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a *Grace Notes* publication

# **The Parables**

a Bible study by  
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## The Parables

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## **Foreword**

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## Introduction to Parables

Matthew 13:1-3a; Mark 4:1-2; Luke 8:4

Matthew 13:1-3a, “(1) At that time, Jesus, after leaving the house, was sitting by the sea; (2) And many crowds were gathered to Him, so that after embarking into a boat He sat down, and all the crowd had sat upon the shore. (3) And He spoke many things to them in parables.

Mark 4:1-2, “(1) And He began to teach again beside the sea; and a large crowd gathered to him, so that after embarking into a boat He sat on the sea, and all the crowd was on the land next to the sea. (2) And He taught them many things in parables and He said to them in His teaching...”

Luke 8:4, “And when a large crowd was coming together and going around to each city with Him, He said through a parable...”

### I. Exposition.

Even after the incident with the Pharisees over demon possession, and their attempt to slander His ministry, Christ apparently has more crowds than ever. He is still in the region of the Sea of Galilee, and indeed this incident takes place near the shore of that sea. But there is a significant switch in teaching style here that deserves comment. He begins to teach in parables.

A parable is a simple story used to illustrate a principle of doctrine. It represents a simplification of that principle for the sake of communication. As such, it is certainly a compromise.

- A parable is a compromise because it increases the time allotted to teach the doctrine; it focuses on a single principle within that doctrine. It is not nearly as time efficient as teaching a number of principles point by point.
- A parable is a compromise because it is seldom a perfect fit. Analogies always have their limits.

This is not the first time that Christ has employed parables, but He does so somewhat sparingly.

- There is nothing wrong with such a strategy in evangelization and in teaching Christian basics.
- But in the pursuit of spiritual maturity, illustrating everything is quite inefficient, and slows the advance of those who do not need the illustrations in the first place.
- You will observe that Christ employs the parable often, and it is appropriate to His audience. But observe also how less common it is for the writers of the epistles to do so. And Luke’s history in Acts has the parable even less often.

The parable was a very popular mode of communication among the Jewish scholars of Christ’s day.

Now in the modern science of homiletics, that is, the public speaking of sermons, there is generally more emphasis on the parable than is necessary.

There should be a strong emphasis on rhetoric and effective public speaking; but taking the time to illustrate every principle in every sermon very often is wasted time.

Many people get emotional about illustrations, because illustrations quite often are most effective when they play to the emotions. To remove the emotional from a person’s life is a difficult and chancy surgery indeed, and yet that surgery can be spiritually life-saving.

Jesus Christ used the parable for those who had yet to establish a spiritual autonomy; but this would be the first time that Christ used the parable to teach kingdom information. It represents a striking departure for Him, and a recognition by Him that the people were not listening.

### The Parable of the Sower

Matthew 13:3b-23

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Mark 4:3-25

Luke 8:5-18.

### The Outline.

- A. The parable of the sower.
  - 1. The seed on the road.
  - 2. The seed on the rocks.
  - 3. The seed on the thorns.
  - 4. The seed on the good earth.
  - 5. Christ's repeated proclamation.
- B. The interrogation concerning the parables.
  - 1. The identity of the inquisitors.
  - 2. The big question.
  - 3. The answer:
    - a. Distinctions among souls and the necessity of parables for some.
    - b. The explanation of the consequences of rejection.
    - c. The prophecy of the negative volition of Israel.
    - d. The judgment of the disciples by Christ, they are categorized in the worst way.
    - e. The blessing of sight and hearing for some.
- C. The explanation of the parable:
  - 1. The seed sown on the road.
  - 2. The seed sown into the rocks.
  - 3. The seed sown into the thorns.
  - 4. The seed sown into good earth.
- D. A general explanation concerning communication from God.
- E. The consequences of hearing the word.

### The Exposition.

#### A. The parable of the sower.

- 1. The seed on the road: 'Behold, the sower went out to sow. And while he is sowing some [seed] fell beside the road and was trampled, the birds after coming devoured them.'
    - a. We are going to save the interpretation of this parable until the end, where it receives clarity through the mind of Christ. Here, we will concentrate on the image alone.
    - b. It begins with the verb IDOU, which aims to gain the attention of the listeners. It is an imperative verb that means 'Look.'
    - c. Now the sower goes out to sow. This is his profession, and this was a common sight in Israel. Everyone knows what Christ is talking about. It would be as though we said: "The gardener went out to mow."
    - d. You will have to impute an ancient concept to this narrative: a man with a bag or vessel of seed, walking along and casting the seed as he goes.
    - e. For the sake of efficiency, the seed is scattered by hand with no great scientific precision.
    - f. It is not that this poor sower is particularly sloppy in what he does; it was the practice to be inexact, and even sometimes to an extreme.
    - g. EN TO SPEIREIN, is 'while sowing.' It is like saying, right in the middle of what he was doing... some seed fell on the road.
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- h. Luke adds the idea that the seed on the road gets trampled. An obvious inclusion that was left out by the other two chroniclers of this speech. We will see how trampling fits into the interpretation later.
  - i. Nonetheless the birds come and devour the seed.
    - (1) It is not just that the birds eat the seed; they devour it. The verb KATEPHAGEN makes this description.
    - (2) The aorist tense of this verb fits the meaning very well. The tense describes an action that occurs in a moment's time. The bird fly onto the road and devour the seed.
    - (3) The verb itself means to 'eat down.' It has in mind an eating without the act of chewing. 'Gobble down' is a really good translation of the concept.
    - (4) So the birds come and in a moment's time the seed is gobbled down.
    - (5) And notice also the modern practice of the scavenger birds to eat what is left on the road. The road is open, and with the eyesight of a bird is a really easy place to find food. The birds know to come there for that very reason.
  2. The seed on the rocky places: "And other [seed] fell upon the rocky places where it did not have much earth, and it sprouted for a short time because it did not have depth or moisture. But after the rising of the sun it was scorched and withered because it had no root."
    - a. On the rocky places there is a different challenge for the seed. Here there is OUK GEN POLLEN, 'not much soil.'
    - b. The adverb EUTHEOS depicts the very temporary nature of this plant. It is the adverb 'immediately.' But here it is really 'for just a moment.' Notice the cause of the action - it did not have much earth.
    - c. So the plant does not spring up quickly because it has so little soil; rather it springs up for a very short time. Its span of life is brief indeed.
    - d. Two accounts add reasons of a different kind; depth and moisture. Well really it is this: the lack of soil does not allow the root to grow and expand, so that there is an absence of moisture. The one results in the other.
    - e. The rising of the sun scorches and then withers the new plant. It is destroyed.
    - f. This happens every spring when I bring out all the flowers that I have nursed along in my basement through the winter. After investing months of work to produce seedlings, the sun hits them, and poof! They are gone in a few hours' time.
  3. The seed in the thorns: "And others fell upon the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them."
    - a. This is a little more straightforward, and all of the accounts are in complete agreement as to the nature of the hazard.
    - b. The thorns choke the new plant; they steal its soil, they steal its water, they steal its sun. Because it is a young plant, it cannot compete.
  4. "And still others fell upon the good earth and bore fruit, some a hundred, some sixty, and some thirty."
    - a. But of course the sower is bound to hit the right soil eventually, especially since that is his intent.
    - b. And the seed that falls on the good earth, the earth with the right amount of sunlight, rich with nutrients and the right amount of water - that seed is going to produce a healthy plant.
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- c. And the healthy plant always bears fruit.
  - d. Christ says that the plants produce varying amounts of fruit, but they do indeed produce fruit.
5. Christ's repeated proclamation: "And while saying these things, He was calling out, 'The one who has ears let him hear.'"
- a. At the same time that He is stating the parable, Christ is calling out. This comes from Luke 8:8.
  - b. The present participle LEGON has its action occurring at the same time as the main verb EPHONEI. So the saying and the calling out happen simultaneously.
  - c. The content of Christ's call is simple, 'The one who has ears, let him hear.'
    - (1) So if you are able to hear, then you are politely commanded to listen.
    - (2) The polite command comes from AKOUETO; this is the Greek imperative of entreaty.
    - (3) Christ is telling anyone within earshot that they really need to hear this parable - that it is something of surpassing importance for them.

### **B. The interrogation concerning the parables.**

1. The identity of the inquisitors. "And when He became somewhat alone, after the disciples came, those around Him and twelve interrogated him."
    - a. Now isn't this strange? Our Lord has finally found a way to get rid of the crowds. He tells one parable, and He becomes somewhat alone.
    - b. Mark 4:10 contains the reference: KATA MONAS. This prepositional phrase gives the idea that Christ has become somewhat alone; it is literally 'according to alone,' or 'after the pattern of aloneness.'
    - d. Even the disciples have wandered off during this brief parable - nobody at all thought it of surpassing profundity.
    - e. Remember that Christ has decided to employ the mode of communication that was popular among the Pharisees of the day.
    - f. Indeed, He may have done this in response to their accusations about His ministry. Because they accused Him of working from the authority of the prince of demons, He then adopted their method of teaching.
    - g. And this in turn caused the crowds to filter away! It was as if Christ had used tear gas instead of a parable!
    - h. Well, the smoke has cleared, and there are now just a few folks left; and his disciples thought that the parable was a good intermission, and so they went away too. But now they are back.
    - i. And they are said to interrogate Him; the participle EPEROTON comes from Luke 8:9. It means to 'question intensely.'
  2. The big question. 'For what reason do You speak to them in parables?'
    - a. The big profound question from the disciples and those few who remained around Him.
    - b. And our understanding of this question should be tempered by the fact that Jesus gave this parable and everyone seemed to go away.
    - c. This is not so much a question of curiosity as one of accusation. You can perhaps see the scowls on their faces as they ask: "Why did you just do that?"
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- d. And you see how hard it is for us to fathom this situation, because in a historical irony, we are in love with parables. Since we love parables so much (indeed, perhaps too much), it is difficult for us to see the reason for the question.
- e. But the disciples had a reason; they were now alone, and the crowds had dispersed, and they wanted to know exactly why Christ had shifted to the condescending teaching style of the Pharisees.
3. The Answer
- a. Distinctions among souls and the necessity of parables for some. “And formulating an answer, He said to them, ‘Because has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, but to those outside it has not been given and so everything comes in parables.’”
- (1) Christ first formulates an answer; the aorist tense of the participle APOKRITHEIS does this. It shows that He gives at least a passing thought to the answer before He speaks it.
  - (2) The perfect passive indicative of the verb DIDOMI indicates a very strong action on the part of God. Together with the dative of advantage of the personal pronoun HUMIN, it is translated ‘to you it has been given.’
    - (a) Now God is the one who produces this action; He has given the disciples the ability to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.
    - (b) The perfect tense shows that this is a past action with lasting results. And this makes a great amount of sense, because anytime that you can perceive the plan of God for your life, it is going to have a wonderful result. So the perfect tense is important here.
    - (c) Now it is just to the disciples that this has been given... Well to the disciples and anyone like them. It is not that Christ chose them to be disciples and so God gave them some special perceptive ability. It is that because they chose to believe, God gave them certain spiritual assets for the perception of the kingdom plan.
    - (d) A further clue about this perceptive ability is in the phrase ‘but to those outside.’

This must be those outside of the direct will of God - those who are not believers, or, who if they are believers are also out of fellowship from God.

The idea of fellowship was not foreign at all to the Jews. It was a part of their temple worship. If we could take a walk through the tabernacle today, its symbolism of the plan of God for mankind would be striking to those of us who understand it.

- The tabernacle is entered through a wide gate, 30 ft. across. Immediately to the front as one enters is the copper altar, which, together with its sacrifices, makes a striking depiction of salvation.
  - Just 10 or 20 feet past this altar is the copper laver, which stands at the entrance to a smaller tent. The copper altar is the portrayal of confession, and it is necessary to confess one's sins before going any further in the plan of God.
  - The smaller tent contains all of the elements which represent the post-salvation plan of God. Only the Levitical priests were allowed in this tent, and this in itself portrays an important observation on the plan of God: that though many are saved, not very many of those continue on in the plan of God.
  - We have seen the word of God represented in the table of showbread. We have seen the work of the Spirit depicted in the golden lampstand. We have studied the portrayal of the works of
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righteousness in the incense altar. All of these are the elements in the Holy place, which represent the advance to spiritual maturity.

- The most holy place, or holy of holies and the holy place are separated by a thick veil, which conceals the indwelling presence of the Shekinah Glory. The most holy place is smaller still than the holy place. In fact, only one man, the high priest, was allowed into the holy of holies, and that man only once a year on the day of atonement. This place alone is reserved for Jesus Christ. The veil which separates the inner tent was split when Christ died on the cross, which was a sign to the Jews of the suspension of the dispensation of Israel.
- The writer of Hebrews states that the body of Christ (His life and death) forms a bridge into the most Holy Place, so that all might enter the plan of God, and advance to maturity, Heb 10:20-21.
- The furniture in the Holy place is arranged so that it complements the most holy place. All believers are a reflection of what Christ Himself has accomplished. All believers depend on Him.
- Through the tabernacle the Jews had a wonderful portrayal of God's plan for their lives. This portrayal was a clear and accurate depiction of God's will for their lives. They were to come to know Him, and enjoy a relation with Him through understanding the symbology of the tabernacle and its furniture. This symbology was designed first and foremost for them in their time. Even though we may look at these things and know them even better because of our perspective through the completed canon of Scripture, they had plenty of information to understand and through it to know God and advance in His plan.

Just to make this concept clear:

People outside the plan of God have scar tissue on their souls.

Because of this, they experience spiritual blindness; their repeated cycles in the cosmic system blind them to spiritual truths from the Bible.

The cycle goes like this: they reject the person of God, and then they reject His word; the rejection of God's word demands a replacement, so they accept the cosmic counterfeits and lies provided by the devil.

People inside the plan of God have certain spiritual assets that help them to perceive the spiritual information from God. The ministry of God the Holy Spirit is an example.

The parable is designed to penetrate the armor of the cosmic counterfeits and lies. The reason for the parables is that some have at hand what they need to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, while others do not. If you do not have what you need, then you need a parable.

- b. The explanation of the consequences of rejection. "For whoever has, it will be given to him, and he will have in abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him."

- (1) Let's begin by defining the haves and the have nots in this passage.

- (a) The haves are those who have the spiritual assets related to the perception and intake of the word.
- (b) The have nots are those who reside outside of fellowship with God, and are lacking what they need to process the word of God.

- (2) The one who has will receive more, and in abundance. This is truly the blessings which are received on account of the fulfillment of the plan of God.

- (a) Spiritual blessings, especially knowing God.
- (b) Earthly blessings, like intellectual, business, professional, romantic and many other categories of prosperity.
- (c) Eternal blessings, a multitude of ways in which God can bless you forever.

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- (3) The one who does not have will lose everything.
- (a) The very fact that you are alive represents a fantastic opportunity to fulfill God's plan and experience the destiny that He has for you.
  - (b) And even greater opportunity exists for every believer in Jesus Christ.
  - (c) At the moment you are saved, your blessings for eternity are placed on reserve for you.
  - (d) If you fail to reach spiritual maturity, then you lose those blessings. What you have is taken away from you.
  - (e) You can never lose your salvation.
- c. The prophecy of the negative volition of Israel. "For this reason I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear nor do they understand, and for them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, the one saying, 'In listening, you hear and definitely do not understand; and seeing you see and do not comprehend. For the heart of the people has become dull, and with the ears they barely hear, and they closed their eyes, otherwise they would see with their eyes and hear with the ears and understand with the heart and return and I would heal them.'"
- (1) Christ begins by reiterating the reason for the parables. He talks about those who have accumulated scar tissue on their hearts so that they are spiritually blind and hard of hearing.
  - (2) So they actually listen to what Christ has to say; the sound waves of His voice enter their ears, and their ears work; their eyes receive the information from observing His miracles.
  - (3) But even with a great bombardment of information, they have no comprehension of what it really mean. They do not understand at all that this information could have a great impact on their lives.
  - (4) The quote comes from Isaiah 6:9-10.
    - (a) The translation of this passage is descriptive:
      - In the first line there is a double negative OU ME, which is very emphatic in the Greek. "Hearing you hear and definitely do not understand."
      - The same applies in the second line. It is not like they are just not paying attention; the malfunction goes much deeper than that. There is in fact no understanding whatsoever, either through the hearing or the seeing.
      - The aorist tense verb EPACHUNTHE shows the past action of the heart of the people becoming dull. But it is not in the perfect tense. This indicates that the situation is not irreversible.
      - Their hearing has become BAREOS, which is weighty, burdensome, or difficult. It is such a burden to listen!
      - Their eyes closed, EKAMMUSAN. The aorist tense once again. You close your eyes when you do not want to see something. Closing your eyes is portrayed here as a voluntary action. People who do not want the truth close their eyes to it. Perhaps it will hurt too much; perhaps they need the cover so that they can participate in their favorite category of sin.
      - Notice now the order of things in verse fifteen: (1) See with your eyes or hear with your ears; (2) Understand in your heart; (3) Turn; (4) God does the healing.
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- Now this is the true pattern of grace: (1) Academic understanding of a concept; (2) Application wisdom of the same concept; (3) Repentance, or changing of the mind; (4) God responds in grace.
- (b) The context of the quote comes from the commissioning of Isaiah.
  - (c) But it has some shadowy overtones for anyone who might be listening closely and checking their Isaiah scrolls during the time of Christ.
  - (d) Go on to verses eleven and twelve in that sixth chapter of Isaiah, and you will see what I mean: “(11) Then I said, ‘Lord, how long?’ And he answered, ‘Until cities are devastated and without inhabitant, houses are without people and the land is utterly desolate. (12) The Lord has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.’”
  - (e) In other words, this is the commission of Isaiah that is to last until the fifth cycle of discipline comes upon the southern kingdom of Judah.
  - (f) And Christ adopts the commission of Isaiah for His own, and in the same moment identifies His generation with Isaiah’s. Isaiah’s generation was not a good generation at all.
  - (g) Isaiah 28:1-2 testifies to this: “(1) Woe to the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim, and to the fading flower of its glorious beauty, which is at the head of the fertile valley of those who are overcome with wine! (2) Behold, the Lord has a strong and mighty agent; as a storm of hail, a tempest of destruction, like a storm of mighty overflowing waters, He has cast it down to the earth with His hand.”
  - (h) Or verses seven and eight of that same chapter: “(7) And these also reel with wine and stagger from strong drink: the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are confused by wine, they stagger from strong drink; they reel while having visions, they totter when rendering judgment. (8) For all the tables are full of filthy vomit, without a single clean place.”
  - (i) And in the end the northern kingdom of Ephraim was utterly destroyed, and the southern kingdom of Judah nearly so.
- (5) Your heart becomes dull through repeated cycles of cosmic involvement:
    - (a) Rejection of God’s person, like denying that He is a loving or omnipotent God.
    - (b) Rejection of God’s truth, which is a necessity after rejecting His person.
    - (c) Substitution of counterfeits and lies, to fill the vacuum left by rejecting the truth.
    - (d) The participation in the cycle of lust and unhappiness, leading to the weakening and destruction of the will.
    - (e) Each cycle of cosmic involvement dulls the heart even further, so that the condition worsens.
    - (f) It is most common for people in this category to identify that they have ‘tried religion (or Christianity) and it did not work for them.’ This is the motto of the dull of heart.
  - (6) It is worthwhile to take notice of the objective, which is stated in the end: “otherwise they would return and I would heal them.”
- d. The judgment of the disciples by Christ, they are categorized in the worst way. “And He says to them, ‘you do not understand this parable, and how will you comprehend all the parables?’”
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- (1) This was a parable that was so easy to understand. Well, Christ thought so. Notice that He did not interpret the parable the first time around; He does not do so because He thinks it is elementary in interpretation.
  - (2) But this was only the first of many parables. And if the disciples do not understand this easy and obvious one, how will they ever understand others which are potentially harder to understand?
  - (3) Furthermore, this is an entry-level parable; it is about comprehension of spiritual truth in the kingdom of God. If you do not have a grasp of grace perception mechanics, then it is moot to move on to other things.
    - (a) The two tenses of the verbs in this sentence (in Mark 4:13) work together to demonstrate the entry-level nature of this parable.
    - (b) The first verb is the perfect indicative OIDATE, which because of its meaning is translated as a present tense - 'You do not know...' So this is the present condition of the disciples' comprehensive ability.
    - (c) The second is the future active indicative of GINOSKO. These two, when taken together, show a necessary sequence. This parable must be comprehended first before going on to the others.
  - (4) This represents a hard rebuke of the disciples.
- e. The blessing of sight and hearing for some. "But blessed are your eyes that see and your ears that hear. For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see and they did not see, and to hear what you hear and did not hear." (From Matthew 13:16-17)
- (1) Here is a grand dispensational distinction; here is a great advantage to those who live during the incarnation.
  - (2) The exclamatory adjective MAKARIOI proclaims a state of blessedness on the eyes and ears of the incarnation generation.
  - (3) But the blessing is a counterpoint to Isaiah 6:9-10. It is only the eyes that see and the ears that actually hear which are blessed. There certainly must be perceptive comprehension in order the blessing to come.
  - (4) This is really the nature of much if not all blessing in the plan of God. Blessing requires comprehension.
  - (5) In order to receive your appropriate prosperity for time and eternity, you must comprehend the plan of God in all of its elements. You must have that impact comprehension that brings change to your life and especially your mental attitude.
  - (6) The rationale is given in verse seventeen - many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see and they did not see, and to hear what you hear and did not hear.
    - (a) Christ begins it with a formula: 'Truly I say to you.' The first word is AMEN. The source for our English 'Amen,' the concluding word to our prayers. He does this get their attention - to tell them that what He is about to say is of transcending importance.
    - (b) This is an irony; for the prophets of the Old Testament did not see Christ with their eyes - they had no opportunity to take it to the point of impact comprehension.
    - (c) But they longed to see it. The verb is EPETHUMESAN - this means not only desire, but beyond desire. They had an inner fire to see the face of the Messiah, and to hear
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His voice. THUMEO means to burn like incense. When you add the preposition EPI to the equation, it comes out even stronger. This is an unquenchable and fiercely hot inner fire.

- (d) And Christ does this in order to restore a proper sense of importance to the day and especially to the content of the parables.
- (e) Because the disciples had taken the first parable lightly. There is evidence to conclude that they left right in the middle of it!
- (f) So Christ rocks them a little bit here. What the prophets and righteous men of old would have given to be here now! Isaiah - Jeremiah - Hosea - David - Moses - what they would have given!

When Isaiah prophesies in his eleventh chapter, how he urgently wished to see Him every day, functioning under wisdom... “Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And He will delight in the fear of the Lord, and He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear...”

When Jeremiah in his thirty first chapter predicted a new covenant for Israel, how he earnestly desired to be there on the day that Christ gave the details in His sermon on the mount. Jeremiah would have paid attention on that day!!!

When David wrote the twenty second Psalm - he longed to be where the disciples would not tread - at the cross. How he longed to hear his Savior say the all important words... “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

When Job in the nineteenth chapter utters his reply to Bildad’s accusation, you can feel the heat of his inner fire to be at the tomb with Maria of Magdala on the morning of the third day... “I know that my redeemer lives, and at the last He will take his stand on the earth.”

### C. Christ’s Interpretation of the Parable of the Sower.

“Therefore you yourselves listen to the parable of the sower. The sower sows the word. Everyone who hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches what has been planted in his heart, in order that they might not be saved after believing. This is the seed sown beside the road. And the seed sown upon the rocky places, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, believing for a while, but he has no root in himself but is short-lived, and after tribulation comes or persecution because of the word, immediately he stumbles. And the one sown into the thorns, this is the one who hears the word, and the care of the world and the distraction of wealth or the lust concerning the rest chokes the word and he becomes unfruitful. And the seed sown upon the good earth, this is the one who hears the word and understands, who indeed bears fruit and makes a hundred, and sixty, and thirty.’ And He was saying to them, ‘The lamp does not come in order to be placed under a bushel, or under a bed, is it? Isn’t it [brought out] in order to be placed on a lampstand? For it is not a secret unless in order to be revealed, nor does a secret exist, but to come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!’ And He was saying to them, ‘See that you hear. In what measure you measure it will be measured to you and it will be increased to you. For who has, it will be given to him; and who does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.’”

1. The introduction.
  - a. Our Lord begins with an exhortation to listen. Again, He wants them to pay attention to what He has to say.
  - b. He employs the intensive use of the personal pronoun, adding HUMEIS to the built-in pronoun of the verb, translated ‘You yourselves.’

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- (1) Here is an exhortation to take personal responsibility for what is heard.
  - (2) No one can advance to spiritual maturity for you. Only you can take yourself there.
  - (3) God requires you to become autonomous in the spiritual realm, passing your own tests with the truth that is in your own soul.
  - (4) This represents the second admonishment against laziness in this passage.
  - (5) This is the truth of the matter: we all stand alone at the judgment seat of Christ; we will each of us be responsible for our own spiritual journeys.
- c. The sower sows the word; this is the key that unlocks the parable. Seed the gospel.
2. The seed on the road. “Everyone who hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches what has been planted in his heart, in order that they might not be saved after believing. This is the seed sown beside the road.”
    - a. This sort of rings a bell... ‘hearing and not understanding.’ This comes right from the quote in Isaiah.
    - b. The reason for the lack of understanding lies with the scar tissue on the heart of the hearer. It is not the fault of the evangelist that the gospel has not been understood.
    - c. This tells us that the gospel has a limited shelf life in the heart; that the devil will snatch away what is left on the road.
    - d. And it tells us that the seed of the gospel is not implanted and cannot grow until there is understanding.
    - e. It is certain that the devil has various ways of devouring the word, so that it is taken away from the attention of the hearer.
    - f. Now this is prevention on the part of Satan; at no time is this person saved, even though there is an attempt at evangelism here.
    - g. Luke 8:12 contains the phrase HINA ME PISTEUSANTES SOTHOSIN.
      - (1) HINA is a particle which introduces a purpose clause. This indicates the purpose of the snatching away.
      - (2) The aorist participle PISTEUSANTES depicts an action which occurs prior to the main verb SOTHOSIN. So the believing occurs before the not being saved.
      - (3) By placing the negative adverb ME before the participle, the negation is intended to govern the entire phrase, so that it is really ‘after not believing, they might not be saved.’
      - (4) The point is that Satan does not want this person to believe and as a result be saved.
    - h. In the original telling of the parable, Luke also included the idea of trampling with the snatching away. In no gospel is this specifically explained.
      - (1) But we can impute a good idea to it, if we are careful. Trampling is an action of disrespect.
      - (2) If your nice coat falls from the coat rack, and people tread on it, they are not respectful of your property, especially if the action is intentional.
      - (3) The devil tramples the seed on the road; it maligned by him before it can be understood.
  3. The seed on the rocks. “And the seed sown upon the rocky places, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, believing for a while, but he has no root in himself but is short-lived, and after tribulation comes or persecution because of the word, immediately he stumbles.”
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- a. Now this person believes. They are said to EUTHUS META CHARAS LAMBANON AUTON - ‘immediately receiving it with joy.’
  - b. The participle LAMBANON portrays an action simultaneous with AKOUON, ‘hearing.’ So this one hears the word and immediately, right at the same time, believes.
  - c. The prepositional phrase META CHARAS AUTON tells us that the individual in question accompanies his decision to believe in Christ with joy. He is glad to have salvation.
  - d. Just to make things really clear, Luke includes the phrase PROS KAIRON PISTEUOUSIN ‘they believe for a short while.’
    1. This is the sustaining of belief beyond salvation; they continue in grace orientation.
    2. Salvation is no longer an issue. It is sealed and secure forever at the moment of initial belief in Jesus Christ.
    3. We can define post-salvation belief here as the continuation of positive volition.
  - e. The development of root is analogous to the intake of Bible truth. Metabolized truth in the soul is the root system of the new believer.
  - f. Persecution and tribulation are the scorching suns of any believer’s life. It takes deep roots indeed to endure them.
  - g. Notice especially the phrase in Mark 4:17, DIA TON LOGON - ‘because of the word.’
    - (1) This is an ironclad guarantee; when the word is implanted, persecution is sure to follow.
    - (2) It is Satan’s plan to persecute new believers. He wants their new faith destroyed, so that they will not advance to the witness stand of maturity and give a testimony of love for God against him.
    - (3) If you are a new believer, you had better prepare yourself, because people are going to come out of nowhere and test you. Every time that someone makes a good decision to follow God, Satan immediately makes plans to shine a scorching sun on that person’s faith.
    - (4) God is faithful, and He will not allow you to be persecuted or tested in any way beyond your capability. But you must use your time in order to take hold of the grace that God has provided for that day.
    - (5) Look: if God provides the grace, and you decide against it, then God is not responsible for your spiritual demise. You are.
    - (6) The grace is provided from the very beginning, but you must take hold of it, and be persistent in its pursuit.
4. The seed in the thorns.
- a. This the straightforward one. The believer becomes distracted by the things of this world.
    - (1) There is the MERIMNAI of this world. These are worries and anxieties. There are two ways to take care of the details of life.
      - By responsibly tending to them with a relaxed mental attitude about the outcome.
      - By excessive worry, even when you are not working toward the objective.
      - The worries of life are the details of life: logistics, what people think of you or did to you, how you look, how well you are aging, how well your car is running. Anything that is tied to this world - what Mark’s gospel (4:19) calls TOU AIONAS.
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- (2) There is also the PLOUTOU. These are the riches - things above and beyond salvation.
- (a) Getting rich is a pursuit that is certainly tied to this world, since none of the worldly riches that you accumulate will go to eternity with you.
  - (b) Accumulating wealth in this world is one of the all-time emptiest of pursuits. That is, if it is accumulated for the purpose of wealth itself. God is not impressed with your accumulation of wealth or material goods. None of it can possibly add up to heavenly good.
  - (c) The accumulation of wealth and the pursuit of materialism takes time, and it adds up to nothing at all.
  - (d) But there is nothing wrong with being rich... as long as there is no compromise whatsoever in the spiritual realm.
  - (e) God actually blesses people with wealth and material gain, and others come by it through hard work without compromising their relationship with God. These blessings are meant to be enjoyed.
  - (f) Sometimes God gives material and monetary prosperity as a responsibility in giving. He usually makes it clear when there is a match between what He has given and a special ministry need.
- (3) Finally there is the remaining EPITHUMIAI. These are lusts.
- (a) This compound word designates the idea of illicit lust. The preceding categories may have legitimacy in moderation, but this is when you want something that you cannot morally have.
  - (b) Of course the pursuit of illicit and immoral gain is not only a distraction but it keeps you from fellowship with God for the duration of the pursuit.
- b. No matter what the category, all of these things add up to distraction; the time spent in pursuit of these things is not worth it, and takes away from concentration on God.
  - c. This all adds up to loss of reward at the judgment seat of Christ. And really, it doesn't matter what distracts you, because whether it is cares of this life, the pursuit of riches, or even illicit lust, it is not worth it.
  - d. The riches to be gained in your heavenly reward so exceed what you can accumulate in this life, that there is no point of comparison. The rewards of the next life are exceedingly and abundantly beyond what we could ask or imagine.
2. A summary of the bad earth.
- a. You need to understand that each of these conditions add up to bad decisions on the part of the individual who loses out.
  - b. On the part of the road-seed, there is the bad decision not to understand what is heard, and the devil takes advantage of that bad decision.
  - c. On the part of the rocky-place seed, there is the bad decision to neglect the development of the root system, so that devil can scorch them with persecution.
  - d. On the part of the thorn-seed, there is the bad decision to become distracted.
  - e. Therefore understand that the analogy compares soil with bad decisions. You make your own soil by your own decisions in life.
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- f. It is never just bad luck that someone's faith is devoured or scorched or choked out. It is their bad decision to allow the enemy to take advantage of them to the point where their faith is destroyed.
- 3. The seed on good earth.
    - a. The good earth therefore is the believer who makes good decisions and sets his or her priorities straight.
    - b. This good earth produces fruit. This is a picture of plant reproduction. Christians with their priorities straight reproduce themselves; that is, they are productive in the Christian realm because of their great success.
    - c. These people are happy, and God has blessed them with blessings appropriate to their lives. They are beacons of light to the world because of their success in fulfilling the plan of God.
    - d. But there is even greater production in the realm of blessing for time and eternity.
  - 4. Some Applications of the Parable to Evangelism.
    - a. There is in reality one evangelism strategy here, and two transition strategies.
    - b. People get fouled up in three ways:
      - (1) They listen to the gospel, but refuse to understand it.
        - They believe in the gospel, but refuse to grow and develop their newfound faith.
        - They believe in the gospel and grow some, but then they become distracted by the world.
    - c. With regard to the first category, the one thing you must do is persist in the giving of the gospel, and especially pray that God might intervene in that person's life to bring their attention to the truth again and again. Of course, you must always respect their free will, and if they do not want to listen to the gospel and are tired of the subject, then leave it until God works in their lives.

#### **D. A general explanation concerning communication from God.**

- 1. "And He was saying to them, 'The lamp does not come in order to be placed under a bushel, or under a bed, does it? Isn't it [brought out] in order to be placed on a lampstand? For it is not a secret unless in order to be revealed, nor does a secret exist, but to come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!' And He was saying to them, 'See that you hear. In what measure you measure it will be measured to you and it will be increased to you.'"
    - a. Mark 4:21 describes Christ as speaking this last part constantly; this is the force of the imperfect tense verb ELEGEN. This was not just a one time saying of Christ; He spoke this often.
    - b. So Christ often reminded His disciples of the principle of the lamp and the lampstand.
    - c. This reminder is put into action by means of two questions and then the principle that answers the questions.
      - (1) The questions work together as a team; the first question expects a 'no' answer, while the second expects a 'yes'. The combination is effective because it allows Christ's listeners to walk through the conclusion with Him.
      - (2) The principles are twins, two principles stating the same things twice. The principle applies the metaphor of the lamp and lampstand to the truth, and especially to kingdom mystery doctrine.
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- (a) The first is a silly question, designed to catch attention by its silliness: “The lamp does not come in order to be placed under a bushel, or under a bed, does it?” This creates a need for correction.
  - (b) The second is a reality question, designed to fill the void created by the first: “Isn’t it [brought out] in order to be placed on a lampstand?”
2. In this metaphor, the lamp is the kingdom mystery doctrines that Christ has just recently revealed, starting with the Sermon on the Mount. So He has lit the lamp and it is now out.
  3. How silly to light a lamp and place it under a bushel, or under a bed. The purpose of the lamp is to give light, and so it is always placed to best advantage to fulfill the purpose.
  4. For many long ages the mystery doctrine of the kingdom was a hidden secret. It existed so as to come to light, but at the proper time. God never has a secret unless He intends to reveal it.
  5. Although God the Father knew the content of the kingdom mystery doctrine a long time before it was revealed, He let Old Testament saints know of its existence in order to motivate them.
  6. This is the proper follow on to the principle of the prophet’s longing. That so many prophets longed to see the Messiah reinforces this principle.
  7. Then Christ gives his standard phrase, the one He had been shouting throughout the parable of the sower: “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!”
    - a. Because He picks this up again here, and because this was iterated throughout the Parable of the Sower, you can understand this pretty well as a device to point attention backward to that body of information.
    - b. Because the prophets longed to see what you have seen, and because God has now placed this kingdom mystery doctrine on a lampstand, pay special attention to these parables.
    - c. Christ is no longer shouting this phrase out to the crowd, but rather to His disciples and just a few others only. It is exclamatory by nature, providing the final emphasis to the necessity of the parable.

#### **E. The consequences of hearing the word.**

“For who has, it will be given to him; and who does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.”

1. And here He makes a final point: that understanding and applying kingdom mystery doctrine certainly will have eternal consequences.
  2. If a believer from Christ’s time entered eternity with his soul full of kingdom mystery doctrine and his life full of a testimony for Him, then reward would be given.
  3. If anyone from Christ’s time entered eternity without it, then there would be loss.
    - a. For the unbeliever, a permanent loss of opportunity and potential relationship with God.
    - b. For the believer, the loss of reward.
  4. 2 Timothy 2:4-5. “(4) No soldier on active duty entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. (5) Furthermore, if anyone competes in the athletic games, he does not receive a winner's crown unless he trains according to the rules.”
  5. Romans 8:18, “For I consider the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”
  6. The Order of the Morning Star is an example of that future glory, and why we must train like we are in the military now:
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- a. The order of the morning star is given to the believers who undergo evidence testing under the personal supervision of Satan, and who persevere even unto the end.
  - b. Our lord's testing in the desert is the pattern after which we follow. The royal title of Jesus Christ for the church age is "bright morning star", given for his perfect performance in the desert.
    - (1) Revelation 22:16, "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the [spiritual] root and the [physical] offspring of David, the bright morning star."
    - (2) Numbers 24:17, "A star shall come forth from Jacob." (from Balaam's prophecy).
    - (3) Matthew 2:2, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw his star in the east, and have come to worship Him."
    - (4) 2 Peter 1:19, "And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts."
  - c. By following in the footsteps of Christ all the way through evidence testing, you receive the same reward, under the title of Jesus Christ. This reward includes the following.
    - (1) A uniform of glory, Revelation 3:4,5, "But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white; for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments... and I will not erase his name from the book of life,"
    - (2) Presentation to God the Father and the elect angels in a heavenly honors ceremony during the tribulation.
      - (a) Revelation 3:5. "...and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels."
      - (b) Colossians 3:4, "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you will also be revealed with Him in glory."
    - A royal title, Revelation 2:17, "To Him who overcomes... I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it."
    - The provision of hidden manna, Revelation 2:17, "to him I will give some of the hidden manna."

The original manna was the logistical provision to Israel for the wilderness journey. Since that time, manna came to represent spiritual as well as logistical provision. Psalm 105:40 does this, as well as Ezra in Nehemiah 9:20.

It is most likely that the hidden manna depicts a category of truth that has remained hidden throughout human history.

It is a category not necessary to the spiritual function of any human being in any time in human history.

And yet, it is an astounding category of truth that is a unique privilege to know.

This is fantastic indeed, since it is a part of the blessings for eternity.

    - Co-rulership with Jesus Christ in the millennial state:
 

Romans 5:17, "For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."
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1 Corinthians 4:8, “You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and I would indeed that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you.”

2 Timothy 2:12, “If we endure, we shall also reign with Him.”

Revelation 3:21, “He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”

Revelation 2:26-27, “And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father.”

Special privileges in the millennial and eternal state.

Revelation 2:7, “To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.”

The Paradise of God is the Garden of Eden, which still exists today. It is the Garden in which Adam and Eve resided, and is now guarded by the cherubs with the flaming swords.

In this garden is the tree of life, which was forbidden to the man and woman after the fall, because it causes eternal life, Genesis 3:22. Sinful man plus eternal physical life would equal an eternity of sinfulness. God prevented this from His mercy!

Revelation 3:12, “He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and it will definitely not go out from it [the temple] anymore; and I will write upon it the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.”

In the new temple of God, there will be pillars as monuments to those who are a part of the order of the morning star.

The pillars will be permanent - they will stand forever.

On the pillar will be an inscription of God’s name, the name of the New Jerusalem (which is not yet revealed), and the new name of Jesus Christ.

Since the Greek says I will make him a pillar, with a double accusative, it indicates that the pillar will be a stature in the likeness of that believer.

So whenever people and angels come to worship in the eternal state at the eternal temple, they will be reminded of the church age believers who made it all the way to maturity and gave a fantastic testimony to God.

## **PARABLE OF THE SEED**

Mark 4:26-29

“(26) And He was saying, ‘Thus the kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the earth, (27) and he lays down and rises up night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows - how? He himself does not know. (28) The earth is productive automatically, first a blade then a stalk then a full grown wheat grain on the stalk. (29) Now whenever the crop matures, he immediately sends the sickle, because the harvest has stood together.’”

### **Introduction:**

This is the second of the kingdom parables, following the parable of the sower. Its intent is to teach a truth about the kingdom of God; the millennial kingdom which Jesus the Messiah is introducing to the

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world at this time. Remember that although this is the millennial kingdom of Christ some of these things may indeed be dispensational constants - things which are true in every era of human history. We may therefore find many truths that apply to us in these parables.

### **Interpretation.**

The imperfect tense of the verb LEGO here depicts Christ as saying this particular parable over and over. Again there is the record of repetition unto inculcation.

Christ compares the kingdom of God to a man who casts seed upon the earth. All of the verbs in this verse and the next are in the subjunctive mood. Mark does this in order to communicate the fictional nature of the parable, because the subjunctive is the mood of unreality. It delineates action that is not real. He is not talking about any man in particular, but a fictional man, an example for the sake of illustration.

The point of comparison is to the man, not to the seed. ANTHROPOS is the predicative nominative of this first sentence. So we will concentrate on the perceptions and actions of the man, and compare them to the kingdom of God.

The first thing that the man does is cast seed on the ground. Next, he lies down at night and gets up in the morning. This is a literary way to tell us that some time has past. The few days and weeks of the germination period of the seeds goes by.

Then the man comes out one morning and notices that the seeds have sprouted, and on succeeding days he sees those young sprouts grow. His perception is interesting, though. He has no clue as to how all of this has happened. From his point of view, the earth has automatically produced a blade and then a stalk and then a stalk laden with grain.

Now the verb KARPOPHOREI is in the present indicative. This indicative mood tells us that this is not hypothetical, but a general principle of plant growth. AUTOMATE means that the ground is seen as producing this plant all by itself. This is an observational truth, even though there are many more details than meets the naked eye.

But it does not matter to him how it has occurred, when the crop has matured, he goes and gets his sickle and harvests the crop.

Now the kingdom of God is like this man - not like the plants, but like the man. This cannot be the point of view of God toward the kingdom of God; God is not at all ignorant of how things work in His kingdom. Therefore, it must be the viewpoint of man, and even of believers who reside in the kingdom and observe its happenings.

The harvest then would be the vagaries of human volition as observed by anyone in the kingdom of God.

This parable follows the parable of the sower, which classifies bad and good decisions related to the kingdom of God. From the outside, we may observe that a person is distracted from the plan of God - their life is in the thorns. Or we may observe that their life is the seed sown on the road and they are refusing to understand the impact of the gospel they have heard.

But how can we know every influencing factor? Even if we may know some, we can never know the microcosm of someone's decision making. The human mind is incredibly complex. Add to it years of unique experience that no one else can experience, and you can see the difficulty in understanding the decisions that people make. Although we can observe results, it is not often that we have a clear picture of the reason. This parable exhorts us not to take concern over what we do not understand. Rather, it is up to us to do our duty.

### **PARABLE OF THE TARES**

Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43.

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**Introduction:**

Two parables have been told related to the kingdom of God; they form the immediate context for this third one. The first was the parable of the sower, where Christ related bad decisions to spiritual failure. The second was the parable of the seeds, where Christ told His followers how to deal with excuses.

Now we turn to a third parable that has a close relation to the first two. In this one, we will study the actions of the enemy related to Christ's desire to produce a spiritual population for His kingdom. This parable is more of a dispensational variable than the others, because it focuses on a group called 'sons of the kingdom,' which is pretty narrow. There is also an unfolding of certain elements of the end times which will bear a looking into.

Matt. 13:24 introduces this third parable: "He presented another parable to them, saying: 'The Kingdom of the Heavens is compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.'"

Matthew kicks off the narration with the aorist indicative of PARATITHEMI - 'present.' Christ presented another parable to them. The idea of this verb is to lay something next to someone as a gift or an offering. So Christ offers this to His disciples; He makes a formal presentation to them.

The adjective ALLEN modifies PARABOLEN. This adjective denotes another something in the same category as the first something. The something here is a parable with agriculture as its point of illustration. But also there is a spiritual comparison. The spiritual point of comparison is in the realm of evangelism, according to the proper interpretation of the first two parables.

So here is a man who sowed good seed in his field; sowing seed is of course giving the gospel.

The twenty fifth verse goes on with the narrative: "But while the men were sleeping his enemy came and sowed weeds also among the wheat and left."

TOUS ANTHROPOUS denotes men plural - the men who work for the landowner. These men are asleep when a second sowing is done.

EPISPEIRO denotes a sowing of seeds on top of the original one. What can be done? The weeds become evident after a while. They cannot possibly be noticed immediately, since they are just seeds among seeds. And once the weeds are noticed coming in among the wheat - well that's what happens in verse 26.

ZIZANIA is according to A.T. Robertson's Word Pictures of the New Testament "... 'darnel,' a bastard wheat... This bearded darnel, lolium temulentum, is common in Palestine and resembles wheat except that the grains are black. In its earlier stages it is indistinguishable from the wheat stalks so that it has to remain till near the harvest."

Verses 26-29 record the recognition of the disaster, "(26) And when the wheat grew up and bore fruit, then the weeds also became evident. (27) And the slaves of the landowner after coming forward said to him, 'Lord, didn't you sow good seed in your field?' (28) And he said to them, 'An enemy man has done this. But the slaves say to him, 'Therefore do you want us to go out and gather them up?' (29) And he said, 'No. Lest while gathering the weeds you might also root out the wheat with them.'"

So time passes and the wheat grows and the weeds are recognized. Thus a meeting ensues. The slaves of the landowner come forward with an honest question - because they did not do the sowing, the landowner did. Remember verse 24, 'a man sowed good seed in his field.' This work was done by the landowner alone, and the slaves had nothing at all to do with it. So in seeing the weeds there, the slaves are compelled to ask whether he sowed good seed.

The landowner would naturally understand their question, and would say - "Of course not." Well actually he says, 'An enemy man has done this.' The slaves would then as matter of course desire to know their responsibility. All of those weeds would add up to an awful lot of work for them, and they need to know how it is to be done. The landowner concludes that pulling the weeds will pull up the crop of wheat with them, and so he has a plan.

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The thirtieth verse contains that plan: “Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the harvesters, ‘Gather first the weeds and bind them into bundles in order to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

So it turns out that the work will not fall on the slaves at all, but rather on another group of workers altogether, the harvesters. There is some danger and loss in letting them grow together; the weeds will choke out some of the wheat as they grow. But it is better than losing the entire crop. The weeds are to be gathered and bundled and burned first, and then the wheat is gathered into the barn.

The interpretation of this parable comes in Matthew 13:36-43. Christ there identifies the elements of the parable in this way:

The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man - Christ Himself. The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom, while the weeds are the sons of the evil one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age. The harvesters are the angels. This does much for us in the way of understanding what is going on here, and how we can apply these truths.

How this parable applies to our function as ambassadors for Christ.

Again this parable concentrates on the issue of responsibility. You will notice that Christ never identifies the slaves in His interpretation. They must be human beings as well, even though they do not do the work of the harvest. Perhaps they are a category of angels who do not participate in the final harvest of mankind. The landowner is Jesus Christ, and He always plants good seed.

He plants good seed through us, His ambassadors in His absence. And He insures the goodness of the seed through the common grace ministry of God the Holy Spirit. The good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, people who because of their belief, and more than that, because of their maturity are chosen to rule with Christ during the millennium. Our Lord was at that time hoping to develop a ruling class, an aristocracy for His kingdom. Since He is royalty, He intended to make these mature believers His royal family. But there was negative volition among the Jews, and they rejected His policy. Therefore the church age began. Two timelines will help you to understand the contingency of the church age.

- a. The Jews are positive to Christ's kingdom.
    - (1) Christ dies, and pays for the sins of mankind through His death on the cross.
    - (2) He rises again on the third day, and ascends on Pentecost to right hand of the Father, where He sits down on His own exalted throne as King of kings and Lord of lords.
    - (3) The tribulation ensues shortly thereafter, and continues for its 7 required years.
    - (4) Christ returns for the second advent, and the millennium begins, with the mature Jewish believers as co-rulers with Jesus Christ.
    - (5) The millennium goes on for its 1000 years and concludes after the Gog and Magog revolution.
    - (6) The final judgment occurs, including the judgment of all unbelievers, the judgment of all Old Testament believers, and the passing through of all believers into the eternal state.
  - b. The Jews reject Jesus Christ (the historical result).
    - (1) Christ dies, and pays for the sins of mankind through His death on the cross.
    - (2) He rises again on the third day, and ascends on Pentecost to right hand of the Father, where He sits down on His own exalted throne as King of kings and Lord of lords.
    - (3) The church age follows for its appointed period of time, known only to the Father.
    - (4) The rapture of all church age believers ends the church age, and the tribulation ensues thereafter, and continues for its 7 required years.
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- (5) Christ returns for the second advent, and the millennium begins, with the mature Gentile believers from the church age as co-rulers with Jesus Christ.
  - (6) The millennium goes on for its 1000 years and concludes after the Gog and Magog revolution.
  - (7) The final judgment occurs, including the judgment of all unbelievers, the judgment of all Old Testament believers, and the passing through of all believers into the eternal state.

Jesus Christ never directly causes anyone to believe in Him or to become the sons of the kingdom; all who believe and mature do so freely and without direct cause. He does influence them through the provision of the gospel and intervention in their lives, but that is not the same as overruling volition.

The field is the world; the KOSMOS according to Matthew 13:38. In this field there are good seed and bad seed.

- a. The good seed is planted by the Son of Man, and the bad seed is planted by the devil.
- b. It is the desire of the Son of Man to harvest only the good wheat, the sons of the kingdom.
- c. But this parable has a stronger grounding in dispensationalism than the others, because of the phrase 'the end of the age.'
- d. Christ is here desiring 'sons of the kingdom,' which excludes even some believers.

The enemy man is the devil. He plants the bad seed into the world of human history. Through his system of counterfeits and lies, through his development of false necessities, the devil deceives man. As a result of the devil's activities, there are many false 'sons of the kingdom.' These false sons of the kingdom are virtually indistinguishable from the true ones. They speak the same language, have the same edifice of morality, etc. There are many today in this church age who are analogous to this. Religious and moral types who put on a personality facade that is very deceptive to their real motives and lives. Spirituality means that you have a vital relationship with God the Father through His Son Jesus Christ. Spirituality means being consistent in fellowship and fulfilling the plan of God through persistent study of God's word under your pastor.

The Satanic counterfeits are many and subtle.

- a. The counterfeit gospels.
  - (1) Mankind is perfect, and therefore does not need a savior (this for the really stupid).
  - (2) Mankind is imperfect, but can save himself. Through various systems of good works. Works of compassion, such as feeding the poor and helping the helpless. Works of religion, such as baptism, fervent prayer, feeling sorry for your sins, etc. Psychological growth and self-improvement. Asceticism, or giving up various things in life; even things that are perfectly acceptable in God's eyes.
  - (3) God does not exist, and there is no after life (communist conclusion), and therefore no need for a savior.
  - (4) Mankind needs a savior, but must add something to the saving work of Christ, such as works, asceticism, rites of passage, or schlock psychology, such as the baptism of the spirit, speaking in tongues, and other ecstatic experiences.

The counterfeit plan of God includes:

**Pseudo-purposes:** To grow psychologically; To witness to others and perpetuate Christianity; To do good works; To participate in the rituals of the church.

**Pseudo-spirituality:** Spirituality by morality, rituals, good works. mentality, asceticism, personality and charisma.

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**Pseudo-characteristics.**

- Consistency in fellowship with God is replaced by consistency in the cosmic system, 1 John 1:6, "If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth."
- Spiritual self-esteem is replaced by the personal love/personal hate binary system.
- The personal sense of destiny is replaced by dispensational ignorance or disorientation.
- Contentment independent of circumstances is replaced by unhappiness and circumstantial dependency.
- Grace orientation is replaced by humanistic orientation.
- Objective mental ability is replaced by subjectivity, emotionalism, panic, and mental disability.
- Integrity is replaced by compromise without virtue.
- Humility is replaced by human arrogance.
- Doctrinal orientation is replaced by experiential relativism.

**The historical counterfeits.**

Evolution replaces creationism.

Revisionist histories replace consensus histories.

False conclusions based on humanism replaces the concept that Jesus Christ controls history.

So Christ decides to leave the bad wheat in the world until the final harvest.

1. Why do the wicked remain on planet earth? Why do the wicked prosper?
2. Jeremiah asked this very same question in Jeremiah 12:1, "Righteous are You, O Lord, that I would plead my case with you; indeed I would discuss matters of justice with You: why has the way of the wicked prospered? Why are all those who deal in treachery at ease?"
  - a. Jeremiah was the prophet who endured the destruction of the Jewish kingdom of Judah, the southern kingdom of the divided monarchy of Israel.
  - b. He witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem, and even remained on the ruins of that great city for a while. This is where he wrote the book of Lamentations.
3. Pastor Thieme suggests three reasons for this:
  - a. Identification with an invisible hero. This is the blessing by association of the mature believer.
  - b. Logistical grace blessing from God, imputed to the divine righteousness in every believer. Even wicked believers may receive logistical grace blessing.
  - c. They are evil in an evil society, and so they prosper within the framework of that society. Because it is the devil's world, Satan has the power to bless them.
4. All three of those reasons provide testing to believers in the plan of God. You must never get your eyes on others, because it will distract you from fulfilling the plan of God.
  - a. It is a strong temptation to feel sorry for yourself as a believer who is doing the right things and see the wicked prosper.
  - b. The temptation becomes even greater when you experience lean times by yourself.
  - c. You think to yourself: "I deserve what they are getting; they do not live the same sacrificial life that I am living for God, and yet they have everything. This is unjust.!"
  - d. Principle: the wicked cannot take their blessings with them.

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- e. Principle: God will bless you with blessings in time and in eternity; it is a promise from His integrity!
  - f. Principle: with the grace assets, you are the richest person in the world.
5. So God leaves the wicked on planet earth in order to provide testing to growing and mature believers.
- a. Their blessing may become blessing for you, if you continue to focus on God's plan for you life.
  - b. Because when the wicked prosper it is a test of undeserved suffering, and it offers to do many things for you.
    - (1) They are designed to refine the testimony of the believer, in preparation for the witness stand, 1 Pet 1:6-9.
    - (2) They eliminate hidden arrogance and flaws in the character of the believer.
    - (3) They are a preview of what the believer can expect on the witness stand.
    - (4) They accelerate the spiritual growth of the believer.
    - (5) They develop spiritual muscle in the life of the believer.
    - (6) They develop personal love for God in the heart of the believer.
    - (7) The sufferings bring about great blessing from God, and therefore should be endured with a smiling face.
    - (8) It is also a good idea to keep in mind that you are suffering for the sake of the one that saved you, Philippians 1:29, "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for Him"
  - c. Should you become distracted by the prosperous wicked, you will lose your blessings for time and eternity.
    - (1) The wicked lack capacity for blessing. They do not enjoy what they have and are filled with fear about losing them.
    - (2) Death waits ominously to devour them and all the blessings that they have. Their prosperity will be completely ravaged by death.
  - d. Death has no victory over the believer in Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 15:54-55, "(54) But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory. (55) 'O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?'"

The final verses of this passage give us a reason to undertake a quick review of eschatology.

1. The purpose of the end times is to bring final glory to God in the angelic appeal trial. The end times follow the outline of the closing phases of a trial.
    - a. The tribulation forms the final arguments of Satan. It is his presentation of the earth's environment under his complete control. This will turn into an unmitigated disaster, because Satan, though the most brilliant of a brilliant race, is not capable of ruling this planet, even when everything is under his control.
      - (1) The tribulation begins with the rapture of the church. This is where all church age believers are taken from the earth and meet Jesus Christ in the physical universe. It is there that they will receive their resurrection bodies.
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- (2) The second advent of Jesus Christ ends the tribulation. The battle of Armageddon results in the total destruction of the armies of Satan, and he and his fallen angel minions are imprisoned in the Abyss. Thence follows two judgments.
- (a) The baptism of fire, which is the judgment of all unbelievers of the tribulation, both Jew and Gentile, Matthew 25:31-46; Ezekiel 20:33-48.
  - (b) The evaluation of all tribulational believers, both Jew and Gentile, Matthew 25:31-46; Daniel 12:2-3.
- b. The millennial rule of Jesus Christ forms the closing arguments of God in the angelic appeal trial.
- (1) With the fallen angels bound, and Christ together with the mature believers from the church age ruling over the planet, the environment is truly fantastic. The establishment code for the millennium has total and successful implementation.
  - (2) There is no more war, and on top of that, there is prosperity of every kind. Man and nature will live in complete harmony.
  - (3) This makes a complete rebuttal of the chaos of the Satanic attempts at perfect environment.
- c. And then there is a final judgment. At the great white throne, there are three categories of judgments.
- (1) The judgment of believers.
    - (a) All believers who lived before the incarnation, both Jew and Gentile, are judged at this time.
    - (b) All Millennial believers are judged at this time.
  - (2) The judgment of unbelievers. All unbelievers in history, except those of the tribulation, are judged at this time. Matthew 25:31-46, Ezekiel 20:32-38, Revelation 20:7-10.
  - (3) The judgment of all fallen angels at the end of the Millennium. Their sentence was passed before time began, but its execution is not carried out until the end of human history.
2. So now we have a frame of reference for the last part of what Christ says. “(41) The Son of Man will send His angels, and they will gather from His kingdom all the stumbling blocks and those who manufacture lawlessness (42) and they will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of the teeth. (43) Then the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The one who has ears, let him hear.”
- a. This is the end of the millennial kingdom, where all the unbelievers of the millennium are gathered up and judged.
  - b. They are cast into the furnace of Fire, where there will be [forever] the weeping and gnashing of teeth.
  - c. But the righteous enter into eternal bliss with the Father; they will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of the Father.
  - d. And then Christ finishes with the exhortation toward hearing.

And this is the true application of the parable: it is the business of the Son of Man to execute final judgment on all the people of the world. He has not given us that authority at all.

- 1. Blanket judgment is when you conclude that someone is beyond the point of no return.
  - 2. There is no such as that of someone who is beyond the ability of grace. God’s grace can always act as long as that someone is alive and able to comprehend truth in an academic sense.
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3. Therefore, unless the matter is a case for the establishment authorities, or within a realm of our personal responsibility, we are to stay clear of judging.
  4. The Bible issues stern warnings about judgment. Listen to a few:
    - a. Matthew 7:1-2 “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”
      - (1). You receive Divine discipline for the mental attitude sin.
      - (2) You receive Divine discipline for the verbal sin.
      - (3) You receive Divine discipline for the sin of the other person.
    - b. Romans 14:10-13, “You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: "As surely as I live," says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.' So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.”
    - c. 1 Corinthians 4:5, “Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.”
      - (1) Ultimately, the right to judge is reserved for our Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge all church age believers at the judgement seat of Christ.
      - (2). Many times, people will judge because they fear they will not be vindicated. When you have confidence in the justice of God, then this fear will be removed.
      - (3). Jesus Christ will be perfectly fair at the judgment seat. No detail will escape His attention.
      - (4). Jesus Christ is the only person who is perfectly qualified to judge the human race. He died for those sins. He, too lived a human life, and was tempted far beyond what we will ever encounter.
      - (5) When we overstep the boundaries of our legitimate right to judge, then we presume to take the place of Jesus Christ. James 4:12, “There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you--who are you to judge your neighbor?”

## PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

Matthew 13:31-32

“(31) He presented another parable to them, saying, ‘The kingdom of the heavens is like a mustard seed, which a man after taking sowed in his field; (32) which is the smallest of all the seeds but whenever it has grown is greater than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the heaven come and rest in its branches.’”

Mark 4:30-32

“(30) And He was saying, ‘How should we liken the kingdom of God, or in what way should we place it? (31) [It is] like a mustard seed, which whenever it might be sown upon the earth, though it is smaller than all of the seeds of those upon the earth, (32) yet whenever it is sown, comes up and becomes greater than all of the garden plants and forms large branches, so that the birds of the heaven are able to rest under its shade.’”

I. Introduction.

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A. Well, another parable from the agricultural frame of reference; this from the herb garden at the house and not the crop in the field. This may more properly be a city or town parable than a country parable.

B. Christ does not interpret this parable - He considers that part of it obvious, and so leaves it to the reader. But we are not left without the ability of comparison.

1. The previous parable was the parable of the weeds, where the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom.

2. In the parable of the sower, the seeds represent the gospel. But our present parable follows more closely on the weeds, and so we should take that as the principle of greater influence.

C. Again Mark uses the Greek imperfect tense of the verb 'LEGO,' 'to say.' The imperfect tense tells us that Christ spoke this parable to the disciples again and again.

1. This would account for the apparent discrepancies between Matthew's and Mark's accounts.

2. The language differs somewhat significantly between the accounts; but if they record two separate statements of the parable at about the same time, there is no difficulty at all.

## II. Exposition

D. Mark employs a combination of grammar that is called the deliberative subjunctive. Its purpose is rhetorical and it generally ponders an ethical theme. The deliberative subjunctive puts a question in the subjunctive mood.

E. This serves as a rhetorical device; a way to get your audience thinking about what you are saying.

F. This deliberative question has Christ asking His audience - 'What is the right way to illustrate the kingdom of heaven?'

G. When He goes on with the illustration of the mustard seed, you immediately assume that this is the perfect illustration of the kingdom of heaven.

H. The essence of this parable is easy.

1. The mustard seed is a small seed.

2. Surprisingly, it grows into the greatest of all the garden plants (those known to the people of Christ's geography).

3. It becomes useful to the birds as a home and for shade.

I. Let's look at some of the details.

1. The mustard seed is the smallest (MIKROTERON) of all the seeds which are upon the earth (EPI TES GES).

- a. The mustard seed was indeed the smallest in their ancient frame of reference for seeds.

- b. EPI TES GES is not necessarily a reference to the entire world; in fact, the Jews commonly referred to their country as 'the land.' The Greeks translated this phrase as TES GES.

- c. So Christ's proclamation does not cover the entire earth at all, but just that portion which encompasses the Holy Land.

2. The mustard tree is the greatest (MEIZON) of all the garden plants (LACHANON).

- a. Again Christ's proclamation is limited. The mustard plant grows to a height of 4-15 feet in the promised land, and that is under ideal conditions.

- b. This has to do with the cultivation of a house garden. The LACHANON is the sphere of the plants of the garden, and therefore does not include the plants of the field and regular agriculture.
3. Both gospels employ the verb KATASKENOO to describe the resting of the birds in the mustard plant. This means to 'camp' or 'rest.' The idea comes from the military bivouac - an overnight but not necessarily permanent resting spot.
- J. This parable is therefore a description of God's spiritual plan for the kingdom:
1. See the Review of the Beatitudes.
  2. The spiritual code for the millennium - that little bit of truth - brings forth a big and restful tree.
  3. In fact, Christ has already presented us with the restful nature of His plan; it is His yoke that is easy...
    - a. Matthew 11:28-30, "(28) Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take My yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (30) For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."
    - b. The learning yoke of Christ has to do with the rehabilitation of the soul. The soul under the cosmic system is in a burdensome slavery; thanks to rehabilitation and reestablishment of the proper relationship with God, the burden is removed and rest ensues.
  4. The mustard seed is therefore the gospel, and when it grows up it produces peace and rest in the soul.
    - a. Philippians 2:12, "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling."
    - b. Romans 5:1, "Therefore having been justified by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."
  5. Poise and psychological tranquility are key elements of spiritual maturity; they are signs of a strong personal love for God. 1 John 4:18, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love."
  6. And personal love for God is the fulfillment of the greatest commandment, Deuteronomy 6:5, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

## THE REMAINING PARABLES

Matthew 13:33-35, "(33) He spoke to them another parable: the kingdom of the heavens is like leaven, which a woman after taking hid it into three pecks of meal, until it was all leavened. (34) Jesus spoke all these things in parables to the crowds and apart from parables He spoke nothing to them, (35) so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 'I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been hidden since the foundation of the world.'"

Mark 4:33-34, "(33) And He was speaking the word to them with many such parables as they were continuously able to hear. (34) But He was not speaking to them apart from the parable, but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples."

Matthew 13:44-52, "(44) The kingdom of the heavens is like a treasure which has been hidden in the field, which a man after finding hid, and from his joy goes and sells all which he has, and buys that field. (45) Again, the kingdoms of the heavens is like a merchant man seeking fine pearls; (46) and after finding

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one pearl of great value, after going forth he has sold everything which he had, and he bought it. (47) Again the kingdom of the heavens is like a dragnet which after being cast into the sea and after gathering [fish] of every kind; (48) which after it has been filled, after being dragged up on the beach and after sitting down they gathered the good into a container, but the rotten they threw out. (49) So also it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the evil from the midst of the righteous (50) and cast them into the furnace of the fire; in that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of the teeth. (51) Do you understand all these things?' They said to Him, 'Yes.' (52) But He said to them, 'For this reason every scribe after becoming a disciple in the kingdom of the heavens is like a man who is the head of a household, who casts out from his treasury new things and old things.'

### I. An outline

- A. The parable of leaven.
- B. Christ's strategy for the parables.
  - 1. As many as the people could hear.
  - 2. A full explanation to His disciples in private.
- C. The fulfillment of a prophecy.
- D. The parable of the hidden treasure.
- E. The parable of the pearl of great value.
- F. The parable of the dragnet.
  - 1. The parable.
  - 2. The explanation of the parable of the dragnet.
- G. Christ's questioning of His disciples and their brief reply.
- H. The last parable - the parable of the Scribe.

### II. The exposition.

- A. The parable of the leaven.
    - 1. "He spoke to them another parable: the kingdom of the heavens is like leaven, which a woman after taking hid it into three pecks of meal, until it was all leavened."
    - 2. The leaven is the point of comparison; not the woman or the meal. The leaven is hidden into three pecks of meal.
    - 3. ALEUROU is the wheat flour, or meal used in making the bread of the ancient world.
    - 4. The word peck comes from the Greek SATA, interestingly enough.
      - a. The word itself denotes a certain measure of grain equal to about 12 quarts of dry measure. It was a pretty fair amount of grain, if you consider 36 quarts dry measure of meal. This is more than a bushel in our U.S. units of measure.
      - b. But its similarity to SATAN cannot be missed. It would be ludicrous and irresponsible to say that the kingdom of the heavens is placed inside of Satan himself. There is nothing personal in this paranomasia, or play on words.
      - c. But listen: here is a picture of how the kingdom of God influences the devil's world.
      - d. The kingdom is the leaven, which operates through all believers with momentum, but is especially effective through mature believers.
    - 5. When the word of God operates in the soul of a believer there is a strong dynamic toward affecting others.
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- a. As a growing and mature believer, you may have a profound affect on the world around you.
  - b. You may do so through your proficiency and integrity and courage in a job that could change the course of history.
    - (1) It could be in the area of technology; you may achieve a technological or perhaps a medical breakthrough that causes many lives to change for the better.
    - (2) It could be in the area of statesmanship; you may achieve diplomatic or legislative significance.
    - (3) It could be in the military realm. You do not have to be a high ranking officer or NCO to change the course of a battle or a war. God simply has to implement His perfect sense of timing for you as a soldier to change history.
  - c. You may do so by saying the right thing in the right way at the right time.
    - (1) You may be the cause of many becoming mature; you may be the cause of many who come to a belief in Jesus Christ.
    - (2) You may change the course of history because someone listened to your establishment viewpoint, and decided to stay the course with regard to marriage, family, and nation.
  - d. You may do so because God blesses you by association, and so your neighborhood, and your city, and your country might receive blessing because of your dogged determination to advance to spiritual maturity. Job 1:1-2:6 cf. 42:10-17.
    - (1) Those who love God the most cause magnificent blessing to distribute around them.
    - (2) Although few will realize it in the human realm, the angelic realm remains entirely informed concerning human affairs and human blessings.
6. God energizes change through the course of human events. He disciplines and blesses nations in the devil's world, but mainly through the existence and function of believers.
- a. The blessings and disciplines are done through impersonal love, and designed to focus thought on the spiritual issues of a person's life.
  - b. The objective of divine intervention in human history and human lives is to change a life or many lives by making people think about the spiritual issues of their lives.
  - c. But they must have influence from others in order to make the change. Someone must provide information so that the change is in fact available.
- B. Christ's strategy for the parables. "And He was speaking the word to them with many such parables as they were able to hear, but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples. So that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 'I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been hidden since the foundation of the world.'"
1. Mark employs the Greek phrase TOIAUTAIS PARABOLOAIS POLLAIS - many such parables.
    - a. Christ spoke many parables just like the ones we have been sampling. As a matter of fact, Matthew's gospel makes the record complete.
    - b. This is a great example of why more than one gospel writer was an excellent idea on the part of God the Holy Spirit.
    - c. Had it been up to Mark, the parables recorded after this point would not have been a part of the canon of Scripture.
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- d. Whereas Mark decided to keep the narrative moving, Matthew thought it best to provide a complete chronicle of the information.
2. Next is the phrase KATHOS EDUNANTO AKOUEIN - just as they were continuously able to hear. This too is an important concept in this phase of Christ's ministry.
    - a. The imperfect tense of DUNAMAI shows an ongoing action. Christ wanted them to take in as much as they were continuously able to hear.
    - b. This is a stepped up operational pace for the ministry of Christ, and it sets a standard for every ministry in history.
    - c. The operational pace of a ministry should have the same objective as here.
    - d. Since soul rehabilitation is of paramount importance, and inculcation toward the fullest love for God, and since the means of these great things is the intake and application of God's word - what is stopping any ministry from emulating this virtuous course?
  3. To His disciples He explained the nature of these parables in private.
    - a. They were the ones with a heightened interest in the meaning of the parables. Remember, the crowd was fulfilling the prophesy of Isaiah about hearing and seeing and not understanding.
    - b. But His disciples had a deeper interest in the principles of the kingdom, and so they received the full explanation.
    - c. Until anyone from the crowd expressed a further interest, they would receive no further explanation.
    - d. Perhaps some of the crowd figured out the meanings of the parables for themselves. A parable may be deciphered without too much trouble...
  4. Matthew is quick to point out that Christ's parabolic ministry is the fulfillment of a prophecy from Psalm 78:2: "So that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 'I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been hidden since the foundation of the world.'"
    - a. Matthew is often motivated to do this very thing, because he has a Jewish readership.
    - b. It is Matthew's objective to have his Jewish readers accept that Jesus was their Messiah.
    - c. By showing time and again that Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in Christ, Matthew leads them effectively to that conclusion.
    - d. With these parables, Christ is revealing things which have been hidden since the foundation of the world.
    - e. The kingdom of God is Jesus Christ's direct rule over mankind; it is His millennial kingdom.
    - f. There are two policies for that kingdom:
      - (1) A spiritual code, which was unveiled in the beatitudes.
      - (2) An establishment code, which was unhidden in the remainder of the Sermon on the Mount.
    - g. Those policies were conceived by God the Father at the foundation of the world.
      - (1) Matthew employs the phrase APO KATABOLES KOSMOU in order to do this - literally, 'from the foundation of the world.'
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(2) KATABOLES is foundation, and it concentrates entirely upon the original creation of planet earth, some 4.5 billion years ago.

(3) God made this planet for the angels, Job 38:4-11. Long before the advent of man, while God was making this planet for a superior race of creatures, God conceived the plan of the millennial kingdom of His Son.

(4) Long before the fall of Satan, and long before the fall of Adam in the Garden, God wanted His Son to rule this planet in glory.

(5) Although the millennial rule of Christ will serve as the perfect counterpoint to the chaos of Satan's tribulation, it would have brought glory to God's name even without the fall of creatures.

h. The original context of the 78th Psalm adds further light to our passage.

(1) The Psalm is about the guidance of God even to an unfaithful people. At 72 verses, it is one of the longest of the Psalms.

(2) "(1) Listen, O my people, to my instruction; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, (3) which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us."

(3) But you can see there is a difference, because the Psalm seems to indicate that the information was well known to the people of Israel, while Matthews seems to say that it has lain hidden since the foundation of the world and only just then revealed in Christ.

(4) Verse five of the Psalm tells of the source of the information and thereby gives a clue: "For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should teach them to their children..."

(a) There are two beginnings to the revelation in this Psalm: the first is with Jacob, who became Israel. The second is with the Law, which came through Moses in 1400 BC

(b) These denote the beginning of a new dispensation - the dispensation of Israel.

(c) And here is what you should concentrate on: the information regarding the dispensation of Israel had lain hidden since the foundation of the world until it was revealed in Jacob and in the Law of Moses.

(d) For that reason, it was a parallel to the kingdom doctrines revealed by Jesus Christ.

(5) All dispensation information was conceived by God at the foundation of the world.

(a) It is only at the onset of that dispensation that the information is set forth to the world.

(b) So Matthew is saying that Christ is at the beginning of a brand new dispensation; that He is the Messiah, and that He has brought His kingdom.

C. The parable of the hidden treasure, Matthew 13:44, "The kingdom of the heavens is like a treasure which has been hidden in the field, which a man after finding hid, and from his joy goes and sells all which he has, and buys that field."

1. Some time ago, a treasure was hidden in a field. Someone comes and finds it, and before he can claim the treasure he must own the property. So he goes and sells all his possessions so that he might buy the field. You have heard this story many times with many different variations.

2. In Perry Eberhart's classic book, *Treasure Tales of the Rockies* there are more 125 tales of lost mines and treasures centered in the state of Colorado alone.

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3. Some treasure tales are true, a very few are enough to produce hundreds and thousands of stories of lost treasure.
  4. So here is this nervous, nervous man, who finds a treasure which has been hidden in a field. So he hides it again, and then buys the field. Then the treasure is legally his.
  5. Well, now, the kingdom of the heavens is like that treasure.
    - a. It is so valuable that it is worth more than everything you have.
    - b. And as a matter of fact, many people do give up all they have in order to purchase the field that contains that treasure.
  6. The value of the kingdom of the heavens is beyond all worldly wealth. Consider:
    - a. The wilderness temptation of Jesus Christ.
      - (1) The three temptations of Christ in the wilderness follow the three failures of Israel in their wilderness journey:
        - (a) They failed the manna test, which was a rejection of the logistical provision of God.
        - (b) They failed the golden calf test, which was an embracing of idolatry. As a result, Moses broke the tablets of the Law which God had given.
        - (c) They failed the test of Aaron's rod, which was a rejection of divinely appointed authority.
      - (2) Christ was tempted after this same pattern:
        - (a) He was tempted with regard to the stones and the bread: Luke 4:2-4, "And He ate absolutely nothing during those days; and at the concluding of them, He hungered. And the devil said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, speak to this stone that it might become bread.' And Jesus answered him, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'"
        - At the end of forty days of eating absolutely nothing, our Lord was very hungry. It was the kind of hunger where all you can think about is food. At forty days without food, even the healthiest of human beings is at the extreme limit of endurance.
        - The temptation itself is related to the principle of kenosis; Christ does not have the authority to do this thing apart from the power and timing of the Spirit.
        - The devil knows that the Divine Power is available, but that its use would invalidate the purpose of the incarnation. Again and again Satan says this about the stones; this temptation lasted longer than just a moment.
        - In the later temptation His Scriptural reply is abbreviated, as though He is at the very end of His endurance, or because it is not necessary to repeat the whole thing.
        - This test relates to the logistical test of Israel:
          - The Israelites had something to eat every day. Manna was the world's greatest health food. It was the same thing, but it was something.
          - Christ had nothing to eat for forty days and forty nights. Therefore, His test was far greater than what they endured. He ate the same thing every day: Nothing.
          - Placing the manna inside the ark of the covenant foreshadowed this test of our Lord. It commemorated Christ's victory in the desert, and it looked forward to the redemption of this failure at the cross, as represented by the mercy seat.

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- The essence of the temptation had to do with the temptation to use His divine attributes or rely on what God provided His humanity.
  - The very reason for the incarnation would have been undermined and destroyed had Christ given in here. The cross and the Christian way of life would have instantly become meaningless.
  - Note that Christ quotes from Deuteronomy 8:3.
  - The context of this verse is Moses' final exhortation to the children of Israel before their occupation of the promised land.
  - All three of Christ's replies will come from this speech.
  - These three things denote readiness for the blessings of the land of milk and honey:
    - First, there is worship of the one true God and abstinence from idolatry. This is personal love for God.
    - Second, there is humble acceptance of the circumstances of your life, good or bad, and acceptance of delegated human authority, good or bad.
    - Third, there is a devotion to the word of Truth, and acceptance of God's logistical grace.
  - This scripture was originally learned and inculcated by Christ, probably at a very young age.
  - At this appropriate time, the Spirit recalled this passage into Christ's spiritual frame of reference, His human spirit. Christ instantly understood the issue.
  - Now the issue remained: Would He apply what had been recalled? The answer is of course. He even quotes the passage directly to the devil.
  - Deuteronomy 8:1-10, "All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to give to your forefathers. And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. And He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live on bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. Thus you are to know in your heart that the Lord your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son. Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land where you shall eat food without scarcity, in which you shall not lack anything; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you."
- (b) Luke 4:5-8, "And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, 'I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.' And Jesus answered and
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said to him, 'It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'"

- There is only one instance of temptation here. The show occurred in one moment of time. Ahem, he did not want Christ to look too closely. Again the used car salesman analogy.

- Christ would be given delegated authority from Satan over all these kingdoms, along with the glory of them. Let me point out that the glory of the devil's world is only a veneer.

- The enemy did not receive the kingdoms of the world because of meritorious service. He deceived Adam, and received the authority because of Adam's irresponsible sin.

- All of the kingdoms of the world would belong to Christ at the right time, and only when His chosen people would accept Him as the Messiah.

- This particular condition was not yet fulfilled, and in fact the early indicators were not looking good. In other words, this was attacking Christ at a potential weak spot. The greatness of the world made the temptation all the more agonizing.

- That Christ would continue in poverty for the rest of his life is a testimony to his fantastic resolve. Part of this test had to do with timing, and part of with idolatry. It harkens back to the failure of the golden calf.

- Christ's solution to this problem comes from Deuteronomy 6:13. Let's read that passage beginning in verse 10. "Then it shall come about when the Lord your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you great and splendid cities which you did not build, and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you shall eat and be satisfied, then watch yourself, lest you forget the Lord who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall fear only the Lord your God; and you shall worship Him, and swear by His name. You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, for the Lord your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of the Lord your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth."

- Note that the blessings of the Promised Land are neither earned nor deserved. Yet they are given freely by God.

- The offer from Satan is something similar, but infinitely less because of the object of worship. The satisfaction that comes from a relationship with God is so great as to add to one's appreciation and enjoyment of the attendant blessings. In the worship of idols, all the things turn to dust.

- Christ applies the perfect passage for this specific temptation, another great testimony to the work of the Spirit and the level of inculcation that Christ has reached.

(c) Luke 4:9-12, "And he led Him to Jerusalem and stood Him upon the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; for it is written, bear You up, Lest You strike Your foot against a stone.' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'It is said, You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

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- Note that in this test the enemy is using Scripture against Christ. It is an oft-used ploy, and it seldom fails. This points out the necessity for a prepared pastor to prepare you.
  - The enemy quotes Psalm 91 in the temptation. Verses 11 and 12 are quoted but taken out of context. The whole Psalm goes like this, “He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you make the Most High your dwelling - even the Lord, who is my refuge - then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation.’”
  - This Psalm is about trust in God, and how God responds to those who love Him.
  - Especially pertinent is the conditional clause of verse 9: “If you make the most high your dwelling” This means that the following verses depend on the fulfillment of this condition.
  - Christ could not demand that God send his angels to cushion up his fall... that would be putting God to the test, as what happened in the wilderness at the waters of Meribah.
  - This test appears to be about the establishment of Christ's earthly authority. A good miracle in front of thousands of temple worshippers including the most important men in Israel would well establish Christ's authority among the Jews.
  - How soon they forget. Christ was only forty days before the object of the triple miracle of His baptism. The heavens split open; the voice of God spoke; the Spirit descended in the form of a dove. Yet this miracle, probably in front of those same leaders who were now below in the temple court, did not convince the people to follow Christ.
  - The spiritual gift of miracles would establish Christ's authority at the proper time. This was not that time. The gift of miracles functions under the sovereignty of the Spirit so that He chooses the time the place and the miracle to be performed.
  - The devil is trying to promote Christ before God could promote Him. The devil is attempting to foist onto Christ an Aaron's rod that budded scenario. He is attempting to do so by quoting Scripture that sounds right.
  - Christ rightfully sorts this one out, and quotes Deuteronomy 6:16. The full passage through verse 19 goes like this: “Do not test the Lord your God as you did at Massah. Be sure to keep the commands of the Lord your God and the stipulations and decrees
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he has given you. Do what is right and good in the Lord's sight, so that it may go well with you and you may go in and take over the good land that the Lord promised on oath to your forefathers, thrusting out all your enemies before you as the Lord said."

- Again this is a quote from Moses final speech in preparation for the second generation to enter the promised land.
- This time it was done right by Christ. He passed the tests that Israel failed.
- In a completely appropriate way, the three items in the ark of the covenant represent both the failure of Israel and the triumph of Christ.
- Christ not only paid for our sins, but He also produced the righteousness which would be imputed to us at salvation.
- In producing that righteousness Christ established a way of solving problems which He would leave as a heritage for all church age believers.

(3) Christ's wilderness temptations are a reminder that He was offered logistics, prosperity, and success at the compromise of His integrity and relationship with God. This He could not do. But as a result of His faithfulness to God, there is reward.

(4) Philippians 2:5-11, "(5) Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, (6) who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. (8) Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (9) For this also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, (10) so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, (11) and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

(5) Hebrews 12:1-2, "(1) Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, (2) fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

b. Romans 8:18, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

c. 1 Peter 1:7, "in order that your testing of faith, much more valuable than gold (which being refined even through the testing of fire) might be found unto praise and glory and honor in the revelation of Jesus Christ;"

7. We can categorize the treasure of the kingdom of the heavens in the following way:

a. Blessings for time:

(1) Spiritual Blessings.

(a) Spiritual blessing means maximum spiritual function and awareness. Spiritual blessing means maximum use of the problem solving devices provided by God for spiritual adulthood.

(b) Your relationship with God is fantastic and is based upon a tremendous confidence that, while you have never seen God, you know Him and understand Him as He has revealed himself in Bible truth.

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- (c) You have a relationship with self that is honest and virtuous. This means that your ability to evaluate yourself is functioning at its maximum potential. This means that you are able to recognize your own limitations and adapt your life to them.
  - (d) You have maximum production in Christian service.
  - (e) Maximum function of your spiritual gift.
  - (f) You have a fantastic personal sense of destiny, and you are able to related the events of your life to the angelic conflict.
  - (g) Maximum virtue and God-centered vindication instead of selfrighteousness.

(2) Worldly Blessings.

- (a) Establishment prosperity includes the blessings of privacy and freedom; the enjoyment of both life and property; protection from crime, reprisal, violence, and vindictiveness from others; contentment under national disaster; and acceptance by one's own peers, whether they like you or not.
- (b) Professional prosperity is maximum success or efficiency in a profession, whether law, medicine, engineering, science, military, teaching, law enforcement, athletics, art, music, literature, etc.
- (c) Business prosperity, means success in business as an owner or an executive of a large corporation; or where pertinent, success as a salesman, administrator, laborer, etc.
- (d) Social prosperity is the possession of loving, faithful, reliable, and stable friends, and maximum enjoyment of your relationships with them. It is the ability to handle all sorts of social situations. Your great happiness and enthusiasm for life is expressed both vocally and in silence with friends.
- (e) Mental prosperity is the ability to concentrate; to organize both your thinking and your life; to synthesize, to analyze; mental courage; the function of wisdom in the exercise of the intellect; the development of common sense; and an excellent sense of humor. Mental prosperity includes freedom from the mental sins of fear, worry, and anxiety. The development of normality in life comes from thinking objectively. You will become more observant and aware of others, and therefore not do the things that hurt them. You will have a relaxed mental attitude and a true sense of humor.
- (f) Cultural prosperity is maximum capacity for good entertainment; the enjoyment of the best in music, art, literature, drama, history, and whatever your hobbies, from gardening to astronomy.
- (g) Health prosperity is given to some mature believers. But if you have violated too many principles of health already, you may not have good health, but you will have the ability to cope with your lack of good health. This prosperity means nervous energy and nervous stability, though not necessarily freedom from pain. You can be in good health and have pain.
- (h) Romantic prosperity can mean a wonderful relationship with a member of the opposite sex. It means freedom from mental attitude and verbal sins, which are the areas that destroy romance much more than the obvious overt sins of unfaithfulness and adultery. Romantic prosperity is perpetuated under all circumstances of life.

(3) Blessing by association.

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- (a) The spiritual periphery refers to those associated with the mature believer in the local church, prayer meeting, prep school, mission board, or in some Christian service organization.
- (b) The family periphery refers to those associated with the mature believer as husband, wife, father, mother, children, relatives, and even pets.
- (c) The social periphery refers to friends associated with the mature believer.
- (d) The geographical periphery refers to those associated with the mature believer in his neighborhood, city, county, state, or nation.
- (e) The professional or business periphery refers to those associated with the mature believer in business, in schools, on athletic teams, medical clinics, law firms, law enforcement organizations, engineering firms, banks, corporations, symphony orchestras, and military organizations.
- (f) There is blessing by association after death. This is called heritage blessing. Loved ones who are left behind receive the greatest insurance policy which is provided by association with the mature believer after his death. Blessing by association continues after the death of the mature believer; it extends to the next generation, and sometimes to the third generation.
- (g) National Impact of the Invisible Hero. The overflow of wisdom from the person in spiritual maturity often lands in the national arena. God has a way of placing mature believers in some rather spectacular places.
- Joseph, Moses, and Daniel are three very good examples of mature believers having national impact.
  - In each case, God placed them where they had a direct effect on the Pharaoh or king.
- (h) International Impact of the Invisible Hero. While mature believers live in client nations, client nations in time of spiritual prosperity send out missionaries.
- Missionaries evangelize foreigners in their native lands, and set up churches from those gospelizing efforts. Those churches grow and produce mature believers, so that there is now an effective basis for impact within that country. Because of the missionary, there has been international impact.
  - But statesmen and military men and businessmen may all also have impact by interacting with foreigners. You may also have international impact by evangelizing a foreigner on your soil; when they return to their native land, they bring the gospel and the plan of God with them. This was the international impact of Solomon on the Queen of Sheba, and Philip on the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts chapter eight.
- (i) Angelic Impact of the Invisible Hero.
- By advancing to the witness stand in the angelic appeal trial, and giving an accurate testimony under demonic cross-examination, the mature believer has wonderful impact in the angelic realm.
  - Angelic impact is the greatest category of blessing by association, and is fantastically rewarded in time and eternity.

b. Blessings for eternity.

- (1) Many of the blessings for time may be transferred into eternity. When they are, they are greatly multiplied.
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(2) The greatest blessing of eternity is the removal of the veil between the believer and God. 1 Corinthians 13:12, “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

(3) And yet there are many more blessings that have to do with recognition: because you have been an invisible hero in this life, God makes you a visible hero in the next. Mature believers attain instant celebrity status in the eternal kingdom.

(a) As a result, they wear crowns and pure white garments; they have statues in the eternal temple and are presented to God by Jesus Christ in a special honors ceremony; they have special privileges to the paradise of God and the tree of life.

(b) And all of these things are eternal and never pass away. You have become a hero forever.

D. The parable of the pearl of great price, Matthew 13:45-46, “ (45) Again, the kingdoms of the heavens is like a merchant man seeking fine pearls; (46) and after finding one pearl of great value, after going forth he has sold everything which he had, and he bought it.”

1. This one is remarkably like the last, but is included by Christ in the same speech for emphasis.

2. One particular note is that the merchant goes to the point of no return; he has sold everything which he had. The perfect tense of ΠΙΠΡΑΣΚΟ clearly demonstrates that he has irrevocably sold everything of quality in his possession.

3. The relative pronoun of quality is ΗΟΣΑ. It shows that he has not sold all in his possession but everything of quality. In reality, he has had the ancient equivalent of a garage sale.

4. The key note of these two parables strikes the same: something valuable must be exchanged for the greater gain. Let’s examine the potential sacrifices related to the spiritual life.

a. Time. It does take a daily investment of time to study the word and pray. Furthermore, it takes time to operate in Christian service.

b. Sin. Since the realm of sin is forbidden, all matters of sin must be surrendered. In essence you must give up the devil’s system in your life.

c. The laws of Christian behavior.

(1) Christians are called upon to have a higher standard of behavior when they are around other people. Two categories of human beings are affected:

(a) Unbelievers.

(b) Weaker believers.

(2) As ambassadors, we represent the kingdom of heaven to other human beings, who are not in the plan of God, whether believers or unbelievers.

(3) So that no ill might be spoken against our home country, the kingdom of heaven, we are asked to give up certain things while in their presence.

(4) So that no one outside of the plan of God might use our behavior as an excuse to stay outside, we are asked to give up certain things while in their presence.

(5) Although nothing specific is mentioned, anything that is not a sin, and yet may be considered objectionable are to be surrendered. Naturally sin should be avoided.

d. Loss of esteem in the world’s eyes. Being a Christian means enduring ridicule for your faith. Especially during times when Christians have stained their own reputations through degeneracy. In times like these, Christians must endure prejudice.

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- e. Lifestyle versus priorities. There are certain legitimate functions of lifestyle that can be distracting to the priorities of the Christian. There are hobbies and recreational pursuits that can distract; there are career paths that are actually destructive to spiritual growth.  
Even geographical factors may cause a legitimate distraction.
  5. But in exchange for this, we may pursue a Christ-like life, and leave behind:
    - a. Guilt and regret with reference to sin.
    - b. Fear and worry from many causes.
    - c. The internalization of stress which leads to health and even mental health problems.
    - d. Anger and bitterness about your handicaps and difficulties in life.
    - e. Injustice, because of the guarantee of vindication which we have received from.
  6. And in exchange for this we gain all of the rewards I have mentioned above. The relationship with God through Jesus Christ is a pearl of great price, but the price is much more than worth it.
- E. The Parable of the Dragnet, Matthew 13:47-50, “(47) Again the kingdom of the heavens is like a dragnet which after being cast into the sea and after gathering [fish] of every kind; (48) which after it has been filled, after being dragged up on the beach and after sitting down they gathered the good into a container, but the rotten they threw out. (49) So also it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the evil from the midst of the righteous (50) and cast them into the furnace of the fire; in that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of the teeth.”
1. Matthew’s employment of the aorist participle gives maximum dramatic effect. All of these participles (casting, gathering, filling, dragging, sitting) lead up to the main verbs, which are gathering and throwing out.
  2. Matthew is repeating what He remembers from Christ’s layout of the parable. It is in reality Christ’s dramatization. All of the aorist participles are the every day details of the fisherman’s life. And remember the setting of these parables - Christ is standing in a boat and preaching to those on shore. This parable is therefore an excellent match to the scene and to the audience.
  3. So the fishermen cast a dragnet on the sea and gather fish of every kind. The net is then full and dragged up on the beach. The fishermen sit down and gather the good fish into a container but the rotten they threw out.
  4. This parable reiterates the truth of the parable of the weeds, the interpretation of which occurs in Matthew 13:36-43.
  5. But here is a strong reminder that there is a judgment at the end of the age, and that we will be responsible for our decisions. This is the flip side to the idea of reward.
    - a. Yes, there is reward for those who love God; but here is a strong warning from our Lord - that the unbelievers of the age are cast into the furnace of fire.
    - b. This is the end of the millennial kingdom, where all the unbelievers of the millennium are gathered up and judged.
    - c. They are cast into the furnace of Fire, where there will be [forever] the weeping and gnashing of teeth.
    - d. But the righteous enter into eternal bliss with the Father; they will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of the Father.
    - e. Imagine the elect angels doing this thing. They have endured the prehistoric angelic conflict and seen billions of years of degeneracy; they have also endured the thousands of
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years of the angelic appeal trial in human history. They have always stood for what was right, and they are by the side of God always.

- (1) But there is significance here; the angels have to do this, and it is not done directly by God.
- (2) At first thought it seems a grim and even terrible duty. But whenever God gives a responsibility it is so that His creatures can gain an appreciation for Him. The angelic creatures will at this moment gain a great lesson in divine responsibility for creatures.
- (3) The elect angels will know many of these unbelievers by name and by reputation. Perhaps they participated in their lives in some direct manner. There is no pleasure in this duty; the casting away represents no failure on the part of God, but rather the end result of a lifetime of negative volition. But God is not willing that any should perish, and is not pleased with joy when they do.
- (4) It pleases God to do His duty, even when that duty is terrible. Our execution of criminals under the principle of capital punishment is the closest that we human beings will ever come to this responsibility.
- (5) This also connects the judgment of humanity with the angelic conflict, and points to the stark reality of that conflict.

F. The Final Parable, Matthew 13:51-52, “(51) Do you understand all these things?’ They said to Him, ‘Yes.’ (52) But He said to them, ‘For this reason every scribe after becoming a disciple in the kingdom of the heavens is like a man who is the head of a household, who casts out from his treasury new things and old things.’”

1. Christ is very earnest to make His disciples understand these things, and in verse 51 He double checks their understanding.
  2. He requires honesty about their spiritual growth, so that He can assess whether He needs to communicate more information on the subject of the Kingdom of Heaven.
  3. The disciples evaluate themselves and all say that they know the information.
  4. But their reply is so laconic that it seems a little suspicious. They use the one word answer NAI - ‘Yes.’ Like a teenager’s one word answer, this could mean trouble. They understand, but they have no great impulse to discuss the information. Hmmm.
  5. Strengthening this suspicion is Matthew’s employment of the adversative conjunction DE. Since this immediately follows the disciples’ answer, it seems that Christ is aiming this last parable at them and specifically their too quick and too short reply.
  6. This parable concentrates on the Scribes; perhaps there were a few present in the small circle who listened to these parables.
  7. A scribe who becomes a disciples is like the head of a household, an OIKODESPOTE. This head of the household is an ANTHROPOS, in contrast with Matthew 13:27, where the head of the household is the Son of Man, Jesus Christ (as interpreted in verse 37).
  8. The OIKODESPOTE is the owner and ruler of the house. Although we have developed a negative way of thinking about a despot, that is not necessarily included in the original.
  9. The owner of the house goes through his treasury, and casts out new things and old things. He is getting rid of everything. Perhaps if you supplant the word ‘basement’ or perhaps ‘attic’ for the word treasury, you will have a better picture of the idea.
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10. The home owner just wants the attic or basement or storage area clean. This is human nature; suddenly it does not matter whether the thing in there is new or old; it **MUST** go! Even new things of value are tossed out for the sake of cleanliness.
  11. Well now this picture describes the repentant scribe just right, and indeed any repentant person coming from a legalistic background.
  12. In cleaning the attic of their soul, they are prone to discard the valuable things of old. Think of a moral scribe who casts out his morality as a part of the house cleaning of repentance; think of an expert in the Law of Moses who tosses out his knowledge of the Scriptures. Of course there are many valuable pieces of knowledge that the Scribe could safely retain as parts of his every day spiritual life.
  13. The Scribe would need to switch his motivation, and make a few rearrangements with regard to doctrine; he would need to revitalize his spiritual walk so that he communicated to God much more often. But throw everything out? Not necessary; even foolhardy.
  14. The Gentile, the one who is locked into the lascivious lawlessness side of the spiritual realm and who has little or no prior knowledge of God, this one must throw out much more.
  15. Now how is this parable the response to Christ's disciples too quick reply to His question?
    - a. They have responded too quickly, perhaps, for His taste, and He is unsure of the honesty of their statement.
    - b. He is obviously looking at some former Scribes and legalists as He makes this statement.
    - c. And this reply is like saying, "You think you know everything but you don't."
    - d. The former Scribes in this audience are prone to have thrown all their knowledge out of the attic of their brains. Therefore if they say they have understood anything, it is a danger that they have understood nothing. Christ wants them to think again.

### **III. A Summary of the Parables and Their Meaning.**

- A. The parable of the seeds. "An evangelist goes out to evangelize. Sometimes the gospel goes to those who are not interested, and refuse to perceive the information beyond the point of polite listening, if that. Soon they have forgotten they ever heard it, and refuse to listen any more. Sometimes the gospel goes to someone who immediately receives it with joy, but refuses to grow; persecution comes on account of their faith, and God allows the persecution because they have had a fair amount of time in which to prepare for it. Their persecution destroys their faith, and they are Christians who turn out to have no effect on the world. Sometimes the gospel goes to those who receive it and even grow in the initial phase of their walk with God. But later they become distracted by the many cares of this world, and so they fall away from their relationship with God. And then there are those few who take their faith seriously and keep their priorities straight; these are the ones who fulfill the plan of God, and as mature believers have a tremendous impact on the world around them. Through them many come to believe and advance.
  - B. The parable of the growth of the seed. As givers of the gospel we do not have to know all of the details of someone's response. We are the workers, and we must do our duty unto God. The details of why one believes and another creates excuses should not matter to us. Don't get involved in excuses; just give the information.
  - C. The parable of the weeds. It is never the place of the gospel giver to judge the one who rejects. That will always remain the business of Jesus Christ, who is the only qualified judge for all men. We are never to cast final judgment over anyone's life as long as they are alive, for that life represents opportunity.
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D. The parable of the mustard seed. From that obscure day when we receive the gospel comes great things. The gospel grows inside of us through the daily pursuit of the word, so that our relationship with God becomes very powerful. And our lives become restful places for many who are tired from living in the devil's world. They gravitate to us because of our love for God, and because we are a shady rest to them. From this powerful relationship with God comes much impact on the weary and heavy-laden of this world.

E. The parable of the leavened bread. We are in this world to give impact. It is the devil's world, but we have the possibility of changing history through the gospel. That is God's intent through our lives. The presence of even one mature believer can make a tremendous difference in the lives of many.

F. The parables of the treasure in the field and the pearl of great price. We are asked to sacrifice much for the sake of our everyday walks with God. It is worth every bit of sacrifice that we have to offer, for what we have gained in salvation and what we will gain in eternal reward makes it worth it.

G. The parable of the dragnet. Be sober in regard to your spiritual walk, for you, too, will undergo judgment. The consequences of that judgment may be grave indeed.

H. The parable of the homeowner. Be careful that you do not throw out good things with bad when you enter the plan of God. As a believer from a legalistic background you may be tempted to throw out the good things from your heritage, but it is wrong to do so.

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