

CAPITAL BIBLE CHURCH

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SERMON NOTES

PASTOR BILL HAKEN

“Secrets of the Kingdom”

“The Dragnet”

Matthew 13:47 - 50

Big Idea – The judgment of God is as certain and sure as the love of God!

Matthew 13: “Also, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was put into the lake and caught many different kinds of fish.

48 When it was full, the fishermen pulled the net to the shore. They sat down and put all the good fish in baskets and threw away the bad fish.

49 It will be this way at the end of the world. The angels will come and separate the evil people from the good people.

50 The angels will throw the evil people into the blazing furnace, where people will cry and grind their teeth with pain.”

The Picture of Judgment

Matthew 13: “Also, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was put into the lake and caught many different kinds of fish.

48 When it was full, the fishermen pulled the net to the shore. They sat down and put all the good fish in baskets and threw away the bad fish.

The picture Jesus uses to illustrate God's judgment on unbelievers was familiar to those who lived near the Sea of Galilee, and especially those, like several of the disciples, who were fisherman.

Sea of Galilee had 3 basic methods of fishing:

1. with a line and hook, which was used to catch one fish at a time. That was what the Lord instructed Peter to do when they needed money to pay the two-drachma tax (Matt. 17:24-27).

The other two types of fishing involved nets. One net was a small, one-man casting net called an amphiblēstron. Peter and his brother Andrew were taking turns casting an amphiblēstron when Jesus called them to become "fishers of men" (Matt. 4:18-19).

The folded net was carried over the fisherman's shoulder as he waded in shallow water looking for a school of fish. When the fish were near enough, 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 came down over the fish. Weights around the perimeter of the net caused it to sink and trap the fish. The fisherman then pulled on the cord, which was attached to the center of the net and drew it around the fish like a sack. When the net had been pulled closed, the fisherman would haul his catch to shore.

A second type of net was the *sagēnē*; a very large dragnet, or seine, that required a team of fishermen to operate and sometimes covered as much as a half square mile.

It was pulled into a giant circle around the fish, between two boats out in deep water or by one boat when working from the shore. In the latter case, one end of the net would be firmly moored on shore 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. 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 net permitted nothing to escape, all sorts of things besides the desirable fish were caught. It swept everything in its path—weeds, objects dropped overboard from boats, all manner of sea life, and fish of every kind.

When the net was filled, it would take a large number of men several hours just to drag it up on the beach. Then they sat down, and put the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw 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 containers, usually baskets.

The Principle of Judgment

So it will be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth, and take out the wicked from among the righteous, (13:49)

Jesus begins by explaining that the separation of the good and bad fish represents God's judgment at the end of the age. The parable of the wheat and tares illustrates the coexistence of believers and unbelievers in the present form of the kingdom, and this parable illustrates their separation as the form of the kingdom changes.

But in His interpretation of the parable of the wheat and tares Jesus stated the same truth He gives here:

At the end of the age [His] angels shall come forth, and take out the wicked from among the righteous (cf. vv. 39-41).

Now, during the church age aka the “age of grace”, God permits unbelief and unrighteousness. But the time is coming when His toleration will end and His judgment begin. The first phase of judgment will be the separation of the wicked from among the righteous, the tares from among the wheat. The dragnet of God's judgment moves silently through the sea of mankind and draws all men to the shores of eternity for final separation to their ultimate destiny—believers to eternal life and unbelievers to eternal damnation.

Men move about within that net as if they were forever free. It may touch them from time to time, as it were, startling them. But they quickly swim away, thinking they have escaped, not realizing they are completely and inescapably encompassed in God's sovereign plan.

The invisible web of God's judgment encroaches on every human being just as that of the dragnet encroaches on the fish. Most men do not perceive the kingdom, and they do not see God working in the world. They may be briefly moved by the grace of the gospel or frightened by the threat of judgment;

but they soon return to their old ways of thinking and living, oblivious to the things of eternity. But when man's day is over and Christ returns to set up His glorious kingdom, then judgment will come.

Jesus is not giving a full description of the last days, 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 final judgment at the great white throne (Rev. 20:11-15).

Revelation 20:11-15 (NKJV)

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. But they found no place to hide.

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Just like in the wheat and tares parable (v. 41) and declared in many other New Testament passages (e.g., Matt. 24:31; 25:31-32; Rev. 14:19; 15:5-16:21), angels are the Lord's instruments of separation and execution of sentence. The separation will include all persons who are then living and all who have died—

"those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment" John 5:29.

Some people wonder why Jesus repeated the teaching about the angelic separation in this parable, when it is almost word for word what He had just said at the end of His explanation of the wheat and tares (Matt. 13:41).

First, the emphasis here is exclusively on the aspect of separation of believers from unbelievers, whereas in the other parable the major emphasis is on their coexistence.

Second, it is such a vitally important truth that it bears frequent repetition.

Over and over Jesus warns about the horrors of hell and pleads with men to avoid it by coming to Him for salvation.

He warned that, just as in the days of Noah before the flood, people will be "eating and drinking,... marrying and giving in marriage.... Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left" Matt. 24:38, 40-41.

God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 18:23)

Ezekiel 18:23 "Do you think that I like to see wicked people die? says the Sovereign LORD. Of course not! I want them to turn from their wicked ways and live."

and does not desire that anyone perish (2 Peter 3:9).

The Lord wept over Jerusalem because the people would not come to Him and be saved (Luke 19:41).

Luke 19:41 As Jesus came near Jerusalem, he saw the city and cried for it,

42 saying, "I wish you knew today what would bring you peace. But now it is hidden from you.

43 The time is coming when your enemies will build a wall around you and will hold you in on all sides.

44 They will destroy you and all your people, and not one stone will be left on another. All this will happen because you did not recognize the time when God came to save you."

He warned about hell not to put people in agony but to save them from it.

Matthew 25:41 "Then the King will say to those on his left, 'Go away from me. You will be punished. Go into the fire that burns forever that was prepared for the devil and his angels.

The Peril of Judgment

and will cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (13:50)

Perhaps no doctrine is harder to accept emotionally than the doctrine of hell.

Yet it is too clear and too often mentioned in Scripture either to deny or to ignore.

Jesus spoke more of hell than any of the prophets or apostles did—perhaps for the reason that its horrible truth would be all but impossible to accept had not the Son of God Himself absolutely affirmed it.

It had special emphasis in Jesus' teaching from the beginning to the end of His earthly ministry. He said more about hell than about love. More than all other teachers in the Bible combined, He warned men of hell, promising no escape for those who refused His gracious, loving offer of salvation.

In the Sermon on the Mount alone, the Lord gives several specific and direct warnings about hell:

"Whoever shall say, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell" (Matthew 5:22), and, "It is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell" v. 29; cf. v. 30; 18:8-9; Mark 9:43.

Jesus declared that the wicked *"sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 8:12) and that unbelieving Capernaum would "descend to Hades" (Matt.11:23; cf. Luke 10:15).*

He asked the evil and hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, *"How shall you escape the sentence of hell?" (Matt. 23:33).*

many other times Jesus refers to hell and warns about damnation (Matt. 5:20; 7:13, 19, 23, 27; 10:28; 12:36; 16:18; 18:8-9; 21:43-44; 23:14-15; 24:40-41, 51; 25:30, 46; Mark 3:29; Luke 12:9-10, 46; 16:23; John 5:29; 15:6).

Hell is not merely the fate of forever reliving bad memories or of going out into nothingness, like many believe and teach.

Nor is it a place where sinners will continue their sinning, unrestrained and unrebuked. There will be no pleasure at all in hell, not even the perverted pleasure of sin—only its punishment.

When an interviewer asked a young punk rock singer what she was looking forward to at the end of her career, she replied, "Death. I'm looking forward to death." When asked why, she said, "I want to go to hell, because hell will be fun."

Such deception is tragic beyond words. Nothing could less describe hell than fun. The human mind cannot begin to conceive of the eternal horror that is hell.

Even the biblical figures related to hell are only suggestive, because the finite mind cannot comprehend infinite pain and torment any more than it can comprehend infinite joy and bliss.

But from God's Word we learn four basic truths about the furnace of fire that will help us to partially grasp its terror

1. hell is a place of constant torment, misery, pain

The torment is often described as darkness (Matt. 22:13), where no light can penetrate, and nothing can be seen. Throughout the numberless eons of eternity the damned will never again see light or anything that light illumines.

Matthew 22:13 Then the king said to his aides, 'Bind his hands and feet and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Hell's torment is also described as fire that will never go out and cannot be extinguished (Mark 9:43) and from which the damned will never find relief.

Mark 9:43c "...and go to hell, where the fire never goes out."

Hell could not be anything other than a place where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

2. hell will involve the torment of both body and soul.

"Annihilationism" is not taught in the Bible.

Neither the soul nor the body is annihilated at death; nor will they ever be.

When an unsaved person dies, his soul goes out from the presence of God into everlasting torment. At the resurrection of all the dead, the bodies of the unsaved will be raised, and those resurrected bodies will join the soul in hell's torment (Matt. 10:28; cf. John 5:29; Acts 24:15; Rev. 20:11-15).

Just as believers will be fitted with resurrected bodies so they can enjoy the glories of heaven forever, unbelievers will be fitted with resurrected bodies so they can endure the torments of hell without being destroyed.

Jesus spoke of hell as a place "where their worm does not die" (Mark 9:44). When physical bodies are buried and begin to decay, the worms can attack them only as long as the flesh lasts. Once consumed, the body can experience no more harm. But the resurrected bodies of unbelievers will never be consumed, and the hellish "worms" that feed on them will themselves never die.

3. the torments of hell will be experienced in varying degrees.

For everyone in hell the suffering will be intense and permanent, but some will experience greater torment than others.

"Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses," says the writer of Hebrews. "How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10:28-29).

Those who willfully reject Jesus Christ 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 Old Covenant.

And on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for the pagan cities of Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom than for the Jewish cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum—who not only had the light of the Old Covenant but the opportunity to see and hear the Son of God in person and to witness His miraculous works (Matt. 11:22-23).

"Hell will have such severe degrees," writes John Gerstner, "that a sinner, were he able, would give the whole world if his sins could be one less."

4. the torment of hell will be everlasting.

Nothing will be so horrible about hell as its endlessness – its eternity

Jesus uses the same word to describe the duration of hell as the duration of heaven:

"These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" Matthew 25:46

People in hell will experience the total absence of hope.

Although God originally designed hell for the devil and his fallen angels, men who choose to follow Satan's way instead of God's will also suffer Satan's fate.

The great Puritan writer and preacher John Bunyan describes hell with his customary vivid imagery:

[In hell] thou shalt have none but a company of damned souls with an innumerable company of devils to keep company with thee.

While thou art in this world, the very thought of the devil's appearing to thee makes thy flesh to tremble and thine hair ready to stand upright on thy head. But oh, what wilt thou do when not only the supposition of the devil's appearing but the real society of all the devils of hell will be with thee—howling, roaring and screeching in such a hideous manner that thou wilt be even at thy wit's end and ready to run stark mad again for anguish and torment. If after ten thousand years, an end should come, there would be comfort. But here is thy misery: here thou must be forever. When thou seest what an

innumerable company of howling devils thou art amongst, thou shalt think this again—this is my portion forever. When thou hast been in hell so many thousand years as there are stars in the firmament or drops in the sea or sands on the seashore, yet thou hast to lie there forever. Oh, this one word—ever—how will it torment thy soul. (New Cyclopaedia of Prose Illustrations, ed. Elon Foster [New York: T. Y. Crowell, 1877], p.450)

Big Idea – The judgment of God is as certain and sure as the love of God!

The Bible says hell is real!

Deuteronomy 32:22 For a fire is kindled by my anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell; It shall consume the earth with her increase, And set on fire the foundations of the mountains.

Psalms 9:17 The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.

Psalms 55:15 Let death seize them; let them go down alive into hell, for wickedness is in their dwellings and among them.

Psalms 139:8 If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.

Proverbs 7:27 Her house is the way to hell, descending to the chambers of death.

Proverbs 9:18 But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of hell.

Proverbs 15:11 Hell and destruction are before the LORD; So how much more the hearts of the sons of men.

Proverbs 15:24 The way of life winds upward for the wise, that he may turn away from hell below.

Proverbs 23:14 You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell.

Isaiah 14:9 "Hell from beneath is excited about you, to meet you at your coming; It stirs up the dead for you, All the chief ones of the earth; It has raised up from their thrones All the kings of the nations.

Ezekiel 31:17 They also went down to hell with it, with those slain by the sword; and those who were its strong arm dwelt in its shadows among the nations.

Ezekiel 32:21 The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell with those who help him: 'They have gone down, They lie with the uncircumcised, slain by the sword.'

Amos 9:2 "Though they dig into hell, from there my hand shall take them; Though they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down;

Habakkuk 2:5 "Indeed, because he transgresses by wine, He is a proud man, and he does not stay at home. Because he enlarges his desire as hell, and he is like death, and cannot be satisfied, He gathers to himself all nations and heaps up for himself all peoples.

Matthew 5:22 But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.

Matthew 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.

Matthew 5:30 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.

Matthew 10:28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Matthew 18:9 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.

Matthew 23:15 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

Matthew 23:33 Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?

Mark 9:43 If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched--

Mark 9:45 And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched--

Mark 9:47 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire--

Luke 12:5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!

2 Peter 2:4 For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;

2 Peter 2:9 ...then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,