

Parable of the Dragnet (Matt 13:47-52)
Jesus' sequence of parables on the Kingdom of God

Sometimes it is worthwhile to evaluate if Jesus is teaching a parable as part of a series of parables on a particular subject. A good example of this is a sequence of parables in Matthew 13 when Jesus teaches about the Kingdom of God with: the Parable of the Sower, Parable of Weeds, Parables of the Mustard Seed and Yeast, Parable of the Hidden Treasure and Costly Pearl, and Parable of the Dragnet. As you study each parable, discover what Jesus is saying and whether there is a significance in the order of His presentation.

Matthew 13:47-51, LSB

47) "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; **48)** and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away. **49)** So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, **50)** and will throw them into the fiery furnace; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **51)** "Have you understood all these things?" They said to Him, "Yes."

1. Do you see the simile found in the first half of the Parable of the Dragnet (Matt 13:47-48)? What is being compared?

2. During the first century, fishing involved using dragnets which were larger than typical fishing nets. Floats made of wood or papyrus bundles and sinkers comprised of rocks were employed to keep the head of the net at the surface while its foot was dragged along the lake's bottom. One method was to anchor one end of the net on shore, and the boat takes the other end and makes a semicircle back to shore. Another method has the dragnet cast and drawn into the boat or dragged behind the boat to the shore. What is Jesus' interpretation of the Parable of the Dragnet?

3. Who hears Jesus' interpretation of this parable? What is being emphasized? Fill out the row on the Parable of the Dragnet

Parable	Who hears Jesus' interpretation?	What is being emphasized?
1. Parable of the Sower (Matt 13:1-9; Mark 4:1-9; Luke 8:4-8)	Everyone	In contrast to Jewish expectations, the kingdom of God was not about political power or land. In His Parable of the Sower, Jesus indicates that the good news of the kingdom will be heard by all kinds of people, but only a small number will hear, understand, accept and have an abundant spiritual life from it.
2. Parable of Weeds (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43)	Disciples	In contrast to the Parable of the Sower, the Parable of the Weed presents the seed as either Believers or non-Believers. In a world that contains both Believers and non-Believers, Jesus places an emphasis on His role as Judge deploying His angels to separate non-Believers from Believers before ushering them into the Kingdom of God.
3. Parables of the Mustard Seed and Yeast (Matt 13:31-33; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-21)	Everyone	The Parable of the Mustard Seed places an emphasis in the power of the seed; its small size belies how big the plant will ultimately be. In like manner, the small and humble beginning of Jesus' ministry belies the future glory of the kingdom of God. In the Parable of the Yeast, the kingdom begins in a small way; however, unlike the mustard seed, yeast does not grow. Instead yeast transforms and changes the flour into dough; the kingdom of God is a small living agent that, once initiated, cannot stop until it transforms and changes completely.
4. Parables of the Hidden Treasure and Costly Pearl (Matt 13:44-46)	Everyone	Jesus emphasizes the desirable worth of the kingdom of heaven. The laborer who accidentally finds the hidden treasure sells all that he has to buy the land. The merchant, who is seeking beautiful pearls, finds one so exquisite that he sells all that he has to buy it. The pairing of the two parable juxtaposes two different types of people. In the Parable of the Hidden Treasure, a man accidentally discovers something valuable. In the Parable of Costly Pearl, the man is searching for something valuable. In like manner, one may hear of the Good News when he least expects it or when he might be searching for the truth amidst the marketplace of ideas.
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Teacher Notes

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1. Do you see the simile found in the first half of the Parable of the Dragnet (Matt 13:47-48)? What is being compared?

Teach the student what a simile is: a figure of speech that compares something to something else.

Figure of speech:

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What the figure of speech is being compared to, which helps the listener understand:

49) So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, **50)** and will throw them into the fiery furnace; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **51)** “Have you understood all these things?”

2. During the first century, fishing involved using dragnets which were larger than typical fishing nets. Floats made of wood or papyrus bundles and sinkers comprised of rocks were employed to keep the head of the net at the surface while its foot was dragged along the lake's bottom. One method was to anchor one end of the net on shore, and the boat takes the other end and makes a semicircle back to shore. Another method has the dragnet cast and drawn into the boat or dragged behind the boat to the shore. What is Jesus' interpretation of the Parable of the Dragnet?

Ask the student: what is the focus of the comparison? Think carefully!

1. Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a dragnet which is designed to catch “all kinds” of fish in its path; the kingdom is vast and superior to all others. However, the point of comparison is the separation of the good and bad fish. The use of the terms “good” and “bad” lack moral overtones and instead is in the context of fish suitable for eating. “Bad” fish are “worthless” for eating.

In Jesus' interpretation, the fishermen represent unfallen angels. The fish represent human beings, and while the parable places no moral context to the fishes, Jesus' interpretation does make a moral judgment; human beings are either wicked or righteous.

2. Not only is Jesus teaching that the separation of the wicked from the righteous involves the evaluation of every human being, He is also indicating that there will be consequences of the wicked.

Has the student heard something like this before? The wicked will be thrown into the “fiery furnace” which symbolizes divine punishment (Matt 13:42) and the phrase “gnashing of teeth” is associated with the place of future punishment (Matt 8:12; 13:42).

3. Who hears Jesus’ interpretation of this parable? By listing what is being emphasized, one might see how this parable relates to the others in this series.

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5. Parable of the Dragnet (Matt 13:47-52)	Disciples	The Parable of the Dragnet paints a picture of final Judgment. Jesus ascribes to Himself the role of Judge. He directs His angels to remove the wicked. The righteous left behind enter the kingdom of heaven.