

LESSON 11

GREAT BIBLE THEMES

We do not plan to take up the narrative where we closed last time, but will resume that in our next lesson. For our study today we want to note particularly the things Jesus taught regarding the kingdom. Here are the questions that shall serve as an outline for our investigation.

1. Did Jesus continually think of His work in terms of a kingdom?
2. We have mentioned that the Jewish nation was looking for a kingdom, but they expected an earthly one. How did Jesus try to explain the true nature of the kingdom God had in mind to them?
3. Jesus frequently spoke in parables. What was one of his main purposes in so doing?
4. Mention four parables and tell briefly what each tells us about the nature of the kingdom that was to be established.
5. Jesus appeared to his apostles and others for a period of forty (40) days between his resurrection and his ascension. What was his chief topic of conversation during this period?

LET US LOOK TO THE BIBLE FOR OUR ANSWERS

Let us recall that the writers of the Old Testament revealed many things about God's eternal purpose. A number of different figures of speech were used in making these plans known. The most

frequently used one was that of a kingdom with its king who was to rule over the subjects of this divine institution. Did Jesus continually think of his work in these terms? We studied a number of statements he made in our last lesson which gave us some information regarding the time of its establishment. We want to notice how he thought about his work.'

On one occasion a number of young children were brought to him. His disciples possibly thought that he would not have time for them because they might hinder his teaching program. But Jesus saw something more in the children than his disciples were able to see. To him they were not in his way. Notice what he said, Mark 10:14-15, "But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for _____

 _____. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive _____
 _____ as a little _____,
 _____, he shall not enter _____
 _____." He then took them up into his arms and blessed them. Does this mean that he was thinking about the characteristics of those who would make up his kingdom? Possibly the childlike faith and confidence a child has in those who provide for him is the quality that all who were to enter this kingdom were to possess.

In the early days of his personal ministry he gave some of his greatest teaching to the multitude assembled on a mountain. Among other things he taught them to pray to God secretly and not to be seen of men. He then gave them a model prayer that they might pray. Do you recall the very first petition in this prayer? Notice Matthew 6:9-10, "After this manner therefore

pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed by thy name.
 _____ . Thy will
 be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” Then follows petitions for
 daily bread and forgiveness of debts. It might not be correct to
 say that the first petition of the prayer was more important than
 others, but Jesus was so concerned about the blessings of God
 that were to come through his kingdom that he wanted his
 followers to make it a part of their prayers.

Man has always placed too much emphasis upon the temporal
 things of life. Jesus wanted his disciples to enjoy the really great
 things that could make a life worthwhile. You will enjoy reading
 Matthew 6:25-34 in this connection. In these verses Jesus taught
 people not to worry over (“take no thought” is the expression in
 the King James version) food and clothing because life is more
 than these. Begin with verse 31 to follow the thought of the
 passage. “Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat?
 Or, What shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?
 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your
 heavenly Father knoweth that ye _____
 _____ . But _____

_____, and his
 righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”
 Does Jesus mean that man should have as his greatest ambition
 the attainment of the blessings that are to be found in the
 kingdom of God? Would you want to claim this as a promise
 upon which you may build your entire life? If I should spend my
 life in seeking for temporal things such as food and clothing
 would I be acting wisely? Again, we notice in this the importance
 Jesus placed on the kingdom of heaven.

Did you ever try to explain something you had seen to someone who had never seen anything like it? The only way you could possibly do it would be to explain it is like something he does know or understand. Jesus was in exactly this position. He wanted his disciples to come to understand as much as possible about this great eternal kingdom for which God had made such great plans. How could he lead them to understand about the principles that should govern his subjects when they had never seen or heard of the type of kingdom of which he spoke. Obviously the only way he could do this was to say that the kingdom of heaven would be like something they did understand. If you are familiar with the parables of Jesus you will recall that practically every one of them begins with the expression, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto". Does this reveal one of the primary reasons he spoke in parables? Would it be correct to say that the parables were given in an attempt to explain the nature of God's rule or reign upon the earth? (We use the terms "God's rule or reign" upon the earth to mean the same as to have a kingdom). Let us use this approach to a brief study of some of his parables. We shall refer to some of the shorter ones first.

Matthew grouped most of the parables here recorded into two chapters in his gospel, the 13th and the 25th. Before we read any of these parables, we want to look to the following verses in the first of these chapters, 24, 31, 33, 44, 45 and 47. Notice the expression found in each of these verses. Is it very evident that he was trying to give his followers a proper understanding of the nature of the kingdom he was to establish? Notice now verses 31 and 32. "Another parable put he forth unto them, saying,

_____ is like to a _____
 _____, which a man took, and
 sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but

when it is grown, it is the greatest among the herbs, and becometh a tree." Can you put in your own words just how the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed? Evidently each parable was given to convey one basic idea. Would it be correct to say that this kingdom was to come from a small beginning, but that it was to grow to be great in size?

Verse 33. "Another parable spake he unto them: The kingdom of heaven is like unto _____, which a woman took, and hid in three _____ of _____, till the whole was leavened." This refers to the yeast used. A piece of leavened dough saved from one baking when added to new dough fermented it so that the entire amount was leavened.

Verses 44-46. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto _____; the which when a man hath _____, he hideth, and for _____ thereof goeth and selleth _____, and _____ that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a _____ goodly _____: Who, when he had found one _____, went and _____, and _____ it."

These two parables both have the same meaning. Can you state it in your own words? Try it. We want to keep in mind that Jesus is telling his followers what his kingdom would be like. Would you agree with the statement that these two parables set forth the greatness of the value of God's kingdom, and that we would do well to give all we have for it if we could do so? Do

such statements as these indicate that Christ put a great deal of emphasis in his teaching upon the value of the kingdom to the human soul? Did it occupy a major part of his time and teaching or was it only an incidental thing with him?

A more detailed study of these and other parables would be very interesting, but time and space will not permit us to do this now. We do want to look to several passages that tell us more about the nature of the church or kingdom. What two points do we learn from Luke 17:20-21? "And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the _____ of _____ should come, he answered them and said, "The kingdom of God cometh not with _____: (or with outward show) Neither shall they say, Lo, here, or lo there! For, behold, the kingdom of God is _____." These Jewish leaders probably thought of the coming of an army with all the pomp and splendor of an earthly king when they thought of the coming of Christ's kingdom, but they were told that it was not to come with a lot of outward show. Christ's church was to be a kingdom that would rule over the hearts of people and should dwell within their hearts and lives. This was an idea that those who were very close to Jesus did not fully grasp.

When Jesus was being tried before Pilate he was asked if he was the king of the Jews. His reply is found in John 18:36-37, "Jesus answered, My kingdom is _____; if my kingdom were of _____, then would my servants _____, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a _____? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a _____. To this end was I born." The Jewish leaders

were trying to make Pilate think that Jesus wanted to be a king in opposition to the rule of the Roman emperors. He did not take this charge seriously because he knew that Jesus had no idea of such a kingdom.

As a final point showing that Jesus continually thought of his work in terms of a kingdom, we want to look to Acts 1:3. "To whom also (the apostles) he shewed himself alive after his passion (death) by many _____, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to _____." Thus, we see that during the forty-day period between his resurrection and his ascension he appeared to his disciples many times and continued to speak of things pertaining to this eternal reign of God.

Let us list a few additional ideals from the gospels. One might not understand just how this kingdom was to grow. The parable of the sower given in the first part of Matthew 13 gives us some light on this point. In this parable we have the story of the sower who sowed his seed in several types of soil. In explaining the meaning Jesus said that the word of God was the seed of the kingdom. The types of soil represented four (4) different kinds of hearts into which the seed would fall. Thus the growth process of the church was to be through sowing the word of God in the hearts of the people of the earth. This seed, if properly cared for, should grow in the heart until it produces fruit that would honor God. Would it be consistent with this teaching to expect the kingdom to grow in any other way? Does this place a responsibility upon his church today to sow bountifully if they would reap bountifully.

In our last lesson we recommended that you read the second chapter of Acts very carefully because it records the actual beginning of this kingdom which was to be small at first but, in the providence of God, was to grow to bless every nation. May we suggest again that you read it again. This is in preparation for our next lesson.

TEST

1. Jesus said his kingdom (was, was not) of this world.

2. After Christ's resurrection and before his ascension he spoke: (a) about reigning over his kingdom in Jerusalem, (b) about postponing the kingdom of God, (c) of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, (d) of reigning on earth for a while. _____
3. The seed of the kingdom was to be: (a) unrest among the people, (b) the word of God, (c) Jews returning to Jerusalem, (d) war in Palestine. _____
4. Jesus said that the kingdom of God: (a) is within you, (b) comes with observation, (c) would be defended by its army, (d) would come with splendor and pomp. _____
5. Jesus said that men ought to receive the kingdom of God as a little child. (True or False) _____
6. Jesus taught that: (a) men should not pray to God for things he needs, (b) man should take care of his own worldly interest first, (c) God does not know what man needs unless man prays, (d) man should seek first the kingdom of heaven. _____
7. Jesus taught in parables because: (a) in this way he could teach lessons on subjects of which the people were unfamiliar, (b) he could keep the people ignorant of his plans, (c) a parable was language that only his apostles

understand, (d) that was the only method he knew.

8. In the beginning of these parables we find this expression:
(a) In the beginning God, (b) The kingdom of heaven is like,
(c) The kingdom of man is like, (d) The earthly kingdom of
earth is like. _____
9. Jesus said that the kingdom is like: (a) a grain of mustard
seed, (b) leaven, (c) world government, (d) a treasure.
Which one was NOT mentioned in our lesson:

10. What chapter in the book of Acts was to be read in
preparation for the next lesson? _____

Score: 10 points for each correct answer. _____

Correct answers to questions in lesson 10:

1. (true)
2. (c)
3. (c)
4. (true)
5. (d)
6. (b)
7. (false)
8. (no)
9. (d)
10. (b)

List below others who wish to take this course.