

Query #34 November 2017
Producing fruit

Query:

Matthew 13:23:

But he that received seed into the good ground is he that hears the word, and understands it; which also bears fruit, and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Just what does Jesus mean by this variation?

Response:

As should be normal by now, let us read the context (i.e. the verses above AND below the query text).

Matthew 13:

¹⁸ Hear you therefore the [explanation of the] parable of the sower.

¹⁹ When any one hears the word of the kingdom, and understands it not, then comes the wicked one [and/or his angels], and catches away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

²⁰ But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that hears the word, and anon [immediately] with joy receives it; ²¹ **yet has he not root in himself**, but endures for a while [for it is intellectually received, being based on feelings and logic only]: for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, by and by he is offended [and rejects it].

²² He also that received seed among the thorns is he that hears the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, **choke** the word, and he **becomes** unfruitful.

²³ But he that received seed into the good ground is he that hears the word, **and understands it**; which **also** bears fruit, and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

But it should be obvious now that we did not read far enough above these words, for they are an explanation of the allegory, so let's read again.

Matthew 13:

³ And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, Behold [which means, Think about this scene], a sower went forth to sow;

⁴ and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls [Satan and his angels] came and devoured them up.

⁵ Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:

⁶ and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because ***they had no root***, they withered away.

⁷ And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

⁸ But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

⁹ Who has ears to hear, let him hear.

[Don't miss any words in between a parable and its explanation, for they will always have a direct connection with the subject of the parable.]

¹⁰ And the disciples came, and said to Him, "Why speak You to them in parables?" ¹¹ He answered and said to them, "Because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. [Does God withhold?] ¹² For whoever has [the guidance of the Holy Spirit], to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whoever has not [the Spirit], from him shall be taken away even that he has [because it just becomes confusing to him and he does not want to hear any more so he rubbishes the truth and loses a little of what he already had, for rejection always brings a loss].

[Don't confuse rejection with time taken to consider the truth.]

¹³ Therefore [for this reason] speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. [Parables help to minimize the effect of confusion – they are just incomprehensible to them and are not rejected, but ignored.]

¹⁴ "And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias [Isaiah], which says, "By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive: ¹⁵ for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes ***they have closed***; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them". [Isaiah 6:9-10.]

[Make sure that you go back and read the original for it may be quite different, as it is in this case.]

¹⁶ "But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

¹⁷ For verily I say to you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see, and ***have not seen them***; and to hear those things which you hear, and ***have not heard them***.

[Ask yourself the question: Why haven't they seen or heard them?]

Who is the sower, and what is he sowing? In this case it is Christ Himself, but it could be anyone who is being guided by the Spirit. And He is sowing the words of truth.

What is the “root”? “Whereby [by His power, v3] are given to us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of *the divine nature*, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith . . .” 2 Peter 1:4-5.

It is the soil which is different.

The “seed” is always the same – for it is the word of God. And Jesus tells us that if it is listened to it will produce four different kinds of reactions.

1. An instant rejection.
2. An acceptance, but it doesn't last because there is no “root”.
3. An acceptance, but the worries of this world overcome the root.
4. An acceptance, *and a growth*.

That last one is also known as justification and sanctification!

Number 3 is a sad case for here is someone who has accepted the gift of the new nature and been born the second time, and even produced some “fruit”, but the “weeds” of the world (and Satan's temptations) take over and it is given up! This saddens the heart of the Spirit. “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed to the day of redemption”. Ephesians 4:30. And it becomes permanent as it is indulged in.

2 Peter 2:

²⁰ For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ [and His gift], they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. [Why? Because there is only one way to God and they have now consistently refused it.]

²¹ For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. ²² But it is happened to them according to the true proverb, “*The dog is turned to his own vomit again*”; and “*The sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire*”.

In the same vein, why doesn't #2 last? Because the words are only being intellectually understood, like evidence in a legal case. That will give you a

belief, not an experience, but . . . “You believe that there is one God; you do well: the devils also believe, and tremble [but it doesn’t help them]”. James 2:19. Why not? Because it does not produce “fruit”.

What is the fruit?

Galatians 5:

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³ meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

²⁴ And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit [walk the talk]. ²⁶ Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. [This is one proof of the walk.]

The Message (MSG)

²⁵⁻²⁶ Since this is the kind of life we have chosen, the life of the Spirit, let us make sure that we do not just hold it as an idea in our heads or a sentiment in our hearts, but work out its implications in every detail of our lives. That means we will not compare ourselves with each other as if one of us were better and another worse. We have far more interesting things to do with our lives. Each of us is an original.

But how do WE measure Christians? Often by their works because there is no other way for us. “Yes, a man may say, ‘You have faith, and I have works: show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith *by* my works’.” James 2:18.

So we look at the tree and value it because of the fruit it bears!

But what are we supposed to do? Not measure or value, but *recognise!*

Luke 6:

⁴⁴ For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes.

⁴⁵ A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

How do we recognise a plant if it is out of season and it has no fruit to identify it? By its shape and leaves. But we can be wrong in that identification, or lacking the facts to identify accurately! In the same manner, we can be wrong about who is, and who is not, a Christian. We cannot see the ROOT, and one

tree can look like another. But that surely is the Gardener's responsibility and none of ours?

There is a bush in a garden on which are two different coloured flowers, and someone said, "Look, it has different coloured flowers". Then they were informed that there were two different plants (of the same species) in that bush area and they were growing so closely together that they looked like one while they were producing their individual flowers. Which is why when the servants said to Jesus, "Will You then that we go and gather them up?" [He answered] "Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, you root up also the wheat with them". Matthew 13:28-29.

Now we ask the question, "Can a bramble bring forth figs [*unselfish* good works]?" And the answer is, "No". "But can it LOOK like a tree and produce what looks like good works?" What does nature teach us? What is a "bramble bush" [or a tare]? A blackberry is a good example. Could a blackberry grow tall and look like a tree and to the undiscerning be taken to be one?

And the answer is:

<https://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20080604091134AAHyFYf>

Do blackberries grow on trees?

i know as a kid blackberries grew on bushes but recently i came across a huge tree with them growing on it.... are these safe to eat? or are they something else? . . .

Best Answer:

What you've probably found is a mulberry tree. They're slightly longer than standard blackberries, with a thin stem. The berries are good, but don't EVER plant one--they are harder than h*ll to get rid of (I've been trying for about 3 years).

So mulberries look a lot like blackberries and can even be eaten safely!

In just the same way, the "evil man" (rebellious or independent from God man) can seem to be a tree of God. All we would have to do is wait for the fruit (the blackberry produces them in the second year) and we would see the deception. (Consider the identification of the tares in Matthew 13:24-26.)



For more information:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morus_%28plant%29

A mulberry tree in England.

They can grow to 15 metres or 45ft tall.

Here's an interesting fact about blackberry plants.

<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/edible/fruits/blackberries/blackberries-not-fruiting.htm>

If your blackberry plant looks healthy and blooms, but grows misshapen fruit or even no fruit at all, chances are that your blackberry plants are affected by one of many blackberry viruses. Some of these viruses include: Blackberry Calico, Blackberry/Raspberry Tobacco Streak, Raspberry Bushy Dwarf, Black Raspberry Streak.

Unfortunately, most of these blackberry diseases will show almost no outward signs of infection on the blackberry plant other than to decrease the number of blackberry fruit found on the plant. *In fact, some of these blackberry cane diseases can even make the plant grow bigger and faster.*

These diseases may also only affect one kind of blackberry variety and not another, so one variety of blackberry in a yard may fruit while another blackberry susceptible to that blackberry virus may not.

The other unfortunate fact about blackberry viruses is that they cannot be cured. Once a blackberry bush is infected, it must be removed.

In the spiritual realm a bigger and faster-growing “blackberry bush” could be a religion or a teacher of religion that eventually *asks* for money and support from the people. (The “cares of this world” and the “deception of riches” can be seen as viruses.)

That's in line with what Jesus said:

Matthew 7:

²⁰ Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them.

²¹ Not every one that says to Me, “LORD, LORD”, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *does the will of My Father* which is in heaven [and not just good works to be seen by men]. ²² Many [not a few] will say to Me in that day, “LORD, LORD, have we not prophesied in Your name? And in Your name have cast out devils? and in Your name done many wonderful works?”

²³ And then will I profess to them, I *never* knew you [not even for a short time]: depart from Me, you that work iniquity.

How do we get to 30%? Or 60%? Starting at zero we grow – from 1% to 100%. So if we see someone with 1% (or even none for a while) are we right to judge them as having no fruit and think of them as non-Christians?

If they grow bigger and faster, or become popular teachers quickly, is that also good evidence?

So what makes one plant different from another? Jesus tells us that it is the root, *which He alone can supply*.

Ezekiel 36:

²³ And I will sanctify [prove] My great name [character], which was profaned [not respected] among the heathen, which [even] you have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD [the Creator], says the LORD GOD, when I shall be sanctified *in you* before their eyes.

²⁴ For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land [the kingdom of heaven].

²⁵ Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. ²⁶ A new heart [or root] *also* will I give you, and a new spirit [fruit] will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. [What do we do?]

²⁷ And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause [enable] you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them. ²⁸ And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and you shall be My people, and I will be your God.

²⁹ I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. ³⁰ And I will multiply the fruit of the [your] tree, and the increase of the field, that you shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.

³¹ Then shall you remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your [past] iniquities and for your [past] abominations. [Or at least, they should be past!]

³² Not for your sakes [or your goodness] do I this, says the LORD GOD, be it known to you [but because I like gardening]: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.

So we can have 100% *root* while only having from 1 to 100% of *fruit*!
And that latter keeps increasing each season until maturity.

Accordingly we have the story of the disciples and apostles.

{AA 49.3}

Those who at Pentecost were endued with power from on high, were not thereby freed from further temptation and trial.

As they witnessed for truth and righteousness they were repeatedly assailed by the enemy of all truth, who sought to rob them of their Christian experience. They were compelled [by love] to strive with all their God-given powers to reach the measure of the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus.

Daily they prayed for fresh supplies of grace, that they might reach higher and still higher toward perfection.

Under the Holy Spirit's working even the weakest, by exercising faith in God, learned to improve their entrusted powers and to become sanctified, refined, and ennobled. As in humility they submitted to the molding influence of the Holy Spirit, they received of the fullness of the Godhead and were fashioned in the likeness of the divine.

Conclusion:

All the percentages of fruit only tell us that Christians are “growing in grace” and *can* reach a maturity according to their position in the kingdom of heaven.

Who wants to add (or subtract!) from these thoughts? I won't argue as I have stated, but I will publish your Scriptures so that we may review all the words of God on the subject.

Next query. To be discussed from December 1, 2017

I read recently that someone described the God of the Old Testament as a hard, unforgiving deity; one who punishes at the slightest provocation (and that often with death by stoning, i.e. gluttony, Deuteronomy 21:18-21), and who judges His enemies severely. And others have said even harder words against Him. The next verses in the law show that they could hang a criminal, so stoning was a deliberate choice! Deuteronomy 21:22-23.

How do I reply to that accusation?

For contact:

mail to: nonconformist@mail.com (Cut and paste)

To see the list of some my past queries, [click here](#).

To see past queries and my responses, [click here](#).