

Notes for Matthew -Chapter 13 (Page 1 of 6)

Introduction - Jesus and Parables.

1. The spiritual rich get richer and the spiritually poor get poorer.
 - a. "He (Jesus) replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away. (Luke 19:26, NIV)
 - b. Speaking in parables was Jesus way of separating those who want to follow Jesus from those who didn't. God desires that we seek him and learn the meaning of these parables.
 - i. "I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me." (Proverbs 8:17 NIV)
2. Chapter 13 is mostly Jesus talking in parables. There are seven parables in Matthew Chapter 13.
 - a. Parables are stories and illustrations designed to make a point.
 - b. The good news of Chapter 13 is Jesus explains why he speaks in parables:
 - i. "He (Jesus) replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you (i.e., my disciples), but not to them (non-believers). Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. "" (Verses 11-12 of Chapter 13).
3. What is the purpose of the Parables?
 - a. Some are to illustrate life here on earth as followers in Jesus.
 - b. Some are to illustrate eternal judgments and rewards.
 - c. Some are to illustrate how Jesus is to separate believers from non-believers.
 - d. Others illustrate the Gospel message itself, of Jesus paying the price of our sins.
4. Some of the parables illustrate that in heaven, Christians are a "special subset" of those in heaven.
 - a. "But you (believers in Jesus) are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1st Peter 2:9, NIV)

Chapter 13 Verses 1-2: That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. ² Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore.

1. There are some people who believe this is a collection of parables that Matthew combined in Chapter 13. Notice the opening words of Verse 1: "That same day".
2. Jesus sat in a boat a little distance off the shore. It prevented the crowds from thronging him.
3. The water surface acts as a natural sound amplifier to the shores.

Verses 3-9: Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop--a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. ⁹ He who has ears, let him hear."

1. Now the good news is the Jesus explains this parable. It makes my job easy. ☺
 - a. Verse 18 says, ""Listen then to what the parable of the sower means:"
2. Let's break up this paragraph with the verses that tie together with these verses.
 - a. Verse 3: A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.
 - b. Verse 19: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.
3. The first thing we notice is that Jesus is not being literal (about birds and seeds).
4. Notice is that the "seed" refers to the Gospel message.
5. Notice that "birds" are symbolically used to describe Satan/demons.

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Verses 3-9 (cont.): Tying the verses with Jesus' explanation of the verses later in the chapter.

6. Verses 5-6: Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.

Vs. 20-21: The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.

- a. For a plant to survive winds and storms, it must develop strong roots.
 - b. The same applies to our spiritual condition. That is how we survive persecution.
 - c. We can survive through persecution by being "rooted" in prayer and God's word.
7. Verse 7: Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.

Verse 22: The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.

- a. The "thorns" represent the worries of life and the deceitfulness of wealth.
 - b. Jesus said, "Anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (Matthew 10:38-39, NIV)
 - c. Jesus is comparing "worrying" and riches as "choking" our relationship with Jesus.
 - d. Worrying is the opposite of faith. Worrying is taking responsibility upon yourself that God never intended for you to take.
8. Verse 8: Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop--a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

Verse 23: But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

- a. To live a life in service to God is to do greater things than what can be accomplished by living for your own set of goals or accomplishments.
 - b. "I (Jesus) tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." (John 14:12)
9. Some commentators take the "4 soils" parable applies to Christian "good days" and "bad days".
 - a. Jesus describes this parable being about different types of people, not about "good and bad days" for the Christian. Therefore I disagree with this view.

Verses 10-12: The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" ¹¹ He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. ¹² Whoever has will be given more, and he will have abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.

1. The disciples are asking why Jesus is talking in parables and not blunt sentences.
2. This is Jesus "weeding out" program, to separate the true believers from those who don't care.

Verses 13-15: This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. ¹⁴ In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: " `You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. ¹⁵ For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'

1. Verse 15 is a quote of Isaiah 6, Verses 9-10.

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Verses 13-15 (cont.):

2. Let me paraphrase Isaiah, "The gospel message is obvious for anyone who hears it. If you think about it logically it makes sense. But since you willfully choose to reject Jesus, I God-the-Father, will make your hearts (not your heads!) "cold" to understanding the message."
3. Whether we like it or not, God's redemptive plan is saying in effect, "If you choose to willfully reject God, I'll make it harder and harder for you to change".

Verse 16: But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.

1. Jesus says that we are to be grateful that God choose us and have eternal salvation. I don't know why God choose me and not others, but I am grateful He did and I want to live out my life here on earth in gratitude of that fact.

Verse 17: For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

1. Christians are a "special subset" of all those who get to spend eternity in the presence of God in heaven. In that sense, we are blessed because we get to understand God's greater purpose.
2. Notice the phrase "many prophets and righteous men".
 - a. This indicates to me that many Old Testament people spend eternity with God.
 - b. The Old Testament Prophets had "some" understanding of Jesus and the Messiah.
 - c. They may not have fully comprehended it, but they wanted to see it.

Verses 18-23 have already been discussed as the parable explanation of Verses 3-8.

Verses 24-30: Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. ²⁷ "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' ²⁸ " 'An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' ²⁹ " 'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.' "

1. This is the only other parable where Jesus gives an explanation (in Verses 37-43).
2. Verse 24: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field."
Verses 37-38a: "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom."
 - a. Verse 37 says the one sowing the "good seed" is the Son of Man. This is a title of Jesus.
 - b. The seed itself represents the "sons of the kingdom", which is Christian believers.
 - c. The field is the world, which means the people of the world.
3. Verse 25: "But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away."
Verse 38b-39a: "The weeds are the sons of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil."
 - a. The "enemy" itself is the devil. The "weeds" the sons of the evil one.
 - b. Therefore, are the weeds referring to demons or non-believers? Verse 25 says that the enemy (devil) sowed "weeds" among the wheat. Therefore, I would argue that the "weeds" are referring to false believers in the church.
 - c. Notice it says, "while everyone was sleeping" is when the enemy sowed. Could this refer to the church having "its guard down" so false believers crept in?

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Verses 26-29: When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. ²⁷ "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' ²⁸ "An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' ²⁹ "No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them.

1. There is a wheat look-alike called a "tare" in most translations. The NIV calls it "weeds".
2. When they grow, they look alike. It isn't until both are fully budded that one can tell them apart.
3. The same is for false-believers. They will become obvious by their conduct. (See 2nd Tim. Chap. 3)
4. Verse 28 ends with the "owner's servants" asking, "Where then did the weeds come from?"
 - a. We as believers don't know how those false prophets got within our mist.
 - b. Notice the believers are turning to God to solve the problem of the false believers. I believe this analogy can be compared to a prayer.
5. Verse 28 asks the question, "Do you want us to go and pull them (the weeds) up"? Jesus says no.
 - a. Jesus is saying don't separate the "wheat from the weeds" because you may accidentally kill the wheat while doing so. I believe Jesus is saying don't judge for eternal salvation.
 - b. Don't kill someone for being a non-believer, unless you accidentally kill a believer or one who will turn and be a believer. (Remember Christians "burned heretics" at one time!)
6. The explanation of the parable -- Verses 39b-43: "The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels." ⁴⁰ "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴² They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear."
 - a. This leads to a whole discussion about when we are judged. Are we judged when we first die? How does time work in heaven?
 - b. My personal view is that time doesn't exist in heaven. God created all things including time. Therefore, when we die, we enter the "eternal now". Time still exists on earth, but not in heaven. This is how everyone, past, present and future can be judged "at the same time". There is no time in heaven, just the "eternal now".
 - c. I spoke in my introduction about the fact there are two judgments in heaven, a 1,000 years apart. I should explain further: If there is no "time" from God's perspective. Therefore the first resurrection of believers is a continual thing from Jesus' time until the tribulation.
 - d. Some cult groups like the Jehovah Witnesses do not believe in a literal hell. Verse 42 teaches the opposite.
 - e. Verse 43 says, "Then the righteous will shine like the sun..."
 1. Jesus is teaching that once the influence of sin is taken away, we can "shine better".
7. The main point of this parable is that you can't tell who is and who is not saved, as we can't read people's thoughts. Therefore, in that particular issue, we are not to judge people's salvation.

Verses 31-32: He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. ³² Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches."

1. A bad interpretation of this parable is, "The church as like that mustard seed. The church then grows into a tree-like mustard bush where birds can make nests."
 - a. This interpretation is that the church will grow into tree as the gospel message spreads.
2. The previous and the next parable both are about false-believers in the church.
 - a. If you read this parable in context, I believe this parable is also about false-believers,

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Verses 31-32: (cont.)

3. To explain this parable, let's look at Jesus' comment about parables in Mark's Gospel:
 - a. Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this (4-soil) parable? How then will you understand any parable? (Mark 4:13, NIV)
 - i. This means that some of the phrases and word-pictures used in the "4-soil" parables apply as word-pictures in the other parables as well.
 - b. Back in Verse 19, in the 4-soil parable, "birds are bad" and represent Satan.
 - c. These false-believers are the "birds in our big mustard bush", which is the church.
 - d. Jesus is saying that as the church gets big, there will be false believers within the church.

Verse 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."

1. The New King James is more literal: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened." (Matthew 13:33b, NKJV).
2. The "three measures of meal" is important to a Jewish-mind (the 12 disciples) because it represents the "fellowship offering". This is a friendship greeting when guests come over.
 - a. To a Jew of that day, "three measures of meal" is a symbolic way of greeting guests.
 - b. In Genesis 18, God appeared to Abraham and Abraham then entertained three angels. In Verse 6 of Chapter 18, Abraham told his wife to prepare "three measures of meal".
3. Whenever you read of leaven (or yeast, same thing) in the bible it is a bad thing. It represents sin.
 - a. Part of the Jewish Passover ritual is to remove all leaven from the food. (Exodus 12:19)
4. The "3 measures of meal" with leaven represents the growth of the church with sin mixed in.
 - a. The history of the Christian church is a mixture of great growth and horrible atrocities.

Verses 34-35: 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."

1. Verse 34 is an interruption of the parables for Matthew to make a comment.
2. Matthew's point here is that the Old Testament predicted the Messiah would speak in parables.
3. Matthew is quoting Psalm 78:2 and saying it is about Jesus. (Notice Psalms contain prophecy!)

Verses 36-43 are being skipped as we discussed them as part of Verses 24-29.

Verse 44: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."

1. Jesus said in Verses 38: "The field is the world".
2. The man who "sold all he had to buy it" is Jesus himself.
3. The Hebrew term translated "special treasure" is used 4 times in the Old Testament (Exodus 19:5, Deut. 7:6, Deut.14:2, and Psalm 135:4). That particular idiom is not used in the New Testament.
4. I believe "a special treasure" is only referring to Jewish believers. "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you (Jewish nation) shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. (Exodus 19:5, NKJV).

Verses 45-46: Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶ When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

1. The key is the fact that "pearls" are not "kosher". Oysters (shellfish) were a forbidden food.
2. My personal theory is that because pearls are "not for Jews", this verse ties to Gentile believers.
3. Verse 44 focuses on a "special treasure", which is an Old Testament idiom for Jewish believers.
4. Verse 45-46 focuses on pearls, which I believe focuses on non-Jewish (Gentile) believers.

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Verses 47-50: "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish.⁴⁸ When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away.⁴⁹ This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous⁵⁰ and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

1. From Verse 36 and onward, Jesus is talking only to his disciples and not to the crowd.
 - a. First he gives the explanation of the "wheat and the tares". (Verses 36-43)
 - b. Next he gives the "special treasure" parable and the "pearl" parable. (Verses 44-46)
 - c. Finally, he is given this "fisherman" parable. (Verses 47-50).
 - d. Notice that Jesus gives the explanation for this parable within these verses.
2. This parable is similar to the "wheat and the weeds/tares" in that it is talking about how people will be ultimately judged for eternity. Notice the first two words are "once again".
3. The application is to "not to rush to judgment on anybody". God knows who will be saved and we don't. This means for us to not give up on people and to not judge people's eternal salvation.

Verse 51: "Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked. "Yes," they replied.

1. I've always wondered if the disciples were sincere in that answer or if they were too intimidated to tell Jesus they didn't get it. I wish they would have said no and Jesus would comment further!

Vs. 52: He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."

1. To paraphrase Verse 52, God holds us accountable for what we know as believers.
2. Verse 52 is talking about "teachers" of the law. If you know the law, you are more accountable.
 - a. "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly." (James 3:1, NIV)
3. Jesus is saying believers are like homeowners who bring out "new and old treasures"
 - a. I believe the "Old Treasures" are for teachers to preach the Word of God. This is passing on "old truths" to believers. I believe "new treasures" are new applications. The trick of every Christian bible teacher is to apply biblical knowledge to the present situation.
 - b. An alternative view is "old/new treasures" is an idiom for our "works" for God. They apply to recent works ("new treasures") and older works in our lifetime ("old treasures").

Verse 53-57: When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there.⁵⁴ Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked.⁵⁵ "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas?"⁵⁶ Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?"⁵⁷ And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor."

1. The main point is that the townsfolk where Jesus grew up did not believe in him.
2. These verses also refute the Roman Catholic doctrine of Mary as perpetual-version.
3. Why would Matthew mention here that Jesus went back to his hometown after the parables and nobody (or practically nobody) believed in him?
4. I think the simple point is the "danger of familiarity". They knew Jesus as "Mary and Joseph's oldest boy" and couldn't think of him as the Messiah.
5. If Jesus couldn't get his own brothers to believe in him, why should we expect any better?
6. Sometimes people simply accept "strangers from afar" with greater authority than those who grew up in the community. This is what Jesus meant in Verse 57

Verse 58: And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

1. Jesus didn't "waste his time" doing demonstrations on those who didn't believe.