



The Kingdom of Heaven is Like...

Matthew 13

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Part 6, The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Happy Friday and welcome back to our theme for May and June: The Kingdom of Heaven is Like... In Matthew chapter 13 Jesus teaches eight kingdom parables. This "Kingdom" is God's realm, His government, His polity. And so, Jesus is teaching about the nature and function of God's government and realm, i.e., its propagation, its conflicts, and later, its citizens.

At the time that Jesus was speaking—and continuing even unto this day—God's kingdom on this earth was and is spiritual in nature (just as Jesus explained to Governor Pontius Pilate). God's present "kingdom" finds its expression NOT in a geographic territory, or a splendid capital city, but in the "hearts" (the inner beings, the spirits) of blood-bought, spiritually born-again children. Just as the local New Testament church consists of PEOPLE, God's present Kingdom is also PEOPLE. On this planet, the Kingdom is comprised of born-again, heaven-bound Christians who enjoy new citizenship, a new constitution, and new loyalties. We are blood-bought, adopted children; saved from our sins and given joint-heirship with Christ. Consequently, we ought to be loving servants of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Now, in the first four of the eight Kingdom Parables, Jesus focuses upon how His current spiritual Kingdom interfaces and even conflicts with another spiritual kingdom identified in Scripture as *the world*. The word *world* in the New Testament is often translated from the Greek word pronounced *kos'-mos* (which, by the way, is the root of our English word "cosmos"). It literally means an "orderly arrangement", or even a "decoration" (Strong's Concordance). Other translations are from *ahee-ohn'* (one of the roots of our word "eon" or "aeon"), which connotes an age or dispensation of time. In these senses then, we can oftentimes equate the word *world* with an "economy", i.e., how an entity, institution, or government is administrated, run, organized, and structured, and also with the appointed age of time in which this economy is manifested.

And so in the Holy Scriptures, we discover that this present world economy is administrated by that sower of tares, the Wicked One, i.e., the Devil or Satan (see Matthew 13:9). Paul calls

Satan the “little-g” *god of this world* (2Corinthians 4:4), and also the *prince of the power of the air* (Ephesians 2:1-3). This last phrase connotes a leader (prince) who exercises rulership authority (power) over this circumambient globe (air or spiritual realm). Satan administrates an evil spiritual economy that attempts to influence and control humanity, to the end that he might thwart the plan of God and usurp the worship that is due to only God. In that process, he seeks to kill, steal, and destroy (John 10:10). The prophet Daniel introduces us to two of these fallen angels, called the Prince of Persia and the Prince of Grecia.

In Parable 1, The Sower and the Four Soils, Jesus taught that even though His gracious Gospel is sown without prejudice into every condition of soil (teaching the "whosoever will, may come" doctrine of salvation), not every hearer will gladly receive the Word and become born-again through repentance and faith. Sadly, Jesus teaches that the majority of humanity will reject God's precious free gift of salvation. In Parable 2, The Wheat and the Tares, Jesus taught that the Enemy (Satan) works hard to plant a "Fifth Column", a resistance movement, a highly organized network of saboteurs into God's Kingdom. The husbandman (Jesus) commanded His servants to permit the tares (pseudo-Christians) to grow alongside the wheat (born-again believers) until the harvest (the end of the church-age dispensation). At that time the angels will gather up the impostors and cast them into the furnace of fire! And now, in Parable 3, The Mustard Seed, Jesus starts to teach about the unstoppable influence and power of His spiritual kingdom.

In Matthew 13:31-32 we read,

31 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: 32 Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

After hearing the first two parables, the disciples must have been wondering if Christ's kingdom could survive such a high level of rejection and contamination. Only one in four soils (heart conditions) were receptive and produced spiritual fruit! And it seems that the enemy was able to sow tares with impunity. What kingdom could survive such inefficiency and such attacks? If they indeed had these thoughts, it was because they had not entered the Power and Plan of God into their formula for corporate success! As the old song declares, "Little is much when God is in it!"¹ And as Paul taught, God uses those things and people that the lost world considers foolish and base, to the end that God will receive glory for His Kingdom's ultimate victory (see 1Corinthians 1:26-29).

This Parable of the Mustard seed teaches one main thought: **God's Kingdom, despite starting small—seemingly outnumbered and outgunned—will grow exponentially, and triumph gloriously.** Just as that tiny seed became a tree, Jesus' Kingdom will eventually exercise, *...dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. 9 They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. 10 The*

¹ Suffield, Kittie L. 1924. *Little is Much When God is In It*. https://library.timelesstruths.org/music/Little_Is_Much_When_God_Is_in_It/

kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. 11 Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him (Psalm 72:8-11). And, as the Seventh Angel promised, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever (Revelation 11:15).

The simile of the mustard seed was given to encourage not only the 12, but also EVERY born-again believer! Consider those saints described in Hebrews 11:36-38, believers who were not delivered physically, but rather, *...had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.* These, like faithful Stephen, could look into Heaven BY FAITH and declare, *Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God (Acts 7:56).*

Friends, when we are spiritually born-again into Christ's Kingdom, we become, *...more than conquerors (Romans 8:37).* We become over-comers! Revelation 21:7 reads, *He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*

God bless and consider!