

“SIGNS OF THE TIME - DETERIORATION OR RESTORATION? Part II” (Matt. 13)

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INTRO: Are bad things happening a sign of the times – a sign of Christ’s soon return (Isa. 9:7; Eph. 5:27; Acts 3:20-21)?

THREE REASONS FOR THIS SERIES:

1. To help people be prepared for potential persecution.
2. To encourage long-range planning (Great Commission).
3. To encourage a faith-filled optimistic future perspective.

The Parables & The Parousia (Matt. 13): Jesus used parables (stories) to reveal kingdom mysteries to those with open hearts while concealing from closed hearts (vv. 10-17).

The Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:1-9, 18-23).

1. The seed fell on 4 soils – 4 types of hearts:

- A. Walking paths/hard hearts/reject gospel (vv. 4, 18-19).
- B. Rocky soil/superficial hearts/receives the gospel but falls away when persecution comes (vv. 5-7, 20-21).
- C. Thorny soil/distracted hearts/receives the gospel but falls away because of the cares of the world (vv. 7, 22).
- D. Good soil/prepared hearts/bears much fruit (vv. 8, 23).

2. The results: While there were four different soils, a competent farmer would sow the vast majority of seed on the good soil, producing far more fruit than was lost.

A. Two Applications:

- 1) Prepare your heart to be good, fruitful soil!
 - 2) Focus the seed you sow on good soil (Matt. 10:14).
- B. What happened to the seed sown in the book of Acts (2:41, 47; 4:4, 32; 5:14, 28; 6:1, 7; 8:4-8, 14; 9:31, 35, 42; 11:21; 12:24; 13:45; 14:1, 4, 6; Col. 1:5-6, 23)?
- 1) Did only 25% who heard the gospel get saved?
 - 2) Did 67% of those who got saved backslide?
 - 3) Did only 25% who heard the gospel bear lasting fruit?

CONCLUSION: Jesus is coming! Be ready! Be victorious! Be good soil! Be teachable! Be busy fulfilling The Great Commission! Be faith-filled and optimistic regarding the future. [Homework: Read the Parables in Matt. 13]