

Lesson 2. The Parables of Matthew 13: Parable of Sowing Soil, Matt 13:3–22: Definitions of Kingdom of God & Kingdom of Heaven; the Lord's Interpretation of the Parable of the Sower, Matt 13:18–22

Matthew 13:3 - And Jesus spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow;

v. 4 - and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up.

v. 5 - "And others fell upon the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil.

v. 6 - "But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

v. 7 - "And others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out.

v. 8 - "And others fell on good soil, and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.

v. 9 - "He who has ears, let him hear."

1. The emphasis in the parable is not on the Sower. Christ is the teacher of the information but what the teacher has to say can be cancelled by negative volition.
2. Neither is the emphasis on that which is communicated, i.e., the seed. According to verse nine, all have ears but not all hear.
3. The emphasis is on the soil, which is symbolic of the soul of the hearer and his volitional response to the message of the Sower.
4. The Sower sows the same seed into various soils. Based on each soil's receptiveness to the seed there are four things that result:
 - 1) No germination. (v. 4)
 - 2) Germination but a small root system causes the plant to wither and not grow. (vv. 5–6)
 - 3) Germination but the influence of other plants causes it to be choked off and not grow. (v. 7)
 - 4) Germination, growth, and production of fruit in various proportions. (v. 8)



5. The responses to truth noted here are applicable to any teaching situation. The disciples now want to know why the Lord chooses to use the parable as a teaching technique.

Matthew 13:10 - And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"

v. 11 - And He answered and said to them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted."

6. In every dispensation it is only the believer who is granted the privilege to understand spiritual things. In this context, the Lord's disciples were among the elect. Those who stood on the shore primarily were not and thus did not understand the Lord's teachings.
7. The term "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" requires some brief explanation and the best synopsis comes from:

The phrase, kingdom of heaven, is peculiar to Matthew and signifies the Messianic earth rule of Jesus Christ, the Son of David. It is called the kingdom of the heavens because it is the rule of the heavens over the earth.

The kingdom of heaven has three aspects in Matthew: (a) "at hand" from John the Baptist, Matthew 3, to the rejection of the King, Matthew 12; (b) in seven "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," to be fulfilled during the present age, Matthew 13, to which are added the parables of the kingdom of heaven which were spoken after those of Matthew 13; (c) the prophetic aspect—the kingdom to be set up after the return of the King in glory, Matthew 24-25.¹

8. This phrase, "kingdom of heaven" must not be confused with the phrase "kingdom of God," which Scofield defines in his footnote at Matthew 6:33:

The kingdom of God is to be distinguished from the kingdom of heaven in five respects: (1) The kingdom of God is universal, including all moral intelligences willingly subject to the will of God, whether angels, the Church, or saints of past and future dispensations; while the kingdom of heaven is Messianic, mediatorial, and Davidic, and has for its object the establishment of the kingdom of God in the earth.

¹ C. I. Scofield, (ed.), *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), Matthew 3:2fn.



(2) The kingdom of God is entered only by the new birth; the kingdom of heaven, during this age, is the sphere of a profession which may be real or false. (3) Since the kingdom of heaven is the earthly sphere of the universal kingdom of God, the two have almost all things in common.

For this reason many parables and other teachings are spoken of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew, and the kingdom of God in Mark and Luke. It is the omissions which are significant. The parables of the wheat and tares, and the net are not spoken of the kingdom of God. In that kingdom there are neither tares nor bad fish. But the parable of the leaven is spoken of the kingdom of God also, for, alas, even the true doctrines of the kingdom are leavened with the errors of which the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Herodians were the representatives. (4) The kingdom of God “comes not with outward show” (according to Luke 17:20), but is chiefly that which is inward and spiritual; while the kingdom of heaven is organic, and is to be manifested in glory on the earth. (5) The kingdom of heaven merges into the kingdom of God when Christ, having “put all enemies under His feet,” “shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father.”²

9. In summary, the “kingdom of heaven” referred to by the Lord in Matthew 13 refers to the Lord’s Messianic ministry on earth. The Jewish people rejected this kingdom during the Incarnation. Following that rejection, Jesus began revealing the peculiar aspects of the invisible kingdom that would become evident through revelation prior to the Second Advent. This information was first revealed by the Lord through parables and later through the revelation of the New Testament canon. The kingdom of heaven will ultimately merge with the kingdom of God following the Second Advent and with the millennial reign of Christ.
10. The kingdom of heaven includes those who believe and those who do not and therefore those who understand spiritual things and those who do not. Believers who can process spiritual information can apply spiritual interpretations to the parables. Our Lord elaborates in:

Matthew 13:12 - “For whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.

² Ibid., Matthew 6:33fn.



Matthew 13:13 - "Therefore, I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

v. 14 - "And in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, (Isaiah 6:9-10) 'You will keep on hearing but you will not understand; and you will keep on seeing but will not perceive;

v. 15 - for the heart of this people has become dull and with their ears they scarcely hear. And they have closed their eyes lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and return and I should heal them.'

v. 16 - "But blessed are your eyes, because they see and your ears because they hear.

v. 17 - "For truly I say to you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see and did not see it; and to hear what you hear and did not hear it.

1. Notice the grace of God. Jesus Christ created the pre-Fall human body with the necessary senses to perceive truth when it is revealed. Post-Fall there are circumstances that emerge from the gene pool crapshoot that cause a few to have deficiencies in sight and hearing. God's justice is expressed through grace in that such individuals are granted salvation should such deficiencies cause them to be incapable of perceiving the Gospel. However, Helen Keller is an inspiration and an example for such individuals.

Nevertheless, the majority of mankind possesses functional auditory areas and occipital lobes in their cerebral cortices at birth. Although born spiritually dead and under condemnation, they possess the necessary assets to hear and see, and thus understand the presentation of truth.

2. In the dispensations of the Gentiles and of Israel, many prophets and righteous men longed to hear and see into the mysteries of the kingdom.
3. Through positive volition, the disciples had come to understand more than had Old Testament believers.



4. One mystery of the kingdom is the fact there would be an interval between the Incarnation and the millennial reign of Christ. This would eventually become clear through the divine system of grace didactics. In Matthew 13 the Lord has only just begun His revelations regarding this and other mysteries of the “kingdom of heaven.”
5. For the message to germinate, sprout, grow, and produce fruit, it must land on the fertile soil of the positive believer’s soul. These parables were designed to challenge those who were positive and conceal truth from the negative.
6. Those who have eyes and ears are responsible for what they see and hear. There is no discrimination here. If they want to know the truth, they only have to see what they see and hear what they hear. The key to unlocking this knowledge begins with faith alone in Christ alone and continues by positive acceptance of the Word as it is communicated.
7. Our Lord now interprets the first parable for His disciples:

Matthew 13:18 - “Hear the parable of the sower.”

- 1) Jesus emphasizes the Sower which is Himself.
- 2) The image of Him sowing is symbolic of His teaching ministry.
- 3) The seed emphasizes the content of His message.
- 4) For seed to have its desired effect it must fall on receptive soil.
- 5) Positive volition results in production of great fruit.
- 6) Negative volition results in no fruit and eventual rejection of all truth.
7. The Sower can sow but grace didactics may be neutralized by negative volition which, in reality, has already been influenced by some form of cosmic didactics.

Matthew 13:19 - “When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it [**negative volition**], the evil one [**demonic forces under the command of Satan**] comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.”

1. “Beside the road” is the soil upon which the first seeds fell.



2. Verse 19 tells us the soul is the soil into which the seed is sown, whether the Gospel or doctrine.
3. The soul's essence contains volition which must either accept or reject the message.
4. Their souls are like the soil that has been trodden alongside a road. You can sow seeds there but they will not be able to grow since the seed cannot enter into the soil in order to germinate.
5. Germination is synonymous with positive volition and resultant metabolism of truth.
6. Although the information is both seen and heard, no action is taken and demonic influences neutralize the message. This is the result of negative volition.

Matthew 13:20 - "And the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;

v. 21 - yet he has no firm root in himself but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away."

1. A seed sown too shallowly may sprout and appear to be a healthy plant.
2. However, because of the type of soil—rocky—the plant cannot acquire a very deep root system and quickly withers.
3. Such is the case with the believer who hears the truth with great enthusiasm. He is very joyful over the principles he has just learned and appears to be solid in his faith.
4. But this believer fails to build a root system in doctrine.

Colossians 2:6 - As you, therefore, have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

v. 7 - having been firmly rooted and built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed and overflowing with gratitude.

5. Instead, the ignorant believer assumes he can move through life sustained by a rosy glow but his low inventory of ideas soon betrays him.

6. One of the major challenges to the believer with little doctrine is the criticism, scoffing, and abuse that come when a stand is taken for doctrine, Christianity, Jesus Christ, or other spiritual issues.
7. Human viewpoint causes them to doubt their convictions or makes them ashamed or embarrassed about them.
8. Over the centuries, Satan has developed great human viewpoint systems of thought designed to neutralize the unstable believer.
9. They are at work all day long every day and only the Christian with a solid inventory of ideas and loyalty to the word can endure under these insidious pressures.
10. These pressures are symbolized in Matthew 13:6 by the heat of the sun. “Scorching” is the result of one’s failure to utilize biblical problem-solving devices in favor of human viewpoint solutions.
11. Bad decisions limit future options and often result in various forms of discipline: “they are scorched.”
12. The statement, “they had no root,” indicates these believers ignored or rejected basic doctrines which enable a person to withstand the basic pressures of life.
13. Without the ongoing renovation of thought in the **καρδία** (**kardía**) of the believer’s soul, he is incapable of defending his soul against the attacks from the devil’s world.
14. As a result of such pressures, the believer “withers away,” that is, he enters into cosmic living and tries to solve his problems from a soul inventory based on human viewpoint.
15. No deep root system means the plant cannot get enough water and nutrients to sustain a healthy life.
16. In Scripture, water is often symbolic of doctrine. Without consistent inculcation of doctrine the spiritual life of the believer withers and becomes ineffective.

Matthew 13:22 - “And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”

