

THEME: **THE PARABLES OF JESUS**

TOPIC: **THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED**

TEXT: **MATTHEW 13:31-32; DANIEL 4:10-12; MARK 4:30-32; LUKE 13:18-19**

INTRODUCTION

1. From the first two parables that Jesus taught and then explained, it is easy to surmise that the disciples may have been discouraged by what they heard as stated below.

a. In **"The Parable of the Sower"**, only one soil of four would be truly receptive to the Word sown.

b. In **"The Parable of the Wheat and Tares"**, they learned that Satan would be doing his best to undermine the efforts of the Sower.

2. Biblical commentators as early as 349-407 A.D have suggested that the next two parables in **Matthew 13:31-33** were told by Jesus to encourage His disciples in reference to the kingdom.

a. The first parable is that of **"The Mustard Seed" – Matthew 13:31-32**

b. The second parable is that of **"The Leaven" – Matthew 13:33**

Both of which appear to describe the kingdom as destined for remarkable growth.

In our study today we will be focusing on **"The Parable of the Mustard Seed"**, with background information to help us understand the parable.

I. THE MUSTARD SEED

A. THE PLANT ITSELF...

1. The mustard plant is well known for its hot-flavoured seeds.
2. Among seeds sown in a garden it was generally the smallest
3. As a plant, it reaches ten, sometimes fifteen feet in height.
4. In the winter months of the year, its branches has become rigid, and the plant often serves as a shelter for birds of many kinds.

B. PROVERBIAL USES OF THE MUSTARD SEED ARE:

1. The mustard seed was used frequently to describe anything that is small in its beginning
2. Jesus used it on another occasion to describe one's faith – **Matthew 17:20**

[With this understanding of the mustard plant and its seeds, perhaps we are better able to appreciate the meaning of the parable itself (please read **Matthew 13:31-32**)...]

II. THE MEANING OF THE PARABLE

A. THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN WOULD HAVE A SMALL BEGINNING

1. Old Testament prophecy foretold this:
 - a. Concerning the Messiah – **Isaiah 11:1; 53:2-3**
 - b. Concerning the kingdom – **Daniel 2:35b, 44** (starting out as a stone, becoming a great mountain)
2. Consider this description of the beginning...
 - a. The Son of Man grew up in a despised province.
 - b. He did not appear in public until his thirtieth year.
 - c. He then taught for two or three years in neighbouring villages, and occasionally at Jerusalem.

- d. He made a few converts, chiefly among the poor and unlearned.
 - e. He then falling into the hands of his enemies, died the shameful death of the cross.
- Such, and so slight, was the commencement of the universal **kingdom of God**.

B. BUT ITS TREMENDOUS GROWTH WOULD DISPROVE ITS HUMBLE BEGINNINGS...

1. Just as the "small stone" of **Daniel 2:35** "became a great mountain and filled the whole earth"
2. The growth of the church in the first century A.D. certainly confirmed the truth of Jesus' parable
 - a. The 120 disciples grew to over 3000 just in one day – **Acts 2:41-42**
 - b. It was soon about 5000 – **Acts 4:4**
 - c. The number of the disciples continued to "multiply"
 - ✓ In Jerusalem – **Acts 6:7**
 - ✓ Throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria – **Acts 9:31**
 - d. Years later, there were "myriads" (countless or extremely great number) of believers just in Jerusalem alone – **Acts 21:20**
3. Even today, we see the growth and influence of the kingdom of heaven in lives of believers around the world!

C. IT'S GROWTH WOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO THE WORLD...

1. In the parable, Jesus spoke of how "the birds of the air come and nest in its branches"
2. What is meant by Jesus about "the birds of the air..."? He does not say, but the kingdom of God is certainly a blessing to all who take refuge in its "branches".
 - a. E.g. "for the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" – **Romans 14:17**.
 - b. To those seeking rest for their weary souls, the King offers His tender invitation to come to Him and enter His kingdom of rest – **Matthew 11:28-30**.

CONCLUSION

In this simple parable, Jesus offers encouragement to that small band of disciples following Him over the hills of Palestine. They would be a part of something that would grow and bless the world immensely!

It should be noted that the potential for the kingdom's amazing growth rests in the Person who reigns as its King.

- Those who will abide in Christ can be used by Him to produce the remarkable growth in the kingdom illustrated by "**The parable of the Mustard Seed**".
- Secondly as Paul wrote to the Philippians, "**I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me**" – **Philippians 4:13**. Suggesting that growth and influence is part of the Kingdoms agenda.