Week 9

Assignment: Read Chapter Seven, Pages 80-85. (A Comprehensive Study of NINE Parables of Jesus Christ) – **The parable of the Dragnet.**

Video Presentation found on the ARIZE Institute of the Five-Fold Ministry and Bible College Website: www.arizefivefoldministry.info. Also located on YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/@ARIZEffmbc2019.

This Parable will be detailed in the book and will also include additional information in the following section.

This course, rather than being taken as an audit or as an online presentation, is presented in the same way as a credit course. If you are considering using this course as an audit and want to switch to a credit course, please talk to your facilitator, and they will direct you on how to do so.

The Dragnet (Mt 13:47-50)

INTRODUCTION

We have seen where Jesus taught two parables concerning the growth and development of the kingdom:

"The Parable Of The Mustard Seed" - Mt 13:31-32

"The Parable Of The Leaven" - Mt 13:33

We also saw where Jesus taught two parables concerning the value and preciousness of the kingdom:

"The Parable Of The Hidden Treasure" - Mt 13:44

"The Parable Of The Pearl Of Great Price" - Mt 13:45-46

Jesus also taught two parables depicting the present mixture and future separation involving the kingdom of heaven:

The first was "The Parable of the Wheat And The Tares", which we have already studied- Mt 13:24-30,36-43 and the second is "The Parable of the Dragnet", which will be the focus of this chapter. Mt 13: 47-50.

In each case where two parables seem to address the same subject, subtle differences show which aspects of the kingdom are being stressed. In the two parables describing the kingdom's growth and development, one depicts visible growth (The Mustard Seed), and the other depicts invisible growth (The Leaven). In the two parables

describing the kingdom's value and preciousness, one illustrates its value to one who accidentally finds it (The Hidden Treasure), and the other illustrates its value to one who seeks it (The Pearl Of Great Price).

Similarly, we will notice a subtle difference between "The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares" and "The Parable Of The Dragnet" ...)

Jesus tells the parable of the dragnet to his disciples, communicating that at the return of the King Messiah, he will establish God's dominion worldwide and separate the "righteous" from the "wicked". In God's eyes, the only difference between the "righteous" and the "wicked" is that the righteous have asked for Jesus' forgiveness and have not relied on their own righteousness to be in right standing with God. In addition, this parable teaches that some who consider themselves "Christians" will be revealed at the end of the age not to have put their faith in Jesus Christ.

THE DETAILS OF THE PARABLE

A "dragnet" was cast into the sea. As defined by the Holman Bible Dictionary, a "dragnet" is a large fishing net equipped with a weighted bottom edge for touching ("dragging") the river or lake bottom and a top with wooden floats allowing the net to be spread across the water (Isa 19:8). Such nets were normally let down from a boat and then drawn to shore by a crew positioned on the beach. If the catch case large, they hauled the net to shore by boat (**Jn 21:6-8**). Once they brought the dragnet ashore, they separated the fish: those fit for eating were kept in vessels, and the inedible were discarded.

In this chapter, we will cover the last of the parables Jesus told in Matt. 13—the parable of the dragnet. Before we study this parable, let's read it to become familiar with it. Matthew 13:47-52. In 13:52, Jesus says that understanding these parables lets us not only affirm what the Old Testament taught about God's kingdom but also learn new things about it.

The Old Testament prophets taught that when the Messiah comes, he will dramatically terminate "this present evil age" and replace it with God's perfect, worldwide kingdom. This will include separating all people into one of two groups—the "righteous" and the "wicked." He will welcome the "righteous" into his kingdom, but he will banish the "wicked" to everlasting punishment (cf. Dan. 12:2).

WHO ARE THE "RIGHTEOUS" AND THE "WICKED?"

Before we go any farther, we must understand what Jesus means by ***"righteous" and "wicked."*** When we read these terms, we naturally assume the "righteous" refers to people who do lots of righteous deeds, and the "wicked" to people who do lots of wicked deeds. But this is *not* what he means. Jesus (and the rest of the Bible) makes it clear that the "righteous" may include people who have done very wicked things, while the "wicked"

may include people who have done no outwardly wicked things and many outwardly good things. Briefly recount Lk.18:9-14. The man who did lots of wicked things goes home "justified" (declared righteous), while the man who did lots of moral and religious things goes home *not* justified. How can this be?

Read Rom.3:21-25a. The only righteousness that counts is being declared right with God. *None* of us can attain this verdict by our own works, because *all* of us fall short of his perfect standard. But we can be declared right with God through faith in Jesus, no matter how unrighteously we have lived. This is because Jesus died to pay the full penalty for our sins—so when we humbly entrust ourselves to him, God declares us "righteous" based on his payment.

Imagine two people with an unpayable debt to the IRS. One man owes far more than the other, but neither can pay. Then a very generous man comes and says, "I will fully pay both of your debts. All you need to do is admit that you can't pay it and let me pay it for you in my name." What if the man with the greater debt thankfully agreed—but the man with the lesser debt said, "No thanks—I don't need your help." The IRS would declare the first man "righteous," but the second man guilty.

For all our moral and religious differences, each of us is one of these two men. We are *either* saying: "I depend only on God declaring me righteous through Jesus' payment for me," *or* we are saying: "I depend on my own righteousness, and I reject God's gift of righteousness through Jesus." Which one are you? If you are saying the latter, you will be excluded from God's kingdom, no matter how good you have been. If you affirm the former, you will be welcomed into God's kingdom, no matter how bad you have been. This is the good news of Jesus Christ, which offends the self-righteous but gladdens the humble.

THE NEW INFORMATION

Let's go back to the parable. The separation of the "righteous" from the "wicked" is "old" information. What is the new information? The new information is that during this stage of God's kingdom, it will gather both true believers in Jesus and people who don't truly believe in him. **A dragnet gathers both edible and inedible fish**—they only get sorted out after the net is brought ashore and workers separate the fish. In the same way, as the message about Jesus goes out through the world, it will gather people who truly respond with faith in Jesus and people who are among God's people—yet not truly believing in Jesus. This will be fully sorted out only when Jesus returns, and his angels separate these people into two groups. The New Testament applies this truth in two main ways...

NOT ALL LEADERS/GROUPS THAT SAY THEY ARE "CHRISTIAN" REALLY ARE CHRISTIANS/BELIEVERS

First, it teaches that not all leaders/groups who say they are "Christian" really are in Matt. 24:4,5,11, Jesus warns us that throughout this period of history, many will come "in his name" (claiming to represent him) and will deceive many people in Matt. 7:15,16,

Jesus warns us to watch for false prophets who claim to be one of his "sheep" but are actually "wolves in sheep's clothing"—deceivers who lead others astray from the true Jesus.

The Bible teaches that behind this human activity is a spiritual enemy—Satan. Satan knows that he cannot eradicate the true Jesus and his true gospel , so he creates counterfeit Jesuses and counterfeit gospels. He energizes these false prophets to keep people from coming to the true Jesus, to damage Jesus' reputation, and to make other people cynical about Jesus. He has done this well throughout the centuries.

"Christian" cults are often thought about during these desperate times, which sprang up in the 1970's and 1980's, during the Jesus Movement. The Children of God lured young people in through sexual immorality. Sun Yung Moon declared himself to be the true messiah and damaged many young people's spiritual lives. Jim Jones (People's Temple) and David Koresh (Branch Davidians) led their followers literally to their deaths through mass suicide and incineration. These people were spiritually deceived; their families' hearts were broken—and many people became cynical about any non-institutional churches, or even about Christianity itself. Similar groups, led by similar leaders, keep springing up worldwide—especially where Christianity is growing rapidly.

How can you discern genuinely Christian leaders/groups from counterfeits? Jesus says, "You will recognize them by their fruits." In other words, they will manifest certain characteristics that will give them away. The most important of these "fruits" is whether their teachings agree with God's Word, the Bible. Paul reminds Timothy of this as he opposed false prophets in Ephesus (read 2nd Tim. 3:13-15). The best way to detect counterfeit currency is to be an expert in genuine currency. Likewise, the best way to detect false teachers is to know the true teaching well—and the Bible is the source of that teaching. The Bible teaches us who the true Jesus is ("Christ"—the only Messiah/Savior), and the Bible teaches us the true path to salvation (by grace through faith alone). Read Heb.5:13,14.

Are you becoming acquainted with the Bible? Can you use the Bible to discern what you hear "Christian" leaders teach—on the radio, on the internet, in their books, or in church? Or do you go by what you feel, what others think, etc.? Sometimes people say to me: "I just trust what you say." It's great to value that trust—but you should trust the Bible more than you trust anyone or anything else! A leader's main goal is to help you learn the Bible so you can receive salvation through faith in Jesus and grow into a discerning follower of Jesus (Eph. 4:11-14). Listen to everything I or we teach and consider whether the Bible teaches it. If I or we deviate from what the Bible teaches, you should question it.

NOT EVERYONE INVOLVED IN A CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS REALLY A CHRISTIAN.

The second way the New Testament applies this parable is that it teaches us that not everyone involved in a Christian church is really a Christian. One famous Christian

preacher said, “Going into a church doesn’t make you a Christian any more than going into a garage makes you a car.” As the message of Jesus goes out through a local Christian church, many people are gathered—neighbors, friends, family members, etc. This is great because Jesus' message is meant to be shared, and the church of Jesus is meant to be welcoming. But remember, being involved in a church doesn’t make you a Christian. The only thing that makes you a Christian is personally receiving Jesus Christ, so you know Him personally and experience His transforming presence in your life.

This is why Paul ends his letter to the Corinthian church this way (read 2nd Cor. 13:5). Why did he say this? Because he assumed some people would hear this letter being read, attend their meetings, and be positive about their message—but hadn't truly received Jesus into their hearts, so they personally knew him. This is the “test” he urges them to take. It’s not a test of behavior, nor is it a test of Bible knowledge. You can have lots of behavioral problems and have very little Bible knowledge—and yet still be a genuine Christian. On the other hand, you can be a nice, moral person, and have many Bible passages memorized—and yet still not be a Christian at all. The key is this: Do you know you have entrusted yourself to Jesus as your Savior, and do you know Jesus is in you? True Christians may not know when they trusted Jesus, but they know they have. True Christians have times when it doesn’t feel like Jesus is in them, but they have experienced his presence in their hearts—assuring them of God’s love, forgiving them, bringing his Word alive to them, helping them pray, guiding them in their moral decisions, etc.

THE MEANING OF THE PARABLE

As with “The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares”, Jesus explains what this parable means - Mt 13:49-50. In its present state, the Kingdom of God will be a mixture of good and bad, just as a dragnet will catch both good and bad fish.

In “The Parable Of The Wheat and Tares,” we saw that Satan's influence causes this, so there will be those “that offend, and those who practice lawlessness,” cf. Mt 13:41. Paul wrote that in “a great house” (i.e., the church) some vessels are “for honor and some for dishonor” - 2 Ti 2:20-21, but in the future there will be a separation - Mt 13:49, and it will occur “at the end of the age” - cf. Mt 13:39-40.

The agents of this separation will be the “angels” - cf. Mt 13:41 and the “wicked” will be separated from the “just” (i.e., the righteous) - cf. Mt 13:41. The punishment of the “wicked” is described - Mt 13:50. i.e., “cast…into the furnace of fire.” - cf. Mt 13:42a: “There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Mt 13:42b.

In giving His explanation, we see the emphasis of Jesus in this parable, and the fundamental difference between it and “The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares” is:

a. The emphasis is upon…
    1) The “future” separation of those in the kingdom
    2) The punishment of the wicked

b. Unlike "The Parable of the Wheat And The Tares"...
   1) There is nothing in the explanation related to the "present" mixture in the kingdom - - contrast that with Mt 13:24-30
   2) There is nothing depicting the blessedness of the righteous - contrast that with Mt 13:43

The Parable of the Dragnet, then, reinforces the spiritual truths taught in "The Parable Of The Wheat and Tares", especially those relating to the coming judgment and condemnation of the wicked, and that Jesus would emphasize the judgment and condemnation of the wicked in this parable ought to impress upon us that the "good news" of the kingdom of heaven also contains "bad news" for those who reject it. Since this parable focuses on the "destiny" of the wicked, this might be a good time to review what Jesus Himself taught on the subject.

JESUS TAUGHT THE WICKED WILL BE JUDGED

We have seen this truth illustrated in the two parables we have been comparing, and He warned those cities that rejected Him of the coming judgment - Mt 11:20-24. He spoke of the condemnation that would come upon His generation (Mt 12:41-42), and He said the wicked would be raised unto condemnation, unlike the righteous (Jn 5:24-30). Jesus also taught that the wicked will be separated from God. He spoke on this separation on numerous occasions in His Sermon on the Mount (Mt 7:21-23) and in the judgment scene (Mt 25:41-46). He also taught that the wicked will be cast into Hell, which is a term used most often by Jesus to describe the destiny of the wicked.

The Greek word is "geenna" {gheh'-en-nah}, which in Hebrew is "Ge-Hinnom." B. W. Johnson[1] comments: The term Gehenna arose from the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where the Canaanites burned human sacrifices to Moloch. After the return of the Jews from the Captivity, they made it a place of defilement, where the refuse of the city was thrown and burned. The name was applied to the place of future punishment by the Jews. The word is often used in the New Testament and always denotes a place of future punishment.

[1] https://www.biblestudyguide.org/comment/bjohnson/pnt/PNT00.HTM