

If You Plan to Reap What You Sow, You Had Better Watch What You Plant

by
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In the “Questions & Answers” section of the January 1998 issue of *The Voice of Elijah*®, I was asked to explain what Jesus was *talking about* in the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14–30). I did that at that time. Then, in the “Questions & Answers” section of this issue, I was asked to explain the *meaning* of the Parable of the Sower. I will do that as well. However, I am going to begin a series of articles in which I will explain the *meaning* of all of Jesus’ parables rather than continuing to explain individual parables. The reason for that is, the parables of Jesus do not stand alone as individual units. Each one of them is part of an ongoing discourse in which Jesus was explaining some particular facet of *The Teaching* to His disciples.

Notice that I said I would “explain the *meaning*” of Jesus’ parables. I did not say I would explain their *meaning* and *significance*, even though every parable has both. That is because, although I am now free to openly explain the *meaning* of Jesus’ parables, I cannot as yet explain their *significance* openly. Therefore, if you desire that additional information in the near term, you will have to seek it elsewhere.

The fool will accept my explanation of the parables of Jesus and think he understands all that he needs to know about them. Don’t tell him he doesn’t. Let him find out the hard way. Without an understanding of the *significance* of a particular parable, knowledge of its *meaning* is more or less worthless. That is because the *significance* of each and every parable that Jesus told tells you precisely how it fits in with the parables of Moses and the Prophets. I trust you will keep that in mind should you feel the idiotic urge to “show what you know” after reading what I write. If the only thing God ever intended us to do with our knowledge of the

Truth was use it to impress others, He wouldn’t have made it the sole requirement for salvation.

The Key to Understanding Parables

If you ever intend to understand the parables of Jesus and the Prophets, you must first understand that every parable contains at least one *parabolic image* whose *meaning* and *significance* is concealed in and revealed by the *meaning* and *significance* of its corresponding Hebrew idiom. In the Parable of the Sower, the central *parabolic image* is obviously the *Seed* the sower sows. The Hebrew idiom that corresponds to that image is not quite as obvious. So I will tell you outright it is the idiom “raise up a seed.” I am currently in the process of explaining the *meaning* and *significance* of that idiom and two other related idioms—“build a house” and “make a name”—in another series of articles I am writing for *The Voice of Elijah*®. When I have finished that series, you will be better able to understand the *meaning* and *significance* of the Parable of the Sower. You can believe that if you care to, or you can disbelieve it if you dare to. It doesn’t matter much to me one way or the other. I’m not the one still seeking to understand the parables of Jesus. If you aren’t, then why are you reading this article?

Enough ridiculing fools. Let’s take a closer look at the context in which Jesus told the Parable of the Sower. Matthew begins by telling us this:

While He was still speaking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. And someone said to Him, “Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You.” But He answered the one who was telling

Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "**Behold, My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.**" (Matthew 12:46–50)

As I told you several years ago, the point of Jesus' statements concerning His family in this passage has to do with a *parabolic pantomime* in which He was making an oral testament that would be valid under both Roman and Jewish law. (See "Did Jesus Leave a Will?" *The Voice of Elijah*®, July 1991.) Roman law required that a testator disinherit his legal heirs before designating any additional heirs. According to Jewish law, the legal heirs of Jesus included His mother and brothers. Therefore, Jesus disinherited the members of His immediate family so that they might later be reinstated and share His estate with all others who *inherit the promise* under the terms stipulated in His will—that is, by doing "the will of My Father who is in heaven."

I have also told you what "the will of My Father" is. In an article I wrote a year ago, I explained His will is that people believe the Truth rather than believing Satan's lies. (See "Thy Kingdom Come. Thy Will Be Done, on Earth," *The Voice of Elijah*®, April 1997.) Knowing that, you can see that the point of Jesus' *parabolic pantomime* is that only those who believe the Truth of *The Teaching* are *heirs of the promise*. My point concerning Jesus' *parabolic pantomime* in this regard, however, is merely that Matthew wants his reader to understand that *the inheritance of the promise* was on Jesus' mind when He told the Parable of the Sower. He makes that clear by telling us what Jesus said to His disciples immediately after He told them the Parable of the Sower. Listen to this:

And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" And He answered and said to 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 shall {more} be given, and he shall 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. And in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says,

'YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; AND YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE; FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, AND WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES LEST THEY SHOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I SHOULD 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}."

(Matthew 13:10–17)

The point that Matthew wants his reader to gain from Jesus' statements on this occasion is obvious to anyone who is aware that God had His Prophets speak in parables so as to seal up the Truth of *The Teaching* in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is the same point that Jesus made in the *parabolic pantomime* in which He made an oral testament that would legally convey *the promise* to His *heirs* after His death. The Apostle is making sure we understand that, on this occasion, Jesus was using parables to explain to His disciples what God requires of those who seek to *inherit the promise*. That is made even more obvious by His quotation of the Prophet Isaiah. Isaiah had already explained why God insisted that he and all the other Prophets speak in parables. It was because most people have no interest at all in understanding the Truth. Yet belief in the Truth is the only requirement that God has ever placed on individual *inheritance of the promise*. (*Corporate inheritance of the promise* is another matter entirely.)

Knowing the context in which Jesus told the Parable of the Sower, we can now take a closer look at the parable itself:

On that day Jesus went out of the house, and was sitting by the sea. And great multitudes gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole multitude 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. And others fell upon 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. And 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."

(Matthew 13:1-9)

Before we go any further, let's consider the *parabolic imagery* that Jesus used in this parable. In and of itself, the *Seed* image would tell us extremely little. It only begins to speak when it is set in the context of a somewhat more complex *parabolic image*. In this case, that *parabolic image* is one in which a sower is scattering the *Seed* on various types of ground. But contrary to popular opinion, the central focus of the Parable of the Sower is not the type of ground on which the *Seed* falls, it is what happens to the *Seed* after it has been sown. Therefore, we not only have to consider the images of the *Seed*, the sower, and the type of ground in which the *Seed* is sown, we should also take into account the additional images of the sun, the birds, and the thorns that prevent the *Seed* from sprouting, growing, and/or bearing fruit.

In His explanation of the Parable of the Sower, Jesus has already explained the *meaning* of the parable in terms that are clear enough for anyone to understand, provided they have ears to hear and are able to understand. The only problem with that is, as Jesus pointed out to His disciples immediately after He told the parable, not everyone has ears to hear or a mind that is capable of understanding. But, for the benefit of all who can hear and understand, I'll state the matter plainly. The *parabolic image* of the *Seed* represents the Truth of *The Teaching*—not just in the Parable of the Sower but throughout the Scriptures. Depending on the context in which you find this particular *parabolic image* used, however, it could represent *The Teaching of Moses*, *The Teaching of the Prophets*, *The Teaching of Jesus*, or *The Teaching of the Apostles*—*The Apostolic Teaching*.

Since all of these *Teachings* have essentially the same content and differ mainly in their historical perspective on the Truth, we can refer to each one of them as *The Teaching*. You should keep in mind, however, that *The Teaching of Moses* is the most concise and cryptically stated formulation of the Truth, while *The Apostolic Teaching* is the most detailed and openly explained. Nonetheless, these two *Teachings* explain exactly the

same thing: How mortal man—a *seed*—can be transformed into an immortal creature—a *plant*—by and through no greater agency than belief in *The Teaching*—a *Seed*—which replicates itself in the Believer (the ground in the Parable of the Sower)—as a *plant*.

As you can see, the *parabolic imagery* that stands behind the Parable of the Sower points to two entirely different *seeds* and two entirely different *plants*. However, since *everyone is what they believe*, you should also be able to see that both *seeds* and both *plants* can sometimes be one and the same. So how can we maintain any kind of separation between them? That is where the Hebrew idiom "raise up a seed" comes into play. It provides insight into the *mythological imagery* on which Moses and the Prophets based their statements concerning the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. That insight is absolutely essential to an understanding of what the Prophets and Apostles wrote. If you do not understand the *meaning* and *significance* of that idiom, you can easily be misled by the way they use the *parabolic images* of the *Seed* and the *plant*.

Now that I've told you what the Parable of the Sower is *meant* to explain, let's see if that agrees with Jesus' Own explanation of what it *means*:

"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. And 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 riches 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."
(Matthew 13:18-23)

There are two other things you need to know about the Parable of the Sower that Jesus does not mention in His explanation. The first is what "the word of the kingdom" is, and the second is what He *means* by

“the heart.” To the Greeks, like all the other ancient peoples, the “heart” was the mind, and the “word of the kingdom” is nothing more than *The Teaching*. The point of this parable is, the information contained in *The Teaching* is all that anyone needs to know to ensure a spot in the Resurrection of the Righteous. But if I were to tell you how I know that, I would also have explained the *significance* of the parable.

In the parables where Jesus uses the *Seed* image, we find a variety of *parabolic images* other than those that He included in the Parable of the Sower. In some, the *Seed of The Teaching* has already been planted and has sprouted, and the produce of the resulting plants is ready to be harvested. That introduces the image of workers engaged in the process of cutting wheat, threshing the sheaves, winnowing the grain, and storing the *Seed* in granaries. In other parables, the *Seed* image is somewhat hidden behind the fact that it has already been planted, harvested, threshed, winnowed, ground into flour, and made into dough or bread. In still others, *The Teaching* is represented as an entirely different kind of *Seed* that, after being planted, has grown into a tree. Nonetheless, the one who understands the *meaning* and *significance* of the *Seed* image can easily see that all these parables convey exactly the same *parabolic meaning* and *significance* as the Hebrew idiom “raise up a seed.” That is, they all explain how mortal man can attain immortality through resurrection from the dead.

For example, Jesus told this parable concerning the effect that the Truth of *The Teaching* has on the already milled *Seed* of God:

He spoke another parable to them, “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three pecks of meal, until it was all leavened.”
(Matthew 13:33)

The word translated “meal” in that verse actually means “wheat flour.” Matthew says Jesus told this parable at the same time as He told the Parable of the Sower and several other parables that focus on the *Seed* image. That tells us the emphasis of this particular parable is not on the flour, it is on the *Seed* from which the flour came. That clues the alert reader in to the fact that when Jesus told His disciples the Parable of the Sower, He was showing them the various ways the *Seed* image had been used by Moses and the Prophets.

It is not obvious to the average reader that the Prophets use bits and pieces of the *parabolic imagery* related to the *Seed* image all the time to make statements that one cannot possibly understand unless one is thinking in terms of the Hebrew idiom “raise up a seed.” Here’s one from the Prophet Jeremiah:

*Then the LORD stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me,
“Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.
See, I have appointed you this day over the nations
and over the kingdoms,
To pluck up and to break down,
To destroy and to overthrow,
To build and to plant.”*
(Jeremiah 1:9–10)

The Hebrew verbs translated “pluck up” and “plant” in that passage are *meant* to evoke the *parabolic imagery* related to the Hebrew idiom “raise up a seed” in the mind of the reader. The Hebrew verbs translated “overthrow” and “build” emphasize exactly the same thing—death and resurrection from the dead—by pointing to the idiom “build a house.” Moreover, what the Lord said to Jeremiah concerning his calling is absolutely essential to an understanding of what Jeremiah wrote. Jeremiah’s message was one in which he prophesied concerning two seemingly contradictory themes. On the one hand, he described the complete and total destruction of “*The House*” of Israel. On the other, he *promised* absolute redemption to a *remnant* of that *House*. One cannot adequately reconcile those two disparate *promises* of God without knowing what the Lord said to Jeremiah about the pivotal role he was to play in “building *The House*” of Israel:

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the captives of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place {into} the land of the Chaldeans. For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them again to this land; and I will build them up and not overthrow them, and I will plant them and not pluck {them} up. And I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the LORD; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart.’”
(Jeremiah 24:4–7)

The casual reader has no idea at all what the Prophet is *talking about* in that passage, but it should be clear to anyone who knows what Moses wrote. In case you are not familiar with Moses, perhaps I should tell you that Jeremiah is quoting him here. Did you see what “the word of the Lord” said to Jeremiah? He said He was going to “plant them” and “give them a heart to know Me.” That last phrase tells you what He *meant* by what He said. I’ll explain how that is some other time. For now, all you need to know is the fact that the Word of the Lord is *talking about* the same thing that He explains to Moses in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 30.

On several occasions, the Prophets restate the point of what the Lord said to Jeremiah, as well as what He said to Moses, in terms of the same *parabolic imagery* we have been discussing here: At Israel’s darkest hour, the plan of God was to “raise up a seed” for both Jacob and David by “building a house” where one had never stood before.

You cannot even begin to understand what I just said unless you are thinking in terms of the *meaning* of the two Hebrew idioms “build a house” and “raise up a seed” and understand their *significance* in regard to what Moses and the Prophets said concerning Jesus Christ. Over the next several years, I will not only show you *what* the Prophets said about the *Living Word* of God but also *why*. For now, let me show you where Jeremiah ties the *parabolic imagery* in which *The Teaching* is a *Seed* sown by a sower together with a *promise* concerning the New Covenant that God said He planned to establish with Israel when His Firstborn Son existed solely in the Person of Jesus Christ:

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and with the seed of beast. And it will come about that as I have watched over them to pluck up, to break down, to overthrow, to destroy, and to bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant,” declares the LORD.

“In those days they will not say again,

*‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes,
And the children’s teeth are set on edge.’*

But everyone will die for his own iniquity; each man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth will be set on edge. Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their

fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

(Jeremiah 31:27–34)

You probably noticed what the Lord said about “sowing” “*The House*” of Israel and “*The House*” of Judah, and what He said about *The Teaching* in that passage, but did you see what He did with Leviticus 26:12? I’m sure you did if you know what Moses wrote. But for the benefit of those who haven’t spent the time they should have reading Moses, the Master Prophet, let me tell you what the Lord did. He modified the words He spoke to Moses ever so slightly so that when you read Ezekiel 18, which is where He directs you by mentioning the sour grapes proverb, you would understand that the New Covenant has the same terms as the Old Covenant except in one particular. Under the terms of the New Covenant, *corporate* responsibility for sin has been replaced by individual responsibility for sin. In other words, if you sin under the terms of the New Covenant, you will die, but nobody else in Israel will be required to suffer for your sin. That was not so under the terms of the Old Covenant. If you didn’t know that, you obviously missed the point of Jeremiah’s account of Achan’s sin (Josh. 7:1–15).

In this passage, the Lord is explaining to Jeremiah how the New Covenant relates to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. We know that, however, only because Jeremiah recorded this:

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and with the seed of beast.”

(Jeremiah 31:27)

When you read that, I’m sure you immediately recognized it as a *parabolic statement*. But just in case you

didn't, let me be the first to tell you—it is. And it clearly identifies the *parabolic Seed* that the Prophets tell us God would one day “raise up” for Jacob and David. He will be both “*The House*” of Israel and “*The House*” of Judah. The point of what Jeremiah records here is, God plans to “sow” “*The House*” of Judah and “*The House*” of Israel with the “seed of man” and the “seed of beast.” And He did that, just as He said He would—not once, but twice. Once as the *Seed* of the Word of God Who came down from above to dwell among men and a second time as the *Seed* of Jacob and David Who had been born in the likeness of sinful man. But the one who understands the *meaning* and *significance* of the idiom “raise up a seed” can see that the Lord has in mind only the second time that He “sowed” His Son in this particular passage.

The Lord is *parabolically* describing the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ to Jeremiah in terms of a sower sowing *Seed*, which is exactly the same *parabolic imagery* that Jesus had in mind when He told the Parable of the Sower. However, in the Parable of the Sower, Jesus carries the *parabolic image* of the *Seed* to the time beyond the grave when God has finally “raised up” the Son of David as the *Seed* of God that He was before He came down to Earth. At that time, He once again became the *Living Word* of God, the *Seed* Whom God has used His Evangelists to sow in the Earth for the past two thousand years. It was God's plan that, after that *Seed* had been planted, His Prophets, Apostles, and Teachers would water the plants that sprouted from that *Seed* until the time came for Him to harvest the increase. That is what the Apostle Paul is describing when he makes this *parabolic statement*:

What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave {opportunity} to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.
(1 Corinthians 3:5–9)

Paul then goes on to speak in terms of the *parabolic imagery* associated with the Hebrew idiom “build a house” and he restates exactly the same thing he had just explained: God intended to use the offices He

established in the Church to tend His plants until the time came for them to be harvested. And God's plan worked just fine until Origen and his ilk came along planting their nonsense in and among God's *Seed*. That is when God resorted to His contingency plan, which Jesus describes in the Parable of the Tares immediately following the Parable of the Sower.

If you didn't understand what I just explained, don't worry about it. It wasn't *meant* for your benefit. But for those of you who have ears to hear, take a look at the Parable of the Tares that Jesus told right after He explained the *meaning* of the Parable of the Sower to His disciples. In it, He uses the same *parabolic imagery* that I explained above:

He presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprang up and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. And the slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ And the slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’ But he said, ‘No; lest while you are gathering up the tares, you may root up the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.”’”
(Matthew 13:24–30)

In this parable, Jesus adds to the *parabolic imagery* that He used in the Parable of the Sower. We already know what the *Seed* is because He defined it for us. It is “the word of the kingdom,” which is, I have told you, *The Teaching* that He taught. We can be certain that same *parabolic imagery* holds true for this parable as well. But we don't have to speculate about it; here is what Jesus said to His disciples when they asked Him to explain what He *meant* by what He said:

Then He left the multitudes, and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.” And He answered and said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; and {as for} the good

seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil {one;} and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear."
(Matthew 13:36–43)

To understand the point of this parable, you must keep in mind the fact that the *Seed* the Son of Man sowed in the field is the Truth of *The Teaching*. The plants who sprout from that *Seed* are the True Believers who believed it and thereby—*because we are what we believe*—parabolically became plants that sprouted from the *Seed* of God. If you care to read an account of how Jesus Christ planted the *Seed* of *The Teaching* in the world, read the Gospels. If you want to read an account of how some of the *Seed* He sowed sprouted, read this:

Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."
(Luke 24:44–48)

Luke is describing how Christ supernaturally enabled His disciples to understand the Truth of *The Teaching* after He was resurrected from the dead. As Jesus had already explained in the Parable of the Sower, when that *Seed* of Truth enters the heart—that is, the mind—of the one who has been enabled to hear, it sprouts and that person becomes a new plant. In the case of the Parable of the Tares, he becomes a plant in God's field which is, as Jesus explains, the world. However, the focus of the Parable of the Tares has to do with the fact that Satan contaminated *The Teaching*—the

Seed the Son of Man had sowed—by sowing tares among the plants that sprouted from God's *Seed*.

In the Parable of the Tares, Jesus was *parabolically* explaining to His disciples that Satan was going to sow false teaching as a *seed* that would sprout and grow in the Pretenders who believed it. And as Jesus clearly states, that apparent fiasco will eventually be remedied according to God's divine plan. Jesus tells us that, at "the end of the age," when the time comes for God to finally harvest His *Seed*, He will winnow out Pretenders from among those who actually understand and believe the Truth of *The Teaching* that Jesus Christ sowed in His disciples. You need to remember that God has, to serve His unique purpose, allowed Pretenders to remain in the Church and plant the *seed* of false teaching among True Believers in whom the Truth of *The Teaching* has already sprouted. So if you honestly believe these are the Last Days, you had best make sure you are God's plant and not some other.

Since I have already mentioned the Parable of the Tares on several other occasions, I won't say much more here about how God plans to winnow His harvest or gather His *Seed* into His barns. I will merely remind you what Jesus said about His Second Coming:

"And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved."
(Matthew 24:10–13)

If you intend to be one "who endures to the end," I highly recommend that you carefully examine everything that you believe. If you believe the same Truth of *The Teaching* that the Apostles *received* from Jesus Christ immediately after His Resurrection, you will be able to endure. If you don't, you are destined to be nothing more than chaff that God is going to separate from His *Seed* through the agency of a hot, dry desert wind and consign to burn forever in the fires of Hell. I can tell you that with complete confidence because I know that *we all act in accordance with what we believe*. In case you were wondering, I was *parabolically* describing the Antichrist as a "wind," using a part of the *parabolic imagery* that John the Baptist used when he scathingly denounced the Pretenders of his day:

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance; and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. And **His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.**" (Matthew 3:7–12)

For the benefit of all you city folks, I should tell you it is impossible to winnow grain with a winnowing fork unless a stiff breeze is blowing. And I can tell you for a fact that after that hot, dry desert wind has served his purpose in winnowing the chaff from God's *Seed*, he is going to turn on all those fools who failed to pay attention when attention was due. He will then become a burning, gale-force wind that will absolutely terrify those who have ignorantly believed his deception. That is the *parabolic imagery* the Prophet Jeremiah was using when he said this:

Declare in Judah and proclaim in Jerusalem, and say,
 "Blow the trumpet in the land;
 Cry aloud and say,
 'Assemble yourselves, and let us go
 Into the fortified cities.'
 Lift up a standard toward Zion!
 Seek refuge, do not stand {still},
 For I am bringing evil from the north,
 And great destruction.
 A lion has gone up from his thicket,
 And a destroyer of nations has set out;
 He has gone out from his place
 To make your land a waste.
 Your cities will be ruins
 Without inhabitant.
 For this, put on sackcloth,
 Lament and wail;
 For the fierce anger of the LORD

Has not turned back from us.

And it shall come about in that day," declares the LORD, "that the heart of the king and the heart of the princes will fail; and the priests will be appalled, and the prophets will be astounded." Then I said, "**Ah, Lord God! Surely Thou hast utterly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, 'You will have peace'; whereas a sword touches the throat.**" In that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem, "**A scorching wind from the bare heights in the wilderness in the direction of the daughter of My people—not to winnow, and not to cleanse, a wind too strong for this—will come at My command; now I will also pronounce judgments against them.**"

Behold, he goes up like clouds,
 And his chariots like the whirlwind;
 His horses are swifter than eagles.
 Woe to us, for we are ruined!"
 (Jeremiah 4:5–13)

You cannot even begin to understand the *parabolic imagery* Jesus used in the Parable of the Sower until you are willing to accept the fact that *we are what we believe*. God has never planted or sowed any kind of *seed* in the Earth other than the *Seed* He sowed when Jesus Christ was buried in the tomb. That is the only kind of *Seed* He will ever harvest and the only kind of *Seed* He will ever store in His barns. As the Apostle John plainly stated in the introduction to his gospel, that *Seed* is, *parabolically* speaking, nothing other than the Word of God that Jesus Christ believed:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.
 (John 1:1–5)

I have explained on at least one other occasion what John had in mind when he wrote those words. He is referring to the fact that Jesus Christ believed the Truth of *The Teaching*. So that's Who He was. As John stated, *The Teaching* IS LIKE *Light*. It enables the person who believes it to see what is going on around him. That is, he is able to see how ridiculous we are, readily believing all kinds of lies and easily getting caught up

in the things of this world the way we do. The person who sees “*The Light*” can also see that he needs to have a whole lot more *Light* if he is ever going to be able to see things as they actually are instead of the way the prince of darkness wants him to think they are. That being the case, let me shed a bit more *Light* on the parables of Jesus so that those who have ears to hear may understand the Truth.

Matthew describes another occasion on which Jesus spoke *parabolically* in terms of the *Seed* image. Read this passage carefully and see if you can figure out how the *Seed* image applies to what He said:

And Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.” And having summoned His twelve disciples, He gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.
(Matthew 9:35–10:1)

I was just being facetious, mocking all those proof-text parrots who take verses out of context. There is no way to understand *why* Jesus said *what* He said to His disciples that day by reading just that passage alone. You first have to know He is conducting a *parabolic pantomime*. Then you must read the entirety of Matthew 10 before you can understand the reality He is pantomiming. We don’t have time to go into that here. But I can tell you this: The point He was trying to get across to His disciples pertains to the fact that the full power of the Word of God—*The Teaching*—would one day be at their complete disposal. Therefore, they needed to learn how to use it and not abuse it while He was still with them in bodily form. That’s *why* He gave them authority over unclean spirits and the power to work miracles.

You won’t find much mention of the fact that the disciples continued to work miracles right alongside Jesus, but they did. On one occasion, however, they had a bit of difficulty casting out a demon. Listen to what Jesus said when He heard about their failure:

And when they came to the multitude, a man came up to Him, falling on his knees before Him, and saying, “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic, and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire, and often into the water. And I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him.” And Jesus answered and said, “O unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me.” And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once.
(Matthew 17:14–18)

Did you see what Jesus said about the “unbelieving and perverted generation” He had to deal with? He was not talking about the crowd. He was referring to His disciples and their inability to cast out the demon. We know that because immediately after He cast the demon out, His disciples asked Him why they had not been able to do so. He said this:

Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?” And He said to them, “Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you. [But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.]”
(Matthew 17:19–21)

He was talking about their belief in the Truth of *The Teaching*, which is the same thing He was referring to when He told the Parable of the Sower. But you can’t fully understand how Jesus’ *parabolic statement* concerning the mustard seed on that occasion fits together with the Parable of the Sower without first knowing that He had been explaining the *parabolic imagery* associated with the *Seed* image ever since He gave His disciples authority over unclean spirits in Matthew 9. I’ve already explained some of the things you need to know about that in The Next Step program, so I won’t get into those things again here. They relate to the fact that He had earlier conducted two *parabolic pantomimes* in which He fed thousands of people with just a few loaves of bread. In doing that, He was trying to get across the point that *The Teaching* is just LIKE the *seed* that was used to make the loaves of unleavened bread with which He conducted those *parabolic pantomimes*. All they had to do was distribute *The Teaching* and, LIKE the bread, it would

remain just as much as it was before. It also does not hurt to know that Jesus said this about Himself after He conducted the first, and before He conducted the second, of those *parabolic pantomimes*:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh."

(John 6:47–51)

According to Matthew, Jesus had been explaining various *parabolic images* that are associated with the *Seed* image for quite some time before He obliquely referred to Himself as a mustard seed and chided His disciples for not having the same faith in the Word of God that He had. You probably thought He was referring to a literal mustard seed when He said that. That's only because His statement in that context has been tied—correctly enough—to what He said about Himself in this passage:

He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all {other} seeds; but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants, and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES."

(Matthew 13:31–32)

In that parable, Jesus is alluding to something that Ezekiel said about Him as the One Who would be, in Himself, "The House" of Israel, the One Who is and always will be the *Kingdom of God*. Ezekiel was merely contributing his small share to what Moses and the other Prophets said about Christ as "The Remnant" of Israel. But you need to go back and check the context in which Jesus made that *parabolic statement*. You will find that He made it immediately after He told the Parable of the Tares, which follows hard on the heels of the Parable of the Sower.

Now do you begin to get the big picture? Can you see the *parabolic imagery* that Jesus was trying to explain to His disciples? He is the Kingdom of Heaven.

He is the mustard seed. He is the bread. Yet the one thing to which all of these various *parabolic images* point is the fact that Jesus Christ is *The Teaching* that He firmly believed, which is, as John tells us, the Word of God we must also believe if we desire to *inherit the promise*. That being the case, you can see why the Truth embodied in *The Teaching* holds an incredible value for the one who has ears to hear and understand it. As Jesus went on to explain to His disciples:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering {fish} of every kind; and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down, and gathered the good {fish} into containers, but the bad they threw away. So it will be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth, and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

(Matthew 13:44–50)

In the last of those three short parables, Jesus is superimposing the *parabolic imagery* He used in the Parable of the Tares on top of the *parabolic image* in which He is the Kingdom of God. Before you can understand *why* He did that, you need to know that Matthew has omitted a couple of the parables that Jesus told His disciples on that occasion. First, Mark tells us Jesus said this to His disciples immediately after He explained the *meaning* of the Parable of the Sower:

And He was saying to them, "A lamp is not brought to be put under a peck-measure, is it, or under a bed? Is it not {brought} to be put on the lampstand? For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has {anything} been secret, but that it should come to light. If any man has ears to hear, let him hear." And He was saying to them, "Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it shall be measured to you; and more shall be given you besides. For whoever has, to him shall {more} be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him."

(Mark 4:21–25)

His point is this: *The Teaching* IS LIKE a *Light* which, although it has long been hidden in the Scriptures, will eventually be seen by everyone—by most after it is too late for it to do them any good. Therefore, He admonished His disciples to be careful to listen to the *Seed* that He, the Son of Man, was sowing and let it sprout in their heart—mind—while they still had opportunity. You should heed that admonition. If you comprehend even a little bit of *The Teaching*, that little bit will enable you to understand still more. However, as Jesus warned His disciples, if you don't understand any of it at all, you will eventually lose what you mistakenly think you have. Then, after He said that, He said this:

And He was saying, "The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; and goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts up 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."
(Mark 4:26–29)

After that brief parable in which He said He—the Kingdom of God—was LIKE a sower, Jesus went on to tell the Parable of the Tares in which He plainly identified Himself as the Sower. His purpose in telling the Parable of the Tares was to warn His disciples that, when it comes time to *make a distinction between* True Believers who understand and believe the Truth that He taught and the Pretenders who have believed nothing more than Satan's lies, a lot of folks are going to wish they had never been born. He then asked them this:

"Have you understood all these things?" They said to Him, "Yes." And He said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old."
(Matthew 13:51–52)

Let me help you understand what Jesus *meant* by what He said. I'll just paraphrase it a bit by expanding on the *parabolic imagery* He used:

Therefore, every scribe who has become My disciple is like a man who is responsible for teaching his children. On the basis of his knowledge of The Teaching, he brings forth

things his children have heard and things they haven't heard.

I have already told you Jesus uses the *parabolic image* of treasure to represent a knowledge of *The Teaching*. In this context, He has linked that treasure—*The Teaching*—directly to what people teach. It is important to realize, however, that most people don't stop to think about whether the things they say are false or misleading. Fools not only teach what they have heard other people say, they also make offhand statements based on what they think or believe. Unfortunately, that casual attitude toward the Truth is detrimental to the long-term health and well-being of their souls. Let me show you what Jesus said to His disciples right before He conducted the *parabolic pantomime* in which He made an oral testament. As you read, keep in mind the fact that He is assailing the Pharisees because they blasphemed the Holy Spirit by saying He must be possessed by a demon. It also wouldn't hurt to remember what I told you earlier: In the Scriptures, the "heart" is the mind. Jesus said this:

"You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man out of {his} good treasure brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of {his} evil treasure brings forth what is evil. And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned."
(Matthew 12:34–37)

At this point, I could veer off and pursue the *parabolic imagery* that Jesus used in His parables down a variety of different trails. We will choose one of those paths and pursue it next time. When we do, don't expect any big surprises. In one way or another, every *parabolic image* in the parables of Christ points to the fact that He is the Word of God—*The Teaching* that one must believe in order to *inherit the promise*. The most interesting thing about His parables is not what He says in that regard but how neatly He has *parabolically* summed up the intricately detailed portrait that Moses and the Prophets painted of Him as "*The House*" of Israel Who became "*The House*" of God. In one way or another, He managed to hit all the high points. ■