

Only God knows the tares from the wheat

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WHITE OAK, Texas—In our past a lot of well-known preachers in the Churches of God have misunderstood what the tares of Matthew 13:24-30 are. They have tried to make the tares out as thorny, prickly, ugly weeds that are obviously different from the wheat.

This is false! Jesus had many reasons for telling the parable of the wheat and tares.

Some of His reasons may be:

- Jesus knew there would be unbelievers in the church till the end.
- He knew there would be those in leadership positions who would lead the church into a watered-down religion through swindle and trickery.
- He knew there would be greedy church leaders who would lure the church away to their own benefit rather than inspire them to do what God intended.
- He knew there would be those in the church who would be poison to any they came in contact with.

For wheat's sake

So, when Jesus gave the parable of the tares and the wheat in Matthew 13, He said it was best not to weed the tares from the wheat because doing so would harm the wheat. He said the tares would be dealt with at the end time.

So what are the tares?

Here is a quote from *The Wycliffe Bible Dictionary*:

"The tares (weeds) referred to in our Lord's parable are without a doubt the Bearded Darnel. This destructive weed is almost indistinguishable from Wheat in its early growth. At Harvest time its true nature is disclosed and the farmer separates the Bearded Darnel from the good wheat."

Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary defines "tares" as "a poisonous grass resembling wheat, but with smaller seeds. The tares were usually left in the fields until harvest time, then separated from the wheat during the winnowing. Jesus used tares growing with wheat as a parable to illustrate evil in the world."

Looks like wheat

The tares in the parable are the bearded darnel (genus *Lolium*), which is a species of ryegrass that looks like wheat until the harvest, and then the difference can be discovered.

The seed of the bearded darnel is toxic to man and beast. Some of the symptoms, if ingested, are drowsiness, hypnotic episodes, convulsions, intoxication, drunkenness, trembling, inability to walk, hindered speech, vomiting, dim-sightedness and giddiness.

The farmers, dairyman and cattle feedlots I work with in West Texas, Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico buy wheat hay to feed their livestock.

If the bearded darnel is in the wheat, it is not harmful as grass. It is when the grass goes to grain that fungus develops under the seed skin.

The men I work with have to make sure that when the wheat is harvested no bearded darnel is in the harvest. If it is, they will have sick animals, and some of the animals may even die.

Some may think the bearded darnel is not harmful, because the hay containing bearded darnel is used for livestock feed.

But it is when the fungus develops in the seed head that it can be deadly. Physically, the bearded darnel looks okay, but spiritually it is deadly and will be gathered and burned while the good wheat is harvested and put up into the barn.

Darnel descriptions

Here are some appropriate names or descriptions of the spiritual equivalent of bearded darnel: tare, cheater, deceiver, beguiler, trickster, charmer, swindler. These all are of Satan the devil.

- Bearded darnel cheats and deceives the farmer of his yield because the grain head of the darnel yields nothing. Likewise, Satan cheats and deceives the church of its yield and growth.

- Bearded darnel charms and tricks the farmer into a false expectation of a high yield. Correspondingly, Satan charms and tricks the church into a false expectation of true growth and yield when in reality no fruit is borne in the church.

Satan can promote false growth in the church with no fruit yield.

It takes time

Looking at the wheat and darnel, we can find it hard to tell the difference. It takes time to see the true difference in the two grasses. The wheat seed is heavy and full of fruit whereas the darnel is a small and light seed with no fruit at harvest.

God knows all along the good fruit from the bad. But how can we tell at our harvesttime the difference between the good wheat and the tares?

When the good wheat is ready for the harvest, the head full of fruit will bow its head.

The fruit of wheat is more wheat. Wheat exhibits something analogous to the fruit of the Spirit.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

When the tares, the darnel, are ready for harvest, the heads have no fruit. A tare's head is always upright, never bowing. It is vain, proud, pompous. It exhibits the fruit of the evil one, Satan.

The Bible lists many symptoms of the fruit of tares: scoffing, lust, ignorance, love of oneself, covetousness, boasting, pride, blasphemy, disobedience to parents, ingratitude, unholiness, lack of natural affection, truce-breaking, false accusations, incontinence, ferocity, despising of those who are good, treason, arrogance, love of pleasure rather than love of God, and false piety.

Only God can know

These days, at the harvest, the good wheat is heavy with good fruit. When farmers harvest their fields of wheat, they gather the good wheat into the harvest truck, and the tares, the darnel, are blown out the back of the combine rig as chaff, or trash, and are burned up to return to the soil as humus.

I believe the wheat is the body of God's church and the darnel is unbelievers in the church.

God says not to remove the tares, the darnel, because doing so might harm the true believers.

Only God can know the difference. He knows the heart that we cannot. Only He knows who is His and who is not.

When Jesus returns, He will harvest His wheat, and not one grain of darnel will be harvested to the barn.