The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 4 August 2024. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

Phonies in the Field!
Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Several decades ago, in Leicester, England, a young man named **Jimmy Modha** heard the Gospel, and received Christ as his Saviour. Soon after his conversion, he told his family that he had "found God"; but his announcement did *not* go down well. His father furiously shouted, "*Which* god?"; and when Jimmy replied that his God was Jesus Christ, his father threw him out of the house.[1] His brother Jay disowned him, as well, and told him that he would pray that the gods would kill him for dishonouring their family![2]

Now, Jimmy's brother **Jay** was a brilliant young man. At the time, he was working toward his Ph. D. in parasitology; and he didn't think he needed Jesus. However, his brother told him, "Jay, if you are ever desperate, and no one is there to help you, remember Jesus loves you, and His hand is on your life. Call to Him, and He will save you."[3] Well, shortly after this, Jay began to have frightening dreams. Jay described it this way: "It was as if I was awake in my bed at three in the morning, when suddenly a blinding light broke through the roof and ceiling of my bedroom. In that light I could see a cloud descending from heaven, bearing three awesome, fiery, men-like creatures. The first blew a trumpet so loud, that I was sure the whole world could hear its thunderous sound. I knew whatever was coming was universal in consequence. The second creature cried out, 'Prepare ye, for the Lord is coming to reap the harvest!' Then the third swung a scythe over the earth and cried, 'Now is the earth ready for harvest!'"[4] Jay went on to say, "I tried to wake up from the dream, because I felt I was going to have a heart attack from sheer fright. But I could not. Then, in the middle of the cloud, I noticed a Person who looked completely different. The brilliant light was coming from Him. His face shone so radiantly, that no features were clear, except for eyes that looked like blazing flames of fire. A robe went from His neck to His feet, which were like white-hot metal. He was dreadful in His beauty, and terrible in His splendour. As He descended, He looked at me. I was completely undone, absolutely terrified. I could not bear to look at Him any longer, so I turned my head. To my amazement, there beside me was my brother Jimmy, who was not scared at all. In fact, his face was joyous, and he was reaching out as if to embrace the figure. When I gained the courage to look at [the brilliant figure] again, He addressed me, saying, 'Jay, what are you going to do when this happens?' Then everything vanished, and I woke up."[5]

Needless to say, Jay couldn't sleep after that dream! He had never read the Bible before in his life: and thus, he didn't know that what he had seen in his dream jumped straight from the pages of **Daniel 7, Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, 1 Thessalonians 4 & 5, 2 Thessalonians 1, Jude 14, Revelation 1, 14, & 19,** and many other Scriptures. A few days later, Jay told his brother Jimmy about his dream; and Jimmy said, "Jay, what you saw is the Second Coming of Christ. Can I send you a Bible so you can read about it?"[6] Jay hung up on his brother; however, his disturbing dreams continued. Eventually, Jay got his doctorate; but he had no peace in his heart. In fact, just after he had received a prestigious medical award in Japan, he nearly decided to jump from the balcony of his hotel. However, he didn't. Instead, he

decided to seek after Jesus. He began to read the Bible; and when he came to Jesus' words, ***"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,"*** He asked Jesus to forgive him of his sins, and to be his Saviour. Immediately, the burden of guilt was gone! After that, he moved to Glasgow, joined a church, and enrolled in a Bible seminary. Today, he is the head of a pharmaceutical consultancy company; but he also preaches and shares the Gospel with everyone he meets.[7] God has completely changed his life!

My friends, the age in which we live is drawing to a close. Soon, Christ will return to earth to set up His Kingdom; and when He does, the "harvest" will be reaped! However, until that harvest day, we can expect to see "tares" mixed among the "wheat." The title of this message is ***Phonies in the Field!***

Read Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43.

I. The diligence of the Sower (13:24)

If you have been here in recent weeks, you know that this parable is the second of the seven parables that we call "The Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven." Jesus taught this parable to the crowds one day, as He was sitting in Peter's boat by the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Now, you'll notice that Jesus began this parable by saying, ***"The kingdom of heaven is likened unto."*** In fact, Jesus started the next five parables with these exact same words. What does He mean, though? Was Jesus saying that this "man" in His parable (the sower) is a symbol of the Kingdom? No. He was simply letting the people know that through the parable He was about to tell, He was going to reveal more truth about the Kingdom. He was saying, "Here is another story to illustrate *what it is going to be like* from now until the time that the Kingdom is established." Like the other Kingdom Mystery parables, this parable of the wheat and the tares tells us something about the period of time between Christ's first coming, and His second coming. The period between Christ's two comings consists of the **church age** (in which we are now living), as well as the terrible seven-year **Tribulation period**, which will unfold just before Jesus returns to earth. During this present church age, as well as during the coming Tribulation period, God is preparing a harvest of citizens to enter into the Kingdom; and, as in any harvest, "seeds" are needed in order to produce a crop.

Now, you'll remember that in the parable of the sower and the four soils, the "seed" represented the Word of God. However, in this parable of the wheat and the tares, the "seeds" represent that which God's Word *produces*: and that is **children** for the Kingdom. These good "seeds" represent believers in Jesus Christ; and they have been diligently planted by the "sower." And who is the ***"sower"***? The ***"sower"*** is the Son of man—**the Lord Jesus Christ;** and the ***"field"*** in which He is planting the seeds represents the ***"world"*** in which we live.

However, you'll notice that not all is well in the ***"field"*** of the world. Jesus said that there is an ***"enemy"*** who has gone out and planted ***"tares"*** (or, what we would call "darnel") among the wheat. Now, darnel (which is a kind of ryegrass) looks *very much* like wheat—so much so, that it is nigh impossible to tell the difference between the two, until later in the season, when the seedheads begin to form. Darnel *looks* very much like the real thing; but it is of no

profit to the farmer. It is *not* "fruit": it is a weed. In fact, it is actually a *harmful* and *poisonous weed.* Eating darnel can cause a person to become very ill, or even die. Who, then, planted these harmful weeds? None other than that old enemy of God and man, **the devil**! The "seed" that the *devil* has sown are ***his* children**. However, just as darnel look just like wheat, so many of Satan's children *look, walk, and talk* like Christians, yet aren't. They may even be members of Bible-preaching churches. They themselves may even *consider* themselves to be Christians, because they have grown up in church, have been exposed to the Bible, have been around Christians all their lives, and know all the Christian "lingo" and protocol: yet, they aren't saved. They are not true grain; and thus, they are of no profit to God's Kingdom. In fact, they can cause *harm* to Christ's Kingdom by blending in with genuine Christians, when all the while they are spreading fleshly and worldly ideas and attitudes among God's people. How could they do anything else, when they have no true spiritual understanding, and do not know Christ's love, or His power? They've not gone through the "Door" of Jesus Christ into the "sheepfold" of the local church: instead, they have climbed up over the wall another way, and have been accepted into the church, when they don't even know the Saviour.

Brethren, we have been placed in this world for now; and even though the local church is of heavenly origin, it is still situated here in this world. Even in a local church, the fleshly thinking of the world can quickly take root (especially if unsaved people slip into membership); and in the world *outside* the church, we are *surrounded* by sin! How, then, are we to live in this world? Well, we need to remember that we are *in the world,* but not of it!

Read John 17:12-17.

As Jesus was praying for His disciples, He asked the Father to ***"keep"*** (or "guard") His disciples. Now, what does that mean? Was Jesus asking the Father to take His disciples *out of the world?* After all, the world is drenched with sin and temptation. Surely that is the only way we could possibly be "kept" from sin, right? Well, the answer to that question is "No." It *is* possible for the Father to keep His children from sin, even while they are still living in a sin-filled world. That is why Jesus clarified what He meant by ***"keep."*** He said, ***"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."***

Christian, you are *in* this sin-drenched world, for now; but you do not belong to this world system. Jesus said that believers are ***"not of the world,"*** just as *He* is "***not of the world."*** Now, you may be sure that your set-apart position *will* cause you trouble in this world. As Jesus said, the world *hates* God's people because they are not of the world. I remember a time, years ago, when Brother Dyson and I were knocking on doors, and a lady angrily asked us, "Do you think you're *better* than everyone else, that you feel you need to go around telling us what *you* believe?" Christian, this is how the world generally sees you—as a stuck-up "holier-than-thou." You can expect that people will criticise you, and shun you, for your faith in Christ. In many parts of the world, Christians can expect far worse. In many places, Christians can expect to be denied employment; to have their goods confiscated; to be fined or imprisoned; and even to be tortured and killed. Yet, despite the opposition that the world may

throw at you, the Father *is* able to keep you from sin in the midst of a sinful world. In **1 Peter chapter 2,** Peter wrote, ***"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."*** Peter made it clear that we who are saved are *not* citizens of this world: rather, we are ***"strangers and pilgrims."*** We are citizens of a heavenly country: and as for the *physical* world in which we live, we are citizens of the Kingdom that *will* be established here on earth when Jesus comes down from Heaven, and sits down on His throne in Jerusalem: and we will reign with Him for 1,000 years!

Brethren, we are God's "grain"; and even though there will always be ***"perils"*** that will arise because of ***"false brethren,"*** God knows His own. He knows who are His wheat, and who are tares; and He will keep His own from the evil, until the day of harvest.

II. The deception of the devil (13:25-29)

(Read Matthew 13:25-29.) Brethren, there is a theological system that has been around for about 1,600 years now; and it is called **"amillennialism."** If you don't know what "amillennialism" is, you *need* to know; and you need to realise that it is false. "Amillennialism" was developed and crystalised by a Catholic man named **Augustine**, who lived in the 300's and 400's A.D.; and he was a propagator or many false doctrines. For one thing, Augustine propagated the false doctrine of **purgatory** (the idea that after a Christian dies, he must pay "pay off" the rest of his sin debt in a fiery place called "purgatory," before he can be released, and go to Heaven). We know that this doctrine is utterly false, because the Bible says in **Hebrews 1:3,** and in **Hebrews 10,** that Jesus purged our sins *one time forever* on the cross, and that our sin debt is paid in full. However, Augustine also taught false doctrines in regard to the church, Israel, and end-times prophecy: and these teachings can all be summed up with the one word "amillennialism." **"Amillennialism"** simply means "no millennium," or "no thousand years." What does that mean? It means (according to Augustine) that God has cast off the nation of Israel forever, on account of their rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ; and in Israel's place, God has instituted "the church" (which, by the way, Augustine viewed as a *universal* entity, under the power of the bishop of Rome, instead of as a simple, local, self-governing, Bible-preaching congregation of baptised believers, as the *Bible* teaches).

Now, since, according to Augustine, God is supposedly done with Israel, what, then, are we to make of the hundreds of prophecies in the Old Testament that state that one day God will *forgive* Israel of their all their iniquities, and bring them all back to their land, and that the Messiah will rule and reign over the whole world from Jerusalem? And what do we make of that prophecy in **Revelation 20** which specifically states that Christ and His saints will reign on earth for 1,000 years? Well, according to Augustine, there *won't be* any literal, 1,000-year Kingdom on earth, because nearly everything in the book of **Revelation** (as well as in the books of the prophets in the Old Testament) is figurative and allegorical, and not to be taken literally. But what does the Bible say? Let's look!

Read Revelation 20:1-6.

God clearly says that there *will* be a 1,000-year rule of Christ on earth. Yet, according to amillennialism, the *church* is the "*new,* and *real* Israel"; and therefore, all those Kingdom promises that God gave to Israel in the Old Testament were not really meant for the Jews, but for the *church*; and they are being fulfilled in the *church,* right now! We are in the Kingdom Age *now,* they say! Folks, all I can say is that if *what we are seeing in this world right now* is "the Kingdom," then the prophecies of Scripture are *not* being fulfilled! We don't see a kingdom of righteousness in this world; instead, we see a world that is mostly under the power and sway of *Satan!*

Sadly, not only Catholics, but also most Protestants, and even some Baptists, believe this teaching that "God is done with the Jews, and the *real* Israel is the church." According to amillennialism, *Christians* will bring the Kingdom to maturity by preaching the Gospel all over the world, and by taking control of world governments, and enacting righteous laws, until the world becomes a wonderful place; and *then* Jesus will be able to come back, after we've prepared the Kingdom for Him. Brethren, this is *not what the Bible* says; and the *evidence* that this is not what the Bible says is all around us. As we look around us, we do *not* see the world getting better; we see it waxing worse and worse—just as Christ, and all the Apostles, foretold would happen in the last days before Christ's return! The Jews are moving *back* to the land, just as God foretold would happen in the last days; and everywhere we look, we see the world being groomed for the kingdom of the Antichrist, which will unfold in the seven years just before Christ returns to earth. Folks, *we* cannot possibly "fix" this world! The *only* one who will set things right is the Lord Jesus Christ, when He returns to earth in power and glory to establish His Kingdom!

Now, perhaps you're wondering what all this has to do with the parable of the wheat and the tares. Well, it has *everything* to do with it! You see, if amillennialism be true, and we are in the "Kingdom" right now, then what do we make of **Revelation 20:2,** where we are told that *Satan will be bound in the bottomless pit* during the 1,000-year Kingdom? The last I checked, Satan is *not* bound! He is *very* active in this world!

Read 1 Peter 5:8-9.

Folks, Satan is *not* bound. He is here; and he is hard at work. During this present church age (and during the future Tribulation period), Satan is *anything but* "chained"! He is like a roaring lion, going up and down in the earth, and seeking whom he may devour. Years ago, a pastor named **J. Vernon McGee** told a story from his years at seminary, where he was taught amillennialism. He said, "I went to a seminary that was amillennial, [and]… when we reached

the place where Scripture says that Satan was put into the bottomless pit, we were taught that that has already taken place. I asked the professor, 'How do you explain the satanic activity that is taking place today?' He replied, 'Satan is chained, but he has a long chain on him. It is like when you take a cow out into a vacant lot, and tether her out on a long rope, and let her graze.' That was his explanation! And my comment was, 'Doctor, I think Satan's got a pretty long chain on him then, because he is able to graze all over the world today!'"[8]

Folks, make no mistake about it: Satan is hard at work; and one of his best tactics is to sow "tares" (religious but lost people) right alongside the "wheat" (the saved). Just as tares are practically indistinguishable from wheat right up to the time of harvest, so many lost people *look* like Christians, but aren't. The world is filled with people who have embraced false gospels, and who outwardly appear to be Christians. True Christians might even mistake the "tares" as Christians; and the tares themselves might think themselves to be Christians. Sad to say, this mistaking of tares for wheat often causes Christ's name to be blasphemed. In **2 Peter 2,** Peter foretold that there will be ***"false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you."*** For at least 1,700 years, the name of Christ has been tarnished because of the ***"pernicious ways"*** of false "Christian" leaders and clergy, who abuse and make merchandise of people in the name of Christ. However, the harvest is coming at the end of the age; and when the harvest comes, the tares will be seen for what they really are. After Christ returns to earth at the Battle of Armageddon, all who survived through the Tribulation period will be gathered together for judgment in a valley just outside the borders of Israel. The "tares" will be separated from the wheat by God's angels, and will be cast into hell, where they will remain until the Great White Throne judgment, when they will be judged according to their works, and cast eternally into the Lake of Fire. Meanwhile, all the "wheat" (the true believers) will be gathered into the Lord's "barn" during the Kingdom; and they will rule and reign with Him for 1,000 years!

Read Matthew 25:31-46.

Beware, friends! Jesus said that not everyone who says ***"Lord, Lord"*** will enter into the 1,000-year Kingdom of Heaven. At the judgment, there will be many who really thought that they were Christ's servants, yet weren't. There will even be many who believed that they had the gifts of prophecy and exorcism; yet, these self-deluded souls will hear Jesus say, ***"I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."*** This is a sobering thought: and it invokes an urgent message both to the saved and to the lost.

To Christians, the message is clear. First, do not assume that someone is a child of God simply because he claims to be so. If you really care about that person, ask some questions. Probe a little deeper, and see if your friend or loved one's profession of salvation is in line with what the Bible says. When a professed believer's testimony seems questionable, don't be afraid to challenge him to examine himself, whether he truly be in the faith. His feelings may

be hurt; but God just might use you to snatch him out of the fire. **Secondly,** don't be discouraged by ***"false brethren."*** The Apostles themselves had to deal with many false brethren; and so will we! In **2 Corinthians 11,** Paul listed, among his many troubles and trials, the fact that he had to deal with ***"perils among false brethren."*** False brethren *will* be present with us until Christ returns; and as long as there are false brethren, Christ and His followers will be misrepresented, and "evil spoken of." But take heart! In Christ's glorious Kingdom, all rebellion against the knowledge of God will be put down; and ***"the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."***

Now, to those who are not sure of where they stand with God, the message is also equally clear: get the matter of your salvation settled! Time is short, and this is no game. Either you have been saved by God's grace by placing your faith in Christ, or you are still lost, and on your way to hell. There is no in between. Repent of your sin, and place your trust in Jesus Christ to save you. **John 3:36** says, ***"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."***

III. The decision of the Sower (13:30)

(Read Matthew 13:27-30, 39-43.) In these verses, we find that the sower was faced with a decision: what would he do about the tares that his enemy had planted? If he uprooted them, then the wheat would be uprooted, too, since the roots of the wheat and the tares were intertwined. Therefore, he decided to let them grow together *until* the time of harvest.

Folks, the meaning of this is clear! *For now,* Christ is allowing good and evil to coexist in this world. People often blame God for allowing wicked people to exist in this world; but they fail to realise that if God were to "uproot" all the wicked, there would be almost no one left, since the number of righteous is very, very small! God is not uprooting the wicked *for now,* because He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. The fact is that we are *all* wicked sinners, deserving of God's wrath; and for now, God is mercifully giving *all* of us (even the vilest of us) the chance to repent. Furthermore, if God were to uproot all the wicked, then all of *God's* people would be destroyed, as well, since our lives are intertwined with those of the lost. What is the Lord's decision, then? His decision is to allow the righteous and the wicked to exist side-by-side, *until* the day of harvest.
So, when will this "harvest" be? At the end of this current age. (The world ***"world"*** is translated from the word *aeon,* which means "age.") Jesus said that no man knows the day or the hour when this age will end; but we *do* know the prophetic events that will unfold leading up to it. First of all, the day is coming when this *church* age will end! In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, Christ will appear in the clouds, with the great sound of a trumpet; and all believers of this church age will be resurrected, and will meet the Lord in the air! First, all Christians who have already died will be bodily resurrected, and will be caught up in the air to meet the Lord; then, all believers who are still living will instantly receive glorified, immortal bodies, and will *also* be caught up into the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air!

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

The event that we have just read about ("the Rapture") is the next prophetic event on God's calendar. However, it is not the final "harvest." Immediately after the Rapture, the world will be plunged into a terrible seven years of judgment, which Christ, in **Matthew 24,** calls "the Tribulation." During these seven years, God will hurl horrible judgments upon mankind, to punish them for their wickedness; and most of the human race will die. Also, God will allow a wicked tyrant called the Antichrist to rise to power, and to rule over the entire world. There will be a one-world government, a one-world economy, and a one-world, apostate religion. During those seven years, many people (including great multitudes of Jews) will realise that Jesus is the true Messiah, and that they missed the Rapture; and they will believe on Jesus, and be saved. However, the cost for being a believer during the Tribulation will be death! The Antichrist will hunt down all who refuse to take his mark of 666 in their right hand or forehead; and believers in Jesus will be executed for refusing to worship the Antichrist. However, God will preserve a remnant of believers through this terrible time; and just after the seven years are up, Jesus will descend from Heaven with all His saints and angels, and will destroy the armies of the Antichrist (which will be gathered in the land of Israel, to make war against God). Then, after Christ has slaughtered His enemies in that great battle, He will send His angels to gather *everyone* on earth who is still alive, and to bring them to the judgment that we read about in **Matthew 25.** At this judgment, the saved survivors of the Tribulation will be separated from those who followed the Antichrist; and the Antichrist-followers will be cast into hell. The *only* ones who will enter into Christ's earthly Kingdom will be believers in Jesus Christ. *This* will be the end of the harvest, when Christ gathers His wheat into His barn!

Read Revelation 19:11-21.

Read Matthew 24:27-31, 45-51.

Conclusion: Folks, time is running out. The age between Christ's first and second coming is drawing to a close; and the harvest is nearly upon us. Yet, tragically, most people are not ready for the harvest. As the prophet Jeremiah put it, ***"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."*** My friend, if *you* have not been saved, then you are not one of God's wheat; and no matter how much you may look or talk like a Christian, it won't make you a child of the Kingdom. The *only* way to become a child of the Kingdom is to repent of your sin, believe on the Jesus Christ, and make Him your Lord! If you have not done this, I urge you to do so! For those of you who are saved, I would ask, "Are you doing all in your power to tell people the Gospel, so that they may become God's wheat, and be gathered into His barn when the harvest comes? If not, let the Lord put a burden in your heart for souls!

[1] Robert J. Morgan, *Preacher's Sourcebook of Creative Sermon Illustrations* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2007), p. 686.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] Dr. David Cloud, "A Refutation of Replacement Theology," Way of Life Literature, May 11, 2022, https://www.wayoflife.org/reports/a_refutation_of_replacement_theology.php