

Parable of the Weeds (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43)
Jesus' sequence of parables on the Kingdom of God

Parable of the Weeds (Matt 13:24-30, NIV)

24) Jesus told them another parable "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25) But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. 26) When 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. 30) 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.'"

Explanation of the Parable of the Weeds (Matt 13:36-43, NIV)

36) Then 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."

37) He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. 38) The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, 39) and the enemy who 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. 41) The 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. 42) They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43) Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

1. In telling the Parable of the Weeds (Matt 13:24-30), Jesus is making a comparison to the kingdom of heaven to a man sowing seed on his land. Who does Jesus tell the parable to and what does He emphasize? Who does Jesus explain the parable to and what does He emphasize?

2. As Jesus explains the parable (Matt 13:37-39), what does the imagery represent?

3. What happens at the end of the parable (Matt 13:40-43), “at the end of this age?” What is Jesus revealing about the kingdom of God?

4. Sometimes it is worthwhile to evaluate if Jesus is teaching a parable as part of a series of parables on a particular subject. A good example of this is a sequence of parables in Matthew 13 when Jesus teaches about the Kingdom of God with: the Parable of the Sower, Parable of Weeds, Parables of the Mustard Seed and Yeast, Parable of the Hidden Treasure and Costly Pearl, and Parable of the Dragnet. As you study each parable, discover what Jesus is saying and whether there is a significance in the order of His presentation. Fill in the row of the Parable of the Weeds.

Parable	Who hears Jesus' interpretation?	What is being emphasized?
1. Parable of the Sower (Matt 13:1-9; Mark 4:1-9; Luke 8:4-8)	Everyone	In contrast to Jewish expectations, the kingdom of God was not about political power or land. In His Parable of the Sower, Jesus indicates that the good news of the kingdom will be heard by all kinds of people, but only a small number will hear, understand, accept and have an abundant spiritual life from it.
2. Parable of Weeds (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43)		

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Teacher Notes

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Ask the student: who hears the Parable of the Weeds? What do they recognize in the parable?

Jesus tells the Parable of the Weeds to the public, who recognize and identify with the servants who converse with the master. During this time, many are indentured slaves in the community. It is a plausible story of a man sowing good seed, and his enemy comes at night to contaminate his work with bad seed.

Ask the student: does Jesus explain the parable to the public crowd?

Only the disciples hear the interpretation, which places an emphasis on the **beginning** and **end** of the growing season.

2. As Jesus explains the parable (Matt 13:37-39), what does the imagery represent?

Ask the student: what does Jesus' imagery represent?

As the Son of Man, Jesus identifies Himself as the One sowing the good seed and His enemy as Satan.

The field is identified as the world. The good seed is identified as people of the kingdom - Believers. The bad seed is identified as non-Believers. The harvesters / reapers are unfallen angels.

3. What happens at the end of the parable (Matt 13:40-43), “at the end of this age?” What is Jesus revealing about the kingdom of God?

Explain to the student: In the first century, reaping was usually done with a sickle. Harvesters cut the wheat just below the head and leave the remaining wheat stalks and the shorter tares to be cut separately. Gathered and dried, the weeds are used for fuel where wood is scarce. Jesus draws an analogy with the term “harvest.”

In the Old Testament, the term “harvest” is a metaphor for final judgment (Jer 51:33; Hos 6:11; Joel 3:13); it is the harvesting of souls. This imagery is consistent with Jesus’ statement of the harvest occurring at the end of the age.

Ask the student: as Jesus explains the most important part of His analogy, what does the harvest represent?

Jesus’ use of the image of a “fiery furnace” symbolizes divine punishment, which would not be lost to the Jews as the use of a furnace for punishment occurred in the Old Testament (Dan 3:6; 11, 15, 20; Mal 4:1-2).

This association of the furnace with divine punishment is further reinforced as the place of “weeping” and the “gnashing of teeth.” Used in the same context as Matthew 8:12, the “gnashing of teeth” could be an expression of futility by the wicked or a refusal to acknowledge the justness of God’s judgment.

In contrast to a normal harvest where good seed is removed, Jesus’ harvest is culling the bad seed.

The conflict between Jesus and Satan is personal and about satanic opposition to His world. In this present phase of the kingdom of sowing and growth, Believers and non-Believers will coexist; Believers are not responsible of separating the righteous from the wicked. The disciples learn that Jesus ascribes to Himself the role of Judge, and He will direct His angels to remove the wicked leaving behind those who will enter the next phase of the kingdom, the kingdom of the Father.

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2. Parable of Weeds (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43)	Disciples	In contrast to the Parable of the Sower, the Parable of the Weed presents the seed as either Believers or non-Believers. The disciples learn that in a world where both Believers and non-Believers coexist, Jesus will be the Judge who deploys His angels to separate non-Believers from Believers before ushering them into the Kingdom of God.