

# OpenTheo

## Matthew 13:47 - 13:52



### Gospel of Matthew - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg discusses two parables from Matthew 13 that pertain to the end of the age. The parable of the wheat and tares explains that at the end of the age, the Son of Man will send angels to gather all those who practice lawlessness and cast them into the furnace of fire. The other parable, the parable of the dragnet, explains that the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea that gathers every kind of fish, and in the same way, the angels will gather all those who offend and cast them into the furnace of fire. Gregg explains that there is not simply two kinds of Christians, but rather true disciples of Jesus and those who merely identify as followers without truly following Him.

### Transcript

There are two more parables in Matthew chapter 13 that we have not taken yet as we have studied through this chapter. We have seen the parable of the sower, the parable of the wheat and the tares. We've seen the parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the leaven.

We've also seen the parable of the hidden treasure and the parable of the pearl of great price. So, we have two more parables, making the grand total of eight, that are found in this chapter. Now, we're going to begin reading in Matthew chapter 13, verse 47.

Now, this parable has some similarities with the parable of the wheat and the tares, and that is because both parables talk about the end of the age. They both say, so will it be at the end of the age. In the parable of the wheat and the tares, it says in verse 40 of the same chapter, so it will be at the end of this age.

The Son of Man shall send out his angels. They will gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness and will cast them into the furnace of fire, there will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Here in this parable, it says, so will it be at the end of the age.

The angels will come forth. That's, of course, what was said earlier, only in the earlier parable it says the Son of Man will send his angels, but this does not contradict that. It's

just more brief.

It says the angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into a furnace of fire, and there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. You might notice that verse 42, which is at the end of, or almost at the end of the parable of the wheat and the tares, is word for word, verbatim, with verse 50, which is the closing of this parable. Now, in both cases, the wicked are separated from among the just, which means that when the end of the age comes, and the angels are sent out, that it will be the wicked who are severed out.

It will not be the righteous that are taken away. It will be the wicked who are, and the righteous will inherit the earth according to Jesus and according to the whole teaching of Scripture. And yet, this parable tells something different about the age than the parable of the wheat and the tares.

It's not just a duplication of the same idea, although the ending is similar. It's the part that's before the ending that is not similar. You see, in the parable of the wheat and the tares, you may remember that the field was the world.

The wheat, the good seed in the field, represented the children of the kingdom, and the tares, or the bad seed, represented the children of the devil. And the message was that these children of the devil will not be weeded out. They will not be taken away until the end of the age.

That was the message, that throughout the age of the church, from the time that Jesus planted his kingdom until the end of the age, when the angels will come and do the sorting of things out, the children of the wicked will be in the world along with the children of the righteous. And that means that there are two kingdoms side by side on the planet, the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of God. And this will not change until the end of the age when the angels come and remove all those who belong to the kingdom of darkness.

Now, this new parable about the dragnet is making a slightly different point. Because in the parable of the wheat and the tares, of course, we do not have any reference to evangelism. We don't have any reference to people who are tares, let us say, becoming wheat.

Because in the nature of the cases, tares never become wheat, and therefore that could not be brought out from that parable. But here we have a parable of fishermen. It said it's like the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind.

That is, when fishermen would throw their nets out and drag them in, they would simply get a random sampling of whatever was in the sea at that point. They would get some

fish that were useful to take home and sell or eat, and they would have other fish that are trash that they would just throw back or just throw aside and would have no use for. And it says, and when the net was full, they drew to shore, and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, and they threw the bad away.

Now, it seems obvious from the explanation that Jesus gives that the good fish represent good people, or people who belong to the kingdom of God. And the bad fish represent those who do not belong to the kingdom of God and are thrown away, they're trashed later on. But the interesting thing is they're both drawn in the net.

Now, the imagery of fishermen drawing a net and catching fish, of course, goes back to what Jesus said to Peter and the four fishermen when he called them away from the fishing business that they were engaged in to be disciples. He said, follow me and I will make you fishers of men. In other words, instead of fishing for fish, you will fish for men.

You will bring men to me, is what he had in mind. You will evangelize, you will go out and you will get men and you'll bring them to me, just like a fisherman goes out and gets fish and brings them to the market or to home to eat them. Now, Jesus indicated that that is the work of evangelism.

Now, here he describes fishing, and no doubt he has evangelism in mind. In the parable of the wheat and the tares, there was no gathering in of wheat and tares simultaneously in the sense of for salvation. It's just the wheat grew and the tares grew and then they were separated at the end.

But here there's some gathering in. There's a net thrown out and it brings the fish in, some of every kind, some good and some bad. Now, what does this net represent? I believe it certainly must represent evangelism.

It must certainly represent bringing people into the church. It may even be that it represents the responses to Jesus' own teaching. There were people coming to him, becoming followers of his, but not all of them were really true disciples.

You see, the teaching of Jesus attracted many. His net was cast and brought in different kinds of people. There were people like Peter, James, and John, and Matthew, and others, Philip, who remained disciples and served him until they died and even died as martyrs.

But there were others like Judas Iscariot, who was certainly a bad fish, but he came also. He was attracted by the preaching of Jesus, and there were many others. For example, in John chapter 6, we read that after Jesus said some rather difficult words, some offensive words, it says in John chapter 6 and the 66th verse that from that day forth, many of his disciples did not follow him any longer.

And so, there were people who were not really committed, or if they were committed, there was a limit to their commitment. After a certain point of offense, they decided that

their commitment ended there. Now, there are people who are like that in the church today.

Now, if Jesus would come and preach offensive messages, they might leave the church, but most preachers avoid offensive messages today. I'm not sure why. Certainly, the offense of the cross should still be an offense if it is preached rightly today, but I have a feeling that many ministers today would rather just gather in the fish and not sort them out.

The fish that are gathered in are gathered into what we would have to call the visible church. Now, in this, the parable of the fish or the net is different in its basic thrust than is the parable of the wheat and the tares, because the parable of the wheat and the tares is about conditions in the world. The field is the world, and the wheat and the tares grow together in the world.

They will not be separated until the end of the age. But this parable talks about those who are gathered in from the world into the visible church, it would appear, and we find that they aren't ultimately completely sorted out until the end of the age either, because in many cases you can't tell them apart. Sometimes a person may look like a Christian who isn't a Christian, and therefore the ultimate sorting out will be on the day of judgment when God sends out His angels.

Now, what that means, of course, is that when the gospel is preached, many people are brought in who aren't really believers at all. And yet you never know quite who they are. In 1 Corinthians chapter 1, Paul said that there were divisions in the church taking place, and he said, you know, that was wrong.

But later on in 1 Corinthians 11, he said he felt like it was somewhat necessary for there to be divisions, because that way those who are approved, he said, can be distinguished from those who are not approved. There are people in the church who are approved, and there are some who are not approved of God. They're not real fish, or they may be bad fish.

They don't belong in this catch, but they are there nonetheless. And in various ways, sometimes God lets them become visible. Certainly the Bible indicates that we should confront sin in the life of anyone who's in the church, and if they do not repent, ultimately they should not be permitted to stay in the church, because the church is a company of repentant people, people who have repented of their sins.

That's one of the conditions for entry, and it certainly is one of the conditions for continuing in it. But there are those who do not overtly sin in ways that are scandalous or that the church would notice, and therefore they would never come under the discipline of the church, and they might live and die in the church. But they may not have any relationship to God.

They may not really be committed to God. They may never have really repented and given their lives over to Him, and if this is so, then they would be examples of those that the net has brought in, and they are in the net, but they are not good fish. And in the end, of course, there will be that great sorting out of the fish.

Jesus described it in different terms in Matthew chapter 7. We saw that several weeks ago. Jesus said, Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you.

Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness. Now notice, these are people who were in the church. They were prophesying in Jesus' name.

They were casting out demons and doing mighty works in Jesus' name. They called Him Lord with their mouth, but they were lawless ones. They never really came under His lordship.

They only appeared to. They had some visible signs of being a Christian, but they didn't have the signs that really are definitive. What is the definitive sign of a Christian? Well, Jesus said, Those who do the will of my Father in heaven.

And that doesn't mean you just on one occasion do something obedient. It means you are continually doing the will of the Father. It means that in following Jesus, you have forsaken the pursuit of your own will and your own agendas, and you have embraced in their place the pursuit of God's will and His agenda.

And if you have not done that, then you are not what the Bible calls a disciple. And you may end up being one of those many that Jesus said, Lord, Lord, we did these things in your name. He'll say, I never knew you.

Not everyone who says, Lord, Lord, is going to go into the kingdom of heaven. Those who do, who habitually do the will of God. Those whose life task is to please God.

So defined by our own commitment. You see, you're born committed to one thing. And that is doing your own thing.

You're born with the desire to gratify yourself. You may learn how to please others, but only for the reason of being pleased by them also. It's still a self-serving life.

But Christian conversion, becoming a disciple, is where you deny yourself. You take self off throne and put Christ there. Which means that in your heart, the only one that you care to please is God.

Not yourself. That doesn't mean we don't have temptations to please ourselves. Even the best Christians have those temptations.

But the Christian life is defined by a commitment to resist those temptations and to walk with God in obedience to Him, seeking only His will, and denying ourselves of our will when that is in conflict with God's. The more you walk with God, the more you realize how much of your own will does conflict with God's. And how much you do need to deny yourself day by day.

And those who don't do that may be in the church, but they may not be good fish. A true disciple who follows Jesus is one who will, in the day of judgment, be in the kingdom still. But what this parable is telling us, that goes beyond what we are told in the parable of the wheat and the tares, is that not only is the world a mixed group of believers and unbelievers, but even the church, which has gathered in a sampling of the world, a representative sample have followed Jesus and become part of the visible church.

Yet even some of those are not really Christians after all. There's a parable Jesus told much later in the Gospel of Matthew that makes a similar point. It's in Matthew chapter 20, I'm sorry, it's 22, and it's the parable of the wedding feast.

It goes like this, the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding and they were not willing to come. Again he sent out other servants saying, tell those who are invited, see I have prepared my dinner and ox and fatted cattle are killed and all things are now ready, come to the wedding. But they made light of it and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully and killed them.

But when the king heard about it, he was furious and he sent out his armies and destroyed those murderers and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, the wedding is ready and those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways and as many as you find invite to the wedding.

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. But when the king came to see the guests, he saw there a man who did not have on a wedding garment.

So he said to him, friend, how did you come here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, bind him hand and foot and take him away and cast him into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Isn't that interesting? It ends the same way as this parable, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. There was this invitation to come into the kingdom. It's like an invitation to a wedding.

The first people invited were the Jewish people and for the most part they rejected the invitation. The king got angry and burned up their city, it says in verse 7. That of course refers to God sending the armies of Rome to destroy Jerusalem because of Israel's rejection of the Messiah. But then the message is sent out to the Gentiles far and wide in the highways and byways.

And in they come. And for the past 2,000 years in they have been coming. But notice he says they gathered in good and bad.

And so the wedding feast was filled with guests. That's the church today. It's filled with people.

And yet some of them are good, some are bad. And when God comes, he looks at them and says, I don't think you have a wedding garment. Bind this man and throw him out where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth.

You see the wedding garment represents the righteous deeds of the saints according to Revelation chapter 19. And the person who is not a follower of Jesus Christ but has come into the church, into the visible church and become part of it, that person will be thrown out on the day of judgment. Now this is somewhat frightening to think about in one sense because it means that there are people in the church who have responded to a gospel invitation who are not really saved.

And when God judges the world, he will sort them out. What Jesus said makes it plain that some of those people believe they are saved. And it certainly gives us reason to take seriously what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 13 when he said, examine yourselves and see if you are in the faith.

Because that dragnet of the gospel has called in a great number of people, fish of all kinds. But in the end of the judgment day, there will be some of them sorted out and thrown away as bad fish. I certainly don't want to be one of them.

And yet you don't have to be at a loss to know whether you're saved or not. If you love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, if your life is devoted to serving him, if you're forsaking all, if you are dying to yourself so that you might please God, if you're following Jesus as your Lord and he is your only hope and your trust, then you are certainly a Christian. If any of the things I just said are not true of you, then there's a good chance you may not be a Christian.

And, you know, there's not two kinds of Christians, those who are devoted to Jesus and those who are not. There's only one kind of Christian in the Bible. And, you know, in a modern church, there's more than one kind of person we call Christians, but that's the problem with the net.

The dragnet has called in people who are and people who aren't. We call them all

Christians because we don't know the difference in some cases between them. But there are certainly some who are not Christians.

And it behooves you and me to make sure that we are not among those who will be thrown out when the king comes to examine his guests or when the angels come and sort out the fish, whichever imagery we choose to use of that event. In Matthew 13, 51 through 52, we have another very short parable. Jesus said to them, Have you understood these things? And they said, Yes, Lord.

Then he said to them, Therefore, every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old. Now, that's a parable of sorts. A scribe was a teacher of the law in Judaism.

Most of them were not followers of Christ. In fact, most of them opposed him. However, there were some who followed Christ.

There were some scribes who became believers, and they were teachers. That's what they were by profession. They were teachers of the law.

Now, Jesus said, If one of these scribes becomes instructed in the kingdom of God, which was, of course, the message that Jesus was bringing, that person is like a man who's got treasures old and new to present to people. He can bring out, to display treasures out of his house, old and some new. It means, of course, that a person who was already well instructed in the Old Testament revelation had old treasures that he could present.

But if he now learned the new message of the kingdom of God, he would have new treasures as well. It would not render his old ones obsolete. It would simply add to his collection, as it were, because the Old and the New Testament truths were essentially the same truths, but the new ones were made more clear and amplified.

The kingdom of God was the fulfillment of what the Old Testament anticipated, so that a scribe who could teach what the prophets said about the Messiah and about the kingdom age, and then also knew Jesus as the Messiah and his kingdom to be that age, that person could expound from the old and the new and bring out a great wealth of knowledge as a teacher of the law. I think that a person who is raised in a Christian home and learns the Bible before they're even converted, after they are converted, what they have learned before benefits them greatly, and I think they have a great advantage over those who become converted out of a totally pagan background, because the knowledge of the word of God in early youth, although it may not save a person, once that person is saved, that person has a real wealth to share with other people. And I would have to say that I consider myself very fortunate because I was raised in a Christian home, and I was taught the word of God from childhood, although I wasn't saved through my entire period of childhood, but when I did come to the Lord, and when he did call me to ministry, I had a tremendous wealth of background knowledge that my



parents had given me, and that I take to be what Jesus means about the scribe who's instructed in the kingdom.

He's got a lot more to share than a person who had no background in the word of God and simply becomes a Christian. That doesn't mean he's a better person or has a higher place in heaven, but he simply has more treasures to offer to those who come to hear what he has to say. We'll say more next time.