

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)

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The Word of the Kingdom

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Introduction

Jesus spoke a series of parables in Matthew chapter 13 that we call the “Kingdom parables” because they all speak of the Kingdom of God. Jesus told his disciples that He was doing this so that only they (the disciples) would understand because to know these things about the Kingdom is not given to the general public or even the religious people.

The Holy Spirit has to bring understanding in this area. The first parable is the one that we call the “parable of the sower” even though the more descriptive term might be the “parable of the soils”. Jesus spoke the Kingdom parables to the multitudes, which included the disciples. The explanation of the parable of the sower was spoken to the disciples but in hearing of the crowd. However, the rest of the Kingdom parables were explained only to the disciples in the house after Jesus had sent the multitudes away (Matt. 13:36).

When His disciples asked Him to explain the parable of the sower, He told them that if they couldn't understand this one, how would they understand the rest (Mark 4:13). So, we have in this parable a foundation that is crucial to understanding the other parables. If your understanding is incorrect about this one, it will cause your understanding to be incorrect about the rest of the Kingdom parables.

Jesus explains the parable to us so that we have no excuse for not understanding. This is what He says:

Matthew 13:18-23 NASB

- (18) "Hear then the parable of the sower.
- (19) "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil *one* comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.
- (20) "The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;

- (21) yet he has no *firm* root in himself, but is *only* temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.
- (22) "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.
- (23) "And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."

Three Crucial Elements

The explanation of Jesus reveals three crucial elements to the parable of the sower.

1. The seed;
2. The soil;
3. The hindrances of the growing conditions.

These three elements are the key to understanding the parable and its purpose.

The Seed. The other gospels call the seed “the word of God”; however, Matthew makes it clear that the seed is not just generally the word of God, but the *specific* word of the Kingdom. Many have taught that this is the word of God concerning salvation and interpreted this parable and the rest based on that assumption. But, Jesus said it was the word of the Kingdom, which is for those who already believe (“...unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” John 3:3) The word of the Kingdom deals with the King, His requirements of His citizens, and the purposes of the Father.

The soil. There are four types of soil listed and the hearts of all people fall into one of those types. They are (1) hard, rocky ground; (2) shallow soil on top of rocky, hardpan ground; (3) wild, uncultivated ground with weeds; and (4) rich, prepared ground, fully cultivated.

The hindrances. There are several hindrances mentioned that prevent the seed from reaching maturity and producing fruit. The goal of planting any seed is that it would grow and produce fruit. It is not any different with the seed of the word of the Kingdom.

Enemies of the Word of the Kingdom

The parable brings forth a number of enemies of the word of the Kingdom. The first, of course, is the evil one, the devil. He snatches the word away so that it will not be understood. The harder the heart, the easier it is for the enemy to snatch the word away before it can find root to grow.

To the shallow heart, the enemies of the word are tribulation, that is, affliction, or persecution. Jesus did not say *if* these would come. He said *when*. The word of the Kingdom *always* excites tribulation or persecution. The shallow heart has not been prepared to deal with tribulation or persecution so it falters and the word of the Kingdom withers and dies in them and they fall away.

To uncultivated hearts that are filled with weeds, the enemies to the word are the very things that

have been growing in their hearts all along. However, Jesus mentions two specific weeds that will choke out the word of the Kingdom—the cares, worries of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth or riches. These are in conflict with the basic principles of the Kingdom and prevent the word from producing fruit.

The cares, worries of the world. The word for cares or worries in the original language is a very strong word. It means 'soul-dividing' or 'mind-dividing' anxiety. This type of anxiety divides the mind in such a manner that we fret about what to do. We are fractured into opposing thoughts and bounce back and forth between them. Jesus told us not to worry about tomorrow (Matt. 6:34). He used the same word—we are not to have mind-dividing anxiety about our life. He said this in the context of teaching about the Kingdom of God. We seek the Kingdom first. We put ourselves under our King and Lord. We rest in Him so that we have no need to “take thought” about tomorrow. Otherwise, worry and anxiety will choke out the word of the Kingdom and prevent us from fulfilling our purpose and calling.

The deceitfulness of wealth or riches. Notice that wealth is deceitful. It is not something in which we can trust. Paul told Timothy, “Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, ...” (1 Tim. 6:17 NASB). Paul also addresses the issue with Timothy of those who desire riches.

1 Timothy 6:9-10 NASB

- (9) But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.
- (10) For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Paul then tells Timothy, “But flee from these things, you man of God...” That is some strong language. Maybe we need to “listen up” before the word of the Kingdom is choked out.

Desires for other things (Mark 4:19). Mark adds this phrase to the list. This is when our wants and desires get out of control. The things of the world become more attractive than the things of the Kingdom. Paul told Timothy of a companion who did this, “for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; ...” (2Ti 4:10).

Could it be that we hear so little teaching on the Kingdom of God because we have allowed the enemies of the word of the Kingdom to cause it to be unfruitful? In some cases, the seed has been snatched away by the evil one. In other cases, it has sprouted but then withers and dies because of tribulation and persecution. In still other cases, it has tried to grow but has been choked out by our love of the world.

We must allow the Holy Spirit to cultivate our hearts. The hard, rocky heart has to be plowed deep by the Spirit. If we continue to refuse the plow, we will become unfruitful and useless to the Kingdom of God.

We must die to the kingdom of self in order for the Kingdom of God to find room in us. We must yield the territory of our heart to a new sovereign—King Jesus. Our allegiance is not to ourselves, and not to the world nor our secular government but to the King and His Kingdom only.

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