

## MATTHEW 13

## EIGHT PARABLES

We are once again with Jesus and His disciples on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. We love to imagine to ourselves that it was in the early morning, when the light laid its golden shadows upon the still waters; and when no voice of human discord marred the restfulness of holy silence, nor broke the Psalm of Nature's praise. It was likely a spring morning, full of fresh air; for springtime in those regions – especially around the Galilean Lake – knows nothing of sunshine and showers being mixed. Just as the imagery which was employed in the Sermon on the Mount seems to suggest to our minds that it was spoken during the brief period after the winter rains, when the lilies decked the fresh grass; so also, some of the scenes depicted in the parables of this chapter indicate the more advanced season, when the fields gave their first promises of harvest.

Very happily for us who are the Lord's people, Jesus did not leave His parable of the sower (verses 3-23) to our own interpretation. Rather, He has explained its meaning Himself; and so plain and clear is our Lord's explanation of it, that even a little child – by His grace – may understand it. Jesus compares Himself to a Sower, and the seed that He sows to the Gospel of His Kingdom. But when He speaks of the devil, under the figure of the birds catching away that which was sown in the heart; it should be remembered that it is the ministry of the Word, and *not* the grace of the Lord Jesus, that is thus rendered unprofitable. Similarly, concerning the sun arising upon the stony-ground hearers, He was speaking of the sun of persecution which dries up those persons who were never rooted in Christ. As for what is said concerning the seed sown among thorns, the characters here alluded to are not those who are inattentive to Divine things; but rather, such as make much profession of faith, but have never felt it in their heart, and prefer this world's riches to the riches of eternity. However, by the good ground into which the seed is sown, our Savior was speaking of a heart that is renewed and made good by sovereign grace; for every man's heart, by nature, is evil. And the fruit that is produced from the seed that is sown upon this good ground is also entirely a result of the same grace, and not of man's own making. It is a living relationship with Christ that produces this fruit of blessedness in even the humblest of souls. It is all of Jesus, and from Jesus; and therefore, to Jesus alone be all the glory!

The Lord's next parable recorded here (verses 24-30) was that of the wheat and the tares; and He Himself explained this parable very fully also, in verses 36-43. Here, however, the Lord comes closer to home than He did in the

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ *The parable of the sower sowing seed in different kinds of soils – verses 1-23*
- ❖ *The parable of the wheat mixed with the tares – verses 24-30, 36-43*
- ❖ *The Savior preaches with six other shorter parables – verses 31-35, 44-52*
- ❖ *The people of His own village of Nazareth reject Him once again – verses 53-58*

parable of the sower and the soils. There, the world at large was spoken of as receiving the seed of the Gospel; and the reception of it was shown – by the greater part – to be on the wayside, on stony ground, or amidst thorns. But this parable of the tares springing up among the wheat has a specific reference to the professing Church of Christ, where the children of the devil are mingling with the children of the Kingdom of heaven. Here on earth, they spring up and grow together. The good and bad are left to grow together until the day of harvest, when they shall be finally and forever parted.



The Lord Jesus also gave several other shorter parables in this chapter. For example, there is the parable of the tiny mustard seed, which grows into a strong and mighty tree. The lesson here is that the beginnings of the Gospel would be small, but its latter end would greatly increase. Although no growth may be discernable at first, yet it will at last come to great strength and usefulness. We are also taught the parable of the leaven, which a housewife mixes into her bread dough. The preaching of the Gospel works like leaven in the hearts of all those who receive it. The leaven works silently and unseen, until the entire loaf of bread is leavened; and so also, the Word of God spreads its influence silently and slowly – but surely! Then there is the parable of the hidden treasure in the field. Many slight the Gospel because they look only upon the surface of the field. But all who take the pains to search the Scriptures shall find Christ and eternal life within their pages (John 5:39).

All the children of men are busy at one thing or another. One person desires to be rich, another wants to be honorable, and another longs for an education. Sadly, however, most are deceived; and so they gladly accept counterfeits instead of genuine pearls. Jesus Christ is the Pearl of great price mentioned in another of these shorter parables; if we only have Him, we have enough to make us happy here and forever. On another note, some commentators interpret this parable differently; they identify Jesus as the merchant-man Who is seeking precious pearls – His redeemed sons and daughters – so that He may place them as jewels in His mediatorial crown.

Still another of these parables teaches us that this world is a vast sea; and men, in their natural state, are like the fishes therein. Preaching the Gospel is like casting a net into this sea, to catch something out of it – all for the glory of Him Who has the sovereignty of this sea. Lastly, our Savior spoke of a skillful, faithful minister of the Gospel as being like a scribe who is well-versed in the Scriptures, and able to teach them. He compares him to a responsible steward, who brings forth fruits from last year's growth as well as this year's gathering, so that he may feed his friends therewith. Our place is at Christ's feet; and we must daily learn old lessons over again, and new ones also.

*Lord Jesus, we beseech You for mercy so that when the Gospel is preached to us, it may fall into good soil and bring forth fruit a hundredfold! Amen.*