

THE PARABLES OF JESUS, #014a, Part-1

A Chronological Study

"To Him who opened His mouth in parables and uttered things hidden since the creation of the world."
Psalm 78:2



"The Sower, The Seed, The Soils"

The Mysteries of the Kingdom

Mt. 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15¹

THE INTRODUCTION STATEMENT

The parables are the direct words of Jesus! Now, open your ears, sharpen your understanding, and hear what He has to say!

¹ All scriptures are from the NASB unless otherwise noted.

INTRODUCTION

The term, "The Mysteries of the Kingdom" brings to mind what many of us have experienced sometime in our past. There came that day when a parent, friend, or confidant spoke to us and said something like, "It's time for you to start growing up." They probably followed that statement with some truths about life that you didn't really want to accept – but they were true none-the-less. "No, you can't have that expensive car... you, I, we, don't have that kind of money." "No, we can send you to that university...," "Sometimes people just get sick and die." Then as we grow we get introduced to many truths in life... many are wonderful and exciting, and many are hurtful and hard.

Absolute Authority – God's will in all things.

This is where Jesus' disciples were at this time in His ministry. In fact, this parable is a set of truths that is often avoided or outright rejected by some. The Judeo-Christian God, Yahweh, The "I AM," the one God of all that is and more... is in absolute authority and control of all places, and all people, and all things. When it comes to His election, His calling, His choosing, His predestination and His will... nothing that happens does so without being in agreement with His absolute will. If Jesus simply called the universe into existence [John 1:13] – then there's nothing He cannot do. That's what absolute authority means.² His will controls the plans and progress of all things – to His glory.

² For more please see Ephesians 1:3-14

The Big Picture

In this parable Jesus will teach His disciples and the crowd around them a hard but essential truth concerning true Biblical faith. How does one become a child of God, born from above, Saved? What is God's role in this process and what is the role of the individual? Hard questions and hard answers.

This parable is not about how you should act or react to what Jesus has to say. This parable is about Him – not about you. We've all heard so many teachers and preachers going on and on about how we need to identify what kind of soil we are and work toward becoming "The good soil." Nope! This parable is all about who God is and what He has done (and doing). So, don't look for yourself in His explanation of the parable... look for who He is.

Leading Up To Our Parable:

Matthew's chapter 12 deals largely with authority issues. Jesus and His disciples ate grain in a field on a sabbath Saturday. The Pharisees were watching and confronted Him about it. We found out that God was bigger than the law and that the religious leaders missed that fact. We found out that Jesus, "the son of man" was "The Lord of the Sabbath," not the law or the Pharisees.

Then Jesus healed a man with a withered hand on that same Sabbath... and again the religious leaders tried to condemn Him for it. Jesus' answer to their complaints was to heal all those who were ill who were following Him that day. A clear "right at the moment" statement showing them exactly who He was by fulfilling the

prophecies of the Old Testament prophets. The religious leadership responded by looking for ways to destroy Him – as they had killed the prophets in the past.

The Pharisees, trying to test Jesus again, brought Him a demon possessed man... and when Jesus healed him, they told the crowd that He was healing people by the power of Satan. Jesus responded to them “by your words you will be judged and condemned,” forever.

Jesus’ own family was seeking Him, they thought He had become deranged, and He proclaimed that those like the disciples were His true mother and family, “For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.”

So, you should be able to see that Jesus is leading up to and talking about issues of God Almighty’s sovereignty... and who are those people of faith that benefit from God’s grace, mercy, and salvation. This important parable, spoken of in Matthew, Mark and Luke brings much clarity concerning these things. But first we need to find some definitions concerning the text. We’ll be interconnecting Matthew, Mark, and Luke using our “Linear Text.”

Jesus Teaches in Parables

The Text:

[Mt 13:1-9]

"That day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. And large crowds gathered to Him, [Lk 8:4b] and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, so He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd was standing on the beach."

*"And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, [Mk 4:3] "Listen to this! [Mt 13:3] Behold, the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. [Mk 4:7b] And it yielded no crop. [Mt 13:8] And others fell on the good soil and *³yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. [Lk 8:8b] As He said these things, He would call out, 'He who has ears, let him hear.'"*

³ Translated in the "Historical Past." The Greek language often speaks in a story as if things were happening at that moment when they happened in the past. Thus, in this case, Jesus said, "And others fell on the good soil and yields a crop." The translators changed the tense to make the statement more understandable.

Initial Thoughts

One of the principles I try to keep reminding myself of is: "Don't skip over the words." this is an important principle to begin with right off. When I first composed this lesson I violated that principle trying to "get on with it." But look, "That day." Right out of Chapter 12 comes the first words in Chapter 13... "That day." Not even a single day has passed between these two chapters. Chapter 12 was all about the closing of Jesus' close dealings with the Nation of Israel. The final straw came when the Pharisees proclaimed that Jesus power to heal and cleanse a man from demons came from Satan himself - a sin never to be forgiven. He told them that their evil words would be used to judge them and prove them guilty before Almighty God.

His next words were that he "went out of the house" -- He left the nation of Israel -- and He was sitting by the sea - a clear reference to the common reference in the Old Testament to the Gentiles being as the sea. So hidden in this parable is the transition of Jesus ministry from the Nation of Israel, who would eventually put Him to death to "destroy" Him, and the beginning of the Gospel ministry to the Gentiles.

Jesus then told the Pharisees that the only sign they would get from Him was "the sign of Jonah," the prophet of God who was sent on a mission away from the nation of Israel, to a Gentile city. On the way, he was cast from a ship and swallowed by a great fish. He spent three days in the place of death as the servant of God. He then came forth from the fish to go unto the Gentile city... and they were saved.

"Following this, the Lord Jesus solemnly pronounced the coming judgment of Heaven upon that wicked generation, so that their last state should be worse than the first [vv 43-45].⁴ Jesus then severed the connection of the flesh ties (the nation of Israel) and He then told His disciples of the Spiritual ties with only His kinsmen -- "For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in Heaven, the same is My brother and sister, and mother" [vv. 46-50]. This is a major moment in the New Testament, as Jesus leaves the Nation of Israel as the purveyors of the Gospel and gives it to His Disciples and the Gentile world.

The Disciple's Question Asked

The Question:

[Mt 13:10] *"And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" [Mark 4:13] And He says to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables?"*

And therein lies an important question. *"Do you not understand this parable? And if you don't..., "How will you understand all the [other] parables.?"*

Did you understand Jesus' parable about "The Sign of Jonah?" Like Jonah, God the Father would send Jesus on the Journey to bring salvation to the Gentiles (the world). Along the way He would have to suffer death for three days and be raised again to life. He then would go to the Gentiles, preach the Gospel of Salvation, and they would

⁴ Arthur Pink, The Prophetic Parables of Matthew 13, Calvary book room, Covington, KY 1928

believe – when the Hebrew/Jewish nation would refuse to believe in Him and His mission.

So, as you work your way through this lesson keep your mind focused on who God is, who His Son is, and who His Holy Spirit is. In each case of a “Soil” ... focus on these three persons of the Godhead, and the answers you find may just prevent you from compromising your beliefs in your daily walk.

Jesus Answers Their Question:

“Why do You speak to them in parables?”

Theme #1

The Text

[Mt 13:11]

Jesus answered them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.

When I read this, I am astounded that this common folk, fishermen, tax collectors, etc., are told here that because of their faith and continued following of Jesus... they have been granted the knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom... and that the others in the assembly had not. We’re not told here⁵ what those mysteries are, but we should recognize right away that Jesus, through His authority, has granted to some this benefit and not to others. So here in His first words of explaining this

⁵ Jesus seems to be explaining how current events develop old promises. The NT consistently links the events of Jesus’ ministry and message with Old Promises (Rom 1:1-4; Heb 1:1-2).

question establishes this important theme – that to some... and not to others, especially not to those religious leaders who proclaimed that works of God the Father, through God the Holy Spirit, by Jesus the very Son of God to be the work of Satan himself (Matthew Ch. 12).

Theme #2

The Text:

[Mt 13:12]

"For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.

I am intrigued by Jesus' words here. It sounds like favoritism at first look – but it is not for I know that God spreads His grace upon the whole world. I know that Jesus died on that Cross for the whole world, not just for those who would believe.⁶ I know that my place as a child of God, a brother of The Lord Jesus Christ, is based on my faith in Him and not my works. And I know that the destination of Hell is for those who won't receive Him as the only route to His kingdom, heaven, and eternity by faith.

By this verse I can also now see that belonging to Christ will bring joys and benefits that will not come to those outside of Christ (as part of the Mysteries of the Kingdom). Those outside of Christ will not have these

⁶ 2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slow concerning his promise, as some regard slowness, but is being patient toward you, because he does not wish for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

joys and benefits... and the end result will be literally "Hell" for them and the removal of all benefits and joys of eternity. So the meaning here is those who "Have Christ" will continue to have more and more... and those who do not have Christ will continue to have less and less until they lose all. This is an eternal truth, not one for here and now.

[Mt 13:13a] *Therefore I speak to them in parables;*

**A Hard Reason:
The Text:**

[MK 4:12] *so that while seeing, they may see and not perceive, and while hearing, they may hear and not understand, otherwise they might return and be forgiven."*

So, the question that comes up is, "Does God, for His purposes, turn His heart away from some?" And the answer comes back, "Yes."

We know He does not turn away from those who are in Christ – who are true believers. Sin can certainly interfere with our relationship with Him and His relationship with us... but He remains faithful to those who are His own – through His Son, Jesus. There are even times when members of the Body of Christ have been removed from earth to heaven... rather than let them damage the testimony of a local church or larger witness or testimony **[Acts 5:1-11]**. But there are many places in scripture

where God has left the unfaithful, unrepentant, or unbelieving.

[Isaiah 59:2] "But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear."

One of the most dramatic moments in the scriptures occurs in the book of Ezekiel and Chapters 10 and 11. God has put up with unbelieving, unrepentant, rebellious Israel for centuries. Then the moment came when God had had enough. First, He left the Holy of Holies in the Temple, then He left the Temple, then He went to the edge of the city and looked back, and then He went out of the city to a nearby mountain, and then He was gone. Four hundred years of silence ensued before He sent His Messiah to save the lost. So, is there a breaking point for God? Yes. So, if these Pharisees committed the ultimate sin – calling the works of God the Holy Spirit as being done by Satan – then we can better understand Jesus' words about speaking in parables to that wicked generation – those who would knowingly put the Christ to death – then He shall not speak to them in a way that would lead them to repentance and possible forgiveness.

Three lessons ago we learned about that moment when the Pharisees accused Jesus of healing and doing miracles by the power of Satan. We read these words...

[Mt 12:30] Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. [Mk 3:28] Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their

sins and every slander they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven [proclaiming that the powerful works of God through Jesus' miracles was done by the evil one himself]; they are guilty of an eternal sin. He said this because they were saying, "He, Jesus, has an impure [demonic] spirit."

The Text:

[Mt 12:13-15] *"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. In their case the prophecy of Isaiah⁷ is being fulfilled, which says,*

*'You will keep on hearing, but will not understand;
You will keep on seeing, but will not perceive;
For the heart of this people has become dull,
With their ears they scarcely hear,
And they have closed their eyes,
Otherwise they would see with their eyes,
Hear with their ears,
And understand with their heart and return,
And I would heal them.'*"

Being careful here, the text is literally saying that those whose hearts are completely turned away... God has said that even though they may continue to hear God's word, the Gospel... they will not be able to understand or perceive it – by God's dictate.

⁷ Isaiah 6:9-10

There's a term in the discipline of art called "white space." Sometimes much of the message portrayed in art is hidden in the white space of an image. What is the "white space"? It's the part of a picture that most people don't pay any attention to. The places around the portrayed image. The same is true in writings. Often there is a "hidden" message that you can only understand if you take the time to "see or hear" with the intention of finding it.

Looking at the three verses above we can see what the text says. But... what is there that it doesn't say? The very topic of our study... God, the Sower, sows the seed. And the Seed is the Word of God.⁸ Looking at Jesus' words we see that "*while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.*"⁹ – Understand what? God's Word being sown by God on them!

But, Blessed Are Your Eyes

The Text:

[Mt 13:16-17] *But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. 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.*

When we look at these verses, in Part-2 of this lesson, we need to remember that when Jesus speaks these words

⁸ Luke 8:11 The Seed is the word of God.

⁹ Matthew 13:15 A quotation from Isaiah 6:9-10

His death, resurrection, ascension, and Pentecost are yet in the future. Throughout the Old Testament men and women of God have had the presence of the Holy Spirit, not to permanently indwell, but to indwell for His purposes. So, Jesus is speaking to His disciples and telling those who have become true believers and followers of Jesus they have been given the gift of hearing and seeing and understanding the parabolic truths that Jesus is teaching them. But... beyond that, He is telling them that "The Mysteries of the Kingdom," the one whom the prophets spoke of, the coming messiah, was standing before them and teaching them things that were mysteries in the Old Testament – even for the prophets. They had looked, they had listened, but they did not fully comprehend what God was telling them through direct revelation or from the prophets. What a marvelous blessing for the disciples and for us. Oh, that all believers would take the time and do the work of reading, memorizing, working through the scriptures – seeing, hearing... and then teaching others. We've been given the indwelling Holy Spirit of God to enable us to see and hear the very hidden things of God. How glorious and how wonderful is our King.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

- 1. Of all the authorities in our world who holds the absolute authority over all things and what does that mean?**

God Almighty. Absolute authority means that God is the one who makes those decisions that He deems to be absolute. Nothing anywhere is, becomes, is changed, is determined, etc... except through the mind and will of Almighty God.

- 2. What can or do I decide in this life?**

God has given the right to decide and do those things that we will be responsible for. All of my decisions will be weighted by the mind and will of God and I will be found to be in alignment with His will, or against it. And I will be held responsible for my intentions, decisions and actions.

- 3. What is this parable basically about?**

In this first part of this lesson we can see from the chapter leading up to Ch-13 that it sits on a trajectory of the authority of God, especially as it applies to Jesus and the forces of evil against Him, and His choices as to who has the opportunity to "Know the mysteries of His kingdom."

- 4. Why does Jesus teach in parables?**

Jesus reveals that teaching in parables allows those whom God has given "Eyes to see" and "Ears to hear" His word, to come to faith in Him and Grow in salvation and grace to become His children as part of His family.

5. What lesson does Jesus teach about faith?

In Mt 13:12 Jesus tells us that those of faith will be given more and in abundance; but whoever does not have faith, even what he has shall be taken away from him. Hard but direct words concerning the authority of God.

6. What sins can be forgiven?

Mk 3:20 tells us that people can be forgiven all their sins... except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. This special category comes in two forms. First, those who told Jesus (and those who follow in time who speak the same blasphemy) that His works (as God) were performed by the power of the Devil. Second, anyone who goes to death without receiving the Lord God Jesus Christ as their personal savior.

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Jeremiah 18:15
"Don't stumble from the Ancient Path"
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