List of the Parables
—Stories that Jesus told

The list of parables below makes a helpful study reference to the parables that Jesus told. It helps you to organize your study and teaching of Christ's parables. Each blue heading links you to the appropriate lesson.

Introduction to the Parables That Jesus Told

Seven Themes
This lesson sets out the seven main concepts which Jesus teaches in his parables.

Great Mistakes
This lesson is about how the parables highlight the great and terrible mistakes that people make.

What is a Parable
This lesson explains the nature of a parable, and how it should be interpreted.

Why Did Jesus Speak in Parables?
This lesson explains Christ’s reasons for using parables.

Stories For All Peoples
This lesson points out the remarkable fact that the parables Jesus told are understood by people of all classes and cultures.

List of Parables on Themes 1 and 2

The Kindness and the Severity of God

Parables in the Sermon on the Mount
Word pictures in Matthew chapters 5 through 7.

The Unforgiving Slave
The Unforgiving Slave (Matthew 18:21-35) refused to forgive little though he was forgiven of much. Consequently his debt was reinstated. This parable illustrates both the goodness and severity of God.

The Lost is Found
In the parables of the Lost Sheep Lost Coin and Lost Son (Luke 15:4-32), there was great rejoicing when the lost was found. These parables illustrate the goodness of God.

The God Who Cares and Answers Prayers
The parables of the Friends at Midnight and the Persistent Widow (Luke 11:5-13, Luke 18:1-8), further illustrate the compassion and kindness of God and show the need to seek it.

Seeking or Rejecting Grace
The parables of the Workers in the Vineyard and the Marriage of the King’s Son
(Matthew 20:1-16, Matthew 22:1-14) further illustrate God’s mercy and grace. (See also the Vine and Branches John 15:1-5)

The Banquet Parables
The parables of the Embarrassed Guest the Luncheon for the Poor and the Slighted Invitation (Luke 14:7-24) also show God’s goodness, but emphasise that we ought to respond with humility.

Invited and Compelled
The parable of the Slighted Invitation (Luke 14:16-24) is about people invited to a dinner. When they refused the invitation, other people were rounded up and compelled to attend. What is this saying about grace and choice?

List of Parables on Theme 3

Obedience, Fruitfulness, and Stewardship

Two builders, Two Sons
The parables of the Two Builders and the Two Sons (Matthew 7:24-27, Matthew 21:28-32) illustrate theme 3 of the parables, namely true obedience to God’s word, and not mere lip-service.

Bearing Fruit
The parables of the Vine and the Branches, the Barren Fig Tree, and the Sower of Seed (John 15:1-6, Luke 13:6-9, Luke 8:5-15) illustrate theme 3 of the parables, namely obedience to God. These three parables highlight the need for fruitfulness.

Stewards of God’s Grace
The parables of the Talents, the Wicked Tenant Farmers, and the Unrighteous Steward (Matthew 25:14-30, Matthew 21:33-46, Luke 16:1-13), also illustrate theme 3 of the parables, namely obedience to God. These three parables highlight the need for stewardship.

List of Parables on Themes 4 and 5

The value and universality of the kingdom of God

Seven Short Kingdom Parables
The parables of the Hidden treasure, Pearl of Great Price, Yeast, Mustard seed, Household Treasures, Sprouting seed, and the Dragnet, (Matthew 13, Mark 4, Luke 13) picture the very great value of the kingdom of God, and its universal nature

The Parable of the Tares
The parable about the Tares in the Field (Matthew 13:24-30, Matthew 13:36-43) where good seed was sown concentrates on the last three themes of the parables. The kingdom is a spiritual and worldwide kingdom in which God’s people are recognised by their good hearts

The Good Samaritan
The parable about the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) also encompasses the last three themes, but particularly shows that God looks on the heart not the outward person, and God recognises justice, mercy, and kindness
List of Parables on Themes 6 and 7

The Weak Made Strong, God Looks on the Heart

Hearts Awry
The parables about the Two Debtors, the Pharisee and Tax Collector, and the Whited Tombs (Luke 7:36-47 Luke 18:9-14, Mt 23:27-28) illustrate how the Pharisees looked down upon others and promoted themselves as righteous, yet their own hearts lacked humility, justice, and love.

Two Rich Men

List of Other Parables

About The Great Mistakes

Empty House, Empty Lamps
The parables of the Empty House and the Foolish Virgins (Matthew 12:43-45, Matthew 25:1-13) are about failure to respond to God's kind invitation, to see the sin in oneself, and to get ready for judgment.

Dividing the World In Two
The parables of the Two Gates and the Sheep and Goats (Matthew 7:13-14, Matthew 25:31-46) show how we must choose now which of the two multitudes we will be among in eternity.

The Sheepfold Parables
The parables of the Good Shepherd and the Sheep Gate (John 10:1-30) contrast the Shepherd to a stranger, a thief, or a hireling, and show how we must ensure that we follow him and not them.

Various Lists of Parables

You may have noticed that not all lists of parables are the same. Of course they will all include the Good Samaritan, the Sower of Seed, and other passages that are quite clearly parables. However there will be certain parables included on one list that are omitted from another.

Each list maker has slightly different criteria as to what shall be deemed a parable. For example, the tower builder who does not count the cost (Luke 14:28-29) could well be regarded as a parable, but not every list includes it. The same may be said for many brief word pictures which Jesus uttered, and their inclusion or omission from a list of parables is somewhat arbitrary.

It would be arrogant to claim that we will study every parable uttered by Jesus and recorded in scripture, for that would mean having to be dogmatic about whether or not certain sayings of Jesus are parables. So I will claim no more than that our study of the parables will be comprehensive.