

MATTHEW

Lesson 6 w/Answers

Matthew Chapters 11-13

We continue our study of Matthew and a look at some of Christ's parables on the Gospel, His Messiahship, and about the Kingdom of Heaven. We will observe a decided turn in the direction of Jesus' ministry and His approach to teaching, as we delve into this lesson. We will also learn a great deal about His Kingdom and His sacrifice for us.

For this lesson, read Matthew Chapters 11, 12 and 13 and answer the following:

1. In Matthew 11:28-30, what does Jesus invite people to do?
 - a. ANSWER: He invites them to find rest in Christ, especially for the "heavy laden" and for those that "labor" (i.e., those who are trying real hard; see question three below). Christ promises that if we "learn" of (or from) him, we will truly find rest for our souls. Clearly, these verses refer to matters of the spirit and our spiritual well being.
2. In farming what is the purpose of a "yoke", and how would that relate or apply to us today?
 - a. ANSWER: A yoke is used as a steering mechanism for animals. An animal thus yoked must go in the direction of the driver. Thus, to take up Christ's yoke is to follow where he leads.
3. What "burden" is Christ referring to when he says that His "burden is light"?
 - a. ANSWER 1: Further along in Matthew's gospel, in Chapter 16, Jesus says "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." [NIV]. Doesn't this sound like a heavy load? (See 1 John 5:3)
 - b. ANSWER 2: In actuality, this refers to the heavy burden that the Pharisees were piling upon the Jews with oral tradition-after-oral tradition and law-after-law. To live a righteous life was now such a burden that no one had any hope of ever making it. The sheer weight of all the rules, laws, and regulations being heaped upon them was something that Christ severely and repeatedly chastised the Pharisees about.
 - c. ANSWER 3: Christ's burden is light. His laws are not heavy, and they do not burden us down. His grace is sufficient for us; we do not have to live a life buried in theology and pious living in order to be saved, or to follow him.
4. In the first twelve chapters of Matthew's Gospel, John the Baptist, and then Jesus, preach repentance to the Jews. Things begin to change in Jesus' teaching approach beginning in Chapter 13. Can you identify what happened, and how Jesus changed his approach?
 - a. ANSWER: The Jews rejected Christ in Chapter 12, so beginning in Chapter 13 and for the rest of His ministry Christ only taught in parables.
5. What do we note that happened in Matthew 11:20?
 - a. ANSWER: The cities where he had performed miracles refused to repent.
6. Then, what do we see happening in Matthew 12:14?
 - a. ANSWER: The Pharisees reject Christ and plot to kill him.
7. In Matthew 12:15-21, what do we see beginning to happen? (see especially verses 18 and 21)
 - a. ANSWER: Jesus begins taking the message to the Gentiles and including the Gentile world as people who can be saved.
8. As we noted in a previous question, beginning in Chapter 13, Christ taught in parables. Specifically why did he do this? (see Matt. 13:10-14)
 - a. ANSWER: He did this to hide the truth from the Jews; see verse 11 and those that follow.
9. What do the parables of "The Sower", "The Wheat and the Tares", "The Mustard Seed". and "The Leaven" all have in common (apart from the fact of course that Jesus taught them)?
 - a. ANSWER: Each parable features both the righteous and the unrighteous, or good and evil. For this group of parables, in every instance, these two opposites are evident.

10. What do the parables of "The Hidden Treasure" and "The Pearl of Great Price" both have in common?
- ANSWER: Both of these parables only feature something of value, i.e., no weeds, leaven, birds, etc.; and they both required that a person give up or sell all that they have in order to purchase these items. Neither of the items in these parables was obtainable without cost; they both required a purchase.
11. What is the basic truth that Jesus was hiding in these parables?
- ANSWER: He was hiding, and at the same time revealing, that he is the Messiah. This is particularly true for the two last parables. To understand any of these parables however, you needed first to understand that Jesus was the Messiah. This was something that his disciples understood as well.
12. In looking at the parables of "The Wheat and the Tares", "The Mustard Seed", and "The Leaven", what principles can be seen as common to all three?
- ANSWER: We see the ongoing battle of good versus evil; we see Satan's continuous attempts to ruin Christ's work, and we see the effect of evil on the Kingdom of Heaven.
13. Often misunderstood and diversely interpreted, the parables of "The Mustard Seed" and "The Leaven" were easily understood by the disciples (see Matt. 13:51). If that be the case, then Christ's references to two common Jewish symbols would have needed no explanation, that of leaven and that of the birds. If leaven represents evil, or sin (as we know that it does), what might the birds represent? (See Matt. 13:4)
- ANSWER: We can see from Christ's teaching on the first parable that birds represent evil as they come and eat the seed. As all of these parables were given together in order to teach about the Kingdom. It can be interpreted that "The Sower and the Seed" is about the Gospel and those who accept or reject it, as Jesus interprets for us. It can then be seen that Satan comes to plant weeds in the next parable about the Kingdom; again, the affect of evil on people. "The Mustard Seed" certainly represents how the Church began small and grew large, but we cannot deny the birds in the tree as symbols of evil of some sort; there are various interpretations on this point. My take is that they represent compromise in the church, and in the final stages would match up well with the Laodicean church in Revelation. The church was the last church, which was neither cold nor hot. It represents compromise, and apostasy results in a church of form but no substance. Leaven also fits into this interpretation, since evil can permeate a rapidly growing church and can infect it completely.
14. If the parable of "The Wheat and Tares" shows us the Church today on earth, with righteous and unrighteous intermixed by Satan's schemes, what would Christ be telling us in the other two parables ("The Mustard Seed" and "The Leaven"), that would be consistent with this theme?
- Answer: See the answer to Question 12 above.

In this lesson, we have observed Christ turn from teaching principles about Christian living to teaching principles about His kingdom, the Church, and our adversary Satan. From the His last two parables, we can deduce that He is the person who gave "all that he had" to purchase us. Recently, I have been meditating on the crucifixion and the horrible price Christ paid for us. I would encourage you to dedicate some time to do the same.

In light of the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur, I also considered that Jesus was slain just as the blood a lamb was sacrificed on this "Day of Atonement" for the sins of the Jews. Just as it was in the beginning, when innocent blood was shed for pelts to cover man from his sins, so it is that Christ, the Lamb of God, was slain for us. And above all, he did all of this because God saw in us a treasure worth giving all that He had in order to purchase us. His love for us is greater than we can ever imagine. I pray that we will all come to see that we are the treasure that Christ purchased, and that we will commit to reflect His glory in our lives in return for all that he has done for us.

Have a great week everyone!

In Christ,

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