

Wheat and Tares

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Whenever separation from a fallen church body becomes necessary, some will argue against it claiming that the “wheat and tares must grow together until the harvest.” This is a misapplication of the parable, as the following article shows.

This article is not a complete study on the very vital and interesting question of the wheat and the tares. It is an answer to an objection, for ever since the matter of separation has been before us, those who have stood in opposition to that truth have taken strong refuge in this parable.

So confident are they that this is the final word in the matter that one can be assured that just as certainly as the question of separation is raised, just so surely will be brought forth “the Wheat and the Tares” as an argument for staying by the old ship till the very end.

Misapplication of the Parable

But this is superficial thinking and the misapplication of the Scriptures in a dangerous way. What is more, to so use the parable is to put themselves into a position from which they can only extricate themselves by admitting that the parable is not in any sense of the word an argument against separation today. This we will shortly show.

First of all, let us see and know to what the parable should be applied so far as separation is concerned, for there is separation taught in the parable, without question.

There have been many separations in the past from fallen and apostate church organizations. Did Jesus speak the parable to illustrate the experience of His true people in these separations? If He did, then the parable would be valid as an argument in regard to the present separation. But the fact is that Jesus was not speaking of those separations, but of “the great

final separation of the righteous and the wicked.” Let us read the whole statement as it is written:

The Desire of Ages, p. 333:

The great final separation of the righteous and the wicked, He had pictured in the parables of the wheat and the tares and the fishing net.

When Jesus was talking about the final separation, He was not talking about any other but that final separation. Nor could He have spoken that parable to apply to that and also the other separations, because the conditions are so different in each case that it would be impossible.

Therefore, to apply that parable to separations other than the final separation is just simply to misapply the Scriptures and try to use it to teach that which Jesus never intended it should teach.

Trapped in a Corner

And what is more, to so use the parable as it was never intended that it should be used, is to put one's self in a very difficult position indeed. It is, in fact, a position where one finds one's self trapped without an answer. And this is because, if the parable is truly valid as an argument against separation today, then it has always been valid as an argument against separation ever since it was first spoken. That is a simple and obvious principle and cannot be violated or changed to suit any desired argument. That is obvious on any reflection. The marvelous consistency of Scripture demands that it be so.

And that being so it follows then that if the argument is truly valid today, then everyone of those groups that have separated since the parable was first spoken, is utterly under condemnation for having separated. They should never have separated. And who are the “they” in question? They were the Apostolic Church, the Reformers one and all who withdrew from Rome, and certainly the Advent Believers of the last cen-

tury.

Everyone that seeks to use the parable to argue against and to condemn those who separate today, is thereby at the same time utterly condemning all those who ever separated in the past. It means that, in their view, there should never have been any separations at all.

- It means that the Advent Movement was all a mistake.
- It means that the Second Angel's Message must be denied.
- It means that the Reformers should have all stayed among the tares in Rome to this day.
- And to take it back to its ultimate, it means that the Apostles should never have left the Jewish Church.

This is the inescapable corner into which such a use of the parable will put one. Thus it follows that if one holds or promotes this view, then to be consistent, that one must return forthwith to the old Jewish Church. But we are confident that all will recoil from the idea of either condemning any of those who did join in the great reformations of the past, or of going back to join the old Jewish Church.

But will they have both the honesty and the courage to admit that the very argument that leads to this conclusion is unsound and must be abandoned? Can we have the assurance that this false argument will be heard of no more?

Two Separations

There are two separations and that each is in a category of its own. It was the same mistake that the Jews made in not being able to see the two comings of Jesus and the differences between those two comings of which the prophecies relating to the one were peculiar to that one and could not be applied to the other. We are in great danger of making the same mistake but must not on any account. It is too late in history now to be making such blunders.

Three Classes, not Two

Another basic mistake in regard to this parable lies in the failure to see that there are three classes, not just two. A study of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins in the light of its first fulfillment will make this point very apparent. That first fulfillment of the parable took place in the rise of the Great Second Advent Movement as is proved by a study of *The Great Controversy*, pages 393-493.

And the going forth of that message developed three distinct classes. In the first case there were those in the churches who refused the message and therefore did not go forth to meet the Bridegroom. Therefore, they cannot be called virgins neither can they be called the tares. You might regard them as thorns and thistles for they are obviously not like the wheat whereas the tares very closely resemble the wheat until the harvest and the final separation.

The second class are the foolish virgins who in every respect are the same as the wise except in that they do not have a personal experience in righteousness. See *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 411 and *The Great Controversy*, page 394.

The First Separation

The foolish joined with the wise in their separation from the ones who were not classed as virgins and would not go forth to meet the Bridegroom. And it is to be still further noted that these continued together until the judgment came, the door was closed and then the two classes were separated in a final separation.

The Final Separation

That final separation was concerned only with the separation of the wise and the foolish virgins, or with the wheat and the tares, exactly as Jesus spoke of it as being. The wheat and the tares must first be separated from the rest before they can come to the final separation which does not separate the

wheat and the tares from the rest but only from each other.

The most solemn warning of all—and I wish that this could be written in letters of fire so that no one would miss it—is that those who refuse to take part in the first separation can have no part in the second and thus are eternally lost. See what happened to those who refused to come out in the days of Christ and the Apostolic Church. They were never reckoned among the people of God again. See the same picture again in the Reformation and Advent Churches. Those who refused the call were never again reckoned among the people of God at all. Let us be warned today!

Friends, the simple fact is that the parable of the wheat and the tares is concerned with the great final separation and with nothing else. Let us be warned off the extremely dangerous ground of misapplying the Scriptures. It could very well cost us our eternal life.