

Lesson 50 – THE PARABLE OF THE SOILS

Matthew 13:1-9,18-23

The first parable the Lord spoke to His disciples was the parable of the sower and the soils, *“SAYING, BEHOLD, A SOWER WENT FORTH TO SOW.”* This and the following parables in Matthew 13 are kingdom parables which the Lord used to define and describe the nature of His kingdom as set forth in the New Covenant age leading up to His second coming and the final judgment. The parable of the soils deals with the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world and how the Gospel will be received by those who hear it. It begins with a “sower” (farmer), who symbolizes preachers of the Gospel going forth to plant seed, which is the Gospel message itself.

(Matt. 13:4-8) – Christ speaks of four different types of soil upon which the seed fell:

“SOME SEEDS FELL BY THE WAY SIDE” – The “way side” describes hard unfertile ground where seed cannot grow. The birds came and ate the seed.

“SOME FELL UPON STONY PLACES” – This “stony” ground describes a thin layer of dirt covering broad stretches of limestone so that the seed could not take root and grow. The sun’s heat “scorched” the seed, and it was destroyed.

“AND SOME FELL AMONG THORNS” – This thorny ground describes weed-infested soil where the seed was choked out and destroyed.

“BUT OTHER FELL INTO GOOD GROUND” – The “good ground” describes fertile prepared soil where all rocks and weeds had been cleared away and where the seed could grow and flourish as the Lord willed.

(Matt. 13:9) – *“WHO HATH EARS TO HEAR, LET HIM HEAR”* – Christ knew that all who heard the truth would not receive and believe it. He knew that only those who had been given by God spiritual life, spiritual ears to hear and believe the truth would receive it and believe (John 3:3-7).

(Matt. 13:18-19) – After telling them the reason He now spoke in parables, He begins to give the meaning of the parable. The “sower” represents all preachers of the true Gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace in the salvation of sinners through the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is called *“THE WORD OF THE KINGDOM”* as it sets forth the glory of the Person and work of the King of kings Who, by His obedience unto death as the Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, and Preserver of His people (God’s elect) finished the transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, brought in everlasting righteousness, sealed up the vision and prophecy, and anointed the most Holy (Dan. 9:24). It is the Gospel wherein the righteousness of God (Christ’s righteousness imputed) is revealed to His people and which they are brought by God to believe in Christ as the only way of salvation and eternal life (John 14:6; Rom. 1:16-17; 2 Cor. 5:19-21).

The soils represent people in various states and attitudes who hear the Gospel message at least with the physical ear. The first three hear the Gospel but receive no saving benefits from it. The last one hears the Gospel effectually and invincibly in the power of the Holy Spirit and bears the fruit of faith in Christ, true repentance, and perseverance in the faith. One thing is certain according to this parable – There is no salvation apart from hearing the Gospel (Rom. 1:16-17; 10:13-17), but unless the Holy Spirit gives spiritual life and receptive hearts to those who hear it, there will be no faith or repentance.

(Matt. 13:19) – THE WAYSIDE hearer is one who has no interest in hearing the Gospel truth. His heart (mind, affections, will, conscience) is spiritually dead and deceived, and he has no saving understanding of what he has heard as he has no concern for his soul's eternal safety (1 Cor. 2:14). "*THE WICKED ONE*" (Satan) comes quickly to cause him to forget what he has heard.

(Matt. 13:20-21) – THE STONEY-GROUND hearer is one who, at first, seems glad to hear the Gospel and even makes a quick profession of faith – "*AND ANON WITH JOY RECEIVETH IT.*" But the word preached to him was not implanted deeply in his heart by the Holy Spirit so as to bring him to real conviction of the truth. So, after a little while, when the heat of tribulation and persecution come over the Word, he "*IS OFFENDED,*" i.e. tripped up by his own self-love and self-preservation. He leaves the truth and turns back to lies.

(Matt. 13:22) – THE THORNY-GROUND hearer is somewhat interested in the truth but never commits himself to Christ. He never arrives at the point of seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33) with his whole heart. Other matters of worldly riches and possessions choke out the Word, and he bears no fruit of faith and repentance (Luke 12:15-21)

(Matt. 13:23) – THE GOOD GROUND hearer is one of God's elect, Christ's sheep, to whom the Holy Spirit comes in the preaching of the Word and gives him spiritual life, knowledge, a new heart, mind, and desire. This is the true believer who is given the gift of faith (Eph. 2:8-10). This is one who has been convicted of truth by the Spirit so that he cannot ignore, deny, or leave Christ and the truth (John 16:8-11). He understands God's holy law and justice, his own sinfulness and depravity, the only way of salvation in Christ and by His righteousness alone. He has been brought by God to repentance of dead works and idolatry so as to bear fruit unto God (Rom. 7:4-6). While all believers do not bear equal amounts of fruit, every one of them bears the same fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).