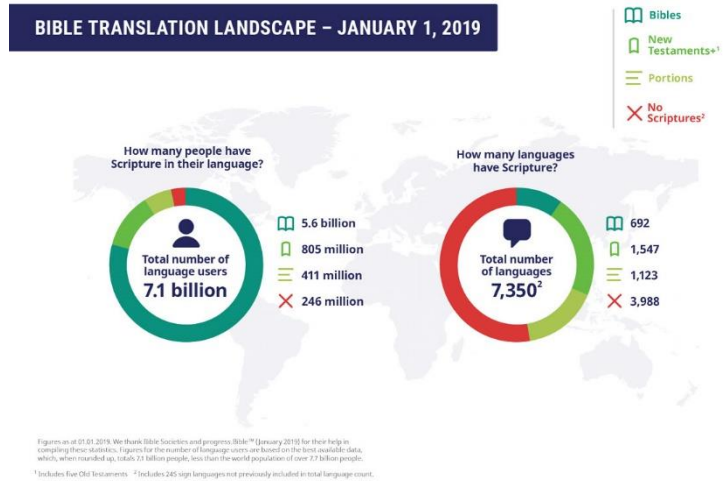


How Do You Respond to God's Word?

5/20/2020 Wednesday PM

Introduction

- Tonight, we are going to ask the question, **How Do You Respond to God's Word?**
- This is really something to think about, because how we respond to God's Word will dictate what happens next.
- God's Word is the Bible and its teachings.
- According to the United Bible Society on January 1, 2019 the complete Bible has been translated into 692 languages with the New Testament being translated into 1,547 languages.
- Out of the 7.1 billion people on the planet, only 246 million people do not have any part of the Bible translated into their language.
- That is less than 3.5% of the world's population meaning over 96% of the world have at least parts of the Bible translated in to their language.
- There has never been a time in human history where God's Word was more widespread and available than today.
- One would think with the God's Word so widespread; we would see better statistics when it comes to people believing it and living by it.
- The disparity between the availability of God's Word and the percentages of people that actually hold to its teachings is due to how people respond to it.
- Jesus taught us this lesson over 2000 years ago when he gave the Parable of the Sower or the Four Soils speaking specially about the gospel message.



Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

¹That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. ²Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. ³Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. ⁸Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop--a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. ⁹He who has ears, let him hear."

¹⁸"Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ¹⁹When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. ²²The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. ²³But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."



- **Vv.1-2** – We see here that Jesus was teaching crowds that were so large that he had to teach from a boat while the people were on the shore.
- **V.3** – Jesus began to tell “them many things in parables.” Parables are best described as earthly stories with spiritual meanings. They were meant to convey spiritual truths to people using context that they would all understand.

- Each teaching contained “hidden” truths that were right there for everyone to grasp, however, many people did not “pick up, what Jesus was putting down.”
- That is really the crux of what Jesus is getting at with this whole parable.
- As we can see from **Vv.3-9**, Jesus describes a farmer going out to sow seeds in his fields and has he scattered the seeds they fell on different types of soils.
 1. **Hard-Packed Ground** – This ground is described as “the path.” If you can imagine the farmer scattering the seeds, some would inevitably fall on the path between the rows, or wherever he was walking. This ground was not tilled for sowing seeds and thus the seeds would remain on the surface, never penetrating the soil. This made them ripe for the picking for bird food.
 2. **Rocky Ground** – This ground had a lot of rocks in it which made the soil shallow. The plants sparge up, but there wasn’t enough room for their roots. When the sun beat down on the plants they withered and died because they were not able to draw from their root system.
 3. **Thorny Ground** – This ground was full of thorns and/or other weeds that eventually choked the plants and deprived them of their nutrients.
 4. **Good Ground** – Obviously the good soil was the one that was tilled and ready to be sown. The rocks had been removed, it had been de-weeded, and thus it produced a bountiful crop 100, 60, or 30 times more than was sown.
- **Vv.18-23** – Here is where Jesus begins to describe to the disciples what the parable actually means.
- Although he never identifies the farmer, we can surmise that he could have been talking about himself as he did in other similar parables.
- However, it can also apply to anyone proclaiming “the message about the kingdom” which is the gospel message and God’s Word as a whole. This is the seed.
- He then goes on to identify the 4 types of soil with different “hearers” of God’s Word.
 1. **Hard-Packed Ground** – These are the people that basically ‘overhear’ God’s Word being proclaimed, but do not respond at all to it. Maybe they are people that were in Jesus’ crowd that day that didn’t really want to be there. They heard what he said, but were not listening to comprehend what he was saying. These people have not been “tilled”, and their ears and hearts are not open to receive the message of Christ. Thus, they do not understand anything that is said, and it is quite easy for Satan (the birds) to swoop in and erase it all. You must not just hear, you must believe what you are hearing.
 2. **Rocky Ground** – These are people that respond to the message of Christ emotionally and shallowly. They half-hear the message, but never allow it to really penetrate their hearts. Thus when the slightest adversity comes their way, they drop everything because there is no root system in place. These people do not usually last very long at all. You cannot just hear and then believe without allowing the message to penetrate into the marrow of your bones. To do this, you will have to seek maturity in your faith and to pursue depth in your faith.
 3. **Thorny Ground** – These people hear “the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.” They hear what is said and may even believe a lot of what is said, however they do not “de-weed” their lives. They try to believe the message without applying its truths to their daily walks. Living this dual-life, is impossible and eventually the “weeds” of this life like worries and greed choke out the message making it unfruitful in their life. You may see a stalk come up out of the ground, but there will not be enough nutrients to allow fruit to be produced from that stalk. These people never fully surrendered to God’s Word.
 4. **Good Ground** – These people not only hear the Word and believe what it says, that allow it to penetrate their lives in such a way that it becomes their source of nutrients on a daily basis. They “de-weed” their lives and fully surrender to the message of the kingdom. They are not just “hearers of the word, they are doers of the word.” Then and only then, will you see a bountiful and fruitful crop, produced.
- Even though the Bible and its message is available to so many people today, unfortunately the vast majority that hear it are not “good soil.”
- The sower is not selecting only certain soil to get the seed, he is scattering it all over the place. Each individual person dictates how they respond to God’s Word.
- The message of the kingdom is available to everyone, it all comes down to how people respond to it.
- **How Do You Respond to God’s Word?**
- **Are you just “overhearing it?” Have you responded emotionally only and remain shallow with no roots? Have you attempted to lead a dual-life and live like the world while at the same time surrendering to Christ? Or Have you developed a strong root system?**