JESUS
11. STORY-TELLER:
The Parables of Jesus

STUDY AHEAD

Jesus often taught in parables ("comparisons"). A parable compares something familiar (eg. farming, fishing, herding) with something spiritual (truths about the ways and works of God). This study-ahead guide will focus on Matthew 13, where the writer gathered 7 parables of Jesus into one 'sermon block.'

1. Read Matt.13:3-9. See if you can unpack the meaning of the parable of the sower *without looking ahead* to Jesus' explanation.

2. Read Matt.13:10-17. Jesus only explained His parables to His closest disciples, or to those who *wanted to know* the meaning. Otherwise, the meaning remained 'hidden.' Why did He closely conceal His message through parables?

3. Read Matt. 13:18-23. Here, Jesus explained the meaning of the parable of the sower to His disciples (who asked for the meaning). How does Jesus' explanation compare to what you said in answer to #1 above?

4. Read Matt.13:24-30. Try again. What do you think Jesus is trying to convey in the parable of the wheat and tares? *Do NOT look ahead to His explanation.*

5. Read Matt.13:36-43. Notice again that *the disciples asked* Jesus to explain the parable of the wheat and tares. Why is it important that they asked? How did you do trying to figure out this parable on your own?

6. Read Matt.13:31-33. These are 'twin' parables. Both convey the same idea. What was Jesus getting at with the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven? Hint: What do both stories have in common?

7. Read Matt.13:34,35. This is Matthew's editorial comment in the midst of the chapter. What was his point in this little side note?

8. Read Matt.13:44-46. Here we find another set of 'twin' parables. Both the parable of the hidden treasure and the valuable pearl have something in common. What is it?

9. Read Matt.13:47-50. Have you ever gone fishing and caught some 'junk fish?' The parable of the fisherman and the dragnet rounds out the compilation of Matthew 13. In this case, Jesus provides the explanation along with the parable. What's the meaning?

10. Read Matt.13:51-52. This is a miniature 8th parable in the collection, but it was directed only at the disciples (who had been listening intently to Jesus). Jesus compares a true disciple to the head of a household. What does the comparison mean to you? And how does this meaning shape your understanding of what it means to be a DISCIPLE of Jesus?

11. Look at the Oak Pointe Church bookmark, the 8 traits of a disciple. Which of those 8 traits were touched upon by the parables of Jesus in Matthew 13?

In summary: Jesus used parables to REVEAL truth to the RECEPTIVE and to CONCEAL truth to the CLOSED. How does this relate to what Jesus said about "casting pearls before swine" (Matthew 7:6)? On a personal note, how does all of this speak to you about your own level of receptivity to the teachings of Jesus?