

V. 27. *The servants*; not the reapers of v. 39, but men employed by the householder and zealous for his interests. *Didst not thou sow good seed?* They are utterly surprised and unable to account for the appearance of so many tares, for the seed was well-winnowed and clean. (Gen. 1: 31.)

V. 28. *An enemy hath done this.* See on v. 25. The source of evil is a personal devil. (Eph. 6: 12.) *Will thou then that we go and gather them up?* Their fidelity exceeded their wisdom.

V. 29. *But he said, Nay.* It was not wise to uproot them at that stage of growth; later it could be done with safety. Now their roots were intertwined. "The parable vividly sets forth the intermingling of good and bad men as inevitable during the development of the kingdom of God on earth. A thousands ties connect men irrespective of religion or moral character. Kindred, material interests, locality, associations of many sorts bind them into groups, and such ties cannot be snapped as long as human society remains what it is."—McLaren.

V. 30. *Let both grow together.* The tares were spared for the sake of the wheat. God tolerates for the sake of the good. Ten righteous men would have saved Sodom. (Gen. 18: 32.) *The time of the harvest*; the end of the world (v. 39), the final judgment. (16: 27.) *To burn them.* Fire is an emblem of judgment. (vs. 41, 42.) But the judgment was not to begin, as many thought, with the Messianic kingdom on earth (Luke 3: 17), but to mark its close. *The wheat.* The true members of the Kingdom. (v. 43.)

II. The Mustard Seed, 31, 32.

Vs. 31, 32. *Another parable.* In this parable Christ sets forth under the figure of a mustard seed the external growth of the kingdom of heaven. For *kingdom of heaven*, see on v. 24. *The least of all seeds.* It is not the smallest seed known to science, but it is an exceeding small seed when compared with the size of the plant. *Greatest among herbs.* Dr. Thomson in "The Land and the Book" says that he has seen this plant on the rich plain of Akkar as tall as the horse and his rider. *Becometh a tree.* Not as to its nature, but in size. *The birds.... lodge in the branches*; seeking shelter in the branches and food in the seed. The parable implies great results from small beginnings (Zech. 4: 10), and is therefore of high encouragement to all Christian workers.

III. The Leaven, 33.

V. 33. *Another parable.* This parable sets forth the internal growth of the kingdom. *Like unto leaven.* Leaven is any substance which produces fermentation, as fermented dough (commonly used), yeast, etc. This is the only place in Scripture where it is not used to symbolize the principle of evil. *Which a woman.... hid*; by kneading it into the dough. *Three measures*; three *seahs*. Perhaps the amount needed for an ordinary baking. (Gen. 18: 6.) A *seah* contained about a peck and a half. The leaven represents the subtle influence of the Spirit in the internal growth of Christianity, and also the silent yet prevailing influence of Christians upon the world.

APPLICATION

The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field, v. 24. The field in which we sow may be a very small one and very unpromising, but if we sow the good seed in it we shall not lose the harvest. John Bunyan's field was Bedford jail, but who can measure the harvest that has sprung from the seed which he sowed while writing the Pilgrim's Progress? Mr. Moody's first field was a group of eighteen ragged urchins whom he gathered off the

street into a Sabbath School. He was faithful in that small field and God permitted him to sow the good seed all over the United States and Great Britain and Canada. In the case of Jesus Himself, we owe some of His most precious words to casual interviews with single individuals like Nicodemus and the woman of Samaria.

But while men slept, his enemy came, v. 25. Satan is ever on the watch to sow the seed of evil thoughts and desires in our hearts.