

**Matthew 13: 31 & 32; “The Birds of the Air”, Understanding The Parable of the Mustard Seed, Session # 4, presented by Pastor Paul Rendall, on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022, in the Adult Sunday School Class.**

**Matthew 13: 31 & 32** – “Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.”

**Here in this Parable, particular attention is paid to the definite growth of the Kingdom of Heaven.** The Kingdom starts out very small, even as the Mustard Seed, and it ends up as a very great tree, greater than all the herbs. It grows up to be so great, that even the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.

**Review –**

**Major Question 1. How does the Kingdom of Christ, the Kingdom of Heaven, grow and advance in this present Church age?**

**Answer:** God the Father has set up this kingdom, through the Person and Work of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has redeemed all believers unto God. According to God’s purpose, the Kingdom of heaven grows by the Holy Spirit’s working in the hearts and lives of people who are called and led to go and preach the gospel and make disciples of all the nations. Those who are saved then become willing to come into local churches where they will be taught to observe all that Christ has commanded.

**Major Question 2. What does the Kingdom of Heaven being like a Mustard Seed mean practically for our church and all churches of Christ?**

**It means** that all of Christ’s churches around the world in every generation should do what they can to spread the gospel, and fulfill the Great Commission in the places that they live. And each member of the local church would make efforts to spread the gospel personally, according to their gift and ability.

**Matthew 28: 18-20** – “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” “Go therefore and make disciples of the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” “Amen.”

**Major Question 3. In Principle, for the Kingdom to advance, why must we have, and exercise, Mustard Seed Faith?**

**Matthew 17: 14-21** – “And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, ‘Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water.’ “So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.” “Then Jesus answered and said, ‘O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you?’ “How long shall I bear with you?” “Bring him here to Me.” “And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.” “Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, ‘Why could we not cast it out?’ “So Jesus said to them, ‘Because of your unbelief, for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’, and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.’ “However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”

The words used here by our Lord Jesus here, “If you have faith as a mustard seed you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’, and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you,” shows us that there is a principle of truth here that we must take notice of if we would see the kingdom of Christ make progress in this world. Our faith, in relation to our preaching and sharing the gospel of Christ, must be fixed on Christ Himself and the power which only comes to those attempting to serve Him when they pray (and even sometimes fast) in relation to what they do.

If they would see His kingdom go forward, they must have this mustard seed faith. It is not the amount of our personal faith and trust in Christ that is being talked about here. It is knowing the reality of the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings that will allow us to see greater success in relation to the “mountains” of opposition and difficulty which are set before us in relation to accomplishing the task set before us of fulfilling the Great Commission.

### **Today’s Study –**

**Major Question 4. In terms of the Kingdom becoming a great tree, should we believe that promises which related the success and victory of this Kingdom will have their fulfillment?**

**Daniel 7: 7 & 8, and 13-27** – “After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.”

“I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed. "I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit within my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. I came near to one of those who stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things: 'Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever. Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, which devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet; and the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows. "I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom. Thus he said: The fourth beast shall be A fourth kingdom on earth, Which shall be different from all other kingdoms, And shall devour the whole earth, Trample it and break it in pieces. The ten horns are ten kings Who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, And shall subdue three kings. He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand For a time and times and half a time. 'But the court shall be seated, And they shall take away his dominion, To consume and destroy it forever. Then the kingdom and dominion, And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.' "This is the end of the account. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly troubled me, and my countenance changed; but I kept the matter in my heart.”

We find in these verses prophecy of the Antichristian powers making war against the saints in New Covenant, New Testament times. These Antichristian powers, it says here, will prevail against Christ's saints, His Church, His people, and His Kingdom's advancing through the gospel and Biblical truth, until a certain point in time during this present Church age. The saints are given into his hand for a time, times and a half of time, which is the same period of time as the 1260 days prophecy found in Revelation chapter 11, verses 1-3, Revelation chapter 12, verse 14, and Revelation 13, verses 1-8. After that period of time of deception and persecution, the Ancient of Days, God the Father, makes a judgment in favor of the saints, and it says that the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.

**In Daniel 7, verse 26 it says that The court is seated.** The King James has it – But the judgment shall sit. That is, the court of God's just judgment takes place according to His predetermined plan and forecounsel in heaven. It takes place between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and according to their counsel, the dominion of Antichrist is taken away, to consume it and to destroy it forever. And then, it says in verse 27 – The dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him; that is our Christ.

**I hope that you will notice with me that this is not a picture of the Last Judgment.** The vision speaks of specific times and seasons. We know that this is not speaking of the Last Judgment because at the last judgment and following, Christ will deliver up the Mediatorial Kingdom to God. And all national governmental powers will cease to be. But here it says that all dominions, that is, all places which bear political rule in the kingdoms of this world shall serve and obey Christ.

#### **Understanding these verses –**

I believe that clearly these verses should be seen in relation to the coming spiritual reign of the church for the 1,000 years which is mentioned in Revelation 20: verses 1-6. This will take place before the Second Coming of Christ, and before the little season of Satan which is mentioned in Revelation 20, verses 7-10. This will take place shortly before Christ's Second Coming according to that passage in Revelation 20. For in verses 11-15 we find the verses speaking of the Last Judgment. And the Last Judgment will only take place after Christ returns on the Last Day.

**Keeping this explanation in mind, we can now go on to think about the birds of the air coming and nesting in the tree of Christ's kingdom.**

**Major Question 5.** – What does it mean in our Parable when it says that the birds of the air come and nest in this tree of Christ's kingdom? Who are the birds?

**A. The Birds of the Air are representative of many people spiritually coming into Christ's kingdom.**

As we labor for Christ, let us believe that there will be most certain progress, growth of the Kingdom of Heaven, Christ's Kingdom. Let us believe that as we labor for our Master, on into the future, we will more and more be seeing the birds of the air come more and more, and nest in its branches. The birds of the air are people, and so, let us labor in the expectation that the gospel will have greater and greater success among the nations and kingdoms of this world.

**Isaiah 60: 8-12** – “Who are these who fly like a cloud, and like doves to their roosts?” “Surely the coastlands shall wait for Me; and the ships of Tarshish will come first, to bring your sons from afar, their silver and their gold with them, to the name of the Lord your God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He has glorified you.” The sons of foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you; for in My wrath I struck you, but in My favor I have had mercy on you.” “Therefore your gates shall be

open continually; they shall not be shut day or night, that men may bring to you the wealth of the Gentiles, and their kings in procession.” “For the nation and kingdom which will not serve you shall perish, and those nations shall be utterly ruined.”

The birds of the air, here, are many people coming to Christ from many countries of the world. The sons of foreigners will build up the walls of Zion, Christ’s church. The particular reference is the conversion of many peoples from many countries, following the conversion of the Jews, and their being brought into the Church. These people, “the sons of foreigners” will bring their silver and gold with them to give it to the Lord’s work in building up Christ’s kingdom through their rebuilding of Israel as a Christian nation. The nation or kingdom that will not serve the interests of Christ’s Church and His Kingdom shall be utterly ruined. Let us see this in its context. There is here a particular reference to the conversion of the Jews and their being brought into Christ’s Church. All Israel will be saved as it says in Romans 11: 26. God says that in His wrath He struck them, but in His favor He has had mercy on them. They will be grafted into the one olive tree again, and as a result of the Lord’s working in this mighty way, many people will be saved among the nations, world-wide.

## **B. The Birds of the Air are Nations and Kingdoms of this World which shall become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ.**

**Revelation 11: 15** – “Then the seventh angel sounded: and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have come the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.”

### **Examples of Nations being spoken of as “Birds” in Biblical History –**

#### **1. Assyria**

**Ezekiel 31: 1-6** - “Now it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the third month, on the first day of the month, that the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his multitude: ‘Whom are you like in your greatness? Indeed Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon, with fine branches that shaded the forest, and of high stature; and its top was among the thick boughs. The waters made it grow; underground waters gave it height, with their rivers running around the place where it was planted, And sent out rivulets to all the trees of the field. Therefore its height was exalted above all the trees of the field; its boughs were multiplied, and its branches became long because of the abundance of water, as it sent them out. All the birds of the heavens made their nests in its boughs; under its branches all the beasts of the field brought forth their young; and in its shadow all great nations made their home.’”

**John Gill on vs. 6** – “All the fowls of the heavens made their nests in his boughs,... People from all parts of the world, under the whole heavens, flocked to his dominions, and settled themselves in one province or another; promising themselves protection, prosperity, and peace under his government: and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young; even people of a more savage disposition, being either conquered by him, and placed in his provinces; or coming thither of their own accord, took up their residence there, built houses, planted vineyards, married wives, begat children, and settled their families there: **and under his shadow dwelt all great nations; under his protection, care, and government, many large kingdoms and states were; yea, all were either subject to him, or sought to be his friends and allies: this explains the above figurative expressions.** The Targum is, “by his army he subdued all the strong towers; and under his governors he subjected all the provinces of the earth; and in the shadow of his kingdom dwelt all the numerous people.”

**This, my brethren, is what it also means in Matthew 13: 32 when our Lord says that the “birds of the air come and nest in the branches” of the kingdom of Christ.** Christ’s kingdom, His Church shall spiritually reign upon the earth as it says in Revelation 5, verse 10. Many large kingdoms

and states will either be subject to Him, or seek to be His friends and allies to His cause. Under Christ's shadow will dwell all these numerous people.

**b. Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar shows us the same truth.**

**Daniel 4: 13-17** – “I saw in the visions of my head while on my bed, and there was a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven. He cried aloud and said thus: 'Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, Strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get out from under it, And the birds from its branches. Nevertheless leave the stump and roots in the earth, Bound with a band of iron and bronze, In the tender grass of the field. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts on the grass of the earth. Let his heart be changed from that of a man, let him be given the heart of a beast, and let seven times pass over him. This decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, In order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.’”

This shows us things going in the opposite direction for Nebuchadnezzar. He had all of these people and nations under his rule in his kingdom. But since he was proud and would not repent of his sins in this regard, his dominion was taken away from him, and he would lose the confidence of all those who had sought shelter under and in his tree. In Christ's kingdom, this will not happen. Because God has ordained that Christ's kingdom shall be the kingdom which will last forever.