

STUDY SEVEN | MATTHEW 13:1-23

THE SOWER & THE SEEDS

OVERVIEW

A PARABLE ABOUT RECEIVING THE WORD (VV 1-9)

Jesus tells a parable about a farmer scattering seeds. There are four types of soil: the path, the rocky ground; the thorns, and the rich soil. The seeds correspondingly are snatched away by the birds, scorched by the sun in shallow ground, choked by the thorns, or bear an abundant harvest. We are called to consider carefully the parable.

PARABLES IN GENERAL EXPLAINED (VV 10-18)

The purpose of parables is explained: they reveal the secrets of the Kingdom to the disciples but not to others. When they are received, much more is given – blessing from God. When they are refused, all is taken away – a judgment from God. The background to this reality is the ministry of the prophet Isaiah, who preached the Word of God to a hard-hearted people (Isaiah 6). Though all have the ability to see and hear the secrets, not all choose to, because a hardened heart prevents understanding and therefore reception of the Kingdom, otherwise they would indeed be received. But those who have heard and received are greatly blessed. Many prophets and righteous men longed to see and hear such things but did not.

THIS PARABLE EXPLAINED (VV 19-23)

The parable of the seeds is explained. There are four responses:

- when someone hears the message of the kingdom and does not understand, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in the heart – the seed on the path.
- when someone receives the word joyfully, but it takes no root because of trouble and persecution, the joy does not last, and they fall away –the seed on rocky places.
- when someone receives the word, but the worries of this life and deceitful concerns for wealth consume them they do not bear fruit –the seed among thorns.
- when someone understands and receives the word they bear abundant fruit for the Kingdom – the seed on rich soil producing bountiful crops.

‘COME UNTO ME’

JANUARY 31

MATT 10:1-31 WORKERS FOR THE HARVEST

FEBRUARY 7

MATT 10:32-42 THE UNDIVIDED DISCIPLE

FEBRUARY 14

MATT 11:1-30 KNOWN & UNKNOWN

FEBRUARY 21

MATT 12:1-14 LORD OF THE SABBATH

FEBRUARY 28

MATT 12:15-37 THE TOUGH & TENDER SERVANT

MARCH 7

MATT 12:38-50 WHO ARE MY FAMILY?

MARCH 14

MATT 13:1-23 THE SOWER & THE SEEDS

MARCH 21

MATT 13:24-43 THE WEEDS, THE SEED & THE YEAST

MARCH 28

MATT 13:44-58 THE TREASURE, THE PEARL & THE NET

RESOURCE

A GREAT LIGHT
DAWNS

PETER BOLT

(READING THE BIBLE TODAY)

We are not responsible for bringing people into God's Kingdom. Only Jesus makes that possible. Our task in a lost world is to be busy sowing the seed. Be indiscriminate. But don't be careless. People are lost without Christ. But that's precisely why God sent him into the world, sent him to the cross, and raised him from the dead. That same power is at work when we sow the gospel seed.

Humility is the antidote to hard-heartedness. Isaiah prophesied God's word will not return to him void (Is 55:11) – it will always be effective, bringing, as this parable has ultimately described, judgment or blessing.

GETTING STARTED

1. Why do you think the message of the gospel meets such a ‘mixed’ reception? Do you think the gospel may have lost its power?

INTO THE TEXT

READ VERSES 1-23

2. Jesus used parables as a distinctive means of teaching people. What does he explain is the purpose of the parables (v 11, see also Matt 11:25)?
3. Though all have the ability to receive Jesus’ teaching, not all choose to. What are the two possible outcomes for those listening (v 12)?
4. Why don’t some people receive Jesus’ teaching (v 15, see also Isaiah 6:9-10)?
5. What importance does Jesus place on his teaching (vv 16-17, see also 1 Peter 1:10-12)?
6. What’s the seed (v 3, 19)?
7. Note the four soils Jesus identifies in vv 1-9. Match the corresponding explanations in vv 18-23.

SOIL	EXPLANATION

8. List all the things that the passage tells you about what God is like.
9. List all the things the passage tells you about what we are like.

10. What has Jesus done that deals with the contrasts between what God is like and what we are like?

TAKEAWAY

11. How much of a barrier do you think our 21st culture is in our promoting the gospel? Do you think Jesus' categories about responding the Word of God still apply today?

12. What do you think is the crop (v 23) that results from those who receive Jesus' teaching? What would it look like in a believer's life?