

that simple, unpretending, humble, and therefore soon to be despised faith of early Christians, which was weak and small as compared to the greatness of world power and prosperity surrounding it? This was sown in man's field, and the result of *his* nurturing care is to produce a *great tree*, in which "*the birds of the air*" come to seek, and they find a resting place. We see what the Lord Himself says He means by "fowls" or "birds of the air" in *verse 19*, a symbol used in other parts of scripture for evil spirits, or those actuated by them (*Ephesians ii. 2*). If therefore they can find lodgment there that pleases them, what sort of state will Christendom then be in? Purity? or more or less apostasy? This symbol of a great tree is used in a parallel sense of evil, in *Ezekiel xxxi.*, where again we see a great tree, and the *fowls of heaven* making nests in his branches.

So great, so flourishing, so prosperous, was this great tree to the eye of flesh, that even the *trees of Eden*, the true people of God, who outwardly could not compare with this great tree of boughs and branches (but no fruit), even they looking at the apparent beauty of the tree, but away from God, "envied" him. But in *verse 16* his end was to be cast down to Hell.

Again, another parallel symbol to the tree is seen in *Daniel iv. 11-14*. "The leaves [or *outer appearance*] fair;" "the fruit thereof much." This tree had fruit, but it was only fit to feed *flesh* with, there was meat for all; for every taste that flesh could lust after. And again, the fowls of Heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof. How illustrative is this of the present day, a 'Form of Godliness without the power!' Is not the teaching of this passage paraphrased, as it were, by the Apostle Paul in *Colossians ii.*, "which things have indeed a show of wisdom [leaves fair], in will worship [or self-devised worship], and humility, and ill-treatment of the body, not in any honour, to the *satisfying of the flesh*?" The tree in *Daniel* had meat for all; and "all flesh was fed of it". Yea, be it high church or low church, or broad church, or Romish church, Presbyterian, or Wesleyan, etc., etc., it matters not, there is meat to feed every variety of taste or opinion that flesh can lust after, 'the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life'.

Again, in the fourth parable of *Matthew xiii.*, is seen the woman *hiding* leaven in meal till *all* was leavened. The *hiding*, here similar to the *stealthy* sowing in *verse 25*, shows it to be the act of the devil. What God accepts must be open and manifest (see *Exodus xxviii. 35-38*). When Aaron ministered, he must be *heard*, "that he die not". "HOLINESS TO THE LORD," must be always written on his forehead that God might accept his ministry. So in *Revelation vii. 3*, God *seals* His servants in their foreheads, a sign of beauty, where it must be ever seen by all, as a witness that they are His, but in *Revelation xiii. 16*, the devil