

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43: The Kingdom Of Heaven

Everyone loves a good story. This can be seen by how popular movies are and how many books are published each year.

Jesus told a great many stories, or parables, throughout His ministry. Some of them were for the crowds which they could understand without explanation and others which they couldn't understand! It was sometimes only to the Disciples to whom he explained the story behind the story.

Why did he do this?

The unbelieving crowds who heard & saw Jesus at work proved themselves deaf to His claims and unresponsive to His demands upon them. They would later clamour for his death.

The Disciples on the other hand had already grasped something of the supernatural character of their Master and His Kingdom He came to usher in. So to them he explained the Parables, as we see in our Gospel reading for to-day. Those who recognised Jesus as the promised Messiah would have ears and eyes open to his truth and be impacted by what he said and did.

Matthew Chapter 13 contains 7 Parables, all about the Kingdom of Heaven which Jesus had inaugurated. Our parable for to-day falls into two sections: the story told to the crowds and the explanation given only to the Disciples:

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1. The Parable Of The Weeds: 13:24-30

Jesus lived in a rural community. There were farmers, shepherds, fruit growers and fishermen. Many of his stories were about sheep, crops, vineyards and fishing.

In this story, the Kingdom of Heaven is likened to life on the farm:

A man sowed good seed in his paddock.

At night, his enemy came and sowed seeds in the same paddock, only these seeds were weeds! Then he went away.

After some time, both the good seeds and the weeds sprouted and formed heads.

The owner's servants came to the farmer with some alarming news: *there are weeds amongst the wheat! Where did they come from?*

The Farmer knew that his enemy had been at work, trying to ruin his crop and send him broke.

The farm workers asked the farmer: *Do you want us to go and pull the weeds up?*

No, said the farmer, *because while you are pulling out the weeds you may pull up the wheat with them.*

Then the farmer told them what they were to do: *let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: first collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.*

The crowd who heard this story would have been scratching their heads wondering what his story had to do with anything. They were deaf to the story behind the story.

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The Disciples however knew that there was more to this story and came privately to Jesus to seek an explanation.

2. The Meaning Of The Parable Of The Weeds: 13:36-43

In answer to their request, the Lord Jesus carefully explains the various parts of the parable:

The sower of the good seeds is Jesus himself, the Son of Man. Matthew usually refers to Jesus in this way as he was writing for Jews and they knew from their Old Testament Scriptures that the Son of Man was to come. Other Gospel writers refer to Jesus as The Son of God, or God the Son.

The field is the world.

The good seeds refer to the Sons of the Kingdom.

The weeds are the sons of the evil one, the devil.

The enemy is the devil.

The harvest is the 'end of the age', or the last judgement.

The harvesters are angels.

The Lord then gives the story behind the story in verses 40 to 43:

When the Lord Jesus returns to wrap things up with the final judgement, there will be two groups of people who will stand before him:

Those who are **the sons of the evil one**, that is, those who refuse to acknowledge Jesus as their Saviour and Lord, will, like the weeds, be *thrown into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*. They will be in hell.

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The other group consists of *the righteous*, **the sons of the Kingdom**. These are they who have repented of their sin and trusted in Jesus as their Saviour. They have accepted the fact that Jesus' death was the punishment for their sin and that now they belong to God's Kingdom, God's family. They will enjoy Eternal Life with Him. They are right, or 'righteous' before God.

Jesus then adds: *he who has ears, let him hear*. In other words, he or she who hears the farming story and other parables which Jesus told, should not only hear the surface story, but understand the hidden meaning, or the story behind the story. They should understand the truth about him and his Kingdom.

CONCLUSION: There are many to-day who have heard stories about Jesus but they refuse to accept the truth about him. They regard Christianity and the Bible as a lot of fairy stories. They may have even read the Bible, been to Sunday School and Church for years but have never grasped the central meaning of the Cross. Some may not want to know and some may be genuinely seeking after God.

God loved us all so much, that He came in the person of Jesus to show us what He is like and to die in our place, taking the punishment that our sins deserve. He longs for all people to turn back to Him and accept Jesus as their saviour and then live their lives under his rule and authority, to live rightly.

He or she who has ears, let them hear!