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EMBRYO KINGDOM PARABLES

– MARK 4:26-32; MATTHEW 13:33 – JULY 21. –

Text: "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." – Matt. 6:10.

MANY OF US in the past have overlooked the fact that nearly all of the teachings of the Redeemer appertain to the Kingdom – His Messianic Kingdom. Some of us indeed had gotten the unscriptural thought that Messiah's Kingdom would consist merely of a sovereignty in the hearts of His followers and in the present life.

Now we see the real import and connection of the Great Teacher's numerous utterances on this subject. As He taught us to pray, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, even as it is done in heaven," He meant that we should have in mind God's glorious promise that eventually, through Messiah's Kingdom, ignorance, sin and death will all be overthrown, and the willing and obedient of mankind will be released from these until "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess" to the glory of God.

Our Lord meant that we should connect this Kingdom with the great promise made to Abraham, "In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The Master's teachings and the Message which He commissioned us to give in His name is the Gospel of the Kingdom – the Message of coming glory, and the Message that now God is selecting a "little flock" to be the spiritual Seed of Abraham, joint-heirs with Jesus in the Throne of that Kingdom. Paul refers to this in Galatians 3:29: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's Seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Today's study sets before us a number of Jesus' parables respecting the Kingdom. The majority of these refer to the Kingdom

class of the present time rather than to the Kingdom in its fully developed state during the thousand years of His glory. All of God's consecrated people, begotten of the Holy Spirit during this Age – since Pentecost – constitute together the Kingdom class, the Kingdom in embryo – unfinished, undeveloped, incomplete. Some of these embryo members of the Kingdom may yet fail to make their calling and election sure, and they may become "castaways" as respects the glory and honor to which they have been called.

THE KINGDOM DEVELOPMENT SLOW

The first illustration of our lesson is that God's Kingdom in its present embryotic condition is of slow, gradual, methodical development, covering the entire period of this Gospel Age. It is like seed cast into the ground, which brings its maturity after many days and varied experiences – when it is finally harvested. Jesus and the Apostles did the seed sowing, not only for their own day but for the whole wheat class developed throughout this Age. And as Jesus explained in another parable, "The Harvest is the end of the Age." The gathering for the heavenly garner will be accomplished by the First Resurrection.

LIKE A MUSTARD SEED

The different parables do not view the embryo Kingdom from the same standpoint. It is because it may be viewed from such a variety of angles that so many parables are given us. Just so we might take various photographs of a building. One might show the eastern side, another the western, another the front elevation, another the floor-plan, and another show it with its scaffolding. Or, if a concrete building, the frame work might be pictured, inside of which the concrete is cast.

The parable of the mustard seed appears to represent the Kingdom from the viewpoint of the world – as the nominal church, developed from the original little seed of the true Gospel. From that little seed we have a great institution today with many denominational branches. But

alas! its thrifty development has invited into its branches the fowls of the air, which the Lord elsewhere describes as representing the Wicked One and his angels – Satan and his representatives – who of course should have no place in the Church; and they would have no [R5050 : page 198] place in it if the Church were loyal and zealous enough to proclaim only the true Gospel and the narrow way of self-denial.

Indeed, it is the neglect to preach this Gospel of the "narrow way" that has brought such prosperity to nominal Christianity and made it a desirable place for the fowls of the air – Satan and his deluded ones – to lodge in its branches, to be the real life of Ecclesiasticism. This seems to be the same picture which the same Great Teacher gives us in Revelation 18:2. There we read that the nominal systems are represented symbolically as Babylon; and there we read, "She hath become the hold of every foul spirit and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird."

The word "cage" would seem to imply that these unclean birds are considered very desirable, and are held on to by nominal Christianity – probably because regarded as being amongst their best paying members and because of having the most attractions.

PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN

Throughout the Scriptures *leaven* is used as the symbol of *sin*. Thus when Jesus in His purity was to be symbolized as the "bread from heaven," the Jews were directed to use unleavened bread. Again, at their annual Passover season, the Jews were directed to cleanse their houses of leaven, to burn it up, to destroy it. Here again leaven was a symbol of sin, corruption. St. Paul, commenting on this, writes to the Church, "Purge out, therefore, the old leaven [sin, malice, hatred, strife, etc.], that you may be a new lump" – that you may be, with Christ, the one unleavened loaf. It is of this Loaf that he declares, "For we, being many, are One Loaf, and one Body; for we are all partakers of that One Loaf." – I Cor. 10:17.

It is true that in one of the official sacrifices bread was to be baked with leaven; but this, we believe, was for the very purpose of symbolizing or representing us, the Church, and the fact that we were by nature sinners, children of wrath, even as others, and that the baking would arrest the corrupting influences of the leaven; and this baking represented symbolically the experiences through which the Church must pass in order that sinful and corrupting tendencies might be completely destroyed in us.

In this parable our Lord represents a woman mixing leaven with a family baking of meal, with the result that the whole mass was leavened. Consequently, if any of the family desired pure, unleavened bread, it would be unobtainable, because the leaven pervaded the entire baking. What does this represent? We reply that in Scriptural symbolism a *woman* represents an ecclesiastical system. The woman in the parable represents a system organized and in power at an early date, and possessed of the pure meal – the pure food provided by the Lord for the household of faith.

The woman mixed leaven, error, false doctrine, with all the meal, with all the food supplied. Not a particle of it was left uncontaminated. The result has been indigestion. The Word of God, originally pure, is no longer accepted. The leaven, or fermentation, has spread so that [R5050 : page 199] today the entire mass of theological doctrine is putrid and offensive to all Christian people of all denominations.

The parable was a prophecy of what has occurred. It is time all true Christians were hearkening back from the creeds of the Dark Ages to the Words of Jesus, the Apostles and the Prophets. We are glad to note that "His Holiness, the Pope," is prominent amongst those who are pointing back again to the teachings of the Bible, as being the unadulterated Word of God, which alone "is able to make us wise unto salvation," and by which alone "the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work." – 2 Tim. 3:15-17.

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