

PARABLES OF JESUS

INTRODUCTION

A. Setting

1. Farming techniques
 - a. Wheat was a basic food in Palestine so the procedure of raising wheat would have been familiar to the hearers.
 - b. The soil was hardly plowed so the seed was broadcast by the sower on the surface of the soil.
 - c. The seed was then scratched into the soil with a wooden plow.
2. Growing opposition to Jesus' message
 - a. Religious leaders accused Jesus of using satanic power not divine power.
 - b. Jesus began to teach His disciples through the use of parables.
 - c. Those who were receptive would understand but those who had made up their minds against Jesus would not understand.

B. Main idea: Jesus compares four types of soil to four responses to the message of the kingdom of God.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER - MATTHEW 13:1-23

A. The Parable of the Soils Presented 1-9

1. The setting (1-3), *That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. 2 And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. 3 And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow.*
 - a. *That same day*, in response to the rejection of Jesus as King.
 - b. Jesus was speaking to the people when His mother and brothers stood outside, asking to speak with Him.
 - 1) Matthew 12:46-50, *While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. 48 But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" 49 And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."*
 - 2) John 7:5, *For not even his brothers believed in him.*
 - c. Jesus left the house and sat beside the Sea of Galilee. Crowds gathered around Jesus so He got in a boat on the shore.
 - d. Jesus starting telling them things by means of parables and He said *A sower went out to sow.*
 - e. This is the first in a series of four parables: The Soils (3-9), The Weeds (24-30), The Mustard Seed (31-32), and the Leaven (33).
2. The soils (4-8)
 - a. Soil along the path (4), *And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them.*
 - b. Soil on rocky ground (5-6), *Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, 6 but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away.*
 - c. Soil among the thorns (7), *Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.*
 - d. Good soil (8), *Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*
3. Warning concerning this parable (9), *He who has ears, let him hear.*
 - a. The sower sows the seed to all.
 - b. The soils respond differently to the seed.
 - c. The difference is not in the sower, nor in the seed but in the soil.
 - d. Jesus interpreted this parable to His disciples in verses 18-23.

B. The Purpose of Parables (10-17)

1. The disciples asked Jesus why He spoke in parables (10), *Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?"*

2. Reasons for using parables (11-13)

a. So disciples can understand kingdom truth (11a), ***And he answered them, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven,***

- 1) Jesus communicated through parables in order to continue revealing truth to the disciples, Matthew 12:11-12a, *And he answered them, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance,*
- 2) *secrets, Colossians 1:26, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.*
- 3) *kingdom of heaven*
 - a) Matthew was the only Gospel writer who used the term.
 - b) The distinction between *kingdom of heaven* and *kingdom of God* seems to be that the former includes saved and professing Christians whereas the latter only refers to the saved.

b. So unbelievers will not understand kingdom truth (11b-13), ***but to them it has not been given. 12 For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.***

- 1) Jesus communicated through parables in order to hide the truth from unbelievers. Those who reject the person of Christ will not be granted insight into the work of Christ and what they already know will be taken away.
- 2) Louis Barbieri, *By using parables in public, Jesus could preach to as many individuals as before, but He could then draw the disciples aside and explain to them fully the meaning of His words.*

c. So the Old Testament would be fulfilled (14-15), ***Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. 15 For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.***

- 1) Jesus quoted Isaiah 6:9-10 to show that hardened hearts in the Old Testament would continue.
- 2) This condition will continue until their hearts are softened at the Second Coming of Christ, Romans 11:25-27, *Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”; 27 “and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”*

3. Result of using parables is blessings for those who understand (16-17), ***But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. 17 For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.***

- 1) The disciples saw not only what unbelieving contemporaries could not see but also what many prophets and righteous people from the past longed to see but could not.
- 2) Thomas Constable, *Jesus’ claim to be able to reveal more than the Old Testament prophets knew was a claim to being more than a prophet. Only God could do what He claimed to be doing.*
- 3) Jesus would begin teaching that a new age, the Church Age, would appear between the rejection of the kingdom and the establishment of the kingdom on earth at His return.

C. The Parable of the Soils Explained (18-23)

1. Jesus began to interpret the parable (18), ***Hear then the parable of the sower:***

- a. Jesus compared the four results of sowing to four responses to the kingdom message.
- b. Responses vary to the same message from the same messenger.
- c. The response does not depend on the seed but on the soil (the hearer).

2. The soils

- a. Seed sown on the path (19), *When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.*
 - 1) When a person hears the message but does not understand it, the devil takes away the Word that was sown.
 - 2) The birds that ate the soil along the path represent Satan, who is antagonistic to the Word of God and seeks to prevent the seed from coming to harvest (regeneration).
- b. Seed sown on rocky ground (20-21), *As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.*
 - 1) The person has initial interest but there is little soil to grow roots because of distractions.
 - 2) When troubles arise because of the word, the person falls away.
 - 3) These people begin well but fail to follow the Lord faithfully.
 - 4) Salvation is not the point in view here but responsiveness to the message of the kingdom.
- c. Seed sown among thorns (22), *As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.*
 - 1) There was initial interest but there was too much competition from the things of the world.
 - 2) Robert Wilkin, *The present life rather than the life to come, and present treasure rather than future treasure, capture his affections. They are deceitful in that they can drain spiritual vitality before the person realizes what is happening to him or her.*
- d. Seed sown on good soil (23), *As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”*
 - 1) Seed sown on good soil had an abiding result of 100, 60 or 30 times what had been sown.
 - 2) The good soil represented one who not only hears the Word but responds by faith.
 - 3) Tom Constable, *The fruit in view probably represents increasing understanding of and proper response to divine revelation in view of the context.*
 - 4) R. T. France, *Disciples are not all the same, and so equally genuine disciples may produce different levels of crop, depending on their different gifts and circumstances.*

CONCLUSION

- A. Stanley Toussaint, *The principle taught by the parable is this: reception of the word of the kingdom in one's heart produces more understanding and revelation of the kingdom.*
- B. Louis Barbieri, *The difference in these results was not in the seed but in the soil on which the seed fell. As the Gospel of the kingdom was presented, the good news was the same. The difference was in the individuals who heard that Word...In this parable Jesus demonstrated why the Pharisees and religious leaders rejected His message. They were not "prepared soil" for the Word.*
- C. J. Dwight Pentecost, *The good soil represented one who not only hears the Word but understands it. This process, as Jesus taught elsewhere, is through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who causes a person to understand and to appropriate and consequently live by the Word that has been received, John 16:13-14, When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.*