

Matthew 13: 31 & 32; “The Parable of the Mustard Seed”, presented by Pastor Paul Rendall, on August 28th, 2022, in the Adult Sunday School Class.

Matthew 13: 31 & 32 – “Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.”

In the former parable, which we have just finished studying, the Lord Jesus tells us what will be characteristic of this whole Church Age in the churches; that there will be wheat and tares, believers and professed believers. In the case of the professed believers, they are those who are really unbelievers who look like true believers only for a time. They are sown by the devil, in all the local churches of the field of this world as Jesus says in verse 38. Our Lord Jesus says that He is the One who sows the wheat. There will be a most definite harvest due to His most precious saving works in the lives of each one who believes the gospel.

Now, whereas these Tares are sown by the Devil as counterfeit Christians in the churches so as to bring discouragement, and to cast doubt upon the certainty and necessity of real and true conversion to Christ; Jesus sets this parable of the Mustard Seed in between these two sections of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, between the giving of the Parable and the Explanation of the Parable. And in it our Lord relates that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a Mustard Seed which a man took and sowed in his field. You will notice that this phraseology, “the kingdom of heaven is like a man taking and sowing in His field”, is the same in both parables. So, I think that we should conclude that this Parable of the Mustard Seed is building off of what Jesus said in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares.

Here in this Parable, more particular attention is paid to the definite growth of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Kingdom starts out very small, even as the Mustard Seed, and it ends up as a very great tree, greater than all the herbs. It grows up to be so great, that even the birds of the air come and nest in its branches. What does this mean exactly?

1. Understanding the term Kingdom of Heaven.

a. The Kingdom of Heaven – It means the same thing as before in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares; the whole spiritual kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ which is entered into, by faith in the Gospel. Believing in Christ’s Person and His finished work of righteousness and sufferings, by the power and working of the Holy Spirit, this is the way that you enter it. You must believe in Christ in order to go to heaven. You must believe in Christ in this life, so that you will have heavenly spiritual things in your heart; that is by the Holy Spirit. But when you believe in Christ you have entered His kingdom of heaven in your heart. He will then teach you spiritually and lead you all the way to heaven.

You must be born again to see and to enter the Kingdom of God, which is the same Kingdom as the Kingdom of Heaven. But specifically, here in this Parable, Jesus is referring to the progress of growth, and the advance of this Kingdom. Jesus is saying that His Kingdom, in all the earth, will have large and even amazing growth, even as the Mustard Seed eventually becomes a Mustard Tree, during the time of this present Church Age until He comes again the Second Time,. The Father has bestowed a Kingdom upon His Son, the Mediatorial Kingdom of Grace. It is He who is sowing seed and gathering the harvest for eternal life, which begins here while we walk upon this earth, believing in the Lord Jesus, that His seed of righteousness has been sown in our hearts.

Daniel 7: 14 – “I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven!” “He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him.” “Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.” “His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.”

What Daniel was seeing in this vision is that it is the Father’s intention that the Lord Jesus Christ be given a kingdom whereby He would have dominion, the power to rule, and the glory, that is He will be seen in the excellence of His Majesty as the Savior and Lord of all men; that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion will be an everlasting dominion, and it shall not pass away, or be destroyed. This kingdom will be, as we have seen in past studies, delivered up to the Father when Christ returns the second time, to raise the dead, and those who have believed in Him will be glorified together with Him; transformed to be like Him. And thus we shall forever be with the Lord.

Luke 22: 28-30 – “But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials.” “And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

Speaking to His apostles in particular, our Lord Jesus tells them that just as He has had a kingdom bestowed upon Him by the Father, that He has bestowed one upon them. The one bestowed upon Him by the Father is the Mediatorial Kingdom as He says in John chapter 17, verse 17: 1 and 2 – “Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: ‘Father, the hour has come.’ “Glorify You Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.”

The kingdom Jesus bestowed upon the apostles was Him giving them apostolic authority to rule in the church. As John Gill says in his commentary on these verses, they had the power of binding and loosing, or of pronouncing things to be lawful or unlawful. They had power of remitting sins in a ministerial and declarative way; and not only of rebuking and reproving for sin with authority, but even of inflicting corporeal punishment on delinquents, and that in a very severe way, as the cases of Ananias and Sapphira, Elymas the sorcerer, the incestuous person at Corinth, and Hymenaeus and Philetus.”

Eventually, Jesus says, they would be the judges of the twelve tribes of Israel on the Last Day when He returns. The gospel would first be preached to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles. Churches would be founded by the apostles and they would be regulated in doctrine and practice according to their written word. All of this would flow out of the Son of Man being the Seed which would fall into the earth and die, but in doing so, He would be much fruit; that is, the people whom He would save through His death.

John 12: 23, 24 – “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.”

So, we see here, that unless Christ had gone to the cross, that the seed of God’s word bringing salvation in the effectual way that it does, to all of God’s elect people, to all who savingly believe, would never have taken place. But since He did, much grain was produced; the great harvest of people whom Christ would bring to saving faith in Himself, in every generation, and in all of the world.

Luke 12: 32-34 – “Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” “Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys.” “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

We see the beginnings of Christ's Mediatorial Kingdom in terms of the results of those being saved, during the days of His earthly ministry, were very small, even like a mustard seed. Even though multitudes followed Jesus to listen to Him, and to benefit from His miracles, and to hear His teaching, still, there would not be many who savingly believed in Him. Notice the wording however – It was the Father's good pleasure to give them, this little flock, the kingdom. A most definite spiritual bestowal of this kingdom by the Father, to the believing disciples through their relationship to Him, the Son.

Jesus intimates that it was a spiritual kingdom and so his disciples could afford to sell what they had and give alms, and make for themselves bags (money bags) which would not grow old. Because as they paid attention to the spiritual truth of Christ's words giving them the righteous and spiritual principles to live by, they would prosper spiritually because they would have a treasure in the heavens that would not fail.

2. Understanding the words – The Kingdom of Heaven is like a Mustard Seed.

The Mustard Seed is described here as the “least of the seeds”, “greater than the herbs”, and it “becomes a tree”. **In Mark chapter 4, verse 32** it says – “But when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches....”

When the Lord Jesus says that the Mustard Seed is the least of seeds, He is saying this, not in the sense that there aren't smaller seeds in existence in the world, but He is saying that it is the smallest in the sense that His kingdom of heaven is the smallest of seeds a spiritual sense, relative to its perceived success in bringing forth something great. The size of the mustard seed being very small, it does not seem likely to produce a great plant, let alone a tree. The perceived success of what the gospel of Christ would bring forth in relation to the progress of Christ's kingdom and the truth of His word, at first seemed to be very small. But it would be because of the greatness of the Person of Christ, Himself, and the power of God which was inherently in Him, that would be the reason for the success of the preaching of the word, and the growth of His kingdom to an astounding height in the eyes of men.

Isaiah 27: 5 & 6 – “Or let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me.” “Those who come He shall cause to take root in Jacob; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.”

It would be because of the power which God has intrinsically put in that seed, that a massive plant would be brought forth (Christ's Church and His Kingdom) which would be greater than herbs and actually become a tree. In an earthly sense the mustard seed was a very small seed. In an earthly spiritual sense the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of Christ, was very small, but because of the power of God in His word and the power of the Holy Spirit in His servants, preaching and sharing the gospel, there would be certain success that would attend their preaching and bring forth great results in the conversion of people to Christ. During the whole Church age the, Christ's kingdom, the kingdom of heaven, would grow very greatly, in its influence in men's hearts and among the kingdoms of this world, far beyond the expectations of anyone looking at it.

