

Sunday, June 12, 2011—Mark Dispensationally Considered—Mark 4:30-41: My Anchor Holds

Mark 4:30-32

- *“And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? 31) It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: 32) But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.”*
- Mark 4:30—Jesus raises the question of what the kingdom of God is comparable to.
- Mark 4:31—Jesus answers his own question by comparing the kingdom of God to a grain of mustard seed that is sown in the earth.
- The verse clearly states that a mustard seed is “less than all the seeds that be in the earth.” This has been the source of much ridicule for Bible critics and Skeptics because there are smaller seeds than a mustard seed.
- “The mustard plant is this parable is thought to be the black mustard, which grows quite large. There are smaller seeds than the mustard, but it is probably smallest of the garden seeds.” (Baker, 115)
- Matthew 13:31-32
- “Jesus is not referring to all the seeds in the world, but only those that a Palestinian farmer sowed in his field. This is made clear by the qualifying phrase, “which a man took, and sowed in his field (verse 31).” And it is a fact that the mustard seed was the smallest of all seeds which the 1st century Jewish farmer sowed in his field. So there is no contradiction between science and Scripture. What Jesus said was literally true in the context in which He said it.” (Geisler, 345)
- Mark 4:32—when this small seed is sown it grows large enough for the birds of the air to lodge within it.
- “The Mustard Plant is a garden herb, and is cultivated for its seed, used as a condiment. It grows wild, often to the height of seven or eight feet.” (Larkin, 89)
- Some claim that the mustard seed cannot grow big enough to house the birds, let alone to a tree size. But this is not so, because there is evidence that some mustard seeds grow into trees about ten feet tall. This would certainly provide enough branch space for a bird to lodge. (Matt. 13:32) (Geisler, 345)

- The figure of fowls finding shelter in the branches of a tree is found elsewhere in Scripture. It is interesting to consider that each time this figure is used it is connected with kingship.
 - Ezekiel 17:22-24, 31:3-6
 - Daniel 4:20-22
- Unfortunately, unlike the parable of the sower, or the wheat and the tares we are not given the interpretation. As one might imagine this has led to much speculation about what the parable of the mustard seed means.
- The statement that the birds lodged in the branches does not mean that they built permanent nests within the Mustard tree, they merely find pleasurable shade in the branches eating the seeds. Mustard is an herb which lasts only for a season; it is not a tree which endures for many years.
- Therefore, the parable speaks of rapid growth that is only temporary in nature. It is important to remember that these parables are not depicting the character of the kingdom after it is established by Christ at His second coming. Rather, they are depicting the nature of the kingdom when it contains a mixture of good and evil. This form of the Kingdom existed for only a few years from the beginning of John's ministry through the early part of the book of Acts.
- Therefore, the birds who find refuge in the branches of the Mustard tree are analogous to the "tares" in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares or the fowls that eat the seeds that fall by the wayside in the Parable of the Sower.
- Mark 4:13—remember what we said about the Parable of the Sower being a gateway parable that unlocks the meaning of the others.

Mark 4:33-34

- ***“And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. 34) But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.”***
- Mark 4:33—there are many more parables recorded in Matthew than can be found here in Mark.
 - Leaven (Matthew 13:33-35)
 - Hid Treasure (Matthew 13:44)
 - The Pearl (Matthew 13:45-46)
 - The Drag-Net (Matthew 13:47-52)
- It is important to remember two things about these parables: 1) they communicated God's Word to the Little Flock, 2) even within this group would be varied levels of understanding (Mark 4:23-25)

- Mark 4:34—once again it is important to remember that Christ spoke in parables so that only those to whom it was given would understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God (Matthew 13:10-17, Mark 4:11-12)

Mark 4:35-41

- ***“And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. 36) And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. 37) And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. 38) And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? 39) And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40) And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? 41) And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”***
- Mark 4:35-36—according to this verse all the teaching contained in this chapter occurred on the same day. Apparently as the day wore on other ships gathered in addition to the people who had gathered on land.
 - Mark 4:1—he began teaching them from the ship.
- Mark 4:37—as they began crossing the sea a storm blew up that threatened the ship.
 - Matthew 8:24
 - Luke 8:23
- Mark 4:38—while all this is going on Jesus is sleeping in the rear of the ship. The Apostles awaken him all freaked out and say don’t you care we are dying?
- Mark 4:39—Jesus rebukes the wind and says to the sea “Peace be still” and a great calm resulted.
 - Psalm 121:3
- Mark 4:40—how often are we like the disciples? How often do attempt to brave the storms of life on our own. How often are we full of fear and anxiety over the things going on in our lives? We to need to walk by faith.
 - II Corinthians 5:7
 - I Thessalonians 2:13—we have the God’s promise that Word of God works effectually in us when we believe it and act by faith.

- Philippians 4:6-7—our promise is peace in the midst of the storm. Jesus like Christ kept that boat safe he is promising to keep our hearts and minds.
- When the storms of life come we need to keep ourselves anchored to God through faith in his written word to us.