
"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind." (Matthew 13:47)

I. The Kingdom Net

- a. The main point: The "kingdom net" is wider than the church, but includes the church. The net gathers all kinds, but the coming kingdom keeps only the righteous in a *container*.
- b. The Church, like the net, contains all kinds of people, but the final kingdom will have only one kind – people of righteousness.
- c. The Net Parable is a word of warning. The believer must be a serious listener, because even though a person is now in the church (the net), that does not mean that in the end that person will be in the kingdom.
- d. Who of us is righteous? Who of us is sufficiently serious to meet and stand before Christ?
- e. Is this intended to be a "hard word" to believers? Is Jesus pulling the "faith rug" out from under our feet?
- f. This text should not be read separate from other biblical teaching on faithfulness. (Luke 18:8; Roman 12:2; Hebrews 11:6)
- g. Serious faith Christians always leads disciples to seek to be righteous, not just to get to heaven.
- h. The wicked are those who have lived evil lives and have not repented and sought forgiveness.
- i. Those who are finally righteous are those who realize their own shortcomings and rely on God's mercy.
- j. This parable in some way attacks the false security of Christians. This parable reminds us of the words of Paul, *work out your salvation with fear and trembling.* (Philippians 2:12)
- k. True faith in Christ does not put us on "Easy Street", but should lead us to the understanding that we are to live on the intersection of "Faith and Grace Streets."

II. Personal Application

- a. The Word of God is like a net. It draws many different people together, but not all "churchgoers" will enter eternal life. Not all will become what Christ wants them to be, changed.
 1. All were "fish", but only the changed fish were kept and placed in the "kingdom container".
 2. In the final analysis, Christ will be the "Final Decision Maker." He decides what the standard is for entering eternal life. We should all be warned, but not worried if we are following Christ.
- b. Within the church we will always find good and bad, real and unreal. (Parable of the Tares)
- c. Jesus has given every believer the ability to discern evil from righteousness, but Jesus does not sanction any officer of the church to separate "the fish", this is "God's business." Why?
- d. When the fear of the Lord is discarded, faithful righteousness vanishes.
- e. There are two distinct *times* in the net parable: 1) the time of fishing and 2) the time of separating.
 1. We live *now* in the time of fishing. There is a promise that *separation* will follow.
 2. The knowledge of a future separation should motivate to take seriously our relationship with Christ and ask ourselves, "Am I prepared to see Him?"