

3-2018

The Parables of Jesus Christ: The Sower, the Seed, and the Soil

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Recommended Citation

Willmington, Harold, "The Parables of Jesus Christ: The Sower, the Seed, and the Soil" (2018). *The Second Person File*. 232.

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THE PARABLES OF JESUS CHRIST

PARABLE TWELVE: The Sower, the Seed, and the Soil (Mt. 13:3-9, 18-23; Mk. 4:3-8, 13-20; Lk. 8:5-8, 11-15)

SURVEY

A farmer scattered some seed in a field that consisted of four kinds of soil, all of which yielded different results.

- Footpath soil: the birds soon came and ate the seed.
- Shallow soil with underlying rock: the plants sprung up quickly, but soon wilted and died for lack of nourishment.
- Thorn-infested soil: the tender blades of the plants were quickly choked by these thorns.
- Fertile soil: this area alone produced an abundant crop of 30, 60, and 100-fold return.

SIGNIFICANCE

This is the first of nine parables explaining and illustrating the Kingdom of Heaven all of which were related by Jesus during an extended lecture given on the banks of the Galilean Sea.

SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

- Jesus Himself provided the interpretation regarding these four kinds of soil.
 1. Roadside Soil
A person who receives the Word without really understanding it—seed soon stolen by both Satan and his false ministers.
 2. Shallow Soil
A person who receives the Word without acting fully upon it. Thus, when persecutions and trials arise, he falls away.
 3. Thorn-infested Soil
A person who receives the Word but attempts to mix it with the pleasures of this life. However, worldly things soon choke it.
 4. Fertile Soil

A person who receives the Word with an honest, sincere, and understanding heart. This one alone will bear fruit.

- The following suggested applications are offered in regard to these four kinds of soil:

1. Roadside Soil

- a. The Apostle John would later in a spiritual sense associate demonic doctrine with unclean birds (Rev. 18:2).
- b. The roadside soil kind of heart refuses to obey God's command as recorded by both Jeremiah and Hosea:

"For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns." (Jer. 4:3)

"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you." (Hosea 10:12)

- c. These kind of people are seen often during Jesus' earthly ministry.

"Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men." (Jn. 2:23-24)

"And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do." (Jn. 6:6)

2. Shallow, Rocky Soil

Jesus summarizes this kind of person in two-fold fashion.

- a. They have no root. Both David and Paul speak of this:

"The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away." (Psa. 1:4)

"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." (Eph. 4:30)

- b. They are unable to withstand the storms of life. It has been rightly observed that persecution, pain, travail and tribulation serve as the ultimate tests in revealing the saved from the unsaved, the one having roots from the one without roots.

3. Thorn-infested Soil. Two factors prevent this soil from producing fruit:

- a. The deceitfulness of wealth. The rich young ruler had, sadly enough, allowed this thorn to infest his heart.

"Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions" (Mt. 19:21-22).

Paul would later warn of this:

"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Tim. 6:10)

"For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia." (2 Tim. 4:10)

- b. The desire for and pleasure in worldly things. This would be in direct opposition to that attitude once demonstrated by Moses.

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." (Heb. 11:24-26)

4. Fertile Soil

The fertile soil thus receives the Word (unlike the shallow heart), understands it (unlike the hard heart), and holds fast to it (unlike the crowded heart).

Is Jesus indicating here that only one out of four (25%) of those witnessed to will be saved? *No*, but He is promising that some will accept Christ. In other words if we sow, we will reap!

In a concluding thought, the 30-, 60-, and 100-fold harvest produced by the fertile soil seems to tie in with Jesus' vine and branch discourse. Thus:

- a. *"Every branch that beareth FRUIT, he purgeth it..." (Jn. 15:2a).* A reference to the 30-fold.
- b. *"That it may bring forth MORE FRUIT"* (Jn. 15:2b). A reference to the 60-fold.
- c. *"He that abideth in me ... bringeth forth MUCH FRUIT"* (Jn. 15:5). A reference to 100-fold.