

**8:1 Soon afterwards, He began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him,  
8:2 and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,  
8:3 and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means.**

Jesus' Galilean ministry began in Luke 4:14 and ends in Luke 9:51 when He heads toward Jerusalem where He will ultimately be crucified. Luke 8:1-3 bridges into the final phase of this ministry.

"Soon afterwards" in 8:1 means that soon after eating with Simon the Pharisee (Lk. 7:36-50), Jesus began going from city to city preaching about the kingdom of God. The imperfect tense verb ("going") suggests that He was continually moving about from town to town talking to people. He would move from the hillsides to the valleys and into the public squares. Every place He went became His pulpit and huge crowds would gather around Him to listen.

To "proclaim" meant to openly and authoritatively herald a public message. Before there was mass media, the king would send his authoritative representative into the city square and he would herald the king's message to the people. This is what Jesus was doing.

The content of what He proclaimed is simply described as the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is the sphere in which God rules over those who have come to Him for salvation. Simply stated, Jesus was preaching the message of salvation. This was the single focus of Jesus' teaching. He even continued to speak on the same subject after His resurrection; Acts 1:3 says that He spent forty days appearing to His disciples and speaking to them of things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

When Jesus preached, He spoke about various aspects of the kingdom in a multiplicity of ways. In Matthew 22 He compared the kingdom to a banquet where people were invited, and later of others who were compelled to enter. In Mark 1:15 Jesus said, "the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the gospel." He taught in Mark 12:28, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength." Then, in Luke 9:61 Jesus said, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." In Matthew 13:44 Jesus compared finding the kingdom to finding a treasure buried in a field or a pearl of immeasurable value – upon finding it and seeing how valuable it is, one is willing to sell everything to get it. He also talked about how one is to live as a kingdom citizen (the Sermon on the Mount), of the glorious future kingdom when God comes on earth, and of the eternal state of the Kingdom. Jesus told His disciples to ask God that His kingdom come and will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10). In sum, when Jesus preached of the kingdom, He invited people to enter, to repent, to commit themselves to loving God with all their hearts, to never look back, to value it and even be willing to give up everything to get it, and to pray for its coming.

The twelve disciples were with Him as were a number of women. The rabbis of the day believed that women were incapable of learning or of receiving spiritual instruction. In fact, there were laws made that forbade women to be taught by a man in public, even by their own husbands. The Greeks also disdained teaching women. Not Jesus. He didn't care about being politically correct. He reached out to everybody at every level of society.

Mary was one of the women who followed Jesus. She was called Magdalene to distinguish her from the other women named Mary who are mentioned in the Bible. The name Magdalene identifies her as coming from the town of Magdala. Jesus had delivered her from seven demons and she faithfully followed Him from that time on. She witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus (Mk. 15:40), was present at His burial (Mk. 15:47) and went to the tomb after His death early Sunday morning (Matt. 27:61; 28:1; Mk. 16:1). She was also one of the first to see the resurrected Lord (Jn. 20:18) and in Luke 24:9-10 was one of the women, who upon returning from the tomb, reported the events to the eleven apostles and the others.

Joanna was the wife of Chuza who was Herod's steward. Chuza possibly even managed the king's estate. Thus, she was a woman of a very high position. She also witnessed the resurrection and reported to the apostles what had taken place (Lk. 24:10).

We know nothing of Susanna other than what is written here.

Jesus' ministry was supported by those whose lives He had changed. Although the band of disciples had left everything and owned nothing, God met their needs by providing people who supported them out of their private means. Jesus and His followers had a money bag (Jn. 13:29), a treasurer, and even enough money to help the poor.

***8:4 When a large crowd was coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, He spoke by way of a parable:***

Early in Jesus' ministry Jesus spoke plainly or in simple analogies so that everybody could understand Him. In Luke 4, He openly said that He fulfilled what was written in Isaiah 61. For example, in Luke 5:31-32 He said, "It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." But as His ministry continued, He began to speak in more prolonged stories, illustrations, and analogies that demanded an explanation in order to be understood. Luke 8:5-8 is an example of this.

Verse 4 says that Jesus spoke to the crowd in *a parable*. A parable is a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson. This parable is commonly known as The Parable of the Sower; it uses sowing seed on different soils to explain different conditions of the human heart. It is more about the soil than the sower, so perhaps another name would be more appropriate.

Rabbis loved to teach in parables. Parables make truth vivid so that it was almost unforgettable. They also make the truth repeatable. If someone can remember the story they can usually remember the meaning as well. And of course, they also make learning interesting.

However, the significance of this parable was monumental. It was more than a teaching aid employed by Jesus to facilitate learning. Rather, it marked the turning point in Jesus' ministry to Israel; it signaled the formal rejection of Jesus by the nation. Jesus chose to use parables as a judicial act that flowed from the events in Matthew 12 when He had healed a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute (Matt. 12:22). Both the healing and casting out of the demon were undeniable displays of the power of the Holy Spirit at work in Christ. The miracle pointed both to who Jesus was and the source of His power. Jesus said, ". . . if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." In other words, if the power He displayed was from God, it vindicated Him as Messiah, the great Davidic King of prophecy, and the kingdom of God would have come. The crowds recognized this possibility and were starting to ask if Jesus was the Messiah, the son of David (Matt. 12:23). This was a significant revelation of the person of Jesus to the nation; it forced a decision. However, when the Pharisees heard of how the crowd was responding to Him, they immediately denied the miracle as a work of God. Rather, they willfully and consciously rejected this indisputable manifestation of the Holy Spirit's power and said it was the power of Satan (Matt. 12:23). Nothing could be more blasphemous than to attribute the glorious work of a Holy God to Satan! From this time on, Jesus only addressed the crowds in parables. The parallel passage in Matthew 13 says, "indeed, He said nothing to them without a parable" (Matt. 13:34).

When Jesus' disciples asked Jesus "Why do You speak to them in parables?" (Matt. 13:10) He replied,

13 ". . . I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

14 "In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE;  
15 "FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES, OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.'

Jesus' parables were God's judgment on the nation. They were a judicial act against those who hated knowledge and rejected the truth. They cut off those who had rejected Christ from the privilege of understanding the mysteries of the kingdom of God; at the same time, once they were explained, they provided further light to the disciples. The nation was experiencing the same judgment as their ancestors (Matt. 13:14, 15; Isa. 6:9-10). In the days of Isaiah, God spoke through the prophet to Israel, but Isaiah's message was actually judgment concealed. Though Isaiah would call the people to repent and warn of the devastation of the nation, the people had already set their hearts against God. Therefore, God confirms them in their rebellion. Though Isaiah's message had glimmers of hope – if they

turned they would be healed (Isa. 6:10) – in actuality, God would not open their deaf ears so they could hear. Thus, they would not turn, nor would they be healed.

“For those without ears to hear, parables seem to conceal more than they reveal, so that superficial hearings and seeing do not lead to true spiritual understanding or perception” (Commentary on the NT Use of the OT, Beale, Carson, ed., 46). Parables would leave their spiritual condition unchanged; they would be in the same darkness that they had begun in. Though they heard, they did not understand; though they saw they did not perceive, for their hearts had become dull and they had closed their eyes. God Himself judicially confirmed them in their self-imposed blindness. They loved darkness so God gave them more of it.

The parable itself follows:

**8:5 "The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up.**

**8:6 "Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture.**

**8:7 "Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out.**

**8:8 "Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great." As He said these things, He would call out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."**

**8:9 His disciples began questioning Him as to what this parable meant.**

Nobody would be baffled by what Jesus had said. On the surface it is a simple story. Typically, a farmer would plow furrows in the soil and then, with a bag of seed over his shoulder, he would broadcast the seed, throwing it everywhere. As the seed was being thrown, it would fall to the ground and find different soils. Jesus mentions four different soils where the seed might land.

The first place that the seed fell was upon the road (8:5). In those days fields were divided into long, narrow strips for cultivation. Between the fields there were paths that were about three feet wide and provided a way for people to travel through the area. They also provided the means for the farmer to care for his crops. People didn't generally build fences or walls, so these paths also separated one field from another. The path itself was unplowed and hard, compacted by foot traffic and baked by the sun. The soil would become hard as rock and unsuitable for growing anything. When the sower threw the seed, some seed would inevitably go beyond its desired arc and fall upon the path. That seed had no hope of sprouting. It would either be trampled underfoot by those traveling the path or would be eaten by the birds that no doubt followed the sower around as he sowed.

The second place seed fell was on rocky soil (8:6). Rocky soil doesn't mean that the soil was full of rocks. When farmers designated land for a crop, they plowed up the rocks and removed them, so that they didn't interfere with the plants' development. This rock is referring to the limestone bedrock that was just below the surface and was only covered by a thin layer of dirt. Seed that landed in this soil grew up

quickly since that was the only direction it could go, but as the growing season continued, the days grew longer and the sun got hotter. In time the plant would wither and die.

The third place seed fell was among the thorns (8:7). The word translated as “thorns” is a general word for any prickly plant whether weeds, thorns, or thistles. These were particularly troublesome in cultivated land. Being native to the area, they were hardy and fast growers, quickly sucking up the water and the nutrients in the soil and blocking the sunlight as they grew. Needless to say, a seed planted in these conditions could not thrive; they would quickly be choked out.

This soil is a deceiver. On the surface the soil appears deep and rich. There is adequate moisture to sustain the plants in the heat of the day. But there is other life that is there.

The last place the seed fell was into the good soil (8:8). “Good soil means it doesn't have any of the prior conditions. It's not hard; it's soft. It's not shallow; it's deep. It doesn't contain weeds; it's clean. This is the prepared soil that readily accepts the seed and produces a healthy, productive crop” (MacArthur). In Matthew 13:8 and Mark 4:8, which record the same parable, Jesus said that the seed brings forth thirty fold, sixty fold, and a hundred fold. Luke only mentions the hundred fold.

***8:10 And He said, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND.***

Without an explanation the parable is just a story that could mean a vast number of things. Therefore, although Jesus challenged the people to hear what He had said, He explained to the disciples who had accepted previously revealed truth (Lk. 8:9).

Verse 10 is a great blessing to the believer. Believers have been granted the privilege of understanding the mysteries of God. A mystery is a spiritual truth that was hidden in the Old Testament but revealed in the New. The disciples had been granted the privilege of receiving more light, while the others were left in darkness. Those who don't listen when they can will never be able to listen.

This verse also makes it clear that the parable is judicial in nature. It says that Jesus spoke in parables SO THAT the general populace could not see or understand. In other words, Jesus did not want the people to understand, for they had already been given ample truth which they had definitively rejected.

Jesus then explained the parable to the disciples.

***8:11 "Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God.***

The seed, not the sower, is identified. The seed is the word of God. It is the gospel. It is the word about how to enter the kingdom, the word from God about forgiveness and reconciliation. It is the message that Jesus has been preaching.

Peter and James also follow their Master's lead and refer to the gospel as a seed in their writings. 1 Peter 1:23 and 25 say, "You've been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable. . . . and this is the word which was preached to you." James 1:21 says, "Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility *receive the word implanted*, which is able to save your souls."

***8:12 "Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved.***

Verses 12 and 15 make it clear that the soil is the human heart. Verse 12 says that the devil comes and takes away the word *from their heart*; verse 15 says that the good soil represents the ones who have heard the word in *an honest and good heart*. The seed is the same in all four of the soil conditions. The result of the hearing of the gospel does not depend on the sower; it depends on the condition of the heart.

Elsewhere, Jesus' assessment of the human heart is not encouraging. In Mark 7:21 He said that out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, envy, jealousy, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. Here the first soil represents people with hardened hearts. They are resolute in their indifference. There is no interest in Christ. There is a love of sin. "There is no self-searching, no self-examination, no contrition, no honest assessment of guilt, and no repentance" (MacArthur). Their heart is callous both to the goodness of grace and the prospect of judgment.

***8:13 "Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away.***

These hearts are much different than the hearts in verse 12. The soil represents the person who receives the word with joy. But the words, "they believe for a while," are key to understanding what is being taught. Jesus said (John 8:32) that a true believer is the one who continues in His word. This soil represents the hearts of people who appear to believe for a while, "but in time of temptation fall away." According to Matthew 13:21, the specific temptation that causes them to fall away is affliction and persecution.

In other words, there will be people who gladly receive the seed, but will later depart from their profession of faith. 1 John 2:19 speaks of people like this: "They went out from us but they were not really of us. If they had been of us, they would have remained with us, but they went out in order that it might be shown that they are not all of us." They "believe for a while" but the fact that they leave the body of believers is evidence that they were never really a part of the true Christian community to begin with. Although trials can make some people apostatize, trials in the life of one who has truly believed "produces endurance," not departure from the faith (Ja. 1:3). In 2 Corinthians 12:10 Paul said, "I am well content with weaknesses, insults, distresses, persecutions, difficulties for Christ's sake for when I'm

weak, then I'm strong." 1 Peter 5:10 says that "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you."

***8:14 "The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity."***

The third soil is now explained. It is similar to the second soil in that initially there appears to be a true reception of the word and growth. But in this case "as they go their way they're choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life."

The third soil thus represents a worldly heart. Paul said to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:9-10 that "those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." 1 John 2:15-16 warns professing believers to "not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world." Positively, Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6:33). The true believer does not seek the world, he seeks Christ, but in doing so finds that God blesses him with gifts of His grace. This is also illustrated when the man found the pearl of great price; he sold everything to buy it. That's the heart of the truly saved. It's the heart ready to receive the seed. It's a heart that does not have a duplicity of loves and affections for "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth" (Matt, 6:24).

***8:15 "But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance."***

The fourth soil is good soil. In Matthew 13:23 when Jesus talked about the good soil, He said, "It's those who understand the Word." Mark says, "they hear the word and accept it" (Mk. 4:20). Luke says they "hold it fast." In other words, the good soil represents the heart that understands, accepts, and holds fast to the message received.

Significantly, this heart both bears fruit and demonstrates perseverance – neither of which are mentioned in the other soils.

Fruit bearing is evidence of spiritual life. Ephesians 2:10 says, "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." Romans 7:4 states that we died to the law "in order that we might bear fruit for God." Colossians 1:10 adds, "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and

increasing in the knowledge of God.” John the Baptist told the people to “bear fruit in keeping with repentance” (Matt. 3:8). Jude describes false teachers as “autumn trees *without fruit*, doubly dead” (Jude 1:12). Jesus said in John 15:4-5, “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, *he bears much fruit*, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” If the branch does not fruit, it demonstrates that it is only superficially connected to the vine. It will be cast away. Jesus said, “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away . . . and cast them into the fire and they are burned” (Jn. 15:2, 6).

Fruit consists of the inner attitudes and the outer behavior of a changed life. Galatians 5:22-23 stresses a change in attitude. Paul says that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. 1 John 3:9-10 emphasizes two outward changes. John says, “No one who is born of God practices sin . . . anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.” Abandonment of sin and love for God and others is outward fruit. Paul, in Philippians 1:11, speaks of a life “filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” Psalm 1:1-3 says, “How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.” This psalm displays both the attitude and the behavior of the saved.

The seed planted in good soil bears fruit and endures, but we must never forget that fruit bearing is the result of God’s work in us. It is a consequence of His saving grace. Furthermore, if we are truly saved we *will* persevere because God will preserve us. Jesus said in John 6:37, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.” God sovereignly draws people to Himself. All that He draws *will* come and *none* will ever be cast out. Jesus then said, “This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing. . . .” (Jn. 6:39). The Father’s will is expressed in two desires: (1) that none whom He gives to Christ will be lost, and (2) that those who are given to Christ will be raised. In other words, God’s desire is to give people to Christ, and that all whom He gives reach the destination of their salvation. Since Christ perfectly accomplishes the Father’s will, not a single person given to Him will be lost.

Thus, salvation is not based on the strength of man to hold on to it, but the power and character of Christ to fulfill God’s will (see also 1 Pet. 1:3-5). God said, “I will make an everlasting covenant with them. I will not turn away from doing them good. I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will never depart from Me” (Jer. 32:40). When the soil of the heart is good, God will put His fear, His worship, and love for Him that will never go away.

The last soil therefore identifies the truly saved. These understand, accept, and hold fast to the message they received. They bear fruit for they are abiding in Christ. They do not fall away when trials come, nor are they sucked away by a love for the world. They persevere because God is at work in them causing

them to have endurance. They manifest inward and outward signs of salvation that are visible and lasting.