

Mark 4:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow:

Analysis

Jesus commands: 'Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow.' The double imperative—'Hearken' (Ἀκούετε, listen attentively) and 'Behold' (ἴδοὺ, look, pay attention)—emphasizes the parable's importance. These commands demand focused, responsive listening, not casual hearing. The parable's subject is universal: a farmer sowing seed. In agrarian society, everyone understood sowing—scattering seed across plowed field. The simplicity disguises profound spiritual truth about gospel reception. Jesus uses familiar image to teach about varying responses to God's word. The imperative to 'hearken' becomes thematic—the parable is about how people hear (Mark 4:9, 23-24).

Historical Context

Palestinian agriculture followed ancient patterns—farmers hand-scattered seed across prepared fields. Sowing preceded deeper plowing that covered seed. This explains seed falling on path, rocky ground, and thorns—not carelessness but standard practice. The parable's agricultural imagery resonated immediately with Jesus' audience, mostly rural peasants and fishermen familiar with farming cycles. Prophets regularly used agricultural metaphors (Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 4:3; Hosea 10:12), establishing continuity between Jesus' teaching and Old Testament revelation.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does the double command to listen challenge casual, inattentive hearing of Scripture?
2. What distractions prevent you from truly 'hearkening' to God's word?
3. How does understanding this as parable about hearing affect your approach to Bible study?

Interlinear Text

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|---------|--------|----------------|-------|---------|-------|---------|
| Ακούετε | ἰδού, | ἐξῆλθεν | ό | σπεῖραι | τοῦ | σπεῖραι |
| Hearken | Behold | there went out | | a sower | | a sower |
| G191 | G2400 | G1831 | G3588 | G4687 | G3588 | G4687 |

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 13:26 (Parallel theme): But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

Deuteronomy 4:1 (Parallel theme): Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you.

James 2:5 (Parallel theme): Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?