

### Jesus Gave the Parable of the Soils

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand and be able to explain to others what it means to be a part of the family of God. That relationship means that we now have both a spiritual family and also an eternal family. In this topic, we will be starting a study of the parables that Jesus gave to explain the mysteries of the kingdom.

We see that the same day the brothers of Jesus came to visit Jesus, He later taught a very large crowd of people later that day. Matthew 13:1-2 says, “On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.” We see that Jesus went out of the house where He had been and went down by the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus sat down by the seashore. We see that large multitudes of people quickly gathered around Jesus. The word translated “multitude” means *a large gathering of people*. The word also referred to the common people rather than the rulers and leaders. Finally, the word spoke of large crowds that gathered from different places so that they were not an organized group.

We see that as the large crowds came together, Jesus got into a boat and sat down in the boat. Meanwhile, the crowd of people stood on the shore to listen to Jesus as He began to teach them. Mark 4:1 explains, “And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat *in it* on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea.” Here, we see that the boat was on the sea, so it was quite a few feet from the land. This made it possible for the entire crowd to hear because the water made the sound carry making it possible for people all along the shore to hear what Jesus taught. We see that the entire crowd was facing the sea, which made it possible for them to see Jesus as He sat in the boat.

We see that Jesus began to teach the people many things in parables. Matthew 13:3-6 says, “Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: ‘Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some *seed* fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away.’” The word translated “parable” means *a story that compares one thing with another*. Jesus often used parables about things people all understood to teach spiritual truth that might be hard for people to understand.

In Matthew 13:11, we read, “He answered and said to them, ‘Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.’” Here, we see that Jesus used parables to reveal truth to His disciples but hide truth from the religious leaders who did not want to believe in Him. As a result, we will see that these parables are stories that are teaching about the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. In the New Testament, a mystery is used to speak of something that was hidden in the Old Testament but is revealed in the New Testament.

In this chapter, we see that Jesus tells these parables to the multitudes and then explains their meaning to His disciples.

In this parable, we see that Jesus talked about a sower sowing seed in the ground. It is very possible that there may have been a person within sight of the crowd of people who was scattering seed on his field as Jesus gave this parable. We will see when Jesus explains this parable to His disciples that the focus of the first parable was about the various kinds of ground where the seeds landed as they were scattered. Jesus began this parable by saying that a sower went out to sow seed in his field. In Mark 4:13-14, we read, “And He said to them, ‘Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word.’” Here, we see two key things about this parable. First, this parable is a basic parable that is like a foundation for all of the parables that Jesus taught. Second, we see that the seed is the Word of God. Jesus wanted to make sure that the disciples understood these two principles because that would make it easier for them to understand all parables.

In this parable, we see that the man sowing his seed was scattering the seed on his field. As he was throwing out the seed, he had seed scattered on four different kinds of soil. The various kinds of soil speak about the condition of the hearts of various people. First, Jesus said that some of the seed fell by the wayside. In the previous chapter, we saw that Jesus and His disciples were walking through the grain field. We saw that the people had narrow paths through the fields of grain. Since people walked on these paths each day, they soon became hard as the people walked on them and the sun baked them. As a result, we see that some of the seed fell on these paths. This meant that the seeds just sat on top of the ground. We read that the birds came and devoured the seeds that were sitting on these hard paths. Mark 4:15 says, ““And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.””

Second, we see that some seed fell on stony places. This meant that there were rocks under the ground that could not be seen because there would be a tiny amount of soil on the tops of these rocks. These rocks just under the thin layer of dirt would cause the dirt to be warmer than the rest of the field. As a result, the seeds that landed on top of these hidden rocks would actually start to grow faster than the rest of the field because those seeds were in warmer dirt. However, the hidden rocks would make it impossible for strong roots to develop. Within a few days, these seeds would have a blade come through the surface of the ground.

Then, hot days would come and the sun would quickly dry out the thin layer of soil. The plants would then rapidly die because there were no roots to get water and minerals from the dirt to help the seeds grow into plants. Mark 4:16-17 says, ““These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble.”” In contrast, Psalm 1:3 points out what happens when a seed falls on ground where it can get plenty of water. That verse says, “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.” This verse talks about a tree, but the same principle

applies. A tree planted by the river will bring forth fruit at the time of fruit, the leaves of the tree will not wither or dry up, and that tree will prosper. The same things happen to seeds that get plenty of water. With plenty of water, there are no rocks to block the development of roots into the soil.

Jesus explained about two other kinds of soil in Matthew 13:7-9, where we read, ““And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”” Here, we see a third kind of soil. This is soil that has a lot of thorns growing on that soil. Thorns and weeds will always grow faster than the seeds of grain. Mark 4:18-19 says, ““Now these are the ones sown among thorns; *they are* the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”” We see that none of these first three soils ever bear any fruit.

Fourth, we read about the seed that fell on the good soil. Mark 4:20 says, ““But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept *it*, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.”” The contrast that we gave to the rocky soil gives us a picture of the good soil. We see that good soil will always bear good fruit. Jesus had said, in Matthew 12:33, ““Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by *its* fruit.”” Jesus had then explained in Matthew 12:35, ““A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.”” By comparing these two chapters, we see that the four kinds of soil actually described the hearts of various kinds of people. The first three kinds of soil are like the evil man because none of them bring forth good fruit. The good soil in this verse describes a person who had come to God in repentance and faith. We see that each person who comes to the Lord, in repentance and faith, will bear good fruit.

We also see that there are different levels of fruit bearing. In John 15:1-8, we see that the vine bears various levels of fruit as it talks about fruit, more fruit and much fruit. John 15:7-8 says, ““If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”” Jesus will cause our lives to bear much fruit as we learn to abide in Him. That is why Jesus said, in Matthew 13:9, ““He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”” It was the desire of Jesus that every Christian would really listen to what He said so there would be hearing that produces action as we learn to abide in Him. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Jesus wants their lives to bear much fruit because Jesus wants their lives to be filled with joy. Jesus explained that joy in John 15:11, where we read, ““These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full.”” As Christians, it is also our desire to see the lives of our children experience the full joy that Jesus promised. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children develop this joy.