

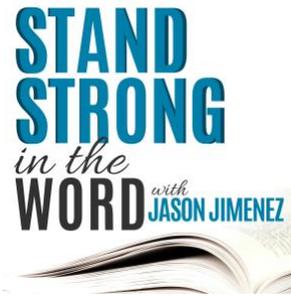
**#47 “Parables About the Kingdom of Heaven”
Matthew 13:1-53; Mark 4:1-34; Luke 8:4-18**

Jesus now turns to teach the Galileans in parables. A parable is basically a riddle, a story that carries a meaning through analogy; a wise saying or teaching. The word *parable* comes from two Greek words, *para* and *ballo*, and the combined words means “to throw alongside.” Jesus throws together truths and unknown truths in a parable to bring out a spiritual lesson. The Galileans were rural farmers and could relate to the parable of the Sower that Jesus taught them by the sea.

In Matthew 13:34, 35, it reads, “All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: “I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.”

1. PARABLE #1: THE SOWER (Matt. 13:1-23)

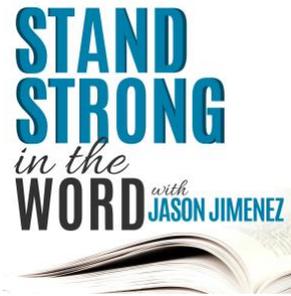
- A. A sower went out to sow (v. 3)**—In Jesus’ first parable, He uses a sower to appeal to the agricultural customs of His day to explain the kingdom of heaven.
- B. Why do you speak to them in parables? (v. 10)**—Jesus wanted to teach His followers about the Kingdom of heaven, and in Psalm 78:2-3 it prophesied Jesus would speak in parables, “I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us.”
- C. To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given (v. 11)**—Jesus taught in parables in order to teach the people hidden truths or to explain mysteries about the kingdom of heaven, and to keep it from those who rejected Him and His message.
- D. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand (v. 13)**—Isaiah 6:9-11 prophesied that there will be people who will fail to understand the Messiah’s message because of their unbelief (see 1 Cor. 2:6-10; Eph. 3:3-6, 8-9).
- E. Many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see (v. 17)**—The prophets spoke of the coming Messiah and His kingdom to come.
- F. Hear then the parable of the sower (v. 18)**—Jesus gives a parable that explains the different conditions of the human heart by comparing it to soil. This will explain why some believe in Jesus, while others reject Him.
 - 1) THE SEED: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom**—The seed is the Word of God. The Word of God is “living and active” (Heb. 4:12),



and must take root in the heart of a person in order for it to grow and bear fruit. Jesus said in Matthew 7:16 that you will “know them by their fruit.” Wiersbe writes, “Fruit is the test of true salvation (Matt. 7:16). This would include holiness (Rom. 6:22), Christian character (Gal. 5:22–23), good works (Col. 1:10), winning others to Christ (Rom. 1:13), sharing what we have (Rom. 15:25–28), and praising God (Heb. 13:15). If a plant is to bear fruit, it must be rooted in soil and exposed to sunshine.”¹

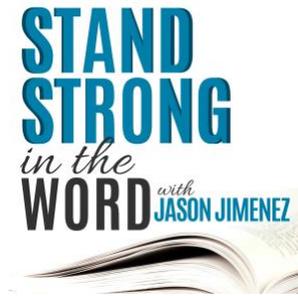
- 2) **ROADSIDE SOIL/NO RESPONSE/NO RECEPTION: Does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. (v. 19)**—The word **understand** means, “to comprehend; to bring together.” (see Rom. 3:11; 2 Tim. 2:7). A hard heart will not accept the message of salvation because it doesn’t understand in order to believe. There are those who resist the gospel, and are too stubborn to turn to God. Satan doesn’t want people to understand/comprehend/make sense of the message of salvation (see 2 Cor. 4:3-4). So he **snatches** (to seize, to grab by force). In Judaism a bird is often referred to as Satan or a robber. 1 John 5:19, “We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”
- 3) **ROCKY SOIL/EMOTIONAL RESPONSE/SLIGHT RECEPTION: As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy. (v. 20)**—Rocky ground refers to the top-level/shallow surface made of limestone. Some respond to the gospel with enthusiasm, but then when trials come—they are too weak and shallow to withstand them. Spurgeon says the problem with emotional responders isn’t their sudden growth, but their lack of depth.
 - a) ***Yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. (v. 21)***—The term “**falls away**” means to stumble. The trials in this person’s life doesn’t refine them, but instead, offends them. This is not a gradual falling away, but a collapse under pressure. Luke 8:13, “And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; **they believe for a while**, and in **time of testing** fall away.”

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 45.



- b) James Montgomery Boice, *The Parables of Jesus*, “Many people fit that description. We see them in our thriving evangelical churches. Their shallow hearts are attracted to the joy and excitement of a church where much is happening. They hear the gospel and seem to fit in. Many even make a profession of faith. But then some difficulty comes—loss of a job, misunderstandings with other Christians, sickness, even a bad romance—and just as suddenly as they once seemed to embrace the faith, they fall away, because they were really never born again.”²
- 4) **THORNY SOIL/WORLDLY RESPONSE/HESITATIVE RECEPTION:** *As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. (v. 22)*—As this person learns to grow in their faith, they allow unspiritual things to keep on growing as well. The **Cares of the world** pertains to worry, anxiety and concerns. This person heard the Word and believed, but neglects to do the work. The church is filled with believers who are not doers. They enjoy the message, and try to live moral lives, but lack maturity and depth to grow the kingdom of heaven.
- 5) **FERTILE SOIL/FRUITFUL RESPONSE/FULL RECEPTION:** *As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty. (v. 23)*-This person receives the Word, and actively obeys to do the work to advance the kingdom of heaven.
- 6) M. S. Mills, *The Life of Christ: A Study Guide to the Gospel Record*, “This parable reveals that a Church Age would follow Jesus’ earthly ministry, and that the Church is the earthly manifestation of the Kingdom of God. The Church’s function is to spread the Word of God, but spreading this Word will meet with four different responses. The first two responses our Lord described are those of the unregenerate: some will resist the gospel, preferring their sinful ways; on the other hand, some will find the gospel message appealing and will respond to it intellectually but not spiritually. The last two responses sketched by our Lord are those of the regenerate: some will respond to the message of salvation but will nevertheless choose to continue their temporal, not spiritual, pursuits. Others, however, will involve themselves in the

² Boice, James Montgomery. *The Parables of Jesus* (p. 18). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.



spiritual work of the Church and be fruitful for their Lord.”

2. **PARABLE#2: THE WHEAT AND THE WEEDS (Matt. 13:24-30, 37-43)**

A. **The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field (v. 24)**

- 1) **The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man (v. 37)**
- 2) **The field is the world (v. 38)**
- 3) **The good seed is the sons of the kingdom (v. 38)**

B. **Enemy sowed weeds among the wheat (v. 25)**

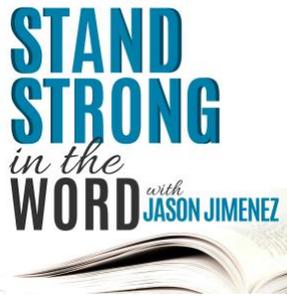
- 1) **The weeds are sons of the evil one (v. 38)**—In the world, there are believers and non-believers. As God uses His people to do His will, Satan has planted his own people to work against God’s people doing His will.
- 2) The Greek word for **weeds** is *zizanion* and only used here. Probably referring to a **darnel**, a weedy rye grass that resembles wheat until mature, and bears poisonous black seeds, and become entwined with the wheat making it difficult to uproot without damaging the wheat in the process. A neighboring enemy would often plant darnels in his enemy’s field to destroy his crop. A strategy Jesus says Satan uses to attempt to disrupt/destroy God’s kingdom people.
- 3) M. S. Mills, *The Life of Christ: A Study Guide to the Gospel Record*, “The opposition which the Church will encounter is thus of two sorts: direct, iniquitous opposition, and insidious, heretical opposition.”
- 4) **The enemy who sowed them is the devil (v. 39)**—In verse 19, Satan snatches away the Word when someone doesn’t understand. In verse 39, Jesus mentions that Satan also plants tares among the “wheat” (true believers), to trick or to influence them (see 1 Tim. 1:20). Satan’s goal is to destroy the wheat before the harvest.

C. **Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds? (v. 27)**—The deception of Satan to work his way into the church, and plant false doctrine, heresies, and to corrupt leadership, and break up the unity.

D. **An enemy has done this (v. 28)**—Jesus knows the work of Satan, and it is paramount that Christians are aware of the evil devices and schemes of Satan (see 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:14; Eph. 6:11; 1 Thess. 2:18).

E. **No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. (v. 29)**- The true test of a tare versus wheat is at the harvest. Jesus referred this as the day of judgment in verses 40-43.

F. **Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, “Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but**



gather the wheat into my barn.” ’ ’ (v. 30)—The final judgement depicted here. The false wheat (weeds) are bundled up and burned (representing hell).

- 1) **The harvest is the end of the age (v. 39)**
- 2) **The reapers are angels (v. 39)**
- 3) **The weeds represent sinners and will be judged and cast into eternal damnation (vss. 40-43)**
- 4) The parables prior to verses 39-43, speak of the activity of God in the world until the day of judgment. Whatever difficulty to determine wheat from tare on earth will certainly be known at the final judgment.

3. **PARABLE #3: THE MUSTARD SEED (Matt. 13:31-32)**

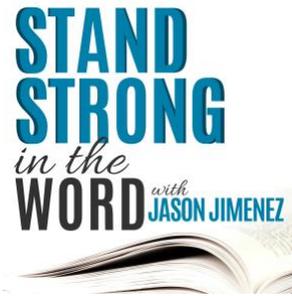
A. The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. (v. 31)—The mustard seed was the smallest garden seed used by first century Jewish farmers, and the smallest seed planted to produce edible vegetables and greens.

B. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches. (v. 32)—There are two kinds of interpretations to the mustard seed.

- 1) The first interpretation doesn't consider the growth of the mustard seed as entirely good. In the case of the bad soils among the good (vss. 18-23), the growth of the leaven as bad/impurity/presence of evil (see Mk. 8:15; 1 Cor. 5:6-9; Gal. 5:9; 1 Tim. 4:1; Jude 12) (vs. 33), and the planted weeds/tares by the evil one to grow alongside the wheat (vss. 38-39)—and the reference of **birds nesting in the branches** all point to the growing corruption that will take place in Christendom.
- 2) The second interpretation keeps the mustard seed and leaven (in context) to Jesus' overarching theme of the expansion of the kingdom of heaven. Referencing Ezek. 17:23; 31:6; Dan. 4:21 that prophesy the kingdom growth of Jews and Gentiles. Revealing the penetrating power of the kingdom in the world despite Satan and the presence of sin.

4. **PARABLE #4: THE LEAVEN (Matt. 13:33)**

A. The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened. Some Jewish texts use yeast/leaven to symbolize evil, while other texts did not (see Gen. 19:3; Ex. 12:11; Lev. 23:17). Jesus speaks of a Galilean woman preparing a large patch of bread, not a



bakery. **Three measures of floor** could feed well-over 100 people. Point is, many people will be used to advance the kingdom of heaven in expansive ways. Thus, pointing to the pervasive growth of the kingdom of God to come.

5. **THE HIDDEN TREASURE (Matt. 13:44)**

A. ***The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*** The parable of the treasure and of the pearl both speak of the whole-hearted response to the kingdom of heaven. The Old Testament mentions treasure-seekers who rejoice when they find hidden treasure (see Job 3:21-22; Pro. 2:4). Likewise, when a person finds Christ, nothing else matters to them.

6. **THE PEARL OF GREAT VALUE (Matt. 13:45-46)**

A. ***Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.*** In this parable, it speaks of a person who is in the business of searching and purchasing pearls. The proverbial meaning is there are those who are seeking for answers—who are in search of spiritual truth and will find it. And when they do, they will abandon their worldly life for the one God has called them to.

7. **THE NET (Matt. 13:47-50)**

A. ***Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*** More than likely, Jesus is referring to a seine net/dragnet that was pulled between two boats—catching a variety of fish down below, some edible and others considered unclean. ***Sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad***—The day will come when the good will be separated from the bad. This will occur when Jesus returns on earth to establish His kingdom (see Matt. 25:30).

8. **UNDERSTANDING AND LIVING THE TRUTH (Matt. 13:51-53)**

A. ***Have you understood all these things?*** Jesus wants all people to come to the knowledge of truth, and be saved. His teachings were catching on and spreading.