

## BURNED OR BARNED?

I'd like to begin by reading a verse of Scripture from **Matthew chapter 13**, because in a nutshell it gives the gist of what I'd like to talk about this morning, and then we'll fill in the details as we go along. Beginning in **Matthew 13:24** Jesus tells the parable of the wheat and tares, but I'm just going to read **verse 30** at this point and then we'll talk more about the other verses in this parable. In **Matthew 13:30** Jesus said, "Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to **(what?)** burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn."

I think the main point that's misunderstood about this parable is the harvest. When does it take place and what are the agencies that actually do the harvesting, and we'll get to that, but one thing is clear, the barn is where I want to end up, how about you? In several places the Spirit of Prophecy likens the barn to the heavenly garner. In fact, the words garner and barn are used interchangeably in the King James Bible. When you think of a barn, don't you think of a place where animals find shelter and safety and perhaps where the feed is kept dry and preserved? And so, without question, the barn is where we want to go, because it represents a place where we are kept safe and secure, and what better place is there to find that safety and security for all eternity, than in God's heavenly kingdom!

There's another verse in **Matthew 3:12** where John the Baptist, speaking of Jesus, said, "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Now this is not our subject today, but the tares are not the chaff. The chaff is the earthliness and character defects that the wheat must get rid of on the threshing floor before they're taken to the barn, but I doubt that we'll have time to explore that further today.

If you haven't already, please turn in your Bibles to **Matthew 13:34**, "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them."

First of all, I think it would be a good idea to define just what a parable is. A parable is an illustration or a word picture. It's like a bridge that leads the hearer from the seen to unseen, from the earthly to heavenly, and it's a way to drive home an important point. Jesus' parables were stories that have a hidden spiritual meaning; stories teaching a moral lesson or a religious principle. His parables also revealed truth to those who were willing to receive it; to those who were spiritually minded, while at the same time concealing it from those who were carnally minded, or literally minded.

For a good example of carnally and literally minded people, in **John 6:53** Jesus said, “Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” And the unbelieving Jews said, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat? how ridiculous.” They failed to catch the hidden spiritual meaning, didn’t they? And how could they, they were carnally and literally minded. And the Bible says, from that time forward, many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him. Jesus had many followers other than the 12 during this time, but when Jesus said what He did, many said, “This guy is crazy! There’s no way He can be the Messiah”, and they went back to their apostate church and to their former carnally minded brethren.

Then there was Nicodemus who thought being born again had to do with entering his mother’s womb the second time when Jesus told him, “you must be born again.” Fortunately though, Nicodemus was an honest man and he hung around Jesus long enough to understand the spiritual significance of what He said, and we’ll meet him in the barn some day soon if we are faithful. And so, an understanding of the parables today, just like then, depends upon our spiritual condition.

In **Matthew 13:35** Jesus further explains why He taught in parables when He said, “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been **(What)** kept secret from the foundation of the world.” And so Jesus’ parables revealed secrets, and who doesn’t like to be privy to secrets?

Just as a side note here, Jesus was quoting from **Psalms 78:2**, which was written by Asaph, whom Jesus called a prophet. David wasn’t the only writer of the Psalms. Asaph wrote at least 12, and most people don’t know anything about him, but he was a prophet.

So, if the parables of Jesus teach truths that have been kept secret from the beginning of time, then we need to pay close attention to how this parable of the wheat and tares applies to us down here at the end of time. Just because Jesus taught this parable to His disciples and the multitude of His day, doesn’t mean that we can ignore what it teaches in this our day.

Now let’s back up in **Matthew 13** to **verses 10** and **11** where Jesus spoke of the purpose of His parables. “And the disciples came, and said unto him, why speakest thou unto them **(that is, the general multitudes)** why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.”

Why did Jesus say the mysteries of the kingdom were given to only some? If you read on you'll find that those who were not given understanding were those who were not spiritually minded. But here's the point I want to make. Jesus plainly tells us here that there are only two groups, one will understand and the other will not understand. Some will see the spiritual significance of the parables, and some won't, and in the end one group will be burned and the other barned. What makes the difference? Is Jesus playing favorites? Absolutely not. The Bible says God is no respecter of persons. Paul gives us the answer to this question in **1 Corinthians 2:14** if you'd like to turn there. Paul says, "the natural man (**or the carnal man**) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are (**what?**) foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." How can this man give us His flesh to eat? How can I crawl into my mother's womb the second time and be born? Foolishness! That's the attitude of those who are like the natural man, or the man who has not partaken of the divine nature.

All the parables Jesus told in the hearing of the multitudes were thought by the majority of them to be foolishness, either that, or they understood where Jesus was going with His parables but couldn't accept that they applied to them. In fact, this was the very reason why the religious leaders tried to have Him stoned, and that's ultimately why they had Him crucified. Some of those religious leaders knew that He was the Messiah, but they rejected Him nonetheless. How insane is that? And human nature hasn't changed over the past 2000 years, because unfortunately millions of people are essentially doing the same today.

So, here we have two groups, those who have spiritual discernment and those who do not. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, and those who have no desire to live a holy life. Thus we have the wheat and the tares; two different groups, and by the way, that's all there has ever been in this world, and that's all there is today. There are the children of God and the children of the devil, those who serve God and those who serve Him not, the church of Christ and the synagogue of Satan, the obedient and the disobedient, saints and sinners, those who obey God's law and those who transgress, those who will burn, and those who will reside safely in the barn. And so, there is no neutral ground. Everyone is in one group or the other. And perhaps we will all find out which group we are in today.

With these things in mind then, let's read **Matthew 13:24**, because this is where the parable begins. "Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field."

"The kingdom of heaven is likened unto." Jesus used this terminology over and over again when teaching in parables, but what did He mean? Have you ever thought about it? When Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto", He was saying that this parable can be compared to, or likened to the experience, or the process that My people are going to go through on their way to obtain the kingdom.

Later on, in **Matthew 13**, when Jesus sent the multitudes away and was alone with His disciples, He began to give them an explanation of the parable, because even the disciples didn't understand, but they were willing, that's the important thing. And so, are we willing, is the question. I hope so.

In **verses 37, 38** Jesus plainly told the 12 that the one who sowed the good seed in the field was Himself; that the field represented the world; that the good seed were the children of the kingdom; and the tares were the children of the devil, but for us today there is a present truth application about the field that expands on what Jesus told His disciples 2000 years ago. This truth was there all along, but many failed to grasp the significance of it back then, just like many are doing today.

Notice what it says in ***Christ's Object Lessons, page 70***, "The field, Christ said, is the world. But we must understand this as signifying the church of Christ in the world."

Also in ***Review and Herald, August 8, 1893*** it says, "The world is a fallen world, and the church is a place represented by a field in which grow tares and wheat."

And so, in these two quotes, Sister White zeros in on the field and sees that it's actually the church, and this understanding will become significant as we'll see in a few minutes. As we read through this parable, we'll always want to keep in mind that the field represents what happens in the church.

Now, what was the church that Christ began in New Testament times by sowing the good seed? It was the Apostolic Church, made up of the 12 disciples of Christ who came out of the Jewish church, along with those who believed through their word. Then as corruption and apostasy crept into the church through paganism and then the papacy, a reformation began to take place and Protestantism was born. So the Protestant movement was the continuation of the good seed that Jesus sowed. Then during the great advent awakening in the early 1800s when the Protestant churches rejected the first and second angels' messages, that good seed had to leave the fallen churches, and eventually the Seventh-day Adventist church was formed, or the remnant of the good seed as it says in **Revelation 12:17**.

Now let's take a look at **Matthew 13:25**, because Jesus said something very important

here. He said, "But while men slept, his enemy (**the devil**) came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way."

Now this part of the parable has been played out many times since the inception of Christ's church, because Satan has been sowing tares since the beginning, and sleepy men are the reason for the various apostasies that have occurred over the past 2000 years, and also why God's people had to come out from those apostasies.

So how does this parable apply to us today? That's what we want to know, and who are these men who are found sleeping at their post of duty? Or we could say, who are these sleepy men who are represented as being a part of the church of Christ in these last days? *Testimonies for the Church, volume 2, page 439* says, "Men who stand in very responsible positions (**church leaders**) at the heart of the work are asleep. Satan has paralyzed them in order that his plans and devices may not be discerned while he is active to ensnare, deceive, and destroy."

What the prophet says here is a perfect description of Satan's plan to work by stealth. He works through the tares to ensnare, deceive, and destroy the whole crop of wheat, and he's been quite successful over the past 2000 years, and he's still at work in these last days. In fact, he is depicted by the apostle Peter as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, and John, in the Revelation, tells us it's because he knows that he has but a short time left. The question is, do we know that time is short? With all that's been happening over the last few months, we should all know that America is in the process of changing from a lamb-like beast to a dragon, and it's happening faster than most of us ever thought possible.

The quote I just read about the sleepy church leaders was written in 1868. Now, I've heard people ask, if the church was so bad over 150 years ago when this statement was written, why wasn't there a call to separate from it at that time? and the answer is very simple. Many of the leaders of the church in 1868 may have been asleep and even paralyzed, but they did not apostatize, they did not renounce their religious beliefs, that's what apostasy is! They did not give up or change their doctrinal position. The main problem back then was that worldly interests began to outweigh their spiritual interests, and that later developed into procedural, and administrative problems in the church. In other words, the leaders came to believe that they knew how to manage the work better than God did. That's what happens when Christians allow selfishness and worldly interests to outweigh God's interests.

For instance, when the prophet said God wanted our sanitariums to remain small and in the country, the leadership didn't listen, and continued to make Battle Creek a great

metropolis until God burned it to the ground in February 1902. When the prophet said the Review and Herald should not print worldly reading material, the leaders continued on with their own agenda anyway, because they had dollar signs in their eyes. They wanted to make money for the Lord and disobeyed Him to do it, until God also burned it to the ground in December of that same year.

These kinds of things were repeated over and over, but again, they made no doctrinal shift back then; they had not apostatized. This came later after the prophet died, and a couple more generations of these sleepy leaders passing on their sleepiness to others, until finally many of the leaders in this sleepy, paralyzed, Laodicean condition progressed into open apostasy. And there were two main points where they deviated from the doctrinal truths they previously held, and these had to do with the human nature of Christ and perfection of character, and as far as I can tell, this began to come out in the 1950s with the book *Questions on Doctrines*, or the questionable doctrines book as I like to call it. Then it was about 35 years later, in 1991, when the North American Division met in Perth, Australia and made a declaration they called The Perth Declaration. This is when denominational leaders took the first official shots at the Independent Ministries who were, in their mind, causing division, because they took exception to the new theology teachings involving the human nature of Christ, perfection of character, and the idea that one can have a saving relationship with Jesus and still have ongoing sin in the life. As I recall, this new theology teaching was really taking hold in the early 1970s with men like Morris Vendon.

Then as the church continued to depart farther and farther from the truth and became more entrenched in these errors, the denominational leaders said that arguing over whether or not Jesus had a fallen or unfallen human nature, and whether or not perfection of character was even possible, were considered by them to be “moot issues.”

Do you know what “moot” means? It means “open to question”, or “debatable.” And debatable means, “doubtful.” When you are discussing something with someone who says, “that's debatable” or “that’s questionable”, it means they don't agree, and they're trying to cause you to doubt your position. What moot means in the end is total rejection of the truth along with those who proclaim it. That’s why we have seen so many people disfellowshipped over the past 40 years or so. The church disfellowshipped them for what they call apostasy, when in fact it was the church leaders themselves who had exchanged the truth for a lie.

Is the fact that Jesus had a fallen human nature a moot issue? Is it open to question? Is it debatable? Absolutely not! It's the heart of the gospel! In the Spirit of Prophecy there are many, many clear statements that Jesus had a fallen sinful human nature, and yet without sin, and the Bible is also clear and says that it is the teaching of antichrist to believe otherwise. **1 John 4:3** says, "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh (**that's carnal or fallen flesh according to the Greek**) is not of God: and this is that spirit of (**what?**) antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." And unfortunately it's in the last day church in the world as well.

There are many instances that could be cited where church leadership has gone wrong in the areas I just mentioned, but I'll tell you about just one for the sake of time. On November 1, 2006, church leader William G. Johnsson Ph.D., when dialoguing with the Presbyterian church, said the human nature of Christ and Christian perfection are areas of long standing contention within Christianity and that "the ideal of sinless perfection; do not have the support of church leaders."

Now Johnsson wasn't talking about the false teaching of holy flesh here, but the idea that we can actually perfect a Christian character and live without sinning. And friends, the implications of that statement are huge, and to my knowledge has never been retracted. That's just a nice way of saying that people, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, can't stop sinning, and if you can't stop sinning, then Jesus is going to have to save us in our sins and not from my sins. The devil's attack upon the human nature of Christ and perfection of character are the two areas that will cost us our eternal life if they are misunderstood.

The false idea that Jesus had an unfallen human nature, which seems to now be the prevailing idea among church leaders today, is the teaching of antichrist, and those who believe that are not part of Christ's church, no matter what they profess, and no matter what name they call themselves by. And as a result of these errors, God's professed people have fallen into the New Theology teaching of salvation in sin, which is directly opposed to perfection of character. This New Theology really isn't very new, it's at least 6000 years old. This is the same lie the serpent told Eve in the Garden when he said to her "Thou shalt not surely die" when you disobey God.

Nearly all errors that deal with salvation among Christians today are an outgrowth of these two issues, and it's the basis of Satan's great deception, that the law of God can't be kept, and he wants you to fall for it. Can I be blunt for just a minute? If you don't have faith to believe that victory over sin is possible, you know what? the devil will see to it

that you never have it. If you want victory, you have to first believe it's possible, and if you lack faith to believe, it's because you're not spending quality time in God's word and in prayer every day, and perhaps have rejected the fact that there will be stern battles with self to fight. This is not rocket science. Time spent with God is the key to victory! So don't fool yourself by thinking that it comes any other way. **Romans 10:17** has the answer to doubt, do what it says there, and you will have victory, because God has promised, and He cannot lie.

So, the leaders of the church went to sleep, and while they were sleeping, don't think that the devil sat idle. While they slept what did Christ's enemy do? he "sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way." In **verse 38** Jesus explained to His disciples that the tares are the children of the wicked one and the wheat are the children of the kingdom. And so, both have fathers, don't they? One is the father of lies and the other is the Father of truth and righteousness, and each plant will produce fruit after its kind. You see, Satan doesn't have to worry about his children not doing his work for him, because tares are motivated by the same principles inherited from their father.

Now let me ask you a question about what Jesus said in **verse 25**. Why does Satan do his dirty work of sowing tares among the wheat and then leave the field? Or we could say, why does Satan place his people among God's people and then just slink away from the church? Oh, Satan is very tricky; he is our wily foe. He knows that if he creates too much activity all at once, he might awaken those who slumber. So he works slowly to avoid detection, and uses the tares, who are deceived themselves for the most part, to water down the truth and twist the Scriptures of truth into a lie.

Plants grow very slowly, don't they? You can keep your eyes on a plant all day long, but you're not going to notice any growth, but they're growing nonetheless, and while the tares are slowly growing, their roots are intermingling with the roots of the wheat. Another reason Satan has an advantage over these sleeping men is that the wheat and tares look the same at first, but what happens when they become full-grown? Then they're easily detected, but still, they are so tangled up with the unsuspecting wheat that it's very difficult to separate them without destroying them. But the day finally comes when the tares mature, and in **Verse 26** Jesus acknowledged that when He said, "But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also."

When you go to Strong's Concordance you'll find that the word tares are what's known as "Darnel or false grain." Darnel is a common plant over in Palestine, and in the early stages it's indistinguishable from wheat. Only when the plant matures and the seeds of



the dandelion turn black is it easy to tell the difference. In striking contrast, when wheat matures it's whitish in color. Remember what Jesus said to the woman at the well? In **John 4:35** He said, "Say not ye, there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields: for they are white already to harvest."

So even in this parable the plants rightly represent each group. The black seeds of the tares represent the children of the wicked one, or Satan's kingdom of darkness. And the white heads of wheat represent the children of the kingdom, or God's kingdom of light.

Now, there's something else I discovered about dandelion that's very interesting. Within each black seed there's an ingredient called soporific poison, and this poison is sleep producing, and if enough of the seeds are ingested, they will produce the sleep of death.

So, we need to be careful that our characters don't become a breeding ground for these seeds to multiply, because apparently that's what happened to the sleepy church leaders. They allowed themselves to become influenced by the soporific poison produced by the tares instead of maintaining strict adherence to the word of God.

In **Matthew 13:27, 28** it says, "So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, an enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?"

Now, before we let Jesus answer that question let me ask you, how many times have you heard the fable that God is going to gather up the tares and remove them from the field? That the tares will be removed from the church and only the wheat will remain? Friends, God has never worked this way with unfaithful churches in the past, and He's not going to do it now? As already mentioned, when the Jewish church was unfaithful, the righteous came out, the good seed came out, and the rest were left in the field, left in their apostate church. And it was the same with Catholicism and apostate Protestantism, the good seed came out! Same in 1844. Adventists had to leave the fallen churches. And it gives me no pleasure to say it, but history is being repeated one last time once again today.

In ***Upward Look, page 131*** it says, "The Lord Jesus will always have a chosen people to serve Him. **(Always! Always has, always will)** When the Jewish people rejected Christ, the Prince of life, He took from them the kingdom of God and gave it unto the Gentiles. God will continue **(that's an important word)** God will continue to work on this principle with every branch of His work."

I'm going to say it was about 30 years ago now when there was a mass exodus from the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, and during that time I had a conversation with Colin Standish about this principle of separation, and he said, "it's true, God's faithful people in the past had to separate from their apostate churches, but God is going to work on a different principle with the Seventh-day Adventist church, so we must not tell people to leave." You see, he was one of those who believed that God was going to remove all the tares from the field and that the Seventh-day Adventist church would then become a pure church and thus be able to give the loud cry, and of course I did not agree with him, and I told him why. However, a man convinced against his will, is what? of the same opinion still.

Some of these men like Standish did a good work exposing error for a while, but they weren't willing to take the truth all the way, and so many of them have now fallen asleep themselves, or perhaps have now died, and it's been left to others to finish what they started, and it has been those, for the most part, who have not been trained in the literary institutions as we've been told it would be. In these last days God is using men and women from the common walks of life, and those who are highly educated are not going to do it, because they think they're smarter than God.

Here's one of the quotes I shared with our dear brother Standish. In ***The Great Controversy, page 343***, it says, "The principles of God's dealing with men are ever the same." That means, if a church doesn't serve God, after a time He removes the candlestick to another place, and the faithful few must follow the light when it leaves, or they will walk in darkness.

Here's another quote I shared from ***Upward Look, page 131***, "When a church proves unfaithful to the work of the Lord, whatever their position may be, however high and sacred their calling, the Lord can no longer work with them. Others are then chosen to bear important responsibilities."

As sad as it is friends, there has to be "another coming out", and this coming out has been in progress for many years now. When it was determined some 70 years ago that the church leadership wasn't going to change course, people not long afterward began leaving, and there are still a few left who must make that same decision today. Are you one of them? Listen friends, I have loved ones and those I care deeply about who still need to make this decision, and I know it's not an easy one, but it needs to be made nonetheless, and it needs to be made soon, because the Holy Spirit is being withdrawn from the earth and great controversy is fast drawing to a close because of it.

This “coming out” is just what Ellen White feared would happen, and she wrote about it in *Manuscript 16, page 216, October 2, 1889*, where she wrote the following, “I was confirmed in all I had stated in Minneapolis, that a reformation must go through the churches. Reforms must be made, for spiritual weakness and blindness were upon the people who had been blessed with great light and precious opportunities and privileges. As reformers **(she’s talking about our Advent pioneers now)** As reformers they had come out of the denominational churches, but they now act a part similar to that which the churches acted. We hoped that there would not be the necessity for another coming out. While we will endeavor to keep the ‘unity of the Spirit’ in the bonds of peace, we will not with pen or voice cease to protest against bigotry.”

Bigotry is “obstinate or unreasonable attachment to a belief or opinion; in particular, prejudice against a person or people.”

So what was going on back then? Here’s what was happening. During the time of the General Conference Session in Minneapolis, there was bigotry against Elders Waggoner and Jones and the truth they were teaching, and I would say even against Ellen White, because she agreed with these two young men when they presented their true message of righteousness by faith in opposition to the legalistic views of their older brethren. Here we have the spiritually minded and the carnally minded again. And Sister White said, and I’m paraphrasing; she said, “Look brethren, we will try to ‘keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace’, but if you leaders refuse to accept the truth that these two young men are presenting and don’t change your attitude toward them, then there’s going to have to be ‘another coming out’, because the church is heading toward apostasy.”

The question is, as this apostasy has developed over the years, what does this mean for us today? Is God going to raise up another church, another denomination? NO! We are down to the remnant now. And by the way, the Spirit of Prophecy never connects the word “remnant” to the church organization, at least not that I’ve been able to find, but rather the remnant applies to a people who love God and keep His commandments, and God has always had a people who did that long before the Seventh-day Adventist church was organized, and that’s why God has always had a church on earth as we read earlier. Not just those giving lip service, but those who actually obeyed from the heart. God is now, just as He has done in the past, gathering the precious wheat out of the field, out of all the apostate churches, and those who are not aroused from their Laodicean slumber party, are going to be left in the field to burn.

Did you know that the Laodiceans are the tares Jesus spoke of in this parable? Here's another quote I shared with our dear brother Standish. *Upward Look, page 35*, "We have abundant evidence that the tares grow with the wheat in the church of God (**or in the field**). There are sincere Christians (**which would be the wheat**) and there are also lukewarm Christians" (**which would be the tares**).

So, we can see from this statement that the harvest of the wheat is away from lukewarm Laodiceans. Over the years I've heard many Seventh-day Adventists proudly say that their church is the Laodicean church, because it's the last church mentioned in **Revelation 3**, and I would not disagree with that; the problem is, every Laodicean is going to be spued out, and spued out does not mean going through to the kingdom. If we want to make it to the barn we must leave the Laodicean condition behind and develop the characteristics of the church at Philadelphia, because not one Laodicean will be saved, not one! But you can study that out for yourself.

But here's the point about these zealous servants who wanted to gather up the tares. As servants today, we must not make the same assumption that the servants of the householder made when they said: "Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?" The idea was to gather the tares out of the field and take them away so they wouldn't contaminate the wheat, but there's something wrong with that approach? What is it? It is simply this: Jesus is not in the tare harvesting business; He's not in the business of removing tares from the field. He's in the business of removing wheat from the field.

So the servants of the householder wanted to gather up the tares, but what did Jesus say in **Matthew 13:29**? "He said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them."

Now, there are several reasons why the servants of Christ are not to pull up the tares? One of the reasons might be that some are not fully ripe, and they might make mistakes, because when the plants are young they're not distinguishable from the wheat, and even if the tares are mature, some of the wheat could very well be destroyed by pulling them up, because their root systems are twisted around the tares so closely that they would be killed in the process. It takes a very delicate process to separate the wheat from the tares successfully, and what human being is capable of doing such a work? Really none. That's why Jesus said, "let them grow together until the harvest."

So, when does the harvest take place? When Jesus comes? Yes, but first there has to be a separation of the wheat from the tares. There is more than one phase to the harvesting process; one that began on October 22, 1844 with the investigative judgment and one that ends the process when Jesus comes to execute judgment, and between these two judgments there is, and has been a preparation for the harvest in each generation. And

so, there's a separation phase to the harvest, which is going on now, and there will be a physical harvest when Jesus comes, and most Christians today are only concerned with the physical part, because they think Jesus will change their character when He comes. But to believe that we can remain in the field, or in an apostate church with the New Theology mind-set until that happens is a deception.

Again, all through history God's people had to leave their apostate church, and it's no different today. God will always work on this same principle, we already read that. Satan would like us to put off the part of the harvest that requires separation from the tares for some future time so we can stay in a corrupt church and be lost, but brothers and sisters, the part of the harvest that will determine whether we remain in the field to burn or get harvested out, is in progress now, and has been for many years.

And think of this; when God destroyed the earth with a flood, He removed Noah and his family from an apostate world, didn't He? And so again, the righteous always come out and away from the wicked. Don't ever forget that principle, because if you do, it will cost you dearly.

Let me give you a couple reasons why it's dangerous to stay in an apostate church. Number one, Satan is a master at deceiving people through creeping compromise. He insinuates himself into churches gradually; that's what happened to the sleepy watchman in the parable. And number two, you may think you're strong in what you believe and won't be adversely affected by what the tares are teaching and by the way they live, but if you think that way, you're fooled already and don't know it. Remember what it says in ***Early Writings, pages 124, 125***? If we knowingly go where error is being taught without being obliged to go, the Lord will not keep us from being deceived.

In **2 Corinthians 3:18** we're told that we are changed into the image of God by beholding Him, and the same principle is true when beholding falsehood. In ***Christian Education, page 65*** it says, "It is a law of the mind that it gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is trained to dwell." And don't think that Satan doesn't know that. He is a master psychologist, and he is determined to get you on his side any way he can, and we are no match for Him. And so we are not to have confidence in ourselves in these matters. And number three, if you know the church you attend is doing wrong and the leadership is allowing it, then by your presence or through membership you will be held corporately accountable, and the only way you can get out of that death sentence is to speak out against the wrong while you are there, and if you do that, you won't be there long, because they'll give you the left foot of fellowship just like they have to so many others.

***Testimonies for the Church, volume 3, page 269*** says, "God holds His people, as a body, responsible for the sins existing in individuals among them." Think of that the next time the church you attend sweeps sin under the rug or teaches things that are leading people

down the broad road to destruction. If you just sit back and say nothing, and do nothing, then God will hold you responsible as if you were the one who sinned, or that you were the one who was teaching that error.

Now back to the parable. In **Matthew 13:30**. Jesus said, “Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.”

Here again we see two phases to the harvest; the binding is the first part, and removing the wheat is the second. Jesus said the tares are to be “bound in bundles,” but did He tell the reapers to take them anywhere? No. Why? Because it’s a waste of time and effort to remove them from the field. This parable reflects the true process of the harvest, because it’s easier to burn them right where they are.

When Cindy and I lived in Oregon, there were large fields of rye grass, and after the seed was harvested and taken out of the field, the farmers would pull large propane burners with their tractors through the fields and burn everything that was left behind, and that rightly represents the process in the parable. Remove the wheat, or the children of the kingdom, and burn up the tares that are left in the field, or in their apostate church.

Now, the field represents what? “The church of Christ in the world.” And the wheat is to be harvested out of that field. And so, if the wheat is to be gathered out of the field, or out of all the apostate churches, then the last day church has to be a church that has gone bad just like all the others before it. They have apostatized, or rejected the truth they once had, and you’ll have to decide whether or not the church you attend has done that. When one hears and understands the message of this parable, they will have to decide for themselves to leave or to stay.

Now here’s another important point; who are the reapers according to the parable? In **Matthew 13:39** Jesus said, “The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are **(who?)** the angels.”

According to the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, angels are God’s messengers, and what do messengers do? They deliver messages! **Early Writing, page 118** says, “I then saw the third angel. Said my accompanying angel, ‘Fearful is his work, awful is his mission. He is the angel that is to select the wheat from the tares, and seal, or bind, the wheat for the heavenly garner. These things should engross the whole mind, the whole attention.’” And friends, that’s the reason we’re studying this parable today. There’s something important here that the Lord would have us to understand. It’s a mystery of the kingdom, or a secret that has been kept from the foundation of the world, something

that has been hidden from carnally minded people who believe that Jesus is too loving to burn them up if they stay in the field.

So again, the harvesting process of binding the wheat and tares began right after the first and second angels' messages were rejected in 1844. Since that time, and in each successive generation since, the third angel has been doing the work of separating the wheat from the tares, and the investigative judgment, which also began in 1844, is the process that reveals which are wheat and which are tares. But how does the third angel do his awful and fearful work? *Testimonies for the Church, volume 1, page 77* says, "I was shown that the third angel, proclaiming the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, represents the people who receive this message and raise the voice of warning to the world" or to "the church in the world." So, it's people like us who know the truth and share the truth with others that binds the wheat and tares in separate bundles, and that's what fulfills this phase of the harvest.

And what is the message of the third angel? *Testimonies to Ministers, pages 91 ,92*, "The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety. It invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. . . . This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice."

So, here's what the third angel's message is all about in a nutshell. When Jesus is abiding in the heart, it will be made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. In other words, you will stop sinning, you will be obedient to all the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus, because you have received the righteousness of Christ. You can't have Jesus and sin in your heart at the same time. According the Bible that's impossible! One or the other has to go! **1 John 3:6** says, "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not." And **verse 8** says, "He that committeth sin is of the devil." So the third angel's message is a message of salvation from sin, a reclaiming from sin, which makes the third angel's message at swords points with the new theology of salvation in sin. Do you see that? The third angel's purpose is to remove sin from our lives and get us ready to be harvested out of the field.

And so, the third angel's message, given by God's messengers, is what separates wheat from the tares, and seals or binds the wheat for the heavenly garner. It's not the messenger who does the separating, that's an important point, it's the message! Our job

is to give the message and the message will do the work of binding and separation. And the acceptance or rejection of the message is what determines where we're going to end up; whether in a lukewarm tare filled church, left in the field to burn, or wheat that is gathered out of the field and into the heavenly garner.

Now, there's something else that must happen to the wheat before the executive judgment takes place, or before the physical harvest takes place at the coming of the Lord. The first phase of the harvest is to separate the wheat from the tares and bind them in bundles, but there's still a process the wheat must go through before they're ready to be gathered into the barn. We don't have time to go into detail about this today, but after the wheat, or the children of the kingdom, have become separated from the tares, there's still a violent process the wheat must go through to separate the chaff from the wheat, which involves whatever spiritual growth needs to happen before they are character ready for the barn, and we're not all at the same stage in the process, but we're going to have to leave that right there for today for lack of time.

Now, once the wheat are bound in bundles and sealed, who or what harvests them into the barn? **Letter 86, June 18, 1900**, "The message of the angel following the third is now **(written well over a hundred years ago)** is now to be given to all parts of the world. It is to be the harvest message, and the whole earth will be lighted with the glory of God."

So, the fourth angel's message of **Revelation 18** is the harvest message that is responsible for actually gathering in the crop, because that's what the word harvest means, to gather in. The third angel binds and seals the wheat, and the fourth angel gathers them out of the field. And what is the fourth angel's message? It's the last call to all who are still in the field, still in their apostate churches to separate from those who persist in sin, and if they don't, they're going to receive of the seven last plagues that are prepared for Babylon, which is all the apostate churches.

But here's the thing, if the wheat are still in the field, how can they be the ones who give the final warning to those who are still in the field? They can't. It can only be done by those that have been led out of the field "a little way." I wish we had the time, but you're going to have to read it and study it out for yourself in **Early Writings, page 55**. In fact, it would be well to read the whole chapter titled "End of the 2300 Days." On **page 55** it says when Jesus rose up from the throne in the Holy Place, before entering the Most Holy in 1844, he "led them out **(that is, those who leave their apostate churches at the time)** he "led them out a little way" and said, "Wait here; I am going to My Father to receive the kingdom; keep your garments spotless, and in a little while I will return from the wedding and receive you to Myself."



That's where the little praying companies are today. They're not in the field that's going to burn, and they're not yet in the barn, they've been "led out a little way" from their apostate churches to give the final warning. These little companies have been led out to meet in small groups just outside the field, and they've been told to "keep their garments spotless" and they can't do that and continue to sin. With God's help they have to stop, and they also have to let those who are still in the field know that they can never have spotless garments if they remain in their Babylonian churches. Just as our pioneers were "led out a little way", they must be led out a little way" as well.

And that makes perfect sense when you think about it, because **1 Peter 4:17** says, "Judgment must begin at the house of God." In other words, probation will close for God's professed people before it does for those who have not had an opportunity to hear the truth for this time, and if that's the case, then we must make our decision to leave the field and be "led out a little way" in order to keep our garments spotless and proclaim a message for others to do the same. As already mentioned, no one can keep their garments spotless unless they stop sinning, that's why perfection of character is not a moot issue. Without clean garments we're doomed, and the devil knows it. That's why he is so desperate to fool people into thinking that they are saved in sin and that the blood of Jesus still covers them while they are living in it.

Also in *Testimonies for the Church, volume 9, page 97* we are told that God is "holding back His judgments, waiting for the message of warning to be sounded to all." **(And that)** "There are many who have not yet heard the testing truth for this time. **(Then it says)** Tenderly will the Lord look upon them. His heart of mercy is touched; His hand is still stretched out to save, while the door is closed to those who would not enter." Who is that door closed to? It's closed to those who have heard the testing truths of the third and fourth angels' messages, but have not heeded them. That would be those who have decided to remain in the field rather than allowing those messages to get them ready to be harvested out.

Now let's read quickly through the last few verses of this parable in **verses 40-43**. These are the verses that deal with the last phase of the harvest, or the executive judgment. Jesus said, "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels **(literal angels during the executive judgment)**, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Oh, I pray that we all have ears to hear this morning.

In *Review and Herald, April 1, 1902* Ellen White wrote the following about the wheat and tares parable. She said, “Read this instruction carefully, doing all in your power to understand the parable. The Holy Spirit will impress the minds of those who desire a clear comprehension of this parable.” And I hope that’s what we have done this morning.

Well, I think we’re about out of time and I know I’ve given you a lot to think about, and to study about, but in closing I’d like to read one last thing from *Early Writing, pages 88, 89* where the prophet writes about a vision the Lord gave her that explains much of what we’ve been studying this morning.

She writes, “A train of cars was shown me, going with the speed of lightning. **(The final movements will be rapid ones)** The angel bade me look carefully. I fixed my eyes upon the train. It seemed that the whole world was on board, **(or we could say it looked like the whole church was on board, because this is in the context of the wheat and tares parable)** It seemed that the whole world was on board, that there could not be one left. Said the angel, ‘They are binding in bundles ready to burn.’ Then he showed me the conductor, who appeared like a stately, fair person, whom all the passengers looked up to and revered. I was perplexed and asked my attending angel who it was. He said, ‘It is Satan. He is the conductor in the form of an angel of light. He has taken the world captive. **(He has taken who captive? He has taken the church captive)** They are given over to strong delusions, to believe a lie, that they may be damned. **(That lie is salvation in sin according to 2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12. Check it out for yourself)** This agent, the next highest in order to him, is the engineer, and other of his agents are employed in different offices as he may need them, and they are all going with lightning speed to perdition. I asked the angel if there were none left. **(Lord, is the whole church going to be lost?)** He bade me look in an opposite direction **(that would be salvation from sin, not in sin)**, and I saw a little company traveling a narrow pathway. All seemed to be firmly united, bound together by the truth **(the truth of the third angel’s message)**, in bundles, or companies **(those who were “led out a little way”)**. Said the angel, ‘The third angel is binding, or sealing, them in bundles for the heavenly garner.’ This little company looked careworn, as if they had passed through severe trials and conflicts. **(Because they have! Through the winnowing process the chaff has been removed from their characters and has blown away at the threshing floor)** And it appeared as if the sun had just risen from behind a cloud and shone upon their countenances, causing them to look triumphant, as if their victories were nearly won. I saw that the Lord has given the world **(or the church)** opportunity to discover the snare. **(The snare of believing that one can be in a saving relationship with Jesus while still having ongoing sin in the life)** This one

thing is evidence enough for the Christian, if there were no other; namely, that there is no difference made between the precious and the vile.”

Oh, we could easily spend another hour talking about the fact that one can hardly distinguish between most Seventh-day Adventists and worldlings today, in dress, in diet, in the activities they engage in, and what they believe, and the way they lightly regard the Sabbath, but we are totally out of time, so let's close with prayer.