

Luke 13:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it?

Analysis

Jesus asks: 'Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it?' (τίνι ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ τίνι ὁμοιώσω αὐτήν;). The double question emphasizes the challenge of explaining God's kingdom to earthly minds. The mustard seed parable (vv.18-19) illustrates how God's kingdom begins small but grows expansive—from Jesus and twelve disciples to worldwide church. The leaven parable (vv.20-21) shows the kingdom's permeating influence—small beginning, total transformation. Both parables counter expectations of immediate, visible messianic kingdom, teaching gradual, organic growth through gospel proclamation.

Historical Context

First-century Jews expected dramatic messianic intervention—military victory, restored Davidic throne, Gentile subjugation. Jesus' parables redefined kingdom expectations: not instant conquest but gradual growth, not external force but internal transformation. The mustard seed (smallest cultivated seed in Palestine) growing into a tree large enough for birds to nest illustrates disproportionate growth from humble origins. Leaven (normally a symbol of corruption in Scripture) here represents gospel's transformative power working invisibly but comprehensively through society.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How do these parables correct impatience about the pace of God's kingdom advancement?
2. What comfort and challenge do these images of gradual growth offer to Christians engaged in long-term gospel ministry?

Interlinear Text

Ἔλεγεν δὲ, τίνι ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ
said he **Then** **Unto what** **like** **is** ^{G3588} **the kingdom** ^{G3588} **of God**
G3004 G1161 G5101 G3664 G2076 G932 G2316

καὶ τίνι ὁμοιώσω αὐτήν
and **Unto what** **shall I resemble** **it**
G2532 G5101 G3666 G846

Additional Cross-References

Mark 4:26 (Kingdom): And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground;

Luke 13:20 (Kingdom): And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God?

Luke 17:21 (Kingdom): Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.