

• *The main theme of Jesus' preaching was the kingdom of God*

The main theme of Jesus' preaching was the kingdom of God. When the angel Gabriel first announced the coming of Jesus, Mary was told, 'the Lord God will give to Him the throne of... David... he will reign...; and of his kingdom there will be no end'<sup>1</sup>. When Jesus spoke of His preaching, He said, 'I must preach the kingdom of God...' <sup>2</sup>. Luke tells us He preached 'the good news of the kingdom'<sup>3</sup>. When He sent out His disciples, He told them to 'preach the kingdom of God'<sup>4,5</sup>. Sometimes He would take His disciples aside and speak to them concerning the kingdom of God<sup>6</sup>. When Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount – perhaps His greatest preaching – its main theme was the godly life in members of the kingdom of God. 'Yours is the kingdom...', Jesus said in His opening words<sup>7</sup>. The 'kingdom of God' took a dramatic step forward when Jesus came into this world. The very least person who experiences the kingdom through Jesus' working in his or her life is greater than John the Baptist who belonged to an earlier stage in the history of salvation<sup>8</sup>.

- <sup>1</sup> 1:32-33
- <sup>2</sup> 4:43
- <sup>3</sup> 8:1
- <sup>4</sup> 9:2
- <sup>5</sup> see also 9:60
- <sup>6</sup> 9:11
- <sup>7</sup> 6:20
- <sup>8</sup> 7:28

• *To experience the 'kingdom of God' is to experience of the power of Jesus as God's King*

The 'kingdom of God' is a phrase that speaks of experiencing the power of Jesus as God's King. Jesus is the King. Where Jesus is, there is the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is God getting His will done on earth by sending and using King Jesus. The 'royal power of God' sometimes acts in dramatic ways. Luke 9:27 probably refers to the demonstrations of God's power seen in the outpouring of the Spirit and in the fall of Jerusalem.

• *The parables are an invitation to experience God's kingdom*

The parables are an invitation to experience the kingdom of God. Jesus says, 'To you has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God'<sup>1</sup>. Jesus uses two parables. The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed<sup>2</sup>; and it is like the working of yeast<sup>3</sup>.

- <sup>1</sup> 8:10
- <sup>2</sup> 13:18-19
- <sup>3</sup> 13:20-21

**1. The kingdom of God may be compared to a mustard seed**

**1. The kingdom of God may be compared to a mustard seed<sup>1</sup>.** God's kingdom is not a place; it is an experience. It is not a locality; it is the kingly and royal power of God working within us through Jesus, God's King. The parable of the mustard seed makes the point that the kingdom has small beginnings but leads to big results. The mustard seed was very small, about a millimetre in size, but it grew into something large and strong. The tree that would grow from the seed could be about three metres high or more, and was strong and sturdy. Quite large birds would sometimes perch on its branches.

- <sup>1</sup> 13:18-19

• *God often acts in a very small way*

When God is acting in this world through Jesus, His King, He often acts in a very small way. The world hardly notices what is happening.

• *Misunderstood*

People in Jesus' day tended to misunderstand the kingdom. They thought of it mainly in terms of political power and looked for some kind of revolutionary movement that would force the Roman soldiers out of Israel. There were promises in the Old Testament about the kingdom of God being like a mighty tree<sup>1,2,3</sup>.

- <sup>1</sup> Ezekiel 17:22-23
- <sup>2</sup> Ezekiel 31:1-14
- <sup>3</sup> Daniel 4:11-12

• *It is true that the kingdom of God, eventually, produces mighty results*

It is true that the kingdom of God, eventually, produces mighty results. It affects nations and empires, and it does have political results – in the long run. But the kingdom of God does not begin with revolutionary violence. It begins with individual men and women coming to new life by their faith in Jesus. It begins with Jesus driving back the forces of darkness and the power of sin, in the lives of particular people.

• *Quiet and inconspicuous beginnings*

Both individually and internationally, the royal power of God tends to act quietly and inconspicuously at first. When Jesus was born, He was born in a stable. He ministered in a despised part of Israel called Galilee. His earliest followers were fishermen and wicked people whose lives had been dramatically changed.

• *Destined to change the history of the world*

But the quiet beginning led to something gigantic and enormous. It revolutionised people's lives and was destined to change the history of the world.

• *We should never despise small beginnings in the things of God*

We should never despise small beginnings in the things of God. Whether it be in world-wide outreach, or whether it is a matter of what God does in our own lives, God has a habit of beginning in a small way!

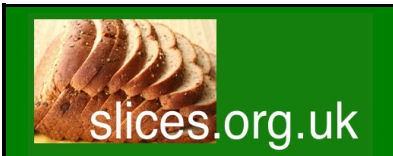
**2. The kingdom of God may be compared to the working of yeast**

**2. The kingdom of God may be compared to the working of yeast** <sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> 13:20-21

When an Israelite housewife wanted to bake some bread, she would have a little piece of fermented dough – a piece of dough left over from the previous time of cooking and allowed to go sour and slightly alcoholic. She would take a piece of this old leftover dough and mix it with a large quantity of flour. Luke refers to 'three measures', enough to make bread for a hundred people. The effect of the 'leaven' or 'yeast' or 'sour dough' would be to make the entire mass of flour rise and become bread. Without the 'yeast', it would be more like a hard biscuit. Jesus uses this as a picture of the spreading influence of the kingdom of God. It happens in our lives personally, one by one. And it happens internationally, as the influence of changed lives spreads. The kingdom of God may begin in a small way, but then it starts affecting everything. It affects every area of our own lives, and then it starts to affect cities and provinces and countries. Whole nations rise to greatness because of the influence of the royal power of God at work in people's lives. It does not begin with worldly enterprises. It begins with the coming of Jesus into the world, and into our personal life. But then the royal power of God transforms everything. What Jesus does is despised by the world, but what Jesus does will eventually conquer the world.

• *A picture of the spreading influence of the kingdom of God*



Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)* books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



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