

GOOD SEED FOR GOOD GROUND

- *JUNE 19. - MATT. 13:1-9;18-23. -*

Golden Text: – "Wherefore, putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your souls."

– James 1:21 – R.V.

FROM a boat our Lord taught a most wonderful lesson respecting the method used by the Almighty in the selection of the "little flock," whom he invites to be members with Christ Jesus in the administration of his Millennial Kingdom. The Kingdom message or invitation is the "seed" which is under consideration in the above parable, which, under favorable conditions, germinates and brings forth the required fruitage of character-development. Our Lord was the great Sower of this good seed of the Kingdom, and after him came the Apostles. Since then he has used all of his faithful people more or less in this seed-sowing.

The fact that most of the "seed" of the Divine message seems wasted is no proof that the message is not good and desirable. This parable shows that the real fault lies in the soil – in the heart. If all hearts were right the message or seed would bring forth much fruit everywhere.

WAYSIDE HEARERS.

The parable states that not all of the soil is good or suitable, nevertheless, the intimation is that it is within the power of many to correct and offset the unfavorable conditions in themselves. We are not left to conjecture, for this is one of the few parables which our Lord himself interpreted – a fact which many seem not to have noticed.

The "seed" is the message of the Kingdom. Many do not understand it. On such ears the message is lost, for the Adversary is on the alert to take it away, symbolized by the birds devouring the exposed "seed by the wayside." [R4635 : page 202] Such "wayside" hearers constitute the most numerous class in every congregation of the nominal church. They are merely formalists.

STONY GROUND HEARERS.

"Stony" ground represents another class of hearers of the Kingdom message. To them it sounds good; they are interested, but they lack depth of character. They make professions and for a time flourish extraordinarily, but they lack the depth necessary to a character development suitable for the Lord's use in the work of the Kingdom, and when the trials and testings come they stumble. They thought they might be carried to the Kingdom on "flowery beds of ease," while "others fight to win the prize and sail through bloody seas." There is no *easy road* to the Kingdom. The Master declares to all who would be of the elect "Bride," "Through much tribulation shall ye enter the Kingdom."

GOOD SEED BUT THORNY GROUND.

The ground which will produce thorns is rich and very suitable for the production of proper Christian character, but it is infested with thorn seed and the soil cannot successfully produce both wheat and thorns; hence, as the parable shows, the thorns choke out the wheat so that [R4635 : page 203] a sufficient crop is not produced. These thorns are not, as some have suggested, sensual vices and criminal appetites. Hearts in which sensuality dominates have no ear whatever for the Kingdom message, and are not mentioned in the parable, which refers only to those who are no longer willing sinners, but who are walking outwardly in the way of righteousness. The Master's word is, "He that receiveth the seed among thorns is he that heareth the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word and

he becometh unfruitful." There are many noble people represented also by this portion of the parable. There are many who, if freed from the spirit of the world, from its ambitions and wealth and influence, its love of the good things of this life, would be very fruitful in righteousness. When we look about us and see the thrift and energy of many people of civilized lands, we say to ourselves, properly, if these lives were really turned into the way of the Lord and were rid of these earthly encumbrances, what grand, noble characters they would make. However, their strength, their energy, is absorbed by worldly affairs and cares, and they do not bring forth the fruitage demanded as the necessary qualification for the higher honors of a place with Christ in his Kingdom. The Master's message to such is, You cannot give your time and strength and influence to worldly matters and at the same time make your "calling and election sure" to a place with me in my Kingdom. Whoever would be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me. Where I am there shall my disciple be.

"THAT YE BEAR MUCH FRUIT"

"Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit," said our Master. In this parable the *good* ground varies in its productiveness – thirty, sixty and an hundred fold. The larger the returns, the greater will be the Father's pleasure and the Savior's glory. Nor is the statement an extreme one, as some might suppose. The new "miracle wheat" sometimes produces more than two hundred grains from one. This parable seems to imply that the responsibility for the fruitfulness of the heart and life and character depends very greatly upon the individual and how he receives the message of the Kingdom. Those in whom the fruits will be the most abundant will be such as grasp the invitation most intelligently and earnestly. "He that heareth the word and *understandeth it*" and whose heart is in a condition of loyalty to God and who frees himself from hindrances and worldly

ambitions and aspirations and, like the Apostle Paul, can say, "This one thing I do," will surely gain the Kingdom.

It is not sufficient that we *hear the message* of the Kingdom; it is not sufficient that we have *good hearts* or *good intentions* in respect to it; it is additionally necessary, as the Master says, that we should *understand* the Kingdom message; hence the need of Bible study. Intelligent people consider it very wise and proper that several years of study be devoted to preparation for the few years of earthly life. How much study, then, should be considered proper for our preparation for the eternal life and Kingdom blessings? The time and effort thus consumed in character development for the Kingdom are wisely spent, and the harvest of thirty, sixty or a hundred-fold illustrates the degree and intensity of our earnestness. The *rewards* in the Kingdom will also be proportionate. "As star differeth from star in glory, so shall it be in *the* resurrection of the dead." Varying degrees of glory in the Kingdom will be manifested, yet none will be acceptable to the Father who shall not have brought forth fruitage in good measure; the "well done" will never be pronounced if not merited.

