

RIGHTLY RESPONDING TO OUR APOSTATE ERA

Part II: Rightly Responding To Our Apostate Era's Satanic Planting Of Unbelievers Among Believers (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43)

I. Introduction

- A. The great rise in spiritual error in today's world can leave an uninformed believer confused and unsettled about his welfare if he does not understand God's plan for him in this notably apostate era.
- B. Christ gave important teaching in parable form in Matthew 13:1-52 to inform believers on how they are to think and act so that they can be settled and productive amid such apostasy, so we view it for our edification:

II. Responding To Our Era's Satanic Planting Of Unbelievers Among Believers, Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43:

- A. After revealing in the Parable of the Sower that there would be a wide range of responses to God's Word in our apostate era, most of such responses tending to be negative, Jesus taught in the Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 Parable of the Wheat and the Tares (or Weeds) that Satan would take advantage of these negative responses even among believers to plant weeds, that is, unbelievers, among the wheat of true believers in this era:
 - 1. In His Parable of the Wheat and Tares (Weeds), Jesus explained that Satan would sow the weeds of unbelievers among God's wheat of true believers in organized religious realms, Matthew 13:24-26, 36-39a.
 - 2. Satan will be able to do this since, according to Jesus' previous Parable of the Sower, even believers know variations in spiritual productivity due to variations in their victory over the hard ground of unbelief, over the stony ground of human effort versus relying on God for power in living and over the weedy ground of worldliness, Matthew 13:23 with 13:18-22. Immature and carnal believers think and act much like the lost (1 Corinthians 3:1-3), making it easy for Satan to plant lost folk among groups with immature and carnal believers that he might influence his plants (cf. John 8:44) to counter the discipling of God's true believers.
- B. This Satanic planting of the lost among the saved would make for trials to God's servants who minister the Word, so they would ask God if they should uproot and remove the lost from the saved, Matthew 13:27-28.
- C. However, God would direct His servants not to expel the lost from their midst lest such action harm the discipleship of weak believers who rely heavily on organized groups of believers around them, Matthew 13:29. Rather, God wills that Satan's unsaved plants and true believers develop together in organized groups until the end of the age when God harvests men's souls through His reapers, the angels, Matthew 13:30, 41.
- D. Thus, God's servants must expect there to be unbelievers planted among believers anywhere where believers meet, that God's servants thus spiritually brace themselves for this reality without being upset or disillusioned.
- E. Accordingly, for true believers and God's servants who minister His Word to them to achieve spiritual stability and be productive in view of this challenge from Satan, they must heed the lesson of the Parable of the Sower with all the more care that they offset their exposure to Satan's destructive efforts in their midst:
 - 1. Satan controls the unsaved (cf. John 8:44; 1 John 5:19), so he tries to influence the lost he plants in groups of believers to doubt Scripture, rely on human might and indulge in worldliness so as to hinder the discipleship of believers in such groups and thus counter their testimony and effective outreach to others.
 - 2. This pressure requires an effective response, that of true believers and God's servants who minister to them in such groups to take all the more care to **counter** the personal temptation in their own lives to distrust Scripture, to rely on human might versus God's power and to yield to worldliness that they might keep spiritually productive in life and service opposite Satan's influence through Satan's plants in their midst!

Lesson: *In our era of apostasy, the variations of response to the ministry of the Word in organized religious groups like churches gives Satan opportunity to plant unbelievers covertly in such groups of believers that he might use his plants to counter the discipling of believers and the discipling work of God's servants. Thus, believers and God's servants who minister the Word must watch that they closely heed Scripture, rely on God's power and avoid worldliness that they might successfully counter Satan's work through the lost among them.*

Application: *(1) May we watch how we respond to Scripture, for to the degree that we heed it, we rely on God's power to heed it and we avoid worldliness do we mature in Christ. (2) If believers in groups experience varying degrees of spiritual victory over unbelief in Scripture, over relying on human effort versus God's divine enabling and over worldliness, making it easy for Satan to plant unbelievers in such groups to counter the discipling process, we believers must all watch our own walk to overcome temptations to fail to heed Scripture due to pressure from unsaved people in our midst who are planted and influenced by Satan to influence us to fail here. (3) We must thus especially watch out for bad influences of weak believers who are negatively impacted by Satan's plants!*