

Other Parables.

DECEMBER 18. A.D. 28. MATT. XIII. 31-33, 44-52.

Golden Text, Matt. 13: 49.

THERE are no less than five distinct parables in this lesson. Two of these, the "grain of mustard seed," and the "leaven," were told to the multitude as Jesus sat in the boat, v. 34, the other three, along with the explanation of the "tares," were told to the disciples only, when having sent the crowds away, Jesus went into a house with the twelve, v. 36. V. 31. *The Kingdom of Heaven*—the church of Christ and his rule in the individual heart. The beginnings are small, as a grain of mustard seed, the least of all seeds, v. 32. Who could have thought then, that the religion preached by Jesus and a few Galilean fishermen, would, ere long, overthrow paganism, and spread over all the world, as we now see it has? Zech. 4:10. V. 32. *becometh a tree*—the Lord's planting becomes a tree of righteousness, Is. 61:3. V. 33. *leaven*—the action of the Gospel, in the world, or in the heart of man, like that of leaven or yeast in the dough, is secret but steady and continuous. Sinners are typified here by the "meal," and preachers of the Gospel by the woman. V. 44. *treasure hid*—the riches of the Gospel are hidden from unbelievers, 2 Cor. 4:3. *he hideth*—in his heart, Ps. 119:11, as one hideth his most precious possessions. *Salleth all*—gives up all for Christ, Luke 14:33, Phil. 3:8. V. 45. *A merchantman seeking*—sometimes Christ is found of them who sought Him not, Is. 65:1, Acts 9:3, but more usually it is those who seek that find, Luke 11:9. Seeking is the safe way to find. *Goodly pearls*—things that men value highly as means of happiness, honours, wealth, science, &c. V. 46. *One pearl of great price*—Christ, the only source of eternal happiness. *Sold all*—gave up all for Christ. *Bought it*—without money and without price, Is. 55:1. V. 47. *Kingdom of Heaven*—the preaching of the Gospel is like dragging a net through the sea of the world. Preachers of the Gospel are called, Fishers of men, Matt. 4:19. *Gathers of every kind*—good men and hypocrites from the visible church. Ministers cannot always judge of the sincerity of those who profess love for Christ, v. 26. V. 49. *At the end of the world*—at the last judgment, Matt. 25:32. V. 50. *Furnace of fire*—the sufferings of hell, Matt. 25:41. V. 52. *Every Scribe*—every teacher well acquainted with Gospel truth. *A householder*—one who has provided beforehand for possible emergencies, such as want, sickness or accidents, a good house-keeper. *His treasure*—His stores. *Things new and old*—the mind of the teacher should be well stored with Bible truths, to be used as occasion demands. A faithful study of the Gospel is a blessing to others as well as to ourselves.

Herod and John the Baptist.

JANUARY 1. A.D. 28. MATT. XIV. 1-12.

Golden Text, Matt. 14:12.

WHEN Herod the Great, the slayer of the children of Bethlehem died, he left his kingdom to his three sons, of whom Herod Antipas, who killed John, was one. He reigned over Perea and Galilee. He was the bad son of a wicked father, cruel, dissolute and treacherous. V. 1. *Tetrarch*—literally the ruler of a fourth of the country, but that title was then given to those who ruled over a third, or even a half of it. *The fame of Christ*—the report of His wonderful miracles. V. 2. *John the Baptist*—whom he had put to death, Mark 6:14, 15. *Mighty works*—John worked no miracles, John 10:41, but if he had risen from the dead, Herod supposed him to possess greater power. V. 3. *Laid hold on John*—arrested and imprisoned him, Mark 6:17-20, Luke 3:19-20. *Herodias*—a granddaughter of Herod the Great, wife of Herod Philip, brother of Herod Antipas who had put away his own wife and persuaded Herodias to leave her husband to live with him. V. 4. *Not lawful*—Mark the courage of John, comp. with Nathan, 2 Sam. 12:7, and Elijah, 1 Kings 18:18, 21:20. Herod had committed a double breach of God's law, Exod. 20:14, Levit. 18:16, commands binding on kings as much as on common people. V. 5. *Feared the multitude*—but not God, as he wished to add murder to his other sins. V. 6. *The daughter of Herodias*—by Philip. Josephus says her name was Salome. *Danced before them*—eastern customs forbade this, it showed great want of modesty. She was probably as wicked as her mother. V. 7. *With an oath*—rash and foolish promise, such as a half-drunk man would make. V. 8. *Instructed*—comp. Mark 6:24. *A charger*—a large dish. V. 9. *The King was sorry*—he feared John, knowing him to be a just man and holy, Mark 6:20. He often had followed his advice. Holiness compels the respect even of wicked men. John's death might cause a rising of the people, who revered him as a prophet, v. 5. His conscience protested against this murder. *For the oath's sake*—the law of God forbidding murder, is above any foolish oath a man might take. No vow is binding, which is a transgression of God's Law. *Them which sat at meat*—his guests. He feared they might laugh at him. Many people do evil, for fear of being ridiculed by wicked companions. V. 10. *He beheaded John*—the prison must have been near the palace. V. 11. *Brought it to her mother*—that she might gloat over her revenge. V. 12. *Came and told Jesus*—to warn him of possible danger, see Luke 13:32, and to be comforted by Him. Christians should cast all their cares upon Jesus, 1 Pet. 5:7. If a pastor is removed, Christians should not forsake their church, nor grow careless of religion.