

of the faithful servants is to get rid of the evil crop. A traveler in Palestine says, "Men, women and children were in many fields engaged in pulling the weeds." Nay; for fear that the wheat might be pulled out with the tares, so closely intertwined had they become.

V. 30. *Until the harvest*; which for wheat began in April. *Gather ye . . . first the tares*; either before or after the cutting of the crop. *Burn them*; as useless and hurtful. *Wheat into my barn*. Barns in Palestine are now frequently underground grottoes carefully cemented to keep out damp, with the mouth plastered over to make them air-tight. Grain stored in such places will keep sound for years. In our Lord's time, however, the barns were likely buildings of some kind above ground.

The parable of The Tares is explained in vs. 36-43. It deals with the problem of the wicked in society, not in the church. The Messiah was expected to destroy them. The lesson is that they are to be tolerated until the day of God's judgment shall come.

II. The Mustard Seed, 31, 32.

V. 31. *Mustard seed*. This plant grows wild in Palestine, and is also cultivated. On the banks of the Jordan it grows ten feet high, drawn up among other bushes. It sometimes attains a height of twelve feet under cultivation, and may by courtesy be called a tree. The essential part in the application of the lesson parable of the Mustard Seed is not the rapidity of the growth, but the contrast between the insignificant beginning and the large beneficial result. *In his field*; Mark, "in the earth" (Mark 4:31); Luke "into his garden," Luke 13:19. So Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God first among his own people, the Jews.

V. 32. *Least of all seeds*; not absolutely; but the mustard seed was used proverbially of anything excessively small. It was the smallest seed actually known to the ancient gardener. *Birds . . . lodge in the branches*; literally, "pitch tent," for the sake of rest or shelter, or to eat seeds. This is suggestive of souls attracted to the kingdom for rest and shelter. Travelers speak of the bullfinches and rock-pigeons, which, in the summer, may be seen in flocks on the mustard bushes growing on the plain of Gennesaret.

They feed on the seeds found from four to six in a pod.

III. The Leaven, 33.

V. 33. *Like unto leaven*; in its pervasive quality. Leaven was used in those days as yeast is used amongst us. It was a handful of fermented, but unbaked dough, preserved from the former baking. It was either broken down into the water in the kneading trough before the fresh flour was added to it, or it was thoroughly mixed with the dough after it was moistened. The whole was then set aside for a few hours until it was thoroughly leavened. This method was used in early days in our own country, but has fallen out of use, because it was apt to give the bread a sour taste and a disagreeable odor. Elsewhere in the New Testament "leaven" is a symbol of evil (see 1 Cor. 5:6, 7; Gal. 5:9). The Jews regarded the fermentation produced by leaven as a kind of putrefaction. Some give a bad sense to "leaven" here, taking it to refer to the corrupting influences which hurt Christianity. But this is hardly possible in a parable which is paired with that of the Mustard Seed. *And hid*; by the process of kneading for baking. *Three measures*; seahs. A seah was about 1½ pecks. This was a quantity usually taken for a household baking. (See Gen. 18:6; Judg. 6:19; 1 Sam. 1:24). The kingdom is at first a very small thing; but it will gradually change society by the diffusion of truth and goodness.

The parable of The Leaven "implies that the Christian must live in the world, for the leaven cannot do its work without contact. Human life must be touched at all points, in order that its work and play, its religion and relaxation, its politics and its commerce, its science and its arts, may be raised and warmed by its penetrating action of Christian morality and Christian ideals" (Plummer).

Light from the East

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THE MUSTARD PLANT—Our Canadian weeds known as mustard are low herbs. But the black mustard (*brassica nigra*), common in Palestine, attains a much greater size, sometimes reaching a height of eight or even ten feet. It could not be called a tree in our