

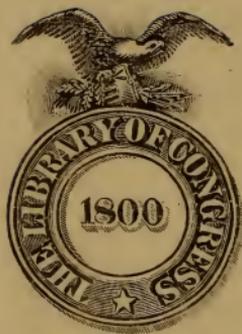
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The Seven Parables
of the Kingdom

BY

REV. SAMUEL GINN



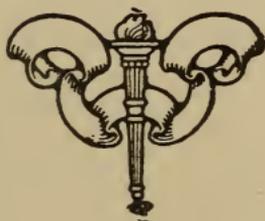
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SEVEN PARABLES
OF
THE KINGDOM



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INTRODUCTION

The thirteenth chapter of the gospel of Matthew is not only a very interesting, but also a very important chapter, containing as it does the unfolding of the mysteries of the Kingdom of the heavens: "even the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God"—Eph. 3:9. This chapter contains seven parables which according to verse 53 were all delivered by the Savior upon one and the same occasion, and in these seven parables the Lord Jesus clearly sets forth the Truth concerning the establishment and the growth of the Kingdom of the Heavens in this age. In verses 1-3 we see that Jesus leaves the house in which He had been staying with His disciples and goes down to the seaside where He spake many things to the multitudes in parables and without a parable spake He not unto them. (v. 34.) Then in v. 10 immediately after He had finished the first parable, the disciples asked Him why speakest thou unto them in parables? We

too would ask that question, but before we attempt an explanation, let us first understand what is meant by a parable. The parables of the Lord Jesus are invariably the description of some heavenly thing under the image of an earthly thing. This does not mean that the Lord Jesus used anything fictitious or untrue to illustrate His teaching. Invariably He takes one of the common, familiar things of everyday life, such as the sower, the seed, the salt, the mustard tree, the leaven, the treasure, the merchant seeking pearls and the fisherman with his net; these familiar things taken out of the occurrences of everyday life He uses to illustrate the mysterious and unseen. All the parables in this chapter or any other chapter in the Gospels are facts and occurrences with which the hearer was not only very familiar, but which were often being carried out even while the Savior was speaking. The Savior's teaching had ever been characterized by simplicity and directness, hence we too with the disciples ask the question why speakest thou unto them in parables? What was His purpose? We are not left in doubt for the Savior Himself answers the question. First of

all we are to remember that the Savior did not use parables that He might more effectually conceal the Truth from those who had rejected Him in unbelief. Would it not have been dishonest and deceitful in Him to profess to be the Way, the Truth and the Life and then deliberately so mask or veil the Truth, that the many would be confused while only the few could understand. On the contrary we know positively that from the manger to the cross not the least shade of deceit or dishonesty was ever found in His life. Why then did He use the parable? That He might *aid* and not hinder in the proper understanding of His teaching. For example some one tells you there is a spot on the sun, if you want to see it, what do you do? You cannot see it with the naked eye, no not even with the aid of a telescope, the dazzling light will only blind you; but if you use a piece of smoked glass then you can see clearly and that without any discomfort. So it is with the parable like the smoked glass, it veils the truth but does not blind our eyes. It is rather an assistance to correct vision and proper understanding. But in addition to all this notice the Savior's answer v. 11, He

answered and said unto them, because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. Notice again that this is not all of His answer, v. 12, for whosoever hath to him shall be given and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not from him shall be taken even that he hath. Notice that the necessary knowledge was given to the disciples by which they were enabled to understand the mystery of the kingdom set forth in the parables of our Lord; but this same knowledge which was given to them was not given to others, and the lack of this knowledge made it impossible for them to understand the parables of the Lord Jesus. Now why was there such a difference? What was it that the disciples of the Lord Jesus possessed that the other men lacked? The disciples of the Lord Jesus were not richer than other men, nor were they wiser in matters of worldly wisdom, but they were richer in faith and it was this faith that enabled them to understand the mysteries of the kingdom. The people who could not understand the parables were those who had no faith in the Lord Jesus as Savior and king.

Notwithstanding His gracious ministry, in spite of His wonderful teaching and all the signs and wonders that He wrought among them as mighty witnesses of His divinity, they still rejected Him and by that rejection they lost the power that the disciples gained in receiving Christ. So it is to this very day when we accept Christ in simple childlike faith our eyes are opened, we see that which before was mystery, for the promise has ever been believe and thou shalt know. But so long as we reject Christ our eyes are closed to a proper understanding of the Truth, the gospel seems a mystery, but if it is a mystery, it is a mystery to them that are lost, lost through unbelief. In v. 13 the Savior explains further, "therefore speak I to them in parables; because seeing that they see not and hearing they hear not neither do they understand." Herein was the prophecy of Isaiah 6:9 fulfilled. The people to whom the Lord Jesus ministered had for centuries been well trained in the O. T. truth, they were very well prepared to receive the message of Jesus, but they refused to receive Him, hence though they saw Him with the natural eye they would not look to Him with the eye of

faith; though they heard Him with the natural ear they would not listen or obey. Then our Lord strives to gain their attention by an all together different method, namely: by speaking to them in parables. What infinite patience and wonderful compassion is here displayed. When the people through wilful rejection and unbelief had closed their eyes and were as asleep, then instead of abandoning them, we see the Saviour attempting to rouse them from the lethargy of unbelief by speaking to them in parables. Yet we should ever bear in mind that it was not to the multitudes alone that the Savior spoke in parables but in v. 52 of this chapter and often thereafter we find that the Savior speaks to the *disciples* in parables, for they too as well as the multitudes were in blindness and darkness at times. He spake unto them in parables. What a volume of love and patience is contained in those words. As we carefully and prayerfully look into this chapter may our eyes be opened to behold the mysteries of the kingdom; for the King has said "if we have faith it is given us to know." Before we take up these parables separately let us look at them in a general way. In Gen. 41:45

we read of one whom Pharoah called "Zaphnath-Pananeah" which means revealer of secrets. This person is Joseph, the Hebrew lad, who after he was rejected by his brethren became the interpreter of dreams and the revealer of secrets before the great king. In this wonderful chapter we behold Jesus as the rejected one. First they rejected John, the fore-runner, then they reject the King Himself and after that, Christ Jesus rejected by His brethren like Joseph of old, now becomes the revealer of secrets. Even a casual survey of this thirteenth chapter of Matthew shows that it contains seven parables which are best known as the seven parables of the Kingdom. Notice the Savior uses the expression, "the Kingdom of Heaven is like" no less than six times in these seven parables, therefore it is well for us to know at the very outset, what is meant by the Kingdom of Heavens. First the Kingdom of Heaven is not the Church. You may search the Scriptures from Gen. to Rev. and you will not find a single passage where the Church is called the Kingdom of the Heavens. The Savior first mentions the word Church in Matthew 16:18 where he says, "I will build My Church."

The Church was not yet in existence when our Lord was on earth, and He nowhere in all His teaching refers to the Church as the Kingdom of the Heavens. Nor does the Holy Spirit refer to the Church as the Kingdom, but He speaks of the Church as the Body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, the Habitation of God, a Temple and a House but *never* as the Kingdom. What then does our Lord mean by the Kingdom of the Heavens? The answer is very plain. Christ offered the Kingdom to Israel, but Israel rejected the offer. Then Christ like the Sower in the first parable went *out* into the *world wide* field, scattering the precious seed of Truth through His own ministry and that of His disciples and wherever the Truth in Christ Jesus has been proclaimed, wherever men have been brought face to face with the question what will you do with Jesus that is *Christendom* that is the Kingdom. Therefore we see that while the Church is not the Kingdom yet the Church is *in* the Kingdom.

In these seven parables of the Kingdom the Savior tells us what men will do with the work He began on earth. All the opposition and hatred the world is to direct against the

cause of Christ is clearly foretold. The seven parables of the kingdom are susceptible of a of a two-fold division. (the first four and the last three.) The first four were delivered before the multitudes, then after He had dismissed the multitudes, He goes into the house with His disciples and in *their* hearing He delivers the last three parables. Furthermore our Lord explains the first two parables, but leaves the last five unexplained, although He gives us a partial interpretation of the last parable (the dragnet.) Again the parables of the kingdom may be divided into groups of two. (1) The Sower who went out to sow and the enemy sowing tares. These two parables refer to the beginning of the kingdom after it is left in the hands of men. The growth of the kingdom is also implied in these parables and the conditions of conflict therein described are to last to the very end of the age. The second group, the parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the leaven. These two parables describe the growth of the kingdom both internal and external. The third group, the parable of the treasure hidden in the field and the one pearl of great price. These two parables stand for

the two mysteries in the Kingdom, Israel God's earthly people hid in the field and the Church, the pearl of great price for which He has given all. The parable of the dragnet stands alone and refers to the end of the age.

Again we may look upon these parables from another view point. When we turn to Rev. 2 and 3 we find in the message of Christ to the seven churches the outline of the history of the Kingdom of the Heavens. When we compare these seven parables with the message to the seven churches we find a most striking similarity. Compare the parable of the Sower with the message to the church at Ephesus. Do not both alike refer to the apostolic age? The beginning of the kingdom, with its failure and forsaking of the first love. Compare the parable of the wheat and the tares with the message to Smyrna. Compare the parable of the mustard seed with Pergamos. Under Constantine the great, the Church becomes a big state institution. It is like a great tree to which the nations like unclean birds fly for shelter. Compare the parable of the leaven with Thyatira, the Roman age marked by the rise of the papacy and all the abominations of Ca-

tholicism. Compare the parable of the treasure hid in the field with Sardis, the reformation era. Compare the parable of the pearl with Philadelphia. Compare the parable of the dragnet with Laodicea, neither hot nor cold, therefore judgment is soon to come. We simply offer these as suggestions to an introductory study of the seven parables of the kingdom.

Finally we glance for a moment at the last parable. Most generally we think of this thirteenth chapter of Matthew as containing but seven parables, whereas there are really eight. The seven parables unfold the mysteries of the kingdom, while the eighth deals with the responsibilities of those who know the truth. After our Lord had declared the seven parables He asked His disciples, "Have ye understood all these things?" Hardly knowing what they said they answered yea Lord. Of course they did not understand all and the Savior realized that they did not. He knew they had a glimmering of the Truth, and He also knew that after His decease, the Holy Spirit would guide them into all Truth; so He accepts their answer and charges them with their responsibility.

CHAPTER I

The Parable of the Sower

Matthew 13:3-9; 18-23

And he spake to them many things in parables, saying, Behold, the sower went forth to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the birds came and devoured them; and others fell upon the rocky places, where they had not much earth; and straightway they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth; and when the sun was risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root; they withered away. And others fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up, and choked them; and others fell upon the good ground, and yielded fruit, some a hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty. He that hath ears to hear let him hear * * * Hear then ye the parable of the sower. When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the evil one, and snatcheth away that which hath been sown in his heart. This is he that was

sown by the wayside. And he that was sown upon the rocky places, this is he that heareth the word and straightway with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while; and when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway he stumbleth. And he that was sown among thorns, this is he that heareth the word, and the care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. And he that was sown upon the good ground, this is he that heareth the word and understandeth it; who verily beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

The first parable of the Kingdom is the well known parable of the sower. Our Lord evidently considered a thorough understanding of this parable quite essential, for it is one of the two parables which He explains to His disciples and in Mark 4:13 He says that if they could not understand this first parable, they would not be able to understand the others which He proclaimed afterwards.

We notice that there are four points of main importance in this parable (1) The Sower, (2) the Seed, (3) the Soil, (4) the Result of the sowing or the Harvest.

(1) The SOWER "Behold the Sower went out to sow" There are two things that immediately attract our attention in these opening words of the parable. (1) Our Lord speaks of *the* sower and not of *a* sower. (2) That the Sower went *out*. Who is *the* Sower? It is not difficult to explain the personality of the Sower; though the Lord does not tell us who the Sower is in His explanation of the first parable, yet in His exposition of the second parable He says "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man." Our Lord himself is the sower. The sower of the seed in Palestine did not live in the country as the farmer does in our land; but his home was generally found in some little hamlet, from which he must go out to the distant field to sow the grain. The Sower, that is the Savior went out from His home in heaven to earth bearing the precious seed. He came first to His own people Israel but they would not receive Him, their attitude toward Him is described in (Is. 5:2-7) "He fenced it in, and

gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vines, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein; and He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes * * * and now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be trodden down." Israel was the vineyard of (Is.5) which the Lord himself planted with care, but in spite of all His care, it brought forth *wild* grapes; this indicates the rebellious spirit with which Israel rejected the gracious ministry of our Lord. Then our Lord laid the vineyard waste and bare and now behold the Sower went *out*: our Lord went out from His own people who had rejected him and henceforth He goes out into the *worldwide* field scattering the precious seed. "Beginning at Jerusalem unto Samaria the Sower goes even to the uttermost parts of the world." The sowing He began continues still, and the result or the harvest is still the same.

(2) The Seed. What is the seed? When we look at the parable apart from the Savior's interpretation of it, we are apt to think that the harvest depends upon the kind

of soil upon which the seed is sown. However when we study the Savior's interpretation of the parable, we see that the quality of the harvest depends upon the nature of the seed. If the Savior had not explained the parable, we would be disposed to think that the harvest depends altogether upon the quality of the soil. That is, if the seed fall upon the highway, or upon the stony ground, or among thorns, we say there will be no harvest; but if the seed fall upon the good ground, there will be much fruit. This is man's interpretation: notice that the Savior in His interpretation of the parable does not place any importance upon the condition of the soil, but He places all the importance upon the condition of the seed which is cast into the soil. As we carefully examine the Savior's interpretation of this parable, we see that there is one expression that occurs no less than four times. It is this "he that was sown" this expression refers to the seed and notice that the seed is not referred to as *it*, but this is *he*. This expression "he that was sown" is the keyword of the interpretation passage. Let us read this passage verse 18 "Hear ye then the parable of the sower.

When anyone heareth the Word of the Kingdom and understandeth it not, then cometh the evil one and snatcheth away that which has been sown in his heart. This is *he* that was sown by the wayside." Notice closely the Savior says this is *he* that was sown by the wayside. Not this is *it* but this is *he*. (v 20) "and he that was sown upon the rocky places" notice again not *it* but *he*. (v 22) "and he that was sown among thorns" notice again *he* that was sown and not *it* (v 23) "and he that was sown upon good ground" notice again *he* that was sown and not *it*. This fourfold explanation proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that the seed is not simply the written or the spoken Word of God but the seed is that portion of the Word which has become so thoroughly incorporated in us that it is a part of our being and that which was the written word has now become incarnate in us. The word is now the active principle of our life. Hence the Savior in referring to the seed speaks of the seed as a person *he* not *it* and in His interpretation of the second parable He says of the good seed "these are the sons of the kingdom." With this interpretation in view, let

us now carefully examine our Lord's description of the different kinds of seed.

(1) "He that was sown by the wayside" Who is he that was sown by the wayside? Our Lord answers "anyone who heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth it not." These are the class who hear the word with the natural ear only. The heavenly harmony of the gospel wakes no echo in their soul, to them it's music is as sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal. They hear, but do not understand and so the evil one comes and snatches away that which was sown in the heart. Then this man's heart becomes like a seed that has fallen upon the beaten highway, there is now no possibility for growth and the life which like the seed might have produced a multiplied harvest in the establishment and upbuilding of the kingdom is now sterile and barren; for the seed is now either ground to powder under the wheels of commercialism or snatched up by evil passions which like birds of prey are ever seeking that which they may devour. (2) "He that was sown upon rocky places." Who does this mean? The Savior answers "this is he that hears the word and immediately receives it

with joy, but has no root in himself but endure for awhile; then when tribulation or persecution cometh because of the word straightway he stumbleth. This represents a class of hearers who not only hear the word of the kingdom, but who accept it and rejoice in it, but they do not go beyond that. They do not allow the word to take deep root in their lives. Beneath the thin shallow soil with which they cover over their unregenerate nature there is the heart of stone that has never been broken under the Holy Spirit's convicting power. Alas how many there ever have been in this class; putting on the form of godliness but denying the power thereof, springing up and for a time giving indication of life and health, but when the time of trial comes they have no power of resistance, so they wither and die without bearing fruit, doing nothing for the upbuilding or advancement of the Kingdom. (3) v 22 "He that was sown among thorns." This man represents the class of those who hear the word and even receive it, but the cares of the age and the deceitfulness of riches like great rank weeds choke the word so that this man dies and passes out of the world bearing no fruit,

doing nothing toward the growth or establishment of the Kingdom. When we think of the many claims the world makes today upon the minds of men, and the strenuous life that many lead, we need not look far for examples that illustrate this class. (4) v 23 "but he that is sown upon the good ground, this is he who hears and understands the word, who bears fruit also some 30, some 60, some 100 fold." This represents the class whose hearts have been made receptive to the truth by the agency of the Holy Spirit and the word now becomes the ruling principle of their life, therefore they have a subtle influence that works mightily for the growth and establishment of the Kingdom.

(3) The Soil. Let us now consider the significance of the *soil* into which the seed was sown. Where does the sower generally sow the seed? In the field. Where is the field? The Savior's answer is "the field is the world." But we may ask if the Savior is the Sower, and the good seed is the sons of the Kingdom, and the soil or the field is sown is the world, how long does the sowing of the seed continue? Does the sowing of the seed cease after the Savior has ascended unto the

Father? We answer, the sowing He began still continues and the result is still the same. Though absent from the world, our Lord is still at work, through His disciples the Kingdom is still being advanced, the seed is still being sown. John 14:12 "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that believeth on Me, the works that I do, shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do because I go unto My Father." Thus we see that the sowing He began still continues and the results are still the same. Will this sowing continue to the end of time? We answer that the sowing of the seed will continue to the end of this age. But what will mark the end of this age? "The coming of the Lord." What marks the beginning of the age in which we live? The age in which we live is defined by Paul as the dispensation of grace, Rom. 6:14. This dispensation of grace begins with the cross of Calvary and extends to "the coming of our Lord for His saints." (I Thess. 4:16-18) During this age (the dispensation of grace) the sons of the Kingdom will continue the work of advancing the Kingdom until the King himself comes to take his own to himself. We build up or set back the growth of the

Kingdom in proportion as our lives are fruitful of good or evil. We hasten or retard the Coming of Christ our King in proportion as we watch and work and pray for His coming.

(4) The Result or the Harvest. Let us bear in mind that the Savior is the sower of the seed, the seed represents those persons whose life is the very incarnation of the word of Christ, the soil or the field is the world in which we live, and upon which our lives exert a subtle influence that works mightily for the upbuilding of the Kingdom in this age (the dispensation of grace).

Now as to the *harvest* or the result. What will become of all this seed that is sown? Will the world receive it? Will we be able to sow the entire field? We often hear it said that the world is growing better and better and by and by the whole world will be converted and then Christ will come. We do not know on what foundation this theory is built but we are very sure that it is not based upon the Truth of Holy Scripture as it is found in these parables of the Kingdom. Notice that in this very first parable of the Kingdom the Savior teaches that there will not be a universal acceptance of the

Truth in this age. In fact we see very clearly that only *one-fourth* part of the seed sown bears *any* fruit besides *all* of that which does bear fruit, does not yield alike, some bears 30, some 60, some, only a small proportion, bears 100 fold.

PERSONAL APPLICATION—The sower of the seed goes up and down the world-wide field which He has sown and is still sowing with the seed and as He goes the eyes of the King look closely for the harvest of the kingdom. He looks closely into your life and mine, for it is the character of your life that determines the character of the harvest. Here He comes to a place where the seed was sown but the ground is bare, not a blade or single stalk of grain is to be seen; it is as if it were sown by the wayside and He says "this is he that heareth the word of the Kingdom and understandeth it not." Then we hear the despairing cry O! Master! Can it be that we who have so often heard thy word, have been so heedless as never to understand? Give us back! O give us back! the years of life lest we come into thy presence empty handed, bringing nothing but leaves. But alas the harvest is past, the summer is ended and so

these pass out of the world, without having advanced the kingdom of Christ their Lord.

Again the Savior comes to a spot which but a few days before was green and luxuriant but now it is dry and withered, it is the seed which was sown upon the stony ground. We listen, and O! with what sadness do we hear Him say, "These are they who at first received the word with gladness, but when tribulation came because of the word they stumbled." These are the fair weather Christians, there was a great deal of enthusiasm and promise in their service and testimony when they first came to Christ, and as long as there was sunshine and flowers all went well, but by and by the way became steep and thorny and they forsake the way of the Cross for the primrose path of worldly pleasure and indulgence, and so they too pass out without having advanced the Kingdom of Christ their Lord. Again the Lord comes to a place which the growing grain was covering as with a carpet of living green, but now all is hidden beneath a rank growth of weeds; and the sower says "this is he that heareth the word but the cares of the age and the deceitfulness of riches choked the Word of

Truth. There was too much *business*, no time left for the Master and so although these may have influenced the age mightily in a social or a commercial way, and though they were widely known and highly honored in the world because of their influence and great achievement, yet they must now pass out, to be forever forgotten and unknown in that great Kingdom toward the advancement and establishment of which they have contributed nothing.

Again the Savior comes to places where the ripening grain can be seen whitening for the harvest and the sower says "this is he that heareth the word and understandeth it; who verily beareth fruit some 30, some 60, some 100 fold. These heard and understood the word. It was their meditation day and night. Perhaps they did not get on so fast, nor up so high in the eyes of men, but their lives were prolific in *righteousness*. Their every thought, and word, and deed, was as a seed, which in turn, bore a multiplied harvest for the King.

What is your life? Is it the seed sown on good ground, that springs up and bears 100 fold? Are your words, and thoughts,

and deeds, like seeds that bear a multiplied harvest for the King? Remember the time is short and the days are evil. In the morning sow thy seed; sow it bountifully even now while it is called today. Soon the night comes when man's work is done. Do not complain because the Sower has cast your lot in the stony places, or among the thorns or even upon the beaten highway. If you have heard and understand the Word it matters not where your lot is cast. His power within can overcome the opposition of the age and transform the very desert into a watered garden. Let us then sit at His feet and learn of Him. May the Holy Spirit ever take the things of Christ and show them to us, till we *understand*, then shall we indeed glorify the Father by bearing much fruit.

CHAPTER II.

The Parable of the Tares

Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43

Another parable set he before them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man that sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. But when the blade sprang up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. And the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? Whence then hath it tares? And he said unto them an enemy hath done this. And the servants say unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he saith, nay; lest haply while ye gather up the tares, ye root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn. * * * Then

he left the multitudes and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Explain unto us the parable of the tares of the field. And he answered and said, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; and the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy that sowed them is the devil; and the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered up and burned with fire; so shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast, them into the furnace of fire; there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

THE PARABLE OF THE TARES

In the latter part of the v. 36 of Matt. 13 we find the *title* of this parable, "and His disciples came unto Him, saying explain unto us the parable of the tares of the field."

From this we see that the Savior in declaring this second parable to His disciples, so emphasized the matter of the tares that they speak of it as the parable of the tares in the field.

In this second parable as in the first, we notice four points of main importance. They are: 1, the Sower; 2, the seed; 3, the soil; 4 the result of the sowing or the harvest.

(1) The Sower. In the first parable there was but one Sower, (the Son of Man) but in this parable of the tares there are two sowers. However it is not difficult to identify the personality of these two sowers. Our Lord himself says, v. 37. "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man" and again He says, v. 39, "and the enemy that sowed them (the tares) is the devil." Now contrast the time and manner of their sowing. The Son of man sowed the good seed in *His* field, in the light of day, when all who cared, might see His work, and say it is very good. The enemy (Satan) sowed when it was night. He came to do His spiteful work while men slept, lest any should see that He was sowing evil seed in *another's* field. Perhaps, the character of the two sowers is most sharply

contrasted when we compare their work. The work of the Lord Jesus was ever done in the light of day; He himself in referring to it said, "in secret have I said nothing." He had nothing to conceal, for His works were ever right and true. He himself was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Satan's work has ever been in the dark. He worked while men slept, because his work was evil and could not be accomplished in the light of day. He is the Prince of darkness, the arch enemy, and adversary of our souls.

(2) The Seed. In this parable there are two kinds of seed—the good seed (the wheat) and the evil seed (the tares.) What do these two kinds of seed represent? Like begets like. Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. The good seed represents the Sons of the kingdom and the tares are the sons of the evil one. The wheat was good, like the Master who sowed it but the tares were evil like the one from whom they came. The tares or the darnel (so called from its supposed stupefying power) is a species of wild grass, which, while growing closely resembles the wheat or rye, but when it begins to mature the difference is seen at once. The

seed of the darnel is poisonous. Recent investigations have shown the presence of a fungus in the darnel seed to which its poisonous qualities are attributed. Why was such seed sown? It had no value; it was not only worthless but even poisonous. Why then was it sown? The main object of the enemy in sowing the darnel among the wheat was to damage the work of the Sower of the good seed as much as possible. The harvest of good grain would be lighter, and the darnel mixed with the wheat, would lessen its value. Note the subtle manner in which this spiteful work was done. The enemy (Satan) selects a poisonous seed (the darnel) which looks like the wheat and which when growing can scarcely be distinguished from the wheat, and while men slept he sows this evil seed among the wheat. Satan's method has ever been to cheat and deceive. He has developed great skill in counterfeiting the Truth, so that at times he is able to deceive the very elect of God.

When did the enemy begin to sow the evil seed? (1) Immediately after the Sower had cast the good seed into the soil. (2) While *men* slept.

(1) Immediately after our Lord had proclaimed the Truth. Immediately after the Lord had finished His work on earth and ascended unto the Father in Heaven. No sooner had the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples, than Satan begins his malicious and hateful work. The enemy sows the seed. In the days of the apostle Paul we behold the tares among the wheat in the persons of Ananias and Sapphira and later in Simon Magus. These took the truth of God's word and changed it into a lie. They were like the devil, the Father of lies of whom they were begotten.

(2) While *men* slept. Notice: not while the Sower slept, but while *men* slept. The Sower never slumbers or sleeps; but men into whose hands the work of establishing and advancing the Kingdom was given, *these* who should have been watching while the Lord was absent, (as He now is in this dispensation of grace) fell asleep, and it was while the Lord's Stewards were in this unwatchful condition that the enemy came to sow the tares in the wheat. This unwatchful condition developed immediately after the Sower had finished sowing the good seed. It did

not come at once but developed gradually. Beginning with the apostolic age, down to the present time, the work of the enemy has been the same. Satan is still at work. He is still using the old method of *counterfeiting* the Truth. The devil can quote Scripture as glibly as ever, but he never quotes it *correctly*, he always changes the Truth and makes it into a lie. In the beginning of this age we behold the tares among the wheat. There were those who even from the beginning of the age, denied the Diety of our Lord, they also denied the fact of His resurrection and did all they could to pervert the Truth. These were the tares *among* the wheat, that the enemy sowed as soon as the good seed was sown. Today the home or foreign missionary knows by experience that satan is still at work and that he still exercises all his cunning and subtlety to counterfeit the Truth; as soon as the good seed is sown. As soon as the fallow ground is broken up and the good seed is sown, then immediately the enemy comes and at the first opportunity the tares are sowed *among* the wheat.

(3) The Soil. In this second parable as in the first "the field is the world." The two

kinds of seed are sowed in the same field and that field is the world. The word translated world in this connection is *Cosmos* which means the whole system of the universe, including man, the earth, and all the creation of God. The field then is the world (cosmos).

The *ownership* of the field: (v. 24) "the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man who sowed good seed in *his* field." The field (cosmos) belongs to Christ the Sower of the seed. Now we understand what the psalmist meant when he wrote (Ps. 24:1) "The earth is the *Lord's* and the *fulness* thereof, the world and they that dwell therein." The Lord Jesus sowed the good seed in the field which was *His*, his by right of creation. The enemy (satan) has no right in the field whatever, he is a trespasser, hence he does his work when men sleep.

(4) The Result or the Harvest. Let us bear in mind that the Savior is the Sower of the good seed and that satan is the sower of the evil seed; the good seed are the sons of the kingdom and the tares are the sons of the evil one; the field is the world: now as to the Harvest.

The two kinds of seed are sowed in the same field, they both spring up and grow side by side. For awhile the presence of the darnel in the wheat is unnoticed, so closely does it resemble the growing grain; but when the seed appears, then the difference is apparent. As soon as the servants of the King discover the darnel in the wheat, they go to him and say, "Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? And he said unto them, an enemy hath done this. And the servants say unto him, wilt thou that we go and gather them up? But he saith, nay; lest haply while ye gather the tares, ye root up the wheat with them." Just here we take occasion to speak of an error that has crept into the minds of a great many Christian people, who say, "we cannot have a pure church or assembly, for the Lord himself has said that the evil will always be with us, and that we are not to put them out who are the sons of the evil one." This theory is based on the supposition that the Lord is referring to the church and we find that many people hold to this theory and govern their actions accordingly. Notice, however, as mentioned before; the *field* is not the

church, the field is the world (cosmos). The kingdom of the heavens is not the church, although the church is *in* the kingdom. Our Lord is not referring here to evil that springs up in the church, and when He says "let both grow up together" he is not referring to the evil that may be growing up with the good in the church. Later on we find that our Lord speaks very plainly concerning the evil in the church, which He says is not to be tolerated. In Matthew 18:15-17 we hear Him say "If thy brother sin against thee go, reprove him between him and thee alone. If he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he do not hear thee, take with thee one or two besides, that every matter may stand upon the word of two witnesses or three. But if he will not listen to them, tell it to the assembly; and if also he will not listen to the assembly, let him be unto thee as one of the nations and as a tax gatherer." That is the Savior's instruction concerning the dealing with evil in the church and if we had the courage to carry it out, while the membership of the church might be cut down, the efficiency and working power of the church would be greatly increased.

“The Harvest is the end of the world (the age) and the reapers are the angels.” In this age (the dispensation of grace) the wheat and the darnel grow up together. It is the Master’s will that it should be so, for he hath said “let them grow up together.” How vain and idle is the dream of many who today aim at world reformation, wasting the time and effort that might have been spent in sowing the seed, by attempting to pluck up the tares by the roots. The time of harvest is not yet come, and even when it comes, it will not be given to *man* to do the work committed to the *angels*, who shall then gather together the tares and burn them. The wheat and the tares grow up together until the end of the age and then comes the Harvest. This harvest scene is vividly described in Rev. 14:14-20 “And I looked and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of Man, having upon His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat upon the cloud, thrust in thy sickle and reap; for the time is come for thee to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.”

PERSONAL APPLICATION: (1) In the beginning of the age the devil began his work and still continues his work of counterfeiting the Truth. On every hand we see him sowing tares among the wheat. In Mormonism, Zionism, Christian Science, etc., we behold the result of his sowing. In these we see the enemy has so cleverly *wrested and misquoted* Scripture as to deceive many. Let us therefore be on our guard with loins girded and the lights burning, watching against our foe.

(2) In this age a mixed condition of good and evil prevails. What are we going to do about it? Our blessed Lord never advocated the Carrie Nation method of smashing barfixtures and raiding the dens of vice. The province of God's people is not to attempt a mere world *reformation* by endeavoring to root out drunkenness, immorality and other obnoxious evils of the age. Our province is to sow the *good seed* with the Master: as to the tares we see growing among the wheat, the Master says let them grow up together till the harvest; sometimes we long for the harvest and in impatience we exclaim "Why tarry the wheels of His chariot" but in the fulness of time He will

come. Then the Sower of the seed will gather the wheat into His own granary and the tares will be gathered together in bundles and burned. Some throw up their hands in despair as they exclaim "Alas! the world is growing worse!" and others say it is growing better. Now which is correct? We answer the world is growing worse in this sense, that evil is unquestionably on the increase, and again the world is growing better, in this sense that the good is unquestionably growing stronger every day. We say then that the world is growing better and it is growing worse; which is only another way of saying that the wheat and the tares are both growing apace. A mixed condition of good and evil prevails in this age until the time of the end.

Finally it is possible for those who in times past were known as the sons of the evil one to become *converted* into the sons of the Kingdom. This change is at once a great miracle and mystery, impossible with man, but possible with God. His power and it alone can take the vile and sinful heart and make it pure and submissive to His will.

As sons of the kingdom it may be your

lot to live and grow up among the tares. Never fear if you only ever hear and understand His Word, their presence can have no power to harm or hinder you. "Fret not thyself because of evil doers, for they shall soon be cut down like the grass. Commit thy way unto Jehovah, trust also in Him, He shall make thy righteousness to go forth as the light and thy judgment as the noonday. Let your light so shine before men that they shall see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

There are many other questions that we might discuss in connection with this parable but as our Lord himself does not discuss them, we will not take them up here.

CHAPTER III

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Matthew 13:31-32.

Another parable set he before them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; which is indeed less than all seeds; but when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs, and becometh a tree so that the birds of the heaven come and lodge in the branches thereof.

THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

Although this parable of the Mustard seed together with the other parables of the Kingdom, that were declared after it, was not taken up and explained separately as the Master did with the first two parables; yet in His interpretation of the first two parables of the Kingdom, He places in our hands the key whereby we are able to unlock the meaning of the five parables that are left unexplained. With this key in our hands, let us

then prayerfully and reverently attempt the study of the parable of the Mustard seed.

In this parable of the Mustard seed we are able to mark out the four points of main importance that were so clearly distinguished in the first two parables (The Sower, The Seed, the Soil or the Field, and the Result or the Harvest.) In addition to these four points we find another ("the birds") of verse 32 has been added, and that the most prominent idea in the parable is not the Sower nor is it the seed but the marvelous shall we not say the *abnormal growth* of the seed.

A comparative study of the scriptures of the old and new testament at once reveals a most harmonious relation and consistency. The same applies with the teachings of the Lord Jesus; you cannot find the slightest confusion of ideas in all His teaching. All is harmonious and consistent. If therefore such perfect harmony prevails in all the other sayings of our Lord, we can safely argue that the same harmony prevails in the parables also. For example: if in His interpretation of the first parable our Lord says that, "the Sower of the seed is the Son of Man," then in every parable that *follows*, where the sower is men-

tioned we must naturally conclude that the sower of the seed is still the Son of Man. Any other interpretation would result in a confusion of ideas. Therefore in this parable the *man* who took the grain of Mustard seed and sowed it in his field is the Son of Man, the Sower of the good seed. The seed (mustard) is the sons of the Kingdom. The soil or the field in which he sowed the seed is (cosmos) the world. The birds that roost in the tree we shall see later are there for an evil purpose. The remarkable or *abnormal* growth of the seed comes in the end or consummation of the age.

Was it a common or natural thing for the mustard seed to attain such a remarkable growth as here described in this parable? Was it a common thing for the traveler to see a plant of mustard that had reached such an enormous size that the fowls of the air made their nests in it and flew to it as they would to the widespreading branches of a great tree for shelter and safety? We answer that a mustard plant of such enormous size would be a very rare and extraordinary sight indeed, for by nature the mustard plant is but a shrub that grows in the garden, often

reaching a height of 7 or 8 feet. Yet as Dr. Thompson says in his "The Land and the Book," "after having seen pepper bushes grow on year after year into tall shrubs, and the castor bean line the brooks about Damascus like willows and poplars, I can readily credit the existence of mustard trees as large as are here described in the parable of our Lord." We are ever disposed to take the words of our Lord as *literally true*. It may be that the very spot where our Lord stood when He proclaimed this parable was shaded by a mustard tree of gigantic proportions so that every person present could not help but notice it and marvel at its extraordinary and *abnormal* growth. Then the Savior who had just finished illustrating the Truth concerning the beginning of the Kingdom, now takes the mustard tree which attracts the attention of every one present and uses it to illustrate the *abnormal growth* which the Kingdom was destined to attain in the end of the age.

The OBJECT of this parable is to illustrate the external growth of the Kingdom which the Savior knew was destined to grow and attain to a most unnatural and abnor-

mal growth. He knows the end from the beginning and even though only one-fourth of the seed He sows is productive of good, even though an enemy is sowing darnel among the wheat, yet the kingdom which in its beginning is so small and unpromising is destined to attain to a most wonderful growth so that He says the kingdom of heaven is like to the Mustard seed so small and insignificant in its beginning but which reaches such an unnatural size that the fowls of the air fly to it for shelter.

But some would ask does not this parable teach us the marvelous growth of the church? As we enter into a discussion of this question let us note some facts concerning the mustard tree. The mustard tree springs from a little seed which is one of the smallest of seeds and yet from this humble beginning there comes the great tree. In like manner the church sprang from a most humble beginning, and in the course of a few centuries attained to a growth which is as marvelous as the great mustard tree that came from the tiny seed.

Again the mustard tree grew to such a height and size that the birds of the air came

to it and built their nests in it finding security and shelter in its widespreading branches. So also they tell us that the church grew to such an extent that its branches spread all over the earth, and the nations and peoples of the earth like birds fly to the church for security and shelter. We readily admit that the Church of Christ has grown remarkably, and when we consider how small and insignificant was the beginning of the church, we admit that like the mustard tree, the church has attained to an abnormal growth. We also admit that a great multitude of unconverted people are to be found in the church today many of whom are (like the unclean birds of the parable) *roosting* in the church, settling down in her branches, seeking no other object than security and shelter from suspicion.

If this parable of the mustard tree is intended to illustrate the marvelous growth of the church; then the *Mustard tree* is the *church* and the *birds* that roost in the tree are the *converts* that have been brought into the church. Notice as we compare scripture with scripture that birds always represent that which is unclean. In the parable of the

Sower the birds that swooped down and devoured the good seed which had fallen by the wayside are not angels of good, but instruments of evil. In Genesis 15:11 we have the picture of Abraham driving away the unclean birds that sought to devour the sacrifice on the altar, which sacrifice was the type of the atoning work of Christ which He wrought for us on the Cross. The birds in this parable clearly represent the *unconverted* people who are coming into the church and putting on the outward form of Christian profession to gain some selfish purpose.

By nature the mustard is an *herb* and not a *tree*. The particular mustard tree described in the parable was a monstrosity, something abnormal which not only became greater than all herbs, but greater than its own species. From this then we are forced to the conclusion, that if the Savior is using the parable of the mustard tree to describe the external growth of the *church*, then the *church* must be a monstrosity which has attained to an abnormal growth. When we turn to scripture we find that the church is the bride and Christ is the bridegroom. Rev. 21:9 and in Eph. 1:22,23 we find that Paul

speaks of the Church as the body of Christ. Therefore since that which is affirmed of the Church is also affirmed of Christ: those who say that the mustard tree in the parable represents the church are forced to take the position that the blessed Lord himself the Head of the church is perverted and abnormal in His personality.

If the parable of the mustard seed does not represent the growth of the church what does it represent? The first two parables (the Sower and the tares in the field) describe the beginning of the kingdom and the next two parables (the mustard seed and the leaven) describe the external and the internal growth of the kingdom. The church we repeat is not the kingdom although the church is in the kingdom. Every church has an influence, but every person over whom the church has an influence is not in the church; this vast domain (CHRISTENDOM) where the name of Christ is known and honored is the kingdom and the parable of the mustard tree describes the external growth of that kingdom.

How did the Kingdom attain such an abnormal growth as that which is described

in the parable of the mustard seed? The abnormal growth of the Kingdom is the result of man's setting aside the divine plan and substituting his own plan for the advancement and upbuilding of the Kingdom. Thus through the *manipulation of men* the Kingdom develops into that which like the mustard tree is perverted and of abnormal growth. Away back in the early history of the kingdom, yes even from the very beginning when the Master was *preaching* the Kingdom, we find that the disciples instead of being clothed upon with humility, were ever asking "who is the greatest among us?" "Which of us will sit at the right hand of the King?" In the early history of the church the same spirit of self seeking is perpetually cropping out (I Peter 5:3.) In the fourth century under the reign of Constantine the Church became a *great state institution*; many now came into the Church who *professed* Christ but who *possessed* no faith in Him. They sought the security and shelter the Kingdom afforded for various politic and diplomatic reasons. Thus the church and Kingdom of Christ was greatly strengthened in a material way, until it finally attained

that abnormal growth described in the parable of the mustard seed.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: As we step onward and upward into the Master's Kingdom let us not aim at greatness or the promotion of self. Let us not be found asking "Who is to be the greatest among us?" Or "Who is to sit at the right hand of the King?" Let us rather emulate the spirit of the Master, who took upon himself the form of a servant and was ever known as the meek and lowly Jesus.

In our efforts to advance and establish the Kingdom of Christ we are not to use the methods of the world. In the world the meek and lowly are pushed aside to make room for the high and the mighty. The world advances its interests by craft and cunning and diplomacy. The servants of Jesus are to be wise as serpents, but we are to exercise that wisdom which is as harmless as the dove.

When the building up of any world enterprise is considered, we often hear men say, "we must first have so much capital, and we must have so many men of influence to back this enterprise." Likewise when the ad-

vancement of the King's business is being considered, we often hear men say, "we must first have so much money and we must have the names of so many persons of influence back of this enterprise." Thus men often leave the Lord Jesus out altogether and forget that it is *His* kingdom they are seeking to advance. His kingdom is not of this world neither can His kingdom be built up by any world method. Whenever we attempt to build up the Master's kingdom by any world method, then we see that the growth which results is *perverted and abnormal*.

In the XI chapter of Romans we read of a tree which is to grow up and spread its branches over the whole earth. This tree for the present is cut down, its strength is broken, its branches lie scattered upon the ground, its glory is departed. This tree is Israel, the chosen people of God. The nation of Israel sinned steadily, obstinately turned her face from the light and truth in Christ Jesus, so God cut down the tree (Israel) and her branches are now scattered among the nations of the earth. The glory which Israel once had, is now given to the Gentile races

and today, the same apostasy which destroyed Israel is now beginning to work in the church and we behold all christendom affected by it. "Hath God cast away His people Israel?" No, in the end of the age apostate christendom the great and mighty tree of perverted and abnormal growth will be cut down; which by that time will "have become the habitation of demons and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every *unclean and hated bird*." (Rev. 18:2) Behold even now the axe is laid at the root of the tree "if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He spare not thee."

CHAPTER IV

The Parable of the Leavened Meal

Matthew 13:33

Another parable spake he unto them; the kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened.

THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN

As we enter into the study of this parable of the leaven, we notice at the very outset that two interpretations of this parable present themselves to claim our careful consideration. Which of these two interpretations shall we accept? Let this rule guide us in our choice. Let us not accept any interpretation that may be popular and almost universally accepted, simply because of its popularity. Nor let us reject that interpretation which is unpopular and is almost universally rejected, simply because of its unpopularity. *The popular idea is not always*

right and the unpopular idea is not always wrong. May the SPIRIT guide us into all Truth.

Again we notice four points of main importance in this parable. The meal, the woman, the leaven and the result of the mingling of the leaven with the meal, and of these four the most prominent is the Leaven.

Of the two interpretations of this parable, the most POPULAR is this: the leaven is said to represent the Gospel, the woman is said to represent the church, then the woman (the church) takes the leaven which is said to represent the Gospel and mixes it with the meal which is said to represent the whole human race and so they tell us that "the leaven of the Gospel" is to continue working upon the human family until the whole mass is leavened, or the entire human family is converted.

We cannot accept this interpretation, even though it be the most popular, for two reasons. (1) Because this interpretation of the parable of the leaven is a direct contradiction of the teaching of all the other preceding parables. If the leaven represents the Gospel, and the woman represents the church, and the three measures of meal represents

humanity then the object of this parable is to teach us that the power of the Gospel through the agency of the church is to so work upon men, that finally the whole human race is to be converted. This theory although widely spread and almost universally accepted throughout Christendom is in direct contradiction to the teaching of the parables of the Kingdom and the Scriptures in general. In the parable of the tares in the field, we have seen how that the wheat and the tares (the sons of the Kingdom and the sons of the Evil one) are to grow up together until the end of the age. A mixed condition of good and evil is to continue in the world to the end of the age; all of which is plainly in direct opposition to the popular theory of world conversion in this age.

Again if this parable of the leaven teaches us that the power of the Gospel, through the instrumentality of the church, is to work upon humanity, until the whole human family is converted in this age; then we are forced to the conclusion that the Gospel is not making very much headway. Is there to be found a single nation, city, nay is there a single village, or hamlet to be found in all the wide,

wide world where every man, woman and child is evangelized. For over 1900 years the Gospel has been preached and yet the evil is still in the world, the tares are still growing among the wheat. Is the Gospel then a failure? By no means. For the Savior clearly teaches us in the parable of the tares in the wheat, that we are not to look for a world wide conversion in this age; but are rather to find a mixture of good and evil prevailing in the world to the end of the age. Shall the Son of Man find faith on the earth? The second reason why we do not accept the popular interpretation of this parable is this: according to the popular idea, leaven is the type of *good*, whereas we maintain that a comparative study of Scripture shows very clearly that leaven is everywhere taken as the type of *evil*. A careful study of the Old Testament Scriptures clearly reveals the fact that leaven is always taken as the type of evil. Leaven was excluded from every burnt offering that was presented to the Lord. When the devout Jew was about to keep the feast of unleavened bread, he first searched every nook and corner of his house that not a single morsel of bread containing leaven be found

there. Leaven itself is corruption and to the devout Jew leaven was the *type of evil*.

In like manner a study of the New Testament Scriptures clearly shows us that *leaven* is the *type of evil*. Outside of its use in this parable, we find that our Lord uses the word leaven three times and each time it is used in connection with that which is *evil*. Luke 12: 1 "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy." Matthew 16:6-13 here we find that the Savior warns the disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees; and in Mark 8:15 "He charged them, saying, take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." Now what was the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of the Sadducees and the leaven of Herod? Was it anything good? No. The leaven of the Pharisees was their *hypocrisy*. They made much of the letter of the law, but they utterly ignored the spirit of the law. The leaven of the Sadducees was *rationalism*, they denied the doctrine of the resurrection of our Lord and in many other respects their teaching tended toward materialism and rationalism. The leaven of Herod was the *pageantry* and magnificent *display* of power

by which Herod ever strove to *conceal* from the eyes of the people the weakness of his own character and the crumbling foundation which supported his tottering throne.

When we turn to the epistles of Paul, we find that here too the word leaven is used to represent that which is *evil*. In I Cor. 5:6-8 we find that leaven is used as the type of *evil*, when tolerated within the church. In Gal. 5:9 we see that leaven is used as the type of *formalism*. Thus it becomes very plain that throughout all Scripture, whether of the Old or New Testament, *leaven is taken as the type of that which is evil* and we cannot believe that it is the type of good in the parable of the leaven.

Let us now proceed to the consideration of the second interpretation of this parable, which interpretation, though unpopular, is not to be rejected because of its unpopularity. Let us now in accordance with our comparative study of Scripture consider leaven as the type of *evil*. If leaven is the type of evil, then what does the meal represent which is corrupted by the leaven? Where does meal or flour come from? It is the product of the wheat (the good seed which was sowed by

the Sower of the first parable, Christ Jesus our Savior). This meal is wholesome and good, it stands for the Truth in Christ and His Word. When the leaven is mixed with the meal, it begins to work until the whole mass is changed and influenced in a most subtle manner by its mysterious working. Thus our Lord teaches us in the parable of the leaven: that error and evil doctrine will corrupt the good meal (the doctrine of Christ). First the church was made into a great state institution; this *outward* growth of the Kingdom of Christ becoming more perverted and abnormal, is taught in the parable of the mustard tree and the *internal* growth of the Kingdom is taught in the parable of the leaven.

The *woman* in this parable represents the apostate church. Her evil doctrine like the leaven is corrupting the meal, the Truth in Christ. The leaven works silently, secretly, its working is a great mystery. Paul speaks of its working in II Thes. 2:7 "for the mystery of lawlessness doth already work." Thus we see that the Truth in Christ became corrupt by the introduction of error very early in the age and like leaven, the mystery

of lawlessness is still at work, and will continue to work until all Christendom is permeated with its corrupting influence.

When we remember that the leaven has been exerting its corrupting influence throughout Christendom for so long, we sometimes wonder that the whole lump has not been leavened and the Truth in Christ utterly overwhelmed by the power of the evil one. We should remember however that when our risen Lord ascended to the Father in Heaven, He did not leave us alone, but He promised His Holy Spirit to them that obey Him and revelation and experience alike tell us that the promise of the Father has been verified. In this evil age, when there is so much error and deceit the Holy Spirit *guides* us into all Truth. He enables us to distinguish the Truth from error and He guides us into all Truth. He ever takes the things of Christ and shows them to us.

Let us now sum up the teachings of the parable of the leaven. The leaven is the type of error or evil. The woman represents apostate Christianity, the meal represents the Truth of Christ and His Word and the action of the woman mixing the leaven with the

meal and allowing it to leaven the whole, is the type of the internal growth of the kingdom. Thus we see according to the teachings of the parables of the mustard tree and the parable of the leaven that the kingdom or Christendom, both as to its external and internal growth develops into a condition which is perverted and abnormal in the end of the age.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: Leaven or error of which it is the type is silent, secret, and mysterious in its working. The Truth in Christ Jesus, however, is open and plainly held up for the investigation and acceptance of all. The gospel invitation is ever extended: "Come and see." The Spirit and the Bride say come, and let him that heareth say come, and whosoever will let him come and drink of the water of life freely." The blessed Master himself said "in secret have I said nothing." He also taught His disciples to walk in the light as He is in the light. We are to let the light of our lives to shine so that men may see our good works and glorify the Father in heaven. If our lives are truly hid with Christ in God we need not fear the light.

Leaven is corrupting and contaminating in its influence. The Truth in Christ Jesus is purifying and tends to preserve and make wholesome. We are told that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." We are also told "that the fear of the Lord is *clean*." The Lord Jesus also says "ye are the salt of the earth." Salt we know ever exercises a wholesome and purifying influence. It is an antiseptic, it arrests decay. The Lord's people, in whose lives His Truth is thoroughly incorporated are as salt in the earth. They exercise a purifying and wholesome influence upon corrupt and unregenerate humanity. The elements of decay are in everything about us. The Truth in Christ Jesus is the only antiseptic that can arrest the decay of the leaven of unrighteousness. May our lives ever give out this purifying and wholesome influence.

The leaven is persistent in it's working. It keeps on working until the whole mass is permeated with it's corrupting influence. So we as disciples of the Lord are to be energetic in our work. The salt is also persistent and vigorous in it's action. It keeps pushing it's way through every fiber of the mass that is

salted, until the whole is salted. Let us, who through the cleansing blood of Christ are purged from our sins, never weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

The leaven makes a great show of its work: that is, after the leaven is introduced into the meal it causes the mass to swell up and appear much larger than it really is. So Satan, who is swollen with rage, because his time is short and the end is drawing near, causes those who take up with evil doctrine "to utter great swelling words of vanity." (2 Pet. 2:18; Jude 1:16.) The love of God in Christ Jesus, however, does not tend to puff men up or cause them to behave in a unseemly manner. I Cor. 13:5, "love is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not it's own." Let us not fear the great swelling words of the Evil one, the fire of God's wrath will check and utterly destroy his work, "Therefore believers ought to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

CHAPTER V

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure

Matthew 13:44

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in the field; which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

THE PARABLE OF THE HIDDEN TREASURE.

Our blessed Lord has now declared four parables of the kingdom unto the multitudes. As soon as He has finished the declaration of the fourth parable (the leaven) Matthew 13:36, "he left the multitudes and went into the house" and there, with His *disciples* gathered about Him, He gives them the interpretation of the first two parables and also declares the remaining parables of the kingdom. We can readily discover a decided difference between the first four parables and the parables that follow. In the first four

parables, the Savior is addressing a mixed audience, most of whom were curious spectators without faith in Christ. They could only see with the natural eye and hear with the natural ear, for them the eye and ear of faith and Spirit were as yet unopened. To them the Savior speaks only of such things as they could understand in their unregenerate condition, such as the planting and development of the Kingdom, the abnormal growth of the kingdom because of the manipulation of man, the corrupting of the inward working of the kingdom because of perversion of the Truth. In the remaining parables, however, the Savior is addressing His disciples *only*, as they gather around Him in the seclusion of the house. "The secrets of the Lord are with them that fear Him." And now we see that the Lord begins to unfold before His disciples that gather about His feet in faith believing, the secret plan and purpose of God the Father for the whole world in this age.

In this parable we discover four points of main importance: the man, the field, the treasure hidden in the field, and the purchase of the field and all that it contains. As we proceed with the interpretation of this para-

ble we find there are two interpretations, the one is quite popular and is almost universally taught and accepted throughout Christendom. The other interpretation is unpopular and almost universally rejected throughout Christendom. We shall discuss both interpretations but let this rule guide us in our choice, not to accept an interpretation because of its popularity, or reject an interpretation because of its unpopularity. *The popular idea is not always right and the unpopular idea is not always wrong.*

The popular interpretation: According to the popular interpretation, the treasure is the type of salvation or of Christ, the man who sells all he has, to purchase the field is the sinner seeking eternal life. Such an interpretation though ever so popular is a direct contradiction of the Savior's teaching in the preceding parables and the Holy Scripture in general.

(1) We find a man (a Sower) mentioned in the first parable and according to the Savior's interpretation "the Sower of the seed is the Son of Man." Likewise in the second parable the Sower of the good seed is the Son of Man. In the parable of the mustard

seed, the man who took the good seed and sowed it is the Son of Man. There never is the slightest confusion of ideas, or contradiction of statement, in all the sayings of Jesus and we cannot see how the man referred to in the parable of the hidden treasure can represent the sinner, while the man referred to in the first three parables according to the Savior's own interpretation is the Son of Man.

(2) If the hidden treasure is salvation in Christ Jesus, and the man who sells all he has is the sinner seeking salvation, then we are led to believe that the sinner can make atonement for his sin by selling all that he has. This however is a direct contradiction to the teaching of the Savior in the preceding parables and of the Scriptures in general. The sinner seeking salvation cannot secure pardon for sin by selling all or a part of anything he may possess. The sinner is expected to forsake his evil ways, and yet no amount of morality or deeds of righteousness can secure salvation or pardon for sin. Gal. 2:16. "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." We are not justified through the works of the law but through

faith in Jesus Christ. Since Christ died for us, we are no longer under the law, we are under grace. The dispensation of the law, began with the giving of the law to Moses and ends with the crucifixion of Christ. When God gave the law to Moses God first reminded Israel of their marvelous deliverance from the house of bondage in Egypt because of His grace; and then he offers them the law. It was their privilege to plead for grace instead of the law. However after the law was given in their presumption they answered: Ex. 19:8, "and all the people answered together and said, all that Jehovah hath spoken we will do." Consequently God's command through all the dispensation of the law was "this do and live." Once during the dispensation of the law a self righteous Pharisee came to Jesus saying: Mark 10:17, "Good Master what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" and to him the Master said, knowing full well how the rich young ruler prided himself on his strict observance of the law and also just where he had failed to keep the law, the Master said, v. 21, "Go sell whatever thou hast and give to the poor." But we are to remember that

this young ruler came to the Master during the dispensation of the law, with the works of the law and the Savior answers him as one still under the law. But now, Rom. 6:14-15, "we are not under the law we are under grace." With the crucifixion of Christ, the demands of the law are forever satisfied. "Jesus paid it all." The debt we never could have paid was cancelled with His precious blood. When He died on the cross the dispensation of the law is ended. A new dispensation begins (the dispensation of grace) which continues until the coming of the Lord. In this dispensation the sinner seeking eternal life is not required to sell all or part of anything he may possess to inherit eternal life. The purchase of our salvation has been made once for all through the shedding of Jesus' blood. Nor can the sinner obtain pardon for his sin by deeds of morality and works of righteousness. Salvation is now no longer secured by the works of the law, although the law is still to be kept, but salvation comes through faith in Christ, and even this faith which saves is the gift of God, lest any should boast. *We cannot purchase this salvation we have in Christ Jesus, it is*

God's *free gift*, without money and without price. God *offers* it to everyone. "Nothing in my hands I bring simply to Thy cross I cling." The Christian is expected to make a surrender and a sacrifice of self. But the Christian's surrender and sacrifice of self is not the *condition* upon which we receive or purchase our salvation; it is rather the *result of our salvation*.

We really make no sacrifice or surrender, until we have accepted Christ and then in proportion as we yield up ourselves to the influence of His spirit, the work of surrender and sacrifice begins in real earnest and continues to the end. Thus Paul says, Phil. 3:8,10, "Yea, verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and *do* count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, (this was after Paul's conversion) that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed unto His death."

Thus we see that any interpretation, however popular, which represents the hidden treasure as typical of salvation in Christ

Jesus, and also represents the sinner as securing pardon for his sin by selling all he has; is contradictory to the teaching of Christ and is a most nauseating mixture of law and grace.

(3) In all the preceding parables the word field means "the world." Now if the man in this parable is the sinner seeking salvation and the hidden treasure is salvation in Christ, then according to the parable the sinner must sell all he has and buy the WORLD (field,) which purchase is manifestly impossible. Having seen the absurdity of the popular interpretation, let us now turn our attention to the second interpretation, which though unpopular, is not to be rejected because of its unpopularity.

The man does not represent the sinner seeking salvation, but Christ seeking the sinner, the field is the world. Next we notice that the man in the parable sells all he has and then purchases the field with all the treasure that it contains. What man among men is able to purchase the field, which in this case, is the world, except the Son of Man. How great was the sacrifice that he made to purchase the field. He who was rich in glory

became poor for our sakes, that we through His poverty might be rich. It is the old, old story of Jesus' wonderful love.

But what is the treasure hidden in the field for which the Lord makes so great sacrifice? We answer that Israel is the treasure hidden in the field. Ps. 135:4, "for the Lord hath chosen Jacob for Himself and Israel for His peculiar treasure," Exodus 19:5, "ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine." Isaiah 43:1, "But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name thou art mine." The prophecy of Balaam clearly indicates how precious the nation of Israel is in the sight of God. (Numbers 22-24.) We see here also to what a high position of trust and honor God will yet exalt His chosen people Israel, who for the present are as treasure hidden in the field, scattered and dispersed among the nations of the earth. When our Lord came down from heaven to earth, he purchased the whole world, including His earthly people Israel who are as treasure hidden in the field. In fact we are told "He came to His own

(Israel) and His own received Him not." Again in John 11:51, "He died for that nation." The Lord died for the nation of Israel, but Israel rejected the Savior and so now salvation is come to the Gentiles, for as many as receive Him, to them is given the power to be the sons of God, even them that believe on His name.

"Hath God cast away His people?" No. Israel has been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. For the present the results of the Lord's sacrifice are not yet apparent. During this dispensation, while the Lord is absent from the earth, Israel remains in darkness, her eyes are blinded, her strength is broken, her glory departed; she is as treasure hidden in the world wide field. But when the Lord comes to earth again and "the fullness of the Gentiles is come;" then the Lord will claim His inheritance. He will dig up the hidden treasure from the field, and all Israel rejoicing in His salvation will sing, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

PERSONAL APPLICATION.—In this parable we have the picture of Christ seeking the sinner, first the Jew and then the Gentile.

How true this is. *He sought us and found us and brought us back into the fold.* "Herein is love not that we loved God, but that He first loved us and gave his Son to die for us.

Israel is God's chosen people, the treasure, hidden for the present from the eyes of the world. Let us not abuse them, or curse them, or persecute them. Though despised by the world and dreadfully persecuted; yet God still loves them, and though He permits the nations to punish Israel because of their rejection of the Lord who bought them with His blood, yet God hath not cast away His people, but when the fulness of the Gentiles is come, He will greatly exalt and glorify Israel. Let us take heed how we even speak of them. Numbers 24:9, "blessed be every one that blesseth thee and cursed be every one that curseth thee." Ps. 122:6-9, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls and prosperity within thy palaces, etc." Isaiah 62:6,7, "Ye that are Jehovah's remembrancers, take ye no rest, and give Him no rest till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

During this age, the dispensation of grace,

Israel is kept hidden in the field. The glory that Israel once had, is now given to the Gentiles. Thus did God bring judgment upon Israel for her wilfulness and unbelief. Today apostate Christendom is fast approaching a judgment, which no doubt will exceed in every respect the judgment which rests on Israel now. When the time of the Gentiles is full then Jehovah will lift up and highly exalt His chosen people. Romans 11:25-28, "For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this *mystery*, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved; even as it is written. There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer; He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; and this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins."

Let us then remember that this parable teaches us that Christ came to earth seeking to save the sinner, first the Jew and then the Gentile. Israel is "the hidden treasure;" hidden for the present because she rejected the Lord, who to purchase her redemption shed His precious blood. God hath not cast away

His people Israel, but when the fulness of the Gentiles is come, He will restore Israel to her former position of glory.

CHAPTER VI

The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price

Matthew 13:45, 46

Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls: and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

THE PARABLE OF THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

This parable of the Pearl of Great Price is in many respects quite similar to the preceding parable of the hidden treasure, and yet, a careful study and comparison of these two parables, shows us that the parable of the pearl gives us additional truth and is in many respects quite different from the preceding parable.

Again do we find four circumstances briefly related in this parable. (1) A merchant-man *seeking* goodly pearls, (2) a merchant-

man *finding* one pearl of great price, (3) the merchantman *selling* all he has, (4) the merchant *buying* the pearl.

The popular interpretation of this parable is as follows: the merchant seeking pearls is represented as the sinner seeking salvation, the one pearl of great price is said to represent salvation in Christ. We will not stop to discuss an interpretation, which however popular, is so plainly contradictory to the teaching of our Lord in the preceding parables and to the Scriptures in general.

The second interpretation is as follows: the merchant seeking pearls represents Christ seeking the sinner, and to secure this salvation, Christ sells all He has, even to the laying down of His life. But if the merchant seeking pearls represents Christ seeking the sinner, what does the pearl represent? The Hidden Treasure of the preceding parable represents Israel, the chosen people of God, and the Pearl of Great Price represents the church. Inasmuch as the one pearl of great price is the most prominent fact in this parable, we shall find that a careful study of the facts concerning pearl itself will be of great assistance in arriving at a proper understanding of

the parable of the pearl. Let us then consider the following questions: (1) What is pearl? (2) How is pearl formed? (3) What is it used for and what is its value? (4) What is pearl the symbol of? (1) What is pearl? We all know that pearl is a precious gem. The scientist tells us that the pearl is carbonate of lime, which is the same as chalk. The pearl is different from all other gems or precious stones. The emerald, the ruby, the diamond, etc., these all, are inorganic substances or compounds. That is: life was not involved in the process of their formation. But the pearl is an organic compound, that is: *Life* was involved in the process of its formation and in this respect, it is different from all other jems or precious stones. (2) How is the pearl formed? The pearl is formed within the shell of a *living* clam or oyster. Sometimes a grain of sand or some other foreign substance works its way into or rather between the oyster shell, causing continual irritation and annoyance to the soft and tender mollusk within the shell. Next the secretion of the nacre, or mother-of-pearl begins thus the foreign substance is covered and the formation of the pearl begins, layer upon layer,

until that which was the source of continual pain and annoyance, has been transformed into a gem of great beauty and value. "The tears of the oyster are found in the beauty of the pearl." (3) The value of the pearl. The pearl as a precious gem is much sought for and is of great value. In some oriental countries no one but the king is allowed to wear pearls of great price. However, although from time immemorial pearls were regarded as of great value among the gentile races, yet little if any value was attached to them by the ancient Hebrew people. Job 28: 18 "No mention shall be made of coral or pearl." (4) Whether from its appearance, or the manner in which the pearl is formed, the pearl has ever been the symbol of purity and innocence. Keeping these facts in our mind, that deal with the pearl in a general way, let us now turn our attention to the interpretation of the parable of the Pearl of Great Price; remembering that the merchant seeking goodly pearls is Christ seeking the sinner, and that the one pearl of great price for which Christ gives all, is the church.

In the preceding parable, Christ reveals the secret plan and purpose of the Father for

His chosen people Israel, who during this dispensation of grace are as treasure hidden in the world wide field. In this parable of the pearl, the Lord Jesus explains "the mystery" of the church, the pearl of great price, which He is forming now. During this evil age the real value and great beauty of the church can never be discovered. Evil is in the world, the tares are growing among the wheat, the leaven of unrighteousness is everywhere at work spreading its corrupting and contaminating influence throughout the whole Kingdom. Sometimes we exclaim How long! O! Lord! How long! Why tarry the wheels of His chariot! And yet all the while, unhindered by the wiles of the enemy, or the plans of evil men, the Lord Jesus is calling out His chosen ones to Himself. One by one He is gathering them together out of the dark, swelling sea of sinful humanity, and when at last the number is complete, and the last one of the blood-bought throng is gathered in, then the King Himself will come to take His own to Himself in glory, and then shall all the splendor and beauty of the glorified church (the pearl of great price) flash forth, and shine forever resplendent in the bosom of

the Father.

Of the four circumstances briefly related in the parable of the pearl, the first is this: "the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls." From this we see that the merchant of the parable goes about with a definite purpose in view, and that purpose is to find goodly pearls. When, therefore, the merchant finds at last a pearl of great price, we see that the discovery of that pearl is not accidental. Now the merchant seeking pearls, represents Christ seeking the sinner; while the pearl of great price is the church of the living God built up of believers, who have been bought with the precious blood of Christ. Thus we see that the Lord Jesus, like the merchant in the parable, came into the world with a definite purpose in view. This purpose was revealed to man before the Savior's birth Matt. 1:21 "thou shalt call his name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins." Christ came into the world to save sinners. To raise men up out of the degradation and filth of sin and transform them into that which would be forever glorious and most precious in the sight of God. This was the

great purpose which He ever kept before Him, and when at last He discovers in the church the pearl of great price, we see that the discovery is not accidental, but the result of most definite and diligent searching. It is but the unfolding of the secret plan and purpose of God, for those that love Him, "the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God" (Eph. 3:9). How great is this mystery of God's love herein revealed! Who can comprehend the height, the depth, the length and breadth of the love of God, which went out in so great measure for a world dying in sin, that He gave His only begotten Son to die that we might live. Hence the Savior, obedient in all things to the Father's will, left the glories of heaven and came to earth seeking the sinner. Ever keeping this definite purpose in view, that out of the great and innumerable multitude of sinners which He ransomed with His life-blood, He would form a most glorious company into the church of the living God (the one pearl of great price) destined to shine forever resplendent in the beauty of Christ their Redeemer and King and in all the ages which are to come to show forth the wonders of His love.

We can now see why the Lord Jesus uses the pearl as the type of the church. (1) The pearl teaches us *how* and *of what* the church is formed. In the formation of the pearl, we saw how that both life and pain were involved in the process of it's formation. So also with the church, pain and suffering and the laying down of life were involved in the process of it's formation. A grain of sand lodges within the oyster shell, wounding and irritating the tender mollusk within. Next the secretion of the mother-of-pearl begins, the pearl is formed and the wound is healed. The grain of sand is not the pearl, and yet it is the basis upon and about which the pearl is formed. Considerable time is involved in this process. Layer upon layer of a most brilliant and iridescent material, in which all the colors of the rainbow are blended together, are laid upon the grain of sand and thus the pearl is formed. Now just as the pearl, the gem of rare beauty and great value, is built upon that which was of no value and which caused pain and suffering to the life that formed it; so the church is formed exclusively of those, who at one time grievously pained and wounded Him who "loved us and

gave Himself for us." The church of Christ is composed of sinners saved by the grace of God. Is. 53:5, 6 "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." He who in the parable is represented as the merchant seeking goodly pearls, came seeking us. Even while we were yet in our sins, He loved us. When we accepted Him in faith, He washed us from our sins in His blood.

↳ By the gracious influence of His Holy Spirit we are enabled more and more, to die unto sin and live unto righteousness. Thus will He ever continue to work upon us, transforming that which was vile and sinful into that which will be pure and beautiful Eph. 5:27 "that He might present the church to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." The grain of sand is not the pearl, nor is the sinner the pearl of great price. The pearl of great price (the church) is built up of sinners who have

been made new creatures in Christ Jesus. Who have been raised up out of the mire and filth of sin and made to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

In the parable the *one* pearl which he found at last after most diligent searching was of great price; so great was the price that he sold *all* that he had to get it. We can understand how precious the church is in the sight of God when we remember how great the price was that He gave for it. Eph. 5:25 "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it." II Cor. 8:9 "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich." Truly He sold all that He had even to the laying down of His life. He emptied Himself of all heavenly glory, came to earth, took upon Himself the form of a servant, ever went about doing good, yet was misunderstood, misrepresented and persecuted. He who knew no sin was made sin for us. He endured the contradiction of sinners, who might have consumed them by the

Word of His power. For us He wore the crown of thorns, and the purple robe of mock royalty. For us He endured all the mockery, the insult and the reviling in silence. For you and me He carried the cross up the steep and stony path of Golgotha's hill. There He was crucified between two thieves. All this He endured and much more, the half of which has never been told. Truly He sold all that He had that by His sacrifice He might redeem a world from sin and gather together an innumerable company of ransomed souls into one glorious body, presenting them at last faultless before the presence of the Father with exceeding joy.

The pearl has ever been the symbol of innocence and purity and has been ever sought for in the decoration of kings. So it is with the church, the pearl of great price. Once they who are now in the church and are numbered among the sons of God, were sinners who dwelt in the filth and the mire and were led about as captives by the will of Satan. Rom. 8:1, 2 "There is now therefore no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in

Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." We are now new creatures in Christ Jesus. *His* righteousness, *His* power, *His* beauty is laid upon us. His Spirit is working upon us now, He the author and finisher of our faith, though absent now, is silently and swiftly working; shaping and fashioning the pearl of great price. In the end of the age when He comes and the trumpet of the Lord shall sound, then shall the beauty of the glorified church shine forth and as the pearl of great price be taken up to shine in all its iridescent beauty: the rainbow round the throne of God.

The merchant sold all He had to purchase *one* pearl, so Christ will unify the church and make it the *one* pearl of great price. The day will come when the sacramental host, now scattered throughout the world, will be gathered together into *one* body at His appearing. With joy unspeakable they will take up the harp of praise and join with the song of the angels as they sing "one faith, one Lord, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all, and through all, and in all."

PERSONAL APPLICATION: The mer-

chant went about seeking goodly pearls, the Master came into the world to seek the sinner and bring him into the fold of God. We should never forget that we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. That Christ sought us and found us and brought us into the fold. That the church is built up of men who once were vile and sinful, but who now are led by the Spirit of God. That none of us, no not even the best of us, have any cause for boasting, for it is only by His grace that we are what we are. That it is His power, which has lifted us up into the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

The merchant went about with a definite purpose in view: namely to discover and possess the one pearl of great price. So the Lord Jesus ever had and kept the one purpose in view: namely to seek and to save the lost, and out of the great and innumerable company of souls ransomed by His blood to form and fashion that which as the church, would ever be the one pearl of great price, most precious in the sight of God. Even so we as true disciples should have a definite purpose in life. The highest aim and purpose we can keep before us is to live for others. Christ

gave Himself for others and if we would follow in His steps we should enter into the fellowship of His suffering.

If we truly love the Lord and sincerely desire to serve Him aright, then we will connect ourselves with some branch of His church. What though there may be flaws and imperfections in the church visible, we are strengthened in faith as we unite with others in the Lord's work, we are able to accomplish more in spreading the Truth and how can we expect to have Him who bought us with His precious blood, openly acknowledge and acquit us in the day of judgment, unless in our lifetime, we as we have opportunity, openly acknowledge Him as our Savior and confess Him before men.

As members of the church we are to be loyal to our denomination, but we are not to boast about it, or set ourselves up as better, or in any way as superior, to the other denominational branches of the church. The day is coming when the trumpet's sound will scatter all the historical differences and traditions that now divide us. Then there will be one faith, one Lord, one baptism, one church.

CHAPTER VII

The Parable of the Drag Net

Matthew 13:47-50

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind; which, when it was filled, they drew up on the beach; and they sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but the bad they cast away. So shall it be in the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth.

THE PARABLE OF THE DRAG NET

We have now come to the consideration of the last of the seven parables of the Kingdom. In the study of the first of these parables (the Sower) we are taken back to the times of the apostles and we are given a description of the *beginning* of the Kingdom of the heavens after it is committed to the

hands of men. In this last parable (the drag-net) we are given a description of what the *end* of this dispensation will be like. As we look at the picture held up before us in this parable, we see a great, large net let down into the sea and left there to take in fish of all kinds until it is full, and then it is taken up and the good fish are sorted out and preserved, but the bad and worthless are cast out. The disciples must have listened to this parable with intense interest, for many of them were fishermen. They had often cast the net into the sea and toiled all night long and taken nothing. When they became acquainted with Jesus we read that "they straightway left their nets and followed Him." Matt. 4:20. The Lord Jesus had already explained the mystery of Israel in the parable of the hidden treasure. He had also explained the mystery of the Church in the parable of the pearl, and now that he would explain the mystery of the end of the age. (the dispensation of grace) He uses the parable of the drag net and then to these disciples, thoroughly acquainted as they were with every detail of the fisherman's work, He adds the following by way of interpretation, "thus

shall it be in the completion of the age; the angels shall go forth and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

¶ As we look at this parable we can readily distinguish the following points of prominence: the net, the sea, the fish, the fisherman, and the final separation of the good from the bad.

THE NET.—What is the net? What does it represent? Some would have us believe that the net represents the church. However, this cannot be; for the scene of this parable is laid in a time *after* the church is taken out of the world. According to I Thess. 4:16,17 the first event in the closing of this dispensation of grace will be the coming of the Lord *for* His saints. At His appearing the trumpet's sound will raise up the dead who die in the Lord and these will be caught up first, and then we who are alive and remain on the earth will be caught up and thus shall the church, the one pearl of great price be taken up to shine forever resplendent in the bosom of the Father. *After* the church is taken up the end of the age begins. This

parable is a description of the *end* of the age, the Master Himself in His interpretation of the parable says distinctly, "thus shall it be in the completion of the age." Thus we can see very clearly that the net is not the church, for the scene of this parable is laid in a time *after* the church is taken up out of the world.

The first event in the closing of this dispensation will be the coming of the Lord *for* His saints. The next will be a brief period of time called "the great tribulation" described in Matt. 24:21,22; Zeph. 1:15,18; Dan. 12:1; Jer. 30:5-7; Rev. 7:14. This time of great tribulation will be a dreadful time, were it not for the prayers of God's elect, all would be destroyed. After the period of great tribulation is ended, then the Lord will come *with* His saints, in great power and glory and after the separation of the good from the bad is accomplished the millennial reign begins. We believe the scene of the parable of the drag net is laid some time after the coming of the Lord *for* His saints, and some time before His coming *with* His saints. In all probability the separation of the good from the bad mentioned in this parable, occurs during the great tribulation.

Inasmuch as we have seen that the net cannot represent the church, we are still confronted by the same question, What is the Net? The Master says "Again the *Kingdom* of the heavens is like unto a drag net." We believe then that the net represents the *Kingdom*. Let us keep the distinction between the church and the kingdom in mind. The church is not the kingdom, yet the *Church is in the Kingdom*. This may seem confusing, but we can illustrate it in this way: Every church has an influence, that influence is not confined to the membership of that church, but reaches out among a great number of people who are not connected with any church. Now what shall we call the territory over which any church may have an influence? Let us call it the kingdom of that church. Now the church of Jesus Christ (we refer to the church irrespective of denomination) is exercising a great influence throughout the world, that influence is by no means confined to the membership of the church, what shall we call this vast domain over which the church of Christ exercises an influence? The name that is commonly applied to this vast domain is christendom, the do-

main where the name of Jesus is known and honored. We are willing to admit that there are people in the world who have not yet come under the influence of the kingdom, not only in foreign lands, but even in our own land there are many who have never heard the name of Jesus. But wherever the Gospel has been presented, wherever men have been brought face to face with the question, what will you do with Jesus? That is christendom, that is the kingdom. During this dispensation, the Gospel is being spread through the instrumentality of the church. By and by at the coming of the Lord the church will be taken out of the world and then will come the great tribulation. It is very evident that this time of great tribulation does not begin until the church is taken out of the world. It occurs during the last half of Daniel's seventieth week, and is described under the fifth, sixth and seventh seals of the book of Revelation. The great tribulation will not begin till the antichrist is come, and antichrist cannot be manifested till the Holy Spirit removes the church out of the world, for He is the power in the church that restrains. II Thess. 2:7,8, "The mystery of lawlessness doth al-

ready work; only there is One that restraineth now, until He is taken out of the way. And then shall be revealed the lawless one."

After the church (the pearl of great price) is taken up, the end of the age begins and it is in the end of the age that the scene of this parable of the drag net is laid. Inasmuch as the Lord Jesus does not give us an interpretation of all the details of this parable, we will not attempt to explain that which He does not reveal. However this much is evident. After the church is taken out of the world, God will not utterly abandon this world and turn it over to the power of the evil one. Even during the time of great tribulation, men will be warned of impending doom. Perhaps the angels who are to separate the good from the bad will also fly to and fro in the heavens with the everlasting Gospel and call upon men "to fear God and give Him the glory, for the hour of His judgment is come." Rev. 14:6,7.

The most prominent fact in the parable of the drag net is the separation of the good from the bad. The Savior Himself says that this will take place in the end of the age and that the *work* of *separating* the good from

the bad will be done by the angels. This same truth is presented in the parable of the darnel. Matt. 13:41, "The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth." Once there was a time before the coming of Christ, when angels of God met man as he walked in the way (Gen. 32:1) and ministered to his needs or openly interfered with the plans of man, that God's plan might be accomplished. The Old Testament Scriptures contain many instances of this kind, with which we are all familiar and which are too numerous to mention. Hebrews 1:1, "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath in these latter days spoken unto us by His Son." In this dispensation of grace, God speaks to us through His Word and through the Holy Spirit. God's angels are never apparent lest we should depend upon them, nor ever absent, though unseen, lest we should despair without them. But the day is coming after the church is taken out

of the world, in the end of the age, when the angels will come to earth again to take a hand in the affairs of men. Perhaps they may be commissioned to preach the everlasting Gospel in that time of great tribulation which is to come upon the earth after the capture of the saints, but whether that be true or not we are sure of this: That in the end of the age the net will be taken up and the angels will separate the good from the bad. Thus by the separation of the good from the evil and the gathering out of His kingdom (the drag net) all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, the earth shall be prepared for the coming of the Lord with His saints, when he shall set up His throne and reign on earth with His saints during the millennium. *Matt. 13:43.* "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

PERSONAL APPLICATIONS.—The study of this last parable of the kingdom in connection with the parables that precede it impresses us with the wonderful love of God who deals with wayward and sinful humanity with such wonderful patience and infinite mercy. He is slow to anger and plentiful in

mercy. As we walk through the corridors of Truth in His Word and review the history of His dealing with man, we see that from the beginning to the end that history is the record of the Spirit of God striving with man and the spirit of man rebelling against God. All through the ages and dispensations of the past, the hand of God has been stretched out in mercy over rebellious and sinful humanity, nor has God ever wholly abandoned the human family or forsaken them for their sin. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, He would have all men be saved. When we think of His wonderful love, His infinite mercy and patience in dealing with sinful humanity, ought not we who are bought with the price of His precious blood, be more patient and gracious, merciful and forgiving. Hath He not said, if thy enemy hunger feed Him, if he thirst give him drink; hath He not said vengeance is mine I will repay. If our lives were ever filled with this spirit of the Master, would we not be more successful in winning souls?

When at last the fullness of time is come and the cup of the world's iniquity is full, then the angels will begin their work of sep-

arating the good from the evil. What startling changes and revelations will be made in that time when the angels take this world in hand. What weeping, what wailing, what gnashing of teeth, when the wicked are consumed by the wrath of God and by the fierceness of His anger. What brightness, what glory will be revealed when the righteous appear separated at last from all that which is evil or occasions stumbling.

What is your life? Is it like a bright and shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day, or are you each day treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath? Think not that because judgment has been so long delayed, that it will never come. The Lord hath sworn and He will also perform it; vengeance is mine, I will repay saith the Lord. Watch, therefore, and pray for how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation.

When Jesus had finished these parables He said unto His disciples, Matthew 13:51, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto Him, Yea. And He said unto them, therefore every scribe who hath been made a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like unto

a man that is a householder which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

The "things old" refer to the things of the Old Testament and the "things new" refer to the things of the New Testament, of which the Savior had just given a synopsis in the parables of the kingdom. Thus by a comparative study of the Old and New Testament of God's Word, may we under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, ever be enabled to know more of His will and lay hold of God's great plan and purpose for the human race.

If you ask what is the sign of His coming and of the end of the age? We answer: Matthew 24:36, "But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only."

Watch therefore and pray for in an hour ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.

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