PARABLES: AN INDICATION OF JUDGMENT
(Matt. 13:12-15)

When the people of Israel hardened themselves to God's kingdom truth being offered through Jesus, He then spoke to them in parables with the following explanation:

Matthew 13:12 (NKJV)
12 For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.

A well-established principle in Scripture is that when light is received, more light is given, but when people reject the light that is given, then even that will be removed. The people of Israel were given a GREAT LIGHT.

> **Isaiah 9:2 (NKJV)**
> **2** The people who walked in darkness Have seen **a great light**; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a **light has shined**.
>
> **Matthew 4:16–17 (NKJV)**
> **16** The people who sat in darkness have seen **a great light**, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death **Light has dawned."**
> **17** From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, **"Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
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> **John 5:35 (NKJV)**
> **35** He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing **for a time** to rejoice in his light.
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> **John 12:35–36 (NKJV)**
> **35** Then Jesus said to them, "A little while longer **the light is with you**. Walk **while you have the light**, **lest darkness overtake you**; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going.
> **36 While you have the light, believe in the light,** that you may become sons of light." These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.

Israel definitely had the LIGHT – they had great opportunity to respond to the light, but as of Matthew 13, that door had closed. No further kingdom truth would be made known to them.

But for the true disciples, further kingdom truth in the form of parables in Matthew 13 provides great insight into what is presently going on in the world in relation to God's kingdom program.

> "Much that mystifies thoughtful people about the present age is made clear in the mystery parables." – ***John Phillips***

There is a principle in Scripture that willful blindness is followed by judicial blindness. We see this in Romans 1, and this pattern is seen throughout the Scriptures. We see it in 2 Thessalonians 2:10, where God allows the world to be deceived because they do not "receive the love of the truth".

> "Because they did not have the love of the truth, they would not get the light of the truth." - ***H.C. Woodring***

Conversely, those that accept the light receive more light.

> **Proverbs 4:18 (NKJV)**
> **18** But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.

Matthew 13:13 (NKJV)
13 Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Here is the answer to the disciples' question. Christ speaking to them in parables was a form of judgment – because seeing they willfully chose not to see; and hearing they willfully refused to listen; and consequently, they did not understand.

They saw the sign miracles but refused to acknowledge the truth of what they saw; they heard the profound kingdom teachings but refused to apply them. Therefore, they did not get Jesus or God's kingdom plan. They did not understand Jesus or His message. They liked the healings and the free lunch; they were wowed by His miracles, but their hearts remained hardened, not really seeing the truth of Christ as the fulfilment of prophecy.

Matthew 13:14–15 (NKJV)
14 And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says:
'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive;

15 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.'

Jesus here applies to the people of His day what Isaiah said to the hardened people of his time as recorded in Isaiah 6:9-10. Isaiah's message was to a people who were willfully rebellious, refusing to hear what they were hearing and refusing to see what they were shown. This was then followed by a statement of judicial hardening, where the heart of the people is made dull, and their eyes are shut.

This is to be understood against the backdrop of the vineyard analogy in Isaiah 5, where God had done absolutely everything possible for His people to bring forth good fruit. But in response, they had brazenly gone into apostasy, as the remainder of Isaiah 5 so vividly shows. It's not that God wanted to HARDEN them; this rather was the consequence of prolonged rebellion and resistance against God. And so also was it in the time of Jesus!

There comes a point where God lets people go, and in that sense, He hardens them. He gives them over to their own devices (cf. Rom. 1). A deliberate refusal to listen to God eventuates in the inability to hear or respond.

One can become so calloused that one reaches the point of no return (cf. Heb. 6, 10). This becomes an irremediable situation. This reflects the national judgment in Isaiah's time, which Christ then applied to the people of His day.

The hardened condition addressed by Isaiah became indicative of the people of Israel during the time of Christ and is therefore applied to the nation of Israel six times in the NT.

N.T. texts that quote Isaiah 6:9-10

Matt. 13:13-15
Mark 4:10-12
Luke 8:10
Jn. 12:39-41
Acts 28:26-27
Romans 11:8

It is noteworthy that the application of Isaiah 6:9-10 describes the spiritual condition of the people before Christ spoke the parables, not as a result of Him sharing the parables. The condition reflected in the parables is merely descriptive. The parables are in relation to divine judgement upon Israel because of the already hardened condition of their hearts.

> "The spiritually responsive were never denied the truth; the invitation to receive Christ was always open, clear, and uncomplicated. It was those who had hardened their hearts against Christ who were being dealt with in parables on this occasion." – ***Howard Vos***

Note the word "***hearts***" in verse 15. At core, the problem was that these people had a HEART problem reflected in their willful ignorance – they refused to see what they saw – they refused to listen to what they heard. Jesus was not the type of Messiah they expected or wanted, and so they were not open to the truth of Him – even though it aligned perfectly with the prophetic Scriptures and the witness of the Spirit.

The nation at large had essentially hardened their hearts against the truth of Christ, but Jesus still held out an invitation to those individuals who were still in the balance, so to speak. He invites the heavy laden to come to Him (11:28). In 12:30 He warns that to not be with Him is to be against Him. One cannot sit on the fence. The challenge was to respond to the light given, lest they be hardened, which was indicative of the nation as a whole.

Matthew 13 presents the HARD lesson that while we have the light we need to respond to it. I call this "***the light of conviction***" (cf. Ezek. 33:11; Jn. 16:8-11; Acts 6:10; 7:51; Heb. 6:4-6; 2 Pet. 2:20).

If we don't respond to the light of conviction, then there comes a point where it will be withdrawn, and the person will descend into even greater darkness. Hebrews 3:7-8 says, "***Therefore, as the Holy says: 'Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts…***". Or as Paul says, do ***not receive the grace of God vain***, saying, '***Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation."*** (2 Cor. 6:1-2).

> *People often say these fatal words:* ***"I'll do it later, not now…"***
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> "I once talked to a young man of about twenty-two who told me that. He said he believed in God and in Christ intellectually and believed

> that the Bible was true and someday planned to accept Christ as his Savior. But first, he said, 'I've got a lot of living to do.'
> I remonstrated with him for some time, but finally, when I saw that I could not persuade him, I let him go, reminding him that the Bible says that he who, being often reproved, hardens his neck, shall suddenly be cut off and that without remedy.
> A week later I heard that he was driving down the highway about seventy miles an hour when a truck stopped in front of him with a tailgate down. He was instantly decapitated.
> I remembered the words that I had spoken to him. 'He that hardens his neck shall suddenly be cut off and that without remedy.'"
>
> -***James Kennedy***

No wonder Jesus said, "*He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"* In many respects, this was the last call to those who were in danger of hardening themselves against the truth to the point of no return.

Now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation. Tomorrow may forever be too late.

Indeed, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"