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**APOSTOLIC VERSE BY VERSE BIBLE STUDY**

**Straightway Church of Christ, Inc.**

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**“PARABLES AND DOCTRINE”**

**Mark 4:1-9**

***Mark 4:1 "And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land."***

Once before, Jesus had called for a ship to come so that He could get away from the multitude of people on shore. This multitude was so great that He was to get into a ship and cast out just a little way to minister. There are a number of reasons why this is good. One reason is that the voice carries better across water, and Jesus' voice would be magnified with the water, so this huge group could hear.

***Psalm 29:3 “The voice of the Lord is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the Lord is upon many waters.***

***Ezekiel 43:2 “And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory.”***

***Revelation 1:15 “And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.”***

***Revelation 19:6 “And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”***

***Mark 4:2 "And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine,"***

We see, here, that this doctrine was of Jesus. He frequently taught using parables (earthly stories with heavenly meanings) to convey spiritual truths. Mark provides several of these (4:3-32), beginning with the parable of the sower. Jesus was teaching in parables so that people could not receive His message in their minds but through their spirits. The Holy Spirit teaches the Christians all truths.

***1 Corinthians 2:14 “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”***

***Mark 4:3 "Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow:"***

In an agrarian society, listeners would immediately relate to a parable about a man planting seed. "Hearken" means give me your full attention. Possibly at the moment, He pointed to someone in an adjacent field doing what He was describing. As the sower walked, he dropped seed on various kinds of soil. "Behold", here, was telling those in attendance (and us, as well) to see with our inner man. He in essence was saying, "You must look beyond what I am saying literally and look into the spiritual to understand what I am about to tell you". Notice, also, the simplicity of this message. These people were all familiar with growing things and could easily relate to someone sowing seed.

***Mark 4:4 "And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up."***

As seed is sown, it falls on different soils. Seed that fell on the hardened path was devoured by birds. Jesus is the great sower of the seed (Word of God). Not all who hear this Word will receive it. This is an explanation by Jesus about the different way the world and its people receive the Word of God. The sower is the same in all cases (Jesus). The seed (the Word of God) is the same in all cases. It is in the way it is received that is different. Jesus, Himself, would come back and explain in detail what this parable meant, and it will help us in other parables to look for the hidden meaning. Not all who hear the gospel receive it. Satan is depicted as the fowl of the air. Satan has come to steal and destroy the Word.

***Mark 4:5 "And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth:"***

***Mark 4:6 "But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away."***

On rocky ground where the soil was shallow, the seeds sprouted quickly. But without deep roots, they withered in the sun. All of us who have been in church for any length of time have seen the type of person who is indicated above. An evangelist comes through town, and he is so thrilled with the message he goes down front and makes big commitments to God. In a few days when his friends have laughed at him and he runs into hardships, he falls by the wayside. On fire for God for a few days, but his fire went out.

***Hebrews 10:39 “But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”***

***Mark 4:7 "And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit."***

Seed falling among the thorns would be choked, resulting in no crop. These are people who are trying to keep one foot in the world and one in church. They still lust for the things of the world while claiming to be Christians.

***2 Corinthians 6:14-18***

***14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?***

***15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?***

***16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.***

***17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.***

***18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.***

***Mark 4:8 "And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred."***

But some seed fell on good ground and produced a bounty of fruit in varying amounts. We see, here, Christians who receive the truth and live daily upright lives. These Christians are in for all of eternity. Troubles and lust of worldly goods will not turn their heads. They will follow Jesus, whatever the cost. These are fruit bearers, messengers who tell others of Jesus and add to God's kingdom to the best of their ability. Please note that all had the same seed, and all fell on good ground, but all didn’t yield the same! Matter of the fact only 1/3 of the ¼ yielded 100%. Every man is accountable to God for the measure of faith they received

***Mark 4:9 "And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."***

As he concluded, Jesus explained to the crowd that understanding his story required spiritual insight: Let anyone who has ears to hear listen. Ears are a feature shared by all of humanity, to not have ears would be an unnatural occurrence. Therefore, when Jesus addresses those who have ears, He refers to all who have been given His words, no matter their age, ethnicity, language, or status. Jesus was telling them to open the ears of their understanding, the inner ears. He was saying, receive these words inside of you and think about it until you understand. These messages in parables are not for the world to understand but are to be understood within us from the teachings of the Holy Spirit. A similar phrase is found in Revelation in each of the seven letters to the churches: “Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). And in Revelation 13:9, immediately following a description of the Antichrist, we read, “Whoever has ears, let them hear.” The readers of Revelation are called upon to pay close attention and seek God’s wisdom concerning what’s written.
Who is “he who has ears”? The simple answer: all people who have been or are being given the words of God. Like the parables’ original audience, we must also “Listen up! Pay close attention!” Jesus’ simple request is that we use our God-given faculties (eyes to see, ears to hear) to tune in to His words (John 10:27-28; Mark 4:24; Revelation 3:20). “For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open” (Mark 4:22). Seeking God’s truth takes energy and focus; it takes a willingness to be challenged and changed. While the way of God’s truth is not the most convenient or fun path to take, we can be assured that it is the best one (John 1:4; 10:9; 14:6). And so He bids us, “Come” (Matthew 11:28-30).

**QUESTIONS**

1. Why did Jesus enter into a ship to speak to the people?
2. What help is the water to the voice?
3. How did Jesus teach them?
4. Why did Jesus use this manner of teaching?
5. Who teaches the Christian all truth?
6. What does hearken mean?
7. What was Jesus saying with the word, "Behold", here?
8. Why did Jesus speak to them about sowing seed?
9. What happened to the seed in the first parable?
10. Who do the fowls symbolize?
11. What does the seed symbolize?
12. Who is the sower?
13. In the second example, where did the seed fall?
14. Why did it spring up immediately?
15. Why did it wither away?
16. Where did the third seed fall?
17. What happened to this seed?
18. In verse 8, the seed fell where?
19. What was the difference in the results?
20. What did Jesus tell them to do in verse 9?