

THE MUSTARD SEED AND THE LEAVEN

BIBLE TEXT : Matthew 13 :31-33

LESSON 77 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew 13:43).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

BIBLE REFERENCES:

Matthew 13:31-33

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.

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.

NOTES:

Jews Rejected Because of Unbelief

We learned in our last lesson that the Kingdom of Heaven had its beginning when Jesus was on earth. Jesus went everywhere preaching about His Kingdom, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile.

The Jews were God's chosen people, and were originally supposed to be the children of the Kingdom; but when they refused to heed the teachings of Jesus, He said: "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:11, 12). Those people who were coming "from the east and west" were the believers among the Gentiles. God has given *us* all a chance to enter into His Kingdom.

"Foolish Things of the World"

Jesus likened His Kingdom to a mustard seed. In that country the mustard seed was among the smallest of seeds, but the plants grew larger than any herbs — almost to the size of a tree. At the time Jesus was preaching. His Kingdom was very small. He preached mostly to the Jews, and we know that on the Day of Pentecost there were only about 120 who had obeyed His command to tarry in the upper room until endued with power from on high. The people who had answered His call were not great as the world calls people great; they were from among the fishermen, the publicans, the poor, the despised. But Jesus had "chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise" (I Corinthians 1:27).

After the Holy Ghost came upon the disciples, they received power to go into all the world to preach the message of the Kingdom. It had begun to grow. The weak men who had fled in the garden when the multitude came to take Jesus captive, now had power to stand boldly for the doctrine and preach the Gospel of the Kingdom although it meant their death. Thus the Kingdom began to grow, and more souls were added to the church, in spite of severe persecution.

One by one the apostles and many of the disciples and followers of Jesus were martyred for their faith in Jesus. But they had such strong confidence in the Kingdom He had preached that they did not hesitate to die that they might win others for the Kingdom.

Unwise Zeal

The Dark Ages came when millions of martyrs died for their faith. But did the Kingdom perish? Onward and upward grew the mustard plant — and it is still growing today, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14). That means the end of the age, and not the end of the Kingdom. The Kingdom will go on forever. During the Millennium it will cover the whole earth, and everyone will

enjoy its benefits, like the birds in the branches of the mustard.

The Leaven

Jesus gave the people another parable which illustrated the spread of the heavenly Kingdom. This was the growth of leaven, or yeast, in meal. If you have ever watched anyone make bread, you will have noticed that just a little yeast mixed into the dough will cause it to rise. A lid on the bowl will not hold it down; the power of the yeast is so strong that the dough will continue to increase in size and will lift the lid.

Evil men through the ages have tried to place a "lid" on the Gospel. Christians have been severely persecuted in an effort to destroy the preaching of the Kingdom; but the Kingdom has continued to grow in spite of every opposition. The leaven of the Gospel has mixed with every bit of meal — has gone into every country in the world. It is God's Word, and no power of man or Satan can destroy it from the face of the earth.

Requirements for Heavenly Citizenship

What must one do to enter into this Kingdom? Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). And again He said: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). When the rich young ruler came to Jesus to inquire the way of salvation, Jesus loved him and would have been glad to have him for a citizen of His Kingdom. But because he did not want to give up his wealth, the young man went away. Jesus said to His disciples: "Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:23 24).

So we see that those who pretend to be Christians, and even say "Lord, Lord," will not enter if they obey not the will of the Father; it will be very hard for the rich who love their riches more than the Savior to enter; and of course the wicked will not be able to enter: "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Ephesians 5:5).

"Thy Kingdom Come"

The Kingdom is still in its growing stage; citizens for Heaven are still being recruited. The children of the Kingdom are those who have the Kingdom in their hearts.

When Jesus comes again the Kingdom will be set up on earth, and those who have pledged allegiance to the Savior will have part in His reign of a thousand years on earth. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9, 10). When God's Kingdom is set up on earth, His will shall be performed.

Children of the Kingdom

Jesus spoke of that time when He ate the Last Supper with His disciples: "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come" (Luke 22:18).

How we should strive to have a place in the Kingdom! We should see that our lives are bearing the fruits of the Spirit: "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Galatians 5:22, 23). If we have been converted and have "become as little children," and still have the love of God in

QUESTIONS

- 1 To whom was the Gospel of the Kingdom preached first?
- 2 Why are the Gentiles to come in ahead of them?
- 3 How was the Gospel spread after Jesus went to Heaven?
- 4 What did the disciples need before they had power to preach?
- 5 Who causes the Kingdom to increase and grow today?
- 6 How do we receive power to win souls to Christ?

our hearts, we are the children of the Kingdom now, and shall have part in Christ's reign on the earth when He comes again.