Wheat And Tares Attend Church

In the parable of the wheat and tares, Jesus referred to saved believers as *wheat* and every unsaved person as *tares*. Tares include unsaved churchgoers. In fact, there are too many tares in the Church. Matthew 13:30 symbolically reveals tares will in future be burnt in hell. In Greek, the word “*tares*” is “*zizanion*” which means “a particularly undesirable weed resembling wheat and possessing a seed which is poisonous”. ¹

The Davis Dictionary of the Bible says a tare or darnel weed “is a poisonous grass, *almost undistinguishable from wheat* while the two are only in blade, but which can be separated without difficulty when they come into ear”. ² Coming into ear means producing grain. Keener says, “The most basic staple of the Palestinian diet...was bread; thus wheat was critical. But a poisonous weed, a kind of ryegrass known as darnel (usually translated ‘tares’) looked like wheat in the early stages...The fields were normally weeded in the spring, but if the weeds were discovered too late, one would risk uprooting the wheat with them...” ³

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia states darnel “is a *vigorous* grass closely resembling wheat or rye. The seeds are particularly noxious if infected with the mould ergot, producing vomiting, malaise, and even death. Thus tares have to be separated very carefully from the wheat...” ⁴

From the above, we can see:

- *tares look like wheat*. This is just like false converts and nominal Christians who look outwardly like real saved believers. The former attend church, pray, sing spiritual songs, go to church conferences and camps, may tithe and are generally religious. As Matthew 7:21-23 shows, false believers can even be involved in Jesus’ miracle-producing ministry.
- *tares do not produce the same fruit* as wheat. Wheat produces life-nourishing grains. Tares produce no grains which can be used for making life-giving bread. This is just like in the Church. Those who have truly received Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour produce His fruit in their lives after conversion. But false converts and nominal Christians produce various types of “*religious*” fruit which some others mistake as the real fruit of Christ in their lives.
- *tares produce bad seeds* while wheat produces *good seeds*. The seeds of wheat produce other *life-giving* plants which produce good fruit and more good seeds. But tares produce seeds which can make humans *very sick* and sometimes even *kill* them. This is just like in the Church. Those who have truly received Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour produce new born-again Christians through their godly ministry. But false converts and nominal Christians produce more religious hypocrites like themselves. This is unless God graciously converts others through the “*ministry*” of these tares despite the watered-down compromised “*gospels*” they preach.

¹ Louw and Nida, page 32.
• tares grow quickly and spread their death-producing seeds among the wheat if they are not continually and carefully weeded out in the early stages. If tares are continually left unweeded crop after crop, they can end up more numerous than storks of wheat. The tares can take over the crop. Tares produce many replicas of themselves.

Some churches are tare factories

Throughout the history of the Church, many local churches and denominations have tried a compromising supposedly “loving” approach to conversion. They allowed many unconverted people to become full members of their churches. Also, the leaders of these churches often told these “religious” people they were saved because they had merely been water baptised and/or confirmed or had put their hand up for Jesus or had merely asked Him to forgive them and come into their lives without repenting and receiving Him as Lord. All such groups ended up backsliding. The tares quickly multiplied among the wheat. Often the tares ended up taking over these churches.

Some of these groups experienced numerical growth. The leaders of such churches were like farmers with crops containing as many tares as wheat. Outwardly, the crop looked very successful. But later at harvest time, the poor nature of the crop was revealed. The same will happen at the Final Judgement when Christ separates the wheat and the tares.

I have heard some church leaders claim that every local church which is growing in numbers is full of God’s life. But note not everything which grows is healthy and full of life. Tumours are destructive and produce death. But tumours can grow very quickly.

To say that all growth in churches is inspired by the life of the Holy Spirit is very naïve. Satan will encourage growth in churches as long as it is the wrong type of growth. Satan loves to see cultic and heretical groups growing in power, prestige and influence in the Church. He will do his best to promote such groups. He does this because he wants to destroy the Church by any means.

Compromising with lawless tares

One example of how Satan works can be seen in relation to the decree of the Roman Emperor Theodosius I in 391 A.D. when he banned all pagan religions in the Roman Empire. Gratian who was co-Emperor supported Theodosius in this. Theodosius believed he was going to cause most or all people in the Roman Empire to become true Christians as a consequence of his new law. But instead the result was millions of unconverted pagans became nominal Christians and hypocrites. These people were Satan’s willing instrument in paganising God’s Church.

The outward result of Theodosius’s action seemed to involve great success. The churches could claim great growth through the addition of millions of new nominal adherents. But actually such dramatic growth was accelerating the paganisation and backsliding of the Church.

Many naïve souls think that only mature believers are growing and active. They think that unbelievers attending church will evidence no signs of growth and continuously immature born-again believers will not be active in any way. But note tares grow and extremely slowly growing wheat can be very be very active blowing around in the wind.
Tares grow quickly. But their growth is not in good fruit or good seed. Tares grow in religiosity. Matthew 7:21-23, 2 Timothy 3:1-6, 2 Peter 2:1-22 and Jude 4-19 refer to various types of tares who would be attending Church and growing in religiosity but not in Christ. 2 Timothy 3:1-6 prophesies: “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts.”

The difference between immature believers and unsaved tares

Extremely immature, relatively carnal believers are like wheat plants growing in lesser quality soils and not being watered enough. Such believers are not watered with the written Word of God enough (see Ephesians 5:26-27) and as a result are not strong in the Lord. They do not know and practice the Word as much as more mature believers do.

The difference between tares and extremely slowly growing wheat is tares produce no good fruit, whereas the latter produce a small amount of good fruit. Even the most immature born-again believer in Christ will have some fruit of His Presence in their lives. This is contrary to the sinful easy believism “gospel” which teaches the false idea that the most immature believers in Christ can live like tares for years, having no fruit of Him in their lives.

In Jesus’ letters in Revelation 2:1-3:22 to the churches at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea, He was very honest about their true spiritual state. Christ told the people at these seven churches exactly what was His view of their attitudes, behaviour and practical walk with Him. In Paul’s letters to the churches at Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi and Colossae, he spoke about their legal standing in Him, identification with Him and inheritance in Him. But he also revealed God’s exact appraisal of their heart attitudes, words and practical living.

Many ministers and ordinary Christians need to be honest before the Lord, listen to the Holy Spirit and stop pretending. If they really do these three things, they will have to admit that because of compromise with sin and false “gospels” like easy believism and legalism, many Evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches have become the comfortable nestbeds of large numbers of very immature relatively carnal believers who have been converted for many years, varying numbers of tares and a minority of more mature more spiritual believers. These more mature believers often feel out of place and not in tune with the fads and winds of doctrine which the very immature believers and tares follow.

If you are a tare, you need to receive Christ as your Lord and Saviour in not just words. If you are an immature believer, you must set your heart on maturing in Him. If you are a mature believer, do not become stagnant! Keep growing in Him!

Bible Study Questions

1. What are the similarities and differences between wheat and tares?
2. Why are some churches like tare factories?
3. What are the differences between immature believers and unsaved tares?