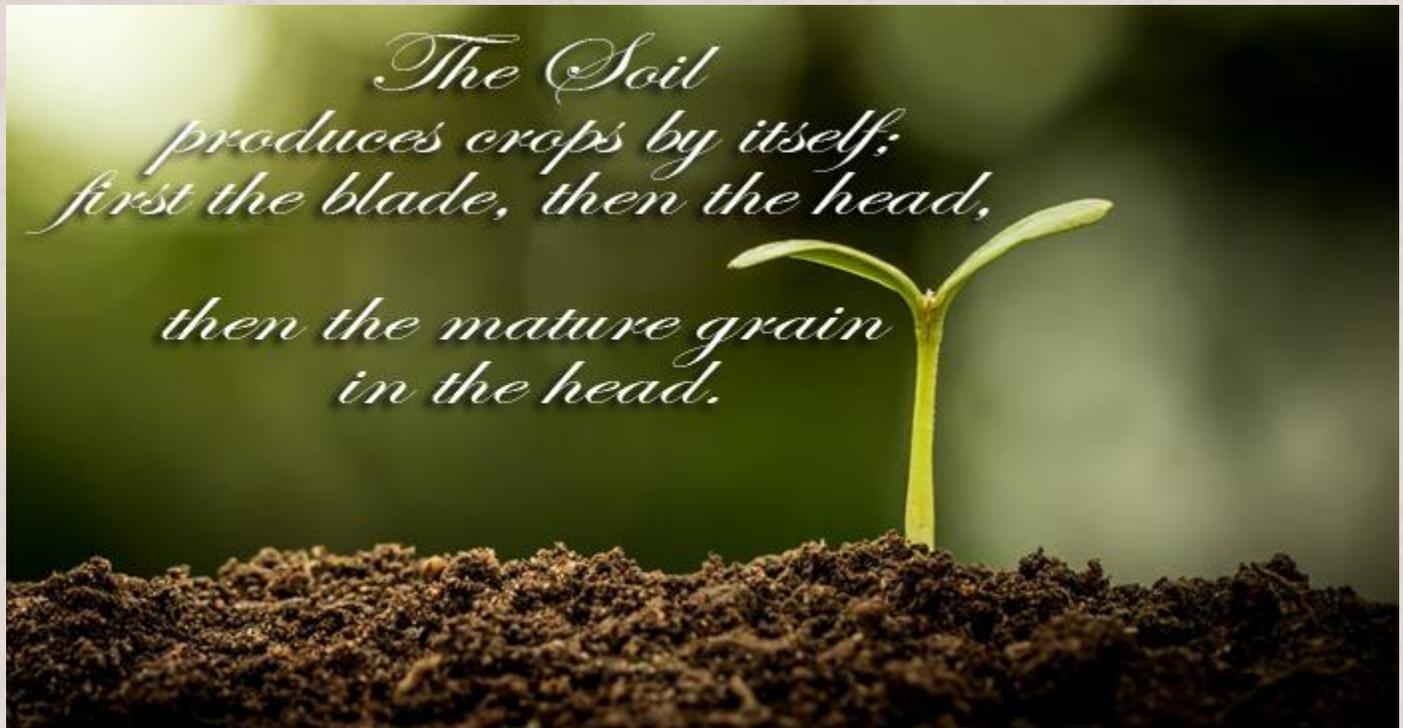


THE PARABLES OF JESUS, #017 A Chronological Study

*"To Him who opened His mouth in parables and
uttered things hidden since the creation of the world."
Psalm 78:2*



"The Growing Seed" The Mysteries of the Kingdom Mark 4:26-29^[1]

INTRODUCTION

Jesus and His Parables

[Mk 4:33-34] *With many such parables He was speaking the Word to them, so far as they were able to hear it; and He did not speak to*

them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.

In the last three lessons we were dealing with Jesus' explanation of why He spoke in parables. We learned along the way that Jesus' plan of action through these parables was to describe important kingdom details in such a way that those whom God had prepared to hear the meaning would hear it, and those whom God had not prepared would not hear it.

The Growing Seed

The Text:

[Mk 4:26-29] And He was saying, "*The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know. The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.*"

The Kingdom of God

[Mk 4:26] And He was saying, "*The kingdom of God is like a man....*"

Along the way in these lessons, we are spreading out many different facets of "The Kingdom of God." Here we are once again confronted with *The Kingdom of God*. "A logical starting point is understanding the word itself. Within the word kingdom (Gk. *basilea*), there are three interrelated ideas which must be considered in establishing a biblical concept of the term.^[2] I'll summarize His meaning here.

First, there is *The Right to Rule* – The authority, sovereignty, dominion vested in a king.

Second there is *The Realm of Rule* – This is the *realm* in which ruling authority is exercised. This involves *the subjects* of the one in authority rather than the authority himself.

Thirdly, there is *The Reality of Rule* – the actual *exercise of royal authority*. A kingdom does not actually exist where there is no active exercise of that royal authority. All three elements must be present to understand each use of the word kingdom properly.

“There are two aspects of the kingdom as the word is used in the Bible and we need to see that they are not self-contradictory. One might say there is an **eternal** aspect as well as a **temporal** aspect; it has a **universal** nature as well as a **local** nature; or there is an **immediate** sense of the kingdom in which God rules directly, and a **mediated** sense of the kingdom in which God rules indirectly through appointed representatives.” [\[3\]](#)

This is probably a good time for some definitions!

Eternal - the Kingdom of God outside of our time. All things physical exist in time. God is a spiritual being. His Son was under the influence of time only while He had physical existence here in time and space. It is expected that we, like the angels, and the occasional visits here by the pre-existent Jesus, when they took (take) on physical existence, will only be subject to time when merging from the eternal state to enter the physical realm on a mission from Almighty God - but our nature will always be eternal - as we were created that way. So is the Kingdom of God. Where God rules in Eternity (from Heaven in Eternity).

Temporal - as in the explanation of Eternal, temporal has to do with the Kingdom of God with its physical existence in time. Where God exercises His rule upon the created universe, especially (to us) on the earth.

Universal nature of the Kingdom of God - God's rule is absolute and absolutely everywhere in both the eternal heavens and upon all of creation.

Local Rule in the Kingdom of God - His absolute rule in any one specific place in His creation - specifically, to us, upon the Earth.

Immediate rule in the Kingdom of God - God enters physical creation and acts upon the moment immediately. A clear example

might be when Moses meets God in the burning bush, or when Jesus, in His physical body, acting as God's righteous servant, heals someone upon His Father's request.

Mediated Rule - Kings, Queens, Presidents, Dictators, Police, anyone with authority only rules by God's plan and program, and specifically His assigned approval. While all these are under His supervision they also find themselves responsible for their actions to be in line with His nature. All are free to rule at His request, all are responsible for their rule.

And - **The Heavenly Kingdom of God** - God almighty rules from His Kingdom in Eternity, outside of the created universe and physical time. Whether He rules the Angels (and other spiritual beings there) in the Spiritual realm or us and/or other created beings in the created universe, the base of God's power is always in the Heavenly Kingdom of God.

One more **clarification**: So that the question of Jesus as a man VS. Jesus as God doesn't keep coming up... Jesus is Almighty God. The Trinity does not divide God's being. Father, Son, Holy Spirit are God (period.). The Kingdom of God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) is like... a man who....

As we study the parables of Jesus we also need to see that many of them begin with, "The heavenly Kingdom of God is **like a man**," in this particular parable I think you will come to the conclusion that **this** man is... just a man. In our most recent parables Jesus portrays His Position as King through the imagery of a farmer and his rule over his farm, what he does, and what is the result. We need to understand Jesus, His rule, and His results – as well as where in the program of God these are expressed. As we always say, "Context is everything!"

The Immediate Context

The Gospel writers present us with at least three *time ingredients* for our context in these Kingdom parables. For simplicity we could

call them Old Testament, New Testament and the Future. Most of the Old Testament concerns the establishment of the kingdom of Israel, most of the New Testament concerns the establishment of the Body of Christ – The Church, and the third element concerns the coming earthly Kingdom and Heavenly kingdoms. Our parables often contain one, two or all of these understandings of the Kingdom of God. The parables are given for our understanding of these things so that we might know Him intimately.

Each of the parables share one important ingredient to understanding them properly. Jesus was teaching and ministering in the closing moments of “The Kingdom of Israel.” They are the story of Jesus, Israel’s promised Messiah, King, and High Priest, and the nation’s absolute rejection of Him. So, the **primary** interpretation of these parables must take that into consideration. Secondary interpretation and application will involve the then future Jewish and Gentile Church and Millennial kingdoms. For this study we will be focusing on the primary interpretation. So, our primary view for this parable is about Jesus the King, as He tells His disciples about “a man who...” and what He has and rules over as a land-owning farmer, and what he has to do with the covenanted nation of Israel.

The Kingdom of God, a Man, Seed, and Soil

[Mk 4:26a] *“The kingdom of God is like a **man** who casts **seed** upon the **soil**;”*

Our first thought is about the Kingdom. Using the immediate context, we have Jesus in Israel the covenanted Kingdom of God at that time on earth (God is also sovereignly ruling over all of His kingdoms on earth). Jesus is educating His disciples as to what is right about His covenanted Kingdom and what is wrong with it.

We learned in an earlier lesson (014 The Sower) that it is God, in that case Jesus, who is the “farmer” who sows the seed, and that the seed is “the Word of God,” and the soil, in that case, is the “good soil,” those who hear and believe the Word of God (believers) as Jesus sows the Word of God to them.

We should see that Jesus was making a specific statement to His disciples concerning those who believe the Word of God.

The Man Does Not Know

[Mk 4:27] *and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know.*

It is always important to make sure that any text we are trying to learn and understand does not contradict other scripture. All scripture must agree with itself. We should see that, in this clause of the verse, our sower of seed cannot be the Lord Jesus because it states here that “he himself does not know” how the seed sprouts and grows. The man in the parable is just an ordinary farmer man who rises early with the sun rising and goes to bed early with the sun setting “and the seed sprouts and grows – how... he himself does not know.

The Soil Produces Crops by Itself

[Mk 4:28] *The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head.*

So, in this parable Jesus is making the connection between soil and the seed. The soil, the believer, receives the seed, the Word of God, and it grows according to a normal plan. One source says that wheat planted in the spring will take about 4 months to get to maturity, and if planted in the fall will take about 8 months to mature because of winter dormancy. The last stage of growth is the development and maturity of the grain head where the seed ripens.

We see that there is a relationship between God’s plan for the wheat and His plan for believers follows a path together:

[Genesis 1:11-12] *Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them"; and it was so. 12 The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good."*

The vegetation – the believer!

The plants yield fruit and seed – the believer's job is to yield fruit (of all kinds – witness, testimony, preaching, teaching, helping others to repentance and salvation in Christ Jesus); that is full of seed (spread the word of God to those who would receive Christ and grow in the word).

It is interesting to note that in God's purposes a single seed grows into a plant or tree that will produce a multitude of seed or fruit – not just one-on-one.

I also like the end of verse Mk 4:28... "*The mature grain in the head.*" Perhaps Jesus, or Mark, added a little tongue-and-cheek there. For it is in the believer's head that the Word of God becomes mature.

The Crop Matures and the Harvest Comes

This parable certainly has meaning on through the age of the Church and then the Millennium, however Jesus was giving this simple message to His disciples so that they would understand some of the major points in the plan of God for the individual believer right there in their own time. They were being prepared to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the message of His Kingdom to their friends and neighbors, eventually all around the middle-east, and then all around the world.

How does that work? I was recently telling a small group in my home about my own experience, and I'm not putting this here for my own aggrandizement but to demonstrate what Jesus is telling His disciples.

I was saved when I was about 24 years old. I was not brought up in a believing home. I was just a regular "lost" guy. After a couple of years my parents were so impressed with the changes in my life – and my constant witness to them – that they both surrendered their lives to Jesus. My dad spoke often to a younger friend of his about the changes in my life, and now his own, and he recommended the bible believing church I was attending to him. He and his wife came to our church and got saved, and their grown children. This man and his wife went off to Bible school and became missionaries to China where they ministered for more than 30 years – as church planters and bringing many to know the Savior. When they retired, they came back to the US and started Chinese Christian churches in the New York City area. God planted seed, it grew and matured, then it multiplied shedding its seed in God's harvest, sending the Word of God into prepared hearts of prepared soil and new believers were born – repeatedly. And like in Genesis 1:12, "And God saw that it was good. Jesus is telling His disciples... "How it all works." The Word of God (the seed), grows and matures the believer and then because of this... there is fruit (more believers). We are the laborers, God produces the growth and fruit.

PARENT'S GUIDE

**WHEN CAN I
START
GIVING SOLID
TO BABY?**

SUNDAY QUERY



"Feast upon The Word of God, Now!"

A word of application

How about you? How did God bring you to Christ? Who planted the seeds (God), who watered your journey (God), how is maturity working on you? Are you witnessing, giving testimony? So many along the way have become lax in their responsibilities in spreading the seed and multiplying the harvest - because they are not listening to God's Word. Don't fall under the reproach of the book of Hebrews 5:12.

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant."

The purpose of Christian Growth is to provide the hands and feet of the laborer.

Romans 10:14-15

14 "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? 15 How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!"

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS WITHOUT ANSWERS

- 1. Why is knowing the verse context so important?**
- 2. Who is "the man" in this parable?**
- 3. What is the lesson taught in this parable?**
- 4. What does Genesis 1:12 teach about being fruitful?**
- 5. What is your responsibility as a plant of wheat?**
- 6. What does verse 29 mean "when the crop permits"?**

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

- 1. Why is knowing the verse context so important?**

Proper contextual study tends to keep all kinds of strange doctrines from introduced into the local church. It is important when studying the Bible to not base any seeming truth from just one verse, or one paragraph. Always study using context and knowing, as best you can, the whole of scripture, both Old and New testaments. It is all one book and one story. It is God written and He cannot contradict Himself or His revelation.

2. Who is “the man” in this parable?

It would be so easy to say that it is Jesus... but He would certainly know how a garden grows – He created all the dirt, plants, worms, the water, the sunlight – everything!^[4] It's just a man who planted seed.

3. What is the lesson taught in this parable?

From the very creation of all things, God’s plan is that all things shall pursue life, and grow up in order to multiply and pursue life. In that plan it is God’s way of attaining a family of human believers who are, in fact, His sons and daughters by adoption – bought by the blood of His Son’s sacrifice upon that Cross of blood and shame.

4. What does Genesis 1:12 teach about being fruitful?

It is God’s purpose to bring glory to Himself by being the source of forgiveness and grace. He created all things to fill the earth and multiply.

5. What is your responsibility as a plant of wheat?

To grow seeds (The Word of God) and to harvest them in order to grow more witness and testimony so that the Word of God can do it’s divine work and bring many into the Family of God.

6. What does verse 29 mean, “when the crop permits”?

Part of this whole process requires the seed grower to be willing and able to bring witness and testimony – proving that they are indeed a child of God and not just a pretender. There is a real difference between a multiplying plant of wheat – or a weed. Look deeply at your faith and life’s works – are you a multiplying wheat, or not?

[1] All scriptures are from the NASB unless otherwise noted.

[2] Penticost, Dwight J., Thy Kingdom Come, Scripture Press, 1990

[3] ibid

[4] John 1:1-4 The Word of God, The Son of God, Jesus created all things from nothing.

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Jeremiah 18:15

"Don't stumble from the Ancient Path"

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