

Matthew 13:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

Analysis

The field is the world (ο δὲ ἀγρός ἐστιν ὁ κόσμος, ho de agros estin ho kosmos)—not merely the church, but the entire created order where believers and unbelievers coexist. **The good seed are the children of the kingdom** (υἱοὶ τῆς βασιλείας, huioi tēs basileias)—those who belong to God's reign through new birth. **The tares are the children of the wicked one** (υἱοὶ τοῦ πονηροῦ, huioi tou ponērou)—literally 'sons of the evil one,' identifying spiritual parentage (John 8:44).

The distinction between wheat and tares (likely darnel, *Lolium temulentum*, which looks identical to wheat until maturity) illustrates the impossibility of perfect human discernment in distinguishing true from false professors. This warns against premature judgmental purging of the church, while also soberly acknowledging that counterfeit 'believers' exist alongside genuine ones.

Historical Context

In first-century Palestinian agriculture, darnel was a common weed problem—its seeds were poisonous, and it was virtually indistinguishable from wheat in early growth stages. Separating them prematurely would uproot both. Roman law even prohibited sowing darnel in an enemy's field, showing this was a known form of agricultural sabotage.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does understanding the 'field' as the world (not the church) affect your expectations for spiritual purity in Christian communities?
2. What are the dangers of premature 'tare removal'—both in church discipline and in personal judgment of others?
3. How can you cultivate discernment between wheat and tares without falling into judgmental pride or paranoid suspicion?

Interlinear Text

ο δὲ ἀγρός ἐστιν ὁ κόσμος τὸ δὲ καλὸν σπέρμα
G3588 but The field is the world the good seed
G1161 G68 G2076 G2889 G1161 G2570 G4690

οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ νἱοὶ τῆς βασιλείας τὰ δὲ ζιζάνια
are are G3588 the children G3588 of the kingdom G3588 but the tares
G3778 G1526 G5207 G932 G1161 G2215

εἰσιν οἱ νἱοὶ τοῦ πονηροῦ
are G3588 the children G3588 of the wicked
G1526 G5207 G4190

Additional Cross-References

John 8:44 (Evil): Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

Acts 13:10 (Evil): And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

Genesis 3:15 (Parallel theme): And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Matthew 13:19 (Kingdom): When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

James 1:18 (Parallel theme): Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

1 Peter 1:23 (Parallel theme): Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

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