

Sunday December 13th 2009
Matthew 13 Parables – Part Three
The Parable of the Sower

1). As we begin our study of the parable of the sower we will have already realized that all of scripture must be understood within its context. And as we saw in our previous sessions, the whole sequence of parables given by the Lord in Matthew Chapter 13 cannot be separated from God's plans and purposes by and for His Son, which include Man, laid out in foundation at the beginning of all scripture in 6 days of work followed by a 7th Day of rest. A purpose that is to be accomplished through the lineage of the promised 'seed of the woman', typified in Seth – a lineage that takes us to Enoch, to Noah, to Shem, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and Jacob's 12 sons [the nation of Israel], to David the King and via David's son Nathan to Mary the mother of Christ and via David's son Solomon to Joseph, Jesus' father according to the law. All of which encompasses rulership with regards to the earth in a Kingdom that will be established in the 7th Day.

2). Christ has come to the nation of Israel, the physical descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob and Jacob's 12 sons. An eternally redeemed people, who are redeemed through putting faith in God's provision for sin, the death and shed blood of the Passover Lambs; and He comes with the offer for them to take possession of the heavenly realm of the Kingdom, the Kingdom of the Heavens – that very thing that was promised to Abraham and his descendants.

a). Ge 22:17 *"blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies."*

b). The very thing that Abraham looked for and waited for -Heb 11:9 *By faith he [Abraham] dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

2). So let's remind ourselves of what scripture says concerning the focus of the Lord's earthly ministry - Mt 15:24 *But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*

b). Mt 4:17 *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

c). Lu 4:43 *but He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent."*

d). And we can add to this the instructions He gave to the twelve –
Mt 10:5 ¶ *These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. 6 "But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' 8 "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.*

c). This offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens though was conditional – it was dependent upon the nation of Israel as a whole coming to repentance with regards to their long history of disobedience to God.

3). Israel's spiritual condition at Christ's first coming is described by the prophet Isaiah - Isa 1:5 *Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, And the whole heart faints. 6 From the sole of the foot even to the head, There is no soundness in it, But wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; They have not been closed or bound up, Or soothed with ointment.*

a). A spiritual condition that still exists for the nation even to this day.

b). The One who has been born 'the King of the Jews' is in their midst.

c). The promised Messiah, the Seed of the Woman, the One of whom Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms spoke is present with them; the One whose lineage fulfills 2 Samuel 7.

d). And not only that but He is performing physical healings the likes of which had never been seen before, signs that demonstrated His credentials as Messiah, and signs pointing to the spiritual healing that would be Israel's if the nation would come to repentance.

4). Israel's religious leaders however reject the signs – attributing the power to perform miracles to Satan rather than to the Holy Spirit.

a). We find them first rejecting the sign of the Sabbath – a sign pointing specifically to the 7th Day, the coming Millennial Kingdom, in which Israel will be completely healed - Mt 12:9 *Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. 10 And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" --that they might accuse Him. 11 Then He said to them, "What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? 12 "Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." 13 Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand."*

And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other. 14 ¶ Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him.

b). *And then just a few verses later - Mt 12:22 ¶ Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. 23 And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" 24 Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." 25 But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. 26 "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? 27 "And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. 28 "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. 29 "Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. 30 "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad. 31 "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. 32 "Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.*

c). *The event that we witness here marks the point of no return after which the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens to Israel is withdrawn for all time, although the actual pronouncement of the withdrawal of the offer does not come until sometime later at the conclusion of the parable of the vineyard – Mt 21:33 ¶ "Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. 34 "Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. 35 "And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. 36 "Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. 37 "Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 38 "But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' 39 "So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. 40 "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?" 41 They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons." 42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders*

rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD'S doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes'? 43 "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.

d). What we will note here is that the Kingdom of the Heavens is being taken from Israel with the added statement that it will be given to a nation 'bearing the fruits of it'.

e). Being fruitful with regards to having a part in the Kingdom of the Heavens is of paramount importance and is the central theme of the parables we are studying.

f). Israel, because of their lack of repentance and continued disobedience failed to produce fruit with regards to the Kingdom of the Heavens and is presented in scripture as a barren fig tree - Mt 21:18 ¶ *Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. 19 And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, "Let no fruit grow on you ever again. [literally – 'for the age']" Immediately the fig tree withered away.*

5). So, let's back track just a little – it is following Israel's religious leaders attributing the power of the Holy Spirit to Satan, rejecting the signs pointing to the offered Kingdom of the Heavens, that Christ begins to speak in parables. And His speaking in parables is preceded by His leaving the house and going to sit by the sea - Mt 13:1 ¶ *On the same day [the same day as the events we saw in Matthew Chapter 12] Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea.*

a). Now this is not an insignificant detail, but is rather filled with symbolism.

b). 'The house' symbolizes the House of Israel – we will remember that Jesus came to the lost sheep of 'the house' of Israel. And His leaving the house points to the events that have just taken place in Chapter 12 with Israel's religious leaders' rejection of the King and His Kingdom resulting in the nation being set aside.

c). His going to sit by the sea is symbolic of Christ now taking that same offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens to those who would be eternally saved, who would predominantly come out from the Gentile nations, following the birth of the Church after Christ's death and resurrection.

d). The sea is used many places in scripture to symbolize the Gentile nations. For example we see Noah going through a worldwide flood upon the raging seas as a picture of Israel going through the Great Tribulation in the hands of the Gentile nations.

e). In another picture of the same thing we see Jonah cast into the sea as a picture of the present nation of Israel being cast out into the Gentile nations at the beginning of the Tribulation.

f). And then we have antichrist, pictured in the beast coming from the sea in the Book of Revelation, coming out from the Gentile nations.

6). That which Christ is about to speak then, in the parables He is going to give, is no longer for the House of Israel, but is rather for those who would in the future make up His Church, those who would predominantly come from the Gentile nations – those such as ourselves.

a). Mt 13:10 *And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" 11 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. 12 "For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. 13 "Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 "And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; 15 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.' 16 "But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; 17 "for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.*

b). We should take a good deal of this to heart as it applies to us even at this very moment.

7). So then, Jesus begins to give a series of 7 parables, 7 being a number of completion, which prophetically look to the history of the Church throughout this dispensation and leading into the Millennial Kingdom, all with regards to the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens.

a). If we want to understand where we are today, how we got here, what is happening within ‘the Church’ and what is coming next, we would do well to study these parables diligently.

b). The word translated ‘parable’ is the anglicized Greek word ‘parabole’ – which literally means to cast alongside. This series of parables then is truth placed alongside another part of that same truth in order to produce a complete picture.

8). So let’s begin with the first of the parables – the Parable of the Sower.

a). Mt 13:1 ¶ *On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. 2 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. 3 Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow. 4 "And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. 5 "Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. 6 "But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. 7 "And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. 8 "But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9 "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

b). First let's understand who the Sower is, what He sows and where He sows them – and our answer to this is given in the Lord's explanation of the second parable, that of the wheat and the tares - Mt 13:37 *He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 "The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom,*

c). What we see then is that the 'seeds' sown in our first parable are the same as those we see in the second and are therefore Christians who are sown in various places in the world – such as Florida, Texas, California, Kenya and so on for the purpose of producing fruit with regards to the Kingdom of the Heavens, as a result of hearing the message concerning the Kingdom of the Heavens.

9). Now we are not left to work out the parable of the sower for ourselves, but because it is the foundation upon which all the other parables are to be built, the Lord Himself gives us the explanation –

a). Mt 13:18 *"Therefore hear the parable of the sower: 19 "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who was sown by the wayside. 20 "But he that was sown on stony places, this is he who hears the word [of the Kingdom] and immediately receives it with joy; 21 "yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word [of the Kingdom], immediately he stumbles. 22 "Now he also who was sown among the thorns is he who hears the word [of the Kingdom], and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word [of the Kingdom], and he becomes unfruitful. 23 "But he that was sown on the good ground is he who hears the word [of the Kingdom] and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."*

b). Let's draw attention to the first part of v19 – 'when anyone hears the word of the Kingdom'. It is the proclamation of the 'word of the Kingdom' and each individual Christian's response to it with regards to producing fruit that is the subject of our parables.

c). In our foundational parable, that of the Sower, we see Christians ‘sown’ in 4 different places, and each of these places is determined by the Christian’s response to the word of the Kingdom he receives.

10). ‘SOWN BY THE WAYSIDE’

We firstly see those who are ‘sown by the wayside’ – and these are Christians who hear the word of the Kingdom but fail to understand the message. Their failure to understand allows the ‘birds of the air’, representing the wicked one, Satan to do away with the message, thereby devouring the person.

a). This is exactly what we see referenced in - 1Pe 5:8 ¶ *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith.....*

b). This is the experience that represents the majority of Christians today who hear this message. They are eternally redeemed and therefore possess spiritual life and so have the capability to understand the message - 1Co 2:13 *These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

c). But they show little to no interest in the word of the Kingdom allowing the enemy to perform his devouring work.

d). In this respect this group of Christians is as fruitless as those of the nation of Israel in Christ’s day.

e). Israel then, as with us now, was in possession of the written word of God, which clearly presents the word of the Kingdom, which we have seen, from the very beginning of scripture.

f). Israel then, as with us now, was capable of spiritual perception, but was blind and deaf to the spiritual truth being presented.

g). Israel then, as with us now, was misled by their religious leaders who actively contradicted and came against the message that Christ preached even seeking how they might destroy Him.

h). Israel then had the physical presence of Christ in their midst directing them to the scriptures that they should have known. And we now have the One who testifies of Christ, the Holy Spirit, to guide us into all truth through those very same scriptures.

i). Consequently Israel’s reaction then is the same as that described for those sown by the wayside in our present time.

j). This is what Christ said of Israel then - Mt 13:15 *For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.'*

k). And 2000 years on there is no difference to that which we find in the church today, with the same catastrophic results. Look at what is recorded in the Book of Revelation with regards to the Church at the end of this present dispensation, where we are now, in respect to the word of the Kingdom – Re 3:17 *"Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' --and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—*

l). Despite what the Church may want to say about itself, its true condition can only be that which is stated by the Lord here in Revelation. There can be no debate or argument about it.

m). Israel of course remains blinded to the truth and will remain so until they are brought to repentance during the Tribulation – it is just as scripture says – 2Co 3:14 *But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. 15 But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. 16 Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.*

n). Only by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ can a Jew today have access to the spiritual truth of scripture – And having believed on Christ a believing Jew is no longer recognized as a Jew, but becomes part of the one new man in Christ – a Christian.

o). And the same would be true here for us – once we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ we cease to be identified as a Gentile and also become part of the one new man in Christ, a Christian - Ga 3:27 *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

p). And because of our spiritual birth we also have the ability to understand spiritual truth, yet, as we have seen those pictured as sown by the wayside choose not to understand or are totally indifferent and are subject to the work of the enemy - 2Co 4:3 *But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*

11). 'SOWN ON STONY PLACES'

20 *"But he that was sown on stony places, this is he who hears the word [of the Kingdom] and immediately receives it with joy; 21 "yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word [of the Kingdom], immediately he stumbles.*

a). Those that we had seen sown by the wayside had no understanding of or were indifferent to the word of the Kingdom, but those pictured as sown on stony places do understand – they hear the word of the Kingdom and receive it with joy.

b). They however, are described as having no root – they do not have a sufficient foundation in the word of the Kingdom – they have not begun to make the journey from immaturity to maturity.

c). And we see in the very early stages of their understanding that tribulation and persecution comes to them ‘because of the word [of the Kingdom].’

d). There is no other message in Christendom against which Satan fights so vehemently as it strikes at the very heart of the present system of rulership through Satan and his fallen angels - Eph 3:1 ¶ *For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles-- 2 if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, 3 how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, 4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), 5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: 6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, 7 of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. 8 To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; 10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,*

e). The tribulation and persecution in line with what happened in Christ’s day and through the evidence of personal experience, will in the majority come from the religious leaders within the Church.

f). These persons who receive the persecution are put under tremendous pressure by Church leaders, are offended, and they ‘stumble’. That which they have begun to hear and to understand and accept is associated with error, and because they have no foundation they have no ability to withstand or refute the attack that comes and they are overcome. They simply give up and Satan wins the victory in their life having prevented them from producing fruit.

12). 'SOWN AMONG THE THORNS'

22 *"Now he also who was sown among the thorns is he who hears the word [of the Kingdom], and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word [of the Kingdom], and he becomes unfruitful.*

a). Our Christian here again is one who hears the word of the Kingdom and presumably begins to understand it and may even resist the tribulation and persecution that comes his way because of the word of the Kingdom.

b). Satan's attack against the word of the Kingdom and those receiving it is unrelenting though and the Christian pictured amongst the thorns is drawn away and distracted by 'the cares of this world [this age]', 'the deceitfulness of riches' and according to Luke's account of the parable, 'the pleasures of this life'; which results in the word of the Kingdom being choked so that like the others he fails to produce fruit.

c). The cares of this world have to do with the distraction of this present age and the present world system. It is a sad comment that much of this is now the central focus of the Church at large, ensuring the unfruitfulness of those involved. The biggest of these in the Church in most places around the world is politics.

d). We should take note of that recorded in - Lu 21:34 *"But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly.*

e). And the warning given to us in - 1Jo 2:15 *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.*

f). We as Christians, if we have heard the word of the Kingdom and desire to be fruitful, must fix our attention on Jesus and the very same thing upon which His attention was fixed – 'the joy that was set before Him'.

g). Heb 12:1 ¶ *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

h). As well as the cares of this world we must also be on our guard against the deceitfulness of riches. Riches are deceitful because they can cause us to become covetous.

i). Covetousness is always spoken of as the same as idolatry as it causes our attention to be fixed on something other than God for our wellbeing and happiness.

j). We can either be covetous for the things that riches provide, believing that if we can have more material possessions our life will be more complete – which of course is a deception - Lu 12:15 *And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."*

k). Or we can be covetous for the riches themselves – the more I have the safer I am, the more secure I am – again, this is a deception. Only in God can we find security - 1Ti 6:17 *Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.*

l). Covetousness is always based in fear and not faith.

m). Then there are the pleasures of this life – Pleasures = Greek – ‘hedone’ = sensual delight/lust. This would clearly be a reference to the works of the flesh.

n). Ga 5:19 *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

o). We as Christians, having heard the word of the Kingdom, and being determined to be fruitful, are to fix our attention on the King and His coming Kingdom – not looking back and not looking around – considering tribulation or persecution, or the cares of this world, riches or the pleasures of life to be of little consequence compared to the glory and exaltation that are laying ahead for us. If we don't then Satan will use one or all three of these in his unceasing efforts to bring about our downfall.

p). Col 3:1 ¶ *If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.*

q). Or to put it even more simply - Mt 6:33 *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

13). ‘SOWN ON THE GOOD GROUND’

23 *"But he that was sown on the good ground is he who hears the word [of the Kingdom] and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."*

a). This is the Christian who hears the word of the Kingdom, who endures the persecution and overcomes the world, the flesh and the devil on a consistent basis.

b). Despite Satan's best efforts there were those in Christ's day who heard and accepted the word of the Kingdom and began to produce fruit, and the same would be true today – and hopefully this would describe all of us. It is a sobering thought that each one of us in this room will find ourselves right now in one of these four places.

c). And what we might also note is that this parable makes quite clear that not all Christians will produce fruit and therefore not all Christians will have a part in the Kingdom of the Heavens. And that Christ makes this perfectly clear even before the Church is brought into being.