

**Introduction**

- 1 When Barack Obama was sworn in as the new USA President, most were impressed with his gift of oratory amongst other things. Some regard him as the answer to all the problems in USA
- 2 However as he begins to carry out some of his decisions there are going to be many reactions to what he has to say and do, some will be impressed, others will not – especially Republicans
- 3 When Jesus Christ began His ministry in Israel at the age of about 30, it did not take long before some of the religious leaders began to disagree with what He did and taught (6:7,11)
- 4 In Luke 7, some doubted like John the Baptist, until Lord identified Himself as the Promised Messiah thru’ His healing miracles. Whereas others like the Roman centurion soldier, believed
- 6 Both Matthew and Mark include this parable in their gospels as it is very important
- 7 What is a parable?
  - a Comes from Greek word “parabole”, which means “a placing beside”
  - b Is used to describe/illustrate stories Jesus used from nature and human life
  - c As a story each word was not to be examined in detail

**I 8:4-8 The Parable of the Seed is told to the whole crowd****A 8:4-5 Farmer’s seed which fell along the path**

- 1 Jesus had moved from town to town preaching the good news about God’s kingdom
- 2 8:4 As He began to tell this parable, crowd numbers grew as many expected to be entertained as exciting things always happened when the Lord Jesus was around.
- 3 8:5 People would have been very familiar with the sowing of seed as many planted their seeds every year between October and December during the rainy season, crop sprouted in April/May and harvested around June. Law forbid them working on Sabbath
- 4 Among Jews, the picture of sowing **means God giving or renewing life**
- 5 The Sower/farmer carried a bag of grain over his shoulder, with the bag in the front.
- 6 From this bag he would throw the seed in rows - some would fall on side of path
  - a These **seeds** were trampled upon by people, or b Eaten by birds very quickly

**B 8:6 Seed on the Rock (below shallow sand)**

- 1 A second part of the seed fell on rock as there was a thin layer of ground with limestone right under the topsoil, which was common in many places in Israel at that time.
- 2 So not a field with many rocks, but a base of rock under the soil – In Africa we had shale
- 3 At first sprouts up, all looks fine as the plant grows, but eventually it withers due to **lack of moisture**, shallow below the surface - **no growth, no grain, no value to the sower**

**C 8:7 Seed among the thorns**

- 1 Third group of seed falls on good ground, but like everywhere the seed shares the ground with thorns and weeds, which could grow to 2 metres tall, with flowers budding on them
- 2 These weeds grow as the grain sprouts, but they also absorb the goodness of the soil, choking and spoiling the grain plants as they grow together – again no grain from the seed

**D 8:8 Seed on/into good soil**

- 1 In contrast to the failure of and the problems faced by the other 3 groups of seed, only the last seed penetrates the soil and achieves its goal of bearing fruit, growing to produce a great crop of grain a hundred times more than was sown.
- 2 This soil provides the farmer with his harvest, making his sowing of the seed worthwhile
- 3 Matthew and Mark say each seed has a different yield, some growing more than others
- 4 So seeds produces a variety of different crops – some more than others

E 8:8b Lord Jesus encourages each hearer with keen ears to think about His words

- 1 The audience is challenged to respond to the Lord's message as it is very important
- 2 The Lord often uses these words to **stress** the **importance** of thinking about and reflecting on what He has to say and need to respond in the right way -only disciples wanted to know

## II 8:9-10 The Lord explains to His disciples why He used this parable

A 8:9 His disciples ask Him a question as they didn't understand its spiritual meaning

The disciples knew Jesus well enough to know he was not giving them a lesson about farming methods but was using that example to explain to them something about God

B 8:10 Contrast between the disciples and the rest, who were not interested (Isaiah 6:9)

1 Lord Jesus explains that the Bible and generally Parables divide people into two groups

### Group 1

a The parables reveal to His disciples the mysteries of the Kingdom of God

b There are many lessons in the Bible which all sinful/self-centred humans can't naturally understand, **but need God to open their minds** to understand these spiritual truths

c By **committing themselves** to a relationship with Jesus and His teaching, Jesus helps the disciples understand the spiritual meaning of this and other parables. (10:22-23).

### Group 2

d **Whereas** the rest do not have the parable explained to them, because Christ's purpose was to put the truth in such a way that it would be hidden from those who were unwilling to welcome it. **If they were willing**, they would have come and asked Him

e The crowd wanted to be entertained and did not really want to believe what Jesus taught

f They **did not** want to become **involved** or committed to Him or His teaching in any way

2 The Lord quotes from Isaiah 6:9, which describes how Isaiah takes his message to an obstinate nation, Israel, which was facing judgement and exile for refusing to obey God.

3 This quotation from Isaiah does not express a desire that others would not understand, **but simply states the sad truth that those**, who are not willing to receive Jesus' message, will find the truth hidden from them

4 The idea of judgement because of hardness of heart is often found in the New Testament, because hearers are resistant to hearing spiritual truths just like the Pharisees-John 9:39-41

## III 8:11-15 Parable of the seed interpreted for the disciples

A 8:11 Seed is the Word of God

1 The seed is the Word from God about His kingdom, where God is King and rules

2 Important to remember a seed is small, but it grows and produces fruit, but this takes time

3 The Word of God tells us everything we need to know about

a God b Entry of sin into the world because people rejected God's control over their lives

c God's plan to help those in world to be reconciled back to Him d How to live for God

e But central to the whole Bible is the Lord Jesus, who through His death, resurrection, **offers forgiveness** of sin and **reconciliation** with God to everyone who repents, believes in and receives Him into their lives

4 It is God, the Holy Spirit who reveals the truth of God's word to the human heart – **not** us

5 Wherever the Word of God is preached, will be found 4 different types of hearts present

a Is not a moment by moment picture of how one receives the word at various times of one's life, but pictures what the Word of God does **throughout** the totality of one's life

b **The soil represents** the different kinds of individuals viewed in terms of their whole life, **not** the **different responses** of **one individual** from time to time

c Taking one's life as a whole, the **parable** asks us to **think** about this question,

**"What single type of response to the word of God have I given?"**- believe it or not!!

6 Below, **only** the **spiritual** condition of the last seed is clear and produces a fruitful crop

B 8:12 Seed stolen by the devil

- 1 Is clear here that the Lord Jesus believed in the existence, personality, work of the devil.
- 2 There is an active living agent, called Satan, separate from man, operating powerfully in man's heart, to **prevent** man from becoming an active member of God's Kingdom
- 3 8:12 - The 1<sup>st</sup> group of seed represents the response that never had a chance to germinate
  - a Seed of the Word is plucked away as soon as it is sown
  - b Life controlled by deep sin
  - c Does not sink down into their consciences c makes no impression on their minds at all
- 4 As a result, any opportunity for faith and being saved from God's judgement is lost
- 5 When the kingdom message is preached a spiritual battle takes place for the hearts of the listeners as Satan tries to stop God's work eg Wandering thoughts, sleepy eyes etc.
- 6 God's desire is that everyone come to repentance and faith (2 Peter 3:9), but Satan's goal is to stop the kingdom message from taking root in the listener's heart, which is hard
- 7 Many never consider the message of the kingdom God brings through Jesus, because the spiritual forces of evil take the message away and the heart isn't ready to respond eg Joan

C 8:13 Seed on the rock without root, no spiritual fruit when persecution comes

- 1 The 2<sup>nd</sup> group of seed on the rock, with no depth, faces obstacles to bearing spiritual fruit
  - a All excited when they 1<sup>st</sup> hear the message, b Excitement is only just below the surface
  - c No deep roots or permanent work in their hearts d Does not produce any spiritual fruit
- 2 As soon as persecution, trials or difficulties come along, their shallow bit of religion and faith withers and vanishes away like the early morning mist – Jesus doesn't approve
- 3 eg a Helen T. at Mtuba Council office rates office –very interested until mocked by husband, friends b Mkhize at Khohlo –home service-local men would laugh at him

D 8:14 Seed among thorns choked by Worry, Riches and Pleasures

- 1 This 3<sup>rd</sup> group of seed which fell among thorns were choked, failed to bear mature fruit
- 2 Is implied there was some form of response, but earthly cares, worries, wealth, pleasure stop them from following the word in such a way that produces permanent spiritual fruit
- 3 8:14 Not told about these worries, riches, pleasures, but eg a 7:25 John/Baptist with rich, b Rich man/Lazarus c 12:19 Built bigger storing places, now take life easy, eat, drink....
- 4 Is no fruitfulness when one is more concerned about welfare, possessions and comfort
- 5 Is important to support oneself financially, but must not be so important that these concerns destroy the hearers personal spiritual reception of God's word, desire to read it
- 6 Things of this life – money, pleasure, food, entertainment, work, daily living etc. are necessary, but if they become too important, our hearts can be ruined, unfruitful for God

E 8:15 Fruitful Seed growing in the Good Heart on good ground gives success with 3 keys

- 1 a **The right kind of heart**, being honest and good, with a moral quality and integrity that makes right responses that please God eg Converted guy in rag trade in London
- b **Hear the Word, believe, obey it, remember it like seed growing in good ground** – Seed about God's kingdom sinks deeply into hearts, produces great joyful results in Faith/practice –Repent, believe, obey God's word - only sure way to be saved from God's judgement, be reconciled to God, have your sins forgiven, go to heaven at death
- c **By persevering patience they produce a crop** – opposite of falling away
  - 1 As the seed of God's word grows throughout a Christian's life, each must continue on in faith amidst pressures of daily faithful living for God in world hostile to gospel
  - 2 Chn changes within, grows more like Jesus less like self-centred nature -2 Cor 3:18
  - 3 Spirit of truth teaches honesty, stops jealousy, anger, how to love neighbours as self
  - 4 Have those with good hearts, as faith grows, they daily trust God's Bible promises They **become** salt, light, **show God's grace** in their lives to those around them-**not allowing** life's problems to destroy their life of faith like the first 3 types of soil

#### **IV Parable of the Sower is really the responses of different people to the Word of God**

- 1 Why do some people stop coming to church regularly, or do not want to go near a church or listen to God's Word? – Makes them feel uncomfortable, challenges their consciences etc.
- 2 The parable asks each one of us to sit back and think about our response to the seed of God's Word over the past years of our lives and into the future.
  - a Is the seed dead or living? b Does Bible influence the way I act, react as I am new creation
  - c Do I ask God what He wants me to do? d Does it control my thinking, actions in depth? or
  - c Is it something I find interesting, but will never allow it to influence the way I live my life
- 3 There are different kinds of responses in hearing and receiving God's Word into one's life
  - a **Refusal** to even consider that the Bible is God's word and shows the way to live for God
  - b **Does stress** or being mocked for believing Bible **make you give up** a living faith in God?
  - c Is a **desire** to become rich or **satisfy** the **desires** of our flesh **more important than** God?
  - d Is **faith solid** and bearing fruit – then let the Bible direct the way you live so you bear the fruit of the Spirit, serve God faithfully, bringing honour, glory to Him – Galatians 5:22-23
- 4 God encourages each to be the **fourth soil** - receptive, faithful, persistent and patient soil
- 5 **To which group do you belong** – the first 3 or the 4<sup>th</sup>???
- 6 **Great example** is found in 8:2-3 of women who belonged to the 4<sup>th</sup> soil, transformed by it
- 7 Am I prepared to confess, stop doing things I know to be wrong like these ladies did?
- 7 Sometimes people appear to grow as Chns, but 1,2 yrs later fall away-Don't judge **eg** Ray B