



International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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Matthew 13:24-33 **New American Standard Bible** **June 10, 2018**

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, June 10, 2018**, is from **Matthew 13:24-33**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

(Matthew 13:24) Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.

In His parables, Jesus used familiar events to illustrate spiritual truths and realities. In the New Testament, the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of Christ mean the same. The kingdom of heaven exists within the world but is not of the world. In this parable,

Jesus' field is the world. The kingdom of heaven is also beyond the world. One of the best descriptions of the throne room in the kingdom of heaven beyond the world can be found in the Book of Revelation, chapters 4 & 5. In this parable, the man who sowed the seed is Jesus himself, and Jesus, the Son of Man, is the Lord of heaven and earth. In this parable, the good seed represents true Christians. True Christians may be described as: ones who by the grace of God respond to the good news of Jesus Christ, feel sorrow for their sins, repent of their sins, receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, reform their lives through the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit according to the truth of the Bible, and bear good fruit. We can compare the good seed and the good soil in Jesus' Parable of the Sower — the good soil produced good grain. In Matthew 13:23, Jesus said, "As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty." Both parables teach us something about the true character of true Christians. On the one hand, Jesus Christ is the One who sows good Christians into the kingdom of heaven. On the other hand, when the gospel of Jesus Christ is sown in good soil, in good hearts, the soil bears much good fruit. Therefore, we know that no one becomes a Christian apart from the grace of Jesus Christ, the truth of the gospel that is sown, and the work of the Holy Spirit who gives the growth.

Jesus began to explain Parable of the Wheat and the

Weeds in Matthew 13:37-38, saying, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. 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”

The parable reminds us that there are people in this world who serve the evil one; so, Christians should not be surprised when they come into close contact with people who want to harm and mislead them. Some have distinguished the visible church, which can include both wheat and weeds, from the invisible church, which contains only wheat. When Jesus Christ returns we will learn the identifies all those included in the invisible church.

(Matthew 13:25) “But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away.

Those sleeping needed their rest each evening. In this parable, no one is judged for sleeping. The enemy is responsible for sowing the weeds. The parable explains the existence of the weeds in the wheat. The gospel of Jesus Christ declares the truth of God and reality. The gospel does not contain a mixture of truth and error that can produce mixed results. False teachings in the church do not come from the Bible. However sincere, human interpretations can sometimes contain a mixture of truth and error. So, believers must pray and examine all teachings about God and Christ in order to make certain

these teachings are according to the Bible and true. The Berean Jews set the example for us: “Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true” (Acts 17:11). Jesus Christ, Christians, and the kingdom of heaven have an enemy who will use others in trying to ruin the good work and destroy the good fruit that God wants believers to bear.

(Matthew 13:26) “But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also.

The weeds *Zizanion* (Greek) are also called “darnel” and “tares.” These weeds are poisonous and can make people sick. The tares look like wheat as they begin growing but can be easily distinguished and separated from the wheat at harvest time.

(Matthew 13:27) “The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’

The owner’s servants were experienced enough to distinguish between the wheat and the weeds prior to harvest time. Likewise, from spiritual experience, study of the Bible, and prayer, the Holy Spirit can help the true followers of Jesus recognize false teaching, false teachers, false preachers, and false members in the church. In Matthew 13:39, Jesus explained, “the enemy who sows

them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.” In the kingdom of heaven on earth, in the visible church, Jesus sows true Christians and the devil sows his followers: both types of people grow together; so, Christians should expect some trouble in the Church from those who do not trust in Jesus and the Bible. Indeed, some say, “The church is full of hypocrites,” but according to Jesus’ parable we should expect some hypocrites to be in church, but how many hypocrites we cannot judge. Jesus sows only good seed in the kingdom of heaven and the church — seed (Christians) that will bear good fruit. We can always say to a critic of the church that in the church the wheat and weeds will grow together until the end of the age when they will be separated. The devil intends for the hypocrites he plants in the church to come between Christ and those who might consider following Him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

(Matthew 13:28) “And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ The slaves *said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’

The devil and those who follow the devil are the enemies of Jesus Christ, the Church, the kingdom of heaven, and Christians. The devil inspires and helps his followers as they try to destroy the Church and the faith, lives, and testimony of Christians. Along with the servants of Jesus, we might be inclined to ask Jesus, “Do you want us to go and pull them up?”

(Matthew 13:29) “But he *said, ‘No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them.

We do not have the power, skill, or responsibility to remove the devil and his followers from the kingdom of heaven. However, God has given Christians the responsibility of exercising discipline in the church. In this parable, Jesus is not teaching against church discipline. Without church discipline a church ceases to be a church. A church must practice loving Biblical discipline toward those who profess to be Christians when they persist in known sin, refuse to repent, and refuse to return to following Jesus and the Bible. If a church allows some of its members to persist in known sin, they can do great damage. Likewise, Jesus said that Christians need to be able to recognize those with the character of a wild dog or a pig, so they can avoid sharing what is holy with them. In Matthew 7:6, Jesus taught, “Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.” Paul wrote about church discipline in 1 Corinthians 5:12, “What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside?” Church discipline is a worthy topic to be studied and discussed, but it is beyond the scope of this commentary on this parable.

Jesus’ focus in this parable is the fact that the roots of the wheat and the weeds can become so intertwined that in the

process of pulling up the weeds you can unintentionally pull up the wheat so that the wheat cannot bear fruit. When church discipline is being exercised, this principle needs to be remembered so church discipline must involve much prayer, much love, much study of the Bible, much counseling and teaching so the wheat is protected as a weed or Christian in the church is being helped to repent and follow Jesus Christ faithfully (for ultimately, we do not have the ability to distinguish perfectly between growing Christians who still struggle with besetting sins and the weeds sown by the devil: church leaders surely need the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Who will always lead consistent with and according to the Bible's teachings. In dealing with the weeds, Jesus primary concern was saving the wheat.

(Matthew 13:30) 'Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

As further explanation of this parable, in Matthew 13:40-43, Jesus explained, "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. 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. They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their

Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.” In the Book of Daniel, we learn some of the characteristics of Jesus, who called himself the Son of Man: “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13-14).

In Jesus’ parable, the Son of Man will send angels to remove the ones who do evil and all causes of sin from the kingdom of heaven and the world; then, the righteous ones will shine like the sun and reveal the glory of God. Everyone will see and know the true children of their heavenly Father. Only the harvesters will be able to distinguish the weeds from the wheat and have the power to remove the weeds and safely preserve the wheat.

We can expect Christians and unbelievers to work in the church and in the world in either helpful or harmful ways until the harvest time. Therefore, we must wait patiently and prayerfully for the end of the age, when Jesus will have His holy angels weed out “everything that causes sin and all who do evil.” Jesus’ parable reveals good reasons for repenting of our sins and trusting in Him as our Lord and Savior. The wheat, the true Christians, will inherit eternal life: “Then the righteous will shine like the sun in

the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

(Matthew 13:31) He presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field;

In His next parable, Jesus explained that the kingdom of heaven would have a small beginning but would grow larger and larger over time. Jesus Christ planted the kingdom of heaven in the field (the world).

(Matthew 13:32) and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES.”

Jesus’ audience would have understood that the mustard seed was the smallest agricultural seed they would ever plant. They all knew about mustard seeds and how large a mustard plant could grow from a seed. As a plant in one of their gardens, they would plan carefully before planting a mustard seed, for it could grow as large as a tree. Jesus’ purpose was not to try to explain to His audience seed sizes from around the world. He chose to use an illustration they would understand, and we need to try to understand what Jesus’ audience would have understood. Jesus carefully planned and planted the kingdom of heaven. It would grow large and many people would come

from the world into the kingdom. Many would be blessed within it. In harmony with the previous parable, the birds could represent Christians who are filled with the Holy Spirit (a dove brought Noah an olive leaf and the Holy Spirit descended as a dove upon Jesus at His baptism), and those who follow the devil and do evil (in Jesus' Parable of the Sower, the birds came and ate the seed). Both types of birds (people) may be in the kingdom of heaven until the time of the harvest.

(Matthew 13:33) He spoke another parable to them, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened."

In this parable, the kingdom of heaven is symbolized by yeast and its effect in dough. Yeast makes bread taste good after it rises to make a loaf of bread and is baked. Loaves of bread made from yeast were used as wave offerings before the LORD in the celebration of Pentecost; so, we know that in the Bible yeast does not always symbolize evil. The LORD would never command anyone to wave before Him something that contained evil as an offering. On the Day of Pentecost, Jesus' followers were completely filled with the Holy Spirit, even as yeast will completely fill dough and make bread rise. From the parable of the mustard seed, we know that the kingdom of heaven will grow externally in the numbers of people who will receive the gift of eternal life and be blessed in this life. From the parable of the yeast, we know that the kingdom of heaven will indwell

Christians as the Holy Spirit fills them fully and works within them to bless others — even as a loaf of bread tastes good and nourishes our bodies.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Why does the kingdom of heaven on earth contain true Christians and those who do evil?
2. Why did the owner of the field tell his servants to leave the wheat and the weeds growing together until the time of the harvest?
3. What will the angels do at the end of the age?
4. How can the kingdom of heaven like a mustard seed and plant?
5. How can the kingdom of heaven be like a loaf of bread?

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