



A parable is a maxim or proverb using something common or ordinary to explain or express truth about something extraordinary. - Pastor Del

Kingdom of Heaven Parables

Eternal teaching lessons

Background- The Kingdom

From the Greek word "Basilea," the kingdom refers to conquered territory, defining a place and people under the authority of a conqueror.

In English, two terms are represented in one word: "*king*" and "*dominion*." The term "King" identifies the conqueror and ruler. Dominion is a term that references the territory ruled and governed by the King. As a sovereign, a "King" has unquestionable authority over the people and territory under his rule.

The people residing under the king's rule benefit from the provision and protection offered within the confines of the kingdom. The King determines the people's identity, and often, the sovereign leader defines and influences their purpose and place in the world.

The Kingdom of Heaven refers to the physical world under the heavens, the temporal world where man resides. The world above the heavens, the eternal realm, does not need to be conquered because the creator's authority already governs eternity. The only part of creation that exists in a state of loss and disorder is the world of man, and it must be conquered and reclaimed by overthrowing the rule of the darkness by the god of this world who hides the truth.

Another notation of reversing the disorder in the world of man is reflected in the

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prayer model the Son of God (God actively present on earth) offers to the disciples that concluded with the declaration: Thy kingdom come... "in earth, as it is in heaven" – Matthew 6:10 and "as in heaven, so in earth"– Luke 11:2. Both passages reflect the influence of heaven, the eternal realm governed by the creator's authority, to be represented in the earth.

The Roman Empire illustrated the imagery of Kingdom order and was physically apparent to the Jewish audience hearing the Rabbi's message. The empire was a global government, overseeing many independent cultures and lesser fragmented tribal units that were unsuccessful at creating a national order representing their origin and manner of life. A tribal mixture of foreign ethnic groups was acclimated into Roman culture and offered citizenry with the promise of military protection against enemies outside Roman borders across the boundaries of the Mediterranean region.

For several generations and hundreds of years, the Jews lived under foreign rule with modest liberty to maintain their personal and religious practices. After the Maccabean revolt in 165 B.C., the Hasmonean Dynasty was the last Jewish monarchy to reign in Judah—that period allowed them to practice their culture and religion without interference. In 63 B.C., the Romans began to enforce the dominion of their government upon territories they conquered. There was uncertainty for many years about Roman dominion over the affairs of Judah.

When the Rabbi introduced the concept of the Kingdom of Heaven, the Jews understood their freedom to practice their religion and cultural norms were already at stake. The concern for preserving their national identity prevented many Jews from seeing the worldview that focused on reclaiming God's order in the world of man. The Jews could see the loss of control, and they would surrender if the Roman Empire enforced its military and political authority upon Judah. The desire to protect and preserve Jewish cultural identity would threaten their ability to relinquish control of their religious practice and become subject to the God of creation.

The declaration in Mark 1:15 begins with time being fulfilled. This divine timestamp marks the fulfillment of God's purpose (time) to bring the Kingdom of God-heaven to man. The Son of God on earth gave men access to God's order in Heaven. The expression "at hand" indicates that this access was previously unavailable to men.

To access the kingdom of God-heaven required men to repent. The call to repentance challenged men to turn away from the disorder of the worldly kingdom and embrace the order of God's divine realm. The results would bring order to the disorder on earth, specifically in the lives of men: *"in earth as it is heaven."*

During His earthly ministry, the Son of God (God actively present on earth) referred to casting out devils as a sign that the Kingdom of God-Heaven was accessible to men. Casting out devils signaled the presence of a greater authority that had come to overthrow and disrupt the opposing forces that hindered men's lives and blinded their eyes to the truth.

Towards the end of His ministry, the Son of God (God actively present on earth) clarified that the kingdom of God was not political or physical, explaining that it would not be observable with the natural eye because it was the authority of God residing in the lives of men. (Luke 17:20) The evidence of kingdom authority is reflected in man's submission to God's order and the reproduction of His seed (spiritual fruit) on earth.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is Like" – This series of short parables offers a variety of vantage points to understand what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. The illustrations in each parable describe how God's work is embedded in the lives of men and how men react and respond when they discover God's work in everyday, ordinary, and even unexpected places. Discovering God's work in the natural world is generally unpredictable. Religion tends to limit God's work within the boundaries of ritualistic practice and among the chosen congregation. These parables showcase the Kingdom of Heaven in an open field compromised by an expected Sower, a tiny seed with unexpected potential, and an empty field with an unexpected treasure.



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Parable of the Sower

“seeds and soil”

Timestamp: 2nd Year of the Messianic Ministry
about the time of the Feast of Tabernacles in the month of Tishri (Sept/Oct)

Parallel Scriptures: to John 6:61-66 / Matthew 11:1-19

Key Events: Feeding of Five Thousand / John the Baptist beheaded

Overview – This is the first series of New Testament parables. The Rabbi modified His teaching method from a direct instructional approach to an indirect approach to His instruction using parabolic metaphors to hide the truth inside common symbols. The brief inquisition between the Rabbi and John the Baptist greatly influenced the first parable series. John’s question about the authenticity of the Messiah’s identity added to the conversations of unbelief that rifled through the minds of religious leaders and other followers who were not entirely convinced. It was disturbing for the Son of God to learn that the man who introduced him to the Judean community as the Messiah was now uncertain of his identity.

John’s questions caused the Messiah to speak out and question the integrity of the multitude that followed Him. He asked their motives and criticisms raised against Himself and the Baptizer. He noted that John had come to them with mannerisms of piety closely associated with the orthodoxy of Judaism. He did not eat or fellowship with those outside his religious discipline, yet many Jews rejected his call to repentance and claimed that he was under the influence of devils. The Rabbi portrayed the opposite disposition; he intentionally broke bread with sinners and others who did not practice Judaism. He was labeled a friend to the publicans, and His message was also rejected, especially by the religious leaders. (Matthew 11:1-19)

John's questions regarding the authenticity of the Messiah were more likely intended to raise questions about the motives of those who followed Him and claimed to be His disciples. This would explain why the Rabbi did not speak defensively against John the Baptist but turned His outcry instead against the multitudes that followed Him.

The second event that influenced a change in the Rabbi's teaching style is connected to the response that followed the miracle of feeding five thousand men and their families. After hearing the Rabbi instruct His audience to devour His body and blood, meaning to consume the words He had spoken to them, hundreds and perhaps thousands walked away and followed Him no more. (John 6:66)

John's death and the loss of His followers caused the Rabbi to retreat from public view. When the Rabbi returned to public ministry after mourning John's death, He chose a less direct method of instruction using the parables. The revised teaching method was intended to attract earnest ears to hear the word and set them apart from careless listeners. The sincere inquirer must have ears to hear; the other would not. The truth would be hidden within the truth spoken, like a seed found in the center of a piece of fruit. To those that would hear and receive, more truth would be given. Those who would continue to question His veracity and eventually reject Him would lose the grasp of the truth presented to them.

Symbols:

Sower – One that distributes/plant seeds;

metaphor: speaks/distributes eternal word (truth)

Seeds – The organic spore or one-cell unit that has the power to reproduce;

metaphor: eternal word / eternal truth

Soil – The upper layer beneath the exposed earth/dirt, with organic elements, nutrients, rocks, and natural growth.

metaphor: the upper or first layer beneath the outer man (heart); *beneath the surface

30- 100-fold return – Harvest of Fruit with variations of results dependent on

times/seasons **metaphor:** the spiritual effects of the eternal word (truth); variations dependent upon time/seasons in life

Matthew 13:1 - The same day, Jesus left the house and sat by the seaside.

Matthew 13:2 - And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

Matthew 13:3- And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;

The Same Day

Verse one of this chapter begins with the timestamp: "The same day," which refers to the Sabbath day in verse one of Matthew chapter twelve. The timestamp corresponds to the Sabbath attached to the Feast of Tabernacles celebrated in the Jewish month Tishri (Sept/Oct). Months earlier, the author of Matthew documents the query of John the Baptist regarding the identity of the Messiah. (Matthew 11:1-19) The miraculous feeding of the five thousand followed John's question and his death in prison. The fish and loaves miracle resulted in the departure of hundreds and perhaps thousands of disciples who no longer followed the Rabbi. (John 6:66) These two events occurred in the month of Nisan (March-April), nearly six months earlier during the Passover season. Because John refers to a Passover celebration in chapter two of his gospel account, the Passover mentioned in John 6:4 is a timestamp that marks the second year of the Messiah's ministry. The second year of ministry is also the timestamp for the Feast of Tabernacles identified in John 7:2 and the Sabbath listed in Matthew 12:1.

The Rabbi was not seen or heard during the six months between Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles. In the chapter that follows the feeding of the five thousand, the gospel of John resumes the log of the Messiah's ministry. (John 7:1-2) Matthew continues his journal of the Rabbi's ministry after documenting John's inquiry and His death in prison. Nearly six months had passed when the authors resumed documenting the Messiah's ministry.

The Multitude

After an absence from public view for six months, hundreds upon thousands gathered to see the miracle man who fed the five thousand. The Rabbi arrived at the seashore after visiting the Synagogue, where He was presented with a challenge to heal a man's withered hand and violate the practice of not working on the Sabbath. After affirming how His critics would respond to the needs of their livestock falling into a pit, the Rabbi-Messiah heals the man and the Pharisee's council among themselves about how they can destroy Him. (Matthew 12:12-14)

The Rabbi knows that the multitude gathered with self-interest bias and likely expected another miracle to satisfy their curiosity. He separates himself from the large crowd and finds a small boat. Sitting in the boat's hull, he begins his new method of instruction.

The Sower

The parable lesson begins with an unnamed "sower," one who scatters seeds. The practice of large-scale or commercial farming is not as specific and intentional as personal gardening. Small, private gardening methods generally involve inserting one or more seeds by hand into a particular hole in the ground.

Large-scale agriculture is approached differently, finding a sizeable open area where seeds can be scattered randomly in multiple directions. A large-scale operation intends to cover a massive area with a maximum number of seeds. Coverage in this manner will scatter seeds in uncertain areas with varying results depending on where the seeds land. The objective illustrated by this method demonstrates the Sower's desire for potential seed germination to come from unexpected places.

Matthew 13:4 - And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

Matthew 13:5 - Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:

Matthew 13:6 - And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

Matthew 13:7 - And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

Matthew 13:8 - But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

The Seed(s)

Scattered seeds fell by the wayside. These seeds were exposed to the open environment. Because they were uncovered, the seeds became food for the birds to devour and nourish themselves instead of sprouting to produce fruit.

Seeds exposed to the elements of the world are vulnerable and in danger of becoming environmental food. They are exposed to the influences of the environment. These seeds are uncovered and unprotected and become the prey of overwhelming social constructs. Instead of producing fruit to contribute to their social environment, they are absorbed and swallowed up by its standards.

Scattered seeds fell upon stony places. These seeds were introduced to the dirt (soil) but not wholly covered, leaving areas where the roots of the seed are exposed to the elements and environment. The seed flowered in the shallow area of the soil, and when the vegetation began to develop, it was scorched by sunlight. Exposure to light is damaging when a plant is not well planted. Because the seed did not establish deep roots, the sunlight needed for growth and development overwhelmed the foliage, and instead of sustaining the new plant, it was blistered in the sunlight and burned by the heat from the sun's light.

Scattered seeds fell among thorns. These seeds found their way into the soil, but they were forced to compete with mature and fruitful vegetation. The thorns and roots of the fruitful plants consumed all the soil's nutrients, leaving nothing available for the new seeds introduced to the soil. The plants already thriving in the soil choke out the life of the new growth before they can reach maturity.

Scattered seeds fell into good ground. These seeds found their way into soil that was not encumbered. The seed took root without issue and had room for growth and development. The seed sprouted and produced ripened mature fruit. The volume of fruit varied in its return, resulting from thirty, sixty, to one hundredfold on the amount of fruit for each seed sown.

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Matthew 13:18 – Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

Matthew 13:19 – When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth *it* not, then cometh the wicked *one*, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

The Wayside Seeds/Soil

The soil represents **a people group** that hears the kingdom's message but fails to understand it. Their ears are exposed to the truth, but their heart is not receptive to the fact they hear. The word of God becomes like a seed exposed to environmental elements, uncovered and unprotected. The words of truth that can empower and give life are devoured by hungry interceptors waiting to steal and take away the truth before it has time to settle and reproduce in a person's life.

The seed was distributed, offered, and spoken, but it was never planted and consequently could not yield fruit. The truth was audibly heard but not spiritually received and never understood. The recipient did not understand the blessing or the value of the seed offered to them. They could not understand the truth in the kingdom message presented to them.

Matthew 13:20 – But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;

Matthew 13:21 – Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

The Stony place Seeds/Soil

The soil represents **a people group** that hears and receives the kingdom's message but fails to establish roots deep enough to sustain active growth. The truth seed (word of God) is received with great joy. Joy without being rooted in the truth is a short-lived experience. An inspirational encounter with God will only fade as the original moment of inspiration dissipates.

The initial growth is loosely planted in the shallow area of the soil with the roots exposed to sunlight. As the new plant begins to grow, tribulation and persecution also evolve. A person new to their relationship with God must expect the joy of their salvation to be tested. The environment of the new plant lives will challenge the early stages of the new plant's life. If a new believer is not rooted deeply in their faith, the exposed roots of their belief will be scorched by the light intended to sustain them.

Preparing the ground by removing stones, interference, and known obstacles is essential to establishing a receptive heart for the truth. If the groundwork of

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preparation is not done, the unremoved stones will prevent new roots from reaching the depth needed to consummate growth. The offenses and hardships of life will exhaust the ability for new life to thrive. The light that should lead and direct them will become too intense and, in time, over-expose them to the truth they were not fully committed to establishing in their life. The seed was distributed and received but did not take root deep enough to yield fruit.

Matthew 13:22 – He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

The Thorny place Seeds/Soil

The soil represents **a people group** that hears and receives the kingdom's message, but pre-existing principles and priorities prevent the newly seeded life from surviving.

Pre-existing principles and priorities consume the available resources and energy in a person's life, leaving little to no available to support or sustain a new commitment. The priorities already thriving will choke out the presence of new growth, labeling the seedling as a competing interest. Pre-existing interests are already mature, illustrated by the thorns protecting their survival.

The thorns preserve the interests of pre-existing principles and priorities and strangle the life of competing values to prevent new ideas from reaching maturity. The seed was distributed and received and reached the depths to formulate the rudiments of new life, but the new viable life was choked and strangled before reaching maturity to yield fruit.

Matthew 13:23 – But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth *it*; which also *beareth fruit*, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

The Unencumbered Seeds/Soil

The soil was not good by nature. It was made good because of the preparation work before the seeds were sown. These scattered seeds found their way into the soil, not saddled with stones or pre-existing growth. The seeds were not left exposed to become environmental food for the fowl in the air.

The soil represents **a people group** that hears the kingdom's message and receives the truth without interference or interruption. The truth is heard and understood, allowing it to be productive and yield various volumes of fruitfulness.

Truth bears fruit; it is by nature productive and not passive. Truth does not exist without affecting where it exists. The impact of truth can vary in volume or measured scale. The estimated magnitude of the truth's effect is not as significant as the ability to measure that truth has been effective.

There was no difference in the soil that the seed affected; all the ground was good and prepared to receive the seed, but the yield results from the soil varied. Some areas of the soil returned a thirty-fold yield, leaving seventy percent of the soil available to yield fruit in a different season. Another third of the soil returned a sixty-fold gain, leaving forty percent of the ground open to produce fruit in a different season. The final third of good soil presented a hundred-fold return in the first season of sowing.

The varied results represent how the truth impacts various aspects of our understanding, leaving room for more growth in some areas and providing complete knowledge in others.

Matthew 13:9 - Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Matthew 13:10 – And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

Matthew 13:11 – He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

The Hearer-

The parable lesson is centered on the ability to hear *spiritually*. The conflict that led to changing the instructional message is embedded in the inability of the followers in the multitude to hear and respond to the truth. John's inquiry from prison suggests that among the followers are those who questioned the Messiah's identity and pondered the option of looking for someone other than the Rabbi. (Matthew 11:3) Some disciples walked away from the Rabbi because his speech was too hard for them to hear. (John 6:60) He said of the twelve that remained with Him that one of them was a devil (*diabolos*), meaning to be of two minds, not settled or absolute about their faith in Him. (John 6:70)

The first parable to signal the change in His instructional strategy is focused on ears that can hear the truth. When the disciples ask why He is teaching the audience using a parable, they are told they have access to understand the mysteries of kingdom truth. The same direct access would not openly be given to the multitude. Instead, it would be concealed for those willing to digest, consume, and fully comprehend the truth. This is the same message He gave the five thousand He fed with fish and loaves. The requirement they believed to be too hard for them.

They could not consume and digest His words as the living bread; in the same manner, they consumed the fish and loaves without question or hesitance.

The mystery of kingdom truth would be hidden inside the parable, and the hearer must consume and fully digest the parable to find the truth.

Matthew 13:12 – For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

Matthew 13:13 – Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

Understanding the Parable-

To everyone who digested and comprehended the truth hidden inside the parable, an opportunity to understand more truth would be extended to them.

The reverse consequence would also be enforced. Everyone who failed to consume and digest the truth hidden in the parable would surrender the privilege to receive more truth. Understanding to learn "*more truth*" is not available to those who reject the truth when presented with the opportunity to accept and understand it.

The parable is not discerned or received through the natural senses. The hidden truth is revealed to us through the spiritual senses. The natural ear cannot understand and will not respond to spiritual truth. Natural truth, which supports and sustains the natural senses, is opposed to Spiritual truth. Spiritual truth does not align with the truth influenced by natural and carnal values.

The natural ear is sensitive to natural truth and responds with natural understanding. The natural ear does not hear or understand spiritual truth and cannot respond to the truth it cannot hear. Only the spiritual ear can hear spiritual truth.

Matthew 13:14 – And *in them* has fulfilled the prophecy of *Esaias*, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

Matthew 13:15 – For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their ears are dull* of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

The Prophecy of Isaiah

Isaiah 6:8 – Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me.

Isaiah 6:9 – And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

Isaiah 6:10 – Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

The Rabbi-Messiah connects this parable with the prophetic writing of Isaiah. Spiritual deafness and blindness were not new symptoms of God's people. The forefathers of the Jews who considered the Rabbi-Messiah's truth too hard also had issues with receiving and understanding the truth.

In the year of King Uzziah, the prophet was commissioned to speak a hard word to God's people. The house of Judah slowly drifted away from its core truth principles, allowing the influences of idolatry and secular culture to infiltrate the practice of their faith. King Uzziah was among the Kings who followed the Davidic-Solomon pattern of righteousness; however, he failed to remove the high places that provided a pathway to offer sacrifices to idol gods. (II Kings 15: 1-4)

As Isaiah the prophet experienced the overwhelming presence of God in the temple, God put a challenge before him, asking the prophet who should be sent to speak to the House of Judah. Isaiah surrendered himself to accept the task, and God placed a message of judgment in the mouth of Isaiah, calling out to those who could hear but understand not and those who see and perceive not. He was compelled to fatten the people's hearts and make them heavier to allow their natural senses to completely consume them and lead them to fulfill their self-imposed fate.

The people who continue to reject the Messiah's truth (Kingdom truth) would be subject to the same fate as the House of Judah in the days of Isaiah. The second year of the Messiah's ministry would be defined by identifying the hearts and minds of followers who hear and believe the truth of the kingdom. Those would be given more revelation and more opportunity to understand the truth. In the second and final year of His ministry, the question of uninterrupted commitment and allegiance to truth would be demanded, including among the twelve men He selected to follow Him.

Matthew 13:6 – But blessed *are* your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

Matthew 13:17 – For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous *men* have desired to see *those things* which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear *those things* which ye hear, and have not heard *them*.

The Blessing

A blessing gives the disciple ears to hear from the multitude. They are given spiritual ears and eyes to understand the truth. Walking adjacent to the Son of God (God actively present on Earth) affords them access that the prophets and other righteous men desired but never received.

The full revelation of this privilege and blessing likely did not reach them until after the crucifixion and resurrection. The doubt that lingered among them as they walked with the Son of God (God actively present on Earth) every day did not allow them to embrace the blessing fully.

We often do not recognize the blessings and privileges that God makes available to us until we find ourselves on the other side of experiences that cause us to doubt and not fully trust God with all our hearts.

[Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath,"-that is, instead of being the better for what he has heard, he is the worse; not apprehending the truth, he is only perplexed and confused by it, and instead of going away enriched, he is poorer than ever.

The truth may be put in such a way that it has both a shell and kernel of meaning and the seed may be so enclosed in the shell that it can be kept safely there, ready for the time when the inner fruit, which is the true food of the soul, can be used. For this purpose, the parable is pre-eminently serviceable.]