

# Pentwater Bible Church

*Gospel of Mark*

*Message 21*

*August 17, 2014*



The Sermon on the Mount, by Carl Heinrich Bloch, used by permission of the National Historic Museum at Frederiksberg in Hillerød, Denmark

The Sermon on the Mount by Carl Heinrich Bloch Cir 1834-1890

Daniel E. Woodhead – Pastor Teacher

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The Book of Mark  
Message Twenty-One  
Kingdom Parables  
August 17, 2014  
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The Storm on the Sea of Galilee by Ludolf Backhuysen Cir.1695

## THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

Mark 4:30-32

<sup>30</sup> And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? <sup>31</sup> It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: <sup>32</sup> but when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it (KJV).

As Jesus continues to teach about the Kingdom of God, which begins with the spiritual segment, he introduced and here teaches that it ends with its governance of the entire earth. The earth will be governed through an absolute monarchy with Jesus reigning supreme as the king over the world with its headquarters in Jerusalem. This is clear from the Psalms and the prophets. Even though the throne will be in Jerusalem (aka Zion) the dominion of Messiah's rule will be the entire earth.

Psalm 2:6-8

*<sup>6</sup>Yet I have set my king Upon my holy hill of Zion. <sup>7</sup>I will tell of the decree: Jehovah said unto me, Thou art my son; This day have I begotten thee. <sup>8</sup>Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession (ASV 1901).*

One well-known passage from Isaiah that seems to get more emphasis at Christmas due to its introduction of the virgin birth actually has much more to say regarding the future earthly Messianic Kingdom.

Isaiah 9:6-7

*<sup>6</sup>For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup>Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this (ASV 1901).*

So here Isaiah says that out of the Israelites (*for us*) will a son be born. This will be very special son. He will be blessed with the following attributes.

1. He will be born of the lineage of the House of David.
2. Will control the earth's government
3. He will be given divine names such as *Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.*
4. He will be eternal (*Everlasting Father*), a God-Man on the earth.
5. His governmental rule will increase in authority and in peace and it will have no end.
6. He will sit upon *the throne of David, and upon his kingdom.*
7. This kingdom will be ruled *with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever.*
8. The primary effort to establish it and cause it to continue forever will be God the Father Himself (*The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this*).

The parable of the mustard seed encapsulates the entire corpus of the Kingdom from its inception being introduced by one man (Jesus), then being dramatically spread around the world bringing people into it and finally in its fully developed form controlling the entire earth with the God Man Jesus ruling as was prophesied.

The mustard sees was used by the Lord Jesus because of its dramatic change from a small seed to a large plant in a relatively short period of time. The Kingdom which one man Jesus offered to His chosen people the Jews ultimately spread around the world and many entered into the Spiritual stage awaiting the realization of this parable's ultimate fulfillment with the God Man controlling the entire world's government.

The mustard seed is not the smallest seed in the world but it was in Israel and was widely used in rabbinic proverbs as well as the Mishnah as an example of the smallest of all things because it took 725-760 mustard seeds to weigh a gram (28 grams equal one

ounce). Although an herb (the common black mustard, species *sinapis nigra*), the mustard plant could grow to heights of ten to twelve feet and attain a thickness of three or four inches. It was also the fastest growing of all garden plants (Greek *ta lachana*, “large, fast-growing annual shrubs”). Because of its size and foliage the undomesticated birds would be attracted to its seed for food and the shade of the large branches. Referencing the use of birds in the parable of the sower as the “evil one” Jesus refers to the accumulation of various non-believers in the Spiritual stage of the Kingdom. Within the Visible Church are many people who have not been truly born again but stay in the confines of “Christendom.” This would include the many groups that profess to be Christian but do not believe in actual historic Christianity and therefore are not born again. Some of these wicked spirits are realized in the liberal church, Seventh Day Adventist’, Mormons, Christ Scientist’s and Jehovah’s Witnesses. This is hardly an exhaustive list since many others who have not actually been regenerated would be considered in the “birds” as well (cf. Daniel 4:12; Ezekiel 17:22-24, 31:3-9).

It is interesting to see the prophetic fulfillment of this parable’s prophetic scope in Church history. When the Church became favorable to the Roman Empire under Constantine announced through his “Edict of Milan (313 A.D.) it gained imperial favor and also patronage. Under Theodosius a later subsequent emperor and a professed Christian, who recognized the rapid growth of the still relatively young faith it became the mandatory religion of the Roman Empire. In 364 A.D. Emperor Valentinian split the empire permanently in half. Rome was the headquarters of the western region and Constantinople in the east (Daniel 2:41). Later Theodosius ruled in the eastern portion of the empire and his western counterpart Gratian, Valentinian son, both recognized Christianity as the official religion of the Empire in 380 AD. Severe punishments for Pagan, and especially the heresy Arianism (belief that Jesus the Son was not eternal and part of the God Head) and Judaism were enforced and the established Church prospered. By the beginning of the 5th century, after just 400 years, the Church grew from a fledgling mystery Jewish cult into a power on equal terms with the Roman Emperor himself. Christianity would slowly come to dominate the entire western world. Which is why the powers of darkness are so intent on persecuting it and Judaism as well. These are God’s chosen and Satan continues his vendetta.

Under later popes who embodied many doctrinal corruptions and error, the decline of the Visible Church continued despite the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. With the rise of the cults and the aforementioned wicked spirits manifested in the non-regenerated people professing Christianity we can see this parable is a rich portrayal of present day conditions as the Church (general christendom) as grown to enormous proportions on the earth but has many evil-birds nesting in its branches.

#### WHY A PARABLE?

Mark 4:33-34

<sup>33</sup> *And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.* <sup>34</sup> *But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples (KJV).*

Repeated here seemingly for emphasis from verses 11 & 12, Mark explains why Jesus taught in parables. Since Mark only of the Gospel writers gave a portion of the total

number of Jesus' parables which, means that they were only samples of the total number of them actually spoken by the Lord. He wanted to communicate the message of God's Kingdom to those who were *earnestly seeking* God. Therefore He would explain them to His followers, not just His apostles.

In keeping with Mark's rapid-fire exposition of the narrative of Christ's story it is not surprising that he does not record as many parables as do Matthew and Luke. Mark was writing for Romans. To them he pictures Jesus as an active, energetic, King, who is a Victor over the destructive forces of nature, over disease, demons, death, and moral-spiritual darkness.

## JESUS CONTROLS NATURE

### Mark 4:35-41

*<sup>35</sup> And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. <sup>36</sup> And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. <sup>37</sup> And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. <sup>38</sup> And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? <sup>39</sup> And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. <sup>40</sup> And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that you have no faith? <sup>41</sup> And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him (KJV)?*

This story is related from one who was actually there. That was probably Peter who was very close to Mark. After teaching all day by the Sea of Galilee the apostles sent away the crowds, took Jesus into a boat and went out on the Sea itself. They took Him *even as he was*, tired, exhausted, in need of rest and sleep.

The Sea of Galilee (Sea of Tiberius, Sea of Chinnereth) is a freshwater inland lake a little over twelve miles long and seven miles wide. The Jordan River flows through it, from north to south emptying into the Dead Sea. Galilee with little warning can produce mighty squalls, which can sweep down the wadis (valleys) around the lake, and quickly transform its tranquil surface into treacherous waves. The Sea of Galilee sits about 680 feet below sea level, and heats up considerably. The hills surrounding the water rise up very sharply and to considerable height. Therefore most of Galilee consists of rocky terrain, at heights of between 1640 and 2296 feet. There are several high mountains in the region, including Mount Tabor and Mount Meron, which have relatively low temperatures and high rainfall. The cold air rushing down from the mountains a distance of approximately 2976 or one-half a mile, meets the warm air rising from the lake in such a way that sudden violent storms can occur on the surface of Galilee. Typically, the storms arrive in mid-afternoon, as the heat of the valley (averaging mid-90s Fahrenheit in the shade) sucks down the cool air of the heights.

This story shows the humanity of Jesus as He was sleeping as well as His deity calming the storm. The disciples were fearful of the squall that had arisen on the Sea and were rebuking Jesus for seemingly not caring for their safety because they said, "*Master, carest*

*thou not that we perish?"* This particular part of the story is not told the same way by Matthew or Luke. They tone down the admonition of Jesus by the disciples. Interestingly they call Him "Teacher." This is the first of the twelve times Mark will refer to Him with this designation. Of particular interest to Bible students is what we are to do as followers of Jesus. We are expected to learn and not be passive about what the Bible teaches us, which is Christ's Word.

Following their admonition and fear about the storm Jesus rebukes the wind. The same terminology was used in Mark 1:25 referring to an exorcism. This implies a demonic force in the storm. There are certainly demonic elements to the creation of weather after the Flood. It came about as a result of the Fall. It is a corruption and not the way the earth was created to be (Isaiah 45:18). Just as in other instances of Jesus controlling the spirit world here He controls the storm. The Greek word (*pephimosō*) used here can be translated "be muzzled." This activity clearly demonstrates His deity as shown in the Old Testament through the story of Jonah and in the Psalms.

Jonah 1:1-4, 10-16

*<sup>1</sup> Now the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, <sup>2</sup> Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. <sup>3</sup> But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah; and he went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah. <sup>4</sup> But Jehovah sent out a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.*

*<sup>10</sup> Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, What is this that thou hast done? For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of Jehovah, because he had told them. <sup>11</sup> Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea grew more and more tempestuous. <sup>12</sup> And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. <sup>13</sup> Nevertheless the men rowed hard to get them back to the land; but they could not: for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. <sup>14</sup> Wherefore they cried unto Jehovah, and said, We beseech thee, O Jehovah, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood; for thou, O Jehovah, hast done as it pleased thee. <sup>15</sup> So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging. <sup>16</sup> Then the men feared Jehovah exceedingly; and they offered a sacrifice unto Jehovah, and made vows (ASV 1901).*

God who controls all things even the evil of the demons who rebelled against Him uses the storm of the Mediterranean Sea to cause Jonah to acquiesce to God's Will. God uses all circumstances on this earth to cause mankind to turn to Him in obedience. Jesus used the storm on the Sea of Galilee to affirm His deity and draw His disciples closer to Him.

Psalm 89:9

<sup>9</sup> *Thou rulest the pride of the sea: When the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them (ASV 1901).*

#### Psalm 107:23-30

<sup>23</sup>*They that go down to the sea in ships, That do business in great waters;*  
<sup>24</sup>*These see the works of Jehovah, And his wonders in the deep. <sup>25</sup>For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, Which lifteth up the waves thereof. <sup>26</sup>They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths: Their soul melteth away because of trouble. <sup>27</sup>They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, And are at their wits' end. <sup>28</sup>Then they cry unto Jehovah in their trouble, And he bringeth them out of their distresses. <sup>29</sup>He maketh the storm a calm, So that the waves thereof are still. <sup>30</sup>Then are they glad because they are quiet (ASV 1901)*

Following Jesus' calming of the storm he rebukes them for having so little faith in Him and the power of God to do all things. They did not fully understand who He was as they *feared exceedingly, and said one to another, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"*

It was evening time. A furious tempest arose on Lake Galilee, which produced a frantic outcry from Jesus disciples on board the boat. They thought He did not care that they were about to die. Jesus performs an outstanding miracle controlling the weather and affirming His deity, which was developed in the Jewish Scriptures. He then lovingly reproaches them producing a profound effect on them realizing that they are in the presence of someone very special who is the God of the Universe, who created all things.

Jesus is exactly who he said He was. It is only He who can control the weather not any man-made scheme. This section of Scripture ends with the people in His presence and us who read this account thousands of years later waiting on Him to return being awestruck. Jesus is the God of the Bible who was prophesied several thousand years before He arrived. It is only he who can calm the human anxiety of world events. We must look to Him when our anxiety over current events of all sorts causes us to take our focus off Him.

#### Philippians 4:4-7

<sup>4</sup>*Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your |moderation| be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. <sup>6</sup>In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus (ASV 1901).*

Amen and praise our God in Christ Jesus.

NEXT WEEK: MARK: DEMONIC POSSESSION

**Please call or e-mail with any questions or comments**

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