

CHAPTER FOUR

*Concerning the parable of the sower.
Concerning the rebuking of the waters.*

1-2. And He began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto Him a great multitude, so that He entered into a boat, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. And He taught them many things by parables. Although He seemed to have dismissed His mother, He is again obedient to her. For it is for her sake that He left the house and went out along the sea. He sat in the boat so that, facing everyone, He could speak and all could hear, and no one would be behind His back.¹

2-12. And said unto them in His teaching, Hearken: Behold, there went forth a sower to sow. And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell along the way, and the winged creatures of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth, but when the sun was up, it was scorched, and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, one thirty, another sixty, and another an hundred. And He said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And when He was alone, they that were about Him with the twelve asked of Him the parable. And He said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are outside, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.² He first tells this parable of the sower, to

¹ A Greek scholion adds: "And from the sea He fishes for those on land."

² See Isaiah 6:9-10. "And He said. Go, and say to this people. Ye shall hear indeed, but ye shall not understand; and ye shall see indeed, but ye shall not perceive. For the heart of this people has grown fat, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I

make His listeners more attentive. Since He is about to say that the seed is the word, which is destroyed when it falls among those who are inattentive, He begins by speaking of these things, so that His listeners might make every effort not to be like that earth which destroyed the seed. Who, then, is the sower? It is Christ Himself, Who in His compassion and condescension towards man "went forth" from the bosom of the Father, without thereby leaving it. He went forth, not to burn up the accursed earth and evil hearts, nor to cut off the thorns, but to sow the seed. What seed? Surely not that of Moses or of the prophets? No, but Christ's own; that is, He went forth to preach His Gospel. Thus, Christ sowed the seed; but some seed fell on a soul which had been trodden on by many. And the winged creatures of the air, that is, the demons who live in the air, ate up the seed. For the path, trodden by many, signifies those who strive to please others. For when a person does everything with the objective of pleasing first this one and then that one, then he is trodden upon by many. Mark this: He did not say, "The sower threw the seed along the way," but that the seed "fell". For when the sower casts the seed, he does so as onto good ground; but when the ground proves to be evil, it destroys the seed, that is, the word. Others say that "fell along the way" means that the seed fell onto an unbelieving heart. For the way is Christ, while the unbelievers are along the wayside, outside of the way which is Christ.³ Other seed falls upon stony souls, meaning, those who easily accept the seed, and then reject it. Those who are stony resemble, to a small degree, the rock which is Christ, inasmuch as they accepted the Word. But inasmuch as they accept it only for a time and then reject it, they are dissimilar. Other seed falls upon a soul surrounded by many cares, for cares are thorns. But the fourth part of the seed falls upon good ground. See how rare is good ground, and how few are saved, for only a fourth part of the seed was preserved. To the disciples who asked Him when they were alone, the Lord said, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries." But surely it is not by fate or by chance that it is given to some by their nature to know, and not to others? Far from it!

should heal them."

³ *para ten odon* is translated in the KJV as "by the way side", and here, as "along the way". The preposition *para* in this context can mean either 'on the road' or 'beside the road'. A similar ambiguity is also present in the English preposition 'along': 'They travelled along the river' could refer either to a trip by boat on the water or a hike by foot beside the river.