

Jesus Told Us This Would Happen!

In Matthew 13 we have the record of seven parables—the number of spiritual perfection—that our Lord uttered consecutively. These parables are prophetic in their significance and scope. They deal with conditions that are to be present here during the time of our Lord's absence. They are concerned with the visible profession of Christianity and they look forward to the closing scenes of the present dispensation.

The chapter opens with the well-known Parable of the Sower who went forth to sow. It pictures the broadcast sowing of the good Seed by the Savior Himself, and in His interpretation of the parable we learn that the "Seed" is the Word of God. The parable sets before us the beginning of the Christian dispensation and makes known to us the manner and extent of the reception of the Redeemer's mission and message. It gives us the ratio of the Gospel's success and forewarns us that all men are not going to receive God's Word, only a fractional minority will. It shows us that the proclamation of the Word is to encounter satanic opposition, yea, that the world, the flesh, and the Devil, will combine in their efforts to prevent it bringing forth fruit. The result of the sowing is plainly stated. Three castings out of four were fruitless! Most of the seed fell upon barren ground. The greater part of the field, which, in our Lord's interpretation, we learn, is "the world," completely failed to bring forth any increase. Some of the seed fell by the wayside and the fowls of the air picked it up; some fell upon the rocks and the sun burnt it up; some fell among thorns and it was choked. Only one-fourth of it fell upon "good ground" and even there the fruitage varied and decreased in its yield from a hundredfold to thirty-fold. In His interpretation, the Lord tells us that the different kinds of ground on which the Seed fell represent various classes of people who hear the Word.

Now what light does the above parable throw? There is no hint whatever in this parable that a time was to come when the whole of the field would be covered with waving wheat, instead, the only possible inference which can be drawn from it repudiates such a conception. Who would dare to suggest that other sowers who should prove more successful than He would follow the Sower Himself, the "Lord of the harvest"? The results of our Lord's own sowing were prophetic of the history of the entire Christian dispensation. In no period of this Age has the whole field—the world—been receptive to the Seed, in no period have more than a fractional minority received the Word and brought forth fruit unto perfection. In every generation, from the time

when our Lord walked the earth in the days of His flesh until now, the emissaries of Satan and the cares and riches of the world have combined to choke and make unfruitful the Word of God. From this parable then it is impossible to deduce any promise of a world ultimately converted by the Gospel.

The second of the parables found in Matthew 13—that of the Wheat and the Tares—brings out even more forcibly than the previous one the fact that there can be no Millennium of earth-wide blessedness before our Lord's return. The Parable of the Tares is also prophetic in its bearing. It makes known to us that which succeeded our Lord's own ministry. Immediately following the Sower's scattering of the good Seed, an enemy came and sowed evil seed in the same field. The Enemy was "the Wicked One" and it is to be particularly noted that he sowed neither thorns nor thistles but "tares" —a counterfeit wheat—which so closely resembles the genuine article that the one cannot be distinguished from the other until the time of harvest. Here then is seen the efforts of the Evil One to neutralize the gracious work of the Son of God. The Lord Himself supplied the interpretation of this parable: just as the wheat represents the "children of the Kingdom," so the tares symbolize the "children of the Wicked One. Let it be noted, however, that the "tares" do not represent wicked men as such, but "the ministers of Satan," "false apostles, deceitful workers" (2 Cor. 11:13) who were secretly introduced by the Enemy amongst God's people just as the tares were sown among the wheat.

This parable began to be fulfilled in the days when the New Testament was written. In the false teachers who harassed the early disciples we may see the mingling of the tares with the Wheat. The "children of the Wicked One" were the Judaizers who entered in among the churches of Galatia and who taught that salvation could not be secured by faith alone, that circumcision was also necessary. The "tares" may be seen in Hymeneus and Philetus of whom we read, "who concerning the Truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some" (2 Tim. 2:17, 18). The apostle Peter referred to the same class when he wrote, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily ("secretly") shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Pet. 2:1). Jude, likewise, had reference to such when he declared, "For there are certain men crept in unawares (as the "tares" were sown secretly among the wheat), who were before of old

ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4). Thus we see that at a very early date the tares were mingled with the wheat.

Again we ask, what light does this parable throw? In our Lord's declaration that the tares should grow together with the wheat until the time of harvest, which he expressly declares is the end of the age, we discover how preposterous, erroneous, and unscriptural is the teaching that the Gospel will yet win the world to Christ. At the time of harvest the world is still a mixed field, and this fact cuts away all ground for supposing that before our Lord returns the tares will be all rooted up or changed into wheat. Instead of the tares being transformed into wheat before the Millennium is ushered in, we are told that at the time of harvest the tares are bound into bunches and afterward cast into the fire—a very different picture that from the children of the Wicked One being reconciled to God! In the words "Let both grow together till the harvest" two solemn facts are revealed—first, Satan shall continue to hinder the success of the Gospel without interruption till the end of the age; and second, the Christian profession once corrupted shall continue thus to the close of this dispensation. And thus it has proven. Finally, be it observed, that in the casting of the tares—the children of the Wicked One—into the furnace of fire, we learn once more that the Age closes not with the universal reception of the Gospel but with Divine judgment upon the wicked!

The third parable of Matthew 13—that of the Mustard-seed—differs from the former ones in that our Lord did not interpret it. Post-millennialists have taken advantage of this fact and have made it teach that which gives countenance to their own pre-conceived theories. In this parable they see the promise of a world conquered by the Gospel. Now, whatever this parable may or may not signify, it certainly must not be made to contradict the teaching of the two that have gone before it. As already stated, the seven parables recorded in Matthew 13 form part of one connected discourse by our Lord and are so many prophetic representations of the development of the Christian profession during the time of His absence. This third parable then cannot set forth the universal diffusion of the Truth because the previous ones show that this is prevented by the opposition of Satan, which opposition is to continue until the end of the age. What then does this third parable teach?

The position that this parable occupies in the series is one of the keys to its interpretation. The first parable is concerned with the beginning of this dispensation, the time when our Lord was here upon the earth. The second deals, prophetically, with conditions that obtained in the lifetime of the apostles, showing us the false teachers—the children of the Wicked One—who crept in among God's people in their day. This third parable then looks forward to a later period and presents a prophetic picture, which saw its materialization in the fourth century of our era. The growth of the little mustard-seed into a great tree represents the development of the Christian profession from an insignificant commencement into a system of imposing proportions. In the fourth century A. D., Christianity was popularized by Constantine who adopted it as the State religion and compelled more than a million of his subjects to be baptized at the point of the sword. The parable of the Tares shows us Christianity corrupted by the insidious introduction of the children of the Wicked One among the children of God: the parable of the mustard-seed forecasted the growth and spread of a corrupted Christianity. This assertion of mine may easily be verified by the details of the parable itself.

The mustard-seed developed into a great tree—an abnormal thing in itself, nay, a monstrosity—so the popularization of Christianity in the days of Constantine produced an unnatural and ungainly system, which was foreign to its spirit and nature. Observe that the "fowls of the air" came and lodged in the branches of the great tree. In the first parable of the series the Lord Himself tells us that the birds of the air represent the emissaries of Satan. The great tree then, stands for a nominal and national Christianity, a monstrous, world-system, that which in our day is the aggregate of the so-called "Christian nations." In a word, the great tree symbolizes Christendom, which in Revelation 18 is said to be the "hold of every foul spirit and a cage for every hateful bird."

Further confirmation of my assertion above, that the great tree that issued from the mustard-seed represents the abnormal growth of a corrupted Christianity is furnished in Daniel 4 where we have recorded a dream, which came to the first head of the Gentile powers. In his dream Nebuchadnezzar also saw a "great tree," and in the fate, which it met with, we learn the end that is appointed to the tree of the parable. To quote—"I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: The leaves thereof were fair, and the

fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and a holy one came down from heaven; He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit; let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches" (Dan. 4:10-14).

To sum up my comments upon this parable. Instead of lending favor to the position of post-millennialism, its teaching—viewed in the light of Daniel 4—absolutely shatters the foundation of that system. Instead of teaching that the professing Church shall conquer the world, it shows that the world has conquered the professing Church. The mustard-seed symbolizes the outward character of the Christian profession at the beginning of this dispensation, when its devotees were few in number, poor in this world's goods, and despised by the great ones of the earth. In the third century A.D., the professing Church was like unto a humble little seed, unpretentious in appearance and insignificant in its dimensions. But in the fourth century there was a dramatic change. Constantine became a nominal Christian and adopted Christianity as the State religion. Then it was that the "tree" grew and became strong in the earth, putting out its branches in all directions. But then it was, also, that the fowls of Satan found shelter within its imposing boughs. However, great as the tree has become, its end is sure. Just as we learnt in the previous parable that the tares shall yet be consigned to the fire, so shall this great "tree" yet be cut down and brought to naught.

We turn now to the fourth parable of Matthew 13—the parable of the Leaven, the leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened. This parable is one of the foundation passages of post-millennialists. In it they see clear proof that the Reign of Righteousness, the Golden Age, is to be brought about by the efforts of the Church. The woman, we are told, symbolizes the Church, the three measures of meal the human race, and the leaven the Gospel, which, working silently but surely shall yet permeate the whole of humanity and influence all men God ward and heavenward. But the assumption that the leaven here signifies the influence and power of the Gospel will not stand the test of the Scriptures, for in the Word of God "leaven" is uniformly employed as a figure of that which is evil. The Israelites in Egypt were commanded to put away all leaven from their houses on the night of the Passover, and to eat the lamb with un-leavened bread. Leaven was rigidly excluded from every one of the

Levitical offerings that typified Christ. When our Lord was here upon earth He bade His disciples "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Matthew 16:11). Writing to the Corinthians the apostle exhorted them to "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:7, 8). Thus we see that, in harmony with its nature, leaven, is uniformly used as a figure of evil. How strange then that sober expositions should ever have regarded sour dough—a form of incipient putrefaction—as a symbol of the unadulterated Word of God working in the hearts of men!

What then is the meaning of the parable of the leaven? We answer that just as the former one brings before us the external development of a corrupted Christianity, so this one shows us the internal working of corruption within the Christian profession. The third parable brings us, historically, to the time of Constantine; the fourth carries us forward to the time of the rise and growth of the Roman Catholic Church. The "woman" in our parable figures the "mother of harlots and abominations of the earth" (Rev. 17:5)—"that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess" (Rev. 2:20). Her act in "hiding" the leaven comports well with the secrecy and stealth that has ever characterized the methods of the Roman hierarchy. The action of the woman is further evidence that the post-millennial interpretation of this parable is erroneous, for there is nothing secret about the proclamation and spread of the Gospel. Said our Lord to His disciples, "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops" (Matthew 10:27); and wrote the apostle, "But having renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, not handling the Word of God deceitfully" (2 Cor. 4:2). But both "craftiness" and "deceit" did mark this woman's action. She stealthily introduced into the meal a corrupting element, and though the resulting bread might be rendered more palatable, nevertheless it had been polluted. The three measures of meal stand for the whole of Christendom, and it is very remarkable that there are just three great divisions in Christendom, namely, the Roman Catholic, the Greek, and the Protestant Churches. And how true it is that these three divisions of the meal have each and all been thoroughly corrupted by the leaven introduced by the "woman"! Everywhere there are relics of Romanism, even in all the so-called Protestant churches.

To say that this parable teaches that the Gospel is to win the whole world to Christ is to put light for darkness and is to make error equal truth. If the leaven represents the Gospel, the woman the church, and the meal the entire human race, then we have to confess that our Lord erred in His judgment and entirely over-estimated the power of the Gospel to find a response in the hearts of men, for after twenty centuries of Gospel preaching we cannot point to a single country where all its subjects make even a profession of Christianity; nay, the world over, we cannot find a single city, town, or hamlet where everyone of its inhabitants is a believer in the Lord Jesus. No, this parable shows us the secret working of a putrefying element that spreads nothing but corruption. Can then the Millennium be introduced by the universal diffusion of a corrupted Christianity?

In these four parables we discover the methods used by Satan to hinder the work of true Christianity. At the beginning he sought to oppose by catching away the Seed, which method was pursued throughout the first century when the Devil endeavored to exterminate and annihilate the Word of God by means of the sword and the bonfire. In the second parable we see him changing his tactics, aiming to destroy Christianity by mingling his own children among the people of God. In the third we see how by a master-stroke of the Enemy the Christian profession was Paganized and as the result the world was won over by dazzling the eyes of men with a gorgeous ritual, with imposing architecture, and with the sanction and approval of the Roman Emperors themselves. In the fourth we discover how he succeeded in corrupting the doctrines and practices of Christianity by introducing into its midst a foreign and putrefying element which has resulted in the leavening of the entire mass.

Consider getting a copy of my book, Lord of Darkness Lord of Light and read for yourself what the enemy of righteousness has been trying to cover up for the last 2,000 years.

Maurice Goulet

<http://www.TheSecretEnd.com>