

Kingdom
(Part 2)
The Kingdom of Heaven is Like

2/13/2025

Last week I spoke of 4 essential parts of a kingdom. 1. A King 2. A people (subjects or citizens) 3. A Place (land) 4. A Rule of Law.

Jesus in speaking to they crowds of people often spoke of The Kingdom of Heaven and what it was like. Today's lesson is the first in a series looking into what Jesus has to say about The Kingdom of Heaven. We begin with a few verses we find in the New Testament which tell us things about this kingdom.

Note * All four Gospel accounts reference this same passage from Isaiah when speaking of the events surrounding the coming of the Christ. (Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23)

Matthew 3:1-3 "In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, "Repent, for **the kingdom of heaven has come near.**" This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

*"A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.'"* (Isaiah 40:3)

This next passage tells us of how this kingdom was received by the world.

Matthew 11:11-12 *"Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in **the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, and violent people have been raiding it.**"*

Next we see a passage from one of Paul's letters which speaks of this King rescuing us, bringing us into His kingdom, redeeming us and forgiving us -

Colossians 1:13-14 *"For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into **the kingdom of the Son** he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."*

In the next passage we see not only what this King has done, but what those in His kingdom have been called to be -

Revelation 1:5-6 *"and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and **has made us to be a kingdom and priests** to serve*

his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.”

In the next 3 passages we see requirements concerning attitude and conduct on the part of those entering this Kingdom -

Matthew 18:3 *“And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the **kingdom of heaven.**”*

Matthew 5:3 *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the **kingdom of heaven.**”*

Matthew 5:20 *“For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the **kingdom of heaven.**”*

Next we see Scripture speak of where Jesus’ Kingdom is and where it’s people hold citizenship.

John 18:36 *“Jesus said, “**My kingdom is not of this world.** If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. **But now my kingdom is from another place.**”*

Philippians 3:20-21 *“But **our citizenship is in heaven.** And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”*

And finally what Jesus told his own disciples about the kingdom as recorded in Matthew 13 -

Matthew 13:11 *“He replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of **the kingdom of heaven** has been given to you, but not to them.”*

This last verse above comes in response to the question asked of Jesus by His disciples - ‘Why do you speak to these people in parables?’ Referring to the large crowd of people who had gathered by the Sea of Galilee to hear Jesus.

Two weeks ago we looked at the parable of the sower and in last week’s lesson we noted that in Jesus’ answer to the question above Jesus begins with the following words - *“When anyone hears **the message about the kingdom** and does not understand it...”*

To hopefully improve our understanding of the parables Jesus had spoken about the Kingdom we will begin by looking at 3 of them this morning -

The Weeds Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

The Mustard Seed Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19

The Yeast Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20-21

Matthew 13:24> - *“Jesus told them another parable: **“The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. “The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ ““An enemy did this,’ he replied. “The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ ““No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.”**”*

The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast

“He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”

The parable of the Yeast

“He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet:

*“I will open my mouth in parables,
I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.” (Psalm 78:2)*

The Parable of the Weeds Explained

Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

*He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the **people of the kingdom**. The weeds are the people of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.*

“As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

Thus we see it is recorded that the disciples of Jesus had asked for an explanation of the parable of the weeds, but we do not see that they asked for an explanation of the other parables listed here in this section of Matthew’s Gospel account.

Some things we might consider. When Jesus speaks He speaks from a vantage point mankind does not have. Jesus has been in Heaven! He also created the world and everything in it! In Matthew 10:26-31 Jesus tells His disciples - *“So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two **sparrows** sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many **sparrows**.”*

Recalling Matthew chapter 10 is the chapter where Jesus tells His chosen disciples (the twelve) what they will be facing in this world when they go forth with the Gospel (good news).

We might sum the above passage up by saying Jesus told them - you will be provided transparency about things, you need not fear anyone or anything but God Himself! God is in control of all things here on earth and in the sky’s above! Even the little things like birds and the hairs on your head.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

*“He told them another parable: **“The kingdom of heaven is like** a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”*

Most of the lessons I have heard through out the years about the mustard seed parable have focused on how small a mustard seed is and how big it can grow. And most lessons have cited Matthew 17:20 to explain that Jesus is talking about faith here. *“And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”*

But very little if anything has been said about the other part of this parable. About the birds and them perching in the branches. The word 'perch' used here in this parable is the Greek word *kataskēnoō* pronounced kat-as-kay-no'-o. It means to lodge or rest. (Lodging as in a temporary place to stay.)

It is the same word used in the passage below from Acts 2:22> -

*“Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him: “I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will **rest** (*kataskēnoō*) in hope, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.”*

I think you will agree with me that in this passage above The Messiah’s stay in death was just a temporary state of things. Or as it says *“He tasted death for everyone”* (Hebrews 2:9)

Let us consider this parable of the mustard seed from the birds perspective and were it is perching, lodging, finding rest.

Here are a few passages about birds in branches from Scripture that Jesus would be familiar with - Ezekiel 31:6 *“All the birds (fowls KJV) of the sky nested in its boughs, all the animals of the wild gave birth under its branches; all the great nations lived in its shade.”*

At first one may think this passage from Ezekiel is speaking of a pleasant scene. But here is it’s context - *“In the eleventh year, in the third month on the first day, the word of the Lord came to me: “Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his hordes: “Who can be compared with you in majesty? Consider Assyria, once a cedar in Lebanon, with beautiful branches overshadowing the forest; it towered on high, its top above the thick foliage. The waters nourished it, deep springs made it grow tall; their streams flowed all around its base and sent their channels to all the trees of the field. So it towered higher than all the trees of the field; its boughs increased and its branches grew long, spreading because of abundant waters. All the birds of the sky nested in its boughs, all the animals of the wild gave birth under its branches; all the great nations lived in its shade. It was majestic in beauty, with its spreading boughs, for its roots went down to abundant waters. The cedars in the garden of God could not rival it, nor could the junipers equal its boughs, nor could the plane trees compare with*

its branches—no tree in the garden of God could match its beauty. I made it beautiful with abundant branches, the envy of all the trees of Eden in the garden of God.

“Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: Because the great cedar towered over the thick foliage, and because it was proud of its height, I gave it into the hands of the ruler of the nations, for him to deal with according to its wickedness. I cast it aside, and the most ruthless of foreign nations cut it down and left it. Its boughs fell on the mountains and in all the valleys; its branches lay broken in all the ravines of the land. All the nations of the earth came out from under its shade and left it. All the birds settled on the fallen tree, and all the wild animals lived among its branches. Therefore no other trees by the waters are ever to tower proudly on high, lifting their tops above the thick foliage. No other trees so well-watered are ever to reach such a height; they are all destined for death, for the earth below, among mortals who go down to the realm of the dead.”

Note* there are different words in Hebrew to distinguish between birds and fowl. Birds are fowl, that is they have wings. But the term fowl also includes small winged creatures such as insects. For instance in the creation account of Genesis the things that fly in the air are referred to as fowl in Hebrew.

In this passage, birds (fowls) nesting in trees first represents a scene of peace. They rest in tall standing trees. But then those trees fall and the birds (fowls) remain. This time resting in fallen trees. The trees representing leaders and their nation. The message here is for Pharaoh of Egypt. It speaks of the fallen leaders of the nation Assyria as a warning sign to Pharaoh and his nation.

In the opening of Isaiah we find this description of things concerning the people of Israel -

*“Hear me, you heavens! Listen, earth! For the Lord has spoken:
“I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me.
The ox knows its master, the donkey its owner’s manger,
but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.” (Isaiah 1:2-3)*

In Isaiah above the animals know their master and act accordingly. In the passage above from Ezekiel above the birds (fowl) (flying things) rest as God has made them to do in trees. Be it that tree is tall and alive or fallen dead on the ground.

Also consider the following?

Daniels 4: 20-22 where we see The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar being spoken of as a great tree about to fall.

Ezekiel 17:22-24 Here we see God is in charge and what He will produce - *“This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will take a shoot from the very top of a cedar and plant it; I will break off a tender sprig from its topmost shoots and plant it on a high and lofty mountain. On the mountain heights of Israel I will plant it; it will produce*

branches and bear fruit and become a splendid cedar. Birds (fowls) of every kind will nest in it; they will find shelter in the shade of its branches. All the trees of the forest will know that I the Lord bring down the tall tree and make the low tree grow tall. I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. “I the Lord have spoken, and I will do it.”

Psalm 104:12 - *“The birds (fowls) of the sky nest by the waters; they sing among the branches.”*

Here is this passage in it's context - **Psalm 104:1-12** -

*“Praise the Lord, my soul. Lord my God, you are very great; you are clothed with splendor and majesty. The Lord wraps himself in light as with a garment; he stretches out the heavens like a tent and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters. He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind. He makes winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants. He set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved. You covered it with the watery depths as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. But at your rebuke the waters fled, at the sound of your thunder they took to flight; they flowed over the mountains, they went down into the valleys, to the place you assigned for them. You set a boundary they cannot cross; never again will they cover the earth. He makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains. They give water to all the beasts of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. **The birds (fowls) of the sky nest by the waters; they sing among the branches.***

We see in the above accounts that the birds (again - Hebrew fowls) are quite content in God's creation doing what God has assigned them to be. And we see the harmony and balance of God's creation when and where God is King. We also see in these passages that the trees form a leading and important part of the accounts. These trees represent leaders of nations standing tall and proud, and yet they fall.

Yes God can do great things with even the smallest of seeds. Plant His Word and watch it grow. Even when our faith is yet small.

Here is another example of God's power coming from just a shoot -

“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.”
(Isaiah 11:1)

The Yeast parable

*“He told them still another parable: **“The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.”***

The word translated here as yeast is the Greek word *zumē* pronounced *dzoo'*- may meaning leaven - to ferment (boil up)

Thayer's Greek English lexicon describes it as -

1) leaven

2) metaphorical - of inveterate mental and moral corruption, viewed in its tendency to infect others. Leaven is applied to that which, though small in quantity, yet by its influence thoroughly pervades a thing; either in a good sense as in the parable Mat. 13:33; or in a bad sense, of a pernicious influence, "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump"

We have a clear example of the metaphorical negative use of this word found in Matthew 16:5-12 *"When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. "Be careful," Jesus said to them. "Be on your guard against **the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**" They discussed this among themselves and said, "It is because we didn't bring any bread." Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, "**You of little faith**, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the **yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**" Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against **the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**"*

To the Mind of those Jews to whom Jesus was speaking the idea of leaven (yeast) would surely also remind them of the Exodus and the Command of God given there concerning putting away of all leaven -

Exodus 12:15 *"For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast. On the first day remove the yeast from your houses, for whoever eats anything with yeast in it from the first day through the seventh must be cut off from Israel."*

For they celebrated this every year as part of the festivals given to them by God.

Thus everyone in the nation of Israel would be thoroughly familiar with leaven and what it does when adding it in the making of bread. It permeates the whole thing. The kingdom of God was designed to permeate, include, involve, encompass all of Israel. But not just those of Israel but all of mankind as well.

Or as Peter says - *"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."* (2nd Peter 3:9)

Or As John The Baptist announced **"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."**

Do we see it in the parables?