

Scripture Texts: Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-10, Luke 8:4-15**Tonight's subject "The Purpose"**

We continue tonight examining the questions about return. The sixth question asks, "Does the numbers referred to in M 13:9&23 mean anything else besides quantity? The numbers mean more than we will be able to cover in this study but we will consider several we should be familiar with. Keep in mind the concept of a 30, 60 or 100 fold return JESUS speaks of.

OK, here's the first thing to notice. JESUS describes it as a crop that produces a 100, 60 or 30 fold return IN THAT ORDER. JESUS begins with the greatest return and goes to the lowest. Now what I just said, reads one truth into the statement but isn't everything these numbers refer to. The return can be about quantity but the numbers represent many truths. Often, when persons refer to these verses they start with the 30 side, go to 60 and on to 100. Please notice, JESUS does the opposite. He goes from the high number to the low number. While this may be a coincidence as to how we describe the return, 30, 60 and 100, it is also a revelation at times of what we are expecting from ourselves and/or the LORD! So, when we say 30, 60 or 100 fold return we may be revealing our expectation level of ourselves and/or the LORD! Do we have faith for everything the LORD means in a 30 fold return?

Could our faith increase into an awareness of double the 30? After reaping the 60 fold return will we ever see the 100 fold return eventually? Again, it's possible we may be thinking in this capacity. This could be right and/or wrong depending upon where we are in our faith journey. KEEP IN MIND; THIS IS ONLY ONE WAY TO INTERPRET THE NUMBERS! That said, if you are thinking in this step by step process of increase and effectiveness JESUS will have mercy on you beyond our comprehension. He will work in your capacity of faith until HOLY SPIRIT reveals a greater plan for your destiny. Eventually, HOLY SPIRIT will say in HIS words to each of us, "look at what the LORD stated Himself. JESUS stated with 100 and goes to 30". Now surely, JESUS isn't stating to start at the best and then decrease to something less than the LORD's best in time? This is one of many reasons why the numbers cannot always mean the literal number. I seriously doubt that we should interpret JESUS saying the following to us. "It is my plan you reap a 100 fold return but in the event you do not then you could reap a 60 fold return if you are fortunate. In the very least, you could reap a 30 fold return if you would just listen and get right a few things I want you to learn." The FATHER is merciful and patient but the LORD's statement here is not to condone accepting less and less in time.

Pay attention to M, Mk & L's stories pertaining to the sequence of the numbers. Mk shares the numbers in the opposite way M does. L only refers to 100 and gives a detailed explanation of what that number means. There's much to learn from the number pattern referred to here!

The numbers have many types. Type is an abbreviation of the word typology. Typology in Christian theology and Biblical exegesis is a doctrine or theory concerning the relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament. Events, persons, or statements in the Old Testament are seen as types pre-figuring or superseded by antitypes, events or aspects of Christ or his revelation described in the New Testament. As well, types can represent the many lessons we go through in the process of discipleship drawing us into closer relationship with JESUS. So the numbers 30, 60 and 100 or 100, 60 and 30 have many type interpretations.

Here are a few to consider. The number sequence is in relation to our triune GOD and or the development of our relationship with our triune GOD. Thus we get saved, (30) and then we are baptized into the HOLY SPIRIT (60) and then we come into relationship with the FATHER walking in HIS love for ourselves and others. (100) This is recognizable in Mk's version of this story. As we walk with Christ, we learn to walk with HOLY SPIRIT and then we walk with GOD. When looking at M's version of the story JESUS "could" be warning us that all (100) who will be saved will to some level learn to walk with Christ but fewer (60) will learn to walk in the Spirit and even fewer (30) will learn to walk with the FATHER. That sad statement is true even though there are those who would say this interpretation is not to be found in M's version.

Another type to consider is this. This principle is true although the parable does not ultimately most deeply mean the following. Disciples can relate the condition of each heart to the return the LORD speaks of. Therefore the seed that falls onto the path that the adversary steals has no return. The heart with rocky places that receives the seed with joy but only lasts a short time due to not having deep root they reap a 30 fold return. The heart with thorns within the soil receive the seed but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word making it unfruitful and thus they reap a 60 fold return. The heart that is considered good soil by JESUS receives the seed and ultimately reaps a 100 fold return! This type is applicable to our reality. It could happen. That said, I don't believe the parable is meant to be understood this way at its deepest level. M 13:23 explains why we should not rely exclusively on the interpretation just described. Again, it's applicable but consider M 13:23. There the seed in the good soil yields a 100, 60 or 30 fold return. Did you see that? Within this good soil we find hearts that will return one of these 3 possible returns! When the parable is considered this way, we develop the impression that this heart alone is the one who reaps obvious return compared to the other hearts that reap very little to no return.

The following information should relieve you of believing there is no other alternative in the heart of the FATHER except to reap the 100 fold return. Possibly, you have been led to believe or have concluded yourself that the 100 fold return is the only outcome or return the LORD will judge as being reflective of genuine obedience pleasing to HIM that HE will accept.

Such conclusions will set you up for the adversary to plant fear, stress and anxiety into your heart. There will be a never ending haunting sense that your effort is not good enough or that the FATHER is just not quite happy with your efforts and the return HE sees in your faith walk.

There is major difference between conviction and condemnation. Briefly, we want more intimacy with the LORD b/c we are hungry and thirsty to know HIM who alone can meet the deepest cries of our heart. There is a major difference in that quest and thinking we must somehow please GOD more b/c HE's never happy and we just cannot do enough to be in good standing with HIM. So, we had better earn some more religious brownie points with GOD or else! We are not suggesting such and the LORD isn't teaching this either! We go deeper not to gain greater acceptance but to further discover our purpose in our call from the LORD. This is a brief explanation between striving to be accepted by GOD (impossible) and reaching into the depths of GOD's love for us finding greater rest and peace in HIM. (possible)

To further encourage you about the 30, 60 and 100 fold return consider the following. JESUS shares with us the parable of the talents in M 25:14. Consider the following. The servant who gains 2 more talents is considered faithful even though another servant gains 5 talents. JESUS clearly commends them both. In no way does JESUS condemn the servant who gains 2 more talents instead of the 5 talents the other servant returned. Thus we see another type in the message of the 30, 60 and 100 fold returns. What is it? If our heart is available and cultivated by the LORD that HE can grow and produce HIS crop within and out of our heart then HE is pleased with the fruit HE sees we bare for HIS glory be it 30, 60 or 100 times what He sowed into us. If the greatest return alone or large returns alone only matter to the FATHER then the only evangelists in Church history that will win GOD's approval will be Billy Graham and Reinhard Bonnke. What then happens to all the other evangelists who only led 20 to 200 persons to Christ? I trust this makes the point here. We must be available. The FATHER ultimately decides the extent of our return. To HIM alone is the glory!

This type will encourage you to consider the power of unity and agreement in the local church. There are many believers who are the wheat sown by the FATHER among others who are not invested into the Kingdom as they could or should be. Additionally, the adversary has sown tares among the wheat. This is a hard word but it is truth! Some disciples would bear greater fruit if the LORD released them into greater fertile situations and opportunities. The LORD knows most of us are constrained to some degree by those around us. You may only bear a 30 fold return in given situations due to this reality. The greater return can be held back due to issues beyond your control. When the power of agreement and unity are weak the results in ministry to the LORD are affected. JESUS knows this. This should encourage us and greatly concern those who hold themselves back and thus others too. Our Heavenly Father balances all this into His judgments over HIS church. Be at peace in JESUS! Smaller returns are not exclusively your responsibility in most situations.