

Sunday February 28th 2010
Matthew 13 Parables – Part Ten
The Parable of the Dragnet

1). As we begin our study today let's call to mind some of the things Jesus said to His disciples in the midst of giving these parables - Mt 13:11 *He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,*

a). And in making known the 'mysteries' He makes clear - Mt 13:35 *that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world."*

2). And here we come to the 7th of the 7 parables in Matthew Chapter 13, bringing to completion and conclusion that which has been the subject throughout the parables - Mt 13:19 *"When anyone hears the word of the kingdom,*
-the proclamation and offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens to a new nation that is neither Jew nor Gentile – the one new man in Christ.

3). And we have seen throughout these parables that Christ gives a complete history of the Church from the beginning of this dispensation to the end of the age with regards to the Kingdom of the Heavens and in doing so does exactly that which is recorded in - Isa 46:9 *Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,'*

4). In these parables God has declared 'the end from the beginning' and has from ancient times' shown us that which is 'not yet done', and we would do well to note that His 'counsel shall stand' and He will do all His pleasure.

a). Theologians and church historians may come to whatever conclusion they wish, but events for Christians in relation to the word of the Kingdom will be exactly as God has stated in His word from the beginning. A wife will be taken from the body of a man and together they will have dominion over the earth in the 7th day.

b). And if we understand what the Lord has said from the beginning we will not find ourselves in a place of ignorance, confusion or error.

5). These final 3 parables that Jesus gives back inside the house have as their focus events that take place beyond the close of this dispensation. The purchase of the field in the Parable of the Treasure and the purchase of the pearl in the Parable of the Pearl present the events that show the completion of His work within the Church, the redemption of the inheritance for His Bride thereby showing the final outcome for those who hear the word of the Kingdom and then produce fruit accordingly – and the redemption of the inheritance for His Bride is inseparable from His renewed dealings with Israel during Daniel's 70th week, the time of Jacob's trouble – the event that we call the Great Tribulation. Hence His return to the house.

a). The 3rd of these final 3 parables, that of the dragnet, begins with past events that have continued throughout the course of this dispensation, but has as its focus events that take place after the purchase of the field, the redemption of the inheritance, and the purchase of the pearl.

6). So let's look at the parable - Mt 13:47 *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, 48 "which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. 49 "So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, 50 "and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."*

a). This then presents to us the conclusion of God's dealings with Christians in relation to hearing the word of the Kingdom – so let's begin by understanding the symbolism.

b). The parable begins with events that take place throughout the course of this dispensation which are symbolized as – 'a dragnet that was cast into the sea'.

c). The 'sea' we will remember is a picture of the Gentile nations, the people group from whom the majority of the church would be drawn - Ac 15:14 *"Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.*

– the group from which the pearl of great price would come.

d). The dragnet then is a picture of the salvation of the spirit – the free gift of eternal life by grace through faith – this is the gospel of grace delivered to those who are dead in trespasses and sins - Ac 16:31 *So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."*

e). The some of every kind who are gathered are all those who have responded positively to the gospel of grace, all those who are eternally saved, all those who are Christians whether they be faithful or unfaithful.

f). We might just remember that Jesus said to His disciples in - Mt 4:19 *Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."*

g). The net being full and drawn to shore would picture for us two things. Firstly the separation that takes place when those 'in Christ' are no longer Jew or Gentile, but are now a new nation, the one new man in Christ and therefore separated from the rest of the fish in the sea, those not caught in the net, those who remain unsaved – Ga 3:28 *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* And secondly, it would picture for us the separation that takes place at the end of this dispensation when all the eternally saved from the last 2000 years will be resurrected or raptured, being removed, or separated, from the earth, to the Judgment Seat of Christ in the heavens.

h). That the Christians who are gathered in the net are classified as 'good and bad' and 'just and wicked' should really be no surprise to us. A distinction such as this was also given in the Parable of the Wedding Guest in Matthew Chapter 22, another parable dealing with the proclamation and offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens – Mt 22:10 *"So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.*

i). Going out into the highways and gathering 'together all whom they found' would picture the same thing as the dragnet cast into the sea, going into all the world and preaching the gospel of grace, and in both instances we see the gathering of the 'good' and the 'bad' – and all are Christians.

7). Although the parable begins with the introduction of the gospel of grace – the dragnet cast into the sea – which it must as this is the beginning point – 1Co 3:11 ¶ *For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

a). We must keep in mind that the parable is dealing with issues beyond the point of salvation by grace. We are instead dealing with issues surrounding our heavenly calling, issues surrounding our inheritance, issues surrounding our being a coheir with Christ – being adopted as a firstborn son – issues surrounding the salvation of our soul - Ro 8:16 *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 ¶ and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

8). Scripture is abundantly clear that not all Christians will have an inheritance in the coming Kingdom – something that has to do with the Kingdom age alone,

never with regards to eternity. Here are just two examples - 1Co 6:9 ¶ *Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.*

a). Ga 5:19 *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

b). What we see in our parable then is this very separation between those who inherit the Kingdom and those who will not inherit the Kingdom that we have just read - Mt 13:48 *"which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away.*

9). What we are seeing then is the final and conclusive separation that takes place amongst the saved with respect to entrance into or exclusion from the Millennial Kingdom of Christ.

a). This separation as we know is not arbitrary, but the last in what will have been an on-going process of separation throughout the duration of each individual Christian's life. And it will have been our personal response to the process of separation which will determine which of these two groups, the 'good' or the 'bad' we will be a part of.

10). Our entire Christian experience begins in separation in the antitype of the light separating the darkness in Genesis 1:4 and the land being separated from the water in Genesis 1:9 – as we are taken from the sea.

a). This is the experience of all Christians and happens because of the finished work of another – it is a separation from eternal death into eternal life, a separation that can never be reversed. It is as a result of the finished work of Christ, and is given to us as a free gift as we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ – Ro 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

b). Whether we realize it or not this separation automatically takes place at the point of our eternal salvation.

11). From this point onwards however, our participation in the process of separation, that which we might call sanctification, becomes a matter of individual

choice. The choices that we make have no effect upon the free gift of eternal life but they do have an impact upon what happens to us at the end of the age. As we have already seen in our parable the good are gathered into vessels and the bad are thrown away.

12). There are numerous other parables that the Lord gives in relation to the eternally saved and the Kingdom of the Heavens that show this same separation.

a). There are 10 virgins in the parable in Matthew Chapter 25 who are divided into two groups of five – based on the separation of those who are continually filled with the Spirit and those who are not - Mt 25:10 *"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. 11 "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' 12 "But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'*

b). There is the wedding guest of Matthew 22 who is separated from the other wedding guests as a result of not having a wedding garment - Mt 22:11 *"But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. 12 "So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. 13 "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 "For many are called, but few are chosen."*

c). And the servant who was separated from his fellow servants by doing nothing with the talent he was given - Mt 25:30 *'And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

13). We can see that these separations all occur at the same terminal point in exactly the same timeframe as the Parable of the Dragnet. And all have as their focus entrance into or exclusion from the Kingdom of the Heavens. And all show the outcome of either reward or loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The separation of Christians at the Judgment Seat of Christ is by no means an isolated idea. It is more than well documented throughout scripture, beginning with the foundational type of the Woman being removed from Adam's side in Genesis Chapter 2.

14). That this separation of 'good' and 'bad' Christians takes place is absolutely certain, and as we said earlier, the outcome for each of us will be determined by our present response to the separating process during our time here on earth.

a). With this process of separation in mind then, within the context of the Matthew 13 parables witness the Parable of the Sower –

- i/ The wayside – separation
- ii/ Stony places – separation
- iii/ Thorns – separation

And then continuing -

- iv/ Wheat and tares – separation
- v/ Mustard seed – separation
- vi/ Leaven – separation

b). And then if we view this in a more general sense for ‘anyone who hears the word of the Kingdom’ – will you draw deeply from the well of water? – separation

i/ ‘Will you go with this man?’ – leave behind the land of your birth, leave behind the world and all it has to offer and go to the land of your calling, a heavenly land – like Abraham, Rebekah and Ruth? – separation

ii/ Will you turn back having started on the journey? – Like Orpah, or Lot’s wife – separation.

iii/ Will you work from morning until night in His field and beat out the grain? – separation.

iv/ Will you wash yourself, anoint yourself and put on your best garment? – separation.

v/ Will you suffer with Christ, die to self, deny yourself and pick up your cross daily, walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh? – separation.

vi/ Will you humble yourself? - separation.

vii/ Will you store up treasures in heaven? – separation

viii/ Will you enter by the narrow gate? – separation.

15). The day is coming when we shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and give an account of what we have done in the body, whether good or bad and in that day we will be separated into one of two groups. The ‘good’ will be gathered into vessels and the bad will be thrown away - Mt 22:14 *"For many are called, but few are chosen."*

16). And I would ask us to all keep in mind the example of the first generation of Israel - 1Co 10:11 *Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*

a). Heb 3:19 *So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.*

b). This first generation of Israel to come out of Egypt was separated from Joshua and Caleb at Kadesh Barnea because of their collective unbelief. They did

not have faith resulting in obedience in their lives in respect of what God had said about entering the land.

c). Nu 32:11 *'Surely none of the men who came up from Egypt, from twenty years old and above, shall see the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because they have not wholly followed Me, 12 'except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite, and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have wholly followed the LORD.'*

d). I wonder if we still have thought patterns, ideas and attitudes that have come from our involvement with the religious mustard tree. I wonder if we cling too tightly to those who are an immovable part of that corrupted system?

e). Perhaps we should heed the admonition of scripture - 2Co 6:17 *Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." 18 "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."*

17). What we see then in the Parable of the Dragnet is the separation made between those Christians who will receive their inheritance and those who won't. We have seen this same separation in the Parable of the Wheat and Tares – Mt 13:30 *'Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."'*

a). We have seen it in the Parable of the Ten Virgins, the Parable of the Wedding Guest and the Parable of the Talents, and although we didn't look at it specifically, the Parable of the Minas/Pounds.

b). We will recall that these are all pictures of the separation that takes place because of decisions and determinations that are made at the Judgment Seat as a result of our works being tested by fire - 1Co 3:13 *each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.*

c). Our works will be as a result of our faithful obedience to the word of God or our unfaithfulness to that same word – the process of separation that we have looked at - 1Co 3:14 *If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

d). And again, the focus of the judgment here is not eternal, but Millennial – it is solely in relation to the Kingdom of the Heavens within the Kingdom age.

e). Both obtaining the inheritance and being denied the inheritance are purely Millennial in their scope. They are exclusively for the Kingdom age.

f). And just to be clear – the Kingdom age is the 7th Day, the Sabbath Rest of God, the culmination of all that God has set in place from the beginning. This is the focus of scripture and the purpose for our creation and the purpose for our salvation. And as such it has an unquantifiable importance from God’s perspective. He takes the 7th Day and our attitude to it very seriously.

g). Ex 20:11 *For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.*

h). Ex 31:14 *'You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death;*

i). Heb 4:4 *For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works";.....9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.....11 ¶ Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.*

18). We have taken a long time to lay this foundation, but I wanted to make sure we are absolutely clear that we are dealing with the eternally saved alone, that we are dealing with the Millennial Kingdom alone and that the Millennial Kingdom, the Rest the Sabbath Day, the 7th Day is the focus of scripture and the purpose of God’s revelation to Man.

19). And the reason we need to understand these things is because of how our parable ends - Mt 13:49 *"So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, 50 "and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."*

a). We are seeing then Christians, who because of their unfaithfulness, are designated as wicked and are subsequently cast into ‘the furnace of fire’.

b). And this is identical to the conclusion of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares - Mt 13:40 *"Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. 41 "The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42 "and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

c). In both instances we are seeing a specific furnace of fire ‘THE furnace of fire’. And some Christians are going to be cast into it.

d). Nor is this the only place in scripture where such a picture is given – Mt 3:12 *"His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."*

e). Joh 15:5 *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 "If anyone [of you] does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.*

f). Heb 6:8 *but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned. 9 ¶ But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.*

20). If we were to study the use of the Greek word 'Gehenna' and the phrase 'the outer darkness' we will find exactly the same truth being taught.

21). Gehenna is a word that the average Christian may never come across and yet it has enormous significance with regards to understanding what awaits the eternally redeemed if they should prove to be unfaithful.

a). It is a word that is used only 12 times in scripture and for 11 of those times it is used exclusively by the Lord in a context that relates to either entrance into or exclusion from the Kingdom of the Heavens.

b). Gehenna was a place that had a literal, specific location, that was well known to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

c). In the Old Testament this very same place is referred to as the valley of the son of Hinnom - Jos 15:8 *And the border went up by the Valley of the Son of Hinnom to the southern slope of the Jebusite city (which is Jerusalem).*

d). The valley of the son of Hinnom and Gehenna are one and the same place.

e). Its location was just south of the city of Jerusalem and was the place during Jesus' time where all the garbage of the city was dumped and burned.

f) So let's look at a scripture from what we know as 'the sermon on the mount', which is a lifestyle blue print for those who would enter the Kingdom of the Heavens, to see how Gehenna is used - Mt 5:29 *"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. 30 "And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.*

g). So did you see it? No? Well therein is our problem. Every time the physical location called Gehenna is referenced it is indiscriminately translated 'hell'.

h). And with the use of the word ‘hell’ comes a notion of eternal damnation and confusion reigns – However - 1Co 14:33 *For God is not the author of confusion*

i). The confusion we see here comes from only one place. It is the work of the enemy. It is the leaven in the 3 measures of meal.

j). And to add to the confusion it is the lake of fire where eternal damnation takes place not ‘hell’ and scripture never refers to ‘hell’ in that way.

22). What the Lord is making clear within the context of the sermon on the mount is that those redeemed individuals, who by their lifestyle are found unworthy of the Kingdom of the Heavens will find themselves in the equivalent of the Jerusalem garbage dump of His day. Just as Gehenna, the valley of the son of Hinnom, was located south of the earthly city of Jerusalem, so will that place which Gehenna pictures be ‘south’ of the Heavenly City, the New Jerusalem, outside the city gates.

a). That’s why we see this recorded in - Re 22:14 *Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. 15 But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.*

23). Exactly the same truth is taught through the use of the phrase ‘the outer darkness’. This is simply another way that the Lord uses to deal with the same issue – that which is in store for those who are denied access to the Kingdom of the Heavens because of their unfaithfulness.

a). The phrase appears 3 times in scripture – all of which are in Matthew’s gospel, and each time it is used in relation to exclusion from the Kingdom of the Heavens.

b). Once with regards to the nation of Israel - Mt 8:11 *"And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. 12 "But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

c). In Matthew 22 in the Parable of the Wedding Guest which we are familiar with.

d). And in - Mt 25:30 *'And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

24). And so if we look at this from one direction we see those who are denied a position with Christ in His Kingdom, because of their unfaithfulness, finding themselves in a place symbolized by the place the garbage from the city of Jerusalem was discarded – south of the city outside the gates.

a). Then seeing the same thing from another direction we see these same disobedient Christians in a place outside, a place associated with darkness – the outer darkness, the darkness outside – separated from the One who said – Joh 8:12 ¶ *Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."*

b). And then from yet another direction we see this same group cast into the furnace of fire.

c). The conclusion we are left with then is that there are extremely serious consequences for those Christians who through the choice of a lifestyle of unfaithfulness and disobedience find themselves excluded from the Kingdom of the Heavens.

d). Now we know that this is for 1000 years only, but 1000 years is a very long time and the imagery used to describe what happens to this group makes it very plain that this is not where we want to find ourselves.

e). Ro 11:22 *Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.*

f). Heb 12:28 *Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. 29 For our God is a consuming fire.*

25). And so the question that we come face to face with once again today is how seriously are we taking our pursuit of the Kingdom of the Heavens and His righteousness?

a). Anything less than a whole hearted response in the positive is in effect a rejection.

b). Right here, right now is a possible point of separation – what will you choose?

c). De 30:19 *"I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;*