; and esp. 13:37–39). The parable does not address the church situation at all but explains how the kingdom can be present in the world while not yet wiping out all opposition. That must await the harvest.

The parable deals with eschatological expectation, not ecclesiological deterioration.

Notes

- 24 The normal way for synoptic parables of the sort “the kingdom is like” to express “is like” consists of ὁμοία ἐστίν (*homoia estin*, “is like”) plus dative. In Matthew, however, this pattern sometimes changes to aorist passive ὁμοιώθη (*homoiōthē*, “has become like,” here and in 18:23; 22:2) or to future passive ὁμοιωθήσεται (*homoiōthēsetai*, “will become like,” 7:24, 26; 25:1). The future passive usages of the verb focus on the kingdom at its consummation and the aorist passive on the kingdom as it has already been inaugurated (cf. Strecker, *Weg*, pp. 214f.; Kingsbury, *Parables*, p. 67; and esp. Carson, “Word-Group”). If so, Pamment’s view (see on 5:3; 11:12), that “kingdom of heaven” is always future, referring to the consummated kingdom, receives a fatal blow.

29 Only here in the NT does the adverb ἅμα (*hama*, “at the same time”; NIV, “when”) function as an improper preposition “with,” “along with” (plus dative, cf. Moule, *Idiom Book*, p. 81; BDF, par. 194 [3]).¹

b. *Interpretation of the parable of the weeds (13:36–43)*

For comments on the authenticity of this interpretation, see on 13:3a, 24. [The reasons for separating the parable from its interpretation relate to Matthew’s plan for this chapter \(see on vv. 3a, 10–17\) and on the need for a setting for this explanation to disciples only \(cf. Bonnard\).](#)

Those who see more of Matthew’s church than of Jesus in the Gospel commonly identify the kingdom in vv. 41, 43 with Matthew’s church. There is, they argue, a double level of meaning. At one level the passage tells the church not to excommunicate its members because there will be a mixture of “wheat” and “weeds” in the church till the end of the age. For Hill (*Matthew*) this leads to an anomaly: 18:8–9, which he applies to church government, suggests excommunication. But **it is doubtful whether Matthew ever confuses kingdom and church: these are two quite distinct categories (see further on 13:37–39).**

Hendriksen recognizes the distinction in principle but then ignores it, arguing (1) if tares are “sown *among* the wheat, not alongside of it or on some other field,” then it is “natural to think of the intermingling of true and false members within the church”; (2) that the parables shed light on “mysteries” (13:11), and there is no “mystery” in both kinds of people living on the same earth, but it is “far more of a mystery ... that *within the church visible* God allows both the true and the merely nominal Christians to dwell side by side”; and (3) that the gathering “out of his kingdom” (v. 41) assumes the weeds were inside, “in this case inside the church visible” (emphasis his).

We make this reply.

¹ D. A. Carson, [“Matthew,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 315–317.

1. Jesus explicitly says the “field is the world” (v. 38), not the church;

so how could there be “some other field”? The intermingling is adequately explained if it takes place on the field of the world. See further on v. 38.

2. The “mysteries” of 13:11 are bound up, not with the intermingling of good and evil per se, in church or world, but in a preliminary or inaugurated form of the kingdom that is not yet the apocalyptic and totally transforming kingdom belonging to the end of the age.

3. The gathering “out of his kingdom” (v. 41) is perfectly clear on a synoptic understanding of “kingdom” (see on 3:2; 5:3; 13:41). But to say that “in this case” the expression refers to the church visible is to assume the very thing that must be proved (see esp. Bonnard).

36 The Greek *apheis tous ochlous* could mean either that Jesus sent the crowds away (KJV) or that he left them (NIV). The house referred to is the one Jesus left in order to preach to the crowds (13:1) and was located, presumably, in Capernaum. **In Matthew’s**

narrative the house provides the setting both for Jesus’ private explanations (vv. 37–43, cf. vv. 10–23) and for the parables aimed at his disciples (vv. 44–52).

Whether ***the verb “explain”*** is *diasaphēson* (used elsewhere in the NT only in 18:31) or *phrason* (used elsewhere in the NT only in 15:15) is uncertain but of little

consequence. More important is the fact that the disciples need explanations (cf. also 15:15–16). They are not distinguished from the crowds by their instant and intuitive understanding but by their persistence in seeking explanations. Jesus’ disciples come to him and ask, and therefore a full explanation is given them (see on 13:10–13).

37–39 On ***“Son of Man,”*** see on 8:20. The title recurs at 13:41: Jesus is the one who both sows the good seed (v. 37) and directs the harvest. One of the most significant details in Jesus’ parables is the way key images that in the OT apply exclusively to God, or occasionally to God’s Messiah, now stand for Jesus himself. These images include sower, director of the harvest, rock, shepherd, bridegroom, father, giver of forgiveness, vineyard owner, lord, and king

(cf. Philip B. Payne, “Jesus’ Implicit Claim to Deity in His Parables,” *Trinity Journal* [1981]: 3–23).

“The field is the world” (v. 38).

This brief statement
presupposes a mission beyond
Israel (cf. 10:16–18; 28:18–20)

and confirms that the narrower command of 10:5–6 is related exclusively to the mission of the Twelve during the period of Jesus’ earthly ministry. Of greater importance in the history of the church has been the view that this actually means that the field is the church. The view was largely assumed by the early church fathers, and the tendency to interpret the parable that way was reinforced by the Constantinian settlement. Augustine made the interpretation official: struggling against the Donatists, who were overzealous in their excommunication practices, he went so far as to say that a mixture of good and evil in the church is a necessary “sign” of the church (cf. esp. his *Breviculus Collationis cum Donatistis* and his *Ad Donatistas post Collationem*). Most Reformers followed the same line: Calvin went so far as to say that the “world” here represents the church by synecdoche.

Ironically some modern redaction criticism has returned to this interpretation because it sees more of Matthew’s church than of Jesus in this Gospel. Nevertheless, this interpretation is without exegetical foundation.

The kingdom is a category flexible enough to be used simultaneously for the saying reign of God (so that “sons of the kingdom” can refer to those who are truly God’s people, v. 38) and for his reign more broadly considered (so that

the kingdom in this sense might well embrace wheat and tares; see on 3:2; 5:3; 28:18); but it is not demonstrable that “church” ever has such semantic flexibility, or that “church” is ever confused with “kingdom”

(cf. Ladd, *NT Theology*, pp. 105ff.; Guthrie, *NT Theology*, pp. 702–6).

In this parable and its interpretation, unlike the parable of the sower, the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom—a healthy reminder that images can symbolize different things in different contexts (see on v. 33).

But “sons of the kingdom” has also changed its meaning from its use in 8:12. There it refers to those who by birth into the Jewish race have a covenant right to look forward to the messianic kingdom but who, by and large, are forfeiting that right. Here it refers to those who truly are the objects of messianic favor and participants in the messianic kingdom.

For their sake the “weeds” are now preserved, and at the “harvest” for their sake the “weeds” will be destroyed.

These weeds are “*the sons of the evil one.*”

(On “*sons of,*” see on 5:9; and with the entire expression compare John 8:44; 1 John 5:19).

The devil himself is the enemy (Mt 13:39); the harvest is the end of the age (see on 9:37; cf. Jer 51:33; Hos 6:11; Joel 3:13; 4Ezra 4:28–29; 2Bar 70:2); and the harvesters are angels (24:30–31; 25:31; cf. 18:10; Luke 15:7; Heb 1:14; 1 Peter 1:12; also cf. 1 Enoch 63:1).

What must also be pointed out is how many features in the parable are not given nonsymbolic equivalents. These include the conversation between the man and his servants, the servants' sleep, and the fact that the wheat was sown before the tares. This selective use of elements in the story is not atypical of parables (see on v. 3a) and the other elements should not be allegorized.

40–42

The identification of the actors is over, and the description of the action begins.

As the weeds are “pulled up” (v. 40; same verb as “collect” in v. 30b) and burned, so it is at the end.

The kingdom we have known as the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God is also seen as the kingdom of the Son of Man, Jesus' kingdom (cf. 20:21; 25:31; cf. Dan 2:35; Rev 11:15).

This (the kingdom) is not the church (contra Bornkamm, *Tradition*, p. 44: see above), for Jesus' reign after the Resurrection extends to the farthest reaches of the universe (Mt 28:18). In that sense "everything that causes sin and all who do evil" may be weeded out of his kingdom (13:41). For the meaning of *panta ta skandala* ("everything that causes sin"), see on 5:29; with "all who do evil" (lit., "those who do lawlessness") compare 7:23.

The entire expression "everything that causes sin and all who do evil" appears to be a periphrastic rendering of the Hebrew of Zeph 1:3; *hammaḵšēlōt 'et-hārōš ā'îm* (lit., "the stumbling blocks with the wicked"), a phrase so difficult in its context that emendations have been suggested and the best MSS of LXX omit it. The first of the two Hebrew words occurs elsewhere only at Isaiah 3:6, where it means "ruins." Hence NIV translates the phrase in Zeph 1:3 as "The wicked will have only heaps of rubble." If this is, correct, Matthew is either not referring to Zeph 1:3 or else is freely adapting it. But the Hebrew word may well mean "stumbling-blocks," "offenses." For what it is worth, etymology supports it; and the Targum understands it that way. Thus in Zeph 1:3 the word may refer to idols, or, better yet, in a figurative manner to people seen as "things that cause offense." If so, Matthew's rendering is appropriate.

The "sons of the evil one" (v. 38) may be metaphorically considered as "everything that causes sin," or, without any metaphor, "all who do evil."

They, like the weeds are thrown into the fiery furnace (v. 42; see on 3:11; 5:22; cf. Jer 29:22; Dan 3:6; Rev 20:15), where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (see on 8:12, cf. 4Ezra 7:36)—viz., eschatological doom.

Nothing is made of the word “first” in Mt 13:30, and here the order is reversed.

What is clear is that Jesus ascribes to himself the role of eschatological Judge that Yahweh assigns himself in the OT, including Zeph 1:3 (cf. France, *Jesus*, pp. 156f.; Payne, “Jesus’ Claim”).

43 In contrast to the evil-doers, *“the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”*

The allusion is to Daniel 12:3 LXX, somewhat shortened by omitting *hoi synientes* (= Heb. *hammaškîlîm* those who are wise” or “those who understand”), further evidence that Matthew has not idealized the disciples as those who have understanding (see on 13:10–13, 19, 23, 36). Hill (*Matthew*) remarks that early in the tradition there may have been a word-play on *maškîlîm* (Aram. *maškîlîn*) (“wise” or “understanding”) in v. 43 and *makšēlot* (Aram. *makšelān*) (“stumbling blocks” or “things that cause offense”) in v. 41. These righteous people (see on 5:20, 45; 9:13; 10:41; 13:17; 25:37, 46), once the light of the world (5:13–16), now radiate perfections and experience bliss in the consummation of their hopes.

The “kingdom of their Father” must not, as is commonly done, be set over against the kingdom of the Son of Man (v. 41) on the supposed ground that the former alone is eternal, or that the Son of Man hands over the elect to him (1 Cor 15:24). The Son’s

post-ascension reign is a mediated reign. **All God's kingly authority is given Jesus (Mt 28:18) and mediated through him; and for all that time the kingdom can be called the kingdom of God or the kingdom of the Son of Man or, more generally, the kingdom of heaven.**

But even when that mediation ceases, halted by the destruction of the last enemy (1 Cor 15:24–26), in Matthew's terminology it is still appropriate to call Jesus Messiah the King (Mt 20:31; 25:34; cf. 26:64), for the kingdom remains no less his.

Notes

39 In the final two identifications of the list in vv. 37–39, the subjective complement precedes the copula verb and becomes anarthrous, in conformity with the rules developed by E.C. Colwell and extended by Lane C. McGaughey (*Toward a Descriptive Analysis of EINAI* [Missoula, Mont. SBL, 1972]). The absence of articles in συντέλεια αἰῶνος (*synteleia aiōnos*, “the end of the age”) is therefore no evidence for a construction built on analogy to the Hebrew construct state (contra Hill), not least because the construction is very common in the NT (706 occurrences) and widely distributed.

c.

The parable of the net (13:47–48)

47–48

This parable, like the last two, is peculiar to Matthew.

In the chiastic structure of the chapter (see on v. 3b), it is parallel to the parable of the weeds and has a somewhat similar meaning.

But whereas the parable of the weeds focuses on the long period of the reign of God during which tares coexist with wheat and the enemy has large powers, the parable of the net simply describes the situation that exists when the Last Judgment takes place:

*the kingdom embraces “good” fish
and “bad” fish, and only the final
sweep of the net sorts them out.*

That is why the introductory formula uses the present tense (cf. further on v. 24; Carson, “Word-Group”).

The chief concern of the parable is neither the consummated kingdom (which in Matthew would call forth a future tense—“the kingdom of heaven will become like”) nor the inaugurated kingdom (“the kingdom of heaven has become like”) but the

situation that exists at the
End.

**And, once again,
kingdom and church must not be equated.**

A *sagēnē* (lit., “drag net,” used only here in the NT)

was drawn along between two boats or tied on
shore at one end and put out by a boat at the other
end, which was then drawn to land by ropes.

“*All kinds of fish*” (v. 47) might hint at the multiracial character of the subjects of the kingdom, but more probably this refers to “good” and “bad” fish (v. 48). In the parable itself, “good” and “bad” fish have no moral overtones but refer simply to fish ceremonially suitable and large enough for eating and those for some reason unacceptable, respectively.

The word *sapron* (“bad”) can mean “decayed,” but here it
simply means “worthless.”

d. *Interlude* (13:49–51)

1) *Interpretation of the parable of the net (13:49–50)*

49–50 Many separate the parable (vv. 47–48), supposedly about the disciples on mission as “fishers of men,” and the interpretation (vv. 49–50), which transforms the parable into a last judgment scene. Hill (*Matthew*) insists that this is “not a suitable ending, for the furnace is hardly the place for bad fish.” But that is to confuse symbol with what is symbolized; the furnace is not for the fish but for the wicked. To be consistent, Hill (and many others; e.g., Jeremias, *Parables*, p. 85; Strecker, *Weg*, pp. 160f.) would also have to object that the tares, when burned (v. 42), do not weep and gnash their teeth (Kingsbury, *Parables*, pp. 165f., n. 143). The parable itself cannot easily be made to refer to the missionary activity of the church; for it describes a separation *when the net is full*, not a continuous separation. Nor may one attach some deep significance to the distinction between catching all the fish (v. 47) and separating them (v. 48)—as if the original parable referred to both the church’s witness in catching men and the final separation (so Kingsbury, *Parables*, p. 120)—any more than it is legitimate in interpreting the tares to divide the harvesting from the final separation of weeds and wheat.

Both the parable
and its interpretation point to the
Last Judgment.

On the angels and the image of the fiery furnace, see vv. 41–42.

*But this does not mean that the parable and its interpretation are about the Last Judgment in the same way 25:1-13 (the ten virgins) and 25:31-46 (the sheep and the goats) are, the **one warning of the need for readiness and the other establishing a basis for judgment.***

The focus here is on the state of the kingdom when the Judgment occurs.

Though it includes both the righteous and the wicked, a thorough sorting out will certainly take place.²

² D. A. Carson, "[Matthew](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelien, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 329-331.

St. Andrews Expository Commentary:

THE PARABLE OF THE TARES

Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43

After the parable of the sower, Jesus told another parable that was built around an agricultural metaphor, but with this parable, the parable of the wheat and the tares, Jesus introduced an element that we will see repeated again and again through the remainder of Matthew's Gospel: He began by saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like ..."

From the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus preached about this kingdom (4:17), and it was an important topic in His Sermon on the Mount (5:3, 10, 19, 20; 7:21). With this parable, however, the kingdom becomes the major focus in His parables.

Given this focus on the kingdom, let me remind you, as we noted earlier, that the terms "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" are synonymous. Matthew, being a Jew, was exceedingly scrupulous about using the name of God, so he chose to refer to the kingdom of heaven. But why this term instead of some other? The kingdom of God is that realm over which God is the sovereign Monarch, but the original locus of that kingdom is heaven. When Jesus came

to this planet, He announced the breakthrough of that heavenly kingdom in this world. It was as if Jesus was invading enemy territory, expanding the borders of heaven. Thus, it was appropriate for Him to speak of the arrival of the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew tells us, **Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way”** (vv. 24–25). The action that Jesus spoke of here—sowing tares, or weeds, in another farmer’s field—was one way in which people in the ancient world sought vengeance against their enemies.

In addition to sowing weeds, they sometimes salted the fields—anything to disrupt the harvest. In fact, this kind of activity was such a problem that the Roman government stipulated punishments for those who were caught in this type of act.

Jesus then said, **“But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared”** (v. 26). Vengeful farmers typically sowed a particular type of weed that had seeds that were almost identical to wheat.

In the beginning, all of the sprouting plants looked the same, so the naked eye could not discern the presence of the tares among the wheat. But as the plants matured, the weeds became readily apparent.

The servants brought the bad news to their master: **“So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this’”** (vv. 27–28a).

The servants could not understand what was happening, but the master knew.

He knew he had sowed good seed, so the weeds could only be the work of an enemy.

Jesus went on to say: “The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both 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 in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn” ’ ” (vv. 28b–30). **The master made no attempt to resolve the problem during the growth of the crop, lest the good plants be damaged.** He resolved to separate the plants at harvest time, storing the wheat away but burning the tares.

The World or the Church?

So, what is the point of this parable? Thankfully, we do not have to guess, for as He did with the parable of the sower, **Jesus provided an explanation for the parable** of the wheat and the tares.

Matthew writes: **Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field”** (v. 36). It seems the disciples were still getting used to interpreting parables, so they asked Him for an explanation.

Matthew tells us: **He answered and said to them: “He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the**

devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (vv. 37–43).

What we have here, then, is a picture of the work of Jesus, "the Son of Man"; some brief insight into His conflict with the devil; and some information about the end of the age.

Even though we have this interpretation, there has been an age-old dispute about what this parable actually means. Does it refer to the world in general or is it speaking specifically of the church? When we look at the terms of the parable, we understand why it is difficult to choose between those options. There is no argument that the sower in the parable is Christ Himself. But then we read that "the field is the world," so some commentators say that Jesus was talking about sowing the seed of the kingdom of God, the seed that brings forth the fruit of salvation, even while the devil is sowing his seed to disturb the kingdom of God and stunt its growth.

This is a possible interpretation, but the rest of the parable is strikingly similar to Jesus' teaching about the problem that will always exist in the church in this age. **We saw Jesus' dreadful warning in the Sermon on the Mount: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven" (7:21a). He will say to many who call Him Lord, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (v. 23).**

This warning was given clearly to those who profess faith and are therefore inside the visible church. But though they are inside the church, they are not really in the kingdom.

The problem seems less significant when we realize that in either case, whether the parable refers to the sowing of the seed of the kingdom in the world or the sowing of the seed in the church, the application is essentially the same. The church is the place where the kingdom of God in the world is made manifest.

When Jesus left this world and ascended into heaven, the last question the disciples asked Him was this:

“Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6b).

Jesus told them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority” (v. 7).

He basically told them that the timing of future events was none of their business. Their primary task as part of the visible church was to bear witness to the presence of the kingdom of God
(v. 8).

It is important to note that the devil does not have to plant fresh seed to thwart and obscure the presence of the kingdom of God in the world. The tares are already covering the world.

It appears, then, that...

Jesus must have been saying that Satan strives to undermine the kingdom by planting tares **in** the church.

In the first year I was a Christian, I learned a rather cynical piece of verse It went something like this:

Wherever God erects a house of prayer,
The devil always builds a chapel there.
And 'twill be found upon examination,
The latter has the largest congregation.

These two factors, then—what the Bible says about people in the church who honor the Lord with their lips while their hearts are far from Him, as well as what the parable says about the activity of the devil—tip the balance for me.

I believe the parable is speaking primarily with regard to the presence of wheat and tares in the visible church.

The Church: A Mixed Body

The great Augustine argued that the church in the world is always a *corpus permixtum*, which simply means ***“mixed body.”***

He was saying that the church is a mixture of those who are true believers and those who have made professions of faith but who are not actually regenerate or numbered among the elect.

Because of this reality, Augustine also introduced the very important distinction between the visible church and the invisible church.

The visible church refers to all of those people whose names appear on the rolls of a given congregation. The invisible church refers to those people who are truly saved.

Many people have the idea that when Augustine put forward the idea of the invisible church, he was speaking of individuals who believe they do not need to be a part of a local church. There are people who maintain that they can worship God on their own. Hence, they are never visible, never seen, inside the walls of a church. It may be possible to be a Christian and have such disdain for the local church, but I am doubtful. All believers are called to be members of congregations, to be involved in the visible body of Christ. Of course, there are extreme examples of people who are part of the invisible church but cannot be in the visible church. An example might be someone who is converted in isolation in a prison camp where no expression of the visible church is permitted. However, **Augustine argued that the invisible church exists substantially and primarily within the visible church.**

The invisible church is called invisible because the real state of any individual's heart, the condition of his or her soul—regenerate or unregenerate—is beyond the scope of anyone's vision, except God's.

We look on the outward appearances, but God looks on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). He knows those who are His.

Thus, **Augustine said that the invisible church is made up of God's elect, whom He has gathered to Himself, the Holy Spirit having regenerated them and begun to bring them into conformity to the Son.**

If we are in the invisible church, God charges us to make our membership visible.

We are told, **“By their fruits you will know them”** (Matt. 7:20). We can produce fruits that may be indicators that we are indeed in the kingdom of God, but

sometimes the fruit that people show is counterfeit.

We all know of people whom we thought were dedicated Christians, but in the end they departed the faith and repudiated everything to do with it. As John tells us, ***“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us”*** (1 John 2:19a).

The possibility of deception is always there because we cannot know what is in the soul of another person.

Uprooting the Tares?

If the church is indeed made up of wheat and tares, we immediately come to the question of church discipline. From time to time at St. Andrew's, the congregation I serve, the bulletin includes a notice that a person has been excommunicated from the membership. You may be scratching your head at this point and

saying, “I thought only the Roman Catholic Church excommunicated people.” Actually, **every church is responsible under God to practice both self-discipline and discipline of one another (see Matthew 18)**. When one-on-one discipline fails, church discipline should be brought to bear, even in Protestant churches and especially in cases involving very public and scandalous sin that is harmful to the sinners, to others, and to the body of Christ.

Of course, church discipline is not to be enacted over every wrongdoing or failure of people in the congregation. The church is made up of sinners, so some sin is to be expected. **Also, we are told in the New Testament that “love will cover a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8)**. We are to practice forbearance and patience with one another, not being contentious and judgmental, trying to bring church discipline to bear at the drop of a hat. We are here to encourage one another, to pray for each other, and to build one another up, not to destroy each other.

The purpose of church discipline is twofold. On the one hand, it is practiced to purify the church from scandal. But even more important, it is undertaken to reclaim brothers and sisters who have fallen into serious sin in a protracted way.

Many different transgressions may trigger church discipline, but in reality there is only one sin for which a person can be excommunicated from the body of Christ—impenitence.

Whenever a person is brought under church discipline, there are stages in the process, and he or she is given opportunities along the way to repent and be restored to good standing in the church. If the person refuses to repent through all the stages of discipline and multiple admonitions, then and only then is he or she excommunicated. **Of course, even excommunication is not final. If the person who has been put out of the body of Christ comes to repentance, he or she can be restored.**

We can trace how this process unfolded in the Corinthian church in New Testament times. A scandalous situation arose in which a man was having sexual relations with his father's wife, but the congregation did nothing (1 Cor. 5:2–3). Apparently, there was no exhortation, no admonition, and no exercise of discipline. When the Apostle Paul heard about this, he wrote to the Corinthians and essentially ordered them to deal with this matter. So, discipline was brought to bear on the incestuous man. He was turned over to Satan; that is, he was put outside of the visible church. In a word, he was excommunicated (vv. 4–5). After that, the man repented. However, the Corinthians refused to let him come back to the church. Paul had to write another letter. He told them: "First you were too lax; now you're too harsh. The purpose of excommunication has been accomplished. The man has repented. Restore him now to your fellowship" (see 2 Cor. 2:5–11).

That is something of a microcosm of the history of the church. At some times, the church becomes lax and lets any behavior go unchallenged. At other times, the church tries to tighten the reins and goes on a witch hunt. That was why, in Jesus' parable, **the owner told the servants not to separate the wheat and tares until harvest time—he did not wish to see the wheat wounded.**

Only in extreme circumstances do we pluck up the tares. We do not actively seek to root them out, even though we know they are there.

The fact that there are both saved and unsaved people sitting in the pews each Sunday morning creates a dilemma for pastors. They wonder how much of their preaching should be evangelism and how much should be nurture. Some churches issue an evangelistic invitation every Sunday morning. However, the purpose of Sunday morning worship is the assembling together of the saints. It is not a time designed for unbelievers. There are other opportunities and programs for evangelism. With that in mind, I emphasize biblical exposition in my preaching, so that the wheat under my care may grow in sanctification and understanding of the things of God.

However, in light of this parable, I recognize that there are tares in my church each Sunday morning, and they need to hear the gospel. For that reason, from time to time, I aim to include elements of evangelism in my preaching.

Lord willing, I hope to both
nurture the wheat and see the tares converted.

St. Andrews Expository Commentary: Parable of the Dragnet

Which Kingdom?

Matthew tells us that Jesus then changed His focus, telling a parable that was **essentially an exhortation and a warning**:

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (vv. 47–50).

Jesus was talking about one of the methods employed by fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. Sometimes they would use the dragnet, which was a vertical net that was pulled behind one boat or stretched between two boats, and it would sweep up large quantities of fish. **There were twenty varieties of fish in the Sea of Galilee.**

Some of the fish were edible and some were not, but the net did not differentiate. It caught everything in its path.

So, after the net had been dragged and filled with fish, it was brought to shore, and the fishermen sorted the fish. Some they could take to market, but others were inedible, so they piled the good fish and bad fish in separate piles.

Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is like that.

In the visible church, which I discussed in chapter 68, there are both believers and unbelievers—wheat and tares, to use the terms of Jesus' parable (Matt. 13:24–30). But...

at the last day, the angels of God will separate the saved from the unsaved, the just from the unjust, those who embrace the kingdom that Jesus proclaimed from those who ignore it or reject it.

Then, the wicked will be punished.

Again, we see Jesus teaching on one of the most neglected of all the subjects He taught about—the last judgment.

He was saying that every human being will be held accountable for his or her actions.

At the end of our days, all of us will stand before God, and there will be an examination. That examination will be all about which kingdom we joined. To find that kingdom is to find the most valuable thing we can find in this world. To overlook it is a tragedy beyond words.

Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary:

The parables of the Weeds and the Net (vv. 24–30, 36–43, 47–50)

Next we turn to the parables of the Weeds and the Net. The parable of the Weeds comes in verses 24–30 and the parable of the Net comes in verses 47–50.

Since the point of these parables is almost identical, we'll consider them together.

In a sense, they both build off of the parable of the Sower.

In **the parable of the Weeds**, fruit-bearing plants are sitting side by side with weeds in a field, which leads workers to ask the question, “So, do you want us to go and gather them up?” (v. 28). In other words, “Do you want us to remove the bad (weeds) from the good (wheat)?” This is an understandable question, particularly when applied to the kingdom of God.

Jesus had come into a setting where most people in Israel saw themselves as part of the kingdom. However, Jesus had made clear that some Jews were part of the kingdom, while others were clearly not. **Many thought that when the Messiah came, He would bring judgment on the wicked and unrighteous, which was in part why John the Baptist had wondered in Matthew 11 if Jesus were, in fact, the Messiah. John probably thought that the process of separating the wicked from the righteous would be well under way by that time;** however, judgment had not yet come, and...

it's almost as if Jesus were saying
in this parable, “**Just wait.**”

Jesus explains the parable of the Weeds in verses 36–43. **The good seed represents believers**, “the sons of the kingdom” (v. 38). These are people who submit to the reign of God in Christ, the fruit-bearing plants from the parable of the Sower. On the other hand, **the weeds represent unbelievers**. There is some debate about whether “weeds” here refers to all unbelievers, or if Jesus was only speaking of people who were not true believers but who would have identified themselves either as a part of the people of Israel or even as a part of the church. ***This reality of false professors can be found throughout Matthew (7:21–23) and the entire New Testament (1 John 2:19). In contemporary terms, we might think of the scores of people today who outwardly identify with Christ or the church but who haven’t been genuinely converted.*** While Jesus may be referring specifically to such false professors here, at the very least He is referring simply to unbelievers who live side by side with other believers in the world but whose hearts are far from Jesus.

At the end of verse 39, Jesus explains that **the harvest represents future judgment**, the time when the weeds will be separated from the wheat. **The picture is grim, for this will be a day of terrifying condemnation for the wicked.** In verse 40 Jesus says that *the weeds are “gathered and burned in the fire,”* and in verses 41–42 His warning is even more sobering:

The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather from His kingdom everything that causes sin and those guilty of lawlessness. They will throw them into the blazing furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This day of judgment that will be so terrifying for the wicked will be **a day of triumphant celebration for the righteous:**

“Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father’s kingdom”
(v. 43).

Those who have believed on Christ as King, Lord, and Savior will radiate His glory forever and ever. Instead of dread, this day evokes great joy for the righteous.

The parable of the Net reiterates...

the same truth as the parable of the Weeds.

Clearly this is a point worth emphasizing.

Jesus is driving home the point that **coming judgment is inevitable.**

MacArthur puts it somberly:

“The dragnet of God’s judgment moves silently through the sea of mankind and draws all men to the shores of eternity for final separation to their ultimate destiny ... believers to eternal life and unbelievers to eternal damnation”

(MacArthur, *Matthew 8–15*, 395).

On the day of God’s final judgment, all mankind will be divided into two categories according to how we respond to Jesus.

For the hard, superficial, and divided hearts
who did not embrace Christ as King,
coming wrath is unimaginable.

God's angels will throw them *into the "blazing furnace"* (v. 42), a metaphor
Jesus uses for hell. Here's how [John Bunyan described](#) that awful place:

[In hell] thou shalt have none but a company of damned souls with an innumerable company of devils to keep company with thee. While thou art in this world, the very thought of the devil's appearing to thee makes thy flesh to tremble and thine hair ready to stand upright on thy head. But oh, what wilt thou do when not only the supposition of the devil's appearing but the real society of all the devils of hell will be with thee—howling, roaring and screeching in such a hideous manner that thou wilt be even at thy wit's end and ready to run stark mad again for anguish and torment. If after ten thousand years, an end should come, there would be comfort. But here is thy misery: here thou must be forever. When thou seest what an innumerable company of howling devils thou art amongst, thou shalt think this again—this is my portion forever. When thou hast been in hell so many thousand years as there are stars in the firmament or drops in the sea or sands on the seashore, yet thou hast to lie there forever. Oh, this one word—ever—how will it torment thy soul. (Bunyan, "Hell," 450)

The parable of the Weeds and the parable of the Net remind us that coming judgment is inevitable. What about you?

Are you among the wheat or the weeds?

Wiersbe's BE Commentary:

Opposition to the Kingdom (Matt. 13:24–43)

Satan opposes the kingdom by trying to snatch the Word from hearts (Matt. 13:4, 19). But when that fails, he has other ways of attacking God's work. These three parables reveal that Satan is primarily an imitator: He plants false Christians, he encourages a false growth, and he introduces false doctrine.

The tares—false Christians (vv. 24–30, 36–43).

Satan cannot uproot the plants (true Christians), so he plants counterfeit Christians in their midst.

In this parable, the good seed is not the Word of God. It represents people converted through trusting the Word. The field is not human hearts; the field is the world.

Christ is sowing true believers in various places that they might bear fruit (John 12:23–26). But, wherever Christ sows a true Christian, Satan comes and sows a counterfeit.

*We must
beware of Satan's counterfeits.*

He has counterfeit
christians (2 Cor. 11:26)
who believe a counterfeit
gospel (Gal. 1:6–9). He
encourages a counterfeit
righteousness (Rom. 10:1–3),
and even has a counterfeit
church (Rev. 2:9). At the
end of the age, he will
produce a counterfeit
Christ (2 Thes. 2:1–12).

We must also stay awake to make sure that Satan's ministers do not get into the true fellowship and do damage (2 Peter 2; 1 John 4:1–6).

*It is when God's people go to sleep
that Satan works.*

Our task is not to pull up the false, but to plant the true. *(This does not refer to discipline within the local church.)*

We are not detectives but evangelists!

**We must oppose Satan and expose his lies.
But we must also sow the Word of God
and bear fruit in the place where
He has planted us.**

What will happen to the tares? God will gather them together and burn them.

It is interesting to see that some of this “bundling” is already going on as various religious groups merge and strive for union.

Spiritual unity among true Christians is one thing, but religious uniformity among mere professing Christians is quite another. It is difficult to tell the false from the true today; but at the end of the age, the angels will separate them.

The net (vv. 47–50):

The preaching of the Gospel in the world does not convert the world. It is like a huge dragnet that gathers all kinds of fish, some good and some bad. The professing church today has in it both true and false believers (the Parable of the Tares) and good and bad. **At the end of the age, God will separate the true believers from the false and the good from the bad.** When Jesus Christ returns to earth, to fight the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19:11ff), He will separate believers and unbelievers *already on the earth*. These are living people who are not a part of the church (which was already in heaven) or Israel. These Gentiles will be dealt with in righteousness: **The saved will enter into the kingdom, but the unsaved will be cast into the furnace of fire.**

The same idea is found in the “sheep and goats” parable (Matt. 25:31ff).

We must be careful not to “read into” these passages in Matthew the truths later given through Paul and the other apostles.

LIFE APPLICATION Study Notes:

13:24ff Jesus gives the meaning of this parable in verses 36–43. All the parables in this chapter teach us about God and his Kingdom. They explain what the Kingdom is really like as opposed to our expectations of it. The Kingdom of Heaven is not a geographic location but a spiritual realm where God rules and where we share in his eternal life. We join that Kingdom when we trust in Christ as Savior.

13:30 The young weeds and the young blades of wheat look the same and can't be distinguished until they are grown and ready for harvest. Weeds (unbelievers) and wheat (believers) must live side by side in this world. God allows unbelievers to remain for a while, just as a farmer allows weeds to remain in his field so the surrounding wheat isn't uprooted with them. At the harvest, however, the weeds will be uprooted and thrown away. God's harvest (judgment) of all people is coming. We are to make ourselves ready by making sure that our faith is sincere.

13:42 Jesus often uses these terms to refer to the coming judgment. The weeping indicates sorrow or remorse, and gnashing of teeth shows extreme anxiety or pain. Those who say they don't care what happens to them after they die don't realize what they are saying. They will be punished for living in selfishness and indifference to God.

13:43 Those who will shine like the sun in God's Kingdom stand in contrast to those who receive his judgment. A similar illustration is used in Daniel 12:3.

13:47–49 The parable of the fishing net has the same meaning as the parable of the wheat and weeds. We are to obey God and tell others about his grace and goodness, but we cannot dictate who is part of the Kingdom of Heaven and who is not. This sorting will be done at the last judgment by those infinitely more qualified than we.²

SPURGEON:

13:47 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a large net thrown into the sea. It collected every kind of fish.” Bad fish and good fish, and creeping things and broken shells, and bits of seaweed, and pieces of old wreck. Did you ever see such an odd assortment as they get on the deck of a fishing vessel when they empty out the contents of a dragnet? Such is the effect of the ministry. It drags together all sorts of people. It is quite as well that we do

not have eyes to see one another's hearts, or else I dare say we would make about as strange a medley as I have already attempted to describe as being in the fisherman's vessel.²

MacArthur Study Bible Notes on "Mysteries"

In the NT, "mysteries" refers to truths not known before but now revealed in Scripture. Key uses of "mystery" in the NT include these:

"the *mysteries* of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 13:11)

"the *mysteries* of the kingdom of God" (Luke 8:10)

"this *mystery* ... that blindness in part has happened to Israel" (Rom. 11:25)

"the *mystery* kept secret since the world began but now made manifest" (Rom. 16:25, 26)

"we speak the wisdom of God in a *mystery*" (1 Cor. 2:7)

"servants of Christ and stewards of the *mysteries* of God" (1 Cor. 4:1)

"I tell you a *mystery* ... we will not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51)

"the *mystery* of His will" (Eph. 1:9)

"the dispensation of the grace of God ... how that by revelation He made known to me the *mystery*" (Eph. 3:2, 3)

"the *mystery* of Christ" (Eph. 3:4)

"the *mystery*, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God" (Eph. 3:9)

"a great *mystery* ... Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:32)

"make known the *mystery* of the gospel" (Eph. 6:19)

“the *mystery* which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed” (Col. 1:26)

“this *mystery* ... which is Christ in you” (Col. 1:27)

“the *mystery* of God, both of the Father and of Christ” (Col. 2:2)

“the *mystery* of Christ” (Col. 4:3)

“the *mystery* of lawlessness is already at work” (2 Thess. 2:7)

“holding the *mystery* of the faith” (1 Tim. 3:9)

“great is the *mystery* of godliness” (1 Tim. 3:16)²

The wheat and tares (13:24–30, 34–43)

13:25 tares. Probably darnel, a type of weed that can hardly be distinguished from wheat until the head matures. In an agricultural setting, sowing darnel in someone else’s wheat field was a way for enemies to destroy someone’s livelihood catastrophically. Here it pictures Satan’s efforts to deceive the church by mingling his children with God’s, in some cases making it impossible for believers to discern the true from the false. Jesus explains the parable in verses 36–43.²

13:43 shine forth as the sun. Cf. Daniel 12:3. Believers already shine because they have the Spirit of Christ and the glorious message of the gospel (5:16; 2 Cor. 4:3–7). They will shine even more in the glory of Christ’s kingdom and eternal heaven (Rom. 8:16–23; Phil. 3:20, 21; Rev. 19:7–9).²

The dragnet (13:47–50)

13:47 *dragnet.* Some people fished by dragging a large weighted net along the bottom of the lake. When pulled in, it contained an assortment of fish that had to be sorted. In a similar way the visible kingdom, the sphere of those who claim to be believers, is full of both good and bad and will be sorted in the judgment.

13:49 *angels.* They serve God in judgment (cf. v. 41; 2 Thess. 1:7–10).²