

[R2633 : page 151]

## PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM.

– MATT. 13:24-33. – MAY 27. –

*"The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the Kingdom."*

PARABLES of the Kingdom are really word-pictures of the Kingdom. No one of these parables represents the complete view of the subject, but merely one phase of it. The attentive Bible student will notice that the theme of the Gospel from first to last is the Kingdom. The message first given to Father Abraham was that his posterity would bless the world – that is to say, be a Kingdom exercising control over the world, and for its benefit and uplifting. This hope was before the Jewish mind for over sixteen hundred years, their expectation being that they would be exalted by God to that kingdom position and bless all the families of the earth, reconciling them to God. Our Lord's proclamation and that of his apostles, at [R2633 : page 152] the first advent was, "The kingdom of God is at hand" – God is now ready to establish his Kingdom if the people are ready to receive it. "But his own received him not," and the Kingdom was taken from them as a nation, to be given to the holy nation, the peculiar people, the royal priesthood, whom the Lord would select, – choosing first from fleshly Israel so many as were ready, and the remainder from amongst the Gentiles during this Gospel age.

Naturally enough, the Jews did not grasp the situation, but were looking for our Lord to establish a fleshly Kingdom in their midst; and it was to counteract this erroneous thought that Jesus uttered these parables of the Kingdom – about nine of them – three being embraced in this lesson. The series began with the parable of the sower, examined in our last issue, which showed that there was but one true seed or message of the Kingdom, and that the fruitfulness of that seed would depend upon the character of heart into which it would fall. Next we have in order the parable of

## THE WHEAT AND THE TARES.

Here the good seed or the message of the Kingdom which our Lord planted is represented as springing up in believers, and constituting them children or heirs of the Kingdom. It is very proper here to note that there is no other method at present of becoming [R2634 : page 152] a child of God, an heir of the Kingdom, except through the acceptance of the Kingdom message, with all that it implies of consecration to the Lord, even unto death – "if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" in his Kingdom. – Rom. 8:17.

The object of these parables, then, was not to depict to our minds what the Kingdom would be like after it has been established in the world, but rather to picture before our minds something respecting the processes of development by which the Kingdom-class would be selected from amongst mankind and made ready for the Kingdom which is to be set up at the second coming of Christ in power and great glory, – when he shall establish that Millennial Kingdom for the very purpose of granting a judgment or trial to all the families of the earth – peradventure under the favorable opportunities of knowledge, etc., then granted unto them, many may choose life through obedience to God and attain it.

As in the preceding parable the Lord Jesus himself was the sower of the good seed, so in this parable: It was Jesus who was sowing the seeds of truth, the promises, etc., which, springing up in the hearts of his disciples, transformed them to newness of life, making of them new creatures, and operating through them as his mouthpieces carried similar blessings wherever the message, the Gospel of the Kingdom, has gone.

"While men slept" the enemy of the sower of the good seed, viz., Satan, came and sowed tares amongst the wheat. The Lord himself not only made possible the Kingdom by redeeming mankind, but announced his willingness to receive some as joint heirs of it, and then

departed for the far country, even heaven itself, not to return until the time for his Kingdom to be established in glory and power. (Mark 13:34.) His chosen apostles faithfully guarded the field so long as they lived, but when they fell asleep in death, as the Lord has foreseen and here predicted, the Adversary found good opportunity to bring in false doctrines, to sow error, and through the error to produce amongst the wheat a crop of tares – darnel. Tares have the peculiarity that while growing they very decidedly resemble wheat, so that it is almost impossible to tell them apart until a certain degree of maturity is reached; then the difference is clearly discernible to all of experience.

We see the fulfilment of this feature of the parable in Christendom to-day; the wheat was sown broadcast over a certain part of the field, the world of mankind, especially throughout Europe and America, and the tare-seed, the error and false doctrine, seems to have been sown still more liberally: and looking back we date that sowing as commencing as soon as the apostles were "fallen asleep." In consequence we find to-day Christians, true Christians, genuine Christians, begotten of the Word of God's promises, and fully in accord with it, and seeking to bring forth good fruit in their lives; and we also see an almost innumerable tare-class of imitation Christians, begotten not of the truth nor of the word of the Kingdom, utterly ignorant of it indeed; begotten of excitement, begotten of fear of hell, begotten of hopes of worldly advantage by joining a nominal church, begotten of pride and a desire to be in good society, begotten of social and financial ambition, etc.

It is often very difficult to discern clearly between these wheat and tare classes; nor has it been necessary so to do down through the eighteen centuries of this age, for the Master declared that they were to be permitted to grow together until the harvest-time, when the ripening of both under the clearer light of the harvest-time would manifest each class thoroughly and distinctly, and then a separation would take place under his supervision.

To our understanding we are now in the "harvest" or end of this age, and the light of present truth, as it shines for the Lord's people walking in the path of the just, which shines more and more unto the perfect day, as well as the light of present truth as it is shining upon the world and its social and financial [R2634 : page 153] and scientific questions, is tending to ripen both the wheat and the tares. The tare class no longer seeks to hide itself, but rather seems to claim that it is the genuine article, the scientific class, evolutionists, higher-critics, and in general the worldly-wise. The wheat class is also becoming more and more discernible, as it ripens in the faith and hope and joy begotten of the Gospel of the Kingdom. The separating work mentioned in the parable is not only at hand, but in progress; a cleavage and separation between nominal Christians (tares) and true Christians (wheat), as nearly every one who is awake discerns: and this separation will be more and more discernible year by year as the harvest work progresses, until its close.

To have attempted to root out all the tares, and to have thus cleansed the wheatfield, at any time in the past, would have meant, as the parable shows, a complete shaking throughout the entire field, a commotion which would not have served the best interests of the wheat; hence the Lord has permitted for all these centuries that the two classes should live side by side and cooperate in church work, and unitedly profess to be his people, intending the separation to be manifest in the end of the age. And surely when the separation does occur it will cause a wonderful commotion in nominal Zion – "Babylon."

The reapers are first to gather the tares and bind them in bundles *to* burn them. They do not burn them at once, but proceed to gather the wheat into the garner; and not until after the wheat is garnered does the fire consume the tares. We are to remember that this is a parable, and that the fire is as much a symbol as the tares, the wheat and the garner; hence we are not to expect a literal burning of the masses of Christendom in a literal fire, after the little flock, the

faithful wheat class, the children of the Kingdom, have been gathered into the barn, the garner, the heavenly condition.

The fire which will then come upon the wheatfield, from which the wheat has been gathered, and in which the tares are bundled, will be what the Scriptures elsewhere denominate "a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation" – social trouble, financial trouble, religious trouble, accompanied by famine and pestilence, and the end of it will be the disruption of all law, order and religion and the prevalence of anarchy. In that trouble all the tares will be destroyed, in the sense that none of them thereafter will claim to be what they are not – none of them will claim to be God's consecrated people. The various inducements by which they were brought to claim themselves to be Christ's followers, when they were not, will then be at an end. No longer will such a claim gain for them social or financial or other standing or advantage, and no longer will they make the false claim.

Explaining the parable privately to his disciples, our Lord showed them that the gathering of the wheat into the garner meant the completion of the work of this Gospel age – the completion of the Kingdom class that shall bless the world, and he says, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." Thus the Sun of Righteousness that is to arise in the Millennial morning, and which is to bless the whole world with the light of the knowledge of the goodness of God in Christ, is to be composed, not only of our Lord Jesus himself, the great light, but also of those chosen to be his joint-heirs in the Kingdom, his associates in the shining forth of the light of truth.

This was a totally different conception of the Kingdom from what had come to the minds of the Jewish people; and altho an explanation of the parable was given to the apostles, and they answered that they understood it, we may well doubt if they grasped the subject comprehensively, until after the day of Pentecost, when, as our Lord

promised, the holy spirit brought them enlightenment of understanding.

### **THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED.**

The third parable-picture of the Kingdom in its present embryonic condition of development is intended to show that from a very small beginning the nominal church of this Gospel age would attain to quite considerable proportions. Its start is likened to the small mustard-seed, which attains to the largest size of its class of herbs. Yet this large development does not necessarily signify advantage or anything specially desirable, but on the contrary it becomes a disadvantage, in that the fowls of the air come and lodge in its branches, and defile it. The "fowls of the air" in the preceding parable of the sower represented Satan and his agents, and we are, we think, justified in making a similar application here, and interpreting this to mean that the Church planted by the Lord Jesus flourished rapidly and exceedingly, and that because of its attainments, strength, etc., Satan, through his agents, came and lodged in the various branches of the Church. They have been lodging in the branches of this Gospel Church for these many centuries, and are still to be found in her, a defiling element. They come in, not for the benefit of the mustard-seed tree or shrub, but for their own convenience and benefit. It is in harmony with this that in the present time the Lord speaks of Babylon, nominal Christendom, as "the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." – Rev. 18:2.

This contamination of the original good planting, [R2635 : page 153] by the Adversary and his agents, is as prominent in this parable as in the parable of the tares, merely showing it from a different standpoint.

### **THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN.**

Here again we have a word-picture of the Lord's Church during this Gospel age of her development and preparation for the Kingdom glory to follow.

In this parable we have brought to our attention the Lord's provision for the necessities of his people during this Gospel age – he did not leave them without a proper supply of food. The three measures of meal, equivalent to one ephah, constituted a good, liberal household supply. Like all of the Lord's provisions, it was good and pure, but as in the other parables the Adversary introduced impurity, falsity, etc., so in this one leaven is introduced into the meal. Leaven represents corruption throughout the Scriptures: in every other instance of its Scriptural use it is represented as an evil, an impurity, something that is defiling. For instance, the Israelites were to put away all leaven, all impurity, at the time of the Passover, that they might come the nearer to the Lord in holiness, etc. Again, our Lord Jesus refers to leaven as a corruption, bidding his disciples "Beware of the leaven of the scribes and Pharisees" – beware of the false doctrines, the corrupt influence, proceeding from the scribes and Pharisees. Again, the Apostle Paul represents the leaven as an evil thing, saying, "Purge out the old leaven." – Exod. 13:7; Luke 12:1; 1 Cor. 5:7.

It would not seem reasonable that our Lord should use the word leaven here as Christian people generally suppose, in a good sense, as implying some grace of the holy spirit. On the contrary, we recognize consistency in all of his teachings, and we may be as sure that he would not use leaven as a symbol of righteousness as that he would not use leprosy as a symbol of holiness.

How then shall we apply this parable? We answer, that the grace of God given to his people in the beginning of this age, **(1)** the faith once delivered to the saints, **(2)** the hope set before us in the Gospel, **(3)** love, the bond of perfectness, summed up the three measures of the Lord's provision for his people, – in partaking of which they were to become strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. But gradually a woman arose, a false woman, represented in Revelation as a harlot, and as "that woman Jezebel." This Roman Catholic system obtained great power over the three measures of meal provided for God's household, and proceeded to mix therewith the

leaven of her own impurity. The result was that all the family food, all the holy doctrines were contaminated with her false doctrines – nothing was left pure and clean, as handed to us originally by the apostles. The faith once delivered to the saints was distorted out of all semblance to its original simplicity; the hope set before us in the Gospel was changed to another hope entirely, unlike the original; the spirit of the Lord, Love, was perverted to a selfish love of creeds of men and human institutions. Alas! no wonder all Christendom is spiritually sick, because of this adulteration in its food supply.

From this standpoint we readily see the force and meaning of the Master's declaration, that at his return he would gird himself, and come forth and serve his people, and that he would send forth at the hands of his servants things both new and old from the storehouse of his grace, "meat in due season."

-----