

General Church Education



The Wheat & the Tares

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-40

Lesson 18

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 2: The Lord Is Our Shepherd

For ages 7-8 years

The Wheat & the Tares

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-40

Ideas for Parents & Teachers

In the next six lessons we learn about heaven. These stories are from the New Testament where the Lord told many parables about the kingdom of heaven. The Lord tells us that He always spoke in parables, that is, earthly stories with a deeper spiritual meaning (Matthew 13:34). Stories are pleasant to hear and easy to remember for the time when we are ready to understand the spiritual meaning.

The Word tells us that the kingdom of heaven is within us (Luke 17:21). If we are to live in heaven after we die, we need to have heaven develop within us as we live our lives on this earth. This is a slow process called regeneration. It starts with learning truths from the Lord's Word. But we also learn false ideas as we travel our path of life. Sometimes we cannot tell which ideas are true and which are false. Eventually, if we turn to the Lord, He will show evil and falsity for what they are and put them out of our hearts and minds. In doing this we make room for the thing which is most important of all, to worship the Lord God Jesus Christ as the One God of heaven and earth. As we get older we must choose whether to serve Him or not. The Lord does not compel us to follow Him.

Ideas for Children

- Parables are stories with a hidden message.
- The Lord used parables to lead people to understand the truth and how it applies to them.
- The Lord rewards people when they are good. The Lord allows evil to bring its own punishment.

From the Writings

Spiritual life is acquired first by knowing the truths of faith, acknowledging them, and believing them. When they are merely known they are, so to speak, at the front door; when they are acknowledged they are in the hall; but when they are believed they are in the room. Thus they pass from the outer to the inner parts of the mind. In a person interiorly there exists good which flows in constantly from the Lord; and there it joins itself to truths, turning them into faith, and then into charity. That good draws truths to itself. *Arcana Coelestia* 8772

Regeneration is a gradual separation from the evil qualities which attach to a person's inclinations. No love in people or angels is entirely pure, nor can it become so. But the Lord regards primarily the intention of the will, and therefore to the extent that people have the intention and persevere in them, to that extent they are introduced into purity and draw nearer to it. See *Conjugial Love* 146

All the details in the parables mean spiritual and heavenly attributes of the Lord's kingdom, and in the highest sense Divine attributes in Himself. In their internal form they fill the whole of heaven because the internal sense is contained within every detail, and that sense is such that its spiritual and heavenly content spreads like light and flame throughout the heavens. *Arcana Coelestia* 4637

The Parable of the Wheat and Tares

The next six stories are parables from the New Testament that teach about heaven. The New Testament is the part of the Word that tells about the Lord's life on earth. A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

Do you know why Jesus spoke in parables when He taught the large crowds of people who came to hear Him? Everyone likes to hear stories, and they are easy to remember. Sometimes the Lord would take His disciples aside and tell them the deeper, heavenly meaning in the parables. He told them as much as they could understand. Now these stories are written down in the New Testament for everyone who wants to hear and understand them.

Teaching About Heaven

Do you know where heaven is? Heaven is where good people go when they die. The life of heaven begins to grow inside us as we learn to do and love what is good during our lives here on earth. Actually, heaven is growing in our hearts all along as we learn truths from the Lord's Word and do them. Or heaven is stopped from growing if we turn away from the Lord.

This parable is about a man who sowed or planted seed in his field. Have you ever watched a farmer plow the earth, breaking up the hard clods of ground and then raking the field smooth so that the seeds he plants will have a better chance to grow? Perhaps your family has a vegeta-



ble or flower garden and you have helped your parents prepare the ground and plant seeds. It is hard work. People want to plant the best seeds they can. It was the same with the man in our story. He did not have modern machinery to prepare the soil. That job was done by hand in those days. He planted good seed. But something else was planted in the ground as well. Read now and find out what it was and who put it there.

Read Matthew 13:24-26. What else was planted in this man's ground? (Tares.)

Who planted these tares? (His enemy.) Tares are weeds. Tares look similar to good grain, especially when they start growing, but their roots will choke out good plants. In this story the servants noticed the tares growing in the wheat field and asked the owner how

this happened. They asked, “Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?” Read on to find out the owner’s answer and what he decided to do about it.

Read Matthew 13:27-30. What would you do if you were in this situation? Would you try to pull up the tares right away or would you wait like the man in this story?

You probably have seen young plants growing. They have very tender little roots. It is through these roots that the young plants get water and nourishment to grow larger and become fruitful. Every farmer knows to be careful when weeding because these tender roots can be disturbed when a weed is pulled up. If the roots are exposed to the air, the plant will suffer and may even die.



Do you think the owner of this field was wise to wait so that he did not tear up the good wheat along with the tares? Yes, he was a good farmer. When the wheat was fully grown, he planned to have the reapers, that is, the people who harvested the crops, pull out the tares first and burn them. Then they could gather up the good wheat grain and store it for use as food.

The Difference Between Good and Evil

Jesus told this parable to a great multitude of people who had gathered around Him to listen to what He had to say. Afterward He left the crowd and went into a house with His disciples. Do you know what a disciple is? It is a person who learns, like a student. The Lord had twelve special disciples who followed Him while He was on earth. They learned from Him and then went out teaching others these wonderful truths to other people.

The disciples had listened as the Lord told this story of the wheat and the tares. They wanted to know what it meant or how it applied to them. So the Lord showed the spiritual or heavenly meaning to them. The special meaning of this story is about the difference between good and evil and how we can recognize it.

The Lord explained that we have many ideas in our minds. Our mind is like the ground and the ideas are like the seeds. Some of the ideas are true and some of them are false. Sometimes we are not sure which are good and which are bad. Good ideas always come from the Lord. He

is the One who sows good seed or His truth in the field of our minds. The bad seeds come from devils or evil spirits who secretly, when we are not aware, sow harmful ideas in our minds just as the tares in the story were planted by the enemy. Evil spirits are always trying to get people to think bad things.

Sometimes we don't know whether our ideas are good or bad. As we get older we gradually learn the difference between good and evil. If we are patient, read the Lord's Word, and keep trying to follow Him, He will show us what is good and what is evil, just as the good wheat was eventually separated from the harmful tares. Parents, teachers and other loving people in our lives help the Lord show us what is good.

Sometimes we *can* see the harmful ideas in our minds easily. If we do not get rid of them they will lead us into trouble and unhappiness. These we must pull up whenever we see them so they do not choke out and harm good things. If we faithfully choose to keep only the good thoughts, our minds will be prepared for heaven. The Lord leaves the choice to each of us. Of course, He wants everyone to choose heaven and live happily with Him forever.



Discussion Questions

- What is a parable? (An earthly story with a heavenly meaning.)
- Why did the Lord teach in parables? (Because stories are interesting and easy to remember. The people who wanted to understand more could do so.)
- Why do you think the owner of the field in this parable was wise? (Because he did not pull up the tares until he could plainly see which plants were weeds and which were good grain.)
- How can you tell which ideas are good and which ones are bad? (Good ideas follow the teachings of the Word and bring true eternal happiness. We can ask our parents, teachers, ministers and other loving people in our lives.)

Activity Overview | The Wheat and the Tares

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. Matthew 13:45, 46

Songs

You Are the Vine

Listen or download at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/song-you-are-the-vine/>

Trust and Obey

Listen or download at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/song-trust-and-obey/>

Activities

Choose one or two.

- Activity 1 | The Wheat and the Tares
- Activity 2 | Seed Mosaic
- Picture to color

Additional Activity Ideas

- Weed a garden
- Compare a well-kept garden with a garden full of weeds

Activity 1 | The Wheat and the Tares

We can practice separating good from evil in our lives by weeding out bad thoughts that come into our minds and not putting them into practice in our lives. After we die the good thoughts we have chosen to make our own through acting on them help move us towards heaven. But before we are ready to go there, the selfish thoughts and feelings we have made our own must be cast out.

Materials

black paper yellow or shiny gold paper scissors glue
a copy of the *Wheat and Tares Vocabulary List*

Instructions

1. Create a single piece of paper out of the black and the shiny gold or yellow paper by taping or gluing the paper together so that the black is on the bottom of the page and the gold is on the top of the page.
2. Cut apart the *Wheat and Tares Vocabulary List* at the bottom of this page. Divide the words into two piles, separating good (heavenly) words from selfish (evil) words.
3. Glue the heavenly words (wheat) to the gold paper at the top of the page. Glue the selfish words (tares) to the black paper at the bottom of the page.

bright	hurt	devils	good
hate	forgive	Lord	heal
angels	selfish	dark	hit
fight	kind	greed	hate
hugs	help	loving	enemy

Activity 2 | Seed Mosaic

It is sometimes hard for us to tell the difference between a good idea and a bad one—especially when we start to make choices and do not have a clear idea of where they may lead. Make a seed mosaic about the word “heaven” out of several kinds of seeds. Challenge another person to find the message hidden in the seeds.

Materials

mosaic template with “heaven” on it (*optional*: printed on stiff paper)
two kinds of similar seeds such as white and brown rice, green and yellow lentils, etc.
glue
glue brush (paintbrush for glue)

Instructions

1. Spread glue on the letters of the word “heaven.” Use a brush to spread the glue, covering each letter.
2. Sprinkle one color of seed on over the glue. Allow to dry for a few minutes and then shake off loose seeds.
3. “Hide” the word heaven by spreading glue on new areas of the page and sprinkling them with seeds of a contrasting color.
4. Continue to cover new areas of the page until “heaven” is completely hidden.
5. Show the picture to others and invite them to find the hidden message!

heaven

