

THE GOSPEL of

MARK

*Secrets of the
Kingdom*

Setting & Plot

Chapter 1 – introduces the premise of the book: Jesus is the Son of God, and his mission: To announce the kingdom of heaven. The people are astounded and marvel at his teaching, miracles and authority & he quickly becomes famous

Chapter 2 – Jesus begins to face opposition starting from the religious leaders as he does not follow their traditions

Chapter 3 – Opposition intensifies to accusations of Jesus being “demon possessed” and progresses so that even his family begins to oppose him

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Chapter 4 – Mark introduces the content of Jesus' preaching: The revealing of the secrets of the Kingdom of heaven



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Mark
4:1-20

Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. ² And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: ³ “Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. ⁵ Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. ⁶ And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. ⁸ And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding

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Mark
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thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”⁹ And he said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

¹⁰ And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. ¹¹ And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables,¹² so that

“they may indeed see but not perceive,
and may indeed hear but not understand,
lest they should turn and be forgiven.”

¹³ And he said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?”

Purpose of the Parables

1. Test of the heart:
 - a. Receptive heart – one who hears and humbly accepts the word and then puts it into practice. The secrets of the kingdom are revealed and applied
 - b. Unreceptive heart – one who hears but refuses to accept the word and put it into practice. The secrets of God's kingdom remain hidden to this person
2. Challenge the hearers' perception of reality and truth by revealing how God see things
3. Each parable confronts a problem, contains a warning and offers a solution or kingdom secrets

¹⁴ The sower sows the word. ¹⁵ And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. ¹⁶ And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. ¹⁷ And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. ¹⁸ And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, ¹⁹ but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. ²⁰ But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”

Parable of the Sower

The Context:

- 3 parables 3 common elements: seed, growth and harvest/yield (to be seen as 1 common discourse)
- Content of Jesus' Teaching on the Kingdom:
 1. The kingdom begins via spreading of gospel
 2. There is opposition: the Devil, the flesh, and the world
 3. There will be some kind of sorting/judgement
 4. The kingdom begins small and seemingly insignificant but grows exponentially

Parable of the Sower

The Problem:

**Jesus is confronting the climate of unbelief that exists in the people's hearts*

- Backdrop: Ch 2 & 3 are meant to show the climate of unbelief from the religious leaders to Jesus' own family who think "he's out of his mind"
- Jesus hints at the unbelief that exists even in the disciples' hearts 4:13

The Warning:

**Only those who hear and accept the word and consequently produce fruit are his true disciples*

Parable of the Sower

The Kingdom Secrets:

1. The gospel is to be preached everywhere
2. The climate of unbelief will reveal God's true children
 - a. Hard soil – Satan steals the seed
 - b. Shallow soil – initial receiving, but abandons when pressured
 - c. Thorny soil – initial receiving, but worldly focus and passions cause abandonment of gospel
 - d. Good soil – When the gospel truly takes root in a person, the result is a complete transformation (new creation) and the evidence of spiritual fruit (through sanctification) being produced

Parable of the Sower

The Kingdom Secrets:

1. The gospel is to be preached everywhere
2. The climate of unbelief will reveal God's true children
3. God produces a harvest from his people
 - The harvest produced in the parable is unbelievable or unheard of
 - The emphasis shifts back to God and the work he is doing in those who are his children

Parable of the Sower

The Mirror of the Parable:

1. The gospel is a priority for believers
2. Gauging the climate of unbelief in our hearts
 - Do you have a receptive heart?
 - Can the climate of unbelief be in the church?
3. God will produce in you what you could not even imagine
 - The Holy Spirit lives within his people – you are his temple! We are his temple!