

# Survey of Biblical History – Part 1: Creation to Christ

## # 18 - THE LATER MINISTRY OF CHRIST IN GALILEE

### **The Parable of the Sower** (Matthew 13:1-23; cf. Luke 8:5-18)

Jesus often spoke in parables (“to throw alongside”). The Gospels record roughly 60 parables or parabolic sayings and account for one third of the teachings of Jesus. A parable is a form of speech spoken as a story (either true to life or fictional accounts), a saying (e.g. “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?” - Luke 4:23), or an illustration that contains a specific point the speaker wishes to make. Jesus used parables to teach significant truths. Parables differ from allegories in that they usually make one or a limited number of points. Allegories have symbolic meaning in all their details. Parables appealed to the people because they could identify with the imagery used (often agricultural) and the parables were always fascinating, capturing everyone’s attention. However, most people did not understand their meaning. Jesus usually had to explain them to his disciples in plain language. As we see here, God purposely used parabolic teaching to substantiate the spiritual blindness of the people. The parable of the Sower is one of the more well known of Jesus’ parables.

**Vs. 19** – “The word of the kingdom” (“word of God” – Luke 8:11) refers to the message of redemption which is the central focus of God’s divine revelation *inscripturated* as part of the Bible and as especially fulfilled in Christ. The “evil one” refers to Satan (Luke 8:12). The soil here is the person with a hard heart. He hears the gospel message, but it does not really penetrate.

**Vs. 20** – The rocky places refer to shallow soil above bedrock. The summer heat retained by the bedrock caused early germination after the cold months. However, the lack of soil did not allow for roots to take hold. This person immediately responds to the message with eagerness but as soon as a test (Luke 8:13) comes (difficult circumstances or pressure) he just as quickly dispenses with his superficial faith (a faith that proves worthless when real life hits hard).

**Vs. 21** – The seed (word) planted among the weeds is soon overtaken. This person soon realizes that his interests lie in the world (i.e. money, pleasure [Luke 8:14], the anxious things of life) and demonstrates that whatever faith he may have had was unfruitful; it did not transform his life.

**Vs. 22** – The good soil refers to the heart that is properly prepared to receive the message of the gospel, embracing it wholeheartedly as it transforms his life. Note that this is the one who truly understands the message (contrast with vs. 19). Luke indicates that this is the person who has an “honest and good heart” and bears up in the long haul with “perseverance” (Luke 8:15). This is the only one who brings forth fruit. An average crop in Jesus’ day was usually less than tenfold. Thirty or sixty-fold was a bumper crop. One hundred-fold was rare indeed.

### **The Feeding of the 5000 and the Bread of Life Discourse** (John 6:1-71)

**Vss. 1-10** – Jesus finds an opportunity to test his disciples’ faith (vs.5-6). Many people had traveled far to see Jesus and they were hungry, with no food in sight.

**Vss. 11-14** – Jesus miraculously feeds perhaps as many as 15,000 people (5000 men) with only 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. See also the feeding of the 4000 in Mark 8:1-9.

**Vss. 15-21** – Knowing that this was a sign of the Messiah, the people sought to immediately crown Jesus as king. But He withdrew, knowing that God had another plan. As Christ went up to a mountain to pray (Mark 6:46), his 12 disciples got into a boat to cross the sea of Galilee not knowing when Jesus would return. Once again, we see another miracle to test the fearful disciples (see this same account in Matt. 14:24-33 and Mark 6:47-52).

**Vss. 22-40** – The next morning the multitude crossed over the lake looking for Jesus, but He rightly perceives that they were not looking for Him, but for more miraculous bread. Again, Christ uses the situation to tell the people the truth concerning Himself. The point was to reinforce the idea that the miracles pointed to the miracle worker and the message of the gospel.

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- Vss. 41-51** – The people began to wonder about Jesus, many of whom knew Him--growing up in nearby Nazareth. Jesus directs attention to Himself and the purpose of God the Father. Then He makes a startling statement about eating His flesh.
- Vss. 52-59** – Jesus speaks enigmatically about eating His flesh and drinking His blood. It would appear ludicrous to think He was speaking literally in some bizarre cannibalistic fashion, but those who had sense should have known that He often spoke with figurative language.
- Vss. 60-71** – Jesus used this strange metaphor (see vs. 63) to alienate those who He knew would be horrified at the statement and did not really believe in Him. The result being that a large number of pretentious followers quit following Him (vs. 66). In fact, this marks a significant point in Christ's ministry. Many were getting the wrong idea about Jesus and they didn't like it. They were expecting the Messiah to be a political mastermind and overthrow the Roman oppressors with Egyptian plague-like power. When Christ refused to be a part of their ill-conceived notions He began losing popularity. At this point Christ had the largest number of followers in His 3-year ministry; but from here onward the numbers begin to slowly dwindle. Would His specially chosen 12 disciples leave also? All but one would eventually endure till the end (vs. 71).

## **Peter's Confession and the Transfiguration of Christ** (Matthew 16:1-17:13)

- Vss. 1-12** – The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus to test Him. They knew the Messiah was one who would be identified by miraculous signs. They had already made up their minds about Jesus. Now they were simply trying to trap Him into making false claims since they believed He was a fraud. Jesus responded with a harsh reprimand. The sign of Jonah refers to a sign of judgment. Jonah was a prophet who refused to obey God and was swallowed by a great fish (probably a whale). He survived for 3 days in the fish before God commanded it to vomit him upon the beach (see Matt. 12:40). Christ's future death and resurrection will serve as a sign of judgment to the unbelieving religious leaders and to all who refuse to believe in Him. Note the disciples were still ignorant of Jesus' metaphorical illustrations.
- Vss. 13-28** – Jesus asks His disciples perhaps the most important question they had ever heard: "Who do you say that I am?" Peter's confession was divinely revealed. Jesus then took the opportunity to speak about a mystery called the Church (the idea of the Church was never revealed in the OT (see Eph. 3:2-6). This marks a shift from the proclamation of the Davidic kingdom, promised to the Jews alone, to the broad spiritual kingdom that would encompass all peoples of the earth. At this point Christ plainly speaks of His coming death and resurrection. Compare Peter's Satanic response (vs. 23) to the previous Divine response (vs.17).
- Vss. 17:1-8** – The kingdom spoken of in 16:28 is directly connected with the following events. The inner circle (Peter, James and John) accompanied Jesus up upon a mountain where Christ was "transfigured." This was the only time during Christ's earthly ministry that a glimpse of His true Divine glory was displayed for men to see (compare this to the vision of Isaiah in the throne room of God - Isa. 6:1-5). The presence of the translated prophets Moses (representing the Law) and Elijah (representing the Prophets) is significant. They are associated in a special way to the coming of the Messiah in fulfillment of the OT and also point to His second coming to earth when His full glory will reign with unprecedented royal majesty. Note also how both Moses and Elijah encountered similar theophanies of God's glory and had similar earthly departures.
- Vss. 9-13** – Jesus instructs the men to keep this experience to themselves until He rises from the dead and the Church is inaugurated. These men would lead the establishment of the Church, and this event would set the seal of the hope of Christ's return upon their ministries that changed the course of human history. Note that Christ gives some further insight upon the importance of Elijah of whom John the Baptist was a type (see Mal. 3:1-7 and 4:1-6).