

Church Growth God's Way!

Immediately after the Parable of the Wheat and Tares was given, the Lord gave two short parables before the disciples asked the Lord for the explanation of the Wheat and Tares. These two short parables are the Parables of the Mustard Seed and Leaven. Both these parables teach the impact of the gospel. It is a continuation of the Parable of the Wheat and Tares.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed -- Matthew 13:31-32 *“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: 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.”*

The mustard seed is not the smallest seed in the world. In fact, the smallest seed in the world is called the *Wolffia* or the flowering duckweed. The fruit of *Wolffia augusta* is about 0.2 mm (1/100th of an inch) long and weighs about 70 microgram - it is smaller than a single grain of salt! Therefore modernists have attacked the Word of God by saying that Christ made a mistake here.

But Christ did not say that the mustard seed was the smallest seed in the world. Our Lord said that the mustard seed was the smallest in the man's field! Therefore there is no misrepresentation or mistake on Christ's part as alleged by the modernists.

The kingdom of heaven is like this grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest seed that the man has but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs (vegetables). The mustard seed becomes a tree. This tree becomes the home of birds which come to lodge in that tree.

The key elements in this parable would be the mustard seed, its size and growth and the tree.

The key to understanding these two parables would have to be the Parable of Wheat and Tares which argues that believers and unbelievers will co-exist. Just as God planted the Christians in the world, Satan will plant his wicked children in the world. The day of judgement will be the day of separation by God's infallible angel.

Just as the field is the world in the Parable of the Wheat and Tares, the field in the Parable of the Mustard Seed has to be the world too. The influence of the gospel of Christ begins small like the mustard seed, which is exactly the case from Acts 2. It will grow and will become large. It will be large enough for many to find lodging and build homes in it like birds. There are the Jews, Samaritans, and the Gentiles all finding salvation in Christ Jesus from all over the world since the time of Pentecost in Acts 2.

The Parable of the Leaven -- Matthew 13:33 *“Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.”*

Whenever leaven is used figuratively, it is always used in the Bible in a bad sense like the leaven of the Pharisees which the disciples were warned to be aware of by Christ (see Matthew 16:6). Here is the only instance where it is used in a good sense. The kingdom of heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole meal is leavened. She would probably have to knead the meal till the leaven is mixed thoroughly.

The key elements include the leaven, the meal and “till the whole is leavened”.

The leaven represents sin? – This means that sin will permeate through the whole world. But the immediate context does not argue for leaven to mean “sin”, otherwise Christ would be charged with saying that the kingdom of heaven is like a world permeated by sin which is out of character with the immediate context. The kingdom of Satan is permeated by sin, not the kingdom of heaven! It does not make any sense for Christ to talk about believers and unbelievers co-existing together, and how the gospel of Christ will influence the whole world and then suddenly change the focus 180 degrees and talk about sin permeating the entire world. That sin is all over the world and that man is desperately wicked are already established facts in Scripture. There is no necessity for Christ to mention them. It makes no sense to interpret leaven here as sin.

The leaven is the influence of the gospel! -- But if the leaven refers to a good kind of influence of the gospel which is more likely, based upon the immediate context, then the understanding is that the whole world would be affected by the spread of the gospel. Leaven works and spreads to the whole without being seen. It is invisible to the eyes and but that does not mean the spread is not real. 2,000 years have passed since Pentecost and what have been described in these two parables have already been fulfilled.

The influence of the gospel in the parable of the mustard seed reveals the extent which is worldwide, whereas the parable of the leaven teaches the manner in which the influence occurs which is surreptitiously.

The Application of the Two Parables –Believers and unbelievers will co-exist but the gospel will spread throughout the whole world. It might begin small but it will grow so large that many will find a home in it. The growth will be sure and invisible. The sovereignty and power of God is shown in these two parables. Satan cannot stop His work and will. If you are a believer, thank God for His grace and mercies in your life. You are part of a large global family of the Kingdom of Heaven! God bless.