**WESTMINSTER BIBLE SCHOOL; THE PARABLES AND METAPHORS OF OUR LORD - THE TEACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**9. THE DARNEL**

*"He set another parable before them, saying, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while people slept, his enemy came and sowed darnel weeds also amongst the wheat, and went away. But when the blade sprang up and produced fruit, then the darnel weeds appeared also. The servants of the householder came and said to him, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where did these darnel weeds come from?' "He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and gather them up?' "But he said, 'No, lest perhaps while you gather up the darnel weeds, you root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the harvest time I will tell the reapers, "First, gather up the darnel weeds, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." ' "*

*Matthew 13:24-30*

*"Then Jesus sent the multitudes away, and went into the house. His disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the darnel weeds of the field." He answered them, "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the children of the Kingdom; and the darnel weeds are the children of the evil one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. As therefore the darnel weeds are gathered up and burnt with fire; so will it be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will gather out of his Kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and those who do iniquity, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."*

*Matthew 13:36-43*

THIS parable is necessarily closely connected with that of the Sower. That was uttered in public, as well as this one, and the two following; after which our Lord went into the house. He had given His explanation of the parable of the Sower to the listening crowds. However, when they were alone in the house, the disciples came to Him, and asked Him to explain the parable of the darnel. This second of the parables is the second and last one which the Lord Himself explained.

We are at once arrested by the form in which the disciples preferred that request. They asked Him to explain to them "the parable of the tares of the field." That shows that as they listened, they had been impressed supremely by that element of the story that Jesus had told them. They did not ask Him to explain the parable of the two sowings, though that must have surprised them. Evidently the Lord intended to lay stress upon the fact of the darnel, or tares. Darnel was the word used, and the Lord had spoken of darnel being sown.

Again there are three things to do; first, to take the picture as our Lord gave it to them simply as a picture in its Eastern setting and surroundings; secondly, to pay attention to our Lord's explanation; finally gathering up the instruction for ourselves.

The picture is of a field in which there were two sowings. It is the picture also of the method of the owner of the field in face of the fact of the two sowings. This picture is Eastern. Notice that the field was the property of the man sowing good seed, and not of the enemy who sowed darnel. Whatever was intended by the field, we are looking at an Eastern picture of a field which was the property of one man. It was his field.

Then there were the two sowings. The first was perfectly simple and natural, in the true order of things. The owner of the field sowed his field with harvest in view, that what he sowed should bring forth harvest was natural and proper. It was a picture of something going on year after year; a man owned a field, and in the field that was his, he cast seed, intending thereby to produce a definite kind of harvest. Then came the part of the story that Jesus told. An enemy came, an enemy of the man and of the purpose of the owner of the field, and of his intention for the harvest upon which his mind was set when he sowed the seed. An enemy sowed with the distinct intention of spoiling the harvest. There is no need to argue that this was unnatural; it was improper, it was dastardly.

What was it he sowed? Darnel, that is, something which in its first springing from the ground even experts cannot detect from wheat. Darnel is sown, and the wheat is sown, and presently when the showers come, and they begin to sprout, the difference between them could not be detected. Darnel is like wheat, but it is actually entirely different from wheat. It is of a different nature. Looking like wheat when it first springs, as it develops and grows the difference becomes increasingly manifest, until when it has come to full growth, no one could make any mistake, or fail to distinguish between the wheat and the darnel. An enemy sowed the field already sown with wheat, with something that imitated it, Evidently the enemy then was a trespasser, who had no right on that field at all. He was full of subtlety, and came "while men slept." He was an enemy, animated by malice.

Then the servants of the owner came to him, and told him what had been going on. Evidently when the manifestation was beginning to be clear as to the difference, they had found out that what they thought was wheat only was wheat and darnel. They came perturbed to the master to tell him someone had sown darnel in his wheat field. "An enemy has done this," he replied. What shall we do then, master? Shall we go through this wheat field and gather out all the tares, this darnel? No, leave them alone until the harvest. Then no one will make any mistake as to the difference between them. Do not try to uproot the tares, because you may not be sure, and may uproot wheat, when you think you are gathering tares. At the consummation of the age, at the harvest time the whole field will be dealt with. Then there will be discrimination according to manifestation. That is the story.

Presently, after Jesus had uttered two other brief but pregnant parables, they went into the house, and the disciples said to Him, "Explain unto us the parable of the tares of the field. And He answered, and said, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; and the field is the world."

Take that last phrase, "The field is the world." The picture drawn necessitated the recognition of the fact that the field was the property of the one who sowed good seed. Thus inferentially our Lord was claiming definitely that the whole world belonged to Him. That is a philosophy of all life and service that we should remember. Many years ago now I was in the Isle of Man, and was listening to a sermon by a local preacher in a Wesleyan Chapel. He said something so full of simplicity that it fastened itself upon my memory. I have never lost the power of it. He said, "The devil is a squatter." That arrested attention. He did not leave his congregation in the dark. He knew something of life in America, and he went on and said, "A squatter is a man who settles on land he has no right to, and works it for his own advantage." Can the theologians give a better definition of the devil than that? That lies behind this word of Jesus, "The field is the world." It is the property, not of the one who is sowing evil seeds in it, but the property of the One Who according to this aspect of the Kingdom, is sowing good seed in the whole world. In Mark's account of the missionary commission, Jesus said, "Go ye into all the cosmos, and preach the Gospel to every creature." That is the same word, cosmos, the whole world, the world in itself, in its order of life, its peopling, "all the world." When Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, he said, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," waiting "for the revealing of the sons of God." When he wrote that stupendous thing he was surely thinking of this parable: the world, the field, groaning, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. Undoubtedly he was referring to the second Advent, and that is the ultimate fulfilment. But it is also true to-day. What this world everywhere in its sighing and sobbing and sorrow is needing is the manifestation of the sons of God.

The inferential claim of our Lord must be recognized. He claims proprietorship. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." "The field is the world." Said Jesus, Two sowings are going on. He had introduced this parable by saying, "The Kingdom of heaven has become like …" We read "is likened unto," but literally it is, It has become like. He was indicating a change that had resulted in world affairs as the result of His coming. Who is He? He is the Sower, and because that Sower is sowing, the Kingdom has become like this. The Sower is sowing His good seed in His own field. He is "the Son of man."

What seed is He sowing in the midst of the world and all its affairs? "The sons of the Kingdom." The Kingdom is the subject from beginning to end, the Kingdom of God, the Kingship of God. The way to its realization in the midst of a derelict world, and of a blasted and broken race, is that He as the Sower is flinging out into the world, in its order and conditions, in its lack of order and chaos, seed. What is the seed? The seed is the sons of the Kingdom, in His own field.

But He said, Another sowing is going on at the same time. Who is the sower? Here our Lord used the word for Satan, *diabolos*, the traducer, the liar. He named him as the one who is against everything that is true, and high and noble. Said Jesus, He is busy in My field, sowing his seed. What seed? "Sons of the evil," men and women who are devoted, not to God, but to evil; evil men and women flung into the world order. But there is a peculiar quality about his sowing. He is sowing his seed among the wheat, and the two prepositions are close together, emphasising one another, *ana meson*, showing that the idea is of a sowing so near to something else, so much like it, as to create widespread deception. That is what the enemy is doing.

What shall we do? If we are the sons and servants of the King and the Kingdom, shall we go out, and root up these evil seeds? Let them alone, said Jesus. Let both alone; let the wheat alone; let the darnel alone. Till when? Till the harvest, till the consummation, till that hour which must inevitably come when the true deep meaning of every human life comes into clear manifestation. He was looking on to a consummation, and He said, Harvest will be the consummation of the age, when the difference will be patent, and when, knowing that hour of fulness has come, He will deal with the world situation by supernatural agency. Angels will be introduced into national affairs, and there will be two harvests. The angels will gather out of His Kingdom everything that is harmful, everything that is wrong, and cast it out to the destruction of fire. They will gather out all those who have been truly the sons of the Kingdom, and all those that have resulted from their sowing in the world, and the righteous shall shine forth in the glory of the Father.

That consummation is not yet. It is still postponed. There are moments when in our loyalty to our Lord, and in our impatience we cry out, Lord, how long? Can we not begin to deal with these evil things, and uproot them? His voice is still saying, Let them alone. Let them both grow to the harvest.

It is an old question, often talked about and debated in meetings and in conversations, Is the world getting better, or is it getting worse? There is only one answer, if this parable is true. The world is getting better every day, and worse every day. There are two sowings, two growths, two increasing manifestations. Evil to-day is more deadly, more damnable, more dastardly than it has ever been in the history of the world. Good to-day is more pronounced, more definite. There more signs everywhere of it than there have ever been. Both are growing, growing, growing, and presently the harvest will come. We do not know when.

Mark what this parable teaches quite clearly. The method of the foe in this age is principally that of imitation, Those who are definitely hostile, and blatantly declare so, are not in view in this parable. I am not saying the devil has nothing to do with them, but that is not his method. It is not his most subtle method. It is not the method most productive of harm in the world. It is imitation. Go back to Acts. Ananias and Sapphira were both members of the outward and visible Church. Simon Magus was also active in the work of the Church. See the writings, and the same thing is evident. What the apostle combated was not the harm of definite opposition, or the massed opposition of godlessness in the pagan world, but that principle, so much like Christianity, darnel, which at the beginning looked like wheat. That has gone on all down the ages. The elements of imitation have been found, so that the Church came to rejoice in a false power, which was entirely antagonistic to her very genius and life, and even to indulge in a false form of supposed purity, which consisted in abstention from trivial things, while the weightier matters were neglected in the depth of her life.

To-day we are seeing it in the realm of doctrine, accommodation to supposed modern thought, in which some men are using the phrasing of Christianity, devitalized, and devoid of the fundamental things - imitation. That is the supreme peril to-day; it is doctrinal.

What are we to do about it? Nothing. Let it alone, resting assured that the hour of actual manifestation is coming. If we begin trying to root up the darnel we are in danger of rooting up wheat, and the process of development can do no harm to the good, and the process of development means always moving towards final judgment for the evil.

Here for the first time our Lord pointed to the consummation of the age. "The Kingdom of heaven has become like …" The field in which the Son of man is sowing the seed will come to harvest, the full realisation of the Kingdom of God. The enemy is sowing darnel, imitation; the purpose of which is the hindering of the arrival of the Kingdom of God. But there is a consummation, an hour of harvest, and then the dawning of a new age, when all things that offend shall be cast out, and then the shining of the righteous in the Kingdom of the Son.

No parable must ever be carried beyond the intention of our Lord. In this consideration we may well remind ourselves that there are things implicit here, but not explicit. There are other things to be said about the age than was said in this parable. A man who is a son of evil, and is planted in this field of the world, darnel, can do what no darnel can do in the realm of Nature. He can have his nature changed and become a son of the Kingdom. That is where the Gospel comes in. The Gospel is implicit here, and it is well to remember it. A man who but yesterday, planted by Satan in the midst of commerce, of society, or recreation, exerting an evil influence, and hindering the Kingdom of God; blessed be God, can be changed, and become a son of the Kingdom, and begin to exert the influence with others, towards the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Our business then is to grow, to develop, and so to fulfil the purpose of our Lord in our own lives, and thus to hasten the coming of His Kingdom; and never to attempt to pull up darnel.