

The Church of the Servant King
Survey of the Bible Series
The Gospel of Matthew
(Lesson SB-MT13A)
Matthew 13

The Parable of the Sower (13:1-9, 18-23)

Jesus has just been accused of performing miracles in the power of Satan (12:24) and the religious leaders desired to kill him for healing on the Sabbath (12:14). When the religious leaders asked for a sign on command from Jesus, Jesus responded with a prophecy of His death and resurrection (12:38-42). All of these factors reveal a rejection of the gospel of the kingdom by the religious leaders and most of the masses. This prompts Jesus to begin speaking to the multitudes in parables. By doing so, those who were truly positive would continue to pursue an understanding of their meaning while those who were negative would drift away.

Points relating to the Parable of the Sower:

1. The "Parable of the Sower" relates the parable to the preaching of the "word of the kingdom" (13:19).

The following passages in Matthew use the word "kingdom" in some way – 3:2; 4:17, 23; 5:3, 10, 19, 20; 6:10, 13, 33; 7:21; 8:12; 10:7; 16:19, 28; 18:1, 3, 4, 23; 19:14, 23, 24; 20:21, 31; 21:31, 43; 22:2; 23:13; 24:14; 25:1, 14, 34; 26:29.

Parallel passages:

Mark 4:1-9, 14-20

Luke 8:4-8, 11-15

2. The "gospel of the kingdom" in Matthew 24:14 is synonymous with "word of the kingdom" (13:19).

Matthew 24:14 – And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. (KJV)

3. The gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of Christ should be distinguished:

- A. The "gospel of the kingdom" (Matthew 24:14) refers to the good news concerning the coming millennial kingdom to be established by Christ at His second coming.
- B. The "gospel of Christ" (Romans 1:16) refers to good news regarding the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

4. The "Parable of the Sower" covers the time periods during which the "word [gospel] of the kingdom" is being preached:

- A. The age of Israel from the time the word of the kingdom began to be preached by John the Baptist in Matthew 3:2 to the beginning of the Church Age on the day of Pentecost 30 A.D.

This explains the condition of the hearts of the people of Israel from John the Baptist until the day of Pentecost 30 A.D.

- B. The final 7 years of the Age of Israel known as the Tribulation which covers the period from the rapture to the second advent.

This explains the hearts of the people of Israel from the rapture of the church until the second coming of Christ.

C. The "Parable of the Sower" has nothing to do with the Church Age.

The Interpretation of This Parable

1. This parable teaches that the period covered by the "Parable of the Sower" is characterized by the following:
 - A. a sower
 - B. seed
 - C. various types of soil
 - 1) wayside soil: (Matthew 13:19)
 - 2) stony soil: (Matthew 13:20)
 - 3) thorny soil: (Matthew 13:22)
 - 4) good soil: (Matthew 13:23)
2. The sower is any communicator of "the word of the kingdom" during the period covered by the "Parable of the Sower." (See Mark 4:14)
3. The "seed" is the "word of the kingdom" that was and will be preached during the period covered by the "Parable of the Sower." (See Mt 13:19, 20, 22, 23)
4. The various types of soil represent the following:
 - A. wayside soil: (Matthew 13:19) the one who doesn't understand and whose heart is hardened
 - B. stony soil: (Matthew 13:20) initial joy but no depth for the seed to take root
 - C. thorny soil: (Matthew 13:22) the effect of the Word is choked out by the details of life
 - D. good soil (Matthew 13:23) the heart that receives the Word and becomes productive
5. The sowing of seed.
 - A. In Mark 4:14 the seed is the "Word."

Mark 4:14 The sower soweth the word. (KJV)
 - B. In Matthew 13:19 the seed is the "word of the kingdom."

Matthew 13:19 When any one heareth **the word of the kingdom**, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. (KJV)
6. The "word of the kingdom" was preached by . . .
 - A. John the Baptist: (Matthew 3:2)

Matthew 3:2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (KJV)
 - B. Jesus [before His crucifixion]: (Matthew 4:17)

Matthew 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (KJV)
 - C. Jesus' disciples: (Matthew 10:7)

Matthew 10:7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. (KJV)

7. During the period in which the "word of the kingdom" is preached, the response to the "word of the kingdom" by the "good soil" will vary:
 - A. Matthew reports a response of a hundredfold, sixtyfold and thirtyfold (13:23).
 - B. Mark reports a response of thirtyfold, sixtyfold and a hundredfold (Mk 4:20).
 - C. Neither Matthew nor Mark should be understood as implying an increase or decrease in fruit production by the good soil during the course of the Age of Israel/Tribulation.
 - D. The implication from both Matthew and Mark is that fruit production will vary among the good soil during the course of the Age of Israel.
8. Mark 4:13 reveals that an understanding of the parable of the sower is basic to an understanding of the parable of the wheat and tares, the parable of the mustard seed, the parable of the leaven, the parable of the hidden treasure, the parable of pearl of great price, and the parable of the dragnet in Matthew 13.

Mark 4:13 And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables? (KJV)

9. The parable of the sower, the parable of the wheat and tares, the parable of the mustard seed, the parable of the leaven, the parable of the hidden treasure, the parable of pearl of great price, and the parable of the dragnet in Matthew 13 are not directed toward the Church even though some parallel truths may be found.

What Does the Parable of the Sower Teach?

This parable teaches that "the word of the kingdom" will be preached, but the "word of the kingdom" will be rejected by those whose hearts have been hardened, and by those who become persecuted because of the "word of the kingdom," and by those who allow the details of life to choke out the "word of the kingdom." However, there will be one group who will receive the "word of the kingdom" and there will be various levels of divine production from their lives.