

Lesson III.

THE GROWTH OF THE KINGDOM

July 21, 1912

BETWEEN THE LESSONS—The parables of this passage continue the discourse of our Lord to the multitude on the shore of the Sea of Galilee which we began to study last week. They refer to the growth of the kingdom.

GOLDEN TEXT—Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.—Matthew 6 : 10.

Memorize vs. 26-28. THE LESSON PASSAGE—Mark 4 : 26-32 ; Matthew 13 : 33.

26 And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed ¹ into the ground ;

27 And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring ² and grow up, he knoweth not how.

28 ³ For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself ; first the blade, then the ear, ⁴ after that the full corn in the ear.

29 But when the fruit is ⁵ brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

30 And he said, ⁶ Whereunto shall we liken the

Revised Version—upon the earth : ² up and grow, he ; ³ ripe, straightway he putteth forth the sickle ; ⁴ How shall ; ⁵ in what parable shall we set it forth ; ⁶ upon ; ⁷ though it be less ; ⁸ are upon the earth ; ⁹ yet ; ¹⁰ Omitt it ; ¹¹ the ; ¹² putteth out ; ¹³ birds of the heaven can lodge ; ¹⁴ thereof ; ¹⁵ it was all leavened.

Daily Readings—(Courtesy, I.B.R.A.)—M.—The growth of the kingdom, Mark 4 : 26-32. T.—God's husbandry, 1 Cor. 3 : 1-11. W.—They shall spring up, Isa. 44 : 3-5. Th.—Ezekiel's vision, Ezek. 47 : 1-9. F.—His dominion, Ps. 72 : 1-8. S.—Not with observation, Luke 17 : 20-25. S.—The seed and the leaven, Luke 13 : 18-30.

THE LESSON EXPLAINED



MUSTARD PLANT

I. THE SEED GRAIN.—26, 27. This parable is the only one peculiar to Mark. It is a brief sermon on the text, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation", Luke 17 : 20. As if Jesus does not define the kingdom; He treats it descriptively. Should cast ; literally, "had cast", a finished action. Should sleep, and rise! He can only wait, until the hidden seed be acted upon by forces above and beyond him. He knoweth not how ; nor need he greatly care, since the process

of growth is hidden from him. "Modern science has failed to find the slightest explanation of what the life in a seed is." But the fact of its growth is independent of explanations.

28, 29. Bringeth forth. of herself ; "automatically", as the Greek word is, through the energies and powers God has given. Man can hinder nature by trampling down the soil, or by allowing it to grow weeds. He can help, too, but only up to a certain point. The meaning here is, that growth is beyond mere human external aid or control. It is God that gives the increase (1 Cor. 3 : 6, 7). "The living, growing power of the gospel, is the power of the living mind and heart of the living God." Blade ; the green shoot. Ear ; running up the stalk and showing at the top. Full corn ; ripened grain held in the ear. The three stages indicated may refer to the gradual growth of the individual Christian life, and the growth of the kingdom of

kingdom of God ? or ⁷ with what comparison shall we compare it ?

31 ⁸ It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown ⁹ in the earth, ¹⁰ is less than all the seeds that ¹¹ be in the earth :

32 ¹² But when it is sown, ¹³ it groweth up, and becometh greater than all ¹⁴ herbs, and ¹⁵ shooteth out great branches ; so that the ¹⁶ fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow ¹⁷ of it.

Matt. 13 : 33 Another parable spake he unto them ; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till ¹⁸ the whole was leavened.

33 ¹⁹ The earth beareth fruit ; ²⁰ then the full ; ²¹ in what parable shall we set it forth ; ²² upon ; ²³ though it be less ; ²⁴ are upon the earth ; ²⁵ yet ; ²⁶ Omitt it ; ²⁷ the ; ²⁸ putteth out ; ²⁹ birds of the heaven

God in the world. Brought forth ; literally, "yielded itself." The meaning is, that the end for which the seed was planted has now been gained. The sickle. Compare Rev. 14 : 15.

II. THE MUSTARD SEED.—30-32. This parable points chiefly to the outward and visible growth of the kingdom. Whereunto ? Rev. Ver., "How ?" Comparison. compare ? Rev. Ver., "In what parable shall we set it forth ?" This method of asking a question, before beginning a discourse, was practised among Jewish teachers. Mustard seed. It attains a growth from 10 to 12 feet high, and has the appearance of a tree. (See Matt. 13 : 32.) The contrast is indicated between the small seed and the large plant that grows from it. Less than all the seeds. It was the smallest seed the Eastern husbandman usually sowed, and it produced the largest garden or field plant which he grew. Great branches ; great—as compared with other plants. Fowls ; Rev. Ver., "birds." May lodge ; not to nest, but to rest and to feed upon the seeds. The rock-pigeons of Palestine are very fond of the seeds of the mustard plant.

III. THE LEAVEN.—Matt. 13 : 33. While this parable teaches the same general truth as the parable of the mustard seed—large growth from small beginnings,—it also emphasizes the inward and pervasive growth of the kingdom in the heart and life. Leaven ; a piece of sour dough-paste that was used as yeast. "Its effect upon dough is due to minute living organisms disseminated through it in great numbers." Leaven in every other place in the New Testament is used to represent the working of evil. (See 1 Cor. 5 : 6, 7 ; Gal. 5 : 9.) Our Lord had the courage to employ it as an emblem of the best thing in all the world—the kingdom of God entering into the heart and life of the individual and the community. Hid ; by the common process of kneading. Three measures of meal. The measure here mentioned was a Hebrew "seah" containing about a peck and a half. "Three measures", more than the usual quantity needed for the food supply