April 27, 2014
"God's Kingdom: Its Advance and Impact"
Luke 13:16-21

"The *kingdom of the Messiah* is the *kingdom of God*, for it advances his glory; this kingdom was yet a mystery, and people were generally in the dark, and under mistakes, about it. Now, when we would describe a thing to those that are strangers to it, we choose to do it by similitudes." Matthew Henry

*I think Matthew Henry is exactly right in what he says in the above quote. The kingdom of God was and still is a mysterious and wonderful thing! Even with parables, **similitudes** as Matthew Henry calls them, the Kingdom of God is not seen or understood without the special blessing of the New Birth, which is brought, with enlightenment, by the Holy Spirit –*

Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3 NKJ)

Yet, even the fact that we have the Spirit and may be born again, does not mean that we automatically know and fully understand God's Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is a spiritual Kingdom, it is not of this world, and our minds are often CLOUDED by wrong thoughts of kings, kingdoms, government and rule in this world and so Christ TEACHES about the KINGDOM, using similitudes –

He uses two similitudes / comparisons here: (1) a man's mustard seed planted in his garden (2) a woman's leaven used for baking, both of these comparisons / similitudes tells us something about God's Kingdom –

*Yet FIRST, let us consider God's Kingdom shown in this context – **Luke 13:16-17 / Colossians 1:13***

I. The advancement of God's Kingdom compared to a mustard seed –

Then He said, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? 19 **"It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches." (Luke 13:18-19 NKJ)**

1. *A mustard seed is an exceedingly small thing that gradually grows LARGE –*

A. *The Stone cut out of a mountain, which became a Great Mountain is a dream / prophecy referring to Christ and His Kingdom, is similar -*

34 **"You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces.**
35 **"Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. (Daniel 2:34-35 NKJ)**

44 **"And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.**
45 **"Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold-- the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure." (Daniel 2:44-45 NKJ)**

2. *Jesus also refers to Himself as like a Seed or Grain of Wheat –*

His death was a seemingly singular act that produces GREAT FRUIT -
23 **But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.** 24 **"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.** 25 **"He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.** 26 **"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him** *My* **Father will honor.** 27 **"Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? `Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.** 28 **"Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven,** *saying*, **"I have both glorified** *it* **and will glorify** *it* **again."**
(John 12:23-28 NKJ)

A. *The "hour" Christ is referring to in John 12:24-28 is the hour of His death.*
B. *His falling into the ground, like a grain of wheat*

"but if it dies, it produces much grain" *refers to the FACT, a FACT we celebrate when we celebrate the LORD's Supper, that Jesus' death brings, LIFE, even ETERNAL LIFE to many!*

C. *Note, Jesus applies His death to His "followers" those who like Paul would desire to know Him, even in "* **the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death," (Philippians 3:10 NKJ)**

3. *God's Word is also compared to SEED –*

having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, [24] because "All flesh *is* **as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, [25] But the word of the LORD endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you. (1 Peter 1:23-25 NKJ)**

C.H. Spurgeon has an entire sermon that applies this passage only to Sunday-School teachers –

"That which is described in the parable was an insignificant business: the man took the tiny seed and put it into his garden. It is a very common-place affair to sit down with a dozen children around you, and open your Bible and tell them the well-worn tale of how Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." CH Spurgeon

Yet, what can happen if this SEED is watered in the heart of even one of these children for conversion?

II. *The influence of God's Kingdom on a person is compared to leaven –*

And again He said, "To what shall I liken the kingdom of God? [21] "It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened." (Luke 13:20-21 NKJ)

1. *In other places "leaven" is used to refer to evil influences –*

"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. (Luke 12:1 NKJ)

2. *Yet, here is reference the good impact / influence the Gospel makes on an individual –*

We are renewed from the inside out and that renewal eventually impacts every part of us **– Therefore, if anyone** *is* **in Christ,** *he is* **a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJ)**

1. *New Eyes – John 3:3*
2. *A New Mind – compare - 1 Corinthians 2:14 & 2:16*
3. *New Ears – John 10:26-27; Revelation 2:11; 2:17; 2:29; 3:6; 3:13 and 3:22*
4. *A New Mouth – compare Psalm 40:3 to Romans 3:13-14*
5. *New Taste Buds – Psalm 34:8; Psalm 1:2*
6. *A New Heart – Ezekiel 36:26; 11:9 & Jeremiah 24:7*
7. *New Feet – compare Romans 3:15-16 to Isaiah 52:7*
8. *An entirely new identity – 1 John 3:1-2*

"The parable of the yeast shows the progress of the Gospel in the heart of a believer. The start of the work of grace in a sinner is usually exceedingly small. It is like adding yeast to a lump of dough. A single sentence or a single verse of Holy Scripture, a word of rebuke from a friend, a casual religious remark overheard, a tract given by a stranger, a trifling act of kindness received from a Christian—any one of these things can be the starting-point for the life of a soul. The first signs of spiritual life are indeed often small in the extreme—so small that for a long time they are not known about except to the person in whom they are taking place, and even he hardly understands what is going on. A few serious thoughts and a conscience pricked, a desire to pray really and not formally, a determination to read the Bible in private, a gradual drawing toward the means of grace, a growing distaste for evil habits and bad companions—these, or some of them, are often the first signs of grace beginning to move the heart of man. They are symptoms which worldly people do not perceive and ignorant believers may despise and even old Christians may mistake; yet they are often the first steps in the mighty business of conversion. They are often the **"yeast"** of grace working in a heart. The work of grace once begun in the soul will never stand still. It will gradually work **"all through the dough"** (verse 21). Like yeast once introduced, it can never be separated from what it has been mixed into. Little by little it will influence the conscience, the affections, the mind, and the will until the whole person is affected by its power and a thorough conversion to God takes place. In some people the process is far quicker than in others; in some people the result is far more clearly seen than in others. But wherever a real work of the Holy Spirit begins in the heart, the whole character is sooner or later leavened and changed. The tastes of the person are altered; the whole bias of his mind becomes different (2 Corinthians 5:17). The Lord Jesus said that it would be so, and all experience shows that it is so." *J.C. Ryle*

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