

# The Gospel of Matthew

## Booklet 15 – Five Lessons

**Matthew 13:1- 9 and 18-23**

**Matthew 13: 10-17**

**Matthew 13: 24-30; 36-43**

**Matthew 13: 31-35; 44-50**

**Matthew 13:51-58**



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## International ESL/Bible Lessons Intermediate to Advanced Level

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Much of the material in these lessons come from *The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. I*, by William Barclay. Daily Study Bible Series. Other content comes from Bible Commentaries, Dictionaries and on-line sources. All pictures are from Google Images.

## The Gospel Of Matthew

Material for this section is from William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew: The Daily Study Bible Series*. The Westminster Press. Philadelphia. 1975. Matthew's Gospel is carefully designed.

**Section One** includes The Genealogy of Jesus, The Birth Story, The John the Baptist Sequences, Baptism and Temptation of Jesus.

**Section Two**, from Chapters 5-7 is The Sermon on the Mount, or the Teachings of Jesus. These are gathered into a group from all the time of Jesus's ministry. These are the *words* of Jesus.

**Section Three** shows the actions or *doings* of Jesus.

Chapter 8 shows the Miracles of Jesus.

Chapter 9 shows the growing opposition to Jesus

Chapter 10 shows the choosing of the Disciples and sending them out

Chapters 11 and 12 show Jesus working with the people and incurring the wrath of the Pharisees.

Chapter 12 indicates crucial decisions made by Jewish leaders: to bring about the death of Jesus.

Chapter 13 has Jesus teaching outside the Synagogue and in parables.

# **The Gospel Of Matthew**

## **The Chapter of Parables**

### **Lesson 38 - Matthew 13: 1-9 and 18-23**

13 <sup>1-3</sup> At about that same time / Jesus left the house / and sat on the beach. / In no time at all / a crowd gathered along the shoreline, / forcing him to get into a boat. / Using the boat as a pulpit, / he addressed his congregation, / telling stories.

<sup>3-8</sup> “What do you make of this? / A farmer planted seed. / As he scattered the seed, / some of it fell on the road, / and birds ate it. / Some fell in the gravel; / it sprouted quickly / but didn’t put down roots, / so when the sun came up / it withered just as quickly. / Some fell in the weeds; / as it came up, / it was strangled by the weeds. / Some fell on good earth, / and produced a harvest / beyond his wildest dreams.

<sup>9</sup> “Are you listening to this? Really listening?”

### **The Meaning of the Harvest Story**

<sup>18-19</sup> “Study this story / of the farmer planting seed. / When anyone hears news of the kingdom / and doesn’t take it in, / it just remains on the surface, / and so the Evil One comes along / and plucks it right out / of that person’s heart. / This is the seed / the farmer scatters on the road.

<sup>20-21</sup> “The seed cast in the gravel— / this is the person / who hears /

and instantly responds with enthusiasm. / But there is no soil of character, / and so / when the emotions wear off / and some difficulty arrives, / there is nothing to show for it.

<sup>22</sup> “The seed cast in the weeds / is the person who hears the kingdom news, / but weeds of worry / and illusions about getting more / and wanting everything under the sun / strangle what was heard, / and nothing comes of it.



<sup>23</sup> “The seed cast on good earth / is the person who hears / and takes in the News, / and then produces a harvest / beyond his wildest dreams.”

### ***Vocabulary***

1. Shoreline: Edge where the water meets the land or shore.  
Coastline.
2. Congregation: A group of worshipers. Churchgoers. Audience.
3. Pulpit: Podium. Stand. Lectern.
4. To scatter: Throwing things around. To toss or fling something like seeds.
5. To sprout: To begin to grow. To germinate.
6. Gravel: Small rocks or stones. These are often used in driveways not paved with asphalt or concrete.
7. To wither: To weaken, to wilt or to shrivel.

8. To strangle: To kill or die by choking.
9. Weeds: Unwanted plants that grow among the flowers or crops.

### ***Idioms***

1. What do you make of this? A phrase or questions often used to ask someone to understand and be able to explain the situation to others.
2. To take it in: To understand and be able to act on something.
3. To pluck it right out: To quickly remove something or an idea.

### ***Questions***

1. How could everyone hear Jesus if he was in a boat and they were on the shore?
2. What are the four types of soil or ground the sower will encounter?
3. How can we get so busy that we cannot hear or practice our faith?
4. How can you apply this parable to those who teach it?

### ***Notes***

1. This chapter 13 is a definite turning point in the life of Jesus. Before, he had spoken in synagogues. Now he is teaching and healing outside. The synagogue was slowly and surely closing against his teaching.

2. Pharisees, scribes, teachers of the law were weighing and thinking about every word Jesus spoke. He did not come to argue with them, but to teach and heal. So Jesus began walking and teaching on the roads.
3. Jesus now teaches in parables that are vivid stories with much truth hidden in them. We can call him the master of the short story.
  - The parable makes truth concrete.
  - Jesus begins with what the people recognize and know, and then helps them to learn more and understand better.
  - His story is always interesting and catches the attention of the listener. It is called “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.”
  - It compels a man to discover the truth for himself.
4. Jesus got into the boat because the lake and its shores formed a natural amphitheater. The people could all sit down and hear and see Jesus.
5. Could it be that Jesus was in the boat and he actually saw a sower or farmer going out to plant or sow his seed? Everyone could see such an ordinary thing happening. The fields at that time were long narrow rows, and the seed was to fall in the field, not in the path or walkway. The paths were open thoroughfares and people walked on them like having sidewalks near our paved roads. That is called the wayside.

6. Here we have four places the seed could land: On the road or pathway, on the gravel, or rocky areas, in the weeds or thorns, or on good soil. The stony or gravel ground was found everywhere. The soil layer was quite thin and underneath it was limestone rock. The seed could germinate, but not really grow.
7. In the thorny ground, the soil would look just fine, but underneath the weed and thorn seed were there, ready to grow with the seed.
8. Here we see that there are different ways of accepting the truths of Jesus. The receptivity of the person and the heart of the person make the difference on acceptance or rejection of God's word.
  - The shut mind perhaps because of prejudice
  - The unteachable spirit is one who is full of pride or of fear.
  - An immoral character and the way a person lives his or her lives
  - The shallow minded person simply will or cannot think things out
  - Those who have interests in everything, but depth in nothing and no time or energy left to add God.
9. The good soil represents a person, whose mind is open, teachable, prepared to hear, understands, and who moves from hearing to action.



# The Gospel Of Matthew

## Lesson 39 - Matthew 13: 10-17

### Why Tell Stories?

<sup>10</sup> The disciples came up and asked, / “Why do you tell stories?” /

<sup>11-15</sup> He replied, / “You’ve been given insight / into God’s kingdom. /  
You know how it works. / Not everybody has this gift, / this insight;  
/ it hasn’t been given to them. / Whenever someone has a ready  
heart for this, / the insights / and understandings / flow freely. / But  
/ if there is no readiness, / any trace of receptivity soon disappears.  
/ That’s why I tell stories: / to create readiness, / to nudge the  
people / toward receptive insight. / In their present state / they can  
stare till doomsday / and not see it, / listen till they’re blue in the  
face / and not get it. / I don’t want Isaiah’s forecast repeated all over  
again:

*Your ears are open / but you don’t hear a thing. / Your eyes are awake  
/ but you don’t see a thing. / The people are blockheads! / They stick  
their fingers in their ears / so they won’t have to listen; / They screw  
their eyes shut / so they won’t have to look, / so they won’t have to  
deal with me face-to-face /and let me heal them.*

<sup>16-17</sup> “But you have God-blessed eyes— / eyes that see! / And God-  
blessed ears— / ears that hear! / A lot of people, / prophets and  
humble believers among them, / would have given anything / to see

what you are seeing, / to hear what you are hearing, / but never had the chance.

### ***Vocabulary***

1. Insight: Perceptiveness, a clear awareness, and intuition.
2. Receptivity: Willing to accept. Quick to learn.
3. To nudge: Gently persuade somebody. Push or poke somebody.
4. Blockheads: Unintelligent people. Unthinking.

Adjective	Noun	Verb	Adverb
Receptive	Receptivity Receptiveness	To receive	Receptively

### ***Questions***

1. Aside from making a Last Will and Testament, what other things do people just refuse to discuss or do?
2. Why does Jesus tell stories?
3. What does insight mean to a person doing research?
4. What is the difference between discernment and insight?

### ***Notes***

1. This passage is difficult to understand. The word in Greek is *mysteria* and can be translated as mystery or secret or insight. If

you are a Christian, the faith is clear to you, but mysterious or foolish to one who is not a Christian.

2. It is true in scholarship and study, that the student who learns and seeks to learn, then to use the learning, has more than the student who sits and stares out the window. This is true of faith and learning about God. Those who know God is real have an insight that comes to them as they practice prayer and learn to worship.
3. I do not know computers very well. I just use mine, but when my son and husband get together, they talk a language I do not know or understand. That is a mystery to me. They have insights I do not have.
4. The passage from Isaiah makes it sound like God had deliberately closed hearts and eyes and ears to learn more of Him. Yet, another translation is perhaps closer to the meaning: The Septuagint: *Go, say to this people: "Ye shall hear indeed, but ye shall not understand; and seeing, ye shall see and not perceive." For the heart of this people has become gross, and with their ears they hear heavily, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.*

Barclay, *The Gospel of Mathew*, Vol 2, p. 69.

# The Gospel Of Matthew

## Lesson 40 - Matthew 13: 24-30; 36-43

24-26 He told another story. / “God’s kingdom is like a farmer / who planted good seed in his field. / That night, / while his hired men were asleep, / his enemy sowed thistles / all through the wheat / and slipped away before dawn. / When the first green shoots appeared / and the grain began to form, / the thistles showed up, too.

27 “The farmhands came to the farmer / and said, / ‘Master, that was clean seed you planted, / wasn’t it? / Where did these thistles come from?’ /

28 “He answered, / ‘Some enemy did this.’ /

“The farmhands asked, / ‘Should we weed out the thistles?’ /

29-30 “He said, / ‘No, / if you weed the thistles, / you’ll pull up the wheat, too. / Let them grow together / until harvest time. / Then I’ll instruct the harvesters / to pull up the thistles / and tie them in bundles for the fire, / then gather the wheat / and put it in the barn.’”

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<sup>36</sup> Jesus dismissed the congregation / and went into the house. / His disciples came in and said, / “Explain to us / that story of the thistles in the field.”

<sup>37-39</sup> So he explained. / “The farmer / who sows the pure seed / is the Son of Man. / The field is the world, / the pure seeds are subjects of the kingdom, / the thistles are subjects of the Devil, / and the enemy / who sows them / is the Devil. / The harvest is the end of the age, / the curtain of history. / The harvest hands are angels.

<sup>40-43</sup> “The picture of thistles / pulled up and burned / is a scene from the final act. / The Son of Man will send his angels, / weed out the thistles from his kingdom, / pitch them in the trash, / and be done with them. / They are going to complain to high heaven, / but nobody is going to listen. / At the same time, / ripe, holy lives will mature / and adorn the kingdom of their Father.

“Are you listening to this? / Really listening?

### ***Vocabulary***

1. To sow: To plant seeds.
2. Thistles: Prickly or thorny weed.
3. To slip away: To leave very quietly, like a thief.
4. To weed out: To remove. To pull out weeds from other plants.
5. To dismiss: Terminate or end. Send the people away.

## **Questions**

1. What lasting truths do you think Jesus is teaching here?
2. Does the devil exist?
3. Why can't we tell the difference between a good and an evil person?
4. Do you think that there is judgment after death? Is it believed in your culture?
5. How can we really listen to God?

## **Notes**

1. Jesus is telling a parable here that all the listeners would understand. The wheat and the weed, called *bearded darnel* (*Iolium temulentum*) looks identical to the wheat as they are both sprouting. But near harvest, the wheat is golden and easily identified, but the darnel is a gray color. That stands out and the farmer can easily see both.
2. The roots of the wheat and the darnel are entwined in growing, so pulling the weed or darnel, will also uproot the wheat. Also the bearded darnel is slightly poisonous and bitter to the taste.
3. To separate the wheat and the darnel or weed, the grain is spread out on a large tray, and the gray seeds are picked out from the golden wheat grains.

4. In Roman law planting darnel or weeds in a field as a deliberate act is forbidden and the punishment is written for all to know. So, it happens that a form of sabotage is actually done. “In India, one of the direst threats which a man can make to his enemy is ‘I will sow bad seed in your field.’” —Barclay, p. 73-74.
5. Lessons this parable tells:  
Hostile powers exist in this world to lead people astray. Or we could say that bad seed is always trying to destroy the good seed. Think of the drug dealers and others that would addict us.
6. It tells us that it is hard to tell the good people from the bad. We are quick to classify people when who we think is good may actually be bad, and a person who appears bad may really be good. Think of a con man. That is short for Confidence Man. He gains your trust and friendship, and then he cheats or hurts you deeply. We cannot judge.
7. Only God can judge. A man in the end will be judged, not by a single act or stage in his life, but by his whole life. Judgment does come in the end.
8. So, then, ultimately this parable is two things— it is a warning not to judge people at all, and it is a warning that in the end, there comes the judgment of God.

# The Gospel Of Matthew

## Lesson 41 - Matthew 13: 31-35 and 44-50 The Curtain of History

### More Stories and Parables

<sup>31-32</sup> Another story. / “God’s kingdom is like a pine nut (mustard seed) / that a farmer plants. / It is quite small as seeds go, / but in the course of years / it grows into a huge pine tree, / and eagles build nests in it.”

<sup>33</sup> Another story. / “God’s kingdom is like yeast / that a woman works into the dough / for dozens of loaves of barley bread—/ and waits while the dough rises.”

<sup>34-35</sup> / All Jesus did that day was tell stories— /a long storytelling afternoon. / His storytelling fulfilled the prophecy:

*/ I will open my mouth and tell stories; / I will bring out into the open /things hidden since the world’s first day.*

<sup>44</sup> “God’s kingdom is like a treasure / hidden in a field for years / and then accidentally found by a trespasser. / The finder is ecstatic—/ what a find!— / and proceeds to sell everything he owns / to raise money and buy that field.

<sup>45-46</sup> “Or, / God’s kingdom is like a jewel merchant / on the hunt for excellent pearls. / Finding one that is flawless, / he immediately sells everything and buys it.



47-50 “Or, / God’s kingdom is like a fishnet / cast into the sea, / catching all kinds of fish. / When it is full, / it is hauled onto the beach. / The good fish are picked out / and put in a tub; / those unfit to eat / are thrown away. / That’s how it will be / when the curtain comes down on history. / The angels will come / and cull the bad fish / and throw them in the garbage. / There will be a lot of desperate complaining, / but it won’t do any good.”

### ***Vocabulary***

1. Ecstatic: Delighted. Thrilled. Overjoyed.
2. To haul: To pull or drag something. To move something with effort.
3. To cull: To remove something or somebody as worthless. Reject. Scrap.
4. Desperate: Frantic. Anxious.

### ***Questions***

1. What do you desire that you would change your life to get?
2. How do we accept the good with the bad in areas of our lives?
3. What have you done in your life that started small and grew really big?

## Notes

1. The parable of the mustard seed, found in many translations, is here called the pine nut. “The point is very clear. The kingdom of Heaven starts from the smallest of beginnings, but no man knows where it will end. “ Remember that often the greatest things have very small beginnings. — Barclay, p. 76.
2. Simile: A simile is a figure of speech that compares two things by using the words 'like' or 'as' something else. They are compared indirectly.  
God’s kingdom is like a pine nut  
God’s kingdom is like yeast  
God’s kingdom is like a treasure  
God’s kingdom is like a jewel merchant  
God’s kingdom is like a fishnet
3. In the Jewish point of view, leaven or yeast, is a sign of something rotten or not pure. It is fermented and kept to use the next day to make more bread. This parable centers on the transforming power of leaven or yeast. It can change the character of bread.
4. The coming of the Kingdom can transform lives. Christianity transformed life for the individual person. It transformed life for women, for the sick and ill, for the aged, and for the child.
5. In Roman times, the aged slave was cast out like a broken tool. Cato, the historian and philosopher writes giving agricultural

advice: “Sell old worn-out oxen, blemished cattle, blemished sheep, wool, hides, an old wagon, old tools, an old slave, a sickly slave, and whatever else is superfluous.”

— Barclay, p. 80.

6. The parable of the pine nut or mustard seed is that great things come from small beginnings. This may be the most personal of the parables for Jesus and his followers. They were few in number, but like the mustard seed as we look back over 2000+ years; we see how widely it has spread.
7. The parable of the leaven or yeast again uses so common and useful to make the point of the transformation of the bread. But God also transforms the individual who seeks Him.
8. Christianity transformed four social directions:
  - Women: At that time women were property and often not seen.
  - Weak and Ill: Jesus showed that our duty is to help the weak and sick. They are not just a nuisance to be thrown away.
  - Old people: They too were cast out when they could no longer work.
  - Children: Often left on a hillside to die if unwanted. Could simply be thrown out.
9. Verse 44 tells a really short parable. To understand it, we must understand that during the time of Jesus, the use of a bank for storage of money or valuables was not available to the common

man. People hid their money and their valuables in the ground. Palestine has always been a battleground, and the hidden treasures the past are forever being found there.

10. Also found in this story of the treasure is the fact that the man found it as he went about his daily work. He was doing his regular work and found the treasure. He was not 'treasure hunting'.

11. "It is suggestive to find the Kingdom of Heaven compared to a pearl. To the ancient peoples, a pearl was the loveliest of all possessions; that means the Kingdom of Heaven is the loveliest thing in all the world. Let us remember what the Kingdom is. To be in the Kingdom is to accept and to do the will of God. That is to say, to do the will of God is no grim, gray, agonizing thing; it is a lovely thing." Barclay, p. 87

## The Gospel Of Matthew

### Lesson 42 - Matthew 13:51-58 The Curtain of History, continued

**51** Jesus asked, / “Are you starting to get a handle on all this?” /

They answered, / “Yes.”

**52** He said, / “Then you see how every

student / well-trained in God’s kingdom / is like the owner of a general store / who can put his hands on anything you need, / old or new, / exactly when you need it.”

**53-57** When Jesus finished telling these stories, / he left there, / returned to his hometown, / and gave a lecture in the meetinghouse.

/ He made a real hit, / impressing everyone. / “We had no idea he was this good!” / they said. / “How did he get so wise, / get such ability?” / But in the next breath / they were cutting him down: / “We’ve known him / since he was a kid; / he’s the carpenter’s son. / We know his mother, Mary. / We know his brothers / James and Joseph, / Simon and Judas. / All his sisters live here. / Who does he think he is?” / They got their noses all out of joint. /

**58** But Jesus said, / “A prophet is taken for granted / in his hometown / and his family.” / He didn’t do many miracles there / because of their hostile indifference.



**Vocabulary:**

1. Hostile: Very unfriendly. Relating to the enemy.
2. Indifference: Lack of interest in something or someone.

**Idioms:**

1. To get a handle on something: To find a way to understand a situation in order to control it.
2. To make a real hit: To be successful in something.
3. To cut someone down (to size): to criticize someone whom you think is too confident in order to make them feel less confident or less proud. *When he started he thought he knew everything, but we soon cut him down to size.*
4. To get your nose out of joint: to make someone resentful. *What's wrong with Jill? What put her nose out of joint? Don't put your nose out of joint. I didn't mean anything by what I said.*

**Questions:**

1. What do you bring to your knowledge of God?
2. Which one these many parables do you remember best?
3. How are you received when you return to your hometown?
4. Can you give illustrations of prejudice and barriers before public persons like singers or politicians?

**Notes:**

1. Jesus has been teaching in parables about the Kingdom of Heaven. He asks if the listeners understood what he was talking about. Then Jesus suggests that each person comes with a background of education, culture and an understanding of life. Jesus doesn't want us to give up who we are, but to add the newness of understanding and belief to it.
2. Many people feel they must give up so much. Yet Christ would rather that we live Christianity through what we have studied for and know. If you are a scientist, you live as a Christian scientist; if a teacher, as a Christian teacher. "Here we see Jesus telling men, not to abandon their gifts, but to use them even more wonderfully in the light of the knowledge which he has given them." — Barclay, p.91.
3. The barrier of unbelief or prejudice keeps many people from hearing others. Prejudice against blacks makes some white people refuse to hear anything President Obama says, either good or bad. Jesus hit the same kind of barrier when he returned to his hometown of Nazareth.
4. Jesus was welcomed home and asked to speak in the synagogue or meetinghouse. That was normal procedure. As when he spoke he surely surprised his old friends and neighbors.

5. The attitude change was dramatic: he was a hit as he spoke, and in the next breath people began their criticism. Many public speakers say that they get their energy and joy from the audience. Here Jesus received that — but the atmosphere quickly changed. Jesus performed no miracles here, for the audience wasn't receptive to him.

***Matthew 13: 51-58 NRSV Treasures New and Old***

<sup>51</sup> “Have you understood all this?” / They answered, / “Yes.” / <sup>52</sup> And he said to them, / “Therefore every scribe / who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven / is like the master of a household / who brings out of his treasure / what is new and what is old.” / <sup>53</sup> When Jesus had finished these parables, / he left that place.

**The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth**

<sup>54</sup> He came to his hometown / and began to teach the people / in their synagogue, / so that they were astounded / and said, / “Where did this man get this wisdom / and these deeds of power? / <sup>55</sup> Is not this the carpenter’s son? / Is not his mother called Mary? / And are not his brothers / James and Joseph / and Simon and Judas? / <sup>56</sup> And are not all his sisters with us? / Where then did this man get all this?” / <sup>57</sup> And they took offense at him. / But Jesus said to them, / “Prophets are not without honor / except in their own country / and in their own house.” / <sup>58</sup> And he did not do many deeds of power there, / because of their unbelief.