

## **THE THORNS**

### **MATTHEW 13:7, 22**

Introduction:

Our Lord was a masterful Teacher. He used the common things of life to teach the deepest of truths. The parable was one of His favorite methods of teaching. Matthew has brought together seven of His parables in this chapter—they are called “the kingdom parables.”

In these parables Jesus spoke of sowers, soils, rocks, thorns, tares, leaven, treasures, pearls, fish and a household. Everyone knew something about these things.

My interest is captured by His word about “thorns.” In the parable of the soils, this is the reference that challenges me most. The reference to seed falling on the path is rather obvious. Many people hear the Gospel, but it never penetrates their understanding. They seem to be immune to the Good News. Even the reference to the shallow soil is rather obvious. All of us have know people who seemed to have a genuine beginning to a life of faith only to fall be the wayside when they encountered a change of circumstances. While they may never renounce their faith, and then they may, it is never is a vital thing in their lives.

But what about these thorny people? Could it be that we have more of them in the church than we realize? Listen to what Jesus said about them in His interpretation--"Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful." (Matthew 13:22, NKJV)

This person seems to have made a good beginning in the Christian life.

When they heard the Gospel, they gave indications that they were receiving the Gospel. But in the end the Gospel never really took root in their lives, it never bore confirming fruit in their lives.

All of this prompts me to take us a little deeper in our search for the significance of the thorns.

#### I. THE THORNS ARE A SIGN OF OUR FALLEN CONDITION.

It is sometimes helpful to find when a word first appeared in the Bible.

Thorns were introduced as a part of the curse that God pronounced upon the ground because of Adam's sin. The curse brought about a radical change in the circumstances in which Adam and Eve had to sustain their lives. They were suddenly confronted with forces in nature that resisted their attempts to have dominion. So we read--

"Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall

not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field." (Genesis 3:17-18, NKJV)

So thorns are associated with the fallen condition of the creation. Since the soil represents the human heart in the parable, it is a reminder that there are forces at work in human nature that impede our attempts to respond to the Gospel in a saving way. The person in the parable encountered this.

This probably indicates that no genuine repentance was experienced. You will noticed that the Lord explained that the person received the seed among the thorns—there was no earnest attempt to get the thorns out of the heart so the Gospel would have the place that it deserved in the life.

## II. THE THORNS TAKE UP THE PLACE THAT BELONGS TO THE SEED.

No one has ever known the human heart like our Lord. He knows exactly what is in man, and where his problems are. This word about the thorns is an indication of His thorough knowledge.

Jesus did not leave us in doubt about the identity of the thorns. They are the worries of this life, and the deceitfulness of riches. Actually the other two Gospels that include this parable expand this to include an expanded

statement. Mark includes “and the desire for other things”, while Luke adds “and pleasures of life.”

This agrees with what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount--“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matthew 6:24, NKJV)

1. The worries of this world will stifle the Word taking root in your life.

Jesus does not lay the blame on the world, but our worries about the world.

2. The deceitfulness of riches will stifle the Word from taking root in your heart.

Jesus does not blame riches, but the deceitfulness of riches. They deceive us when they cause us to trust in riches rather in the Father above.

<sup>23</sup> Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>24</sup> Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” <sup>25</sup> When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astounded and said, “Then who can be saved?” <sup>26</sup> But Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.”

3. The desire for things will stifle the Word from taking root in your heart.

Things are not the problem, but our desire for things.

4. The pleasures of this life will stifle the Word from taking root in your heart.

Pleasures are not the problem, but rather our love of pleasures more than we love God.

### III. THE THORNS PRODUCE NOTHING OF LASTING VALUE.

1. Thorns are a source of pain.

"You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?" (Matthew 7:16, NKJV)

2. Thorns are destined for the flame.

"But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned." (Hebrews 6:8, NIV)