The GATEWAY PARABLE
(Matt. 13:1-3)

Matthew 13 marks a major turning point in the book and a major shift in the ministry of Jesus Christ. This shift denotes a form of judgment on "***this wicked generation,***" which is seen in Christ now addressing the crowds strictly in **parables** that they could not understand (cf. Mt. 12:39, 45).

After all the SIGN evidence clearly showing that Jesus is the prophesied Messiah, the people of Israel largely rejected His claims. Their rejection is seen in their lack of repentance, as noted by Christ in chapter 11, and also in the representation of the religious leaders who went so far as to claim Jesus was doing His phenomenal miracles by the power of Satan, as seen in chapter 12.

Therefore, Jesus called that entire generation, "***An evil and adulterous generation***" (12:39) and also "***this wicked generation***" (12:45). The focus at this point goes from reaching out to the nation to Christ inviting all individuals who labor and are heavy laden to come and find rest in Him, as seen in Matthew 11:28. And then in chapter 12 Jesus puts the focus on a personal relationship with Him, saying in Matthew 12:50, "***For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."***

Matthew 13 is the third of 5 major discourses in the book.

The 5 Discourses in Matthew

- The Sermon on the Mount – Matt. 5-7
- Commissioning of the Twelve – Matt. 10
- ***Parables of the Kingdom - Matt. 13***
- Community Instructions - Matt. 18
    - Olivet Discourse (End Times) Matt. 24-25

Matthew 13:1 (NKJV)
1 On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea.

This verse connects Christ's teaching of parables in chapter 13 to the same day of what had just happened in chapter 12 regarding the sin of blasphemy against the Spirit and Christ declaring the people of His day a "***wicked generation.***" So, the parable teachings in chapter 13 directly connect back to the rejection of the nation as seen in chapter 12.

“Matthew links the parabolic discourse in chapter 13 to the preceding controversies (either 12:38-50 or 12:22-37) and ends it with a formulaic conclusion (13:53), which implies that all these parables were given on this occasion.” – ***D.A. Carson***

Matthew 13:2 (NKJV)
2 And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

Masses of people were following Christ at this time but MOST of them were fickle and not real disciples. Hence, the parables addressing their unbelief and their lack of repentance. Christ saw right through their fickleness!

Matthew 13:3 (NKJV)
3 Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: “Behold, a sower went out to sow.

Here we are introduced to Christ’s ministry of parables. And frankly all kinds of error has been brought into the Church because of not correctly handling the parabolic teachings of Christ. Even a huge segment of my dispensational brethren are off on this topic. Many get the parables WRONG and yet it is a very important part of Christ’s teaching ministry.

The word parable literally means “to cast alongside”.

Parable is a combination of two Greek words.

Para (alongside) ***Ballo*** (to cast): ***Parable:*** *To cast alongside*.

- “It is a story, or a comparison, that is put alongside something else to help make the lesson clear.” – ***Warren Wiersbe***

Parables are true to life stories that teach spiritual truth by way of analogy. But the parables have suffered terrible abuse because of errant teaching. It is has been said that the parables have suffered a fate of misinterpretation second only to the book of Revelation. That might be a pretty accurate analysis.

In the early church parables became subject to extreme allegorism. In reaction to this many interpreters came to emphasize that there is <u>only one single point</u> being made in a parable. But that would seem to go too far because Christ’s own interpretation of His parables often makes several points of analogy as seen for example in the parable of the Sower and the soils.

The first parable that Jesus shares is called the parable of the Sower and the soils. It is **introductory** and is a "**gateway**" parable that is foundational to all the other parables in Matthew 13. This is the first of 7 parables in Matthew 13, but it is different. The other six begin with the formula, ***"The kingdom of heaven is like…"*** but this first one does not have that formula.

"The Parable of the Sower does not begin with "The Kingdom of heaven is like" because it describes how the kingdom begins."
– Warren Wiersbe

In a sense this first parable is an EVANGELISTIC OUTLINE parable that describes who ultimately is going to be in the kingdom. That is the ultimate issue. Those that respond properly to the Word will go into the kingdom. That is the issue with this parable – showing that there are various responses to the Word but only a sincere life-changing response that bears fruit will get you into the kingdom.

Thus, this first parable of the Sower and the soils is really the premier parable on which all the rest build which is reflected in Mark 4:13.

Mark 4:13 (NKJV)
13 And He said to them, "Do you not understand **this parable**? ***[About the Sower and the soils]*** How then will you understand all the parables?

This parable of the Sower and the soils is basic to understanding all the rest because as I say it is foundational to understanding who will ultimately even go into the kingdom. Once you understand that reality then the other kingdom insights build on it.

Jesus begins this first parable by saying, ***"Behold, a sower went out to sow."*** Jesus Himself will interpret this parable in verses 18-23.

The parable has three main elements, namely the sower, the seed, and the soils. The seed is the Word of God which is spread everywhere in the path of the sower. However, the emphasis in the parable is on the different kinds of soils which represent various responses to the kingdom message.

"It explains how the message of the kingdom is not received by all. It could be baffling to contemplate how the Messiah and His message could be rejected by so many. How could Israel reject her Messiah? But this parable explains why. There is nothing wrong with the sower (Jesus) or the seed (the kingdom message). But there is something wrong with the hearts of men who hear the message." – ***Dr. Michael Valch***