

PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

OUR DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL: –

In a discourse on the "Parable of the Sower" (commonly so designated), as recorded in the 13th chapter of Matthew, a dear brother in the Truth, an Elder, by the way, of another local ecclesia, recently gave utterance to the following explanation or rather application, briefly summarized thus:

"This parable divides mankind into four different classes, the wayside soil representing the children of disobedience (Eph. 2:2), the rocky ground representing all the incapables, including all heathens, idiots, etc., the thorny ground representing all the consecrated believers who fail to carry out their consecration vow, thus bringing no fruit to perfection, and go into the Second Death, and the fourth class representing all of the Lord's people."

The writer's mind may be somewhat unduly balanced and his vision considerably beclouded, hindering him from receiving the force of the above application; but it does appear to me with an irresistible force of persuasion that the brother mentioned has taken by far too wide a scope, not by any means intended by the Master. From previous studies along these lines I would not understand that it would be your presentation of the matter, nor that it would be in harmony with the plan in general, wherefore I place myself as an inquirer, earnestly desirous of understanding it correctly. The force of the lesson, it appears to my mind, is almost entirely lost if we venture to apply it to the world at large, so much the more as the Master in his explanation of it very plainly and most emphatically asserts and reasserts that it applies exclusively to those who hear the word of the Kingdom as presented by himself, the Master Sower, the same being carried on through the instrumentalities of his chosen servants, the twelve apostles.

"When any one *heareth* the word of the Kingdom, etc., this is he that received seed by the wayside; he that received seed into stony places is he that *heareth* the word; he that received seed into thorny ground is he that *heareth* the word; he that received seed into good ground is he that *heareth* the word..." From this it appears evident that the fourfold division does not in any sense of the word apply to the world of mankind at large which collectively are called "children of disobedience" or "children of wrath," but only to a certain limited class of all people, nations and tongues, first Jews and then Gentiles. Surely this would exclude from the four-fold division of the parable all the heathens who have not even heard the name of the King; it would equally exclude all deprived of reasoning abilities, the idiots, infants, etc.; and furthermore it would exclude from the category the great majority of so-called Christendom, whose hearing faculties have been greatly neutralized by the Antichristian systems of error, strong delusions in every conceivable form. Thus the four-fold division merely applies to a limited number, viz., those who hear the Gospel in its purity and not a perverted so-called Gospel. In other words it would comprise those only who by the Apostle Paul are designated the "honored" class, honored to hear the Gospel, whoever or wherever they be, or however they receive it.

To the mind of the inquirer, even the majority of those who read the Bible do not hear the word of the Kingdom, because their minds are warped, twisted, prejudiced and beclouded, as was the case with the majority of the nation to whom as a servant the King first came. Before coming into Present Truth the writer of these lines had never heard the Word of the Kingdom, though he had made the Bible his special life study. Without going into any details whatever as far as the parable is concerned, thus briefly I submit to you the two views, both of which cannot be correct or in full harmony with the plan.

In this same connection I shall take the liberty to trespass upon your valuable time, dear Pastor, in presenting to you another question, of less import perhaps, but of great interest, closely related to the one mentioned above. It refers more particularly to the "Parable of the Wheat and Tares," immediately following the other parable. These two obscure presentations of the Kingdom from different viewpoints being explained by the Master, conveys to the mind of the disciple, the learner, quite a few foundational truths, and consequently I have made the same a matter of profound and reverent study.

While recognizing that the true wheat wherever found is acceptable to the Lord, and that in this harvest he will so supervise the issues of the work so that all the wheat will be garnered, nevertheless it appears to me that the world at large does not constitute the wheat-field, but only a portion of it. By reading the Acts of the Apostles, which constitutes a history of the sowing time of the present age about to close, we are naturally forced to the conclusion that the Lord had a definite choice in the matter as a part in his election or selection of the little flock, and that he outlined for his wheat-field mainly the nations of Europe, original and transplanted. I understand that North America, Africa, Australia, etc., are mainly transplantations of the various nations of Europe, and of a comparatively recent date. St. Paul, who was one of the most prominent sowers under the directions of and in harmony with the Chief Sower, carrying on what Jesus *began* both to teach and to do (Acts 1:1), was very explicitly directed to take his course toward Europe, and the Macedonian cry was irresistible when he was in doubt in taking the last step and would have preferred to take another course. Pressing onward toward the northwest he reached the most influential cities and the best seaports, by means of which the Gospel was carried to all the civilized world of that time until finally the Lord directed him to the imperial city of Rome, though he was conducted thither in a different **[R4255 : page 298]** way than he might have preferred if

he had had the choice in the matter. Indications are strongly in favor of the view that he reached as far as Spain. However that may be, we know that it was his intention, and we do know that at the end of his active career he says that the Gospel had been preached under the whole heavens, evidently meaning the whole civilized world, residing around the Mediterranean Sea, and though this would not exclude a number of Asiatic provinces and the upper coast of Africa, it is a matter of history that since then Europe has been the great centre of ecclesiastical activity – the wheat-field in which shortly after the enemy sowed the tares of error. Neither at that time nor since has the Gospel of the Kingdom been generally sent to the aborigines of Africa, South America or Asia. Fragments of Truth at most have reached these benighted but ransomed people, but it does not on that account seem correct to say that they are included in the Lord's wheat-field mentioned in the parable. As a farmer may not despise the wheat that is found fruitbearing outside the regular wheat-field, especially if the latter is almost entirely overgrown by tares, necessitating that the ears of wheat be picked out one by one; so the Lord's people, the saints, whether picked from amongst the tare-field of Christendom or from amongst benighted heathenism are just as precious in his sight. But in view of the facts as recorded on the pages of prophecy and history, would it not be perfectly correct to say that the wheat-field is somewhat limited in its dimensions, and certainly does not include the whole planet?

If the inquirer be incorrect he will be greatly indebted to you, Brother Russell, for putting him right, as you have done and are still doing in so many other perplexing questions.

Furthermore, I am also writing you on behalf of the little class in this place whom I have the sweet privilege of serving in my humble capacity, and if the above suggestions, presented to you by way of inquiry, appeal to you as sufficiently important for other classes kindly give it room in ZION'S WATCH TOWER.

Apologizing for the length of the questions, and anticipating your kind favors in this as in all other directions, I am,

Your fellow-servant in the Truth, very cordially and respectfully,

L. JOSEPH LARSEN, – *Wis.*

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