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Isaiah chapter 44

6Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. **7**Who is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and set it before me, since I appointed an ancient people. Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen. **8**Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any."

Psalms chapter 119

57The LORD is my portion; I promise to keep your words. **58**I entreat your favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise. **59**When I think on my ways, I turn my feet to your testimonies; **60**I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments. **61**Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget your law. **62**At midnight I rise to praise you, because of your righteous rules. **63**I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts. **64**The earth, O LORD, is full of your steadfast love; teach me your statutes!

Romans chapter 8

18For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. **19**For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. **20**For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope **21**that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the

freedom of the glory of the children of God. **22**For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. **23**And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. **24**For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? **25**But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

26Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. **27**And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Context Summary

Romans 8:18–30 talks about the participation of Christians in the everyday suffering experienced by all of creation. We all groan together as a woman in labor while we wait for God to reveal His children. As His children, we are waiting for the Father to complete our adoption by redeeming our bodies so that we can be with Him. God's Spirit helps us in the season of waiting by taking our unformed prayers to God. We trust that God uses every circumstance in our lives for His purposes and that He has chosen us long ago to be His children.

Romans 8:18

ESV

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

What does Romans 8:18 mean? This much-loved and often-cited verse is about Paul's perspective. He has previously written that all who are in Christ are heirs of God's kingdom with Christ, since all who are in Christ will share in His suffering before sharing in His glory.

This begins a powerful passage in which Paul discusses living, as a Christian, through the suffering that comes with this life on earth. Some Bible teachers suggest that Paul is referring "only" to suffering caused by persecution for faith in Christ. Based on the full context of the passage, however, there is every reason to understand Paul to include the everyday suffering that comes with living on this sin-stained planet. He will be clear that it is experienced by all creatures (Romans 8:20), but that only those who are in Christ look forward to sharing in the glories of God's kingdom afterwards.

Paul's perspective is that our present sufferings are not even worth holding up in comparison with the glories that will be revealed in us. Some readers might be tempted to hear Paul glossing over the enormous pain, physical and emotional, that comes with human existence. He is not. Instead, Paul is elevating the much more enormous glory to come. Paul understood pain very deeply. Second Corinthians 11:23–29 contains a small sampling of his experiences: hunger, thirst, danger, imprisonment, torture, and persecution. And yet, he says all of that suffering cannot compare to the glories that will be revealed at some future time to saved believers as God's heirs with Christ. Truly, those endless glories must be incomprehensibly wonderful, satisfying, and meaningful.

Without Christ, we could never participate in God's glory because of our sin (Romans 3:23). In Christ, as God's fully adopted heirs, we will fully experience His glory forever (Romans 6:23). This verse does not minimize the pain we experience—it simply puts it into an eternal perspective.

Romans 8:19

ESV

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

What does Romans 8:19 mean? Paul has written that for Christians, our present sufferings on this earth, on this side of eternity, are not worth comparing to God's glory that will be revealed. Given that life is full of such enormous suffering, God's glory must be incomprehensibly wonderful. This in no way minimizes our pain and suffering—on the contrary, it acknowledges it, while keeping an eternal perspective.

Now Paul writes that saved Christians (Romans 3:26) are not the only ones who long for the moment when suffering will be replaced by glory. In fact, "the creation" eagerly longs for it, as well. More specifically, the creation waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

This statement is startling in two ways. First, Paul describes creation as experiencing an awareness that something better is coming. By "creation," Paul seems to refer to all God has made, from plants and animals, to other people to the air, water, and sky. And all of it, all of us, are waiting for a moment when everything will finally be made right.

The other startling idea is that the moment Paul has in mind is when the children of God are "revealed." Of course, Paul has made clear that those in Christ are

already the children of God. We accept this about ourselves and each other by faith, although we continue to appear on the surface the same as everyone else.

A moment is coming, though, when those in Christ will be glorified and it will become impossible to deny that we are God's children. God's righteousness, and our faith in Him, will be vindicated to the world. Paul is describing a future time when God will make all things right. Paul writes that all of nature is eagerly looking forward to that day. The following verses will explain why that is.

Romans 8:20

ESV

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope

What does Romans 8:20 mean? All of creation is waiting with eager longing for the day when the children of God—those who are in Christ (Romans 3:26)—will be revealed as who we truly are (1 John 3:2). That's what Paul wrote in the previous verse. Now he explains why the creation longs for that day when God will reveal His children, and Himself, in glory.

The creation, meaning all God has made, is suffering. It is subject to something described using the Greek word *mataiotēti*. This term implies something warped, perverse, sickly, weak, or false. This futility—or "frustration"—came long ago, when sin entered into the world. God did not create the world this way, and creation itself did not choose this. The trees and streams and animals and sky did not choose an existence of frustration. Rather, God subjected creation to frustration in response to Adam's sin in the garden of Eden. God did not design creation to suffer. That hardship came after all was meaningful and "very good." This warped, struggling existence came about when God cursed all of creation in response to human sin (Genesis 3:14, 17–19).

The words "in hope" that end the verse belong to a phrase in the following verse.

Romans 8:21

ESV

that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

What does Romans 8:21 mean? Paul has painted a dark picture. Unfortunately, it is an honest representation of the sin-ravaged world in which we live. All of creation suffers in frustration under the curses of God in response to sin (Genesis 3:14, 17–19). In response to Adam's rebellion in the garden, God subjected His perfect creation to frustration and futility. This brought pain, suffering, meaninglessness, and death.

Paul has been clear that the story is not over, though. Creation is waiting, longing, for God's children to be revealed in glory (Romans 8:19). That's the day when all will begin to be made right (1 John 3:2). Somehow, at some level, the creation knows this and anticipates it. Mysteriously, a key component of what will happen on that day is that God's glory will be revealed to all and revealed in those who have faith in Christ (Romans 3:26).

Now Paul concludes his thought from the previous verse. God didn't subject creation to decay, to frustration, out of pettiness or revenge. Instead, He acted in hope of—here meaning "looking forward to"—the reversal of His curses. He never intended for His creation to experience this futility and death and corruption forever. It won't. The day is coming when God will reveal His children in the glory He has for us, and then creation will be set free from its bondage. Paul says that creation itself will obtain the same freedom that those in Christ will receive when they are glorified. All suffering will end. All will be made right (Revelation 21:1–4).

Romans 8:22

ESV

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

What does Romans 8:22 mean? The previous verse described a future moment when God's children will be revealed in glory, and all of creation will be freed from bondage to decay and corruption. In other words, all will be made right. Creation will be returned to the state it occupied when first created, before sin entered into the world (Revelation 21:1–4; 1 John 3:2).

Now Paul makes it clear that we are not there yet. In this present moment, all of creation continues to groan together in the pains of childbirth. Clearly, this groaning coming from creation as it suffers in bondage to decay has been going on since sin entered into the world. It's still happening. Paul also adds a hopeful

word picture. This groaning is like the pains of childbirth. In other words, the pain is real, vivid, and intense, but it is leading to a moment of "birth" when all will be made right and the pain will be forgotten.

This is similar to an analogy used by Jesus, in John 16:21–22: *"When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you."*

Once again, we see that this passage of Romans does not ignore or dismiss human suffering. Pain is real, and human beings experience suffering in this life. The point here is not that pain is pleasant—on the contrary, it's a miserable thing. What can get us through the pain is knowing what awaits us on the other side. This is much like a woman in labor to deliver a baby. No woman wants the pain, itself, but she is willing to endure it because of the joyful result it brings.

Paul will show in the following verse that not only does creation groan now, but we Christians do, as well. We are also waiting for the day when the suffering will end and all will be made right.

Romans 8:23

ESV

And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

What does Romans 8:23 mean? Christians—God's children through faith in Christ (Romans 3:26)—can experience love, joy, peace, and hope in the power of Holy Spirit. At the same time, we should also expect to experience suffering (John 16:33). This is not just the suffering of persecution (2 Corinthians 5:1–5). It includes the way we all suffer, along with all of creation, thanks to the consequences of sin. We live in a world subjected by God to futility and decay, as a way to bring about His perfect plan (Romans 8:20–22).

Paul has described all of creation as expressing this frustration, sorrow, and longing. He uses the term "groaning," from the root word *sustenazo*, applied to the sounds made by a woman in labor, about to deliver a baby, as she endures the waves of pain that come and go.

Now Paul refers to Christians as those who have God's Spirit with us: the "firstfruits of the Spirit" or "the Spirit as a first result of being in Christ." Such saved believers also groan inwardly in this waiting. But while the creation is waiting for God's children to be revealed in glory, we are waiting for something more specific. We wait eagerly for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

The picture Paul paints here ties together several things he has written in Romans 8 so far. He has said that God has given us in the Holy Spirit what he called the "Spirit of adoption" (Romans 8:15). We have already been adopted and have become the full children of God through faith in Christ. So what are we waiting for if the adoption is complete?

Paul has written about a disconnect between our spirits and our bodies: "... although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness" (Romans 8:10). It's true that we are fully God's children right now through faith in Christ, but we have yet to meet our Father in person. We have been freed from the eternal penalty for sin, but our bodies continue to experience the temporary consequence of sin: death. We are dying, and these bodies will die.

So what are we adopted children of God waiting for? We're waiting for our bodies to be redeemed after we die physically and are then resurrected as Christ was. Or as someone put it: Our adoption is complete; we're just waiting for our father to come and pick us up so that we can be with Him.

Romans 8:24

ESV

For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?

What does Romans 8:24 mean? According to the previous verse, we who trust in Christ and have the Spirit of God are waiting with eager longing. We are looking forward to the completion of our adoption as God's children: the redemption of our bodies. That will happen once these sin-warped bodies of ours finally die and are resurrected in glory, just as Jesus' body was (1 John 3:2).

Now Paul writes that the hope of this very thing—resurrection, being with God as His children—is the same hope that brought us to faith in Christ in the first place. It's the thing everyone longs for, but nobody can reach on our own. Sin

keeps us from God's eternal glory (Romans 3:23), but God gives it to us as a gift (Romans 6:23).

We're not home, yet, though. This gift is guaranteed. Our hope is certain, but it has not materialized. We can't see it. If we could, Paul writes, it would not be hope. The life of a Christian is a life of anticipation.

Romans 8:25

ESV

But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

What does Romans 8:25 mean? Paul has been describing both our current state of being and our future as Christians. Our future is glory, when all will be made right, our faith will be vindicated to the world, and our redeemed bodies will allow us to be with our Father forever.

Our current state, though, is one of longing for that day. For now, we have to suffer through the realities of life and all the consequences of sin on this side of eternity. Our hope is sure, but by definition it has not *arrived* yet.

Now Paul describes us, Christians, as people who wait with patience for a hope we do not see with our eyes. We might not always feel the longing as intensely, or always as patiently. Still, to be a Christian in this life means to wait for the best possible reality anyone can imagine, with patience. We can trust our Father to bring it about at just the right time.

32Romans 8:26

ESV

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

What does Romans 8:26 mean? This passage describes the difference between our future and our present, as Christians. Our future in Christ, as God's children and heirs of His kingdom, is everything we long for. Our present, though, is a life of longing, patient waiting, living in the hope of reality that has

not yet arrived. We continue to suffer along with the rest of creation, to groan for the life to come.

How do live in the meantime? A large part of the answer to that question has to do with the Holy Spirit, given to every Christian when he or she comes to faith in Christ. God gives us His own Spirit as a deposit or down payment on that future we are longing for (Ephesians 1:13–14; 2 Corinthians 1:22).

Through the Spirit, God provides for us in many different ways on this side of eternity. Generally, he helps us in our weakness. Paul is acknowledging here that, even as Christians, we remain weak in and of ourselves. Physically, we remain creatures in fragile bodies with sometimes baffling emotions. Spiritually, we can become weak in our faith and/or in our resistance to sinful desires. As Paul will begin to make clear, however, God's Spirit with us makes all the difference. He continually helps us in and even through our weakness. He steps in. He helps with the burden.

More specifically, Paul writes that we are so weak that at times we do not know *what* to pray for! We have been given access, in prayer, to our Father God. We feel the need, the longing, for Him, but what do we ask for? The Spirit steps in and carries those unsaid "groanings"—those thoughts and feelings we simply cannot express in human words—to God. He both creates the connection from ourselves to God and provides the content of our communication.

Romans 8:27

ESV

And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

What does Romans 8:27 mean? Paul has revealed in Romans 8 that the life of a Christian on this side of eternity is one of waiting and longing to be with our God while enduring the suffering of this life. We live with a kind of endless groaning to be made whole by the redemption of our bodies. We are not alone, however. God gives His Spirit to everyone who trusts in Christ (Ephesians 1:13–14; 2 Corinthians 1:22). One way the Spirit helps us in our weakness is by taking our too-deep-for-words groanings, communicating them to the Father as prayers. The Spirit intercedes for us.

Now Paul explains how God receives those prayers. Paul uses a description for God which is both beautiful and perhaps intimidating. Here, he calls God the Father the "one who searches hearts" (Hebrews 4:12–13). The Father and the

Spirit are eternally connected. The Father in heaven knows the mind of His Spirit in us. Their connection remains ever unbroken.

The Spirit then forms our unspoken groanings toward God into prayers that conform to God's will. God, ever in search mode, receives those prayers directly from our hearts. In this way, even in our waiting to be with God in person, we are in potentially constant communication with Him.

This does not mean we don't need to pray to God with words. We still need to make an effort to think about what we will say to God before we say it. Intentional prayerfulness is essential for those who are in Christ. This does mean, however, that we don't need to be overly anxious that we're "praying wrong." Because the Spirit is interceding for us to the Father and within His will, we are free to talk to God as little children talk to their fathers. We don't need special language or systems to be sure He is receiving what we're saying. He understands, even better than we do.

Matthew 13

24He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, **25**but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. **26**So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. **27**And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' **28**He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' **29**But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. **30**Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, "Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn."'"

36Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." **37**He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. **38**The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, **39**and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. **40**Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. **41**The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of

sin and all law-breakers, **42**and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **43**Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

Context Summary

Matthew 13:24–30 contains the parable of the wheat and the weeds, also known as the parable of the wheat and the "tares." Christ will later explain this as a metaphor for God separating believers from non-believers in the final judgment (Matthew 13:36–43). He tells the crowd of a farmer who sowed good wheat seeds into a field. His enemy, though, sabotaged the field with weeds. This probably meant planting a worthless plant that looks deceptively like wheat. The farmer sensibly waits, allowing the wheat and weeds to grow together rather than risking damage to the wheat by uprooting the other plants. At the harvest, the farmer will tell his workers to gather up the weeds and bundle them to be burned.

Matthew 13:24

ESV

He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field,

What does Matthew 13:24 mean? Most of Jesus' parables take the form of short stories meant to create a picture of heaven's kingdom. Matthew seems to have shifted His focus back to Jesus' teaching. In this case, Christ is speaking to the large crowd gathered on the beach of the Sea of Galilee as He sits on a boat just offshore. Later, Jesus and the disciples will go into a house where Jesus will explain the specific meaning of this parable (Matthew 13:36–43).

To understand these parables, it's important to remember that Israel had been waiting hundreds of years for the arrival of the promised Messiah. There was an expectation that this Promised One would establish His kingdom. Israel's leaders and most of her people have not received Jesus as the Messiah, in part, because He is not bringing the kingdom *immediately*, as they assumed He would. At this point, Jesus has not seemed interested in judging the unfaithful, overthrowing the Romans, or establishing a new political kingdom of Israel. Jesus' parables are meant to explain God's actual intentions and give context to His preaching about the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus begins by once again picturing a farmer planting a field of grain. Jesus' listeners likely included many people who worked in agriculture and had participated in planting or tending or harvesting fields. His audience would have quickly understood the exact scenario Jesus describes.

The kingdom of heaven is being compared to the situation Jesus will describe, not the sower specifically. The important point for the story is that the man sowed good seed into the field. The following verses show that this parable, unlike the previous one (Matthew 13:1–9), is not about the quality of the soil or the people that soil represents. The elements are the same, but they are being used for a different lesson, with different symbolism. Now it is the seed that represents people. The sower used only good wheat seeds on this field and nothing else.

Matthew 13:25

ESV

but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away.

What does Matthew 13:25 mean? Agricultural parables would have been especially easy for the original audience to visualize. Many people worked on fields and would have recognized the scenarios Jesus described. This parable starts with a sower who has finished the work of planting a field. The sower used only good wheat seeds (Matthew 13:24).

Now, though, an enemy comes to the farmer's fields at night while his workers are sleeping. This does not necessarily mean that the workers are to blame. The story doesn't suggest that they should have been awake and guarding the field, only that the enemy is sneaky and up to no good. This is an important point in interpreting parables: that not *every tiny detail* is meant to have some literal application. The point of any parable is to explain a larger idea, not to create a detailed explanation.

The enemy's attack takes the form of sabotage. He sows a second round of plants, weeds, mixed right in with the wheat. It's possible that this was a known form of vandalism, and that the people listening to Jesus had seen or heard of this very thing happening before. Scholars suggest the audience likely would have imagined the weeds to be an inedible type of ryegrass called "darnel" or "tares." Prior to modern sorting techniques, this was a difficult weed to manage. It looks almost exactly like wheat, at first. By the time it can be clearly distinguished, it's already fully rooted in the ground.

The following verses will show the great lengths the farmer would need to take to get rid of the weed and save the crop of grain. Especially during this time in Israel's history, this attack would have been malicious, both to the farmer and to those who depended on him for food. Jesus will later explain to the disciples exactly what each element in this parable represents (Matthew 13:36–43).

Matthew 13:26

ESV

So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also.

What does Matthew 13:26 mean? This parable of Jesus describes an attack on a farmer's crop. The farmer planted a field with only good wheat seeds. During the dark of night, his enemy came and planted weeds in the field, as well (Matthew 13:24–25). Now Jesus reveals just how effective the attack has been. By the time the wheat plants begin to develop, the weeds are entrenched.

Bible scholars say the weed Jesus describes was likely "darnel," a semi-poisonous ryegrass that closely resembles wheat in the early stages of its growth. These plants are also known as "tares," and the use of that term in translations such as the King James Version is why this is often called "the parable of the wheat and the tares." This is a common plant, and the attack Jesus describes here has historically been one way of sabotaging another's crops.

Only later, after the wheat begins to bear grain, would the difference become obvious. By that time, though, the roots of the weeds and the wheat would likely have been entangled. As Jesus will show, the only good solution was to harvest the wheat and weeds together and then to separate them (Matthew 13:29–30). Later (Matthew 13:36–43), Jesus will explain to His disciples exactly what each element of this parable represents.

Matthew 13:27

ESV

And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?'

What does Matthew 13:27 mean? Jesus is telling a story, a parable, about an attack on a farmer's field of wheat (Matthew 13:24–26). Later He will explain to His disciples exactly what each element in the story represents (Matthew 13:36–43).

Shortly after the farmer planted his crop, an enemy snuck into his field under the cover of darkness and planted weeds alongside his wheat. Bible scholars understand this weed to be "darnel," also known as "tares." This is a poisonous ryegrass that looks so similar to good grain that it is sometimes called "false wheat." The difference only becomes noticeable once the wheat plants begin to bear grain. By then, the root systems of the two plants would be intermixed in the soil. This kind of sabotage is a known tactic in agriculture, meant to devastate someone else's harvest.

The servants responsible for tending the fields eventually notice that these weeds are growing up alongside the otherwise healthy grain. They take their observation to their master, the farmer, along with pointed questions: How is this happening? Didn't you use good seed? If so, where did these weeds come from? The servants responsible for taking care of their master's field want to know where the process broke down. Despite what some interpreters claim, Scripture doesn't blame the field workers for letting this happen.

Matthew 13:28

ESV

He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?'

What does Matthew 13:28 mean? This parable is sometimes called "the wheat and the tares." "Tare" is another name for a weed sometimes called "darnel," an inedible ryegrass that is sometimes called "false wheat." As a young plant, it looks almost exactly like wheat until both begin to bear; then the difference becomes obvious. By that point, though, the roots of the wheat and the weeds are likely entangled.

In the story, a farmer's servants have come to him to ask how it is possible that weeds have come up throughout the field along with the wheat. Did he use good seed? The farmer now assures them the seed was good. An enemy has attacked them, sowing the seeds of the weeds in among the good seeds of the wheat. This would not have been an unheard-of act in Jesus' era. Sabotaging

another's field with hostile plants is an act seen in many places around the world.

The servants now ask the farmer if he wants them to go and pull up all the weeds. That's not an unreasonable question: darnel is mildly poisonous, so it can't be ignored, or the entire harvest will be ruined. In the following verse, the farmer will explain why that's a bad idea. The two plants will be separated, but not yet.

Jesus will soon explain to the disciples exactly what each element of this story is meant to represent (Matthew 13:36–43).

Matthew 13:29

ESV

But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them.'

What does Matthew 13:29 mean? As part of a parable (Matthew 13:24–28), a farmer's servants have asked if they should pull out unwanted plants. They have discovered weeds, called darnel or tares, growing alongside the wheat. Since this inedible ryegrass resembles wheat plants early in the growth cycle, the sudden appearance of so many weeds was an unwelcome surprise. After the master explains that an enemy has done this to them, the servants want to know if they should get to work and pull up all the weeds.

The master now tells them no. Had there been only one or two small plants, or a scattering of them, weeding would have been the simplest solution. This was not a natural problem, however—this was an attack (Matthew 13:25). There would have been many, many weeds intermixed with the good plants. By this stage of development, when the plants can be distinguished, the roots of the weeds would have been entangled with the roots of the wheat. Pulling up that many weeds could destroy the good grain before it is ready to harvest. So, the master will present a better strategy (Matthew 13:30).

Parables are stories meant to summarize larger ideas about the kingdom of heaven. Jesus intends for His disciples to understand these truths, so He will explain exactly what those are later (Matthew 13:36–43).

Matthew 13:30**ESV**

Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, "Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn."""

What does Matthew 13:30 mean? This concludes the parable of "the wheat and the weeds," also known as "the wheat and the tares." A farmer's field has been attacked. After the farmer planted good wheat seeds, an enemy snuck in after dark and planted weed seeds alongside the wheat. The weed in question is almost certainly *darnel*, also known as tares or "false wheat." This looks almost exactly like wheat early on, so the infestation is only discovered after the good wheat plants begin to develop their grain.

The farmer has explained to his servants why they cannot pull up the weeds. By this time, the roots of both wheat and weed are likely entangled. Taking out one or two plants would be one thing, but in this case the entire field is riddled with weeds. To yank out the weeds will bring up the wheat plants too soon.

Now the farmer reveals his strategy for dealing with these weeds. He will leave them alone for now. He will let them grow to maturity alongside the wheat, and then he will tell his harvesters to gather the weeds first and then the wheat. They will harvest the weeds, bundle them, and burn them. At that point, the wheat is going to be harvested anyway, so it can be collected and put into storage in the farmer's barn.

Jesus began this parable as He did most of those recorded in this section: by saying "the kingdom of heaven may be compared to..." (Matthew 13:24). This is because many people wondered why Jesus, as the supposed Messiah, was not immediately bringing judgment on Israel's enemies and the unfaithful. They assumed the Promised One would set right to overthrowing the Romans and setting up His kingdom on earth. To dispel those misunderstandings, Jesus explains the kingdom using parables.

In this parable, Jesus symbolically described two groups of people: those who will be gathered into the barn and those who will be burned up. The barn represents the kingdom of heaven that He has been preaching about. The fire represents God's judgment, which is sometimes compared to a harvest. Jesus, then, is answering the question of how He has brought the kingdom without bringing the judgment. He is allowing both the "kingdom people" and those destined for God's wrath to remain together until the "day of the Lord" when the

judgment will come and He will establish His political kingdom on earth (Matthew 13:36–43).

Matthew 13:36

ESV

Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.”

What does Matthew 13:36 mean? Large crowds followed Jesus as He travelled around Galilee. Most of the people were not followers in the sense of being committed to belief in Jesus as the Messiah. Rather, most came to see His miraculous healings or to hear His compelling teaching, but not in any sincere effort to follow God. Jesus described them as the fulfillment of Isaiah's words about a people with dull hearts and no capacity to understand the truth (Matthew 13:13–16).

In this chapter, Jesus had taken a seat on a boat and taught to a large crowd gathered on the beach on the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 13:1–2). Matthew has been clear that Jesus spoke about the kingdom of heaven only in parables (Matthew 13:34). Now He has finished and enters a house, likely in Capernaum, with only His disciples. They ask Him to explain the parable of the weeds and the wheat which He taught to the crowd (Matthew 13: 24–30).

Although Jesus will not explain His parables to the crowds, He is willing to do so for the disciples. He has told them that it has been given to them to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 13:11) and that they have the spiritual willingness to understand in a way the larger crowds cannot (Matthew 13:16; John 7:17).

Context Summary

Matthew 13:36–43 follows Jesus away from the crowds and back into a house with His disciples. They ask Him to explain the parable of the wheat and the weeds (Matthew 13:24–30). Jesus tells them He is the farmer, and the field is the world. The good wheat seeds represent the children of the kingdom, and the weeds—also known as “tares,” likely an inedible plant that looks like wheat—are the children of the Devil who planted them. The harvest is the judgment at the end of the age. Then the reapers, God's angels, will gather all the wicked and all forms of sin and throw them into the fiery furnace. The righteous, though, will shine in the kingdom of their Father.

Matthew 13:37**ESV**

He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.

What does Matthew 13:37 mean? Jesus begins to explain to His disciples the meaning behind a parable that He taught to a large crowd (Matthew 13:24–30). Now the crowd is gone, and Jesus and His disciples are alone in a house, likely in Capernaum (Matthew 13:36). The parable began with Jesus comparing the kingdom of heaven to a man who planted good seed in his field. In that parable, the man who sowed a field represents Jesus Himself, the "Son of Man."

The title "Son of Man" is how Jesus most often described Himself (Matthew 26:24; Mark 2:10; Luke 7:34; John 8:28). He was a literal son of man in the sense that He was fully human. However, this is also an important symbol of the Messiah, taken from a vision seen by Daniel (Daniel 7:13–14). Jesus Christ was also this "Son of Man" described as ruling over all peoples forever. Jesus was both man and God, and the fulfillment of prophecy, which may be why He took on this specific descriptor so frequently.

Matthew 13:38**ESV**

The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one,

What does Matthew 13:38 mean? At the disciples' request (Matthew 13:36), Jesus is describing a parable He taught to the crowd (Matthew 13:24–30). This parable is called the "parable of the weeds" or the "wheat and the tares." Jesus described a man who sowed good seed into his field. His enemy, though, came in the night and scattered tares, a kind of weed, among the good wheat seeds.

Jesus has said that the man who sowed the field represents Himself, the Son of Man (Matthew 13:37). This is a Messianic title taken from a vision recorded by Daniel (Daniel 7:13–14). Now Christ explains that the field represents the entire world. The good wheat seeds are the "sons of the kingdom" and the weeds are the "sons of the evil one."

By sons of the kingdom, Jesus seems to mean all people who can be described as God's people. These are the ones who will be citizens of His eternal kingdom, the kingdom of heaven. The sons of the evil one are all who, in rejecting Christ, belong to the Devil (John 8:43–47). Jesus allows for only one option or the other. Nobody is described as belong to him- or herself.

Historically, some commentators have taught that "the world" here means "the church" and that those who belong to the Devil will participate in the church alongside those who belong to God as legitimate children of the kingdom. That seems to be quite a stretch, given that Jesus refers to the field as "the world," not "the kingdom." And, that Jesus refers to there being a notable difference between the two (Matthew 13:26–27). The more reasonable explanation is that it is not the church represented by the parable, but the world *at large*, occupied until the time of judgment both by those who are citizens of God's kingdom and those who are not.

Matthew 13:39

ESV

and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels.

What does Matthew 13:39 mean? Jesus is explaining to His disciples the parable He told to the crowd about the wheat and the weeds (Matthew 13:24–30). He has said the one who sows good seed into a field represents Himself, the Son of Man (Matthew 13:37). The field itself is the whole world, and the good wheat seeds being sown are the sons of the kingdom, those who will become the citizens of God's eternal kingdom. Jesus identified the weeds as the sons of the evil one (Matthew 13:38), leaving only two eternal categories for humanity: those who belong to God and those who belong to Satan.

Now He adds that the Devil is the one who planted the weeds among the good wheat seeds. It is because of the enemy that those who belong to Satan exist alongside those who belong to God in the world. However, the harvest will come eventually. In the parable itself, the farmer waits to uproot the weeds until the harvest, at which time they will be sorted out and burned (Matthew 13:30). Jesus describes that harvest as the end of the age, the prophesied time of God's judgment, sometimes called the "day of the Lord." Jesus now says that those who will harvest the field, the reapers, will be His angels. Jesus describes their grim work in the following verses.

Matthew 13:40**ESV**

Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age.

What does Matthew 13:40 mean? The parable of the wheat and the weeds was previously taught to the crowds (Matthew 13:24–30). In that parable, an enemy snuck into a farmer's field by night and sowed weeds among his good wheat seeds. The result was that the wheat and the weeds grew together, side by side, until the time for harvest came. When it did, the farmer said he would have his reapers gather the weeds and bind them in bundles to be burned (Matthew 13:30). In the story, the farmer represents Jesus (Matthew 13:37) and the good wheat represents those who come to faith in Him (Matthew 13:38).

The weeds represent the "sons of the evil one" who planted them (John 8:43–47). Those who belong to Satan will be gathered to be burned with fire at the end of the age. In the following verse, Jesus identifies the reapers as His angels who will carry out this task of separating "weeds" from the true believers of the world.

Matthew 13:41**ESV**

The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers,

What does Matthew 13:41 mean? Jesus is describing something that will take place at the "end of the age" during a time of judgment on the earth. This is part of His explanation of a parable (Matthew 13:36). This end-times sorting is represented by the time of harvest, when the farmer's reapers will gather all the weeds that have grown up with the wheat to be bundled and burned (Matthew 13:24–30). Jesus has explained that the reapers in the parable represent His servants, the angels.

Now Jesus says directly that He, the Son of Man, will send these angels to gather out of His kingdom all "causes of sin and lawbreakers." The Hebrew phrase these words are taken from may have originally appeared in Zephaniah 1:3. The phrase is apparently difficult to translate. Whatever it means exactly, it is clear from Jesus' teaching that the angels will take out of the world—by then entirely transformed into the kingdom of Jesus—everything that belonged to

Satan or causes evil to continue in the world. This would include people and, perhaps, other things.

The fate of these children of the evil one is revealed in the following verse.

Matthew 13:42

ESV

and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

What does Matthew 13:42 mean? In the parable of the weeds and the wheat (Matthew 13:24–30), Jesus depicted two plants living side-by-side in a crop, due to an act of sabotage. Some are good wheat and others are inedible weeds. The two were so intertwined in a field that they could not be separated without damaging the valuable grain. So, the farmer waits until the harvest.

The good wheat represents the children of God's kingdom. The weeds represent the children of the Devil (Matthew 13:38). The harvest is the time of God's judgment, when Christ will set up His kingdom on the earth. At that time, the entire world—represented by the field—will be His kingdom. Christ will send the reapers, His angels, to gather out of His kingdom all the law breakers and the causes of sin.

Now He adds what will be done with them. They will be thrown into the fiery furnace, a place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Jesus often used this language to describe the eternal fate of those who do not repent of their sin in order to be included in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:22; 8:12). He is describing the experience of God's judgment on those who do not come to His kingdom through faith in the Messiah. We commonly refer to this as hell.

Matthew 13:43

ESV

Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

What does Matthew 13:43 mean? Jesus has given His disciples a detailed explanation of the meaning of the parable of the wheat and the weeds (Matthew 13:36). He is the sower of the field, which is the entire world. He has sown into

His field good wheat seeds, which are the sons of the kingdom of heaven. The devil has come in the night and sown into the field weeds, which represent those who belong to him. When the harvest comes, Jesus has said, He will send His angels into the world to gather up all those who belong to the evil one, the lawbreakers and anything that causes sin. They will be thrown into the fiery furnace, hell, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth in agony (Matthew 13:37–42).

Now Jesus concludes by describing the fate of those who belong to God. He calls them "righteous." They will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Not only will they be granted entrance to the kingdom, they will shine as children of God the Father (Proverbs 4:18; 1 John 2:8; 2 Corinthians 4:6).

The New Testament is clear that entrance into this kingdom is found only through faith in God's Son, Jesus (Ephesians 2:8–10). His death on the cross pays the price for the sin of those who trust in Him, and they are given credit for His righteous life, as well as being entrusted with good works to carry out.

Jesus concludes His explanation with a solemn warning to pay close attention, and to apply His words. The phrase "he who has ears, let him hear" was used during this time to call attention to especially important teaching.