

Luke 13:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.

Analysis

It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. The mustard seed parable (one of Jesus' shortest) carries profound significance. The "grain of mustard seed" (κόκκω σινάπεως, kokkō sinapeōs) was proverbially the smallest seed known in Palestine (Matthew 13:32, "the least of all seeds"), yet it grew into a large plant—some varieties reaching 10-12 feet tall, resembling a tree.

The phrase "cast into his garden" (ἔβαλεν εἰς κῆπον ἑαυτοῦ, ebalen eis kēpon heautou) emphasizes intentional planting—God deliberately sows the kingdom. The growth progression—"it grew, and waxed a great tree" (ηύξησεν καὶ ἐγένετο εἰς δένδρον μέγα, ēuxēsen kai egeneto eis dendron mega)—indicates organic, inevitable expansion from small beginnings to unexpected greatness. This describes the kingdom's advance: beginning with Jesus and twelve disciples, eventually filling the earth.

The image of "fowls of the air lodged in the branches" (τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κατεσκήνωσεν ἐν τοῖς κλάδοις αὐτοῦ, ta peteina tou ouranou kateskēnōsen en tois kladois autou) alludes to Old Testament prophecies where great kingdoms are depicted as trees sheltering nations (Ezekiel 17:23, 31:6, Daniel 4:12, 21). The kingdom of God, though beginning insignificantly, will ultimately provide refuge

and blessing to peoples from all nations—fulfilling the Abrahamic promise that all families of earth would be blessed through his seed (Genesis 12:3, 22:18).

Historical Context

Jesus spoke this parable during His Galilean ministry when the kingdom's manifestation seemed modest—an itinerant rabbi with a small band of disciples, opposed by religious authorities. The parable encouraged disciples not to despair at small beginnings. History vindicated Jesus' prediction: from a tiny movement in a backwater province of the Roman Empire, Christianity spread throughout the known world within three centuries. The "birds" finding shelter may represent Gentile nations finding refuge in the gospel—a shocking inclusion that scandalized first-century Jewish expectations of an ethnically exclusive kingdom.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does the mustard seed parable encourage believers engaged in seemingly insignificant kingdom work?
2. What does the image of birds from all nations lodging in the tree teach about the gospel's universal scope?
3. How should this parable affect Christian attitudes toward small churches, modest ministries, or slow growth?

Interlinear Text

όμοία ἐστὶν κόκκω σινάπεως ὃν λαβὼν ἄνθρωπος

like It is a grain of mustard seed which took a man

G3664

G2076

G2848

of mustard seed

G4615

όν

G3739

λαβὼν

G2983

ἄνθρωπος

G444

ἔβαλεν εἰς κῆπον ἐαυτοῦ καὶ ηὗξησεν καὶ ἐγένετο εἰς

and cast into garden his and it grew and waxed into

G906

G1519

G2779

G1438

G2532

G837

G2532

G1096 G1519

δένδρον μέγα, καὶ τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ

tree a great and the fowls of the air

G1186

G3173

G2532

G3588 G4071

G3588 G3772

κατεσκήνωσεν ἐν τοῖς κλάδοις αὐτοῦ

lodged in the branches of it

G2681

G1722

G2798

G846

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 4:12 (Parallel theme): The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it.

Daniel 4:21 (Parallel theme): Whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation:

Isaiah 9:7 (Parallel theme): Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Acts 2:41 (Parallel theme): Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Acts 4:4 (Parallel theme): Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

Zechariah 2:11 (Parallel theme): And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee.

Ezekiel 31:6 (Parallel theme): All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations.

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