

31 He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field;

32 and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES."33 He spoke another parable to them, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened."

34 All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable.

This morning we are looking at two kingdom parables. These two parables preceded Jesus' explanation of the parables of the wheat and the tares. It seems that the disciples understood these two parables because they did not ask for an explanation of them nor did Jesus give them an explanation. Furthermore at the end of this series of parables Jesus asks this question in vs. 51, "Have you understood all these things?" They said to Him, "Yes."

As we continue in this study of the kingdom parables it is important for us to reexamine the purpose of the parables concerning their instruction about the secrets, the mysteries of the kingdom of God.

Mystery designates the secret plans, thoughts, and dispensations of God that are hidden from human reason, as well as from all other comprehensions below the divine level, and hence must be revealed to those for whom they were intended. However, the mystery is proclaimed to all even though only those who believe understand it. All are summoned to faith; but only those who respond are shown to have spiritual perception and understanding (i.e. only to those who have been "given the mystery" as Mark 4:11 says.) The same can be said of Peter in Matthew 16. Jesus asks him, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." Jesus is clearly indicating that one must receive supernatural illumination to understand the truth that Jesus is the Son of God. Although the mystery is proclaimed to all, not all are "given" this understanding. "Flesh and blood" is morally incapable of revealing it.

These parables are about the kingdom of heaven. Furthermore, those who will have understanding that is granted by God will be given more ability to understand, their knowledge of the kingdom of heaven will be abundant. But those who have not been granted this ability will lose any perceived understanding of the kingdom of heaven they may have, it will be taken away from them. This is a demonstration of the wisdom of a Sovereign God in the things concerning salvation and the knowledge of God. This has nothing to do with good works or intellect or human ability. It has to do with God and the election of His saints.

This is a judgment against those who deny the Gospel. It is proof that when man is left to himself he cannot understand the things of God and of our Christ.

The kingdom is not in and of itself the church. The church exists within the parameters of the kingdom. These parables are not about the church. They are about the kingdom.

In every kingdom throughout history there have been those who live in the kingdom who are not loyal to the king. All disloyalty is a form of lawlessness and a stumbling block whether it be in a good kingdom or an evil kingdom.

The kingdom is the world under the rule of Christ, whether He is acknowledged or not. That is why even in judgement every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord when the consummation of the kingdom occurs.

From Jesus' perspective there is the kingdom as it is when He is on the earth; the kingdom as it will expand to its fullest until He returns and then there is the final eternal kingdom.

Remember with me that in the parable of the four Soils Jesus said the Kingdom had indeed come upon humankind but not for the purpose of shattering evil. It is now attended by no apocalyptic display, no final horrible judgement of irresistible power. Rather, the Kingdom in its present working is like a farmer sowing seed. It does not sweep away the wicked (or none would have hope). We took note in this parable that that only those whose soil had first been prepared by God would later receive the seed and bear fruit. The farmer must sow the seed in ground that has been broken up and since good soil is not its natural state it must be prepared before scattering seed. In other words, unless God is the one who first makes our heart of stone into a heart of flesh, we will not receive the gospel message.

Then in the parable of the wheat and tares we learned that the kingdom is not in and of itself the church. The church exists within the parameters of the kingdom. These parables are not about the church. They are about the kingdom.

In every kingdom throughout history there have been those who live in the kingdom who are not loyal to the king. All disloyalty is a form of lawlessness and a stumbling block whether it be a good kingdom or an evil kingdom.

The kingdom is the world under the rule of Christ, whether He is acknowledged or not.

The kingdom has come but society is not uprooted. This is the mystery of the Kingdom. The Kingdom has come into history but in such a way that society is not disrupted. The children of the kingdom have received God's reign and entered into its blessings. They must continue to live in this age. Intermingled with the wicked in a mixed society. The Kingdom that is present but hidden in the world will yet be manifested in glory.

That is why even in judgement every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord when the consummation of the kingdom occurs.

From Jesus' perspective there is the kingdom as it is when He is on the earth; the kingdom as it will expand to its decreed extent until He returns, even though it is unknown by many and opposed by many. We must not forget that the size or the numbers that will be accounted in the kingdom as true disciples of Christ are already fixed by God. The kingdom does not grow because of the churches evangelistic work. It grows according to God's purpose and He uses the church and the churches evangelism as the means by which the kingdom grows to its full number. Then there is the final consummated eternal kingdom. This is the unopposed kingdom. This is the finalized kingdom with Christ as king as His people as His subjects. There will be no element of distraction or opposition from anyone in this kingdom. Until Jesus comes to consummate His kingdom there will be the mixing of those who are Christ's and those who are not. He has the final authority to separate them from each other.

Now Jesus gives them two more parables that are kingdom parables and they illustrate the scope of the kingdom. They illustrate how the kingdom begins and to what extent it will grow and how the kingdom will transform lives..

31 He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; 32 and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES."

Here Jesus uses a mustard seed to describe what the kingdom of God is like at its inception or inauguration. A mustard seed is not the smallest of all seeds but it is the smallest of a type of seed. The plant here described was very different from that which is known among us in the Western world. It was several years before it bore fruit, and became properly a tree. Mustard, with us, is an annual plant; it is always small, and is an herb. The Hebrew writers speak of the mustard-tree as one on which they could climb, as on a fig tree. Its size owed much to the climate. All plants of that nature grow much larger in a warm climate, like that of Palestine, than in colder regions. The seeds of this tree were remarkably small.

And so it is with the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God has its beginning in very small numbers, so much so that one would wonder how it could in any way influence the larger world of which it was a part. Its beginnings are very humble.

The Scriptures tell of the one who comes and establishes this kingdom:

Php 2:8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Jesus came and established His kingdom in humility.

Mt 11:29* "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.

He came from humble human origins. His earthly parents were not mighty or noble or wealthy or renowned in any way, They were humble people. In His incarnation He came from a place of

humility:

Mic 5:2 "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity."

Those who will be His kingdom people are required to be a humble people:

Jas 1:9* But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position;

Jas 4:6* But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

Jas 4:10* Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

1Pe 3:8* To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;

1Pe 5:5* You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

1Pe 5:6* Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,

The kingdom at its inception is a small thing like a mustard seed. Rather unimposing and small in stature compared to the worldly kingdom that it will one day completely overtake. Yet,

Jesus says:

v.32 and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree

They have learned by now that Jesus speaks with great authority and although they are still in learning mode and have not grasped in the fullest sense, much of what Jesus has taught them, they can be assured that if He says the kingdom will grow, then it will grow.

For the tree to go from a seed to a full grown tree means there will be progressive growth to a pre-determined end. The kingdom will, like the tree become full grown. Neither they nor we know what the full grown tree will look like but we do know that when it has grown as much as God has intended for it to grow, then it will be full grown and at that time the kingdom we be consummated.

As it is with a tree, there will be seasons of little growth and seasons of spectacular growth depending on the conditions that prevail through the trees lifetime. It is the same way with the kingdom of God. There are times when there seems to be so little of the kingdom of God at hand, for example during the Dark and early Middle ages of European history and then God brings a season of true reformation and revival and the kingdom grows at an unparalleled pace. There are seasons when the kingdom expands at a slow but steady pace and then seems to unexpectedly stop.

However, there is nothing that can interfere with the divine purposes of God and His kingdom. Regardless of what we do or do not comprehend, the kingdom will progress until it is the tree that God has ordained it to be . They could and we should take such immense comfort from this fact.

We must see that from Christ's own humility and humiliation at the cross, the foundation is

laid for His exaltation as King over His kingdom and the world as a result of His resurrection and ascension. Let me quote from our newly proposed church constitution from The Truths We Teach:

His Humiliation and Exaltation

The Lord Jesus willingly accepted his appointment as mediator and perfectly fulfilled that office. He endured the most severe tortures of soul and body, was crucified, buried, and remained under the power of death for three days, without seeing corruption. He rose from the dead on the third day. He ascended into heaven, where he sat down at the Father's right hand and intercedes for his people. From the Father's right hand he shall physically return at the end of the world to judge all men and angels..... therefore we need him to be our King to convince, draw, deliver, and preserve us for His heavenly kingdom.

Jesus then says:

v.32 it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES."

The second half of this statement is a quote from an Old Testament proverb

Ezekiel 17:23, "On the high mountain of Israel I will plant it, that it may bring forth boughs and bear fruit and become a stately cedar. And birds of every kind will nest under it; they will nest in the shade of its branches.

In Ezekiel's prophecy it is speaking of a time when all the nations will find their rest in the kingdom of God.

The kingdom has its small and unimposing beginnings, it will have progressive growth and not only be full grown but as such it will be a restive place, a protective and secure place, for many from many nations.

Jesus tells his apostles before His ascension to the throne,

Acts 1:6 ¶ So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;

8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."9 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

But not only is the kingdom like a mustard seed is also like leaven.

33* He spoke another parable to them, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks 0(measures) of flour until it was all leavened."

There is a misconception by some that leaven is only used as a metaphor in Scripture for evil, but this verse proves that notion to be wrong. Here, leaven is a good thing.

The parable teaches that one day the Kingdom of God will rule over all the earth, but has now entered into the world in a form that is hardly perceptible. The Kingdom of God is destined to permeate all human society until the entire world is transformed by a process of gradual

penetration and inner permeation.

One day the Kingdom will prevail to such an extent that no rival sovereignty exists. The entire mass of dough becomes leavened. In the setting of Jesus, the mighty irresistible character of the eschatological, the future and final Kingdom was understood by all Jews and would mean a complete change in the order of things. The present evil order of the world and of society would be utterly displaced by the Kingdom of God. But Jesus ministry appears to have initiated no such transformation. He preached the presence of the Kingdom but the world went on as before. How then could this be the Kingdom? Jesus reply was that when a bit of leaven is put into a mass of meal, nothing seems to happen. The leaven even seems to be engulfed in the meal. Eventually something does happen and the result is a complete transformation of the dough. The gradualness of the process was unheard of by the Jews at the time but Jesus reiterated it again and again. No one could have guessed that Jesus small band of disciples had anything to do with the future, glorious Kingdom of God. However that which is now present in the world is indeed the Kingdom itself. This is the mystery, the new truth about the Kingdom.

Christ changes the heart of those who are His. As His people preach the Gospel to those who will be God's elect their hearts will be changed. As this kingdom grows it affects in varying degrees the heart of competing kingdoms but eventually only the leavened kingdom made up of a leavened people stands. All other kings and kingdoms are defeated.

In these parables that we have studied concerning the establishment and the growth of God's kingdom we can see the process from Gods point of view.

Once the kingdom has begun and there are a small number of kingdom dwellers, they begin to sow the seed of the word of God. Many will have opportunity to hear the word and there will be many reactions to the word. But only those who have their hearts prepared by God will be able to receive the word in a way that will produce definite evidence that they are God's own people, for this is God's kingdom.

Even so, there will be some who seem to be genuine kingdom dwellers in this kingdom but they will eventually be proven to be false and will have no place in the kingdom when it comes in its fullest and final form and will be separated forever from the kingdom. The kingdom will progress in growth and the people of this kingdom will demonstrate genuine fruit. The kingdom will be constituted with all kinds of people throughout the ages who are called to be in Christ's kingdom and not one who is His will ever be forsaken or cast aside.

Do you rejoice in the fact that God by His mercy and grace has called you to be an inhabitant

of His kingdom? Do you glory in God and God alone knowing that it is His work through Christ that makes a place for you in this kingdom?

v.34 All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable.

How our love for Christ and our desire for God should be increased as we understand that He has given His people the ability to understand Jesus' parables because we have been chosen by God for His purpose, for His pleasure and unto the praise of His glorious grace.

As Jesus said earlier in his teaching,

Mt13:11 Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.12 "For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.

PAGE

PAGE 3

Mt.13:31-34 Baptist Church of Evans June 18,2006 Pastor Joseph Krygier