

# Parable Of The Net

## Lesson 4.14

Jesus' parable of the net and the sheep and goats parable reveal that finally there will come a day when Christian hypocrites are exposed as imposters. Their collective fates are in the hands of the Judge, Jesus Christ.

Please read [Matthew 13:47-50 ESV](#) before beginning free Bible study lessons, #4.14

Previous Lesson: [Parable of the Pearl #4.13](#)

Preliminary Bible Study Questions:

1. What is a dragnet?
2. Who do the different species of fish represent?
3. What major event takes place at the end of the Church age?

This Kingdom parable will be explained in conjunction with the sheep and goats parable ([Matthew 25:31-46](#)), so please read that story before proceeding with the lesson. This study has the unbeliever's last judgement in view, while our next Bible study lesson in this series has the believer's last judgement as its focus. Let's get started.

### Parable Of The Net Setting

Jesus' parable of the net (aka parable of the dragnet) was spoken amidst his larger parable's discourse which is found in Matthew 13. The topic of this parable is the last judgement, as it is with both the wheat and tares and sheep and goats parables. Jesus gave this parable to his intimate friends, his twelve disciples, and he included the interpretation along with the parable.

Jesus' parable of the net was created in order to teach his disciples that the Kingdom of God includes a final judgement for all people of all time. **The emphasis in this parable is placed on the unbelievers of the church and world, while the parable of the wheat and tares focuses more on the true believer's.**

### What Is A Dragnet?

The parable of the net, or parable of the dragnet, if you prefer, uses the Greek term for "dragnet" with which most people today aren't familiar. The term is only used in the New Testament once, adding to our lack of knowledge. A dragnet is different from the smaller nets used in passages like [Mark 1:16](#); [Luke 5:2-6](#) and [John 21:6-8](#), which are hand held and used from the shore or boat.

A dragnet is a very long and tall net which had float devices at the top and sinker weights at the bottom. The dragnet was used in the Sea of Galilee during Jesus' day. The dragnet was placed upon the shore to begin the fishing. Fishermen on a boat would then be handed one end of the

dragnet and in a semicircle course bring their end back around to the shore. The dragnet was cast wide and deep. After a time, the fishermen on the shore would "drag" the "net" back to shore, full of many types of fish and other aquatic creatures. Jesus called upon the dragnet to begin his story, the parable of the net, to describe what the Kingdom of God is like.

## **Parable Of The Net Symbolism**

Jesus' parable of the net uses graphic images to represent, or symbolize, spiritual elements of the Kingdom of God. This helps us "picture" the spiritual lessons he is teaching us. **The parable of the dragnet doesn't only use the dragnet to represent the Kingdom, but it uses the dragnet along with the catch and final selection of fish to describe it.**

So, from the start, the fishermen represent workers in the Kingdom, including God, angels, and humans. All these beings work together for gathering people into the Church. The sea represents the world, and the overall catch represents the Church, while the individual fish represent people within the Church. The boat and dragnet simply represent the evangelistic means of gathering the catch of fish.

The fish outside the dragnet, lost in the sea, represent those condemned humans who are outside the net, and thusly outside of salvation's grasp. **However, those within the dragnet's walls are who this parable of the net is speaking.**

## **Parable Of The Net Meaning**

The parable of the net goes on to say that after a time the dragnet is pulled onto shore and the fishermen sort the catch. Some fish are placed in the containers, while others aren't. The fish that are unclean, based upon the Hebrew dietary laws, are then heaped on a pile and burned.

Similar to that activity, the Kingdom of God will soon find Jesus returning in the clouds. His angels will gather the church from all ages and bring it to shore. They will sort the good from the bad. The good will go onto eternal life, and the bad will be condemned.

The parable of the net has a basic message to Christians. The message is that the Church grows in numbers and in strength throughout this church age. **Unbelievers are mixed with believers within Christ's earthly church until the end of the age. However, in the end the last judgement will discern who was truly a Christian and who was a hypocrite.** The last judgement separates true believers from the hypocrites within the church.

## **The Sheep And Goats Parable**

Like the parable of the net, the sheep and goats parable describes the last judgement. **The angels sort out the flock, i.e. the Church, and separate the good from the bad, the sheep from the goats.** The goats go to the left of Christ and will discover their guilt, while the sheep go to his right, and receive their reward.

The goats are similar to the bad fish, who represent hypocrites within the church. The goats look

like sheep and sound like sheep. The goats produce some good commodities like sheep, and from a distance it's hard to tell them apart. However, Jesus Christ will judge the hearts of men and women who participated in his Church.

The last judgement for churchgoers, *i.e.* disciples, is based upon what the persons did and did not do. True disciples who were devoted to personal growth and humble service to Christ went to eternal life. False disciples who remained proud and hardened to personal growth and service were led to their fiery destination in hell.

Jesus Christ, on Judgement Day, will look at the works and ways of all people, and then he'll personally examine the motives behind why a person did or didn't do those things. **This process proves to the world who were truly his, and who were imposter hypocrites.** According to the parable of the net, and the sheep and goats, Christian actors will be shown no mercy, only wrath at their reckoning.

## **Christian Hypocrites Finally Judged**

The parable of the net, and the sheep and goats, describes the Kingdom of God, and in particular Christ's Church. It hyper-focuses on the last judgement day for the Church. Two thousand years have already passed since the Church was started, and many within the Church were not saved individuals. They may have deluded themselves and claimed salvation, but there was no core changes in their life. They learned a few things, did some nice things for Church, but never with the proper motives. These parables assume that the listeners know the prerequisite for salvation is the salvation of one's soul ([John 6:28-29](#)).

Those who weren't saved, however, will be judged on the works they did while in the Church. Christ will determine that those who were unsaved did works for improper reasons. They may have placed some money in the offering plate, taught a Sunday school class, watched babies in the nursery, sang in the choir, etc, but they did it for themselves. They did the service to make themselves look better to others, or to feel better about themselves. They're rotten fish and rebellious goats. They were acting, and therefore, they were Christian hypocrites. These people will be exposed and eternally burned in outer darkness.

## **Seek Salvation And Good Service**

The parable of the net, and the parable of the sheep and goats, should terrify the average, cool church attender. You know, the person who pops in for church and quickly disappears afterwards, not to be seen until their next visit. The ones who really don't care for the souls of people, whether they're saved or not, whether they're growing in Christ, or not. So, let's say this person is YOU. Let's say you're sweating because of what Jesus teaches in these parables. Maybe the thought of being ingloriously slam-dunked into the sea of fire is frightening you right now. Let me help you.

First of all, admit you're a sinner and give yourself up in whole to Jesus Christ. Pray this [Sinner's Prayer](#). Hold nothing back from him. **Commit to studying the Scriptures in order to change your prideful, selfish life into a life that is full of good, God-honoring service to your**

**neighbors.** Learn from the parable of the sheep and goats, that we are to be [Good Samaritans](#) to the unfortunate - we are to be their neighbor.

The sheep and goats parable tells us to aid the unfortunate souls of the world. The deeds of loving-kindness mentioned in the parable are the following: We are specifically called to feed the hungry and thirsty, give shelter and offer clothes to the cold and needy, visit and care for the sick and imprisoned. A quick read of [James 1:27](#) also adds caring for widows and orphans to the short list of Kingdom activities. **You see, your self-professed faith and church attendance, without righteous deeds and humble service, is a lie** ([James 2:14-17](#)). You've been officially warned by Jesus Christ.

Now, get on your knees and plead for forgiveness. It's no use to try and serve God if you're not forgiven by him. Your works will be useless, because you cannot earn heaven. You have to "get right" with God by confessing your sins. After that is accomplished, then stand up and be a neighbor to someone. Give aid to the poor, shelter to the cold, and companionship to the lonely in prisons and nursing homes. **Prove your faith or burn for an eternity.**

### **Grasp This!**

Jesus' parable of the net refers to Christian hypocrites as rotten fish that will be burned at the last judgement. Jesus' sheep and goats parable also says unsaved church-goers are goats who will be cast into outer darkness, a domain full of demons, sinners, and Satan himself. These parables are not meant to scare you, but to warn you of the approaching [Final Judgement Day](#).

If you claim to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, *i.e.* a born again, true believer, then you will already be involved in service to the unfortunate ones in the world. Right? Well, if not, you're being called out by Jesus.

Please read the parable of the rich man and Lazarus ([Luke 16:19-31](#)) to see a vivid picture of who we are to aid. Lazarus is an unfortunate one that Jesus loves. View Jesus as being hidden inside every unfortunate soul on this earth. Because, it's this simple, when we don't care for the least of his brothers and sisters, then we don't care for him. Deal with it now: Knees, feet, and hands. Pray, find an unfortunate soul, and be a neighbor. You're doing it to Jesus ([Matthew 25:40](#)), with Jesus ([Matthew 28:20](#)), and for Jesus ([John 21:15-17](#)). Let's go.

Next Lesson: Wheat and Tares #4.15

#### **Bible Study Questions:**

1. The parable of the net and the parable of the sheep and goats reveal in a striking way that Christian hypocrites will be exposed and eternally burned. How does that affect how church's handle those whose faith is weak, and possibly non-existent?
2. Jesus' parable of the dragnet talks little of those sea creatures that are outside the net of the church. What happens to them? How are they judged?
3. Many discipleship programs at churches are full of biblical training and study plans. After studying today's parables, what should probably be added to discipleship programs?

**Inspirational Bible Verses:**

I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. [John 15:5-8 NIV](#)

**Prayers Of Thanksgiving:**

Dear Father, the parable of the net strikes me with an urgency to help those in need. We are being called to stand up and care for the sick, poor, hungry, imprisoned, widows, orphans, and injured. God, lead our hearts to this service. Show us those who need help. Give us resources so we are able to assist those in need. Thank you for these eye-opening parables that Jesus taught us. May we follow him. In Christ's name, Amen.

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