



# STORY TIME

Discovering the Parables of Jesus



## Hebrew noun *mashal* מִשָּׁל

- Definition: a parable, proverb, riddle, anecdote, allegory
- It defines the unknown by using what is known.
- The mashal begins where the listener is, but then pushes beyond into a new realm of discovery.

## Greek noun *parabole* παραβάλλω

Definition: a comparing, comparison of one thing with another, likeness, similitude, juxtaposition

# Why is it important to study the Parables?

- One-third of the recorded sayings of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels are in parables.
- If we do not understand the parables, we miss what may be known about the historical Jesus. One must understand parables to know Jesus.
- The parables are designed to portray a reality. In a world of metaphorical redescription, the reality behind the parable is dramatized in word-pictures. (Brad H. Young)
- The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are referred to as the Synoptic Gospels because they include many of the same stories, often in a similar sequence and in similar or sometimes identical wording. They stand in contrast to John, whose content is largely distinct. (Wikipedia)

# 41 Parables of Jesus

PARABLES	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE
Salt of the Earth	Matthew 5:13	Mark 9:50	
Lamp Under a Bowl	Matthew 5:14-16	Mark 4:21-22	Luke 8:16, 11:33
Wise and Foolish Builders	Matthew 7:24-27		Luke 6:47-49
New Cloth on an Old Coat	Matthew 9:16	Mark 2:21	Luke 5:36
New Wine in Old Wineskins	Matthew 9:17	Mark 2:22	Luke 5:37-39
The Two Debtors			Luke 7:40-43
The Sower ✓	Matthew 13:1-23	Mark 4:1-20	Luke 8:4-15
The Good Samaritan ✓			Luke 10:25-37
The Friend at Midnight			Luke 11:5-13
Growing Seed		Mark 4:26-29	
The Rich Fool ✓			Luke 12:13-21
The Watchful Servants		Mark 13:35-37	Luke 12:35-40
The Unfruitful Fig Tree			Luke 13:6-9
The Weeds	Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43		
The Seed	Matthew 13:31-32	Mark 4:26-30	Luke 13:18-19
Yeast	Matthew 13:33		Luke 13:20-21
The Concealed Treasure	Matthew 13:44		
The Pearl	Matthew 13:45-46		
The Casting of the Net into the Sea	Matthew 13:47-50		
Owner of a House	Matthew 13:52		
The Lost Sheep ✓	Matthew 18:12-14		Luke 15:3-7
The Unforgiving Servant ✓	Matthew 18:23-35		
The Vineyard Workers ✓	Matthew 20:1-16		

PARABLES	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE
Lowest Seat at the Feast ✓			Luke 14:7-14
The Great Feast ✓			Luke 14:16-24
Cost of Discipleship			Luke 14:28-33
The Lost Coin			Luke 15:8-10
The Prodigal Son ✓			Luke 15:11-32
The Shrewd Manager			Luke 16:1-13
The Rich Man and Lazarus			Luke 16:19-31
Master and His Servant			Luke 17:7-10
Persistent Widow			Luke 18:1-8
The Two Sons	Matthew 21:28-32		
The Vineyard Owner	Matthew 21:33-44	Mark 12:1-11	Luke 20:9-18
The Marriage Feast	Matthew 22:1-14		
Fig Tree	Matthew 24:32-35	Mark 13:28-31	Luke 21:29-33
Faithful and Wise Servant	Matthew 24:45-51		Luke 12:42-48
The Pharisee and the Tax Collector			Luke 18:9-14
Ten Virgins ✓	Matthew 25:1-13		
The Talent ✓	Matthew 25:14-30		Luke 19:11-27
The Sheep and the Goats	Matthew 25:31-46		



# Six Components of a Parable

1. Prologue – prepares the audience, builds anticipation
2. Introduction of the cast
3. Plot of the story
4. Conflict
5. Conflict resolution
6. Call to decision and/or application

# Matthew 13

And He [Jesus] spoke many things to them in **parables**, saying, “Behold, the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear.” Matthew 13:3-9



And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in **parables**?” Jesus answered them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in **parables**; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.” Matthew 13:10-13



Jesus presented another **parable** to them [the twelve disciples], saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.” Matthew 13:24

\* In Bible times, about 30 lbs. of seed was used to a half acre of land. This is about half the quantity of seed normally used today.

- <https://womeninthebible.net/bible-archaeology/farming-agriculture/>



Because of its usefulness, grain was one of the first crops to be cultivated. Grain is useful for making flour, cereals, porridge, and can even be eaten raw. The grass can be used as food for cattle, for building material, or woven into mats and baskets. The chaff, however, is utterly worthless and must be separated out from the grain.



In biblical times, the strains of wheat most commonly used were **emmer** and **einkorn** wheat. These strains have a thick outer skin and require a laborious process of tempering (soaking) of the grains to remove it, accessing the inner portion of the grain, which is ground into flour. By the time of the Roman Empire, most of the world had switched to using hard wheat (*Triticum durum*) to make bread, and now, almost 2,000 years later, civilization has again switched to a different strain, soft wheat (*Triticum aestivum*), to make bread.

The reason wheat has remained the predominant grain over the ages can be found in its chemical composition. Of all the grains in nature, wheat has the highest concentration of gluten proteins, resulting in dough that is easy to work with and in bread that rises well and retains its shape.

Growing wheat has always been a challenging endeavor. Aside from the many pests that infest wheat, invading weeds crowd out much of the crop and reduce yield.

“But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed **tares** among the **wheat**, and went away. But when the **wheat** sprouted and bore grain, then the **tares** became evident also.” Matthew 13:25-26

- The weed that Yeshua was describing was annoyingly familiar to the farmers of His day; what agronomists today refer to as Darnel or Lolium Temulentum. It is a species of rye grass that in its early stages is so similar in appearance to wheat that only a trained eye can make the distinction. That is why farmers must allow both to grow together. They only become distinct from one another at harvest time when the grain itself appears. Darnel isn't just a counterfeit – it is poisonous to man and animals! In tiny amounts, it produces intoxication. But both human and livestock deaths have occurred from eating Darnel because of the parasite fungus it contains.





# Wheat and Tares



Tares closely resemble wheat but are poisonous to human beings. They are indistinguishable from wheat until the final fruit appears. Farmers would weed out tares just before the wheat harvest.

<https://www.jeremiahscall.org/post/the-wheat-and-the-ares-are-ripening>

Notice that nobody is being reprimanded in this story for having been asleep. People need to sleep. Unfortunately, nefarious acts such as this almost always occur under cover of night. Those who perpetrate evil usually do so by stealth to avoid being caught. And evil abounds in this fallen, satanically-influenced world. If anyone doubts that sin is real, then explain why we have to lock our houses, our cars, and our valuables. It's why we need pin numbers and passwords. It's also why nations need armies. It's why we need law enforcement, and attorneys, judges, courts, and prisons.

- Rabbi Glenn Harris <https://shema.com/the-parables-of-yeshua-wheat-and-weeds-and-mustard-seeds-16298/>



Jesus continues the **parable**...

“The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good [wheat] seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ The slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them [the tares] up?’” Matthew 13:27-28

“But he said, ‘No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.” ’ ” Matthew 13:29-30

\* The tare (Darnel) root so intertwines with that of the wheat that the farmer cannot separate them, without plucking up both, “till the time of harvest.”

- Fausset's Bible Dictionary



Jesus said... Let both wheat and tares grow. For now.

Some people today focus only on the ripe fields while ignoring the devastation of the enemy on the rampage, while others become overwhelmed with evil and miss the extraordinary outpouring of revelation that is coming to so many at this time.

But wisdom recognizes both simultaneously.

The parable of the wheat and the tares is not static – the picture is dynamic with the good and the evil growing together.

We can expect as time goes on for evil to increase in seriousness and in volume.

We can also expect to see more of God's glory here on this earth, more people coming to faith, more demonstrations of God's mighty power and salvation.

He [Jesus] presented another **parable** to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.” Matthew 13:31-32





Wild mustard, known as *Sinapsis Arvensis*, a tiny yellow flower that grows in masses in fields, along road sides and abandoned building sites in Israel. “The flowers usually grow to about waist-high but I have walked through fields where the mustard flowers touched my shoulders.”

<https://www.letterfromisrael.com/2012/03/wild-mustard-flowers-of-israel.html>



- Yeshua borrowed imagery from the book of Daniel to describe a vast political empire containing many nations.

- <https://torahportions.ffoz.org/disciples/synoptic-gospels/parable-of-the-mustard-seed.html>

- King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had a dream about a tree that had grown so large that the birds of the air rested in it. However, the tree was chopped down in an instant. Daniel's interpretation revealed that all the kingdoms of man will collapse, even mighty Nebuchadnezzar's.
- God's kingdom is different. Although the inauguration of this kingdom was unimpressive, it would grow until it reached its final, glorious form, until the birds of the heavens nest in its branches (Ezekiel 31:6).

- Rev. Aaron L. Garriott <https://tabletalkmagazine.com/article/2020/02/the-parables-of-the-mustard-seed-and-leaven/>



“Then Daniel, whose name is Belteshazzar, was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him. The king responded and said, ‘Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you.’ Belteshazzar replied, ‘My lord, if only the dream applied to those who hate you and its interpretation to your adversaries! The tree that you saw, which became large and grew strong, whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth and whose foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt and in whose branches the birds of the sky lodged— it is you, O king; for you have become great and grown strong, and your majesty has become great and reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the earth. Daniel 4:19-22

Though its seed is so small, a mustard plant grows to a great height (12–15 feet) in one season, and is a nesting place for the birds of the air. Jesus did not directly interpret this parable.

Its meaning may be that the sphere of professing followers would have a small beginning but would grow rapidly into a large entity. This group could include both believers and unbelievers, as indicated by the birds lodging in the branches of the tree. Other interpreters feel, however, that the presence of the birds is not an indication of evil but simply an expression of prosperity and bounty.



The Parable of the Mustard Seed is contained in all three of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 13:31–32; Mark 4:30–32; Luke 13:18–19). The point of the Parable of the Mustard Seed is that something big and blessed—the kingdom of God—had humble beginnings. How significant could the short ministry of Christ be? He had but a handful of followers, He was a man of no rank and without means, and He lived in what everyone considered a backwater region of the world. The life and death of Christ did not catch the world's attention any more than a mustard seed would lying on the ground by the road. But this was a work of God. What seemed inconsequential at first grew into a movement of worldwide influence, and no one could stop it (see Acts 5:38–39). The influence of the kingdom in this world would be such that everyone associated with it would find a benefit—pictured as the birds perched on the branches of the mature mustard plant.

Elsewhere in Scripture, the kingdom of God is also pictured as a tree. In a prophecy in Ezekiel, the Lord God promises to plant a shoot “on a high and lofty mountain” (Ezekiel 17:22). This small sprig “will produce branches and bear fruit and become a splendid cedar. Birds of every kind will nest in it; they will find shelter in the shade of its branches” (Ezekiel 17:23). This messianic prophecy foretells the growth of Christ’s kingdom from very small beginnings to a sizable, sheltering place.

The history of the church has shown Jesus’ Parable of the Mustard Seed to be true. The church has experienced an explosive rate of growth through the centuries. It is found worldwide and is a source of sustenance and shelter for all who seek its blessing. In spite of persecution and repeated attempts to stamp it out, the church has flourished. And it’s only a small picture of the ultimate manifestation of the kingdom of God, when Jesus returns to earth to rule and reign from Zion.



He [Jesus] spoke another **parable** to them, “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks [measures] of flour until it was all leavened.” Matthew 13:33

- A handful of yeast eventually permeates a large amount of flour.
- God’s work, the kingdom of heaven, may appear unimpressive at first, but appearances can be deceptive, and no one will be able to ignore it in the end. The disciples must be patient. Human valuation misses the point; little becomes great when God is at work.

The amount of flour is the most surprising element of the parable. “Three measures” is the usual English translation for the original Greek “tria sata” which is 1.125 bushels of flour. That’s a ridiculously large amount of flour! Translating into kitchen measures, 1.125 bushels is 144 cups of flour. Using a common recipe for basic white bread that uses 5 ½ cups of flour, 144 cups is enough to make 26 batches of bread of two loaves each, giving us a total of 52 loaves, each weighing about a pound and a half. If we’re frugal, we can get 16 slices out of a loaf, yielding 832 slices, enough for 416 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

What’s the message of the story? The kingdom of heaven is like a woman who wants to do more than feed her family. The kingdom announced by Jesus is like a woman who wants to feed the village. The kingdom of God is like a woman who wants to feed the world. The kingdom is for everybody.



# In the Bible leaven (yeast) often represents evil

- Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses; for whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. Exodus 12:15
- No grain offering, which you bring to the Lord, shall be made with leaven, for you shall not offer up in smoke any leaven or any honey as an offering by fire to the Lord. Leviticus 2:11
- It shall not be baked with leaven. I have given it as their share from My offerings by fire; it is most holy, like the sin offering and the guilt offering. Leviticus 6:17
- Then Moses spoke to Aaron, and to his surviving sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, “Take the grain offering that is left over from the Lord’s offerings by fire and eat it unleavened beside the altar, for it is most holy. Leviticus 10:12
- And Jesus said to them, “Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Matthew 16:6
- And He was giving orders to them, saying, “Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.” Mark 8:15
- Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of people had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, He began saying to His disciples first of all, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Luke 12:1
- Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 1 Corinthians 5:7–8
- A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. Galatians 5:9

(On the other hand...) A morsel of yeast is seemingly engulfed and consumed in the larger lump of dough; however, the leaven actually ends up permeating the flour, transforming the dough and making it rise. So too will the Gospel, with slow growth at first, penetrate and transform society. John Chrysostom comments, "The leaven, though it is buried, is not destroyed. Little by little it transmutes the whole lump into its own condition. This happens with the gospel."



All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in **parables**, and He did not speak to them without a **parable**. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet [Asaph in Psalm 78:2]: “I will open My mouth in **parables**; I will utter things hidden since the foundation of the world.” Matthew 13:34-35

Then He [Jesus] left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, “Explain to us the **parable** of the tares of the field.”

Matthew 13:36



And He [Jesus] said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man [Messiah Yeshua], and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels.” Matthew 13:37-39





At harvest, usually the months of May or June, grain must be cut with a sickle, gathered into bundles, and then pounded and threshed to separate the chaff from the grain. Threshing of wheat, typically done in flat areas, is a symbol in the Bible for judgment (Micah 4:12). Once the wheat is threshed it must be winnowed, the sorting of worthless chaff from the useable grain. The wheat is thrown into the air, and the light chaff blows away while the heavier grain falls. The winnowing of wheat, like threshing, is used to represent God's judgment of sin (Matt. 3:12; Luke 3:17).







# Understanding the Parable of Wheat and Tares

- The sower / planter = Messiah Yeshua (Jesus)
- The field = the world
- The good seed = “sons of the kingdom”; followers of Yeshua
- The weeds = “sons of the evil one”; unbelievers
- The enemy who sowed them = Satan (the devil)
- The harvest = End of the (present) Age
- The harvesters / reapers = angels
- The barn = the Messianic Kingdom and heaven



Yeshua is teaching that corruption would inevitably come into the world, courtesy of Satan, and that one of the forms it would take would be counterfeit believers. The Church, Messiah's Holy Community, will triumph – of this we have His promise. But at the moment, evil is running rampant in the world. The enemy is shrewd and stealthy; he does some of his most fiendish work in the realm of religion. To the undiscerning, these tares will have all the outward appearance of genuine faith. As much as we might wish to root out everyone that isn't on the level, that task is not ours to do, nor is this the time. Yeshua told us it would fall to the angels to do that, and at the end of the age. And remember, the field is the world, not just churches.

And He [Jesus] said, “So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age.” Matthew 13:40

- Apparently, God’s good angels are anxious to rid the world of all the evildoers. Like us, they have to wait for the appointed time. At the End of the Age, they will be sent out to gather up and take away all the wicked and cast them into the fiery judgment. Those who remain are the righteous, and they will flourish in Messiah’s Kingdom forever.
- Rabbi Glenn Harris <https://shema.com/the-parables-of-yeshua-wheat-and-weeds-and-mustard-seeds-16298/>



“The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.” Matthew 13:41-43

\*Whatever the ambiguities on earth, there will be no uncertainty at the end of the age. – New Bible Commentary

# **At the second coming of Jesus, the angels will gather the wicked and throw them into judgment**

- “So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”  
Matthew 13:49–50
- For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power 2 Thessalonians 1:6–9



# **The landowner in Yeshua's parable didn't want his servants to weed out the tares because:**

1. The tares are nearly indistinguishable from the wheat throughout most of their lifecycle. A worker, being unable to tell the difference, might pull up wheat and tares indiscriminately.
2. The roots of the tares intertwine with those of the wheat, so that, even if correctly identified, removing them might still remove neighboring wheat plants.
3. When they begin to ripen, the tares finally become evident to even the most untrained worker. All of the plants can be cut together and the tares separated out by hand.

There was a time not long ago when the 'tares' did a pretty good job masquerading as 'wheat' and blending in. But today people in the world have only contempt for followers of Jesus, and don't want to get along or blend in. In a weird kind of reversal, today it's the wheat (sincere but misguided believers) thinking the way to win souls for Messiah is to blend in with the tares.



The parable of the sprouting seed, the parable of the mustard seed, and the parable of the leaven all speak of a small inception which sets an irresistible process of growth into motion. Rabbi Yeshua wanted to adjust the people's eschatology. The kingdom was not going to happen all at once. Universal peace was not scheduled for the immediate future. Those who were expecting Messiah to bring world peace and fix humanity's problems in a single day were in for a disappointment. He compared His work to a man planting seed who must wait until the harvest, to a mustard seed which starts small but grows large, or to the little bit of leaven which permeates the whole batch of dough. All three examples speak of small beginnings. All three examples set a process in motion which results in a much larger yield. Yeshua was telling them, "The kingdom I am proclaiming may not look like much now, and it may not be without problems, but this is only the beginning. One day it will be universal."

Yeshua's followers anticipated the Messiah leading a military campaign to overthrow Rome and establish an empire ruling over all nations. Yeshua wanted to reorient their perspective and convey a sense of the kingdom that was beginning prior to that day of final redemption. He wanted His followers to take hold of the Messianic Age in this present age. He considered the repentance movement that He and John the Immerser had begun within Israel as the seed that would blossom one day into the Messianic Era. Like the mustard seed, the followers of Yeshua seemed insignificant. Like the tiny mustard seed, however, the movement was destined to grow until it became the dominant plant in the garden. In Israel, wild mustard spreads rapidly, and in only a few generations, its tall yellow flowers quickly overtake an entire field. Likewise, Yeshua foresaw a day when the tiny kingdom movement He started would dominate the world. When the Messianic Era arrives, the kingdom will dominate the world like wild mustard that has spread to dominate a field. It will be like a large tree in which the birds nest. As in Daniel, the birds represent the various nations contained within an empire.



This parable about wheat and tares is about genuine believers and counterfeits. Until Christ returns, both will be allowed to grow together. At first, it's not obvious which harvest each one belonged to. It's only apparent when the crop starts to ripen. This is what we are witnessing today in the world. The harvest is ripening and bearing fruit. The world will know us by our fruit, either righteousness or lawlessness. It is becoming increasingly clear who is for Christ and who is against. The harvests are ripening and showing themselves plainly, which indicates we are approaching the time when the reapers will come and separate the harvests.

**As the Kingdom of Messiah Jesus approaches,  
would my life be called “wheat” or “tare”?**

**Am I helping build the kingdom of heaven  
or helping choke it out?**

**What am I?**

**What do I want to be?**