

Matthew 13:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

Analysis

While men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat (ἤλθεν αὐτοῦ ὁ ἐχθρὸς καὶ ἐπέσπειρεν ζιζάνια)—zizania refers to bearded darnel (*Lolium temulentum*), a weed virtually indistinguishable from wheat until grain heads form. The **enemy** (ὁ ἐχθρός) is Satan (v. 39), who deliberately counterfeits God's work. This isn't accidental contamination but intentional sabotage.

The nighttime sowing emphasizes stealth and evil intent—in Roman law, sowing another's field with weeds was a recognized crime. Satan's tares are false converts, counterfeit Christians who look genuine until tested. The timing **while men slept** warns against pastoral negligence; false teaching infiltrates when leaders aren't vigilant (Acts 20:28-31). The coexistence of wheat and tares until harvest describes the church age—true and false believers intermixed until final judgment.

Historical Context

Bearded darnel was Palestine's most troublesome agricultural weed, toxic when consumed. Its seeds closely resembled wheat until maturity, making early identification nearly impossible. Roman legal codes included penalties for criminal 'oversowing' of enemy fields with darnel. Jesus's parable reflects real agricultural sabotage, making the illustration immediately comprehensible to farming communities.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. Where do you see 'tares among wheat'—counterfeit Christians who look genuine but bear bad fruit?
2. What does 'while men slept' warn church leaders about vigilance against false teaching?
3. How should knowing tares and wheat coexist until harvest shape your expectations for church purity?

Interlinear Text

ἐν δὲ τῷ καθεύδειν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἦλθεν αὐτοῦ
while **But** G3588 **slept** G3588 **men** **came** **his**
G1722 G1161 G2518 G444 G2064 G846

ὁ ἐχθρὸς καὶ ἔσπειρεν ζιζάνια ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ
G3588 **enemy** **and** **sowed** **tares** **among** G3319 G3588
G2190 G2532 G4687 G2215 G303

σίτου καὶ ἀπῆλθεν
the wheat **and** **went his way**
G4621 G2532 G565

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 5:8 (Parallel theme): Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

2 Peter 2:1 (Parallel theme): But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

Matthew 13:39 (Parallel theme): The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

Revelation 12:9 (Parallel theme): And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Hebrews 12:15 (Parallel theme): Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

Matthew 25:5 (Parallel theme): While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

Galatians 2:4 (Parallel theme): And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:

Revelation 2:20 (Parallel theme): Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.