

# The Harvest



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came and sowed tares among the  
wheat, and went his way.”  
(Matthew 13:25)**

## THE HARVEST

In the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus spoke the following parable:

**“The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:**

**“But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.**

**“But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.**

**“So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?**

**“He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?**

**“But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.**

**“Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.”**  
**(Matt. 13:24-30)**

The Master had just previously given to the multitude the Parable of the Sower about seed being sown in various kinds of ground. Then came this Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. Two other short parables followed, and then came an unusual statement:

**“All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:**

**“That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.**

**“Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.” (Matt. 13:34-36)**

It is interesting that of the multiple parables Jesus uttered on that occasion, the disciples chose to ask for an explanation of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. Jesus' response was fraught with meaning, especially for Christians living today.

**“He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;**

**“The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;**

**“The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world [or more properly interpreted, the end of the *age*]; and the reapers are the angels.**

**“As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world [*age*].**

**“The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;**

**“And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.**

**“Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” (Matt. 13:37-43)**

In explaining the parable, Jesus said that he, as the Son of man, was the sower of the good seed and that the good seed were “the children of the kingdom.” The word “seed” has two thoughts. It can be either (1) the *kernel* of the seed, which is first implanted in the soil or ground, or (2) the *fruitage* that develops when the seed germinates, sprouts, and comes forth as wheat.

Thus when “wheat” is mentioned, we are sometimes not certain whether the reference is to the seed, the grain, or to the fruitage, the stalk that grows above the ground. Actually, both thoughts are proper; the second thought refers to different *stages of development*. Our Lord preached the gospel of the Kingdom during his earthly ministry, and he sowed the good seed, the message of truth.

Jesus said further, “While men slept, his enemy [the devil] came and sowed tares among the wheat.” The expression “while men slept” refers to the apostles. After they fell asleep in death, the Adversary boldly came forth and was more successful in sowing tares among the wheat. While the apostles were yet living, they had the Holy Spirit in such measure that they could discern workers of iniquity and those who were teaching error. Accordingly, they exposed false teachers and showed them in their true light, thus nipping in the bud any fruitage or germination of error. But when the ministry of the apostles ceased with their death, when they were in the grave and no longer available to the early Church, then Satan could more easily sow his seed of error, and that seed began to prosper among the good seed. Thus there were two sowings: the sowing of good seed and

the sowing of bad seed. The good seed eventuated in wheat, and the bad seed became tares.

The original parable continued: "But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also." Down through this Christian or Gospel Age, after the apostles had fallen asleep, various ones in the Christian Church professed Christianity. The true Christian was able to discern that some individuals among the membership of the Church obviously were not Christians and hence were not Spirit-begotten, as was manifested by their conduct and doctrine. And there was concern that in the professed Church of Christ, a mixed condition or multitude existed. Eventually, instead of being a wheat field, as the field could have been had the good seed prospered without the tares, it became a tare field. Stated another way, the tares began to predominate.

Thus the concern was voiced in a question in the parable as to what to do with the tares: "Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?"; that is, "Should we pull out or remove the tares?" The Master replied that both the wheat and the tares were to be left alone and allowed to grow together until the "time of

harvest” at the end of the Gospel Age because any uprooting work in the middle of the Gospel Age, as it were, would have an inimical or damaging effect upon the Church by precipitating certain conditions and experiences that were designed for the *termination* of the Church’s career. Jesus’ reply was, “Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.”

In explaining the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, Jesus said, “The harvest is the end of the world [age, Greek *aion*].” He was saying that as we come down to this end of the Gospel Age, called the “time of harvest,” the message would change. Instead of the wheat and the tares being left alone to grow together, a message would come forth that they are to be separated, one from the other. We believe that on the stream of time, we have reached this Harvest period and that we are now living in the end of the age. In fact, most Christians who are following the light of the Bible to a greater or lesser extent seem to feel these are the last days, and they would not too much oppose the thought that we

are in the Harvest of the age with the termination of the Church's career being nigh at hand.

However, the parable teaches the more important lesson that at the end of the age, a message would go forth to separate true Christians, the wheat class, from the tare class. The wheat class are fruitful Christians, those who are developing fruits of the Holy Spirit based on a knowledge of God's Word, whereas the tare class are *imitation* wheat. Tares look very much like wheat until a close examination reveals the lack of fruitage in their lives. The wheat, in being separated, realize the necessity for the Christian to feed on the Word of God. Because the end of the age, the time in which we are living, is a time of great danger, turmoil, darkness, and confusion and a special time of temptation from the Adversary, it is necessary for God's people to be gathered together to the Lord Jesus. His words about the Harvest period, as recorded in the seventeenth chapter of Luke, are very sobering indeed.

**"I tell you, in that night [that is, the nighttime or conclusion of the Gospel Age] there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.**



**“Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left.**

**“Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.” (Luke 17:34-36)**

In each case in this parable, two professed Christians have a very close relationship, but in the separating work of the Harvest at the end of the age, one individual is taken and the other one is left. The separation takes place *even though the two were bosom companions* either by marriage or through a spiritual relationship and friendship in the gospel message. The parable shows, also, that this selection and this separation will occur in three realms of activity: in “one bed,” in a condition of “grinding together,” and in “the field.” Let us consider the three realms in order.

With two being in “one bed,” the suggestion is that they are in *creedal* beds. They are resting in their beds of faith, but one individual finds that the bed is too short for a proper covering. “For the [creedal] bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it” (Isa. 28:20). As Christians grow and the bed of faith maintains its smallness, the discomfiture makes those who are rightly exercised realize the need to go elsewhere for spiritual

food if they are to develop further. To stay in that bed would be a hindrance, and thus the gospel or Harvest message at the end of the age causes a separation by attracting those among God's professed people who desire to develop in the understanding and the knowledge of truth.

The two women "grinding together" represent Christians who have a capacity to spiritually feed other Christians; that is, they not only are living according to the gospel but also are preparing spiritual food for others. Of those who are engaged in feeding through various arrangements that try to help others to grow, such as Sunday school teaching, one individual will be taken and the other left.

Those who are in the "field" do not have a close tie or relationship with the religious denominations. They may be in the world or outside of the organized church. These two individuals are close companions, but when the message of truth comes, it attracts the one individual and leaves the other.

When Jesus gave this parable, the disciples were a little confused as to where the separated individuals would be taken. Since two were together in a certain condition and one was taken,

they wanted to know if the Christian was taken to heaven or if he was translated or just what did happen to him.

**“And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the *body* is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.” (Luke 17:37)**

Matthew 24:28 speaks of a carcass: “For wheresoever the *carcase* is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” Surely the carcass is not in heaven. No, the analogy is that in nature, the eagle’s sense of hunger and its long-range vision are so keenly developed that the bird is constantly on the alert to look for food. Excellent vision gives the eagle a remarkable ability to see food at a distance, and hence it is attracted to a carcass from a great distance. Accordingly, the parable teaches that those who are “taken” are not physically translated to some location but are attracted to a *message of truth* which has the effect of weaning them from close ties or associations with former acquaintances in order to advance and develop themselves. They find it necessary to go on, for they are attracted by the dead humanity of Christ, which is pictured by the carcass: the freshly slain *Lamb of God*. The Book of Job tells that eaglets suck up the blood at the freshly slain carcass (Job 39:30); that is, the eaglets’ feeding on the natural food

prefigures the true Church's searching for and wanting to feed upon the Lamb of God. Christians are interested in the Ransom doctrine of Christ, the reason why he died on behalf of mankind, giving himself "a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1 Tim. 2:5,6). The vicarious nature of Jesus' sacrifice is a central theme or rallying point at the end of the age, and Christians spiritually gather together around this message or food, following the principle "one shall be taken, and the other left."

The Book of Revelation gives a parallel illustration of the condition that exists in the Harvest period at the end of the age. In vision, the Apostle John saw the conditions of our day and recorded them in symbols as follows: "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle" (Rev. 14:14). Of course Jesus is the one seated on the white cloud, the color "white" signifying a cloud of *favor*. The vision symbolically represents that at the Second Advent, before his manifestation in power and great glory to the world, Jesus would appear to the Christian through the Word of God. His revelation through *time prophecies* occurs *before* the great Time of Trouble predicted in Matthew 24:21, "For then shall be great tribulation,

such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” His figurative appearing is a condition of *favor*—a “white cloud” full of rain, truth, and refreshment.

In the vision, the golden crown on the head of the Son of man indicates that the time setting is the Second Advent. At the end of his First Advent, Jesus went as a nobleman (or King) “into a far country [heaven] to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return” at his Second Advent (Luke 19:12). The returned Lord having a crown on his head shows the Harvest work at this end of the Gospel Age, not the Harvest work at the end of the Jewish Age. In other words, there are two harvests in the Gospel Age: one at the beginning and one at the end. We are referring to the Harvest at the end of the age.

Also in the vision is a *sharp* sickle in Jesus’ hand—the sharp sickle of *truth*. When Jesus thrusts in the sickle, it does a separating work; that is, truth separates us from unfavorable conditions of development and gathers us to the Lord. This kind of truth is a cutting message, not a generalized blessing of the gospel but a particularized message. The message of truth makes us realize that if we are to develop further in the knowledge of

the Lord and in spiritual matters, we have to be gathered closer to others of the Lord's people and to feed upon the pure message of truth. Thus the sickle has the effect of separating Christians from a former condition into a new condition—just as two were originally together in the parable, and only one was taken. This rapture pertains not to going to heaven but to being taken out of one condition into another condition down here on earth. While seated on the white cloud, Jesus uses the sharp sickle of truth to do a gathering work. The Harvest period is a time of testing. "He [Jesus] shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi [true Christians in antitype], and purge them as gold and silver [into two particular groupings], that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness" (Mal. 3:3).

We return now to the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares and quote once more Matthew 13:30, "Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn." The tendency of many is to literalize the Word of God in some places where the thought is figurative or symbolic. Here the burning of the tares does not refer to the physical destruction or harm of

those who are depicted as tares. Rather, the burning signifies the destruction of the tares from the standpoint of what they represent. When those who are merely *nominal* Christians, that is, Christians in name only, are under great duress and trial at the end of this age, the circumstances will disclose to them the falsity of their claim to be Christians—and thus *their profession* to be Christians will cease. When this condition takes place and such individuals no longer espouse or profess the cause of Christianity, then they are portrayed as being burned from their former condition and representation as imitation wheat. However, the eternal future of the tares will not be jeopardized because they never were wheat in the first place—just imitation wheat—and the Lord’s purpose is to separate the tares out from the wheat class.

How are the tares gathered together into “bundles”? In connection with the ecumenical movement that is occurring here at the end of the age, the tendency is for many Christians to coalesce around certain groupings that are not in harmony with the Word of God. They are trying to unify for greater organizational strength, but this fraternizing is *in opposition to the teachings of the Word of God*. Instead of going to the pure Word of

truth, they are organizing on an entirely different basis and are compromising various doctrines of the Bible. Thus the ecumenical spirit, the gathering into bundles, has the tendency of drawing a line of separation or a demarcation for those Christians who do not want to support or become identified with this unscriptural movement in which principles are being sacrificed. However, the Lord's purpose is to gather the wheat class into His "barn" (heaven). The wheat are first gathered together in the present life, as shown in the Luke parable, when one of the two is taken or transferred to another condition down here on earth *preparatory* to being ultimately gathered into the heavenly barn condition.

The separating, therefore, has two effects. (1) Earnest Christians are separated from a former condition where they were not developing properly to another condition of freedom of development and growth so that they can mature into full-grown wheat. (2) The mature, fully ripe wheat are separated or harvested by the Lord Jesus to their heavenly inheritance. The account in Revelation chapter 14 continues:

**"And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come**



**for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.”  
(Rev. 14:15)**

We are now living at the end of the Gospel Age with the Kingdom of God quickly approaching (Matt. 6:10). However, before the Kingdom can be established, a great judgment must take place that, in one respect, will be something like what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah. We are coming to the *end of an age*, not to the destruction of the earth, and God, in His anger, will put a stop to the conditions of evil that are flourishing. The *permission* of evil has had the effect of *testing Christians* as to where they stand with respect to God and His Word. Some go more into the world and are drawn or enticed by their flesh or other desires away from truth and godliness. Others see the enormity of the grossness of iniquity that prevails today, and they are groping for a message of hope, for a message both constructive and inspirational that will tell them what God is doing at this time and how they can serve Him and prosper spiritually when such evil conditions abound. Through the Scriptures, the Heavenly Father tells us that He has a sheltering arrangement, that He is doing a gathering work, and that the evil conditions were actually predicted and thus are signs of the times. The wild “waves roaring,” that is, the masses of humanity

in their discontent, are a sign of the coming time of great and intense trouble that will tear down the governments of earth in preparation for their replacement by Christ's Kingdom of peace and power (Luke 21:25; Dan. 12:1).

The signs of trouble tell us that the end of the age and the establishment of the Kingdom are near. Jesus said that men's hearts would fail them "for fear," as they looked "after those things which are coming on the earth," but he also said, "When [you see] these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption [that is, your deliverance] draweth nigh" (Luke 21:26,28). The Apostle Paul added an admonition that when we see these things begin to happen, we are not to forsake "the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but ... [to exhort] one another: and so much the more, as ... [we] see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:25). In other words, godly Christians who are looking for development and growth have a responsibility to look for and meet with others of like precious faith so that they might be as coals of fire, knit together in Christian love, and so that the body might be compacted together, edifying itself, until it grows to maturity (2 Pet. 1:1; Eph. 4:16). When the true wheat class comes to full

maturity, that is, when God's objective of drawing the Church has been accomplished and the work of Harvest is complete, then the long-prophesied Kingdom of God, with its attendant blessings for the rest of mankind, will be established.

In summation, the Harvest is the end of the age. Not to discern the special times and seasons of the Bible is to remain in constant confusion concerning God's great plan for His human creation. Just as every season of the year yields its distinct fruitage—one season wheat, another season grapes, etc.—so it is with God's plan of the ages. In due season, hidden Bible truths become ripe for understanding and must be harvested by God's servants, the household of faith. The living Word of God continues to be a bountiful storehouse of truth, providing new and edifying insights into the secret things of God concerning His people living at the end of the Gospel Age, as well as a clear understanding of the direction and the final outcome of present world affairs.

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