

The Parables of Jesus

Lesson 12

Parable of the Mustard Seed – Mark 4:30-32

The parable of the mustard seed is a simple illustration about the incredibly deep subject of the Kingdom of God. Our study will focus on the Kingdom of God. Jesus tried to share some information with his disciples. Let's look and see what we can learn.

Setting for the Parable

Jesus taught the parable of the mustard seed to a crowd that included his disciples. It was the final parable of three. The first two were the parable of the lamp and the parable of the growing seed. The parable of the growing seed instructed that the Kingdom of God grows slowly, secretly and mysteriously.

Telling of the Parable

Jesus, through the parable of the mustard seed, then informs the crowd that the beginning of the Kingdom is tiny...as small as a mustard seed. However, the finality of the Kingdom shows that it has grown into a massive, strong bush where many birds come to nest in its shade. That's quite a picture. Our work for the Lord is sometimes difficult and Jesus shared this parable to offer encouragement to his followers.

Meaning of the Parable

This parable...as already mentioned...has the Kingdom of God as its main focus. So to understand the parable it is necessary for us to answer the question, "What is the Kingdom of God?"

The Kingdom of God is the reign of God in the hearts of people. The Kingdom is the power of God residing within a person (1 Corinthians 4:20). The Holy Spirit is God himself, who enters a person's heart and eternally abides there (Ephesians 1:13-14).

The Kingdom of God isn't worldly (John 18:36)...it is spiritual. It is not an earthly kingdom or nation but it does invade this earthly kingdom currently ruled by Satan (John 12:31). The Kingdom of God's headquarters is found in heaven (Acts 7:48-49). It has no borders. It waves no flags. It does not kill and conquer with physical strength. The Kingdom's arsenal includes the Bible and the Holy Ghost. The Kingdom conquers evil and sin by empowering believers through repentance, faith and obedience.

God the Father is in complete control of the Kingdom and Jesus is the King. It is universal in the most literal sense...much more than global...it includes all of creation.

Another question for us to try and answer is, "When did the Kingdom of God begin?"

The parable actually reveals the beginning of the Kingdom. It was tiny...like a mustard seed. Jesus Himself was the beginning (Luke 1:32-33). Jesus' arrival and earthly ministry ushered in the Kingdom (Mark 1:15).

The Kingdom started when the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus, then on His disciples, on the 3000 in Jerusalem and finally on Gentile believers (Acts 10:44-45).

From those seemingly small beginnings the Kingdom of God has now spanned the earth for 2000 years. It started as the small mustard seed and is now the very large shrub just as He described.

The Kingdom manifests itself in people who are transformed by God. The Kingdom is invisible...spiritual. You can't see the Holy Spirit, but you can see the effects on a person's life. You can see the Kingdom of God through the changed lives of people. Every time a person reads their Bible and does what it says, the Kingdom grows.

This parable focuses on the most important entity in the world...the Kingdom of God. The reason it is the most important is that it includes forgiveness and eternal life. Nothing is more important than these two things.

Let's talk for a minute about the difference between the Kingdom of God and the church.

The Kingdom of God is within human hearts and unseen to the physical eye. The universal church is a collection of those people who have been saved and are in the Kingdom. The local church (Grace Baptist) is also a collection of Christians but it isn't perfect. In other words, churches...even ours...include some individuals who aren't yet a part of the Kingdom and may never become a part of it. There are true Christians but also non-Christians within the local church.

Finally, let's try and answer the question, "When does the Kingdom of God end?"

Jesus' parable of the mustard seed uses a plant to describe the Kingdom and all plants have a natural life-cycle. So how does this apply to the Kingdom? Jesus' 2nd coming brings the beginning of his Church's perfection as well as His 1000 year earthly reign. The Kingdom will be victorious over all sinful rebellion in the end.

The answer to the question is of course, NEVER. His Kingdom will never end.

There is a banquet table being prepared for us. All Christians will attend the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. The Kingdom's final abode will eventually be located in the New Jerusalem...which He is preparing now. It's beauty is too much for words to try and describe it. We discussed the new heaven and new earth in our Revelation study. If you'd like a refresher, you can read Revelation chapters 21 and 22. I challenge you to pray for the Lord to open your imagination so you can envision heaven and then plant a longing for this beautiful home in your heart. The parable of the mustard seed has this beautiful heaven in view as the final resting spot for those who love and have accepted Him.

Get This!

Practically speaking the Kingdom of God is a person living a life of goodness, peace and joy through the indwelling and empowering of the Holy Spirit. The parable of the mustard seed reveals that the Kingdom starts like a mustard seed in our hearts and then grows into a beautiful life. Notice how the application fits individually in our lives as well as corporately to the church.

We should express our gratitude to Him for forgiveness of sin and the promise of eternal life. Our praise of thanksgiving should rise to heaven every day! Knowing our future is secure and unshakeable in the Kingdom should motivate us to worship our awesome Lord.