**The Gospel of Luke**

**Witness to the Gentiles - #37**

**Mustard Seed, Leaven, Narrow Gate, Herod, Lament**

**Luke 13:18-19, 20-21, 22-30, 31-33, 34-35**

**Luke 13:18-19 – The Parable of the Mustard Seed**

[***18***](http://biblehub.com/luke/13-18.htm) *Then said he (Jesus), “What is the kingdom of God like and to what should I compare it?* [***19***](http://biblehub.com/luke/13-19.htm) *It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed it in his garden; and it grew, and to be a great tree; and the birds of the sky built their nests in its the branches.”*

**Notes and Studies**

1 The main point is how the kingdom of God begins like a “mustard” seed; small but it inevitably becomes great.

2. Jesus was hinting at his own teaching. It will be a big tree like the mustard tree.

3. The kingdom is like a mustard seed and tree but not identical because there is nothing like the kingdom, but there are things that operate in the same way: starting small but growing large.

4. “Birds of the sky” could be the most common one in this part of the world, the “sparrows.”

5. The mustard tree was not used in the OT as illustration, but it is known in Palestine.

Growing up

1. This parable like the next one seems to indicates that the kingdom is God’s work for He is the Creator who provides the trees and the soil.

2. The kingdom is not planted by power of the Creator not by violence. Here the kingdom is like God’s creation a gift.

3. More important is the growing up, which slowly but steadily spreads.



*A Mustard Tree*

**Luke 13:20-21 – The Parable of the Leaven**

[***20***](http://biblehub.com/luke/13-20.htm) *And again he (Jesus) said, “To what should I camper the kingdom of God?* [***21***](http://biblehub.com/luke/13-21.htm) *It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till the whole was leavened.*

**Notes and studies**

1. Here the power of the kingdom of God works like the leaven that can change a lump of dough.
2. It is hidden but works and its work can’t be stopped.

**The Two Parables**

1. The kingdom will grow up and spread.

2. Can be seen like the Mustard tree growing, or can be noticed when a lump of a dough expands and can become bread.

**Luke 13:22-30 – Acceptance and rejection of the kingdom**

[***22***](http://biblehub.com/luke/13-22.htm) *And he went through the cities and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem.* [***23***](http://biblehub.com/luke/13-23.htm)*Then someone asked him, “Lord is it true that only a few are that be saved?”*

*And he said unto them,* [***24***](http://biblehub.com/luke/13-24.htm) *“Strive to enter in at the narrow gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.* [***25***](http://biblehub.com/luke/13-25.htm) *When once the master of the house is risen up, and has shut the door, and you begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, “Lord, Lord, open for us;*

*“and he shall answer and say to you, ‘I know you not where are you from.’*

[***26***](http://biblehub.com/luke/13-26.htm) *“Then you will start saying, ‘we have eaten and drunk with you, and you taught in our streets.’*

[***27***](http://biblehub.com/luke/13-27.htm) *“But he shall say, ‘I tell you, I know not you nor where you are from; depart from me, all you workers of iniquity.’*

[***28***](http://biblehub.com/luke/13-28.htm) ***“****There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrown out.* [***29***](http://biblehub.com/luke/13-29.htm) *And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall recline at table in the kingdom of God.* [***30***](http://biblehub.com/luke/13-30.htm) *And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.”*

**Notes and Studies**

1. The question in verse 23: “*Is it true that few shall be saved*?”

Although it seems theoretical, it has a background in one of the Jewish books, the 4th book of Ezra, “*This age of the Most High has made for many , but the age to come for few*” (7:47 and 9:15), and may also be a reflection on Isaiah 60:21 –

“*Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.”*

*A little one shall become a thousand; and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time.”*

Jesus did not answer them about the few or the many but gave a direct answer: “strive.”

2. The “narrow gate,” or more precisely, the “narrow door,” is a metaphor for the difficulty of letting go of that which can hinder us from seeking God’s reign as the king, which is the real meaning of the kingdom.

1. The Lord, ***kyrie***, seems to be a reference to Christ but is it “Lord” or “lord,” or “sir” as in later translations?

a. The same parable in Matthew 25:10 has it as Lord, and it seems that Luke presents us with the same tradition.

b. The setting of the parable is the Last Day of judgment so it is more likely Lord.

c. *[note: the older NIV (1985) has it “Sir,” but the newer NIV (2011) has it “Lord.” – ed.]*

d. *[ESV, NASB, RSV, KJV all have “Lord.” – ed.`]*

1. Verses 25 to 30 are certainly about:

a. Those who saw Jesus and heard him teaching,

b. Also the coming of the Gentiles for the four corners of the earth.

1. The great patriarchs and the prophets will be, on the day of judgment, with all those who accepted Jesus, while those who have rejected Jesus will be thrown out. This is one of the few places where we can see the unity of the work of God of Israel and his work in the Son.

**Luke 13: 31-33 – Herod’s desire to kill Jesus and Jesus’ departure from Galilee**

[***31***](http://biblehub.com/luke/13-31.htm) *The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, “Leave here and move on, because Herod would like to kill you.”*

[***32***](http://biblehub.com/luke/13-32.htm) *He (Jesus) said to them, “Go tell that fox, ‘Look, I shall be casting out devils, and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I shall be perfected.* [***33***](http://biblehub.com/luke/13-33.htm)*Nevertheless I must walk today and tomorrow and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.’”*

**Notes and Studies**

1. Jesus was in Galilee, but from these verses he is going to Jerusalem to die.
2. A Pharisee may have been among those who came to listen to Jesus from every village of Galilee, (Luke 6:17). He must have had a kind of knowledge that Herod wanted Jesus’ dead. Why the Pharisee gave such advice is not clear to us. But Jesus’ reply was directed to Herod not to the Pharisee.
3. “*Go and tell that fox*” – Fox was a nickname for a crafty and sly person. This was also known in Classical Greek writings (Plato, Resp 2:8, 365, Epictetus Daitr 1:3, 7-8 and Plutarch, Solon). This is the one and only nickname used by Jesus.
4. Jesus is not afraid, and by summing his ministry of casting out demons and healing, he will continue doing his work. Jesus speaks of three days, before he is “perfected”. Luke used the Greek word, ***teleioun***, which is known in English here and in v.2:43. It means after the third day he will reach his goal, he will finish his contest. This goal will be in Jerusalem where he will die and on the third day he will rise. The resurrection was his exodus (Luke 9:31).

**Jerusalem: the city that murdered prophets**

1. The Bible reports many prophets killed in Jerusalem:

a. The prophet Uriah was murdered by king Jehoiakim (Jer 26:20-23)

b. and there was attempt to kill Jeremiah in Jerusalem (Jer 38:4-6)

c. Amos the prophet (Amos 7:10-17)

d. Zechariah, known also as son of Berechiah (2 Chr 24:20-22 ; Matt 23:35).

1. King Manasseh shed much innocent blood, “*till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another*” (2 kings 21:16; 24:4). The Jewish historian Josephus said about King Manasseh, “He spared not even the prophets, some of whom he slaughtered daily, so that Jerusalem ran with blood” (Antiquities 10:3,1).
2. There was also a story of killing the prophet Isaiah reported by Justin Martyr (Dialogue with Trypho 120:14-15).

**Luke 13:34-35 – Lament over Jerusalem**

[***34***](http://biblehub.com/luke/13-34.htm) *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that murders prophets, and stones them that are sent to you, how often would I have gathered your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it.* [***35***](http://biblehub.com/luke/13-35.htm) *Look, your house is abandoned: and truly I say to you, You shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, ‘Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.’”*

**Notes and studies**

1. Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem echoes OT lamentations, like the lament over the death of Josiah (2 Chr 35:25)
2. By comparing himself with a mother bird, Jesus appeals to what is known from daily life. In the OT we have “*the eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings*” (Deut 32:11). Jesus wanted to gather all the children to himself, which is one of the most tender ways of love that protects. The “hen” is not an aggressive bird, and the use of the “brood” is also a tender way of saying how the strong will care for and protect the little and the weak.

1. By saying how often, Jesus was hinting to his numerous visits to the city.

**‘Your house is abandoned’**

“House” here means not just the city and also the temple (Mark 13:2), but house, ***oikos***, could also mean the “household” that is the city. The Romans destroyed it after a long siege in the year 70 AD. The [Roman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Empire) army, led by the future Emperor [Titus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Titus), with [Tiberius Julius Alexander](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiberius_Julius_Alexander) as his second-in-command, besieged and conquered the city, which had been occupied by its [Jewish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jew) defenders in 66.

The siege ended with the sacking of the city and the destruction of its famous [Second Temple](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Temple).



*The Romans carry the Menorah, which was captured from the Temple in 70 AD, as it was illustrated on the Arch of Titus still standing in Rome*

**Jesus’ Lament**

*What you know and what you see*

*Brings sadness to your merciful heart*

*We have not seen in our history such compassion*

*Lamentation brings tears*

*Your love is halted by our evil*

*Your mercy can prevail*

*But our hearts are sealed*

– George Bebawi

***Pope’s Notes***

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