

Parable of the Dragnet

by John Edmiston

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Matthew 13:47-50 MKJV *Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered some of every kind; (48) which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. (49) So it shall be at the end of the world. The angels shall come out and separate the wicked from among the just, (50) and shall cast them into the furnace of fire. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

The sea is the world, full of teeming creatures, and in ancient Jewish thought the sea was an evil and chaotic place. Out of the world are gathered 'some of every kind' and when the net is full, when the end of the age has come, there is a great separation as the angels first toss the wicked into the lake of fire then the righteous who are left and remain are kept with God, to rule and reign with Christ.

We see a mixed world now, a chaotic world now, but God will not tolerate it that way forever. God is pure and holy and wickedness is not being given a free pass. One day the wicked will be cast away forever. Paul gives us a few more clues about this separation:

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10 MKJV *(5) For this is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which you also suffer, (6) since it is a righteous thing with God to repay tribulation to those who trouble you, (7) and to give rest with us to you who are troubled, at the revealing of the Lord Jesus from Heaven with the angels of His power, (8) in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, (9) who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, (10) when He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all those who believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that Day.*

We see here that the wicked, those who persecute and trouble the saints, are dealt with when God returns with His holy and powerful angels (v.7) this will be a time of absolute revenge, of flaming fire and everlasting destruction (v.8,9) and the wicked shall be cast away from the presence of God (v.9).

Those who are punished are: "those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v.8). On the other hand those who are given rest include Paul, and the Thessalonians (v.7), His saints and "all who believe" (v.10).

There will be an absolute and total separation between the righteous and the wicked. There will be no wicked people left in the Kingdom of Heaven. They will all be in the furnace, suffering punishment and everlasting destruction.

God loves sinners enough to die for them on the cross and to patiently wait for them to repent. But those who do not repent are utterly doomed! The wrath of God abides on them:

John 3:36 MKJV *He who believes on the Son has everlasting life, and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him.*

Romans 2:5-8 ESV *But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. (6) He will render to each one according to his works: (7) to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; (8) but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.*

Colossians 3:5-6 MKJV *Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness (which is idolatry), (6) on account of which things' sake the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience,*

Now the wrath of God is a severe topic. We frequently shrink from mentioning it lest we be termed fanatics. Would a loving God send people to Hell forever? If God is righteous and just then the wicked must be separated from the righteous. They simply cannot dwell together. The wicked will always persecute the righteous. That is their nature, they create misery everywhere they go.

Galatians 4:29 MKJV *But then even as he born according to flesh persecuted him born according to the Spirit, so it is also now.*

1 John 3:12-13 MKJV *not as Cain who was of the evil one, and killed his brother. And for what did he kill him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's things were righteous. (13) Do not marvel, my brothers, if the world hates you.*

The wicked hate the righteous and cannot long dwell with them in peace. So the wicked must be separated out from among the righteous and given a place of their own.

I imagine the final judgment as perhaps being in four phases: Firstly there will be the judgment of Truth when God will say 'become what you really are' and when the wicked will be revealed to be wicked and abominable sons of the Devil and the righteous will be revealed to be glorious sons of God.

Then God will issue the judgment of Likeness and say "Gather together with your own likeness and your own kind" and this will group the wicked on the left hand of God and the righteous on the right hand of God.

Then God will assign territory and say "Go to the place assigned to you for all eternity" and the wicked will be cast into the Hell of fire and the righteous will receive the Kingdom.

Finally I imagine the judgment of Recompense and Reward where God says "Receive the recompense for your deeds whether good or evil". The wicked will then be punished with eternal torment and the righteous will receive eternal life.

Hell is not merely a place of passive confinement, it is a place of eternal destruction:

Revelation 14:9-11 MKJV *(9) And a third angel followed them, saying with a great voice, If anyone worships the beast and its image, and receives a mark in his forehead or in his hand, (10) he also will drink of the wine of the anger of God, having been mixed undiluted in the cup of His wrath. And he will be tormented by fire and brimstone before the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. (11) And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever. And they have no rest day or night, those who worship the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.*

Isaiah 66:24 MKJV *And they will go out and see the dead bodies of the men who have sinned against Me; for their worm will not die, nor will their fire be put out; and they will be an object of disgust to all flesh.*

Jesus talks often about the judgment of fire - in fact more than anyone else in Scripture! He tells us that we can end up in the judgment of fire if we are angry with our brother without cause or call him a empty-headed fool (Matthew 5:22); that those who do not bring forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire (Matthew 7:19); as are those who do not abide in Christ (John 15:6); and that if our eye or our hand or our foot causes us to stumble we should cut them off rather than be cast into the Hell of fire (Matthew 18:8,9). Jesus also describes the kind of selfish lifestyle that leads to Hell:

Matthew 25:41-46 MKJV *Then He also shall say to those on the left hand, Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels. (42) For I was hungry, and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink; (43) I was a stranger and you did not take Me in; I was naked, and you did not clothe Me; I was sick, and in prison, and you did not visit me. (44) Then they will also answer Him, saying, Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to You? (45) Then He shall answer them, saying, Truly I say to you, Inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me. (46) And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into everlasting life.*

At the end of the age there will only be two groups of people. One group shall be in everlasting punishment and the other group shall have everlasting life.

Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? Are you obeying His gospel, bearing fruit to righteousness and abiding in Christ? Are you loving, open, kind and generous? Do you feed the hungry, clothe the needy and visit those in distress? If you are simply living for yourself in unbelief, then you must change your ways, straighten up your life, and believe and obey the gospel of Jesus Christ!

If you are saved – are you warning those who do not yet believe? This is not just a parable, it is the Truth. It is what will happen. Let's share the gospel with others while it is still Day!

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