

QUESTION: The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares seems to suggest the unsaved are gathered first, before the saved, so how do you maintain a "rapture theory" of believers being raptured first and the unsaved being left behind?

ANSWER: This parable and the "harvest" it refers to **has nothing to do with the "Rapture" of believers** as taught in I Thessalonians 4:13-18, or of the "leaving behind" of the non-believers to be tried and suffer **the WRATH of GOD in the Great Tribulation** (Matthew 24:21, Revelation 3:10, Revelation 6:15-17). As we will see further along in this paper, the Rapture has already taken place, the seven years of the Great Tribulation has already happened, and the 1,000-Year Millennial Kingdom of Christ has happened and come to an end by the time this "harvest at the end of the age" occurs. God gives us many, many prophecies of the things that will happen at the Second Coming of Christ, scattered throughout the Scripture, but we often get confused when we try to make them all fit into one time frame. There are also several judgments that take place at, during and after the Second Coming of Christ. Let's begin by looking at the parable itself:

- **Matthew 13:24-30** "Another parable He put forth to them, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, "Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?" He said, "An enemy has done this." The servants said to him, "Do you want us then to go and gather them up?" But he said, "No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. **Let both grow together until the harvest**, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to BURN them, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"
- **Matthew 13:36-42** "...His disciples came to Him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.' He answered and said to them, 'He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, **the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the TARES are the sons of the wicked one.** The enemy who sowed them is the **DEVIL, the HARVEST is the END of the AGE, and the reapers are the ANGELS.** Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be **at the END of THIS AGE.** The Son of Man will send out His angels, and **they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend**, and those who practice lawlessness, and **will CAST them into the FURNACE of FIRE.** There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.'"
- **Matthew 13:49-50** "So it will be **at the END of the AGE.** The angels will come forth, **SEPARATE the wicked from among the just**, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

Definition: "TARES" - "tares" are a weed-like plant that LOOKS exactly like wheat, but does not have the wheat kernel, so therefore it is of no value. Jesus used "tares" as an example of people who would **APPEAR on the OUTSIDE to be saved**, and members of His kingdom, but would actually be empty and false. We have Jesus' own words that there will be **many so-called Christians in the church who are NOT God's people and have NEVER BEEN God's people** - they belong to the devil all along! These are the ones who may clean up their lives temporarily, but they continually fall back into sin, because they have never had a new birth and a heart-change. These are the ones who are MISTAKEN by many to be Christians who have "lost their salvation" and turned their backs on Christ. **These are the ones who "cause the Way of Truth to be blasphemed"** (II Peter 2:2), because they CLAIM to

be Christians, yet do not ACT like Christians, and so others judge the church by them, and say, "The church is full of hypocrites!"

Definition: "LEST you also UPROOT the WHEAT with them" - Lest means "for fear that" something might happen. So God does not immediately uproot the tares for fear that some of the wheat might be uprooted or damaged in the process. Many Christians ("the wheat") are still babies, or are still so immature and unlearned in the word of God (even though they SHOULD be mature) that they would not understand, even to the point of seriously damaging their faith, if God suddenly sent judgment on a number of people in their congregation who were supposedly "good Christians." Instead, God expects us all to grow and mature, and to **STUDY His word**, so that we will have our senses exercised **to DISCERN between the GOOD and the EVIL.**(Hebrews 5:13-14).

Remember, Jesus is telling a parable, not teaching church doctrine. Whenever we read a parable of Jesus, we must be careful not to dissect it and take every little detail as "doctrine", but rather to realize that **a parable is meant to teach ONE MAIN POINT.** The one main point of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares is this: "Satan will plant counterfeit, false "Christians" in the church who seem to be getting away with it, but don't worry, God will take care of it in the end, at the Final Judgment." In this parable, Jesus Himself explains the meaning of the parable, and gives some clues as to the timing of it, but we must still realize that **He is only teaching the one main point.**

So, the real question seems to be **"WHEN is 'the END of the AGE' that Jesus is speaking about?"** Jesus said the field is the world, and there have been approximately 2,000 years of good seeds and bad seeds planted in the world since Jesus spoke these words. Billions of people have died already, so **the harvest and judgment of the false believers MUST include all those who have died, NOT just the ones here on earth when Jesus returns.** Although it has been in the FIELD of the WORLD that the good and bad seeds have been planted for 2,000 years, **it is "out of His KINGDOM" that the angels remove "all things that offend" at the "end of the age"** (Matthew 13:41-43). Because verse 43 says that "the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the KINGDOM of their Father" after all sin and "things that offend" God are removed, **this must be happening AFTER the 1,000-Year Millennial reign of Christ on the earth, AFTER the Great White Throne Judgment** and just before God destroys this earth and creates the new heavens and new earth. It can't be happening at the time of the Rapture of the Church, because there will still be seven years of horrible evil and God pouring out His wrath on the world during the Great Tribulation. It can't be happening at the Glorious Appearing of Jesus Christ at the Battle of Armageddon, because the Thousand Year Reign of Christ **who will reign with a "rod of iron"** (meaning there will be non-believers still on the earth who must forceably be kept in subjection to Christ's will) must still take place. Only **AFTER the 1,000-Year Millennial reign of Christ on the earth, and AFTER the Great White Throne Judgment will it be "the END of THIS AGE" and the ushering in of God's perfect kingdom without sin.** At any other time in the earth's history, there would still be evil and "things that offend" God in existence in the world. Not **until Satan is finally cast into the Lake of Fire**, the Final Judgment of unbelievers occurs (Revelation 20:7-14) and all of them are cast into the Lake of Fire, and God recreates the heavens and the earth and removes "the curse" can "the righteous shine forth as the sun in the KINGDOM of their Father" in complete freedom from sin, evil and corruption (Revelation 21:1-8 & 23-27, Rev. 22:3-5).

- **Matthew 13:41-43** "The Son of Man will send out His angels, and **they will GATHER OUT of His KINGDOM all things that offend**, and those who practice lawlessness, and **will CAST them into the FURNACE of FIRE.** There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the KINGDOM of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."
- **Revelation 19:15** "Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And **He Himself will RULE THEM with a ROD of IRON....."**

- **Revelation 2:27** "He shall **RULE THEM with a ROD of IRON**; as the potter's vessels shall be broken to pieces' - as I also have received from My Father."
- **Revelation 20:11-15** "Then I saw a **great white THRONE** and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. **The sea gave up the dead [bodies] who were in it, and Death (the grave) and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them.** And they were JUDGED, each one according to his works. Then death and Hades were cast into the Lake of Fire. This is the second death. And anyone who was NOT found written in the BOOK of LIFE was cast into the LAKE of FIRE."

Where do the angels fit in as the ones assisting in the harvest and removal of the "tares"? Matthew 13:41-42 says, "The Son of Man will **send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom** all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and **will CAST them into the FURNACE of FIRE.** Although they are not mentioned specifically in Revelation 20, I believe the angels are assisting in bringing up the dead souls of those who are in Hades, the bodies from the graves, and the bodies from the depths of the sea, and bringing them before God's throne for judgment. All the unsaved will be resurrected, their souls reunited with their resurrected bodies, and both body and soul thrown into hell for all eternity (Matthew 10:28). **All throughout the book of Revelation we see God's angels participating and assisting in God's judgment and pouring out of His wrath upon sinful, unrepentant mankind.** From Revelation 1:1 to Revelation 22:16, we see angels mentioned, and Psalm 103:20-21 says that God's angels are the ones who "heed the voice of His word" and "do His pleasure" in accomplishing His will on the earth.

- **Psalm 103:20** "Bless the Lord, you His ANGELS, mighty in strength, **who perform His word, obeying the voice of His word!**"
- **Revelation 20:1** "Then I saw an **ANGEL coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.**"
- **II Thessalonians 1:7-9** ".....when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty **angels, in FLAMING FIRE taking vengeance** on those who do not know God, and on those who do NOT obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be **PUNISHED with EVERLASTING DESTRUCTION (away) from the presence of the Lord** and from the glory of His power."
- **Matthew 10:28** "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear **Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.**"

IN SUMMARY - A very brief sequence of events regarding the Second Coming and Judgment.

1.) RAPTURE - Jesus coming FOR the saints: The "Rapture" is when the Believers in Christ, both living and dead (the dead will be resurrected) are CAUGHT UP to meet Jesus in the clouds. This "return" is not visible to the general public (the world), because Jesus only comes down part way, to the clouds, for a **SECRET RETURN to GATHER UP His church, the BRIDE of Christ.** The CHURCH will be in heaven during the seven years of the Great Tribulation, at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Romans 14:10), and then at **the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.** The church or Bride of Christ will NOT have to go through the Great Tribulation, because that is a time of TESTING and pouring out of God's WRATH on a sinful world. **God will not pour out His wrath on His Bride!**

- **I Thessaonians 4:16-17** "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first (Christians who have died will be RESURRECTED). Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up (taken up) together with them **in the CLOUDS to meet the Lord in the air.** And thus we shall ALWAYS BE WITH the Lord."

- **Read Matthew 25:1-13** "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out **to meet the BRIDEGROOM**. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the Bridegroom was DELAYED, they all slumbered and slept. And **at midnight a CRY was heard**: "Behold, the Bridegroom is coming; go out to meet Him!" (Verse 10) "And while they went to buy, the Bridegroom came, and those who were READY went in with Him to the WEDDING; and the door was shut."

Definition: "Behold, the BRIDEGROOM is COMING" - Jesus told this parable (story) to illustrate what it will be like **when He RETURNS**. The "ten virgins" were the maids of honor waiting for the groom to appear for the wedding, and they represent those in the churches today, both real Christians and professing Christians. The "foolish virgins" represent those who are in churches today, perhaps even active members, but they are "Christians" in name only - they have **never really been BORN AGAIN**. The "wise virgins" with "**oil in their lamps**" represent the TRUE CHRISTIANS who have the Holy Spirit (oil is used in the Bible to represent the Holy Spirit). Jesus, in John 3:3,6 & 8, said that we must be BORN AGAIN, and also called it **being BORN of the SPIRIT**. When Jesus returns for the "Rapture" of the church, these church members **will NOT be READY**, and **Jesus will only take the TRUE BELIEVERS** with Him to heaven for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (see Revelation 19:7-9). "**At midnight a CRY was heard**" - This is the same as the trumpet sound and the voice of the archangel that will occur at the moment the church is caught up to the Lord. The idea of midnight means that it will be at a time when most people will not be prepared or ready (at midnight, most people are sleeping).

- **Revelation 19:6-9** "And I heard, as it were, the voice of a GREAT MULTITUDE ...saying, "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the **marriage of the Lamb** has come, and **His wife has made herself ready**. And to her (the bride) it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, CLEAN and BRIGHT (WHITE), for the FINE LINEN is the RIGHTEOUSNESS of the SAINTS.....Blessed are those who are called to the MARRIAGE SUPPER of the LAMB."
- **Ephesians 5:27 & 30-32** "That He might present it to Himself a GLORIOUS CHURCH, not having spot or wrinkle..... For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and **be JOINED to his wife**, and the two shall become one flesh. **This is a great MYSTERY, but I speak concerning CHRIST and the CHURCH.**"
- **Revelation 3:10** "Because you have kept the word of My patience, **I also will KEEP YOU FROM the hour of TESTING**, which shall come upon ALL the WORLD, to test them that dwell upon the earth."
- **I Thessalonians 1:10** "And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even **Jesus, which DELIVERED US FROM the WRATH to COME.**"

2.) The GREAT TRIBULATION - God PUNISHING Rebellious Unbelievers: After the Rapture, there will be seven years of Great Tribulation - horrible things happening in the world, a time of testing, and pouring out of God's wrath upon an evil, unrepentant world. Even during this time, God is gracious and merciful, and there will be many who will be saved, as God sends out 144,000 Jewish evangelists to preach the gospel to those who missed the Rapture because of their ignorance or unbelief. So, what is the advantage of believing in Jesus as your Lord and Savior BEFORE the Rapture happens, if many will be saved afterwards? Most of those who become believers in Christ during the Great Tribulation will be killed for their faith in Christ. The Anti-Christ, also called "The Beast" in Scripture, will declare war on Jesus Christ and all His followers, and many will be killed, particularly by having their heads cut off.

- **Revelation 6:9-11** ".....I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, '**How long O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and AVENGE our**

- blood** on those who dwell on the earth?' And **a white robe** was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, **who would be killed as they were**, was completed."
- **Revelation 7:4 & 9-10 & 14** "And I heard the number of those who were sealed. **One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel** were sealed...." (Verses 9-10) "After these things I looked, and behold, **a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, **clothed with white robes**, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" (Vs. 14) "So he said to me, **'these are the ones who come out of The Great Tribulation**, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."
 - **Revelation 20:4** "....And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."

3.) SECOND COMING (GLORIOUS APPEARING) - Jesus coming WITH the saints: The "Glorious Appearing" will happen at the END of the seven-year Great Tribulation, at the Battle of Armageddon. This will be His VISIBLE and triumphant return (the "sign" of His coming). The Rapture is NOT the same as His VERY VISIBLE Second Coming, when His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, and He will come with all His armies of saints (believers) and angels with Him. We, the believers in Christ, will get up from the table at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, strap on our swords, get on our horses, and follow Jesus down to the earth for the final Battle of Armageddon.

- **Matthew 24:31** "Then shall **APPEAR the SIGN of the Son of Man** in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth MOURN, and **they shall SEE the Son of Man coming** in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."
- **Zechariah 14:1-5** "....and I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle..... Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations.... and **His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives**, which is before Jerusalem.....and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof.....and the Lord my God shall come, and **ALL the SAINTS WITH YOU.**"
- **I Thessalonians 3:13** "....at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ **WITH ALL HIS SAINTS.**"
- **II Thessalonians 2:8** "And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by **the APPEARANCE of His COMING.**"
- **I Timothy 6:14** "That you keep the commandment without stain or reproach, **until the APPEARING of our Lord Jesus Christ**, which He will bring about **at the proper time....**"
- **Revelation 1:5-7** ".....**JESUS CHRIST**, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead (first to be resurrected), and the ruler over the kings of the earth..... **Behold, He is COMING** with clouds, and **EVERY EYE WILL SEE HIM**, and they also who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him."
- **Read Revelation 19:11-21** "Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war..... He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. **And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean**, followed Him on white horses."

4.) MILLENNIUM (1,000 Year Kingdom) - The Millennium will be for a **limited time** of 1,000 years; it is a **temporary** kingdom set up here on earth, as Jesus Christ rules and reigns after His return (Rev. 20:4, 6-7). There will be **unsaved people** in the kingdom (Zechariah 14:16, Isaiah 65:18-25, Rev. 20:7-10), but some will be saved during that time (Zech. 8:2-

23). Many will still have **mortal bodies**, and will be having children (Isa. 65:20-23). The **earth will still be under the curse**, but Jesus will be imposing His reign over it, and subduing it (Rev. 20:1-6, Rev. 2:26-27, Isa. 65:25, Isa. 11:1-9).

5.) LAST REBELLION and OVERTHROW of SATAN - Satan will be released from the bottomless pit one last time to deceive the nations, and then **God will quickly wipe out this rebellion and cast Satan into the Lake of Fire for all eternity**. There will be non-believers who were born during the Millennium to people who went into the Millennial Kingdom in their earthly bodies, and these people must be allowed a chance to choose between good and evil, just as Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. (This is NOT the Body of Christ - WE will all have our PERFECT resurrection bodies, we will NOT have been having children during the Millennium, and we will NOT be deceived by Satan).

- **Revelation 20:7-9** "Now **when the thousand years have expired**, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth..... to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. **And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them**. And **the devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire** and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

6.) FINAL JUDGMENT at the GREAT WHITE THRONE - Jesus indicates in John 5:29 that there are two judgments, one for Believers in Christ, and one for non-believers, and He calls them the **RESURRECTION of LIFE**, and the **RESURRECTION of CONDEMNATION**. You see, **you cannot really separate the Day of Judgment from the Resurrection**, because everyone will die, and everyone will be resurrected to stand before God and give an account for their life. What you have done with Jesus Christ during your life will determine where you spend eternity: either you will be resurrected to live eternally with God in His heavenly kingdom, or you will be resurrected to suffer eternal punishment in the lake of fire. **As Believers in Jesus Christ, our JUDGMENT for SIN has already fallen on Jesus Christ. He paid the penalty for our sins**, and purchased eternal life for us with His own blood, so technically, our judgment has already happened. **Believers do not have to be judged on Judgment Day to know where we are going** - we already know that our "end" or final DESTINATION is EVERLASTING LIFE in God's presence. The Judgment Seat of Christ is a judgment for Believers in Jesus Christ, and it is ONLY to see whether we will receive rewards or not (II Corinthians 5:10, I Corinthians 3:11-15). For the unsaved, there is a day of resurrection and judgment where millions and millions of people will be judged, and their lives and works will be read from the books and weighed and judged by God. The **Final Judgment or RESURRECTION of CONDEMNATION** will take place immediately after the thousand years are over (Rev. 20:5) and is **for UNBELIEVERS ONLY**. This is also referred to as "The Great White Throne Judgment" (Rev. 20:11). They will then be **judged on the basis of their WORKS** and their **WORKS will NOT be enough to save them**. Because they have REJECTED CHRIST and His atonement, they must bear their own punishment for their sins, and they will be thrown into the lake of fire (also called "The Second Death" - see Rev. 20:12-14, Rev. 21:8).

- **Acts 17:31** "Because He has appointed a **DAY on which He will JUDGE the world** in righteousness by the Man (Jesus) whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."
- **Revelation 11:18** "The nations were angry, and **Your wrath** has come, and **the TIME of the dead, that they should be JUDGED**, and that You should **REWARD Your servants** the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth."
- **Romans 6:22** "But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and **the END (destination), EVERLASTING LIFE**."

- **John 5:24-25** "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has **EVERLASTING LIFE**, and **shall NOT come into JUDGMENT**, but has passed from death into LIFE. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will LIVE."
- **John 5:28-29** "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which **ALL who are in the GRAVES** will hear His voice and come forth - those **who have done GOOD**, to **the RESURRECTION of LIFE**, and those who have done evil, to **the RESURRECTION of CONDEMNATION**."

Definition: "THOSE WHO HAVE DONE GOOD" - Wait a minute! I thought salvation was by **GRACE through FAITH**, and NOT of WORKS? **What is "GOOD" in the sight of God**, and what is it that **we MUST DO to be SAVED** and have a part in the RESURRECTION to LIFE? **The only "good work"** that we can do to obtain salvation is **the "work" of BELIEVING in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord**.

7.) NEW JERUSALEM COMES DOWN FROM HEAVEN - God creates a new heaven and a new earth, and His city, the Heavenly Jerusalem, will reside on the new earth for all eternity (Rev. 21).