

The Gospel of Mark

Parables

Lesson #4 for July 27, 2024

Scriptures: Mark 4:1-34; James 1:21; Isaiah 6:1-13; Psalm 104:12; Daniel 4:10-12.

1. Jesus often taught in parables. Why did He do that?

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] This ... study is on the parables in Mark 4. The Gospel of Mark has the fewest parables of any of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke).

For many years scholars have argued over the meaning and interpretation of Jesus' parables: How to interpret what they mean, why Jesus used them, what kind of lessons they were intended to reveal, and how literally they were to be taken, or whether they were purely allegory, and so forth.

Obviously we are not going to solve all these issues in this ... lesson. Instead, **we are going to look at them and, by God's grace, come away with an understanding of the points Jesus made through these parables.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, July 20.^{†‡}

[BSG:] As we study the parables of Jesus in Mark 4, we note an **important motif** [or dominant idea]: **the kingdom of God**. This theme is introduced first in Mark 1:14, 15: "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand' " (*NASB*). **What is the significance of the kingdom of God, as presented in Mark? The pursuit of the answer to this question will be the main topic of [our] discussion.... An understanding of this motif and its significance will help us better understand Jesus' parables.**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 52.^{†‡§}

2. Let us review and discuss the parables in Mark 4.

[BSG:] Mark 4 has just five parables—the sower, the lamp, the measure, the growing seed, and the mustard seed. **The majority of the chapter revolves around the parable of the sower. This parable is told first, followed by the reason for parables, and then the interpretation of the parable.** This three-step pattern will be the focus of the studies for ... [most of this lesson]. Then the other parables will be the subject of [the rest of this] study.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, July 20.^{†‡}

Mark 4:1-9: ¹Again Jesus began to teach beside Lake Galilee. The crowd that gathered round him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it. The boat was out in the water, and the crowd stood on the shore at the water's edge.

²**He used parables to teach them many things**, saying to them:

³ "Listen! Once there was a man who went out to sow corn [grain]. ⁴As he scattered the seed in the field, some of it fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵Some of it fell on rocky ground, where there was little soil. The seeds soon sprouted, because the soil wasn't deep. ⁶Then, when the sun came up, it burnt the young plants; and because the roots had not grown deep enough, the plants soon dried up. ⁷Some of the seed fell among thorn bushes,

which grew up and choked the plants, and they didn't produce any corn. ⁸But **some seeds fell in good soil, and the plants sprouted, grew**, and produced corn: some had thirty grains, others sixty, and others 100."

⁹ And Jesus concluded, "Listen, then, if you have ears!"—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Mark 4:1-9). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].^{†‡}

3. What can we see in these parables without jumping immediately to the interpretation that Jesus gave. **Clearly, in the parable of sower, the key factor is the type of soil.** Clearly, that is the **main influence on how the seed produces or does not.** It is interesting to notice that the length of time for completing the details of each seeds story lengthens with each successive type of soil. The birds pick up the soil cast on the path almost immediately. The seed that falls on the rocky ground springs up for just a few days and then dies. The seed which falls on the weedy soil grows up for some time but is choked by the weeds. Finally, the seed that falls on the good soil grows for the full period of time until the crop is mature.

[BSG:] **Three of the stories are about failure;** only the last is about success, a good abundant crop. The length of the stories, the longer and longer period of time for each successive story, and the fact that only one story is about success, all point to the **risk of failure** but the **abundant outcome of success.**

The parable seems to point to the cost of discipleship and the risks involved, but it also highlights the abundant reward of following Jesus.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, July 21.^{†‡}

4. Clearly, the different types of soil represent different types of responses to the gospel. Why do people respond differently? In Mark 4:1,10, we read that Jesus had been presenting His gospel to a large crowd; but, when it came time to discuss the interpretation, they had gone away and He spoke only to His disciples and a few other friends who heard the interpretation.

Mark 4:13-20: ¹³ Then Jesus asked them, "Don't you understand this parable? How, then, will you ever understand any parable? ¹⁴The sower sows God's message. ¹⁵Some people are like the seeds that fall along the path; as soon as they hear the message, Satan comes and takes it away. ¹⁶Other people are like the seeds that fall on rocky ground. As soon as they hear the message, they receive it gladly. ¹⁷But it does not sink deep into them, and they don't last long. So when trouble or persecution comes because of the message, they give up at once. ¹⁸Other people are like the seeds sown among the thorn bushes. These are the ones who hear the message, ¹⁹but the worries about this life, the love for riches, and all other kinds of desires crowd in and choke the message, and they don't bear fruit. ²⁰But other people are like the seeds sown in good soil. They hear the message, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirty, some sixty, and some 100."—*Good News Bible.**

5. Jesus was not trying to describe every possible reaction that could happen when a person hears the gospel. Clearly, the seed in this story represents God's Word—the good news.

[BSG:] The longest explanations are for the rocky ground and the weedy ground. In describing the rocky-ground hearers, Jesus points to contrasting elements—they receive the Word with joy but are temporary disciples. When persecution comes, they fall away. The weedy-ground hearers are a contrast.

They do not fall away because of hard times but because of good times—their focus is on the things of the world instead of the kingdom of God. Their cares and concerns revolve around what the world has to offer.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, July 22.‡

6. How do you think you respond to hearing new truths from God’s Word? Do you sometimes respond in different ways to different truths?
7. In connection with **His explanation about using parables**, Jesus made these statements:

Mark 4:10-12: ¹⁰ When Jesus was alone, **some** of those who had heard him came to him with the twelve disciples and **asked him to explain the parables**. ¹¹ “You have been given the secret of the Kingdom of God,” Jesus answered. “But the others, who are on the outside, hear all things by means of parables, ¹²so that, **‘They may look and look, yet not see; they may listen and listen, yet not understand. For if they did, they would turn to God, and he would forgive them.’** ”—*Good News Bible*.*†

[This seems like an obvious reference to Isaiah 6:9-10.]‡

Isaiah 6:9-10: ⁹ So he [the heavenly messenger] told me to go and give the people this message: “No matter how much you listen, you will not understand. No matter how much you look, you will not know what is happening.” ¹⁰Then he said to me, “Make the minds of these people dull, their ears deaf, and their eyes blind, so that they cannot see or hear or understand. If they did, they might turn to me and be healed.”—*Good News Bible*.*† [See the larger context in Item #11 below.]‡

8. Does this interpretation suggest to you that Jesus had picked out a few favorite hearers to give His message to while everybody else was rejected as an outsider? Was Jesus intentionally trying to keep outsiders in the dark?

[BSG:] A surface reading of these verses gives the impression that Jesus taught in parables to keep outsiders in the dark. But such a perspective does not fit with Jesus’ actions elsewhere in Mark. In Mark 3:5, 6, Jesus is grieved by the hard hearts of the religious leaders. In Mark 3:22–30, Jesus takes the arguments of the scribes seriously and explains in detail why they are mistaken. In Mark 12:1–12, the religious leaders understand that Jesus’ parable of the tenants is about them. It is actually a warning of where their plot against Him is heading and the terrible consequences to follow. If He had no concern for them, He would not warn them. Consequently, Jesus’ words here in Mark 4 need a closer look in order to recognize what His point is. Jesus is paraphrasing Isaiah 6:9, 10.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, July 23.‡

Mark 3:22-30: ²² Some teachers of the Law who had come from Jerusalem were saying, “He has Beelzebul in him! It is the chief of the demons who gives him the power to drive them out.”

²³ So Jesus called them to him and spoke to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? ²⁴If a country divides itself into groups which fight each other, that country will fall apart. ²⁵If a family divides itself into groups which fight each

other, that family will fall apart. ²⁶So if Satan's kingdom divides into groups, it cannot last, but will fall apart and come to an end.

²⁷ "No one can break into a strong man's house and take away his belongings unless he first ties up the strong man; then he can plunder his house.

²⁸ "I assure you that people can be forgiven all their sins and all the evil things they may say. ²⁹But whoever says evil things against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, because he has committed an eternal sin." ³⁰(Jesus said this because some people were saying, "He has an evil spirit in him.")—*Good News Bible*.*

9. If there was any group of people that did not seem like "good soil hearers," it certainly would be the demon-possessed people of His day. But, whenever Jesus cast out demons, He was breaking into Satan's house and setting Satan's captives free! So that, along with other passages, strongly suggested that Jesus intended to reach out to everyone who will listen.
10. But, unfortunately, as we know, there were hearers who were dead set against accepting the messages of Jesus.

Mark 12:1-12: ¹ Then Jesus spoke to them in parables: "**Once there was a man who planted a vineyard, put a fence round it, dug a hole for the winepress, and built a watchtower.** Then he let out the vineyard to tenants and left home on a journey. ²When the time came to gather the grapes, he sent a slave to the tenants to receive from them his share of the harvest. ³The tenants seized the slave, beat him, and sent him back without a thing. ⁴Then the owner sent another slave; the tenants beat him over the head and treated him shamefully. ⁵The owner sent another slave, and they killed him; and they treated many others the same way, beating some and killing others. ⁶The only one left to send was the man's own dear son. Last of all, then, he sent his son to the tenants. 'I am sure they will respect my son,' he said. ⁷But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the owner's son. Come on, let's kill him, and his property will be ours!' ⁸So they seized the son and killed him and threw his body out of the vineyard.

⁹ "What, then, will the owner of the vineyard do?" asked Jesus. "He will come and kill those tenants and hand the vineyard over to others. ¹⁰Surely you have read this scripture:

'The stone which the builders rejected as worthless turned out to be the most important of all.

¹¹ This was done by the Lord; what a wonderful sight it is! "

¹² **The Jewish leaders tried to arrest Jesus, because they knew that he had told this parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd, so they left him and went away.**—*Good News Bible*.*†

11. So, how could Jesus welcome some formerly demon-possessed individuals while the religious leaders rejected Him? Compare the following story in Isaiah 6.

Isaiah 6:1-13: ¹ In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord [*sic*]. He was sitting on his throne, high and exalted, and his robe filled the whole Temple. ²Round

him flaming creatures were standing, each of which had six wings. Each creature covered its face with two wings, and its body with two, and used the other two for flying. ³They were calling out to each other:

“Holy, holy, holy!

The LORD Almighty is holy!

His glory fills the world.”

⁴ The sound of their voices made the foundation of the Temple shake, and the Temple itself was filled with smoke.

⁵ I said, “There is no hope for me! I am doomed because every word that passes my lips is sinful, and I live among a people whose every word is sinful. And yet, with my own eyes, I have seen the King, the LORD Almighty!”

⁶ Then one of the creatures flew down to me, carrying a burning coal that he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. ⁷He touched my lips with the burning coal and said, “This has touched your lips, and now your guilt is gone, and your sins are forgiven.”

⁸ Then I heard the Lord [*sic*] say, “Whom shall I send? Who will be our messenger?”

I answered, “I will go! Send me!”

⁹ So he told me to go and give the people this message: “**No matter how much you listen, you will not understand. No matter how much you look, you will not know what is happening.**” ¹⁰Then he said to me, “**Make the minds of these people dull, their ears deaf, and their eyes blind, so that they cannot see or hear or understand. If they did, they might turn to me and be healed.**”

¹¹ I asked, “How long will it be like this, Lord [*sic*]?”

He answered, “Until the cities are ruined and empty — until the houses are uninhabited — until the land itself is a desolate waste. ¹²I will send the people far away and make the whole land desolate....”

¹³ ... (The stump represents a new beginning for God’s people.)—*Good News Bible*.*††

12. Isaiah saw a vision of God in the temple and was overwhelmed by God’s glory and his own uncleanness. God cleansed him and commissioned him with a shocking message. Just like Mark, it sounds out of step with the rest of Isaiah in which there is comfort for God’s people.

[BSG:] **In Isaiah 6 the message is meant to shock the people awake so they will turn from their evil ways.** In Mark the key for understanding Jesus’ words is found in Mark 3:35. To understand Jesus’ words and teachings, one must do the will of God (*Mark 3:35*). This brings that person into the family of Jesus. Those who have already decided that Jesus is possessed by the devil will not listen.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday.††§

13. It should be clear by comparing Mark with Isaiah 6 that some people are not kept out, but rather have kept themselves out by their preconceived ideas. How do you respond to the truth when it is presented to you? What if it is in conflict with one of your favorite beliefs?
14. How well are we doing as a church in presenting the gospel to the world around us? Look at

Jesus's parable on the lamp.

Mark 4:21-23: ²¹ Jesus continued, "Does anyone ever bring in a lamp and put it under a bowl or under the bed? Doesn't he put it on the lampstand? ²²Whatever is hidden away will be brought out into the open, and whatever is covered up will be uncovered. ²³Listen, then, if you have ears!"—*Good News Bible*.*

15. Surely, the answers to Jesus's questions must be obvious to everyone. God intends for the good news to be presented to every individual on this earth if possible. But, not everyone is going to respond. We are condemned if we hide our lamp under a bushel or under a basket.

16. Turning to the topic of being fair to others, then God can be fair with us.

Mark 4:24-25: ²⁴ He also said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear! The same rules you use to judge others will be used by God to judge you — but with even greater severity. ²⁵Those who have something will be given more, and those who have nothing will have taken away from them even the little they have."—*Good News Bible*.*

[BSG:] In many locations in the world, fresh produce is sold in open markets. Sellers typically have a device for measuring the product they are selling. It is a common practice of such sellers to add just a bit more to a sale to help the buyer feel he or she is being treated fairly. Jesus picks up on how good sellers treat buyers to make a point about openness to the truth. If one is open and follows the light, he or she will get even more. But if he or she rejects the light, even what they had before will be taken away.

How can we better understand the principle that with what measure you use, it will be measured to you? Think about it in all your dealings with others.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, July 24.†

17. Now we explore the mystery of God making the seeds grow and the growing process.

Mark 4:26-29: ²⁶ Jesus went on to say, "The Kingdom of God is like this. A man scatters seed in his field. ²⁷He sleeps at night, is up and about during the day, and all the while the seeds are sprouting and growing. Yet he does not know how it happens. ²⁸The soil itself makes the plants grow and bear fruit; first the tender stalk appears, then the ear, and finally the ear full of corn. ²⁹When the corn is ripe, the man starts cutting it with his sickle, because harvest time has come."—*Good News Bible*.*

[BSG:] Most [90%] of the Gospel of Mark has parallels in either Matthew or Luke or both. But that is not the case with this parable. It is unique to Mark. The **focus of this brief parable is the growing process**. Jesus indicates that this is how the kingdom of God works. **Humans have a part to play, but the real growth is the work of God**. It is not an endless process. The story comes to an abrupt end with the maturation of the grain. Just so, the return of Christ a second time will suddenly bring an end to our world's history.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, July 25.†

18. Jesus was just beginning His ministry in Galilee when these parables were spoken. It probably seemed to people like there was only a very small group of people interested in hearing what He had to say and even fewer who were willing to follow Him.

Mark 4:30-32: ³⁰ “What shall we say the Kingdom of God is like?” asked Jesus. “What parable shall we use to explain it? ³¹It is like this. A man takes a mustard seed, the smallest seed in the world, and plants it in the ground. ³²After a while it grows up and becomes the biggest of all plants. It puts out such large branches that the birds come and make their nests in its shade.”—*Good News Bible*.*

[BSG:] This parable stresses how something very tiny grows into something remarkably large. Mustard seeds measure typically one to two millimeters in diameter (.039 to .079 inches). The plant described here is probably the black mustard (*Brassica nigra*), which has tiny seeds (more than 700 seeds in one gram). While not the smallest seeds in the world, they are quite small, especially in comparison to the plant they produce, which can grow as large as three meters (ten feet) tall. Jesus notes that birds even nest in the branches of the mustard plant. This last reference is an allusion to Psalm 104:12, with an allusion to Daniel 4:10–12, as well. **Psalm 104** speaks of **God’s power in creating the world**, and **Daniel 4** represents **Nebuchadnezzar as a great tree** under which all the world finds shade and food.

The point Jesus makes is that the kingdom of God, which began very small, will become large and impressive. People in Jesus’ day may have looked down on the dusty itinerant preacher from Galilee with His band of disciples, but time has shown that His kingdom of grace continues to expand throughout the world. “ ‘And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come’ ” (*Matt. 24:14, NKJV*). **Consider what the “church” was like when Jesus made that prediction. Why is this such a remarkable and faith-affirming prediction?**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, July 25.^{†‡§}

19. What did Ellen White have to say about love and serving others?

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] True holiness is wholeness in the service of God. This is the condition of true Christian living. Christ asks for an unreserved consecration, for undivided service. He demands the heart, the mind, the soul, the strength. Self is not to be cherished. He who lives to himself is not a Christian.

Love must be the principle of action. Love is the underlying principle of God’s government in heaven and earth, and it must be the foundation of the Christian’s character. This alone can make and keep him steadfast. This alone can enable him to withstand trial and temptation.

And love will be revealed in sacrifice. The plan of redemption was laid in sacrifice—a sacrifice so broad and deep and high that it is immeasurable. Christ gave all for us, and those who receive Christ will be ready to sacrifice all for the sake of their Redeemer. The thought of His honor and glory will come before anything else.—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons** 48.4-49.2.[‡]

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20. Many of us are reluctant to try to evangelize the people around us. We tend to withdraw and think that that is the pastor’s job! See Mark 4:26-29 as quoted in Item #17 above.

21. As Jesus began His ministry in Galilee, He realized that His time on this earth was growing

short. He needed to provide the evidence to suggest that things were coming to a head and that action needed to be taken. As far as we know, only a few people realized the meaning of Daniel 9:25-27 and that the 490-year or 70-week prophetic time had come to an end. Jesus is represented in Mark 1:15 as almost starting with that idea.

Mark 1:15: “**The right time has come,**” he said, “and the Kingdom of God is near! Turn away from your sins and believe the Good News!”—*Good News Bible*.*†

22. But, Jesus had already spent more than a year trying to work in the area of Judea. Although we know very little about what He did during that time—and what we know is mostly from John’s Gospel, there is no evidence there was a big response to His preaching during that time. As Jesus approached His ministry in Galilee, He knew the time had come. The kingdom of God was among them.
23. What did Jesus mean by speaking about the “kingdom of God”? And what did He mean by “the time is fulfilled”?

[BSG:] **The idea of the kingdom of God is made prominent from the start of Mark’s Gospel. Mark 1:15 states, “ ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand’ ” (NASB).** Other references related to the kingdom of God include Mark 4:11, 26, 30; Mark 9:1, 47; Mark 10:14, 15, 23, 24, 25; Mark 12:34; and Mark 14:25. Hence, **the kingdom of God is a recurrent theme in the Gospel of Mark.**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 52.†§

24. But, where did Jesus get the idea that the kingdom of God was supposed to be coming? Read Daniel 9:24-27.
25. But, if we turn back even earlier to Daniel 7:13-14, we realize that the power that had been dominating the world was going to be overcome and replaced by a completely different kind of kingdom that will last forever. And that kingdom will include the saints.

Daniel 7:13-14: ¹³ During this vision in the night, I saw what looked like a human being. He was approaching me, surrounded by clouds, and he went to the one who had been living for ever [sic-Br] and was presented to him. ¹⁴He was given authority, honour [sic-Br], and royal power, so that the people of all nations, races, and languages would serve him. His authority would last for ever [sic-Br], and his kingdom would never end.—*Good News Bible*.*†

[BSG:] Let us consider the important implications of these future events. First, the little horn will lose its authority over the saints. Second, the judgment means the vindication of God’s people, the saints. The kingdom of God is not an isolated kingdom, confined to heavenly realms only. **The kingdom of God includes the saints; in other words, it is the kingdom of God’s people.**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 53.†

26. So, in fact, Jesus is calling Himself the “fulfillment” of that prophecy. But, He recognized that there was more to come. And Peter picked that up.

1 Peter 1:18-20: ¹⁸For you know what was paid to set you free from the worthless manner of life handed down by your ancestors. It was not something that can be destroyed, such as silver or gold; ¹⁹**it was the costly sacrifice of Christ, who was like a lamb without defect or flaw.** ²⁰**He had been chosen by God**

before the creation of the world and was revealed in these last days for your sake.—Good News Bible.*†

27. Continuing with the theme *the time is fulfilled*:

[BSG:] Mark 1:14 and 15 states that “Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, **‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near’**” (NRSV). These verses provide many important elements for our consideration. **First, the essence of Jesus’ preaching was the kingdom of God.** The kingdom of God is explicitly referred to in **Matthew 4:23**: “Jesus was going about in all of Galilee, . . . proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom” (NASB). **Second, the content of His proclamation was eschatologically oriented—“the time is fulfilled.”** What time is Mark referring to here? It must be the time of the last week of the 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9....

[One scholar noted:] **the Gospel of Mark has been identified as “the gospel of the fulfilled time.”** (See Merling Alomía, Joel Leiva, Juan Millanao, eds., *Mark: The Evangelist of Fulfilled Time* [Lima: Ediciones Theologica, 2003].)

How should we understand the expression “the kingdom of God has come near”? The Greek language used by Mark in his Gospel gives us some clues. Mark 1:15, “ ‘The time is fulfilled and [that is, namely] the kingdom of God has come near,’ ” (NRSV), in the Greek reads: “*peplērōtai ho kairos kai ēngiken hē basileia tou theou.*” The **conjunction *kai*** mostly is recognized as a connector element between two words or clauses, and the common translation is “**and**” in such cases. However, *kai* can work as an explicative particle, commonly called epexegetical *kai*. It means a “word or clause is connected by means of *kai* with another word or clause, . . . [to explain] what goes before it and so.” Therefore, *kai* could be translated, “**that is, namely.**” (See Frederick W. Danker, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, p. 495.)—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 53-54.†‡Ω§

28. The Bible study guide continues discussing the meaning of *the time is fulfilled*:

[BSG:] Thus, if the use of *kai* in Mark 1:15 is epexegetic, the sentence could be read as “the time is fulfilled; that is, the kingdom of God has come near.”

In other words, the coming of the kingdom of God means the fulfillment of the time spoken of by Daniel. In this case, Jesus Christ personifies the kingdom of God, and such an interpretation is in accordance with the pragmatic point of view of Mark. In Mark 1, the kingdom of God is the kingdom of Jesus Christ, who has come in accordance with the divine prophetic agenda to proclaim the good news about God’s kingdom. Thus, the kingdom of God implies the redemption and restoration of humanity. Jesus was asked by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God would come, and He replied, “For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst” (*Luke 17:21, NASB*). Paul also seems to support this perspective when he writes, “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son . . . so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons and daughters” (*Gal.*

4:4, 5, NASB).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 54.†§

29. What are the “secrets of the kingdom of heaven”?

[BSG:] The “secrets of the kingdom of heaven” have been disclosed in Jesus’ coming (*Matt. 13:11, RSV*). Jesus Himself clarifies that there is no mystery in His message: “ ‘Nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it would come to light’ ” (*Mark 4:22, NASB*).

These “secrets” of the kingdom (which are no longer secrets because they have been revealed) are not going to be understood by all people. The gospel, the seed, is scattered over all kinds of soils, but unfortunately, not all soils produce the same results (*Mark 4:3–20*). Spiritual development in the kingdom of God is similar to the growth process of a plant: “ ‘The soil produces crops by itself; first the stalk, then the head, then the mature grain in the head’ ” (*Mark 4:28, NASB*). This development also includes the harvest of the fruits: “ ‘Now when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come’ ” (*Mark 4:29, NASB*). Implicit in this idea is the following notion: before Christ gathers together the people for His kingdom in the final harvest at the end of the time, He first needs to cast the seed—the gospel—upon the soil (*Mark 4:26*). The kingdom of God seems small at the beginning; its seed looks insignificant. But “ ‘when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants, and forms large branches’ ” (*Mark 4:32, NASB*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide 55.†§**

30. So, we can conclude:

[BSG:] The fulfillment of the time spoken of by Mark in his Gospel started when the kingdom arrived in the Person of Jesus Christ at His first coming. **Christ incarnate is the essence of the gospel—the good news.** In every village that would welcome Him, Jesus came to preach about that kingdom. He came to cast that seed upon the soil of every heart. Although small in the beginning, the kingdom shall become great in the end.

Jesus encourages people to receive the kingdom in their present circumstances: “ ‘Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all’ ” (*Mark 10:15, NASB*). In other words, the Savior encourages the people of His time and ours to live in the kingdom as a present-tense experience. However, Jesus Christ posits the end of time as yet to come: “Truly I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine again, until that day when I drink it, new, in the kingdom of God” (*Mark 14:25, NASB*). The eschatology of Mark is conscious of the fact that **the “end of time” is yet future.** However, **Mark wants to emphasize the kingdom and its initial stage, or its present experience, during his own time.**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 55.†§

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Last Modified: May 19, 2024

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