

"On the Way" 365 Bible Reading Plan

MATTHEW 13

Matthew 13

Matthew thirteen begins with a setting of the context along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Remember that the "Sea of Galilee" is a freshwater lake. It is the lowest freshwater lake in the world, as the surface is approximately 700 feet below the sea level of the Mediterranean. The lake is surrounded by the rolling hills of the lower Galilee region. Except for the northernmost and southernmost ends of the lake, where the Jordan River runs in and out, steep hills are on all sides. The multitudes of people would come to listen to Jesus, and as they did, they would gather wherever He was; most of the time, He was in a village by the lake, such as Capernaum or Magdala. The easiest way for Jesus to speak and be heard by the overwhelming crowds that came to see Him was to get into a boat and row out a short distance from the shoreline, stand in a boat, and speak to the people along the bank. The water would serve as a microphone and the banks as a natural theater for the people. The Lord Jesus taught some of His greatest lessons in this manner.

As we opened Matthew's gospel, we understood that Matthew presented Jesus as the King of the Jews. The words and concepts of Jesus as King of the Jews and King of the Universe permeate the gospel. In this chapter, Jesus presents the Kingdom of God in Parable form. Parable is a compound Greek word made up of two words, **Para** and **Bolē**, Para means beside, and **Bolē** comes from the word **Ballō** which means to cast or throw. Parable means to "**cast or throw alongside.**" A parable is one story told that is alongside another story. It is an earthly story with a spiritual meaning. Jesus told

about what the Kingdom of God/Heaven is like, and so He told stories of things that the people were familiar with and brought spiritual truth to reality through earthly stories.

A parable usually has one (1) central message. Many Bible students go astray by trying to make every word of a parable teach some kind of spiritual truth; that is not how it works. Most parables that Jesus taught also have, along with the parable, the true meaning explained by Jesus Himself. For example, the "Parable of the Sower" in Matthew 13:3-9 is told by Jesus. In Matthew 13:18-23, Jesus explains the parable that He just told. This is the normal way of telling and teaching parables. As in almost every aspect of the Bible and Bible study, to know the meaning of a passage, one must continue to read, listen, and study. The Kingdom of God is explained throughout the Old and New Testament as the period when Messiah will rule and reign from Jerusalem and will restore the Kingdom to Israel, as He promised His servant David. Jesus introduced in His earthly ministry the concept of His rule in the lives of His followers as a spiritual kingdom. Jesus, the King Himself, would live in the life of every follower through the Holy Spirit that would take up residence in their lives. This in no way lessens the reality of the Messiah ruling on the earth from Jerusalem. See Acts 1:1ff to see that Jesus did not say to His disciples that there would not be a Kingdom rule, but rather that it was not their business. The business of the disciples was to tell of, and be a witness of His story, the good news that the King has come, died a substitutionary death on the cross, was buried, rose again from the dead, ascended to heaven, and is coming back to rule on the earth!

Prayer and Action Steps

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Rule in my life and help me submit to Your will and Lordship daily. Amen