

## PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

In chapter four of his gospel, Mark introduces us to the most prominent teaching method used by Jesus: the parable. The word “parable” comes from the Greek “parabole” which is a compound word consisting of “para” which means “alongside of,” and “ballo” which means “to cast or throw.” Therefore, the idea of a parable is that of placing side by side, or in literary terms, a comparison or similitude. In His use of the parable, Jesus uses a common occurrence in daily life to convey a deeper spiritual application. In Mark chapter four, we see several parables intended to indicate the nature of the kingdom of God.

The first parable, the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:3-8) as it is commonly called, and its subsequent interpretation (vv. 14-20) indicates several important points about the nature of the kingdom. First, we see the seed of the kingdom is the word of God (v. 14). God’s kingdom will be spread through the sowing of His word in the hearts of people as represented by the different types of soil. Different conditions of the heart will bring about different results, with the heart that is good and prepared being the only one that will eventually bear fruit.

The parable found in verses 26-29 again uses the image of one sowing seed. We learn that the seed sprouts and grows by a power that is outside of the one sowing the seed (v.27). The growth is then accomplished in stages (v. 28), and at the appropriate time a harvest is obtained (v. 29). God’s word works in the hearts of people to bring about growth that, once again, produces its desired results when it reaches maturity.

The final parable of the kingdom in this chapter, the Parable of the Mustard Seed (vv. 30-32), indicates the modest beginnings of the kingdom compared with its ultimate manifestation. The mustard seed is an incredibly small seed (v. 31) and yet grows into a great bush large enough for the birds of the air to nest in its sheltering shade (v.32). God’s kingdom would have its beginnings in twelve uneducated men and a small band of additional followers in the outermost confines of the greatest empire on earth and would grow into world-wide body of disciples within one generation.

God’s kingdom is not a physical kingdom with national borders (Luke 17:20-21; John 18:36). As these parables indicate, God’s kingdom is a spiritual kingdom with its root in the hearts of people who have given themselves wholly over to God’s word and thus over to the kingship of Jesus. Is Jesus your King? Is God’s kingdom growing in your heart?

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