

THE PARABLE OF THE GROWING SEED

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In Mark 4:26-29, Jesus taught, *“So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knows not how. For the earth brings forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest is come.”*

The seed of God’s kingdom

It would certainly seem that the seed in this parable is the same seed as in the parable of the sower, the word of God (Matt 13:20-23; Mark 4:14-20; Luke 8:11). This same analogy is used in 1 Peter 1:23: *“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides for ever.”* In fact, there is no other seed that can produce the good fruit of the kingdom of God. A great principle was established by God in the beginning when he created life: *“And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good”* (Gen 1:11-12). This same principle is applied in a spiritual context in Luke 6:43-45, where our Lord says, *“For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.”* The word of God contains *“all things that pertain unto life and godliness”* (2 Pet 1:3). *All spiritual truth is contained therein* (John 16:13). *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works”* (2 Tim 3:16-17). This is why we are instructed to flee from any other voice than that of our Shepherd Jesus Christ (John 10:1-5). This is why we are commanded to withdraw ourselves from anyone who does not consent to his very words (1 Tim 6:3-5). This is also why we are told, *“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God”* (1 Pet 4:11). The words and wisdom of men only produce corruption (1 Cor 1:18-21; 2:4-5; 3:19).

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(continued)

God is the only source of increase

Jesus compares the kingdom of God to someone who has sown seed and in the following days the seed sprouts and grows up.

But the sower does not know how the seed actually grew. He did not *make* that seed grow. All he did was plant it. This is also what we see in the parable of the sower, where the sower has no control over the different types of ground and what happens to the seed in each kind of ground (Matt 13:3-9,18-23; Mark 4:2-9,14-20; Luke 8:4-8,11-15).

The only thing that we have any control of whatsoever is whether or not we will submit to God and sow the seed (i.e. speak His word) as He gives us opportunity. Whether the good work is teaching God's word or something else, God is the one who must "make all grace abound" to us and provide what is sufficient that we "may abound to every good work" (2 Cor 9:8). God is the one who both "ministers seed to the sower" (i.e. the opportunities, goods, and whatever else we need to be able to do a good work), and also multiplies the seed that is sown (i.e. makes it grow and produce fruit), and increases the fruits of our righteousness (2 Cor 9:9-11). Absolutely every good thing we have, we received from God (1 Cor 4:7; Jas 1:17). Without the Lord, we can do nothing (John 15:5). From this, we must conclude that we are nothing: "*So then neither is he that plants any thing, neither he that waters; but God that gives the increase*" (1 Cor 3:7).

The harvest

Jesus makes another point in the parable of the growing seed, which is that after the fruit is brought forth, the crop is harvested. This would seem to refer to the harvest at the end of the world, when the Lord will come and save faithful Christians (Matt 13:36-43,47-50; 25:31-46; Rev 14:14-20). This would also serve to remind us that, in order to be saved, we must bear fruit and bring that fruit to perfection (Matt 3:10; 7:17-19; 12:33-36; 13:23; Mark 4:20; Luke 3:9; 6:43-45; 8:14-15; 13:6-9; John 15:1-8,16; Rom 6:22; 7:4; Col 1:9-12; Jas 3:17-18). It is also possible that the seed here is the same as in the parable of the tares, where "the good seed are the children of the kingdom" (Matt 13:38). But "children of the kingdom" (i.e. Christians) are produced only by obedience to God's word (1 Pet 1:23). Therefore, whether the seed in this parable refers specifically to God's word, or to Christians themselves, the basic point of the parable is the same. God's word is sown, Christians are produced, they grow, and they are eventually harvested.