

## 7. The Grain Seed

He also said, "**This is what the kingdom of God is like.** A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. **All by itself the soil produces grain (literally 'fruit')—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head.** As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

(Mark 4:26-29 NIV)

The meaning of this parable is intimately linked to a number of the previous parables, particularly *The Sower* and *The Mustard Seed*. Jesus is focusing on the miracle of nature whereby a seed of grain, whether wheat or barley, once sown in the soil, begins to sprout and grow of its own accord and power. It is the invisible Spirit of God that gives everything life, including that which grows in the earth. Man only has to sow the seed in the right soil and then wait for the seed to germinate (Acts 17:24-25, 28; Matthew 6:26-30).

Even the task of watering it is primarily left to God in sending rain upon the earth. Water itself is the source of all life because, without it, we would all die. All of these things of nature are God-given and we should learn to be thankful to Him for providing us with such blessings, while not taking it all for granted (Psalm 104; Colossians 1:16-17).

### The Rainfall

In the past, God often used drought as a sign of His judgment upon Israel and the surrounding nations to reveal to them that He is the only One who provides mankind with everything we need, not only for our survival, but also for our enjoyment (1 Timothy 6:17; Acts 14:17).

According to Zechariah 14:16-19, following the Day of the Lord, in the worldwide messianic kingdom, God would use this judgment of 'no rainfall' as a means of chastening the peoples of the earth who refuse to worship him. Under the New Covenant, the meaning of this text becomes more spiritual in accordance with the teaching of Jesus and the apostles.

Allegorically speaking, this prophecy is teaching us that those who do *not* grow into spiritual maturity and reap a good harvest of fruit to God (fulfilling the feast of Tabernacles in the *new heavenly Jerusalem*, as those who worship in spirit and truth) will be disciplined with a lack of spiritual refreshment and anointing (the rainfall – cf. John 4:19-24; Hebrews 6:7-9). This was especially the case for the first-century Israel of God before the Day of the Lord of 70 AD.

"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, **that times of refreshing may come from the Lord**, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.'

**“Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days.** And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.’ When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”

(Acts 3:19-26 NIV)

Only in Jesus, as the promised Messiah of Israel and the world, can there be true spiritual blessing and refreshment that wells up to eternal life in the kingdom of God. All other roads lead to Death and Destruction (Matthew 7:13-14).

### Three-Fold Spiritual Growth

There are three stages of spiritual growth being figured in the parable of the Grain Seed, namely, *the stalk*, *the head* and then *the full kernel* in the head.

The book of Scripture and the book of nature teach us that there are three stages of physical and spiritual growth as follows:

1. Infancy
2. Adolescence
3. Adulthood

These three stages are represented by the following biblical themes and spiritual motifs, which Jesus also experienced as a male Jew and a human being:

1. Circumcision (Milk)
2. Bar Mitzvah (Solid Food)
3. Sonship (or placing of a son, also known as Adoption, which usually occurred when the child/man was 30 years of age)<sup>1</sup>

These stages are also represented by the following phrases, particularly in John’s first letter:

1. Little Children (Immaturity)
2. Young Men (Growing Maturity)
3. Fathers (Full and Greater Maturity)<sup>2</sup>

The three main Feasts of the Lord also represented this three-fold progression:

1. Passover (Justification - Righteousness – Spirit)
2. Pentecost (Sanctification – Holiness – Soul)
3. Tabernacles (Glorification – Redemption – Body)<sup>3</sup>

There are a number of other three-fold examples that could be given, but these will suffice.

There isn’t any way that we can escape this divine order or try and take a short cut when it comes to spiritual growth. It has to occur first in the soulish, physical realm, and then in the spiritual realm (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:44-49). We must all

travel the same path from Passover to Tabernacles; from immaturity to full maturity; from the natural (or soulish) to the spiritual; from the old humanity to the new humanity.

Not only are we to understand these principles on a personal level, but they also apply on the corporate level. Put another way, again using NT metaphor, these spiritual principles have to do with the individual 'temple', as well as the corporate 'temple'. This can also be applied in an eschatological sense, in accordance with the whole of human history, where the Creator has been guiding humanity from immaturity to maturity.

Be that as it may, Jesus was also saying that the spiritual kingdom of God would continue to grow and bear fruit of its own accord *for it does not depend on the power of the flesh for its growth and power*. Jesus indicated that God would accomplish His purposes in the earth through His chosen ones until the time of the harvest, when the sons of God would reach full maturity, with the Bride having made herself ready for the Wedding Feast (a figure for the fullness of the kingdom promised in the Old Testament); and then He would gather the wheat into His barn (Revelation 14:14-16; Matthew 3:12). Subsequently, the heavenly reign of Christ over the nations could fully begin in fulfilment of all OT prophecy – and the true Israel of God would join Him in that reign.

#### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, Romans 2:28-29; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Hebrews 5:11-14; Romans 8:15-16; Galatians 4:1-7.

<sup>2</sup> See 1 John 2:12-14.

<sup>3</sup> See for example, Romans 8:29-30; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 1:30.