



Mustard seeds against a scale of 20 millimetres (3/4 inch)

Skeptics, critics and evolutionists say the Bible contradicts science in Jesus' parable of the mustard seed, where he says **"a mustard seed . . . is the smallest of all seeds sown upon the earth"** (**Mark 4:31; Matthew 13:31,32**). Does the Bible contradict science about the mustard seed? Let's examine Jesus parable in **Mark 4:31,32** in detail, using the Bible Hub Study Bible, which is quoted in italics. The scriptures are in bold type.

"It is like a mustard seed

The mustard seed is often used in biblical texts to symbolize small beginnings that lead to significant outcomes. In the context of Jesus' parables, it represents the Kingdom of God starting from humble origins and growing into something vast and influential. The mustard plant, common in the region of Palestine, was known for its rapid growth and large size compared to its tiny seed. This imagery would have been familiar to Jesus' audience, who understood agriculture and the potential of seeds.

which is the smallest of all seeds

*While not literally the smallest seed known today, the mustard seed was the smallest seed used by farmers in the region at the time, making it a fitting metaphor for Jesus' teaching. This phrase emphasizes the contrast between the seed's initial insignificance and its eventual impact. The use of hyperbole here serves to highlight the miraculous nature of the Kingdom's growth. This concept is echoed in other scriptures, such as **Matthew 17:20**, where faith as*

small as a mustard seed can move mountains.

sown upon the earth

The act of sowing seeds is a common biblical metaphor for spreading the word of God or the gospel. In the parable, the earth represents the world where the Kingdom of God is being established. The imagery of sowing also connects to the broader theme of spiritual growth and the spread of God's influence. This phrase can be linked to the Great Commission in [Matthew 28:19-20](#), where Jesus instructs His disciples to spread His teachings to all nations, symbolizing the sowing of the gospel across the earth.

But after it is planted

This phrase highlights the beginning of the growth process, symbolizing the initial act of faith or the establishment of the Kingdom of God. In biblical context, planting often represents the sowing of God's word or the inception of spiritual life ([Matthew 13:3-9](#)). The act of planting is a deliberate and hopeful action, anticipating future growth and fruitfulness.

it grows to be the largest of all garden plants

The mustard seed, though small, grows into a large plant, symbolizing the unexpected and miraculous expansion of God's Kingdom. This growth can be seen as a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies about the Kingdom's expansion ([Ezekiel 17:22-24](#)). Historically, the mustard plant was known in the region for its rapid and extensive growth, making it a fitting metaphor for the Kingdom's surprising and overwhelming development.

and puts forth great branches

The imagery of great branches signifies strength, stability, and the ability to support life. In a spiritual sense, this can be seen as the church's growth and the spread of the Gospel, providing support and refuge for believers. This imagery is reminiscent of the tree in [Daniel 4:10-12](#), which provided shelter and sustenance, symbolizing a powerful kingdom.

so that the birds of the air nest in its shade.

Birds nesting in the branches represent the inclusion and protection offered by the Kingdom of God. This phrase echoes Old Testament imagery, such as in [Ezekiel 31:6](#), where birds find shelter in the branches of a mighty tree, symbolizing nations finding refuge in a powerful kingdom. In a New Testament context, it suggests the universal reach of the Gospel, welcoming all peoples and nations into the safety and rest of God's Kingdom.—Bible Hub Study Bible

Jesus was teaching using parables, which draw from real life facts and experiences, but are not entirely literal stories. Jesus was not giving a scientific lecture about botanical plants. His point in the parable was that something very small can grow into something very large. Jesus, as he did in all his parables, used something that was very familiar to his listeners as a platform upon which to teach them something they didn't know, but needed to know.

By an objective analysis of all the relevant facts, we can see that the Bible does not contradict science about the mustard seed.