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Parables 07 The Parable of the Dragnet

Matthew 13:47-52

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- 1.) **Review-** After having given the first parable of the Sower and the Seed which is about the response to the word of the kingdom in the different soils, Jesus told six more parables about what the mystery aspect of the kingdom of heaven was going to be like. Each of these six parables can be grouped in three pairs with each pair describing similar characteristics of the mystery aspect of the kingdom of heaven with a slightly different emphasis.
 - The parable of the *“Wheat and the Weeds”* describes the sons of the evil one as looking so much like the sons of the kingdom that only the angels will be able to tell them apart. When you put the parable of the *“Dragnet”* along side of the *“Wheat and the Weeds”* you see what will happen to both groups at the end of the age.
 - The parables of the *“Mustard Seed”* and the parable of the *“Leaven in the Meal”* illustrate the outward growth of the kingdom of heaven, and the internal influence of those who are represented by the shallow soil and the crowded soil in the parable of the Sower and the Seed.
 - The parable of the *“Hid Treasure”* and the *“Pearl of Great Price”* show the proper response of the true sons of the kingdom to the kingdom message. One person was not searching for anything when he discovered something of great value while the other person was specifically seeking an item of great value.
- 2.) **Background to The Parable of the Dragnet-** Many of Jesus’ disciples were fisherman. Those that didn’t actually fish for a living were still familiar with how fishing was done. In order to understand the parable of the dragnet we need to understand something about the different types of fishing that are described in the New Testament.
 - **Hook & Line-** Sometimes fishing was done with a hook and line. Peter did this when Jesus told him to take the coin out of the mouth of the first fish he catches to pay the temple tax (Matt. 17:24-27).
 - **Throw Net-** Sometimes a throw net called an Amphiblestron was used [1]. This was a small round net, about eight to ten feet in diameter, that had brass or iron rings around it’s edges and a draw string to pull it closed (Matt. 4:18). A man would take one of these throw nets and toss it out over the water where he thought there might be fish, and as the net sank it would hopefully trap a fish or two under it so that when the fisherman pulled the net in by the cord it would close like a bag and catch the fish in it.
 - **Gill Net-** A gill net or Diktuon was sometimes used for commercial fishing. The spacing in the net would only catch fish of a specific size when they poke their heads through net and get trapped. Smaller fish would be able to swim through, and larger fish would not be able to get their heads caught in it [2]. After Jesus’ resurrection he told his disciples, who were fishing, where to cast their net (John 21:6-11). When they couldn’t pull the net up because of the amount of fish caught in it, they dragged it on to the shore and found that they had caught 153 fish in their gill net.
 - **Dragnet-** The word that is used to describe the net in Matthew 13:47 is a Sagene or seine net. Also referred to as a dragnet. These nets were usually between 200 to 400 feet long and 6 to 12 feet wide. But some dragnets were nearly half a mile long. They had wood or bundles of papyrus reeds tied to the top, and pieces of metal or rocks tied at the bottom. A net like this would be like a vertical wall moving through the water trapping everything in its path. Nothing can escape the net. It would take 4 to 16 men to work a dragnet depending on the size of the net. Sometimes they would anchor one end to the shore and a boat

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would take the other end straight out and then slowly make a semi-circle loop back to shore trapping everything (clean and unclean fish) between the net and the shore. To catch fish in deep water, two boats would take the net out and stretch the net between them, then as they turned their boats, they would make a large circle with the net and connect the ends together. They could then haul the net to shore where they would throw the clean fish into baskets and get rid of everything else. When fish are encircled in a net like this they don't realize at first that they're caught. If the net brushes their tails they just dart up ahead into what they think is open water. But there isn't really any open water to escape into because there is net on the other side as well. This is the image that Jesus used to describe the final judgement. Just as no fish can escape the dragnet, none of us will escape our mortality that binds us to this earth.

***READ Matthew 13:47-50 ***

- 3.) **The Interpretation-** This is a parable about the inevitability of the final judgment. Fortunately we don't have to interpret this parable because Jesus interprets for us.
- a.) **The Net-** No fish escapes the net and in the same way no person will escape death. As someone once said; "None of us are going to make it out of this world alive" (except for those at the rapture of the church of course).
 - b.) **The Sea-** Much like the different kinds of people in our own world, there are various kinds of fish swimming around in this environment. Heaven will be made up of people from every tribe, and language, and people, and nation. (Revelation 5:9). There is not just simply one variety of good fish.
 - c.) **The Fisherman-** Jesus tells us that this is how the angels will separate the wicked from the righteous just as fishermen separate the good from the bad fish.
 - d.) **The Fish-** The catch is made up of good and bad fish. Nothing is mentioned about the fate of the good fish (the redeemed) because the purpose of this parable is to describe the ultimate destiny of the bad fish.
 - e.) **The Separation-** Jesus is describing the utter horror that the lost will experience when they are damned to hell for all of eternity. If there was any teaching that most of us wish weren't in the bible it's probably the teaching of the existence of hell. Hell has been called the most disturbing doctrine in the whole Bible. We might tend to not believe that the eternal existence of the unbeliever is a conscious, eternal torment in hell if Jesus hadn't spoken so much about it. As a matter of fact Jesus spoke more about hell than anyone else in the bible. He actually spoke more about hell than he did about love, joy, heaven, or peace. If Jesus himself hadn't affirmed the reality of hell I think many of us might be tempted to doubt its existence. Jesus repeatedly described the horror of hell and warned people to escape.
 - There are two primary words in the Greek New Testament that are translated as hell. One word that is translated for us as hell is the word Greek word "Hades". Its Hebrew equivalent that is found in the Old Testament is the word "Sheol". These terms are each used in two different ways in the bible. **First** of all, the Hebrew word "Sheol" is sometimes translated in the Old Testament using the English word "grave". This indicated the temporary holding place for the souls of everyone who had died, both righteous and unrighteous, prior to the actual payment that Jesus made for the sins of man. **Secondly**, the Greek word "Hades" is translated by using the English word hell because only the souls of the unrighteous dead are there today awaiting their ultimate destiny in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15). We can see this clearly in the account of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. Here we see one man in Paradise and another in Torment. After Jesus paid for man's sin he ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven, and he was able to say to the repentant thief on the cross next to him "today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43) which is located in heaven today. When a believer in Jesus dies today, they are immediately in the presence of the Lord in heaven (2 Corinthians 5:8, Philippians 1:23).
 - The Greek word that is most often used in the Gospels by Jesus to describe hell is the word "Gehenna" (ge-hen-nah). The word is found twelve times in the New Testament

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and was used by Jesus in all but one of the places (James 3:6). It is a reference to the Valley of Hinnom, just south of Jerusalem, where the Canannites used to offer human sacrifices to their god Moloch. After the Jews returned from their captivity in Babylon they made this valley a place of defilement where the garbage of the city was thrown and burned. By the first century this valley had literally been burning for hundreds of years.

4.) Beliefs About Hell- Regardless of who you talk to, it seems like most people have made up their minds on the subject of hell. Even though the existence of hell may not be popular today, it's still not out of business.

1996 Survey by Barna Research Group on Hell -

- Three in ten adults (31%) see hell as an actual location: "a place of physical torment where people may be sent." (1996)
- Four in ten adults (37%), say "hell is not a place, but it represents a state of permanent separation from the presence of God." (1996)
- Describing hell as merely a symbolic term, not referring to a physical place was true for two in ten Americans (19%). (1996)

ISAAC ASIMOV:

I don't believe in an afterlife, so I don't have to spend my whole life fearing hell, or fearing heaven even more. For whatever the tortures of hell, I think the boredom of heaven would be even worse.

A. W. TOZER:

The vague and tenuous hope that God is too kind to punish the ungodly has become a deadly opiate for the consciences of millions.

5.) What the Bible Says-

- a.) Not created for man- (Matt. 25:41-46) In the parable of the sheep and the goats Jesus taught that hell was originally prepared for the devil and his angels. God takes no pleasure in sending people to hell (Ezekiel 33:11). He patiently waits for people to repent because he doesn't want to send anyone to hell for eternity (2 Peter 3:9).
- b.) Duration of Hell - Jesus also taught that the torment of hell will last for the same duration as the pleasures of heaven. Both are everlasting (Luke 16:19-31). No one will be able to change their eternal destiny after they have died (Hebrews 9:27).
- c.) Environment of Hell- Hell is a place of unrelieved torment. It is described as a place where people will be tormented by the pain of fire. It is also a place of darkness (Matthew 8:12).
- d.) Degrees of Punishment- (Matthew 11:20-24) Jesus warned Korazin and Bethsaida that their judgment will be worse than that of Tyre, Sidon because of the number of miracles that they had witnessed that verified Jesus' message. The residents of Tyre and Sidon didn't have the extensive miracles that confirmed Jesus' claim like Korazin and Bethsaida had, and as a result they would be held to a higher accountability for rejecting the message. Capernaum also had witnessed many miracles and they were going to be held more accountable than Sodom because of the amount of revelation that they had been given and ultimately rejected. Everyone in hell will not be punished alike. There will be degrees of punishment in hell. In the parable of the servants found in Luke 12:47-48 the servant that knew what his master had commanded and disobeyed will be judged more severely than the one who didn't know.

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6.) Conclusion; At the end of the Kingdom parables of Matthew chapter 13 Jesus asked His disciples if they understood everything He told them and they said that they did. He then told them a simile comparing them to a household steward who was in charge of dispensing his master's goods. If we understand the truths that Jesus presented here we are likened to the one who is in charge of the storeroom. We have a responsibility to warn people of the coming judgement. In Ezekiel 33:7-9 God told Ezekiel that just as a watchman was responsible for warning the city in the event of the threat of an invading army, God was going to hold Ezekiel responsible for warning the people of the coming judgement. If he did not warn them then he would ultimately be held responsible for their destruction. We have that same responsibility.

[1] Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words. Pg. 790

[2] Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Vol. 2, Pg. 542

[3] Probe Ministries. WWW.PROBE.ORG, Is There Really a Hell? By Rick Rood