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God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

The Kingdom Parable of the Mustard Seed.

(2013)

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But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

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The Kingdom Parable of the Mustard Seed.

Topics.

- The two most common interpretations of this parable.
- The church as an organism and as an organization.

Matthew 13:31-32 --- ³¹Jesus put another parable before them, saying, "The *Kingdom of Heaven* is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. ³²It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

Mark wrote: -

- Jesus said, "With what can we compare the *Kingdom of God*, or what parable shall we use for it? ³¹It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, ³²yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade." (Mark 4:30-32).

Luke wrote: -

- Jesus said, "What is the *Kingdom of God* like? And to what shall I compare it? ¹⁹It is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches" (Luke 13:18-19).

Matthew uses the title the Kingdom of Heaven while Mark and Luke use the title the Kingdom of God showing that the Kingdom in focus is not a Kingdom in heaven, but the Kingdom of God on earth. At this present time the visible church scattered all over the world amongst every nation (not just one nation) is the Kingdom of God on earth. Even though at this time it has a mixture of both good and bad (i.e., hypocrites) in it the church remains the Kingdom of God for the following two reasons: -

1. Christ is the King of it.
2. The better part of it is denominated by a faithful remnant of believers who are loyal subjects of the King and the rightful heirs of God's eternal inheritance and everlasting glory.

The mustard seed: the Encarta encyclopaedia states that the strongest mustard seed comes from black mustard, (*Brassica nigra*) which was probably the large plant mentioned in the Bible and which now grows in Israel to a height of 3.7 metres (12 feet). The larger plants were the favourite haunts of the smaller birds. Clearly this is very large for herb plants.

NOTICE: the good seed and the weeds are in the same field and have the same rain, the same sunshine and the same soil.

The following are the two most common interpretations of this parable: -

1. The Kingdom of God will grow into a great and glorious Kingdom worldwide throughout all nations of the earth until it becomes a Kingdom of global glory that people from all nations come into for shelter and refuge. The reason Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to a mustard seed the smallest of all seeds is because it began with a despised Rabbi coming from despised Nazareth in a despised corner of the Roman Empire.

Added to this the seed was entrusted to a dozen untrained, non-university men of lowly birth and little influence. Clearly the seed the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles planted has grown into a worldwide global Kingdom amongst many nations of the world. Even more than this we know when the Lord Jesus Christ

returns in glory as, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16) to rule and reign from God's Holy City Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God's Holy Mountain) to establish God's Kingdom on earth during his millennial reign. In the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6) the dead in Christ and the faithful, who are alive, will be gathered together to rule and reign as kings and priests with the Lord over those nations who are left outside the Holy City of God. Christ the King united with his people will not only bring peace to the Middle East, but establish God's Kingdom of steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, joy and peace throughout the world and the glory of God will cover the earth.

Jesus will do justice to the poor and oppressed, he will be a faithful and compassionate King forever. He will not allow anyone to strike terror in the earth or use lies and deception to enlarge their own wealth and power. The land will abundantly produce and even the deserts will flourish. The animals will not feed on each other and even the lamb will be able to lie down with the wolf and everyone will eat of their own hands because all that they plant will produce. All nations the LORD has made will come and worship before the Lord Jesus Christ. They will glorify God's Name, proclaiming the LORD is great and does wondrous things and that He alone is God.

The book of Revelation states: -

- Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth (Revelation 1:5-7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that: -

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10).

At the end of this glorious Kingdom age God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead. They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, Second Death) (Rev. 20:11-15). Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its fullness and majestic royal glory. So it is certainly true that the tiny mustard seed will become a great tree that the nations will find refuge in, but this majestic, royal glory will not reach its fullness until the Lord returns. For further information see title: "The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgment," in, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

2. Others state that the mustard plant took on abnormal growth. This is because Matthew, states that the herb plant became the greatest amongst garden plants (greatest among herbs in KJV) and then it goes on to become a tree. Mark writes, when the mustard seed grows up it becomes larger than all the garden plants (greater than all herbs in KJV) and puts out large branches. Luke says that the herb plant became a tree (waxed a great tree in the KJV). Though a mustard seed can grow very large (3.7 metres) (12 feet) it does not become a tree, but still remains a herb plant in the same way that a cat no matter how large it grows does not become a lion.

For this reason many say that the mustard seed grew, but its growth took on an abnormal form, it became contrary to its natural and normal nature. They say that the birds are the same birds that are presented in the previous parable of the sower because Matthew, Mark and Luke all say that the birds came and devoured the good seed (Matt. 13:4) (Mark 4:4) and (Luke 8:5).

Church growth: had Christianity continued humble and unpretentious its ministry would never have been sought as a profession changing the emphasis from seed sowing to tree growing. Instead of scattering the seed in all lowliness the church became more concerned with building larger denominations, institutions and

orders. History shows that the outward growth of the Kingdom of God sheltered evil and even today it shelters many cults and organizations foreign to its true nature

The Church as an Organism and as an Organization.

We can lose sight of the difference between the church as an organism and the church as an organization Jesus said: -

- The *Kingdom of God* is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come (Mark 4:26-29).

In these verses Jesus tells us that the seed is sown and then it brings forth growth of itself. Sadly as the Kingdom of God passed from being an organism to an organization there developed the passion for prominence, power and position, men motivated by worldly principles sought supremacy in the Kingdom of God.

A tremendous truth: how much pressure would be lifted off those witnessing if they grasp this tremendous truth? Once the seed is planted and it takes root in good soil it will produce of itself even if there is no availability of a church or teacher or continuing fellowship that seed will still supernaturally produce of itself. This is because when a seed is planted in good soil it will of itself send its roots out to seek its own nourishment. Likewise when the seed of the Gospel is planted in a receptive heart that newly born again believer will seek out the things of the Lord and Christ by his Spirit and his Love will nourish them as they grow in his garden.

NOTE: this does not mean that we abandon those who respond to the Gospel naturally like any parent with children we do what we are able to do to help in their growth, but it does mean that the pressure is not on us, since the growth of the seed is dependent on the soil that it is planted in. We can nourish it, but we have no power to make it grow. No matter how much water or sunshine a natural seed may receive if the soil it is planted in is bad for its growth it will not produce. The common thread of Jesus Kingdom parables is that the Kingdom of God on this earth started with a very small seed and that the good seed becomes mixed with bad seed. Both seeds grow together in the same field and continue to grow alongside each other until Christ returns.

Matthew: tells us this seed was planted in the field.

Mark: tells us the seed was planted in the earth.

Luke: tells us this seed was planted in a garden.

The analogy is that a tiny seed of eternal life is sown in the earth and as it grows destruction and deception grows alongside it. The seed multiplies, but as it grows it takes on an abnormal shape. The following three reasons for this abnormal growth are: -

1. Hypocritical and prideful religious leaders are in the ministry because they love power and the importance, exaltation and fame they are rewarded with by those who follow them. They are in the ministry because they love worldly riches more than the true riches of God. Loftiness, pride, mastery, prominence and love of position are all adverse to the character of Jesus who humbled Himself.
2. Religious leaders have the mistaken idea that they should Christianise the world, they believe they should impose Christian morals and behaviour onto those outside of the Kingdom of God and those who do not want to be part of God's family. We should always remember that it is not our task to Christianise society. Jesus never tried to change the government of Rome or its Caesars but rather proclaimed to them the Gospel that leads to eternal life and transforms the human heart toward God.
3. The greater the number of seats filled in a church the greater the amount of money given.

For this reason certain ministers are tempted to compromise, distort and twist the Scriptures and messages that appeal to self, pride and ego to attract greater numbers into their churches and thereby increase their incomes and worldly riches.

The apostle Paul tells us that: -

- All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived, but as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it (2 Timothy 3:12-14).

When the Kingdom of God (called the church on earth) is spoken of as having good and bad seed amongst its community it is referring to the outward visible church with its institutions, governments, denominations, architecturally built cathedrals with beautiful stained glass windows and its multimillion dollar church buildings that are seen in this world by man's eyes. Though we can discern many who are saved by their fruits the global worldwide church of the Lord can only be known by God and the Lord Jesus Christ since only they know the true motives and intents of the heart and mind of those who confess to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION: it is foolish to argue and divide over which of these two interpretations apply since both of them contain certain truths and both can apply to the Kingdom of God as it is seen on earth today.

FOOTNOTE.

No one should ever think that every church building lacks faithful believers within its walls, since within God's Kingdom and Christ's global worldwide church there is a mixture of wheat and weeds not only amongst its ministers and leaders, but also amongst its followers. Only when the Lord returns and the angels separate the wheat from the weeds will Christ's Kingdom be totally free of anything that would tarnish his good name and bring dishonor to God (Matthew 13:49).

End.