

What God's People Are To Do Relative To This Time & Season – Wheat & Tares

Now I will move onto the second part of time and season that we are to have understanding regarding: What are God's people to do in this time and season that we are in? Whether we are in only the time and season of the beginning of sorrows/birth pangs/travail or have moved into tribulation, the answer I believe is the same and a very simple one: "Watch" and "Be Sober" and "Pray without Ceasing" in line with God's Word and otherwise revealed will regarding the time and season we are currently in and the one we are headed into. 1 Thessalonians 5 is a primary and perhaps the primary corollary chapter to Matthew 24. Both Jesus in Matthew 24 and Paul in 1 Thessalonians 1:5 urge those alive in the time immediately preceding the Lord's return (i.e., sorrows and tribulation) to both watch and be sober/not be drunk (spiritually) so that we are "ready" and not caught off guard and unprepared (blind, drunk and asleep spiritually) like we would be by "thief" in the "night" breaking into our house. **Both chapters strongly suggest that while we will not know the exact day and hour of the Lord's return the time and season leading up to it and a general awareness of it are observable and knowable.** (Especially, Matthew 24:50; 1 Thessalonians 5:1, 4)

I found some interesting information pertaining to the scientific name for wheat tares (weeds, counterfeit/false wheat plants that have the appearance of wheat) that I think is very relevant and instructively insightful regarding the issues of watchfulness and sobriety and our affirmative duties regarding the same set forth in Matthew 24 and 1 Thessalonians 5. (They are from a piece by minister Andrew Strom and a piece from The Berean.org, respectively.)

Shocking Facts on 'Tares' - by Andrew Strom

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Of course, we all know Jesus' parable of the Wheat and the Tares. Tares are plants that look just like wheat until Harvest time - when it turns out that they were counterfeit. Awhile ago I learned some facts about Tares that truly shocked and surprised me.

When you look up the word "Tares" on Wikipedia, it comes back with the equivalent plant named "Darnel." This is exactly correct according to most Biblical authorities. The Tares are almost always considered to be **the weed Darnel - also known as "false wheat"** which grows plentifully in the whole region around Israel. Here is what Wikipedia says about it: *"It bears a close resemblance to wheat until the ear appears... It parasitizes wheat fields. The French word for darnel is "ivraie"... which expresses that weed's characteristic of making one feel poisoned with drunkenness, and can cause death. This characteristic is also alluded to in the scientific name (Latin temulentus = drunk) ... The plant is mentioned in... the Parable of the Tares in the Gospel of Matthew."*

So is this identification of Tares with "drunkenness" noted elsewhere? Yes - many Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias say exactly the same thing. In fact, the Faussett Bible Cyclopedic states that **"when mixed with wheat flour [it] causes dizziness, intoxication, and paralysis"** and says that **bearded darnel is known as "the only deleterious grain" among all the grasses.**

On the giant website "Botanical.com" we read: **"It is recorded to have produced all the symptoms of drunkenness: a general trembling, followed by inability to walk, hindered speech and vomiting. For this reason the French call Darnel: 'Ivraie', from Ivre (drunkenness)."**

Out of all the weed-type grasses, Tares are seemingly the only ones that produce this deadly "drunken" effect. Isn't that amazing? In the parable of the Wheat and the Tares in Matt 13, Jesus states that his "enemy" sows tares amongst the true wheat. Then He says: ***"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"*** (Mt 13:30).

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God has seeded His church with vessels for honor—the wheat—while Satan has sprinkled in his own vessels for dishonor—the tares (see II Timothy 2:20-21). Jesus does not use the imagery of wheat and tares haphazardly to relate this important lesson. **Instead, the physical properties of these two different plants reveal a depth to the parable's symbolism that emphasizes how different in quality the wheat is from the tare, and how hard it is to tell them apart.**

Wheat, which Christ uses to symbolize His true children, has always been a vital, life-giving substance, possessing both nutrition and healing properties. During most of human history, it has most commonly been used for bread, and it has long been called "the staff of life." Herbert W. Armstrong even proclaimed, "The grain of wheat God causes to grow out of the ground is a perfect food." The matchless quality of wheat serves as a symbol revealing how highly God regards His children.

In contrast, Christ uses the tare to symbolize counterfeits within His church. Tares are weeds diametrically opposite to wheat in all their properties other than appearance. **Even the botanical name of the weed, darnel, conveys its detrimental quality. Darnel comes from the French language, meaning "drunkenness," having earned this name as a result of its intoxicating effect when consumed. When darnel is ground into flour, baked in bread, and consumed while hot, the eater may experience symptoms similar to drunkenness, including trembling, followed by an inability to walk, hindered speech, and vomiting. In addition, darnel is commonly infected by the ergot fungus, which can cause hallucinations when consumed in small doses, but in large doses can do heavy damage to the central nervous system. The Greeks and Romans supposed the darnel and the fungus to cause blindness. The Romans even crafted an insult from darnel, *lolio victitare*, "to live on darnel," a phrase applied to a dim-sighted or shortsighted person.**

The high value and health properties of wheat are opposite to the common and harmful properties of darnel, yet in Christ's parable the owner of the field allows both to grow together. One reason is because wheat and darnel are exact in their appearances during growth. Both plants are lush green and can be distinguished only when they mature and produce fruit: Wheat berries are large and golden, while darnel berries are small and gray. Thus, if the farmer attempted to uproot the tares before maturity, he would wreak havoc on his wheat. Today, modern harvesting equipment easily sifts between the two because of their different sizes. Spiritual wheat and tares grow alike within God's church, identical in appearance, and to attempt to uproot the tares would result in uprooting some of the wheat as well. Just as the qualitative difference between the mature

fruit of wheat and darnel is different, only by the fruit may the brethren be known (Matthew 7:15-20). Even after maturity, God Himself—and no one else—will have the tares removed and will destroy them in the furnace (Matthew 13:30).

So, what do the above-listed pieces have to do with this time and season direction analysis? Well, I believe very good connections can be found in Revelation 17:2 and the related verses and Luke 21. Revelation 17:2 talks about the inhabitants of the earth being **“made drunk with the wine” of “fornication” with “Mystery, Babylon the Great, The Mother of Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth”**. And Luke 21, which corresponds to Matthew 24 says, in pertinent part: “So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, **drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.**” Luke 21:31-36

I believe the boiled-down meaning and direction of these verses is that to the extent someone is partaking of/abiding in worldliness, is the extent to which you will be spiritually drunk, impaired, blinded, not able to watch and see/perceive the events we are expected to and will therefore not recognize the signs of the Lord’s return or be ready for it. *“Worldliness” includes nominal, carnal, lukewarm and otherwise false, non-biblical, counterfeit Christianity (i.e., “a different Gospel,” (Galatians 1:7, 2 Corinthians 11:14, etc.) one not identical to the one preached by Jesus and the apostles and as set forth in the Bible)*. In that connection, the terms fornication and adultery were used often in the Bible to mean human involvement with false gods and spirituality, idols and other ungodly beliefs and practices – i.e., spiritually cheating on God. The opposite of natural and spiritual adultery is true and full love, fidelity and purity unto and exclusive commitment to and intimate union with one’s own spouse. **To the extent we are not singularly and fully committed to the true God and following the true Christ and Gospel, we are drunk/impaired by the very worldly lies and falsities that make the tares tares and unable to truly know and be known by Lord and Bridegroom of the true wheat. If we imbibe (drink) the false doctrine, beliefs and practices of the tares/apostates it is deleterious to us and renders us drunk, blind and unable to perceive what we are to do to be “made ready” for the Lord’s return. We are, essentially, spiritually, left drunk, asleep and oblivious.**

To be ready we must be able to watch and see and understand the times and seasons and what we are to do. To watch and see we must be sober. To be sober we must partake only of the pure water of life of the Lord (“the water of the word,” Ephesians 5:26, etc.) and not the intoxicating, impairing, poisoning “wine” of the world. To the extent we are of the world is the extent to which we are impaired, blind, unable to recognize the times and seasons preceding and of the Lord’s return and will not be “ready” for Him. And just like with the foolish and unprepared virgins of Matthew 25, the door will be shut to those who do not see and understand and therefore are not ready when the Bridegroom comes. You cannot be partly wheat and partly tare. Your spiritual condition is one or the other. Which one are you?

Consistent with the aforementioned, while Jesus stated many signs of the sorrows and tribulation period that would take place at the end of the age immediately preceding His return, He only repeated one – four times! – deception within “the church”/His people, which He also stated first in His list of signs in Matthew 24:

Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age? And Jesus answered and said to them: Take heed that no one deceives you.

While Jesus stated things like natural disasters, wars and astronomical signs in Matthew 24 one time each, He cited deception (of even some of His elect people) by false prophets and christs, four (4) times. He also specified that accompanying their false teachings, prophecies and other deceptions would be counterfeit “great signs and wonders”. Matthew 24:24

Lastly, in terms of direction of additional actions to take in this time and season and during the next, we should pray for the fulfillment of the preconditions that must occur before the Lord’s return; protection, provision, grace, anointing, covering, guidance and the like for God’s true people during these and the upcoming difficult times and seasons; additional salvations and coming into fullness/readiness of already saved followers during the sorrows and tribulation periods; discernment, conviction by the Holy Spirit, forgiveness and repentance regarding any false (unbiblical) beliefs and practices we have engaged in and help to come out of any error, falsity and deception we are in and onto a true path in Christ; and help from Him to be watchful, sober, to recognize and understand the times and seasons and what we are to do and to be made ready. James 3:12 says we can “hasten” (speed up, bring on, make quicker) the coming of the Lord. In that connection, we are told in James to be of: **“holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God; be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; [and to] beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; [and to] grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”** James 3:11-12; 14; 17-18

The following verses spoken by Jesus make very clear the importance of **making sure** you are true wheat and not a false tare:

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.²⁶ 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 to them, ‘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 13:24-30

So, how are we to know our true spiritual condition and the true spiritual condition of others? Jesus and Paul and others said we have a duty to know (Matthew 7:16, 20; 2 Corinthians 13:5; 1 John 4:1, etc.), and Jesus said we will know by the fruit produced – does it line up with the Word of God (our standard and plumb line) or not. **If what you’re believing and living does not squarely line up with the Bible, confess that to God, truly repent, and get onto the true, biblical path God has for you.** After all, Jesus was “The Word” (John 1:1, 14) before He became flesh and dwelled with us, and “The Word” is the only way, truth and life.

If you love Me you will keep God’s commandments and words. (John 8:31-32; 14:15; 21; 23-24; 15:10, 14; Luke 8:15, 21). **God has magnified His word above all His name.** Psalm 138:2