

Parables of the Mustard Seed and Leaven

Matthew 13:31-35 [READ Mt. 13:10-11]

Jesus was a Master Story-teller. It was prophesied in the Old Testament the Messiah would speak with parables (Ps. 78:2; Isa. 6:9-10). Approximately one third of Christ's recorded teachings involved parables. Jesus taught about fifty parables during His earthly ministry.

A parable is a short, simple earthly story that teaches a spiritual truth, religious principle, or moral lesson.

Parables are cultural (like jokes). Therefore, it is important to understand the setting and context if you are to grasp the meaning. The context of the parables in Matthew 13 are the events of Matthew 12—Christ's rejection by the nation Israel. NOTICE in Matthew 12:

1. Jesus claimed to be "*the Son of David*" (vs. 1-8).
2. He backed-up His claim with signs and wonders (v. 13).
3. A council is held by the Jewish leaders to kill Christ (v. 14).
4. Jesus prophesies of the Gentiles turning to Him (v. 21).
5. Christ is publicly rejected and accused of being possessed by a devil (v. 24). This is equivalent to calling the Holy Ghost a devil (vs. 31-32). Therefore, they blasphemed the Holy Ghost and committed the unpardonable sin (cf. Mk. 3:22, 29-30).

The obvious question on the minds of the disciples would be, "Now what? What's going to happen to the kingdom we've been preaching about?" This is the context of the parables concerning "*the MYSTERIES of the kingdom of heaven*" in Matthew 13.

A "*mystery*" in the Bible is a truth that was previously unknown, but is now revealed. It was NOT a mystery that Christ was going to come and set up a kingdom. That was prophesied throughout the Old Testament. The message of "*the kingdom of heaven*" was being preached by John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Twelve through the first part of the Book of Acts.

However, there was still something about the coming kingdom that the disciples did not know. Jesus teaches these parables to enlighten His disciples concerning some of these unknown qualities about His king-

dom. The disciples asked Jesus, “*Why speakest thou unto them in parables?*” (v. 10). Jesus answered, “*Because it is given UNTO YOU [the disciples] to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them [the Christ rejectors of Mt. 12] it is not given*” (Mt. 13:11). The parables were like a two-edged sword, cutting two ways: Enlightening those who believed and blinding those who reject Him.

Part of the mystery was there would be a delay in the kingdom’s fulfillment after Christ’s death, burial and resurrection. Christ would ascend back to heaven. During the interim of Christ’s absence, evil and wickedness would co-exist along with the righteous as Satan would oppose the fulfillment of the kingdom. This was something the disciple’s did not fully grasp until after Christ’s death. They thought the Messiah would come in judgment and cast out all the wicked and immediately set up the Kingdom (Acts 1:6).

At this point the disciples did not even believe the Messiah was going to die (Mt. 16:21-23; Luke 18:31-34). Christ’s death, burial and resurrection was not part of “*the gospel of the kingdom*” the apostles were preaching for the past 3 ½ years.

The parables of Matthew 13 explain the course of the of the Kingdom after Christ’s rejection and crucifixion to it’s ultimate fulfillment at the end of the world (or age). Throughout the process we see Satan’s efforts to oppose to the kingdom and hinder it’s fulfillment.

The Kingdom of heaven began with (1) the sowing of the word of the kingdom and Satan opposed its fulfillment by stealing the word (vs. 3-8). (2) Then Satan sowed tares amidst the wheat (vs. 24-30). (3) Next, Satan promotes unnatural growth by infiltrating the system with demonic agents (vs. 31-32), and (4) he corrupts the meal with false doctrine.

The parables of the mustard seed and leaven both teach the same truth—Corruption within Christendom through false doctrine.

I. The mustard seed—OUTWARD growth of the kingdom (vs. 31-32).

- ➡ This is the third parable in this chapter and the third consecutive parable that involves sowing of seed.

- A. Mustard seed is mentioned five times in the Bible and it is always used in the context of something small, like a small amount of faith (Luke 17:6; Mt. 17:20).
 - 1. In this parable the seed represents sowing the seeds for the nation of Israel in the field which is the world (v. 38).
 - 2. The nation began very small with the seed of Abraham... Isaac... Jacob... the 70 in Egypt... the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt under Moses.
- B. The mustard seed becomes a tree. The nation of Israel became a mighty nation under David and Solomon (cf. Ezek. 16:7).
 - 1. However, mustard a herb. There is no such thing as a mustard tree. The mustard seed does not grow into a mighty oak like the little acorn does. **It is a shrub.**
 - 2. The growth and development is abnormal. Therefore, this “tree” becomes something unnatural.
- C. The Birds—Demonic agents of the devil came and infested Israel. Israel is offered the Kingdom, but false teachers infiltrate and roost in it’s branches opposing God’s reign over Israel.

II. **The leaven—INWARD corruption of the kingdom** (vs. 33-35).

- ➡ Leaven is a substance, like yeast, used to promote fermentation. When something is fermented, corruption has taken place within. When leaven is put in bread dough, it causes it to “puff up.”
- A. Leaven = Type of hypocrisy (Luke 12:1); wickedness (1 Cor. 5:6-8); and false doctrine (Mt. 16:6-12).
 - 1. The word leaven occurs 98 times in the Bible — about 75 times in the Old Testament and about 23 times in the New Testament — and it is always used in a bad sense. Nowhere is leaven used as a principle of good.
 - 2. Leaven was forbidden to be used in the O.T. offerings (Lev. 2:11).
- B. Woman = When a woman is connected with religion in the Bible she usually represents apostasy and false doctrine.

1. Here a “*woman*” has permeated the truth with false doctrine. Like leaven, it grows quietly, it corrupts inwardly, and it “puffs up” outwardly.
 2. This woman represents a great false religious system co-existing along side of the Kingdom, called “*MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH*” in Revelation 17:5.
- C. “*Meal*” is good food filled with nutrients, as opposed to mustard. Mustard is a condiment with **little food value**—Good on hot dogs and hamburgers, but you can’t live on mustard alone.
1. Meal is made of wheat. Wheat = “*the children of the kingdom*” (v. 38).
 2. There has been an intrusion of heretical doctrines within Christendom. Satan is found at work within the ranks of believers (2 Cor. 11:3, 13-15).
 3. Things are not getting better, they are getting worse and worse (2 Tim. 3:13).

SUMMATION: This prompted Christ to ask, “*When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*” (Luke 18:8). The apostle Paul warned that the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine (2 Tim. 4:3). Paul spoke of the final and total apostasy of the church at large before Christ’s coming, “*Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a FALLING AWAY FIRST...*” (2 Thess. 2:3).

There is no denying **the impact the world has had on the church.**

Dick Halverson, a former Chaplain of the Senate, said this about today’s church:

- The church began as a fellowship of believers focused on the Word of God, worshipping the Lord, and serving Jesus Christ.
 - Then the church moved to Greece where it became a *philosophy*.
 - Then it moved to Rome where it became an *institution*.
 - Then it moved to Europe where it became a *culture*.
 - Finally it came to America where it became a *business enterprise*.
-

Satan opposed the work of God by sowing counterfeit Christians, by encouraging a false growth, and by introducing false doctrine that corrupts from within.

Satan is a thief and a liar. Most lies are truths that have been perverted/twisted/taken out of context, or truths with an admixture of falsehood. This is Satan's standard modus-operandi from the Garden of Eden.

We see the leavening process is at work. It would seem that Satan is winning! Satan may try to hinder the coming of Christ's kingdom, but he cannot stop it!

The question is: Will you be a part of Christ's kingdom when it comes (John 3:3)?

Your comments are welcomed. Please [CLICK HERE](#).