

Jesus' Parable in Chronological Order

Three Kingdom of Heaven Parables

Parable #13 — Mark 4:26-29 — The Growing Seed

²⁶ He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷ Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. ²⁸ All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. ²⁹ As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

Parable #14 — Mark 4:30-32 — The Mustard Seed

³⁰ Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. ³² Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade.”

Parable #15 — Matthew 13:33 — The Yeast

³³ He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

³⁴ Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. ³⁵ So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet:

“I will open my mouth in parables,
I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.”

Three Kingdom of Heaven Parables

Jesus had recently told the parable of the four types of soil, then the parable of the weeds among the good plants, and now he tells this parable, recorded only by Mark, about plants growing from seed.

1. Who does the man who plants the seed represent? The seed? The plant it grows into? The soil? Think before you answer.
2. Have you ever tried to grow a plant from seed? Does every seed sprout? Does every seed grow to maturity? What does it take for a plant to grow, and where do you get the things you need?
3. What was the growth process like for the seed in the parable? (4:27-28) Was it quick or gradual? Was it somewhat mysterious and unknown?
4. Does the seed have anything to do with being “born again?” (1 Peter 1:22-25) How about with saving your soul? (James 1:21)
5. How does this parable help you better understand what the kingdom of God is like? How do you feel knowing the message of Christ has a mysterious power in itself?
6. Does this parable imply an obligation for believers to sow the seed, water it, and fertilize it in others, i.e., speak of your faith to others? (1 Corinthians 3:6–9)
7. What small or seemingly insignificant possession is worth a great deal to you? Why?
8. Jesus often referred to mustard seeds in what context? (Matt 17:20, Luke 17:6)
9. This parable must have been confusing to Jesus’ listeners. Everything was wrong. The mustard seed is not especially small, while the yellow mustard plant is only 8" tall and the black mustard bush about 5 feet tall. Explanation please?
10. How does yeast work?
11. Can you summarize these two parables in a simple way as to what they meant to his listeners then and what they mean to us today?
12. Jesus spoke in parables. Are there examples, stories, or illustrations that you can use to help share your faith in Christ with your family or friends?

Three Kingdom of Heaven Parables — Notes for Leader

1. The man represents the planter of the seed who might be Jesus or might, in fact, be a believer planting the seed in a non-believer. The seed represents the word of God (it does not represent a person, which may be a bit confusing, because the mature plant does, in fact, represent a believer). In this parable and the previous ones, people also seem to be initially represented by the soil (“All by itself the soil produces grain...” 4:28).

4. 1 Peter :22-25 - ²² Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. ²³ For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴ For, “All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord stands forever.” [Isaiah 40:6-8]

James 1:21 - Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

6. 1 Corinthians 3:6–9 - ⁶ I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. ⁷ So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸ The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. ⁹ For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.

8. In Matthew 17:20 Jesus says, “I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.” Again in Luke 17:6 we have: He replied, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.”

9. First, why a mustard seed? Probably because it is the most tightly packed seed of all. There is no place for air inside it. As a result it can withstand high pressures and high temperatures. Why refer to the plant as a tree? A mustard seed does not grow into a tree “naturally.” For it to grow into a tree it would have to be a supernatural occurrence. Perhaps Jesus was painting a picture of a supernatural work of God, so that his listeners would envision a supernatural mustard tree that was like nothing they had ever seen before.

As he was talking in this parable they would have been saying, “huh, a mustard tree? Any bird sitting on it’s branches would crush the little bush,” but at the end of the parable they would be saying, “Wow, the kingdom of heaven is really going to be beyond anything we have ever seen before.”

The large branches capable of offering nests for the birds of the air does not

seem to be possible in a mustard herb however large it grew. Birds of the air, or birds of the heaven always symbolize the Satanic powers. Whenever the 'the birds of the air' is used symbolically it means children of the prince of the air. Did Jesus mean by this analogy that the kingdom of God will be in a constant struggle with Satan and his followers? Probably. For more, refer to:
<http://www.acns.com/~mm9n/Kingdom/kingdom4.htm>

11. Jesus used these parables to show that although Christianity had very small beginnings in Jesus, a day was coming when it would grow into a worldwide community of believers and its greatness and impact would be seen by the whole world. Today, if you feel alone in your stand for Christ, realize that God has faithful followers throughout the world and your faith, no matter how small, can join with that of others to accomplish great things.

Courtesy of www.BibleStudyMen.com