

7. The Parable of the Weeds

Matthew 13:24-30

The Parables of Jesus

²⁴Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. ²⁷“The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ ²⁸“An enemy did this,’ he replied. “The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ ²⁹“No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰Let 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’” (Matthew 13:24-30).

Here we read of a problem some farmers faced if they were known as unfriendly or unjust in their business dealings. An enemy would sow weeds in their fields, which would take years of work to eliminate, even if they could. The English word *weeds* are a translation of the Greek phrase *zizanion*. This weed is a plant that has the same sort of stalk and the same color of greenness as wheat while it is growing, but when full grown and ripe, it has long ears and produces grain that is black and poisonous.¹ Of course, if the grain were allowed to ripen fully, the seeds would fall into the soil and produce the same problem next year.

When harvest time was not far off, the servants working in the fields began to notice that as the plants were coming to the last stage of their growth, some of them began to look different as the heads began to form and grow longer than the wheat. They were quick to tell the owner and master of the field that they must get busy and weed out the *zizanion* before the seeds develop. The problem, though, is that the weeds are rooted into the same ground as the wheat, and pulling up the weeds would damage the growth of the wheat. The problem was resolved by the master’s decision to wait until the harvest and then would come the separation of the wheat and the weeds.

The Parable of the Weeds follows right after the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:3-23). That parable was about the work of the evil one seeking to hinder a person coming to fruitfulness in the kingdom of God. The seed sown represented the Word of God planted in the ground of a person's heart and his response to it. The disciples were puzzled, though, with the parable of the weeds, because it sounded similar to the parable of the sower. When they got Jesus away from the crowds, they asked Jesus to explain not the parables of the mustard seed and the yeast of verses 31-35 (shared in the same discourse), but something about the parable of the weeds especially intrigued them. Let’s read Jesus’ explanation:

³⁶Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.” ³⁷He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, ³⁹and the enemy who

¹ Finis Jennings Dake, *Dakes Annotated Reference Bible*, Dake Bible Sales, Inc. Lawrenceville, Ga 30246. Page 14.

sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. ⁴⁰“As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴²They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear (Matthew 13:36-43).

What did Jesus say the things in this parable represent? How is it different from the parable of the sower in the first part of the same chapter?

In the parable of the sower, the one that sowed the seed of the Word is a picture of anyone who shares the Gospel (good news) of the finished work of Christ. The ground or soil represented the hearts of those hearing the Word of God, and the seed was the Word of God. The difference we see in the parable of the weeds is that the sower is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 13:37), and the field is the world (v. 38). The good seed represents all those who believe and have trusted Christ, they become wheat while the weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy that sows them is Satan (v. 39). Harvest time is a picture of the approaching end of the age with the harvesters being the angels. The parable is about the struggle between two opposing forces: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.

At the early part of the 1900s, the prevailing thought of church leaders in the USA and Europe was that, because missionaries had been sent to places all over the earth, the Church would “Christianize” the world and eradicate the evil in the world by bringing all to Christ. Although that would be an incredible turn of events, it is not the truth. The closer we get to the end of the age, the more depraved and full of evil the world has become. The plants of the evil one are seen for what they are. By their fruits, you shall know them (Matthew 7:16).

As we have said before, there are only two kingdoms at war on planet earth. There might be many nations and even many religions, but behind these different philosophies and religions, there is an invisible enemy at work to subvert the work of Christ. He is not a little red man with a pitchfork in his hand. He is a powerful, invisible, created being that has an army of spiritual beings at his disposal to influence the course of human history:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:12).

From the unseen lower heavenly realms that intersect this planet, the war of control over the minds of men is waged. A human lifespan does not bind our enemy; he has been waging this war since the Garden of Eden. It was there in the garden that God pronounced judgment against the serpent or Satan: “that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray” (Revelation 12:9). God said to the enemy:

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between **your offspring** and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:15).

Satan has always had his individuals that he will use against the kingdom of God. There was the story of Pharaoh killing the Israelite babies upon birth (Exodus 1:22). Then Herod tried to exterminate the children that were under three years of age in the city of Bethlehem hoping to kill the baby Jesus (Matthew 2:16). Haman also tried to wipe out the Jewish race in the book of Esther (Esther 3:5-6). We could also talk about those who were opposed to the ministry of Jesus; they were bound and determined to crucify Him. Christ said to them at one point:

⁴³"Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word.
⁴⁴"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:43-44).

Who Are the Weeds Sown by the Enemy?

What do you think the enemy in the Parable of the Weeds was trying to accomplish?

Why would an enemy want to ruin a perfectly good field by sowing weeds? There is the thought of hatred of the owner of the field, with the desire to spoil His harvest. The enemy also wants to gain control of the field; in other words, the world.

Just as God has those He uses to accomplish His purposes, Satan, our enemy also seeks to employ individuals for his means and to his end. The most effective way he can destroy the plans and intentions of God is to infiltrate, deceive, and ultimately destroy. Our enemy does his work best when undetected (which is linked to the symbolism of sleeping, at the beginning of verse 25 in our parable). Satan is most effective when he appears as an angel of light. He presents something that looks genuine, but it is not. However, there is one thing he cannot accomplish. He cannot produce good fruit. In the end, his deception will be apparent when the fruit of the weeds is exposed. There is a product or an outcome of his work, and it will yield a bitter crop.

William Barclay, in his commentary on the book of Matthew, has some interesting observations about the origin of the weeds:

The tares and the wheat are so like each other that the Jews called the tares, "*bastard wheat*." The Hebrew word for tares is *zunim*, whence comes the Greek *zizanon*; *zunim* is said to be connected with the *phrase zanah*, which means to commit fornication. The popular story is that the tares [weeds] took their origin in the time of wickedness which preceded the flood, for at that time the whole creation, men, women, animals, and plants, all went astray and committed fornication and brought forth contrary to nature. In their early stages, the wheat and tares could not be safely separated when both were growing, but in the end, they had to be separated, because the grain of the bearded darnel [zizanon] is slightly poisonous. It causes dizziness and sickness and is narcotic in its effects, and even a small amount has a bitter and unpleasant taste.²

² William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible, The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2*, Published by Saint Andrew Press. Page 73.

This strategy has always been the enemy's plan, to permeate, intermingle, infiltrate, and control not only the world system but also to control man. Here lies the thought of the intermingling of the root structure of the weeds with the wheat.

To examine the weeds at work in the world of today, that which is hidden under the surface of things, we have to go back to the Book of Genesis to see how the enemy has corrupted the world in the past,

1When human beings began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, 2**the sons of God** saw that the **daughters of humans** were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. 3Then the LORD said, “My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years.” 4**The Nephilim** were on the earth in those days—**and also afterward**—when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and **had children by them**. They were the heroes of old, men of renown (Genesis 6:1-4).

The Hebrew term translated “sons of God” is *B'nai HaElohim*, a name used in the Old Testament for *angels*. In the Book of Job, for instance, when the angels (New International Version - NIV), or sons of God (King James Version - KJV) present themselves before God with Satan being among them and accusing Job of wrong motives in his righteousness (Job 1:6-10, 2:1). It is worth remembering that Adam, as a created being, was also called a son of God (Luke 3:38), and before he sinned, would have lived as an eternal being. Everything changed during the Fall.

Some Bible colleges teach that the godly line of Seth had sex with ungodly females, the daughters of men. This line of reasoning does not explain why the world became corrupt (Genesis 6:5; 11.), nor does it explain the Nephilim being on the earth in those days (Genesis 6:4). An argument against the sons of God being angels is that it is believed that angels can't procreate. They would say that Jesus taught, “**At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven**” (Matthew 22:30; Luke 20:34-36 is similar). This passage teaches, though, that it will not be necessary in eternity to procreate. We will be like the angels in that we will be eternal beings.

The apocryphal *Book of Enoch* also clearly speaks of beings coming down as angels. This book was not considered as part of the canon of Scripture, but rabbis and early Christian pastors, scholars, and teachers from about 200 B.C. to 200 A.D. venerated it to study the accepted beliefs of the period. Enoch gives a name to the angels that descend onto the earth calling them "Watchers." Here's what Enoch wrote:

“And I Enoch was blessing the Lord of majesty and the King of the ages, and lo! the Watchers called me—Enoch the scribe—and said to me: “Enoch, thou scribe of righteousness, go, declare to the Watchers of the heaven who have left the high heaven, the holy eternal place, and have defiled themselves with women, and done as the children of earth do, and have taken unto themselves wives: Ye have wrought great destruction on the earth: And ye shall have no peace nor forgiveness of sin: and inasmuch as they delight themselves in their children [the Nephilim], the murder of their beloved ones shall

they see, and over the destruction of their children shall they lament, and shall make supplication unto eternity, but mercy and peace shall you not attain” (Enoch 12:3-8).

Enoch mentioned that two hundred of these mighty angels departed "high heaven" and used women to extend into the plane of existence of humanity.

The Interlinear Hebrew Bible (IHN) gives us an interesting translation. Where the King James Bible says, “The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair,” the IHN translation words it in this way, “The [*b’nai ha Elohim*] saw the daughters of Adam, that they were *fit extensions*” (emphasis added). It is possible that Moses, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is explaining that the watching fallen angelic beings saw that they could enter our plane of existence by mixing their genetic material with pure human stock. If they could enter our plane of existence, they would be able to corrupt the human race with hybrid genetic material. After the Fall of Man in the Garden of Eden, the Lord prophesied to Satan in full hearing of Adam and Eve about the final battle culminating in a victory by the Seed of the woman. Here below is the prophetic word:

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between **your offspring and hers**; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Genesis 3:15 New International Version).

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between **thy seed and her seed**; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel (Genesis 3:15 King James Version).

These evil fallen angels, perhaps (if the theory is correct), thought that, if they could corrupt the DNA of *homo sapiens*, then the Messiah, the Seed of the woman, would not be a fit extension into which the Son of God could be born. If He could not be born into the world, then He would be unable to deliver the fallen human race from the dark bondage of the evil angels under Satan.

Why would evil fallen angels want to corrupt the human race?

At this point, there is a question one is forced to ask: why would Satan and a band of angels depart heaven and rebel against God? It is a possibility that they did not like being tasked by God with the job of taking care of God’s crowning creation—Man. Satan seemed acutely aware of the Scripture that he quoted to Christ in the third temptation in the wilderness:

9The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here. 10For it is written: “**He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully**; 11they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone”” (Luke 4:9-11).

Satan quoted to Jesus the promise of angelic help from Psalm 91:11. But was the promise of angelic support for the human race or just for the Messiah? I believe it to be a promise that angels in the unseen realm will watch over the people of God, (i.e., those that have entered into a

covenant with God). The angels were to serve the heirs of salvation, (i.e., those who are in Christ):

Are not **all angels** ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? (Hebrews 1:14 emphasis mine).

The first-century Jewish historian, Josephus Flavius, also represents this view of many angels leaving heaven at the same time, probably at the same time that Satan won mastery over humanity at the Fall when Adam chose to be obedient to Satan. Josephus writes of the fallen angels:

They made God their enemy; for many angels of God accompanied with women, and begat sons that proved unjust, and despisers of all that was good, on account of the confidence they had in their own strength, for the tradition is that these men did what resembled the acts of those whom the Grecians call giants.³

Josephus also mentions the ancient biblical Amorites that lived around Hebron. "In Hebron, there were still then left the race of giants, who had bodies so large, and countenances so entirely different from other men, that they were surprising to the sight and terrible to the hearing. The bones of these men are still shown to this very day" (Josephus, *Antiquities*. 5.2.3).

Back to our passage in Genesis 6. The daughters of men, *Benoth Adam* (v. 2), literally means, "the daughters of Adam." This reference is to female humans as distinct to those just before referenced that were not human.

Verse 4 of Genesis 6 speaks of the Nephilim on the Earth in those days. The King James Version translated Nephilim as *giants*. The word *Nephilim* is from the Hebrew word *nephal*, to fall, so it means, "fallen ones." When the Old Testament was translated into Greek (Septuagint) in the third century before Christ, the Hebrew word *Nephilim* was translated as *Gigantes*, or "earth-born."

Notice what the Bible says about the result of this hybridization of the seed of man, (i.e., this mingling of the seed of the fallen angels with the daughters of homo sapiens).

⁵The LORD saw **how great the wickedness of the human race had become** on the earth, and that **every** inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was **only evil all** the time. ⁶The LORD regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. ⁷So the LORD said, "I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them." ⁸But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. ⁹This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, **blameless** among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God. ¹⁰Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. ¹¹Now the **earth was corrupt** in God's sight and was **full of violence**. ¹²God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for **all the people on earth had corrupted their ways**. ¹³So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all

³ Josephus Flavius, *Antiquities*, I, 3.1

people, for the earth **is filled with violence** because of **them**. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth (Genesis 6:5-13).

Why would God want to wipe out all His creation except for eight individuals and an ark full of animals?

In verse 9, we read that Noah was righteous and *blameless*. The word translated as *blameless* is the Hebrew word *tamiym*. It means, “Without blemish, sound, healthful, without spot, unimpaired.” It is used to describe a lack of any physical blemish. The use of this word is suggesting that Noah did not have the same genetic difference that the majority of the population of the Earth had. Noah had no tarnished genetic changes brought about by the invasion or incursion into the human species by the fallen angels. Other passages in the Scriptures describe this attack by fallen angels on the creation of God:

¹⁹After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits— ²⁰to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water (1 Peter 3:19-20).

⁶And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but **abandoned their proper dwelling**—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. ⁷**In a similar way**, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire (Jude 6-7).

⁴The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—**and also afterward** (Genesis 6:4).

Scripture says that the Nephilim (the earth-born progeny of the angels with human women) lived on the earth in the days of Noah **but also after the flood**.

Why do you think that Moses (the writer of the Book of Genesis) adds the word, “and also afterward?” To what could he be referring?

It is a thought that, perhaps, the Greek mythological gods, such as Titan, Hercules, Poseidon, Hermes, Europa, Zeus, etc. were these Nephilim that Scripture mentions, and grotesque creatures such as the centaur, with the upper body of a man and the lower body of a horse. From just a biblical point of view, we have many records in the Scriptures of men of extraordinary size. For instance, there was the mention of Og, King of Bashan: “**For only Og the king of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Rephaim. Behold, his bed was a bed of iron. Is it not in Rabbah of the Ammonites? Nine cubits was its length, and four cubits its breadth, according to the common cubit.**” (Deuteronomy 3:11). His bed (translated in some texts as “sarcophagus”) was made of iron and estimated to be thirteen feet long and six feet wide, surely suggesting that he was not of average human size. Then there is the mention of the man of Gath who “**was a huge man with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot—twenty-four in all. He also was descended from Rapha**” (2 Samuel 21:20).

Of course, there is also the mention of Goliath, the giant Philistine that David slew with a sling. Scripture mentions that he was also of the city of Gath and that his height was given at six cubits and a span (1 Samuel 17:4). To correctly calculate his size, we must evaluate what a cubit and a span were at the time. In the time of David's son, Solomon, the cubit was 25.2 inches (The cubit was the length of the elbow to the fingertip and then a handbreadth on top of that (Ezekiel 43:13),⁴ which puts Goliath anywhere between 9 feet 9 inches, and 12 feet 9 inches tall. That makes him not human! When the children of Israel came out of Egypt, God led this new nation to the land of Canaan, but when they came to the borders, they sent out spies to look over the land. Ten of the twelve spies came back with a bad report saying,

³¹But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." ³²And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. ³³We saw the **Nephilim** there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them" (Numbers 13:31-33 NIV).

These fallen spiritual beings are still around and influencing people through the world system of today—deceiving spirits and using human beings to teach things taught to them by demons:

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow **deceiving spirits** and **things taught by demons** (1 Timothy 4:1).

"Just as it was in the days of Noah, **so also will it be** in the days of the Son of Man (Luke 17:26).

In the Parable of the Weeds, who are those typified as growing together until the harvest? Who do you think would be those following deceiving spirits in our day?

How would people in positions of power use their influence for Satan's agenda?

God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his" (2 Timothy 2:19).

There is coming a time when the real enemies of the human race will be known. The Bible points out those who are the weeds sown:

Your merchants were the world's important people. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray (Revelation 18:23).

⁝The realm of the dead below is all astir to meet you at your coming; it rouses the spirits of the departed to greet you—all those who were leaders in the world; it makes them rise from their thrones—all those who were kings over the nations. ¹⁰They will all respond, they will say to you, "You also have become weak, as we are; you have become like us"

⁴ http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/48/48-4/JETS_48-4_701-714.pdf

(Isaiah 14:9-10).

Scripture indicates that at the time of the end, it will be demonic spirits that bring all nations to Israel for the final battle:

¹³Then I saw three impure spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴They are demonic spirits that perform signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty (Revelation 16:13-14).

I want to close our study with three main points that William Barclay makes:

- 1) How hard it is for us to determine who is in the kingdom and who is not - be careful, God will judge.
- 2) Judgment will come. In this life, evil people may escape the consequences, but there is a life to come. There is a new world to rectify the balance of the old.
- 3) In the end, the only one fit to judge is God, and it is a warning that in the end, the judgment of God WILL come.⁵

We are living in a day when we will start to see things come into focus. The darkness is going to get darker. The light will shine brighter. The fruit will be more visible; there will be polarization. All of this will increase until the time of the harvest. Again, I would share the Scripture:

¹"Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.
²"For behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; but the LORD will rise upon you, and His glory will appear upon you (Isaiah 60:1-2).

Prayer: Thank you, Father, for Your promise that we, the wheat, shall be gathered into Your barn (Matthew 13:30) at some point in these last days. Thank You, also, that You have not left us alone but are with us, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). Protect us from the evil one, and use us to be lights in the world to those that are still in darkness. Amen!

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⁵ William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible, The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2*, Published by Saint Andrew Press, Page 74.