

## **Seeing the Unseen Kingdom**

### **Mark 4:21-34**

Introduction: Where is the Kingdom?

- This is the question that would have been a key focus for those in Jesus' audience. In these verses today, we see Jesus answering the question by promising us that further understanding will come to his followers, that the Kingdom is present, and that the end result of the Kingdom is far greater than you could ever imagine.

### **I. Understanding is Promised, So Listen Carefully (Mark 4:21-25)**

#### A. The Struggle: Confusion

- Even for the disciples, the parables of Jesus initially left them feeling entirely confused.
- This confusion must have been particularly frustrating in light of the fact that Jesus claimed to bring the Kingdom.

#### B. The "Parable"

- The Lampstand = Christ/Christ's Message
- The Purpose of the Lampstand = to bring light

#### C. The Promise

- Further Revelation (as seen with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection)
- Greater Understanding (John 16:4-15)
  - Although they were initially confused, Jesus promised they would someday understand.
  - Ultimately, we see that understanding brought about through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

### **II. Kingdom Growth is Present, So Be Patient (Mark 4:26-29)**

#### A. The Work is God's Work

- Ultimately God is given credit in the conversion of every individual.
- Similarly, the Kingdom will grow because it is God who is at work.

#### B. The End Result is Certain (future harvest) (Joel 3:9-13)

- The imagery of a future harvest was commonly used to describe the future Day of the Lord...

#### C. Present Growth is Certain (even if you can't see it)

- Farming Analogy: Before fruit can be observed above the ground, there must be growth beneath the soil.
- Kingdom Reality (John 3:5-8)
  - Even though we, as believers, may not be able to see God's hand at work, that does not negate the fact that He truly is working and growing

his Kingdom. We see this lesson taught to doubting believers both in the Old and New Testaments.

- a. Example of Elijah (I Kings 19)
- b. Example of John the Baptist (Matthew 11:2-6)

Point: The Kingdom that Jesus said was “here,” really was “here” and it still is here today. Even if we cannot see the hand of God at work we must remain patient and remember that work is being accomplished all around us.

### **III. The Kingdom Result is Beyond Compare: Be Expectant (4:25-32)**

#### **A. The Beginning: Insignificant**

- i. The Mustard Seed: Not literally the smallest seed on Earth, but used as a symbol of something that starts out incredibly small.
- ii. The Kingdom/Christianity
  - a. The Insignificance of Christ: His ministry, his appearance, etc
  - b. Insignificance of the Disciples: They were entirely unimpressive and far from the type of group one would think would be key in beginning a great Kingdom.
  - c. Insignificant/Offense of the Cross (I Corinthians 1:18ff)

Christopher Hitchens:

“That’s enough of that. It’s time to intervene,” and the best way to do this would be by condemning someone to a human sacrifice somewhere in the least literate parts of the Middle East. Let’s not appeal to the Chinese, for example, where people can read and study evidence and have a civilization. Let’s go to the desert and have another revelation there. This is nonsense. It can’t be believed by a thinking person.”

Point: The beginning of the Kingdom declared from Christ could not have initially appeared as less significant.

#### **B. The End Result: Shockingly Grand**

- i. The Mustard Seed: Results in a bush that can grow up to 15 feet in height
- ii. The Kingdom (Revelation 7:9-17)
  - a. In Size: The Kingdom would eventually be comprised of multitudes from every tribe, tongue, and nation.
    - Seen in history: 1,000 Believers in AD 40, 6 Million in AD 300
  - b. In Experience: The Kingdom ultimately offers freedom from death, shame, sickness, hunger, etc.

Point: As insignificant as the beginning must have appeared, the end results are ultimately beyond anything those disciples could have possibly imagined. We benefit from seeing a glimpse of this truth throughout Church history and we continually look forward to the grand result in eternity.

#### **IV. The Kingdom is Here & it is Coming: Press On (Mark 4:33-34)**

- A. Unbelievers: Stop looking for a quick fix and find salvation in Christ alone.
  - Repent & Believe, for the Kingdom of God is here.
  
- B. Believers: See the unseen Kingdom.
  - i. Be Amazed by the teaching of Christ
  - ii. Be renewed in your patience
  - iii. Be renewed in your sense of anticipation for what is still to come
  - iv. Listen & Grow daily in your faith and understanding