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The Parable of the Dragnet
Matthew 13: 47-50

The parable of the dragnet DIG: How does this parable couple with the parable of the Householder? What does each parable represent? How so? How is the dragnet used? What does the parable of the net teach about the messianic Kingdom? Who are the good fish? Who are the bad?

REFLECT: How are you personally affected when you read about the different aspects of hell? How does it motivate you? Why? Who do you need to pray for?

The one main point of the parable of the dragnet is that the Dispensation of Grace will end with the judgment of the Gentiles; the unrighteous will be excluded from the Messianic Kingdom and the righteous will be taken in.

The fourth couplet is made up of the parables of **the Dragnet** (saved and lost) and **the Householder** (old and new), where we see some comparisons between life now and life in the future messianic Kingdom. **Jesus** is no longer in front of a crowd by the Sea of Galilee, but alone with **His** talmidim in **Peter's house**.

This parable makes three points. First, the mystery Kingdom will end by the judgment of **the Gentiles**, symbolized by **the sea** **(Dani'el 7; Revelation 13** and **17)**. Second, the righteous will be brought into **the** messianic **Kingdom**. And the third point is that the unrighteous will be excluded. What **Yeshua** said in parabolic form here is spelled out in detail in **Matthew 25:31-36** (see my commentary on **Revelation, to see link click Fc – The Sheep and the Goats**). The unrighteous **Gentiles** will be excluded from **the** Messianic **Kingdom** and will be judged at the great white throne judgment.[721]

The examples **the Rabbi from Galilee** uses to illustrate **God's** judgment on unbelievers was a common one to **His** hearers. It was especially familiar to those who lived near the Sea of Galilee, including several of the talmidim. Still inside the

house, **Jesus** taught: **Once again, the kingdom of Heaven is like a dragnet that was let down into the Sea of Galilee and caught all kinds of fish (Matthew 13:47).** The comparison of **the kingdom of Heaven** to a fishing scene reminds us of the calling of the disciples to **fish for people (Mattityahu 4:19; Mark 1:17; Luke 5:9** and **10b).** The focus seems to be on **catching people** for salvation rather than, as in **Jeremiah 16:18**, for punishment. But, since the apostle's **fishing** ministry belongs to the establishment of **God's Kingdom**, this parable adds the thought that there is a negative as well as a positive aspect to it.

On **the Sea of Galilee** three basic methods of **fishing** were used, and all three continue to be used today. The first was hook and line, which was used to catch one **fish** at a time. That was the type of **fishing the Lord** told **Peter** to do when the Twelve and **Jesus Himself** needed to pay **the two-drachma Temple tax (Mt 17:24-27)**.

The other two kinds of **fishing** involved **nets**. One **net** was small, one-man casting net that Peter and his brother Andrew were taking turns with when **Yeshua** called them **to fish for people (Matthew 4:18-19)**. It was folded and carried over the fisherman's shoulder as he waded in shallow water looking for a school of **fish**. When **the fish** came near, he would hold the center cord in one hand and with the other hand throw the net so that it opened into a large circle and come down over **the fish**. The fisherman then pulled the cord, which was attached to the center of the net and drew it around **the fish** like a sack. After **the net** had been pulled closed, the fisherman would haul his catch to shore.



The second type of **net** referred to here is taken from the Greek word *sagene,* a very large **dragnet**. It required a team of fishermen to operate and sometimes covered as much as a half square mile. **The dragnet** was pulled into a giant circle around **the fish**, between two boats out in deep water or by one boat working from the shore. If from shore, one end of **the net** would be firmly moored to something

immovable while the other was attached to the boat, which would make a large circle out into the water and come back to the starting place. In either case, floats were attached to the top of **the net** and weights to the bottom, forming a wall of **net** from the surface to the bottom of **the lake**.



Because **the dragnet** permitted nothing to escape, all sorts of things beside the desirable **fish** were caught. It swept everything into its path – weeds, things dropped from boats, all kinds of sea life, and **all kinds of fish. When the net was full,** it would take a sizeable number of **fishermen** several hours to **drag it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in containers, but threw the bad away. The fish** to be carried to a distant market would be put **in containers** with water to keep **the fish** alive, and those that were to be sold nearby were placed in dry **baskets**.[722] **But they threw the bad away (Matthew 13:48). The dragnet** is cast over a wide cross-section of people, and while the message saves some, it will leave others unconvinced. Those who have failed to respond to it are presumably among the **bad fish** of this parable.

This is how it will be at the end of the sinking ship that is this **age.** The parable of **the Wheat and the Weeds** pictures the coexistence of believer and unbelievers in **the** mystery **Kingdom**, and this parable illustrates their **separation** as **the** mystery **Kingdom** ends. **The righteous** will enter into **the** messianic **Kingdom**, while the unrighteous will be excluded. **The angels will come and separate the wicked from among the righteous** – believers to eternal life and unbelievers to eternal damnation **(Matthew 14:49).** It is important to note that **the wicked** are **separated from among,** literally *out of the middle of*, **the righteous.** The phrase draws our attention to the parable of **the Wheat and the**

Weeds, which makes a similar point that until the final judgment there can be no separate existence for **the invisible universal Church**; **the wicked** will be *in the middle* of **them**, like the wolves among the sheep (see my commentary on **Jude Ah – Godless People Have Slipped In Among You**).[723]

The Lord is not giving a full description of the last days because you can't press the details of a parable, but is concentrating on the judgment of unbelievers. **He** is speaking of judgment in general, with special focus on what is referred to as the judgment at the great white throne (see my commentary on **Revelation Fo – The Great White Throne Judgment**).

And throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 14:50). Perhaps no doctrine is harder to accept emotionally than the doctrine of hell. Nevertheless, hell is mentioned too often in the Bible to deny or ignore it. **Messiah** spoke more of hell than any of the prophets or the apostles did. **He** emphasized it from the beginning of **His** earthly ministry to the end. **He** spoke more about hell than love. More than all other teachers in the Scriptures combined, **Yeshua** warned us of hell, promising no escape for those who turn their backs on **His** loving offer of eternal life with **Him**.

From **God's** Word we learn four basic truths about hell. First, hell is a place of constant torment, misery, and pain. The torment is often portrayed as darkness **(Matthew 22:13)** where no light can penetrate, and nothing can be seen. Throughout eternity (and eternity is a long, long time) the damned will never see light again. Hell's torment is also pictured as a burning like fire that will never go away and cannot be extinguished **(Mark 9:43)** and from which they will never find relief. Hell could not be other than a place where **there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth**.

Secondly, hell will involve the torment of both the body and soul. When unbelievers die their soul goes out from the presence of **Ha'Shem** into everlasting torment. At the second resurrection (see my commentary on **Revelation Fn – The Second Resurrection**), all the bodies of the damned will be raised, and those resurrected bodies will join their souls in hell's torment **(Mattityahu 10:28; John 5:29; Acts 24:15; Revelation 20:11-15)**. Just as believers' resurrected bodies will be able to enjoy the glories of heaven forever, unbelievers' resurrected bodies will be made to endure the torments of hell without being destroyed. **The Lord** spoke of hell as a place where **the worms that eat them do not die (Mark 9:48).** When physical bodies are buried and begin to decay, **the worms** can attack **them** only as long as

the flesh lasts. Once devoured, the body can experience no more harm. But, the resurrected bodies of the damned will never be consumed, and **the** hellish **worms** that feed on **them** will likewise never die.

Thirdly, the torments of hell will be experienced in varying degrees. For everyone in hell the suffering will be severe and unending, but some will experience greater torment than others. **Someone who disregards the Torah of Moshe is put to death without mercy on the word of two or three witnesses,** says the writer to **the Hebrews**. **Think how much worse will be the punishment deserved by someone who has trampled underfoot the Son of god; who has treated as something common the blood of the [New] Covenant that made Him holy; and who has insulted the Ruach, the giver of God's grace (Hebrews 10:28-29 CJB)?** Those who willfully reject **Yeshua ben David** and trample, as it were, on the sacrifice **He** made for them with **His** own blood will receive much greater punishment than those who had only the light of the TaNaKh **(Matthew 11:22-23; Luke 12:47-48)**.

Fourthly, the torment of hell will be everlasting. Nothing will be so horrifying about hell as its endlessness. **Christ** uses the same word to describe the perpetuation of hell as the perpetuation of heaven. **Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life (Matthew 25:46).** Apart from any love, in pitch-black darkness for eternity, it will be a place of complete and utter hopelessness. Forever. Although **ADONAI** originally designed hell for the Adversary and his fallen angels, people who choose to follow the devil's way instead of **God's** way will also suffer the same fate as the Enemy of souls.[724]

The nine parables we have looked at develop a basic flow of thought: (1) **The Parable of the Soils (Et)** teaches that there will be a sowing of the Gospel throughout the Church Age. (2) **The Parable of the Seed Growing By Itself (Eu)** teaches that Gospel seed will have an inner energy so that it will spring to life on its own. (3) **The Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds (Ev)** teaches that the true sowing will be imitated by a false counter-sowing. (4) **The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Ew)** teaches that the visible Church will assume abnormal outer growth. (5) **The Parable of the Leaven (Ex)** teaches that the doctrine of the visible church will be corrupted. (6) **The Parable of the Hidden Treasure (Fb)** teaches that even with the doctrinal corruption, a remnant will be saved out of Isra'el. (7) **The Parable of the Pearl (Fc)** teaches that the Gentiles of the invisible universal Church will also come to a saving knowledge of Christ. Both Jews and Gentiles together, the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl form the invisible universal

Church. (8) **The Parable of the Dragnet (Fd)** teaches that the Church Age will end with the judgment of the Gentiles; the unrighteous will be excluded from the messianic Kingdom and the righteous will be taken in.[725]