

NEW TESTAMENT



GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

Lesson II: "He Spake Many Things unto Them in Parables" (Matthew 13)

- Jesus presents the parable of the sower and explains his use of parables.
- Jesus explains the parable of the sower.
- Jesus uses parables to teach about the kingdom of heaven on earth (the Church of Jesus Christ).

A study of this lesson will help us develop "ears to hear" so they can understand how Jesus' parables apply to them (Matthew 13:9).

Introduction

Imagine you are riding in a bus. As the journey progresses, you look through the windows of the bus and observe the scenery.

People in the same situation do not always observe the same things. Likewise, not all the people who heard Jesus teach in parables understood how the parables applied to them. This lesson will discuss how we can understand and apply Jesus' parables.



Jesus presents the parable of the sower and explains his use of parables. (Matthew 13:1-17)

When the multitudes gathered on the seashore, Jesus "spake many things unto them in parables" (Matt. 13:3). A parable is a symbolic story that teaches gospel truths by comparing them to earthly things. Jesus said that his purpose in teaching with parables was to simultaneously teach his message to his disciples and conceal it from unbelievers. (See Matt. 13:10-13; note the Joseph Smith Translation of Matt. 13:12 footnote 12a.)

- **Matt. 13:3-8** records the parable of the sower
 - Matt. 13:4 Seeds that fell on the wayside—eaten by birds.
 - Matt. 13:5-6; Luke 8:6 Seeds in stony places—have no root.
 - Matt. 13:7 Seeds among thorns—choked by thorns.

- Matt. 13:8 Seeds in good soil—bring forth fruit.

People might react in varied ways if they heard this parable without any explanation of its meaning. Some people might become frustrated because they do not understand it. Others might understand it but think it does not apply to them. Others might ponder it and ask questions until they understand it and know how to apply it in their lives.

Matt. 13:9 Jesus extended an invitation after he presented the parable of the sower in this verse. Think about what the word hear means in this invitation and what it means to see but see not and to hear but hear not. (See Matt. 13:13-15.)

The Prophet Joseph Smith said:

"The multitude ... received not His saying ... because they were not willing to see with their eyes, and hear with their ears; not because they could not, and were not privileged to see and hear, but because their hearts were full of iniquity and abominations. ... The very reason why the multitude ... did not receive an explanation upon His parables, was because of unbelief"

(Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 96-97).

NEXT WEEK:

#12 "I Am the Bread of Life" (John 5:6; Mark 6:30-C44; Matthew 14:22-33)

Jesus explains the parable of the sower. (Matthew 13:18-23)



Now let's discuss the meaning of the objects and actions in the parable of the sower.

Seed = word of God.

- See **Matt. 13:19; Luke 8:11**

Wayside = people who hear the word of God but do not understand it

- There are some things that we might do that prevent us from understanding God's word: Mosiah 26:1-3 provides for one possible example involving the rising generation.
- **Alma 32:27** reminds us of what we must do to be able to understand the word of God.

- **Matt. 13:19** Lack of understanding makes it easier for Satan to take away the word from our hearts.

Stony places = people who hear and receive the word of God but do not allow it to take root in them.

- **Matt. 13:20-21; Mark 4:5** Some people do not allow the word of God to take root in them.
- **Alma 32:41-43** We allow the word to establish deep roots in us by nourishing it with faith, great diligence, patience and long-suffering. These string roots will help us endure the heat of tribulation, persecution, and offense.

Thorny places = people who hear the word of God but are distracted by the cares of the world.

- **Matt. 13:22; Mark 4:19; Luke 8:14**—Sometimes a person may be unfruitful. "Thorns" cause people to be unfruitful; thorns such as worldly cares, riches, lusts, and pleasures of this life. Obviously, these thorns are evident in the world today.

Our challenge is to determine what we can do to prevent these thorns from choking the word of God in us.

Good ground = people who hear the word of God, understand it, and do works of righteousness.

- See **Matt. 13:23**.

Some actions could be taken to help the unproductive areas produce fruit:

- The wayside could be plowed and fertilized, the stones could be removed, and the thorns could be uprooted.
- Applying this to our efforts to be more receptive to God's word could mean that we spend more effort on gospel study and Church activity, repent to remove our sins, and redirect our minds and hearts away from the worldly toward that which is of eternal value.

Give some thought to why the parable of the sower focuses more on the ground than on the sower or the seed.

Jesus uses parables to teach about the kingdom of heaven on earth (the Church of Jesus Christ). (Matthew 13:24-53)

As we review **Matt. 13:24-53**, remember that in these verses the term "kingdom of heaven" refers to the Church of Jesus Christ, which is the kingdom of heaven on earth (Bible Dictionary, "Kingdom of Heaven or Kingdom of God," 721).

Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43; and D&C 86:1-7 record the parable of the wheat and the tares, the Savior's explanation of the parable to his disciples, and the Savior's explanation as given to the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Matt. 13:27-30 In the parable of the wheat and the tares, the sower refused to let his servants immedi-

ately gather the tares, or weeds. **D&C 86:5-7** clarifies why that was so.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven are about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 98-100).

Matt. 13:31-32 We learn from this that the restored Church in the lat-



ter days, will grow from humble circumstances to be the greatest of all and become home to many in need of shelter.

Matt. 13:33 Leaven is an ingredient, such as yeast or baking powder, that causes bread to rise. In this comparison, the work of God increases as it is introduced to others who benefit from it.

Matt. 13:44-46 teaches the parables of the treasure and the pearl of great price, reminding us that:

- We should be willing to sacrifice all we have to obtain the treasure of the gospel.

- We should not only remember sacrifices that we or those we know have made for the gospel, but also the blessings that have resulted from those sacrifices.

Matt. 13:47 The net in the parable of the net cast into the sea represents the church that offers the gospel message to many different kinds of people. The gathering of the good into vessels and casting the bad away reminds us that there will

be a final judgment when we will be judged on what we have become. (See Matt. 13:48-50. Note: Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:4 explains that “the end of the world” in verse 49 refers to the destruction of the wicked.)

Consider what you need to do to help you stay faithful in the Church and to help others do the same.

Conclusion

Elder Bruce R. McConkie, *"Parables are a call to investigate the truth; to learn more; to inquire into the spiritual realities, which through them, are but dimly viewed. Parables start truth seekers out in the direction of further light and knowledge and understanding; they invite men to ponder such truths as they are able to bear in the hope of learning more. Parables are a call to come unto Christ, to believe his doctrines, to live his laws, and to be saved in his kingdom. They teach arithmetic to those who have the capacity to learn calculus in due course. They are the mild milk of the word that prepares are spiritual digestive processes to feast upon the doctrinal meat of the kingdom."* (Mortal Messiah, 2:245)

Jesus explained his parables to those who sought understanding. As we study Jesus' parables with a sincere desire to understand, we will see how they apply in our day.

