

## Teaching Outline

### Lesson #3

## The Great Dragnet

Matthew 13:47 – 50

### Teaching Outline:

I. The PICTURE of Judgment: A Dragnet

II. The PRINCIPLE of Judgment:

We are living in the days of invitation and opportunity, but a day is coming of eternal separation and final judgment.

III. The PERIL of Judgment: Hell and Its Torment

*“ . . . . And will cast them into the furnace of fire where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

#### Four Realities of the Unbeliever's Final Destination

1. Constant and Continual Torment
2. Torment of both body and soul
3. Varying degrees of punishment
4. Everlasting torment

IV. The PATH Forward: Parable of the Householder

**Lesson #3**  
**Series 3 - Story 4**

**The Great Dragnet**  
Matthew 13:47-50

***AT THE END OF THE AGE, THOSE FULLY COMMITTED TO THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST WILL BE REVEALED AND REWARDED WHILE THOSE WHO REJECT HIM WILL FACE JUDGEMENT.***

**Story Outline:**

- I. The Gathering of Men
- II. The Sorting of Men
- III. The Judging of Men

**Life Application Principles:**

- 1. The radical truth of the gospel will make known who a person really is.
- 2. There are two distinctions among men – those accepting the gospel and those rejecting.
- 3. We are living in the days of invitation, but there is soon coming a day of separation and judgment.
- 4. Acceptance of the truth about Jesus brings life -- rejection results in death.
- 5. Refusing to choose is a choice.
- 6. Sin, suffering and separation is a natural result of the choice to live without God.
- 7. As the end of the age draws near, it will become more difficult to hide behind a façade of counterfeit Christianity.
- 8. The only way we can fulfill our humanity is to be filled with God and understand that we are to live for Him and operate by faith in Him.
- 9. The furnace of fire is the ultimate end of those who turn their backs on truth and refuse the healing grace of the Most High God.
- 10. The Most High God is a God of mercy, grace and compassion, but also a God of justice, wrath and judgment.
- 11. On that judgment day nothing shall be hidden from God – everything shall be uncovered.
- 12. Honesty is the only ground upon which ultimately we can stand before a holy God and receive grace.

## NAME OF JESUS

### Devotional Reading

#### “JESUS, OUR JUDGE”

Have you ever been called to court, either to testify in a case or to serve on a jury? I have had to do both and found them equally unnerving and humbling experiences. Understanding that the outcome of the case and the verdict rendered had the potential to forever change the trajectory of another’s life, was a sobering thought and one I did not take lightly. Because of the serious nature of this call to public service, it is mandated by law in both situations, that a solemn oath is to be taken before God and the people of the court: if testifying, an oath to “tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth” is ordered. To act fairly and impartially a juror must render a decision based solely on the evidence provided. While both experiences were emotionally difficult, I found being a juror was much harder than being a witness. As a witness, I only had to tell the truth about what I had seen and heard. But as a juror, I had to decide, based on what I hoped was truthful evidence, if the person before me was guilty. Sequestered away with the jury at the conclusion of the testimony, I remember crying out to the Lord with a heavy heart, “Who am I that I should be given the responsibility to decide this man’s fate? Lord, how do I know that the evidence presented was actually true? Unlike You, Lord, I can’t see what actually happened. I wasn’t there, but You were! Help me and this jury Lord, to render a right verdict. Give us Your wisdom so that our decision is fair and just for all those involved.” I also prayed earnestly to the Lord to grant wisdom to the Judge presiding over the trial that he would mete out a fair and just penalty if guilt was indeed declared.

Thankful and relieved to be on the other side of those experiences, I am most grateful that I was not the defendant...that I didn’t have to trust in man’s testimony to determine my innocence or my guilt. On earth, there is a very real chance that human pride and human error will overshadow the truth and lead to an unjust and unfair sentence upon a person that could have devastating and life-altering consequences. Hopefully, you and I will never have to face such a trial by man on earth, but a Day is coming when you and I will have to face an even more serious trial. A Day is coming, perhaps soon, when every man who has ever lived will stand trial before the Lord. On that Day, He will judge each man according to his faith and belief in Jesus Christ, and He will justly sentence each one, either to eternal life or eternal death. In that trial human testimony will never be considered.

*“Say among the nations, “The Lord reigns! Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; He will **JUDGE** the peoples with equity. Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all*

*the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord, for He comes to **JUDGE** the earth. He will **JUDGE** the world in righteousness and the peoples in His faithfulness.” (Psalm 96:10-13)*

*“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (2 Corinthians 5:10)*

Unlike man, the Lord is able to render judgement without error. He who created all things, sits enthroned above the earth and sees the ways of man. *“For the ways of a man are before the Lord, and He watches over all his paths” (Proverbs 5:21)*. The Lord knows the truth about each of us, and therefore, He alone is able to render the judgment we are rightly due. In His omnipotence, He knows those whose faith is real because He sees what man cannot, for *“the Lord sees the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7)*. The harsh reality of man’s situation is that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God who created us and gave us life. Therefore, all men—including you and me -- rightly deserve to die and spend eternity in hell. The phrase “BUT GOD” . . . one of my very favorite phrases in all of scripture . . . has made a way of escape available to everyone in the whole world. *“But God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:4-5)*. The only thing the Lord requires of every man in order for him to escape condemnation is to *“believe in the Lord Jesus Christ”* for in this, Paul writes, *“you will be saved” (Acts 16:31.)* As Jesus testified: *“I AM the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6)*, and *“I tell you, everyone who acknowledges Me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God” (Luke 12:8)*.

Have you fallen on the mercy of God and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ so that when you stand on trial before Him, as your **Judge**, your faith in His blood, shed for you, will vindicate you? Have you acknowledged Him before all men so that when He sends His holy angels at the end of the age to separate the evil (unbelievers) from the righteous (believers), you will be saved from the fiery furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth? If you are not sure, it is not too late!! The Lord *“is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish” (2 Peter 3:9)*.

Today is the day of grace, the day of invitation into the love and mercy of God through His Son, Jesus Christ. Now is the time to repent of your sin and to accept the life-saving truth: Jesus came to earth in order to pay the penalty you owe because of your sin; He bore in Himself the judgement due to you and gave you His righteousness which is the power that sets you free from death and eternal condemnation. This is indeed the great exchange! Jesus Christ died in your place so that when you stand on trial before Him, He will find you “NOT GUILTY!” I think one of the saddest verses in all of scripture is when on Judgement Day Jesus, our just **JUDGE** declares, *“depart from Me, I never knew you” (Mathew 7:23)*. May this not be your sentence!

In her book Servants of the Most High God: Stories of Jesus, Mary Ann Bishop writes, “at the end of the age, those fully committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ will be revealed and rewarded, while those who reject Him will face judgment.” At the end of the age, when you stand before Christ, “*who judges in righteousness*” (Revelation 19:11; Revelation 20:11-15), what verdict will He render about you? When He opens the Book of Life, will your name be recorded there? Friends, let no one deceive you... unless your name is written there in the precious blood of Jesus Christ, your final destination will be the lake of eternal fire.

*“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated on it. From His presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and the books were opened. Then another book was opened which is the book of life. And the dead were judged, each one of them according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found in the book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:11-15)*

What you choose to believe about Jesus Christ determines your destiny. Will you choose today to fall into the hands of the One who lives to show you mercy and give you eternal life with Him in glory, so that when you die you will not fall into His awful judgement that will forever separate you from His goodness, mercy and love? If you are saved, is there someone in your life today who needs to hear your testimony about the Lord Jesus Christ? Is there someone who needs to know the Truth so they can choose to receive the life only He can give? Whose life is on the line because you have failed to tell them “the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth” for fear of being judged and persecuted by men? Remember what Jesus said, “*do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*” (Matthew 10:28) Wouldn’t you rather stand with the Lord and be judged by men than to stand with men and be judged by God? Will you today determine to choose life and to testify about that Life to the world? God does not call you to be successful. He calls you to be faithful and in that obedience you will receive great reward!

*“Therefore, they are before the throne of God,  
and serve Him day and night in His temple;  
and He will shelter them with His presence.  
They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;  
the sun shall not strike them,  
nor the scorching heat.  
For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,  
and He will guide them to springs of living water,  
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”  
(Revelation 7: 15-17)*

## THE DOCTRINE

### “JUDGMENT”

#### **The Sobering Truth of Jesus’ Teaching**

A series of life application principles from this week’s lesson state a sobering truth:

“We are living in the days of invitation, but there is soon coming a day of separation and judgment. Acceptance of the truth about Jesus brings life – eternal life; rejection results in death – eternal death. Refusing to choose is itself a choice.”

The presentation of the gospel discloses what a person really is, just as a great dragnet sweeping through the seas gathering fish of every kind ultimately brings into the light whether the fish are good or bad. This has been taking place throughout the ages of history. The radical truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ is like a net sweeping through the tides of restless humanity and whoever is caught in that net is forced to declare his allegiance either to the Most High God or to the gods of this world – forced out into the open to reveal whether that man is indeed “bad” or “good.” Obviously people are not simply born bad or good. The Bible is unequivocally clear. Every man and woman is part of a fallen race. We are all born into lost humanity with spirits dead to God (Romans 3:10-11). Therefore, the use of the words “bad” or “good” in Jesus’ parable of the Great Dragnet refer to how one responds to the gospel truth – what happens when one comes into contact with reality and truth. The “good” are those who deal honestly with the reality of the gospel message. They respond to it, act on it, and reorder their lives to accommodate it. The “bad” are those who turn their backs to the truth and ultimately face the wrath and judgment of a holy God.

As uncomfortable as it is, we must live with this parable in the precise way Jesus presents it. Our Lord is simply indicating that the issue of truth will sharpen distinctly as we draw to the close of this age, and at the end, it will no longer be possible to hide.

“. . . that which is hidden shall be revealed. That which is spoken in closets shall be shouted from the housetops. That which has been hidden in obscurity and which we think we have gotten away with shall be exposed before the gaze of all. Nothing shall be hidden. Everything shall be uncovered” (Luke 12:2-3; Luke 8:17; Matthew 10:26).

## **The Judgments of the Most High God**

The Bible describes at least eight judgments by God in which people, nations, and other created beings are held accountable for their attitudes and actions. In these judgments, the plaintiffs are judged according to the standards God has established for them. These judgments are both positive and negative. Some will be like criminal trials in which charges are read and proved, and as judgment is administered, some type of sentence is passed out. Other judgments will be similar to a contest in which those who have completed certain requirements will be rewarded for their work. Understanding the judgments of God will help us better understand the nature of our holy, just, yet merciful God.

### **Judgment # 1: The Cross: Judgment of God Upon Sin**

When Jesus died on Calvary, he experienced the judgment of a holy God upon the sins of the world. He died in our place as our substitute (Galatians 3:13). The cross was a criminal judgment by our holy God upon the sins of the world.

*The Crime:* The judicial charge which brought about the judgment was sin against God. The crime of sin is so great that it brought about the judgment that took place on Calvary.

*The Criminal:* Everyone is guilty of the crime of sin, but it was Christ who was made a curse for us. God the Father, before the foundation of the world agreed that Christ, His son, would die for every guilty sinner.

*The Sentence:* The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23) . Nothing could be more clearly taught in the Bible than the eternal consequences of sin. Its path leads to ultimate destruction and eternal separation from God - both in this life and the life to come. Sin involves the anger and wrath of God against it. Thus, the Giver of life will judge sin with death – physical and eternal death. That sentence will someday be pronounced over all those who do not accept Jesus as their Substitute (Revelation 20:11-15).

### **Judgment # 2: Self – Judgment: Our Opportunity to Deal with Sin**

God will judge Christians for sin in their lives but He first gives them the opportunity to deal with the problem. The apostle John outlines the procedure involved in the believer’s self- evaluation, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Therefore as we discover sin in our lives from a constant examination of our heart, our immediate response must be to confess it to God. God will forgive our sin and restore us to the place of fellowship from which we fell. Therefore the basis of the believer’s forgiveness is the cross of Christ –

thus, the basis of our self-judgment is the cross. It is the blood of Christ shed on the cross for us – the payment for our sin.

**Judgment # 3: The Judgment Seat of Christ: Judgment of the Believer's Works**

This judgment is often taught as the doctrine of rewards for Christians. It is not a judgment to determine if Christians will enter into heaven, nor is it a judgment for sin since our sin was judged through Christ's sacrifice on Calvary. This is a judgment to determine the quality and quantity of our past service on this earth. As a result of our service for Christ, we will receive a reward. Not everyone will obtain the same reward, and our service will be tested by God to determine the extent of the reward. These rewards are sometimes identified as "crowns" in the Bible.

At Christ's second coming, all the nations of the world will pass before him to be judged (Matthew 25:32). Jesus describes the scene in terms of a separation of sheep and goats. The classification is related to their treatment of those identified by Christ as "these my brethren" (Matthew 25:40-45). These "brethren" include Israelites or Jews, the Church, and the Oppressed. In other words, nations that have sought to harm the Jews, the Church or the oppressed or have simply ignored them are the "goats." The basis of this judgment will be the treatment of the people of God – the Jews, Churches and Christians the world over. Throughout the Bible God is portrayed as a defender of those who cannot defend themselves. Some suggest that God will judge the nations based upon their protection of the oppressed and defenseless members of their society. This includes the very young, the very old, the poor and the unborn.

**Judgments # 4, # 5, # 6: The Judgments of the Tribulation: Seals, Trumpets, Bowls**

During the Great Tribulation, God will release three major judgments upon the world (Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls). The first of these accompanies the breaking of seven seals on a scroll that many believe is the title deed of the world given to Jesus Christ, the only One worthy to open the scroll. The second Tribulation judgment accompanies the sounding of seven trumpets, while the final series of judgments occurs as seven angels empty vials of the wrath of God poured out upon the world.

**Judgment # 7: The Great White Throne Judgment**

At the end of the millennial reign of Christ, those who died unsaved will have to stand before the throne of God to be judged, ". . . and I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Revelation 20:12). This judgment does not suggest these people may enter into heaven or hell on the basis of their works. All those who are judged at the Great White Throne are consigned to hell because they have rejected the gospel.

The saved at this time have already been resurrected and are enjoying fellowship with Christ. The Great White Throne Judgment therefore, will determine the degree of punishment they will endure, based upon the nature of their evil work. When the book of life is opened (Revelation 20:12), a sentence of the severity of their punishment will be determined. All those sentenced will be consigned “into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:14), where they will suffer according to their personally assigned sentence.

### **Judgment # 8: The Judgment of Angels**

The Bible also teaches that angels are not exempt from judgment. Paul spoke to the Corinthians believers saying, “Know ye not that we shall judge angels?” (1 Corinthians 6:3). Toward the end of the age, it will be our responsibility as Christians to represent God in the role of judge. It may be that during the Tribulation, the Millennial Kingdom, or in Eternity to follow, we will serve as judges similar to the judges who ruled before Israel’s first king. As judges, we will be given positions of authority over angels.

Jesus promised, “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36), but that liberty and freedom cannot be experienced and enjoyed if we do not discipline ourselves to recognize that there is indeed a future Day of Judgment. God will one day settle all accounts.

### **The Eternal Abode of the Unsaved: Hell**

*“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” (Revelation. 21:8)*

Hell exists as a definite part of the eternal plan of God. Hell is not the devil’s playground, nor is hell someone’s punishment on earth. **God created hell, a real place where real people will spend a real eternity.** One of the primary dangers of false religions is their denial of this place. It is impossible to identify the missionaries who have chosen to spend their lives answering the call of God in a foreign culture because they believed with all their hearts that lost people will spend eternity in hell if they do not receive the gospel. The existence of hell is well documented in the Word of God. When we understand the nature of hell, we begin to see why the Lord is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). As we better understand hell, we will have a deeper burden for our lost loved ones. It is impossible to cease interceding for them if we truly understand the fate that awaits them after death apart from their salvation. We must make every effort to present the gospel to the lost.

The Bible uses several terms to identify the various purposes and descriptions of hell. We need to note that there is a difference between “hell” and the “lake of fire.” When the unsaved die, they go immediately to a place called hell. Later, the Bible indicates that those in hell are given up and cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14). Even though they seem to be different places, the inhabitants are the same and the punishment is the same. The place of judgment for the unsaved is called the Great White Throne and the lake of fire follows it. Everyone without Christ will enter the first punishment and no one who enters the first hell can escape entering the second (Revelation 11:15). Hell is referred to in several terms throughout the biblical record. Sheol, Grave, Hades, Gehenna, Lake of fire, Second death, Eternal Retribution are all words that refer to this place of punishment. The truth is that human language limits a perfect identification of the horrors of hell, as it also does when we seek to describe the glories of heaven. By using all the above words and phrases, it is as if the biblical writers are attempting to say, “Hell is so horrible I cannot completely describe it. Hell is like a vast sea covered in flames, and that is only the beginning of the pain and suffering these words are meant to convey.”

In the Bible death always speaks of separation, not cessation of existence. The idea behind death is not annihilation but rather the concept of eternal separation from God. Physical death is the first, where a person suffers because he is separated from his loved ones. The second death is the separation of a person from God - forever. Perhaps most disturbing in the biblical descriptions of this place is that it is everlasting punishment – “duration without end.” The worst part of hell is obviously that its inhabitants know it will never end. Eternity is without beginning and is endless; it cannot be measured. People from all nations, races, religions, and families will be in hell. **The only thing that will keep one out of hell is faith in Jesus Christ.** God established this place to punish those angels that rebelled against His authority along with the archangel, Lucifer. Though God is not desirous of sending people to hell, men leave no choice when they continually reject the gospel.

None has a valid excuse for rejecting the gospel. God has freely offered eternal life to all who will receive it (Romans 6:23). If we are unsure we possess eternal life, we should ask God to save us while His invitation remains.

### **The Eternal Home of the Saved: Heaven**

God has certainly prepared a very special place for each one who makes the choice to receive Him and spend eternity with Him. The Bible tells us exactly how we can know with certainty that we have eternal life and a place in heaven with God. **Anyone who trusts Christ as personal Savior will be admitted into heaven for eternity.** The new birth is the only prerequisite to gain admission to this place the Bible calls Heaven – the final and forever Home of every genuine believer - that place where we will be with God forever, where death is no more, tears are no more, and where loved ones will be forever reunited. “Come! Lord Jesus!”



5. What do you think is the underlying principle of this parable of “The Great Dragnet?”
  
6. What has convicted your heart from this week’s lesson? It has been said, “Life is short. Hell is hot.” Based on what you have learned this week, with whom do you need to share the critical truths of this lesson? Will you be obedient to the call?

### **JESUS OUR JUDGE**

How has your understanding of WHO Jesus is and WHY He came changed through your reflection this week on His Name, JUDGE? How will you apply what you have learned and with whom do you need to share this life saving and life altering truth?

### **SALVATION CHALLENGE**

Do you recognize the revealing truth that you have either received the gospel or have rejected it? There is no in-between. Jesus is calling you to come to Him today before it is too late. Will you confess your sin of unbelief and receive Him today as your Lord and Savior?