

'Kingdom' Parables: I

Seeds, etc

Basileia ('malkotah')

- DOES NOT mean 'kingdom' (in the sense that it does *not* suggest an exclusively geographic, spatial sense.)
- Means 'kingship' 'kingly power' 'government' 'governance'. This is **uncontroversial**.
- 'kingdom of heaven' means 'heaven's power' and is EXACTLY SYNONYMOUS with 'god's governance'. It does not in itself have any implication of afterlife, or paradise.

Apocalyptic reading:

1. God's government, God's governance, refers to new government, here on earth, that God (or his agents) will set up in the near future. The arrival of this new government is imminent. When it is set up there will be some form of (rather brutal and violent) judgment. Get ready!

Philosophical reading:

- 2 'God's governance' refers to God's (current, present) power over the world. By extension, it refers to God's governance of a human being. To be in, under, subject to God's governance means to be ruled by God (now), directed by God (now), subject to God's will (now), to serve God (now).

With Stoic spin?

- If we take 'being subject to God's will' in a vaguely Stoic sense, then it will also imply:
- Wisdom; enlightenment
- Transformation of self, liberation from worldly cares/harms
- Ethical wisdom above all
- A form of wisdom that leads to forms of action; wisdom that makes you *do good things*.

1

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter God's governance.

2

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve both God and Money.**

3

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is God's governance. [Q]

Jesus said, "Congratulations to the poor, for to you belongs Heaven's governance." [T]

4

He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.' [Q, M]

It's like a mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds, but when it falls on prepared soil, it produces a large plant and becomes a shelter for birds of the sky.

[T]

5

- ‘The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.’
- Jesus [said], "The Father's kingdom is like [a] woman. She took a little leaven, *hid it* in dough, and made it into large loaves of bread."

6

This is what the God's governance is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.

Why hidden?

A reference to discretion and modesty?

“When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret.”

“When you pray go into your room and shut the door and pray to your father who is in secret; and your Father will reward you in secret.”

“When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen.”

“If you drink only water, don't take every chance to announce it.”

7

No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good man out of the stores of his heart produces good and the bad man out of his stores produces bad.

'Fruit' refers to ACTION

- Grain
- Figs
- Grapes
- Loaves of bread
- Shelter (for birds)
- A ripe harvest
- **GOOD ACTIONS**

8

Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times."

Epictetus:

Some people being only moved to philosophy, as those who have a bad stomach are moved to eat some kinds of food which they soon loathe, go directly for the very top. They let the hair grow long, they assume the [philosopher's] cloak, they show the shoulder bare, they quarrel with those whom they meet; and if they see a man in a thick winter coat, they quarrel with him. Man, first exercise yourself in winter weather. First strive that it be not known what you are: be a philosopher *to yourself* a short time. **Grain grows thus: the seed must be buried for some time, *hidden*, grow *slowly* in order that it may come to perfection. But if it produces the ear before the jointed stem, it is imperfect.**

- Such a poor plant are you: **you have blossomed too soon; the cold weather will scorch you up.** See what the husbandmen say about seeds when there is warm weather too early. They are afraid lest the seeds should be too luxuriant, and then a single frost should lay hold of them and show that they are too forward. You also should consider, my man: you have shot out too soon, you have hurried toward a little fame before the proper season: you think that you are something, a fool among fools: you will be caught by the frost, and rather you have been frost-bitten in the root below, but your upper parts still blossom a little, and for this reason you think that you are still alive and flourishing.

Allow yourself to ripen in the natural way.

Let the root grow, then acquire the first joint, then the second, and then the third: in this way, then, the fruit will naturally force itself out, *even if I do not choose*.

For who that is filled with such great principles does not also perceive his own powers and move toward the corresponding *actions*?

Epictetus and Jesus paraphrased:

- “Sometimes the seed grows too fast, has no root, is scorched by the frost, and does not produce grain.” [E]
- “Sometimes the seed grows too fast, has no root, and is scorched by the sun, and produces no grain.” [J]

Epictetus and Jesus paraphrased

- “The root grows, then the first joint, then the second, then the third; the fruit comes out naturally, all by itself.” [E]
- “All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel. As soon as the grain is ripe, the farmer harvests it”

- **For who that is filled with such great principles does not also perceive his own powers and move toward the corresponding *actions*?**