

Study Series 15 Lesson 3: Revelation – Matthew 13 Parable of the Tares

Parable of the Tares (darnel)

The Revelation gives us some vivid descriptions of one of its central themes: the great Harvest at the end of the age (Rev. 7:4-14, 14:1-4, 14:14-20). Before we study into this in Revelation it will be very helpful for us to look back and study what Christ had said about this very event in Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43:

24 Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a **man** who **sowed good seed** in his field.

25 "But while his men were **sleeping**, his **enemy came** and **sowed tares** among the wheat, and **went away**.

26 "But **when the wheat sprouted and bore grain**, then the tares became evident also.

27 "The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'

28 "And he said to them, '**An enemy** has done this!' The slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to **go and gather** them up?'

29 "But he said, 'No; for **while you are gathering** up the tares, you may **uproot the wheat** with them.

30 '**Allow both to grow together until the harvest**; and in the **time of the harvest** I will say to the reapers, "**First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up**; but **gather the wheat into my barn**.'"

36 Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field."

37 And He said, "The one who sows the good seed is **the Son of Man**,

38 and the field is the **world**; and as for the good seed, these are the **sons of the kingdom**; and the tares are the **sons of the evil one**;

39 and the enemy who sowed them is **the devil**, and the harvest is **the end of the age**; and the reapers are **angels**.

40 "So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, **so shall it be at the end of the age.**

41 "The Son of Man will **send forth His angels**, and they will **gather out** of His kingdom all **stumbling blocks**, and those who **commit lawlessness**,

42 and will throw them into **the furnace of fire**; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

43 "Then **THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN** in the **kingdom** of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

Value of this parable:

1. Gives clear definitions of the parabolic terms.
2. Clearly indicates the outcomes for both the wicked and the righteous, and that the tares are never put into heaven. They are thrown into a furnace of fire where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth. The picture is not of annihilation nor universalism. It is instead a picture of everlasting conscious punishment outside of heaven for their rejection of Christ and persecution of His followers.
3. Helps nail down the sequencing of the end-time events, once we understand the agricultural analogy that Jesus is using here.

How does Jesus define the various terms used in this parable?

"Sower" = the Son of Man (Jesus) cf. Book of Enoch's central character (Son of Man)

"field" = the world (not just the land of Palestine)

"seed" = the sons of the Kingdom (Jewish Christians)

"tares" = the sons of the Evil One (Satan, the Devil)

"the enemy" = Satan, the Devil

"harvest" = the End of the Age

"reapers" = angels

Concepts taught in this parable:

1. Coexistence of good and evil in the kingdom until the end of the age.
2. Permanent separation of good and evil at the end of the age.
3. The blessing on the righteous at the end of the age was to be gathered into the Kingdom of Heaven, while the curse on the wicked was to be gathered out of the Kingdom and thrown into the furnace of fire (Gehenna) where there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth. In one of His other parables (Matt. 21:43 – the Vinegrowers), Jesus said that the Kingdom would be taken away from the unfaithful vinegrowers and given to another people who will produce the fruit. **(Read)** Daniel 7:13-14, 21-22, 27 talks about the Kingdom being given to the saints at the time of the end. The Jews of that generation were given every possible opportunity for a whole generation to hear the gospel and repent. Paul and all the apostles went to the Jews first to share the gospel and save as many of them as possible, before the Kingdom would be snatched away from them and given to the **New True Israel** composed of both believing Jews and Gentiles.
4. This describes what the Kingdom would be like during the transition period and at the end of the age.
5. This is the Kingdom on earth during the transition period, before it was consummated in Heaven and the saints transferred to it in heaven where there would be no more tares.
6. The field is the world (Gr. *kosmos*), which is an orderly arrangement of society (*Kosmos* = orderly system. Word used for gov't, philosophy, even theological system. i.e. Old Covenant Israel).
7. Jesus refers to Himself here as "the Son of Man" which was an apocalyptic title applied to the Messiah by the Book of Enoch. The rabbis of Jesus' day debated who this "Son of Man" would be. Jesus identifies Himself as that apocalyptic figure who would appear on earth from heaven to vindicate His saints and judge the wicked (See the Book of Enoch).
8. The enemy and his helpers (his seed – “brood of vipers” and "sons of your father the devil") were mimicking and counterfeiting the work of the Son of Man for the purpose of destroying the Kingdom – hindering the arrival of it, mitigating the strength of it, limiting the effectiveness and beneficial outcome of it. Mess it up, spoil it, ruin it. If Satan can't own it and control it, he will mess it up for everyone else. He doesn't want anyone else to have what he has, or to have it as good as he has it (jealousy and envy).

9. Notice that the Son of Man (Jesus) **sends forth His angels** to gather in the harvest, including both the good grain and the evil tares. This exact phrase, "send forth His angels," is found word for word in both the Greek and English, in both Matt 13:41 and Matt 24:31. In both texts it is pretty clear that Jesus is talking about literal angels, and not just human messengers. This is significant. It means that the gathering occurred in the **unseen realm** through the agency of the angels. Here are some other **grain Harvest texts** or other texts which have similar ideas, or which show a **similar sequence** of eschatological events:

Is. 66:20 "Then they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as a **grain** offering to the LORD, on horses, in chariots, in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem," says the LORD, "just as the sons of Israel bring their **grain** offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD.

Hos. 6:11 Also, O Judah, there is a **harvest** appointed for you, When I restore the fortunes of My people.

Hos. 8:7 For they sow the wind And they reap the whirlwind. The standing **grain** has no heads; It yields no **grain**. Should it yield, strangers would swallow it up.

Hos. 14:7 Those who live in his shadow will again raise **grain**, And they will blossom like the vine. His renown *will be* like the wine of Lebanon.

Joel 3:13 Put in the sickle, for the **harvest** is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great.

1 Pet. 4:17-18 For *it is* time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what *will be* the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?

Rev. 14:15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe."

Matt. 3:12 “His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His **wheat** into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

- The Holy Spirit inspired John to speak to them about a winnowing **fork** (some translations say fan, but it means the same instrument). His audience is well aware of the customs and procedures done for wheat harvesting and would fully understand the significance of what God was wanting **them** to know. It is us, here today, with our modern unfamiliar world/culture views who are the ones who need to understand the power of what they are being told – explain “winnowing fork.”
 - A winnowing fork is used at the “end” of the harvest once all of the wheat/tares are gathered.

John is giving **them** clear visual imagery about the whole passage he had just spoken:

- It was all stated as present tense/time, and imminent to them.
- The Kingdom had drawn near (vs. 2)
- The ax is at their root (vs. 10)
- Christ’s winnowing fork for the end of the harvest was already in His hand.

What are the "Tares," and what were their characteristics?

1. One writer (in the *ISBE*) suggested that the Tares are "bearded darnel" (*lolium temulentum*) which looks very much like wheat in its early stages of growth, and is the variety of darnel that is the most similar to wheat of all its varieties. It is hard to tell it apart from the wheat in the beginning. Jesus taught much about us not being the ultimate judge of people. That is God's business. It is impossible for us to tell the true character of a person most of the time until his life's work is fully developed and starts producing fruit. Then, "by their fruits we shall know them."

2. The distinction between the tares and the wheat became clearer as time progressed. Many new and weak Christians are incapable of discriminating the subtle differences between various doctrinal positions. At first, to them, it seems like nitpicking. Later on down the road, however, when the fruit of each of the two doctrinal systems begins to show itself, then it is easier to discern which is "good fruit" and which is "bad fruit." There is too much danger of destroying the good with the bad if we try to remove the bad too quickly before it is clear what is the bad. We may mistake some good for the bad and end up destroying some good in the process. Let them alone until it is crystal clear for all to see that it is bad.

3. Tares were sown "up among" (Gr. "ana meson") or right up next to and in with the wheat, so that it would be very difficult and destructive to try to remove them. They sprouted right next to each other, very tightly close together. They were sown by an enemy with malicious intentions, for the distinct purpose of spoiling the harvest for the Son of Man. It would cost much extra effort, time, and money to remove the weed seeds from the good seed.

4. Three ways to separate the Tares: (a) If the tares were few, which was not the case in this parable, women and children were put to the task of picking out the bad seed from the good before the grain was milled (after the harvest, and before they ground it into flour for baking, or put it in the seed bags for later sowing). (b) If the tares did not grow as tall as the wheat, sometimes the taller wheat heads could be clipped off above the heads of the darnel, and then the field of tares was burned to destroy the seed of the tares. (c) In the case of this parable, the tares were culled out by the reaper as he harvested the grain handful by handful, clipping out the tares first, then cutting off the stalks of grain and putting them in separate bundles or piles.

5. The Roman Catholic Church (and even some of the Reformers) used this parable as justification for hunting down the heretics in the church (the Tares) and burning them at the stake. They believed that this parable was teaching that the Tares should be removed and burned so that the Church would be pure. This was one of the texts used as justification for the burning at the stake of Miguel Servetus.

6. Matt. 13:41 – The tares in relation to the Kingdom are said to be, "all stumbling blocks" (Gr. "*skandalon*") and those who commit lawlessness" (Gr. "*anomia*"). Who were the folks in our New Testament whom the apostles described as "*skandala*" and "*anomial*"? See the texts below. Some of these texts apply to the Judaizers, but not exclusively. There were a number of "stumbling blocks" and "lawless" enemies in the pre-AD 70 Church. The Judaizers certainly fit the description, but they are not the only ones. We see a lot of different **stumbling blocks** and **lawless ones** in the pages of the New Testament.

Stumbling Block (Gr. *skandalon*) Texts:

Matt. 13:41 “The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness,

Matt. 16:23 But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.” **[materialistic, political, militaristic mindset]**

Matt. 18:7 “Woe to the world because of *its* stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes! **[false teachers, especially of children]**

Rom. 11:9 And David says, “LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM. **[false Israel, fleshly oriented Israelites, trusting in fleshly descent from Israel, circumcised, and strict keepers of the law].**

Rom. 14:13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way. **[much more than just circumcision, including legalistic law-keeping requirements, especially the kosher laws and keeping special days, in the context].**

Rom. 16:17 Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. **[mainly false teachers who deceived them with smooth, flattering words].**

Gal. 5:11 But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished. **[hints here that circumcision was a stumbling block for the Gentiles - this is an attack on the Judaizers]**

1 Pet. 2:8 and, “A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE”; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this *doom* they were also appointed. **[Jewish unbelievers who wanted a different kind of kingdom].**

1 John 2:10 The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. **[those who did not love the brethren].**

Rev. 2:14 “But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit *acts of* immorality.” **[false teachers and immoral leaders, anti-nomian and licentious, much like the Gnostics].**

Lawlessness (Gr. *anomia*) Texts:

Matt. 7:23 “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’” **[Jewish lawbreakers and hypocrites].**

Matt. 13:41 “The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness,”

Matt. 23:28 “So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.” **[Pharisaical hypocrites].**

Matt. 24:12 “Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold.” **[lawbreakers, no standards, reject all rules, anti-nomian].**

Rom. 6:19 “I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in *further* lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.” **[impure lifestyles].**

2 Cor. 6:14 “Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?” **[lawlessness opposite of righteousness, living wrongly, breaking all laws].**

2 Thess. 2:3 “Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,” **[the epitome of lawbreaking and evil and corruption].**

2 Thess. 2:7 “For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way.” **[either Judaizers, Zealots, or both].**

Titus 2:14 “who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.” **[impure, evil deeds].**

Heb. 1:9 “YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS.” **[hate righteousness].**

Heb. 10:17 “AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE.” **[sin, missing the mark, not living up to the standard of the Law].**

1 John 3:4 “Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.” **[lawlessness is sin, missing the mark, breaking the Law].**

First Gather the Tares and Bind Into Bundles, Then Gather the Grain – The Sequencing of the gatherings found here in Verse 30:

1. Allow both to grow together (transition period) until the harvest (end of the age).
2. The reapers are commanded to FIRST gather up the tares and bind them in bundles (so they can be burned later).
3. Then the wheat is gathered safely into the barn (before any fires, bad weather, or thieves).
4. Then the tares are burned after there is no more danger to the wheat.

Here's what the landowner literally said in the word for word translation from the Greek text: (Matt. 13:30)

Syllexate prōton ta zizania kai dēsate auta eis desmas pros to katakausai auta
Gather first the weeds and bind them into bundles toward the burning of them

The Greek preposition "pros" is normally translated "to, or toward" when it is used with the accusative as it is here in verse 30. If the meaning was to be burned immediately upon the binding into bundles, another preposition would most likely have been used, or it would have simply said to throw them on a pile and burn it then and there. But the way this is constructed, it clearly implies that the burning would not be done until a later time. And all the farmers who heard this parable would have understood it that way.

Key Point: It does **not** say the reapers would burn them immediately after gathering them and binding them in bundles. It only says they would gather and bind them "with a view to" (or "toward") their eventual burning. If this is not the meaning, a farmer would automatically have to wonder what was the purpose of binding them in bundles. If they were going to be burned immediately right there in the field, there would be no need to bind them in bundles. The binding would have been a waste of time and labor. Just throw them on a pile and burn them. The clear implication of the binding was that they were being bound "for the purpose of, and with a view to" their eventual burning **after the harvest was all safely gathered in**. It was not safe to have any fires anywhere in the fields until the harvest was safely gathered. The language here in Matt. 13:30 is consistent with that procedure. The Hebrew farmers were very careful about not lighting any fires in their fields until the harvest was over. If this is not the meaning of this parable, then Jesus applied the parable in an unnatural way, which every farmer in the audience would have noticed and would have very vocally disagreed with and raised objection to.

Therefore, assuming that Jesus was applying this parable in the same way the farmers of His day (and ours) would have applied it, I believe we are safe in drawing the following conclusions about the sequence of the end-time events:

1. Gather & Bind tares----- → 2. Gather grain into barns -----→ 3. Burn the tares
(with a view to eventual, (safely out of harm's way, (only after the grain was
but not immediate burning) before the consuming fires) safely stored in barns)

To make any other application here would be to violate the actual sequence in the normal harvest, and cause Jesus' hearers and farmers today to raise an objection.

Key Point: We need to understand that the gathering process for both the tares and the grain was going on simultaneously. The reapers were commanded to clear out the tares from among the stalks of good grain before they put the sickle to the good stalks. This was a handful-by-handful operation as they progressed through the field. They did not go through the whole field and gather all the tares before gathering any of the wheat. They would have trampled and destroyed and lost much good grain in the process. Instead, they only cleared out the tares from among the current handful of stalks they were working on, putting the tares in a separate bundle to be piled up and burned later. Then they would clip off the heads of good grain that were free of any intermingled tares. Then they would start the process all over again for the next handful. This is repeated over and over again, handful by handful, worker by worker, all the way through the field until the whole field is harvested. The application to the judgment of the Jews is obvious. City by city, household by household, the tares were gathered out from among the elect and the good were gathered up. And because there were a lot of angels engaged in this process, the gathering could occur very quickly. We see this separation already beginning to happen historically with the Neronic persecution. The Jews pushed the church out of their synagogues, harassed them and killed them. Then as the Zealots began building momentum for the war, Christians left Judea just as Jesus had commanded. So there was pretty much a complete separation between the Christians and the rest of the Jews before the war started.

What few Christians were left in the later part of the Neronic purge, had fled to Syria, Parthia, Egypt, and other remote locations outside Israel, and outside the threat of persecution. At the same time the Christians were leaving Palestine, the unbelieving Jews were returning to participate in the war effort. Christians were being **gathered out of harm's way**, while the unbelieving Jews were **being gathered into the very thick of it**. The Jews were being **bundled up in their fortress cities**, where ultimately they would be **killed and burned**.

So, the big point here in this parable, which we do not want to miss, is that the **burning was done later**. The gathering of the tares and binding into bundles is all that is done before the gathering in of the good grain. After all the grain is safely gathered into the barns, then the bundles of tares were burned. **So the angelic gathering of the elect occurred before the burning of Jerusalem**, and most likely before the burning of any Jewish cities took place during the war. This would mean that it would have occurred **before the Roman/Jewish war started**. The Christians would have been safely gathered into the heavenly barn before any of the burning took place.

Grain Harvest:

Holman Dictionary – The book of Ruth provides a vivid picture of the harvesting scene that was carried out by whole families and extra hired men, followed by poor women gleaners picking leftovers. Barley was harvested first during April and May, followed by wheat a month later. A sickle was used to cut off the ears which were held with one hand, and then bundled together in small sheaves to be carted off to the **threshing** floor (1 Chron. 21:22; Hos. 9:1)—a cleared area of stamped earth or stone. Animals, usually cattle, were driven over the spread-out stalks to trample out the grains. Often a cartwheel or a heavy sledge with small stones inserted in the bottom was drawn round and round the floor to hasten the **threshing**. The grains were swept together and separated from the useless chaff by winnowing—a process involving the throwing up of the grain in breezy weather so that the light scaly chaff is blown away, leaving a pile of clean grain ready for grinding into flour (Matt. 3:12). A proportion of the crop was always kept aside and carefully stored in dry conditions for sowing the following year (Gen. 47:24).

CHAFF Husk and other materials separated from the kernel of grain during the **threshing** or winnowing process. It blew away in the wind (Hos. 13:3) or was burned up as worthless (Isa. 5:24; Luke 3:17).

Now our understanding of the text can be developed further:

- Critics of the rapture view have failed to understand this parable.
- There is more involved in harvesting grain than just bundling the sheaves (i.e., getting them out of Judea into refuge cities). Those bundles of sheaves had to be taken to the threshing floor so that the grain could be beaten out of the heads, and separated from the straw and chaff. Then the winnowing fork removed the straw and the chaff, which would be burned along with the tares later. Once the grain was threshed, then it could be gathered into the barn. And once all the grain was safely stored in the barn, then the fires could burn up the tares and chaff.
- The wheat was safely stored in the barn about the same time the tares were being bundled and piled up in their fortress cities (AD 66), before their fortresses began to be destroyed and burned (AD 67-70). This assumes that there was a two-stage process in the gathering, for both the tares and the good grain: (1) The angelic reapers separated the stalks of wheat from the

stalks of tares, binding both into bundles, the grain bundles were taken by cart to the threshing floor, while the tare bundles were put into piles for later burning, (2) then the grain was threshed and stored in the barn (cf. Job 39:12 – gathered from the threshing floor), and afterwards the chaff and tares were burned.

- The flight out of Jerusalem occurred before the armies surrounded it, not afterwards. They got out of the field before the field was burned. They got out of the field at the very time the tares were being bundled up and thrown into piles (fortress cities) to be burned later. If the flight of the Christians had not occurred until after the tares had been gathered up and tied in bundles in their besieged cities, it would have been too late. The Christians would have perished in the Jewish rebellion. So the removal of the sheaves of grain from the field (i.e., the flight out of Jerusalem to Pella and other Diaspora cities) must have occurred before the war began.

- In Matt. 24:15-22 Jesus tells them to flee before the cities were surrounded and BEFORE the wrath began to be poured out. **Eusebius** says that they did leave before the war, and **Josephus** shows that many fled before the war began. This means that the angelic gathering of the elect happened after they had already fled out of Judea. In Matt. 24:29-31, Jesus says that the angels would be sent forth AFTER the great tribulation (Neronic persecution) to gather the elect. We see the same angelic gathering mentioned here in this parable, and in the same sequence and timing – an angelic gathering at the same time the tares were being gathered, but **BEFORE** the wrath was poured out (before the tares were burned). Therefore, the angelic gathering happened after they had already fled out of Judea. As we can see from Job 39:12, the good grain is gathered from the threshing floor, after the heads of wheat have been thrashed and separated from the chaff. The Neronic persecution would certainly have separated the good wheat from the weeds (or tares). That thrashing purified the grain even further, so that there were no impurities and chaff mixed in with it. Just the pure grain was gathered into the barn.

- The angelic “gathering of the elect” in Matthew 24, as well as this gathering of the good grain here in Matthew 13, is **NOT** the escape from Judea, but is instead another “greater angelic gathering” **after** they had already fled from Judea.

- This raises the question, “What was this angelic gathering of the elect after the tribulation and their escape from Judea?” To me, the only easy answer to this would be a **rapture**. Otherwise, we would have to play games with the text here. We would have to explain-away the angelic role in this gathering as being apocalyptic language.

- From looking at both these texts (Matt. 13 and Matt. 24) we are able to nail down the timing and sequencing, and show that the angelic "gathering" of the elect did not begin until **after** the Neronic persecution (AD 64-66), **after** the binding of the tares had begun (AD 66), and **before** the burning of any of the tares (AD 66-70).
- The **great tribulation** was the Neronic persecution upon the Church (AD 64-66). The bundling of the tares was when the Romans forced the Jews to flee into their fortress cities, and especially with the biggest pile which had flooded into Jerusalem that would be burned later at the end of the war.
- Then when the Jews bodies were killed and burned, their souls were gathered by the angels before the judgment seat of Christ to be judged and thrown into the Lake of Fire. Josephus tells us that over a million Jews perished in the conflict. Jews from all over the Roman world had gathered back to Palestine to participate in the revolt. They were bundled up in Palestine, and eventually burned. Their disembodied souls were gathered into the **unseen realm** by the angelic reapers, and judged, and sent to the eternal conscious punishment of Gehenna/Lake of Fire, while the righteous were gathered into the heavenly presence of Christ and the Father.

Historical Sequence of Events:

1. Satan out like a roaring lion – the tribulation on the church began in AD 62 (the start of the 70th week of Daniel 9) and reached a peak with the great Neronic tribulation between AD 64-66 (AD 62-66).
2. Jews arrested James and some of his companions (including John?) (AD 62).
3. John writes Revelation during tribulation before Jewish revolt (Rev. 1:9) (AD 62-64).
4. Nero persecutes Christians in Rome (AD 64-65).
5. Paul, Peter, and John died in the Neronic persecution (AD 64-65).

6. Eusebius says that Christians fled the city before the war, probably as soon as news of the Neronic persecution reached Judea, and definitely when they saw the Zealot armies encircling Jerusalem and Judea. (AD 64-66).

7. Zealots fanned the flames toward war (AD 65-66).

8. The angelic armies in the sky appeared (reported by Josephus 36 days after Passover May 16 AD 66).

9. War is declared and Zealot armies took control of Jerusalem (AD 66).

10. Feast of Passover and Pentecost occurred at the same time the war was beginning – many Old Covenant Jewish pilgrims who had come from throughout the Roman Empire stayed to help fight the war (AD 66).

11. The angelic gathering of the elect evidently began at the same time the Jews were being gathered into their fortress cities to prepare for the war (AD 66).

12. Jewish communities all over the Roman empire were evicted and plundered (AD 66). They fled back to Judea where they could participate in the revolt. They were gathered into the fortress cities there, which were destroyed and burned later.

13. Roman General Cestius Gallus brought his army to Jerusalem, but withdrew unexpectedly, and suffered a humiliating defeat in his withdrawal (AD 66).

14. Nero commissioned Vespasian to go crush the revolt (AD 66-67).

15. War begins in earnest under Vespasian's command (AD 67).

16. Nero was killed. (AD 68) Galba took the throne, then was killed, then Otho, then Vitellius. The war was put on hold while the affairs of Rome were being stabilized.

17. Vespasian is declared emperor and heads for Rome (July 1, AD 69). Titus his son is put in charge of the rest of the war (the siege of Jerusalem and the reduction of the rest of the Zealot fortresses) (late AD 69).

18. Titus assembles his legions at Jerusalem and begins the siege (Spring, AD 70).

19. The Temple is burned and Jerusalem falls into the hands of Titus (August, AD 70).

20. Herodium, Machaerus, and Masada are then sieged and captured by AD 73.

**After the Angelic Gathering of the Elect, the Righteous Will Shine in the Kingdom Matt. 13:43
– The Righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of the Father:**

- Some Old Testament prophets say similar things (Dan. 12:3), as does the NT and the book of Revelation.
- The Book of Enoch has some very similar statements.
- This is certainly an allusion to the saints being in heaven, and **not** still on earth.
- This is the "manifestation of the sons of God" when the first century saints were recognized as being the "children of the Father of Lights" (James 1:17). Light of the world. Light bearers or Light reflectors.
- Paul said that "the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now" waiting "for the *revealing* of the sons of God," which would include the "redemption of their body." (Rom. 8:23).
- That Jewish "world" (cosmos) was waiting for the promises of all the prophets to be fulfilled, when the righteous would be revealed and rewarded, and the wicked would be exposed and punished.

See list of texts below:

"Sun" and "shining" and light, and only the righteous possessing the new city (the wicked are cast out and given darkness):

Prov. 4:18 *"But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, That shines brighter and brighter until the full day."*

Is. 30:26 *"The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven days, on the day the LORD binds up the fracture of His people and heals the bruise He has inflicted."*

Is. 35:8-10 *"A highway will be there, a roadway, And it will be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean will not travel on it, But it will be for him who walks that way, And fools will not wander on it. No lion will be there, Nor will any vicious beast go up on it; These will not be found there. But the redeemed will walk there, And the ransomed of the LORD will return, And come with joyful shouting to Zion, With everlasting joy upon their heads. They will find gladness and joy, And sorrow and sighing will flee away."*

Is. 52:1 *"Awake, awake, Clothe yourself in your strength, O Zion; Clothe yourself in your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; For the uncircumcised and the unclean Will no longer come into you."*

Is. 60:1 *"Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you."*

Is. 60:19 *"No longer will you have the sun for light by day, Nor for brightness will the moon give you light; But you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, And your God for your glory."*

Ezek. 32:7 *"And when I extinguish you, I will cover the heavens and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud, And the moon will not give its light."*

Ezek. 32:8 *"All the shining lights in the heavens I will darken over you. And will set darkness on your land," Declares the Lord GOD."*

Ezek. 37:21-28 “Say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms. “They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God. “My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. “They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. “I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. “My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. “And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.””

Dan. 9:17 “So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications, and for Your sake, O Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary.”

Dan. 12:3 *“Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”*

Joel 2:10 “Before them the earth quakes, The heavens tremble, The sun and the moon grow dark, And the stars lose their brightness.”

Joel 2:31 “The sun will be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.”

Joel 3:15-21 “The sun and moon grow dark. And the stars lose their brightness. The LORD roars from Zion And utters His voice from Jerusalem, And the heavens and the earth tremble. But the LORD is a refuge for His people And a stronghold to the sons of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, Dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain. So Jerusalem will be holy, And strangers will pass through it no more. And in that day The mountains will drip with sweet wine, And the hills will flow with milk, And all the brooks of Judah will flow with water;

And a spring will go out from the house of the LORD To water the valley of Shittim. Egypt will become a waste, And Edom will become a desolate wilderness, Because of the violence done to the sons of Judah, In whose land they have shed innocent blood. But Judah will be inhabited forever And Jerusalem for all generations. And I will avenge their blood which I have not avenged, For the LORD dwells in Zion.”

Amos 8:9 “It will come about in that day,” declares the Lord GOD, “That I will make the sun go down at noon. And make the earth dark in broad daylight.”

Mic. 3:6 “Therefore it will be night for you—without vision, And darkness for you—without divination. The sun will go down on the prophets, And the day will become dark over them.”

Zeph. 3:12-20 *“But I will leave among you A humble and lowly people, And they will take refuge in the name of the LORD. “The remnant of Israel will do no wrong And tell no lies, Nor will a deceitful tongue Be found in their mouths; For they will feed and lie down With no one to make them tremble.” Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away His judgments against you, He has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; You will fear disaster no more. In that day it will be said to Jerusalem: “Do not be afraid, O Zion; Do not let your hands fall limp. “The LORD your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy. “I will gather those who grieve about the appointed feasts— They came from you, O Zion; The reproach of exile is a burden on them. “Behold, I am going to deal at that time With all your oppressors, I will save the lame And gather the outcast, And I will turn their shame into praise and renown In all the earth. “At that time I will bring you in, Even at the time when I gather you together; Indeed, I will give you renown and praise Among all the peoples of the earth, When I restore your fortunes before your eyes,” Says the LORD.”*

Mal. 4:2 *“But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.”*

Matt. 5:16 *“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”*

Matt. 17:2 *“And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.”*

Matt. 24:29 *“But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”*

Mark 13:24 *“But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT,”*

Luke 1:79 *“TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH, To guide our feet into the way of peace.”*

Luke 17:24 *“For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day.”*

John 1:5 *“The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.”*

John 5:35 *“He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.”*

Acts 2:20 *“THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME.”*

Rom. 8:18-19 *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.”*

1 Cor. 3:13 *“each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work.”*

2 Cor. 4:2 “but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the **manifestation** of truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”

2 Cor. 4:10 *“always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be **manifested** in our body.”*

2 Cor. 4:11 *“For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be **manifested** in our mortal flesh.*

2 Cor. 4:6 *“For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”*

Eph. 5:14 *“For this reason it says, “Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you.””*

Col. 3:4 *“When Christ, who is our life, is **revealed**, then you also will be **revealed** with Him in glory.”*

James 1:17 *“Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the **Father of lights**, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.”*

1 Pet. 5:1 *“Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is about to be **revealed**,”*

2 Pet. 1:19 *“So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.”*

1 John 2:8 *“On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining.”*

Rev. 1:16 *“In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.”*

Rev. 7:16 *“They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat;”*

Rev. 8:12 *“The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.”*

Rev. 9:2 *“He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit.”*

Rev. 10:1 *“I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire;”*

Rev. 12:1 *“A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars;”*

Rev. 18:23 *“and the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer; and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer; for your merchants were the great men of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery.”*

Rev. 21:23 *“And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.”*

Rev. 22:5 *“And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.”*

Book of Enoch statements:

Chapter 58

1 And I began to speak the third Parable concerning **the righteous and elect**.

2 Blessed are ye, ye righteous and elect, For **glorious** shall be your lot.

3 And the **righteous** shall be in the **light of the sun**. And the elect in the light of eternal life: The days of their life shall be unending, And the days of the holy without number.

4 And they shall **seek the light and find righteousness** with the Lord of Spirits: There shall be peace to the righteous in the name of the Eternal Lord.

5 And after this it shall be said to the holy in heaven That they should seek out the secrets of righteousness, the heritage of faith: For it has become **bright as the sun** upon earth, And the darkness is past.

6 And there shall be a **light that never endeth**, And to a limit (lit. number) of days they shall not come, For the darkness shall first have been destroyed, And the light established before the Lord of Spirits] And **the light of uprightness** established for ever before the Lord of Spirits.

Chapter 104

1 I swear unto you, that in heaven the angels remember you for good before the glory of the Great

2 One: and your names are written before the glory of the Great One. Be hopeful; for aforetime ye were put to shame through ill and affliction; but now **ye shall shine as the lights of heaven**,

3 **ye shall shine and ye shall be seen**, and the portals of heaven shall be opened to you. And in your cry, cry for judgment, and it shall appear to you; for all your tribulation shall be visited on the

4 rulers, and on all who helped those who plundered you. Be hopeful, and cast not away your hopes for **ye shall have great joy as the angels of heaven**.

5 What shall ye be obliged to do? Ye shall not have to hide on the day of the great judgment and ye shall not be found as sinners, and the eternal

6 judgment shall be far from you for all the generations of the world. And now fear not, ye righteous, when ye see the sinners growing strong and prospering in their ways: be not companions with them,

7 but keep afar from their violence; for **ye shall become companions of the hosts of heaven.**

Chapter 108

1 Another book which Enoch wrote for his son Methuselah and for those who will come after him,

2 and keep the law in the last days. Ye who have done good shall wait for those days till an end is made of those who work evil; and an end of the might of the transgressors. And wait ye indeed till sin has passed away,

3 for their names shall be blotted out of the book of life and out of the holy books, and their **seed shall be destroyed for ever,**

4 and their spirits shall be slain, and they shall cry and make lamentation in a place that is a **chaotic wilderness**, and **in the fire shall they burn**; for there is **no earth there**. And I saw there something like an invisible cloud; for by reason of its depth I could not look over, and I saw a flame of fire blazing brightly, and things like shining

5 mountains circling and sweeping to and fro. And I asked one of the holy angels who was with me and said unto him: What is this shining thing? for it is not a heaven but only the flame of ablazing

6 fire, and the voice of weeping and crying and lamentation and strong pain. And he said unto me: This place which thou seest - here are cast the spirits of sinners and blasphemers, and of those who work wickedness, and of those who pervert everything that the Lord hath spoken through the mouth

7 of the prophets - (even) the things that shall be. For some of them are written and inscribed above in the heaven, in order that the angels may read them and know that which shall befall the sinners, and the spirits of the humble, and of those who have afflicted their bodies, and been recompensed

8 by God; and of those who have been put to shame by wicked men: Who love God and loved neither gold nor silver nor any of the good things which are in the world, but gave over their bodies to torture.

9 Who, since they came into being, longed not after earthly food, but regarded everything as a passing breath, and lived accordingly, and the Lord tried them much, and their spirits were

10 found pure so that they should bless His name. And all the blessings destined for them I have recounted in the books. And he hath assigned them their recompense, because they have been found to be such as loved heaven more than their life in the world, and though they were trodden under foot of wicked men, and experienced abuse and reviling from them and were put to shame,

11 yet they blessed Me. And now I will summon the spirits of the good who belong to the **generation of light**, and **I will transform those** who were born in darkness, who in the flesh were not recompensed

12 with **such honour as their faithfulness deserved**. And **I will bring forth in shining light those who**

13 have loved My holy name, and **I will seat each on the throne of his honour**. And **they shall be resplendent for times without number**; for righteousness is the judgment of God; for to the faithful

14 He will give faithfulness in the habitation of upright paths. And they shall see those who were,

15 born in darkness led into darkness, while **the righteous shall be resplendent**. And the sinners shall cry aloud and see them resplendent, and they indeed will go where days and seasons are prescribed for them.

Statements from Rev. 21-22:

Rev. 21:5 “And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.”

Rev. 21:6 Then He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.

Rev. 21:7 “He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.

Rev. 21:8 “But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part *will be* in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

Rev. 21:9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I will show you **the bride, the wife of the Lamb.**”

Rev. 21:10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me **the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,**

Rev. 21:11 **having the glory of God.** Her **brilliance was like a very costly stone,** as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.

Rev. 21:12 It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names *were* written on them, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel.

Rev. 21:13 *There were* three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west.

Rev. 21:14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them *were* the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Rev. 21:15 The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall.

Rev. 21:16 The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal.

Rev. 21:17 And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, *according to* human measurements, which are *also* angelic *measurements*.

Rev. 21:18 The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

Rev. 21:19 The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald;

Rev. 21:20 the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.

Rev. 21:21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

Rev. 21:22 I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

Rev. 21:23 And the city **has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.**

Rev. 21:24 **The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.**

Rev. 21:25 In the daytime (for **there will be no night there**) its gates will never be closed;

Rev. 21:26 and they will **bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it;**

Rev. 21:27 and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Rev. 22:1 Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb,

Rev. 22:2 in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve *kinds of* fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Rev. 22:3 There will **no longer be any curse;** and **the throne of God** and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him;

Rev. 22:4 they will see His face, and His name *will be* on their foreheads.

Rev. 22:5 And there will no longer be *any* night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.

Rev. 22:6 And he said to me, “These words are faithful and true”; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place.

Rev. 22:7 “And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.”

Rev. 22:8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things.

Rev. 22:9 But he said to me, “Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God.”

Rev. 22:10 And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.

Rev. 22:11 “Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.”

Rev. 22:12 “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.

Rev. 22:13 “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

Rev. 22:14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may **enter by the gates into the city.**

Rev. 22:15 **Outside are the dogs** and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

Applications & Conclusions:

- Question: Is the "gathering into the Kingdom" a spiritual-positional thing, a reference to the flight to Pella, the rapture, or including all of the above? The answer is "all of the above." Matt. 13:30, and especially verses 41-43 can help us answer this.

- One of the reasons why we have traditionally been way off on our sequencing of the endtime events is because of our lack of understanding of the harvesting procedures in first century Palestine.

1. We have assumed that ALL of the tares were gathered up before ANY of the grain was harvested.

2. And we have assumed that the tares were BURNED before the grain was GATHERED.

- These two false assumptions made correct exegesis of this text absolutely impossible.

- In an actual grain harvest, the grain is gathered in very quickly, usually within a matter of days after it ripens. Every available laborer that can be found is summoned and hired to help gather in the grain before the storms or fires can destroy it, and before the thieves can steal it. In the case of the angelic harvest (the rapture), this process could have been accomplished "in the twinkling of an eye." The separating of the tares from the grain definitely occurred during the Neronian persecution, and the binding of the tares into bundles to be burned later occurred when the Zealots began fortifying their cities for the war. The separation and bundling of the tares had occurred by the time the war began in AD 66. The tares were bundled up in their fortress cities, and would be burned later as the war progressed. But the good grain had to be gathered into the heavenly barns before any of those fortress cities were burned. This means that the angelic gathering of the elect had to occur before any of the cities were burned. The Zealots did some burning of Gentile cities just as the war began (summer of AD 66). The rapture would have occurred before that.

- This is, in fact, what we see in the historical record of Josephus. He gives the very **day and hour** of the appearance of the angelic armies in the clouds above Palestine, surrounding all the cities. It was at the time of Passover (May 16 AD 66), right before the war began. Just weeks later at Pentecost May 30 AD 66, a host of people in the unseen realm were heard by the priests to be leaving the temple. That certainly would fit the idea of an angelic gathering of the elect.

OBJECTION TO THE RAPTURE INTERPRETATION OF THIS TEXT:

If the gathering of the good wheat means they were raptured to heaven, then would it not be that the gathering of the tares means they were raptured to hell?

ED STEVEN'S RESPONSE:

The assumption fails to notice the fact that both gatherings were accomplished by angels, making them both de facto supernatural. We can easily understand the supernatural nature of the gathering when we realize that the angels took each group to their final destiny in the unseen realm. The angelic gathering of the wicked into Gehenna/Lake of Fire was every bit as supernatural as the gathering of the righteous into heaven. We have already shown that the wicked were indeed gathered out of the field (the world) when they came back to Palestine from all over the Diaspora (the world) to participate in the war effort. They were bound in bundles in their fortress cities throughout Israel. Those fortress cities were defeated and burned later as the war progressed. Well over a million Jews were killed in the war, more likely close to two million if we include all those outside Palestine in the Diaspora who perished during and immediately after the revolt.

Their disembodied souls were surely gathered by the angels and taken before the judgment seat of Christ, to be judged and cast into the Lake of Fire (Gehenna) for eternal conscious punishment outside the gates of the heavenly city. The righteous elect had already been gathered by the angels into the heavenly presence of Christ, there to reign with him forevermore. All the events involved in the angelic gathering for both the righteous and wicked were supernatural, and have been fulfilled literally and historically in the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem, both in the SEEN realm, and in the UNSEEN realm. The objection simply fails to consider the supernatural character of the angelic gathering of both the wicked and the righteous.