

The Kingdom: Living Within: Part 6

Last week we started our study on parables as they relate to the Kingdom. Within that we began looking at what Jesus said in **Matthew 13:10-17** about speaking to His people in parables. Let's read it again so that we can get reacquainted with the text and have a good place to pick up where we left off.

Matthew 13:10–17

And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. "For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. "Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. "In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE; FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES, OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.' "But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. "For truly 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.

If you remember from last week, we discussed the meaning of the prophecy Jesus quotes from *Isaiah*. Our conclusion about His usage of the prophecy was that He was stating that the Jews, as an ethnic group, had hardened their hearts by closing off their ears to truth and refusing to clearly recognize God in action. Jesus used this specific reference to convey that the people He was dealing with in His ministry were exactly like the people from the time of Isaiah in that they rejected God. In their rejection of God, both long ago and in the time of Jesus' ministry, God caused the hearts of His people to "grow dull" so that He could have mercy on them and preserve them for a time of restoration.

We then dove deeper into the context of the prophecy by taking a look at *Isaiah 6:11-13*.

Isaiah 6:11–13

Then I said, "Lord, how long will this go on?" And he replied, "Until their towns are empty, their houses are deserted, and the whole country is a wasteland; until the LORD has sent everyone away, and the entire land of Israel lies deserted. If even a tenth—a remnant—survive, it will be invaded again and burned. But as a terebinth or oak tree leaves a stump when it is cut down, so Israel's stump will be a holy seed."

In their dullness of heart, God's people had to be virtually destroyed leaving only a stump. Yet, as we discussed last week the Lord preserved that stump as a holy

seed. Seeds are the origin of new life and the holy seed contained in the burned out stump would some day be a source of new life for God's people. Bringing this back to the discussion Jesus was having with the disciples, I believe He referenced the prophecy in *Isaiah* because He knew the tree (the Jews) were still a burned out, dead stump. Jesus acknowledged that the Jews present during the time of His ministry were still producing the fruit of dullness. He said, "In their case (the case of those who do not see or hear) the prophecy of *Isaiah* is being fulfilled." But as He said this He was very aware of the chain of events spoken of in *Isaiah* after that prophecy and He referenced the prophecy with the knowledge of the holy seed.

Unlike the disciples, Jesus had the knowledge to speak from a perspective that no one else had the capacity from which to speak. He knew that even as the Jews were fulfilling prophecy, He was also fulfilling prophecy. His foreknowledge regarding His purpose, His work in the ministry, as well as His work on the cross was contextually incorporated with how He communicated. He knew He was the hope of the Jews as well as the Gentiles; in effect He knew His role was intimately connected with the holy seed producing life again (*Acts 26:1-23, Hebrews 6, Romans 9-11*). This brings us to where we left off in our teaching last week because in His dialogue with the disciples Jesus turned from the prophecy back to His current time and said:

Matthew 13:16-17

But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

This part of our passage is why I took the time to bring up the holy seed even though it was attached to, but not part of, the original prophecy that Jesus referenced. Let me explain further. Jesus says “Blessed are your eyes and ears” because He is taking an opportunity to convey the gravity of the literal time they were living in as well as the importance of the literal events they were experiencing. The verbs in this set of verses pertaining to the disciples are all in the *present tense* and *active voice* meaning that their eyes are seeing Jesus NOW and their ears are listening to Jesus NOW. Jesus is indirectly emphasizing that this very moment is metaphorically pouring water on the holy seed for its time of growth to begin. The disciples don’t comprehend the reality that they are witnessing first hand this benchmark in the history of mankind. In their experience they are just asking Jesus a question about parables. We already know they have been somewhat dense about who they are walking around with and even now they don’t yet fully comprehend that everything He does and says is a walking fulfillment of prophecy and promise. Jesus is standing there in the presence of these mere humans backed by the power of every holy name we have studied. He was the fullness of God embodied in a man and He was trying to reach a piece of the disciples that could connect to that reality even for a moment in time. As He tells them they are blessed, were they in awe or were they shrugging their shoulders in bewilderment? Who knows, but Jesus never softened it for them. He always spoke the truth.

As we expand on the gravity of that moment in time when Jesus was physically on the earth; Jesus said, “Many prophets and righteous men longed to see,” I want

to mention something that we need to remember. The Kingdom of Heaven came to earth when Jesus came to earth as a man (***Matthew 3:2, 4:17, 10:7, 12:22-30***). All we have studied this entire year is available for us to know and understand because when He came as the Messiah He made our access to the Kingdom available. He is the linchpin or the conduit for us to interact with the Kingdom of God. All other interactions between God and mankind before Jesus came was governed by: 1) The Word of God (which the included the law, historical records, prophecies and Psalms); 2) by an act of mercy through the temporary but physical appearance of Jesus (as the Angel of the Lord) before He was born out of heaven into the world as a man; 3) by a visitation from the Holy Spirit “coming upon” someone; or 4) by visitation from angels sent from God. The Kingdom came when Jesus came because He brought it. Again, the gravity of the moment of Jesus’ time here on the earth is powerful. I want to illustrate this further by telling a war story, so pay close attention and pretend you’re by a warm fire listening to an ancient tale of battles and heroes.

Matthew 12:22–30

Then a demon-possessed man, who was blind and couldn’t speak, was brought to Jesus. He healed the man so that he could both speak and see. The crowd was amazed and asked, “Could it be that Jesus is the Son of David, the Messiah?” But when the Pharisees heard about the miracle, they said, “No wonder he can cast out demons. He gets his power from Satan, the prince of demons.” Jesus knew their thoughts and replied, “**Any kingdom divided by civil war is doomed. A town or family splintered by feuding will fall apart. And if Satan is casting out Satan, he**

is divided and fighting against himself. His own kingdom will not survive. And if I am empowered by Satan, what about your own exorcists? They cast out demons, too, so they will condemn you for what you have said. But if I am casting out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has arrived among you. For who is powerful enough to enter the house of a strong man like Satan and plunder his goods? Only someone even stronger—someone who could tie him up and then plunder his house. “Anyone who isn’t with me opposes me, and anyone who isn’t working with me is actually working against me.

This is one of those stories demonstrating that Jesus brought the Kingdom. He is not shy at all to proclaim His casting out of demons proves out the fact the Kingdom of Heaven has arrived. In fact the arrival of the Kingdom is the very first thing He proclaims as He begins His ministry (**Matthew 4:17**). He says the Kingdom is at hand (or has arrived) and He urges the people to repent. This particular conversation with the Pharisees in **Matthew 12:22-30** is one of the most powerful examples of the Kingdom having come with Jesus. Everything that was prophesied about, which at that time had merely been something to look forward to, was actually finally happening for real. We see the Pharisees are thirsty for blood with their accusations, but Jesus turns the threat back on the Pharisees by saying, “**But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.**” Jesus drops a warning on the audacity of the Pharisees by challenging them to think about what it TRULY means if it is by the Spirit of God that He is casting out demons. What are they going to do about it if it is true? He goes on to ask a rhetorical question, “**For who is powerful enough to enter the**

house of a strong man like Satan and plunder his goods? Only someone even stronger—someone who could tie him up and then plunder his house.” Jesus booms with power in the face of these insecure, scheming men, saying that He is the one who is even stronger and He is the one who has arrived to rob Satan’s house. Satan is the prince of the Earth but Jesus is the King of ages and of all creation everywhere before, now, and after. The Earth is just a piece of all that Jesus is in dominion over; and Satan is a slave that can be tied up and submitted to Jesus’ authority upon His command. Jesus walked as a man into Satan’s house and took authority over his stuff, and with the snap of His fingers turned on its head all the balance of power between Satan and mankind that had existed since the beginning of creation. Before this time Satan owned mankind. We were slaves to sin and dead in it. At least the Jews had a means of atoning for their sin by obeying the law, but the gentiles were doomed. We were trapped in bodies that couldn’t stop sinning. We were dead men walking. But Jesus, as God in a man, came and changed it all. He brought the Kingdom.

And what are Satan’s goods? What has Jesus come to plunder? His goods are us, we are his trophies. His goods include the rotten and disgusting fruit in a person’s life: destruction, desolation, depression, oppression, possession, lies, bondage, fear, sickness, guilt, sin and hopelessness. His goods are his demonic conspiracies to destroy us through and through, keeping us from ever finding peace, rest or love. This is why Jesus says that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand and has come upon you because He at last brought the Kingdom to us so that we can finally live in the fullness of it instead of living in its foreshadow. We received this word from the Lord this week and it confirms what I am telling you.

"Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Holiness is the adornment of My people, a sweet aroma of worship. Holiness, being set apart as My own precious possession, is the beauty that dispels delusion, selfishness, and despair. Holiness produces unity, and unity cultivates holiness. Everything you need to know about yourself is found in knowing Me, and in knowing Me, you will be free from thinking only of yourselves."

Then Jesus finishes this declaration by throwing a hard line down in the sand and saying, "Anyone who isn't with me opposes me, and anyone who isn't working with me is actually working against me." In effect He is saying, "This is happening, I am happening, right here, right now so be with me or be against me; but nothing and no one is stopping me." We know that He followed through with these statements by continuing with His work and preparing for ALL of His powerful declarations to be confirmed.

After Jesus binds Satan and plunders His goods, we know that He goes on to permanently break the power of sin and death over the lives of mankind through His death on the cross. He was empowering the holy seed to begin its time of restorative growth. He plundered, He died, and He rose in victory so the holy seed could start to grow out of the stump beginning with the new covenant He could offer the Jews AND the gentiles because of the cross. Jesus' redemption of our sins was the plan all along; so the new life has always been contained within the old destroyed stump. It was just a matter of the Lord's timing.

And speaking of timing that's what Jesus was saying when He said in our original passage, "But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it." He says this because even though the disciples had minds of children and were so out of touch with what was going on, they were eyewitnesses. So many heroes of our faith that gave up control of their entire lives for the Name of the Lord didn't get to even glimpse what they got to see. They heard and read prophecies, they watched the horizon for the Messiah, but most of them had to live their entire lives believing just because they believed and not because they saw or heard. We have one account of an experience of those believers in **Luke 2:25-38**.

Luke 2:25-38

At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah. That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying, "Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised. I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for all people. He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!" Jesus' parents were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary, the baby's mother, "This child is destined to cause many in Israel

to fall, but he will be a joy to many others. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him. As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your very soul.”

Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years. Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer. She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem.

These prophets and righteous men longed to see these things and because of that Jesus closes His explanation about parables by telling the disciples how blessed they are to be chosen for that appointed time of revelation. Jesus loves the Kingdom and He gives it to His beloved. He speaks of it constantly throughout the gospels and it is all that embodies His character and nature. Him giving it to us is an extremely intimate act on His part because it is everything that He is. His bringing the Kingdom to earth is a gift to us and a passage to relationship with Him. In all of His communication He grants us full access to the Kingdom. This granting is in alignment with how He has handled us since the time of His coming. He never stops giving us access to Him if we are willing and take what He gives. Look in these following verses at how His care continues; this is certainly not the way He spoke to the Pharisees.

John 14:15–17

“If you love me, obey my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.

John 14:23–27

Jesus replied, “All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them. Anyone who doesn’t love me will not obey me. And remember, my words are not my own. What I am telling you is from the Father who sent me. I am telling you these things now while I am still with you. But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you. “I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.

Acts 1:4–5

Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, “Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 2:1–4

On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

Jesus was still providing even after all of His work was completed. He communicated and reassured the disciples that a Helper was on the way. As the holy seed began to grow He continued to give direction. Once Jesus brought the Kingdom to the earth, He made a way for our freedom. He had always been laying ground for our deliverance; it was like a sidewalk that was infinitely being paved for our travel. For each step of faith He asks us to take, He provides a place on which for us to place our foot. Jesus knows that the disciples are the first delicate branches and leaves to emerge from that holy seed. The Kingdom came to earth through Jesus' presence and God's peace had come to man through Jesus' death. The holy seed is the hope of everyone, the hope of everything.

As Jesus is saying all of this, without actually saying it "all" in His answer about the question regarding the parables, He knows all the connections. Remember, the disciples were all Jews. And in this conversation about parables, the amazing thing is that they aren't waiting for it like all their ancestors were and they also weren't

looking back on it like all of us are. They were in it neck deep and they were experiencing one of the most amazing times in the history of man. They were the hope for the future and although the veil of unbelief that was supernaturally placed on the Jews had not (and has not) been lifted, they were going to witness and initiate the new growth from the new life of the holy seed through the new covenant by the death and resurrection of the Son of God.

Before we finish this introduction to the parables, I can't help but mention that here we have Jesus sitting there talking to a bunch of very immature unknowing disciples and they can't even touch the scope and depth of who He is let alone what He is actually communicating during this talk. I mean this is blowing my mind out of the back of my head that in this little answer He is saying SO MUCH. He knows what He is saying, but they don't have any idea. It's so funny because throughout the gospels we see the disciples pull Jesus aside and continue to privately ask Jesus what the parables mean (**Matthew 13:10-13, Matthew 13:34-36, Matthew 15:15, Mark 4:10, Mark 7:17**) because they just aren't making the connections in their spiritual immaturity. In this particular conversation we have been studying, I picture them sitting around in the shade, sweaty and tired from the day, thinking they are engaging in a run of the mill casual conversation about why Jesus tells parables. It's just so cool because what He is really doing for them, and for us, even in the face of all of their and our narrow ignorance, is setting out a breadcrumb trail that leads us all to understand the vastly bigger picture that is happening. Yes, in this conversation, they are down on the microscope talking about why He is speaking in parables, but all of these things are just pieces that point back to the overall reality of God revealing Himself to mankind which ultimately concludes in

Him being our hope. This is why our eyes and ears are blessed and why it has been granted to us to know the secrets of the kingdom.

As this part of the conversation concludes, Jesus moves on with His appointed work. He starts explaining the first of the eight parables, which He had recently finished telling just before the disciples struck up the side conversation. The eight parables are as follows:

The Sower and The Seed (***Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23***)

The Wheat and the Tares (***Matthew 13:24-30***)

The Mustard Seed (***Matthew 13:31-32***)

The Leaven (***Matthew 13:33***)

The Hidden Treasure (***Matthew 13:44***)

The Costly Pearl (***Matthew 13:45-46***)

The Dragnet (***Matthew 13:47-50***)

The Householder (***Matthew 13:52***)

At first glance these parables seem relatively simple, after all some of them are nothing more than a sentence. But when I started digging I began to realize the art with which Jesus conveys information. He is a master at using few words to communicate dense meaning. We are going to approach the study of these eight parables by following our tested rule for studying the Word of God. We will use the Word itself to do the interpreting. In addition we are going to approach these parables in the way we approach applying scripture to our own lives by looking at

the meanings and implications from a global, personal, and spiritual perspective.

The first two parables we are going to study (*The Sower and the Seed, The Wheat and the Tares*) have a distinction from the other parables in that Jesus tells them to the disciples and then goes on to thoroughly explain their literal meaning. These two parables lay a very solid contextual framework for us to understand how Jesus communicates about the subject matter of the Kingdom of Heaven through these stories. We are going to read the parable of *The Sower and The Seed* but before we do I want to note that although our passage of study is in **Matthew 13**, I also used the account of this parable written in **Luke 8:14-15** to help fill in some of the metaphorical details about the word picture that weren't stated in the text in **Matthew**.

Matthew 13:1-9

That day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. And large crowds gathered to Him, so He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd was standing on the beach. And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. "Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. "But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. "Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. "And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. "He who has ears, let him hear."

Let's continue on and read the explanation Jesus gives.

Matthew 13:18–23

“Hear then the parable of the sower. “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. “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; 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. “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. “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.”

Let's start by clearly defining the elements of the parable according to what Jesus explains. The seed represents God's word (***Luke 8:11***). This is interesting because we know a few things about what it means when the Bible references the Word of God: 1) In the Old Testament it signified when God spoke to someone and they were receiving it or delivering it, scripture was literally saying, “These are God's words that I'm about to tell you”; 2) In the New Testament it is a title for and descriptive language for the message of the cross and the New Covenant

established through Jesus' death and resurrection; 3) The "Word of God" is part of the Armor of God and is the Sword of the Spirit (**Ephesians 6:17**); and 4) The "Word of God" is also the name the Father uses to address Jesus since the beginning of all that we know and understand (**Genesis 1:1, John 1:1-3, John 1:14-15, Revelation 19:13**). So Jesus is using the metaphor of the seed to represent a complete presentation of His Father, the Word, Himself, and the gospel message, with nothing left out. This is an appropriate metaphor because a seed is a complete entity in and of itself. It has everything it needs stored within its pod for its initial propagation except an environment in which to propagate. It is an origin for life.

Next Jesus says that a sower went out to sow. It is interesting that in our second parable of *The Wheat and the Tares*, the sower who sows the good seed is identified as the Son of Man (**Matthew 13:37**). We know that in the Bible the Son of Man is another title for Jesus. So the sower is Jesus. The next thing I want to make note of is that the parable says the sower "went out" to plant some seeds. And this is very interesting because a farmer tends to reserve their seed for fertile soil but this sower just "went out" and sowed seeds. The seeds land on four potential surfaces: 1) The hard soil/foot path; 2) Rocky soil; 3) Thorny ground; and 4) the Good soil. That the sower "went out" and sowed on any of these four potential surfaces is a major clue that Jesus is giving us to understand some aspects of the Kingdom of Heaven. Let me explain. The seed, or God's word, is complete and perfect in and of itself, but it reacts and responds to its environment. It gets ignored, trampled, stolen, choked out, forgotten, given up on, accepted, rejected, heard, held onto, and nurtured to bear fruit. The environment (type of soil) does not change the concrete reality that the seed/Word of God is absolute power and absolute truth; however, the environment does change the seeds capacity to thrive

and be effective to produce any fruit.

This goes back to what we studied last week about both His and our responsibility in the relationship. Remember, He “grants” and we “know,” the two way street of relationship with God? That very concept is illustrated in this parable with relationship to two of the types of soil: the hard soil and the good soil (**Matthew 13:19, 23**). In this case the concept is illustrated in the usage of the word “understand.” You see the parable states that in the case with receiving the message on the hard soil, people hear the word and do not understand it. But in the case of receiving the message on the good soil, the people hear and do understand. The word “understand” is a *present active participle* meaning that they are now actively choosing to—and continuing to choose to—understand or to not understand. When you approach God’s word from the hard path you will choose not to understand whereas if you approach God’s word from the good soil you will choose to understand.

The reason why I am highlighting this is because I want to start training your mind to recognize examples of the interactive way the Kingdom of Heaven and the kingdom of this world interact and ricochet off of one another. This is one of the reasons Jesus is explaining this parable to us. It lays the groundwork for us to understand the way these two kingdoms co-exist so we can begin to see that the interaction between the two kingdoms is not so rigid and separated. They are very integrated and they impact and affect each other. This reality is one of the reasons why our body is not so freaked out by the spirit world. We already have learned so much in just submitting to and letting the Word of God be our absolute authority and it has opened up the floodgates of understanding for us to learn about the real world we live in. We are spiritual beings having a physical experience, and it is not

the other way around. Therefore, we want to begin to look at these parables as the platform or the stage for us to understand the Kingdom of Heaven and how it operates alongside of the context of the kingdom of the world.

We will continue our study of the parable of *The Sower and the Seed* next time.

Let's pray.