

A. D. 28.]

LESSON IV. THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

[April 27.]

GOLDEN TEXT. Take heed therefore how ye hear. Luke 8, 18.

Authorized Version.

Luke 8. 4-15. [Commit to memory verses 12-15.]

4 And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable:

5 A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way-side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

6 And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.

8 And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit a hundred-fold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

9 And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be?

10 And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

12 Those by the way-side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

13 They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

14 And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

15 But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

Revised Version.

4 And when a great multitude came together, and they of every city resorted unto him, he spake by a 5 parable: The sower went forth to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way-side; and it was trodden under foot, and the birds of the heaven devoured it. And other fell on the rock; and as soon as it grew, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And other fell amidst the thorns; and the 8 thorns grew with it, and choked it. And other fell into the good ground, and grew, and brought forth fruit a hundred-fold. As he said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

9 And his disciples asked him what this parable 10 might be. And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to the rest in parables; that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand. Now the parable is this: 12 The seed is the word of God. And those by the way-side are they that have heard; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word from their heart, 13 that they may not believe and be saved. And those on the rock are they which, when they have heard, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation 14 fall away. And that which fell among the thorns, these are they that have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. And that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience.

General Statement.

The story of the life of Jesus runs continually on from lesson to lesson. He continued his great preaching tour, interrupted now and then by the vast multitude which forced him to go into the wilderness for isolation. Wherever he found people gathered together he relieved their distresses, and wherever he had opportunity he proclaimed his blessed truth. There is a wide difference between the conditions of life in Palestine in A. D. 28 and the conditions of life in this country in 1890. We can form little idea of the immense throngs which followed Jesus from town to town, leaving their pleasure and their business, and willing to go without food or sleep—without covering if necessary—readily lured from their homes by this latest of sensations—a wandering Messiah. In the East to-day such crowds would follow any wonder-worker, just as groups of children are sometimes attracted far from their homes by wandering brass bands.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

Verse 4. He spake by a parable. "The more the number of his hearers increases," says Godet, "the more clearly Jesus sees that the time has come to set some sifting process to work among them." He desires to draw the more spiritual into closer attachment, and to keep the more carnal at a distance, else his great mission in this world will be greatly entrained. **A parable.** Any wise saying that contains a truth, as a kernel is in a nut, or a treasure in a box. It may be a story, or it may be a mere proverb or sentence of truth, the meaning of which does not lie on the surface, but may be reached by research and study.

5. A sower. This parable was spoken by Jesus while sitting in a boat; his hearers were on the shore. On each side of him stretched out the fields of Galilee. It was spring-time. At no great distance, in full view of both preacher and audience, very likely a husbandman toiled, scattering his seed. The scenery of the parable was all about them—the sower, the cultivated hill-side farm, with all sorts of soil in it, the overcropping

rock, the padded foot-path, the thorny corners, and the pecking birds. (1) "In our own country, and on every Lord's day, how many sowers go forth to sow." **Lange.** **The way-side.** The hard beaten paths into which no seed can penetrate. Paths trodden across fields may be said to be almost the only sort of roads in Palestine. **Fowls of the air.** Little birds. **Devoured.** The seed is threatened by a double danger—the feet of travelers and the beaks of birds. (2) "The feeding heart is like a hard-trodden path."—*Fugate*.

6, 7, 8. Upon a rock. Stony ground. **Thorns.** Fields in the Levant are often divided by hedges of thorns, but it is not certain these were referred to. Porret speaks of forests of thistles so gigantic and so dense that no horse can break through them. Farrar says it is hard to overestimate their intense tangled growth. But the phrase here seems not to refer to full-grown thorns, for the thorns sprang up with the seed. **A hundred-fold.** This would be an enormous harvest, but so large a crop has been known in the East. **He cried.** He ex-