

The Furnace of Fire

Scripture: Matthew 13:47–52

Code: 2304

INTRODUCTION

Our Lord often spoke about hell; He said many things about the abode of the wicked. Perhaps the most terrifying thing that Jesus ever said about hell was what He told the Jewish religious leaders in Matthew 23:33: "...how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" It seems strange for us to hear words like that coming from the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ, because we don't associate Him with hell as often as we should. He talked more about hell than he did about love. He said more about hell than all the other preachers in the Bible combined. If we were to model our preaching after His, then hell would be a major theme for all of us.

During an interview I saw recently on television, a reporter asked a girl involved in punk rock, "What are you looking forward to?" She said, "I'm looking forward to death." The reporter asked her why. She said, "I want to die so I can go to hell and have fun!"

What deception! Hell is not fun. One writer said, "There is no way to describe hell. Nothing on earth can compare with it. No living person has any real idea of it. No madman in wildest flights of insanity ever beheld its horror. No man in delirium ever pictured a place so utterly terrible as this. No nightmare racing across a fevered mind ever produces a terror to match that of the mildest hell. No murder scene with splashed blood and oozing wound ever suggested a revulsion that could touch the border lands of hell. Let the most gifted writer exhaust his skill in describing this roaring cavern of unending flame, and he would not even brush in fancy the nearest edge of hell."

In Matthew 13:47-52, our Lord tells a parable that warns about hell. In the parables of Matthew 13, the Lord talks about the period of history between His resurrection and return. He is the King, and He rules in the world. He is allowing both good and evil to grow together during this period of time, as we learned from the parable of the wheat and the tares. He is tolerating the evil of this period. But eventually there will be a time of judgment. We have seen the parables that describe the nature of the Kingdom, the power of the Kingdom, and the personal appropriation of the Kingdom; now we will look at the last parable, which warns of the coming judgment. The parable says that in the end, there will be an eternal separation of the damned from the redeemed. Today, over five thousand people in the United States will die and enter eternity, and most of them will go to hell. Let's look at the picture that our Lord paints in His warning.

I. THE PICTURE (vv. 47-48)

A. The Catch Collected (v. 47)

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind" The imagery Jesus gave in the parable helps us to understand what He is teaching. Fishing was a common enterprise in our Lord's time. Some of the disciples were fishermen, so they clearly understood what Jesus was speaking about. Basically, there were three ways to fish at that time. Fishermen still use those methods in Israel today at the Sea of Galilee. The first way to fish was with...

1. The Use of a Line with a Hook

In Matthew 17, when Jesus asked Peter to pay taxes for the two of them, He said, "...go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up. And when thou hast opened its

mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take, and give unto them for me and thee" (v. 27). In that incident, the line and hook method of fishing was used.

The second way to fish was by...

2. The Use of a Casting Net

When the Lord came upon Peter and Andrew in Matthew 4, verse 18 says that they were "casting a net into the sea." A casting net (Gk. amphiblestron) was a very special net. It was circular and had weights on its perimeter. A fisherman would drape the net over his shoulder, walk up to the shore, and throw the net. The net would hit the water as a large, open circle, and the weights on the outside edges would bring the net down over any fish that were in the area. Then the fisherman would pull a cord attached to his wrist that closed the net into a sack, and bring his catch up onto the shore.

The Lord had that net in mind when he called the disciples to be fishers of men (Mt. 4:19). He wanted the disciples to throw out their nets, and catch men for Christ.

The third method of fishing, which the Lord referred to in Matthew 13:47, involved...

3. The Use of a Dragnet

This is a completely different net, as indicated by the use of the Greek word sagene. The dragnet is also known as a seine net or trawl net. It is a very large net. Bible commentator R. C. H. Lenski said that some of those nets covered one-half of a mile. Because of their large size, they could not be used by a man alone.

When used, one end of the net was attached to the shoreline, and the other end was attached to a boat. The boat would then go out on the water and stretch open the net. After the net was opened, the boat would begin to move in a circle. Because the top edge of the net had floats and the bottom edge had weights, it moved through the sea like a vertical wall. As the circle was being completed and the boat made its way back to where the net was attached to the shoreline, all the sea life that was inside the circle the boat made was caught inside the walls of that net.

When the Lord spoke of a casting net, He referred to it in a positive way: He used it as a picture of the disciples catching men for Christ (Mt. 4:19). When He spoke of the dragnet, He was talking about the gathering of men for judgment.

The Lord emphasized two important things in verse 47: the size of the net was immense, and the catch was all-inclusive. The dragnet swept up living and dead creatures, as well as seaweed and other things from the bottom. It caught every form of life in the area that the net encircled.

That brings us to verse 48:

B. The Catch Categorized (v. 48)

"Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away."

That was a very common scene in that day. The fishermen sorting the catch put the good things into vessels. If they were going to transport something, they would keep it alive in a vessel containing water. They threw away the bad things.

Now that we understand the picture, let's look at...

II. THE PRINCIPLE (v. 49)

"So shall it be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth, and separate the wicked from among the righteous"

A. The Focus of the Parable

There are many things we could say about the parable, but the Lord is focusing on one element of it: the separating process that the fishermen went through on the shore. He emphasized that that aspect of the parable is a picture of the angels separating the good from the bad at judgment.

During this era in which good and evil exist together, God will tolerate evil. But there is coming a time when He will separate those who are subjects of the King from those who are not. Little by little, imperceptibly and silently, God's net is moving through the seas of time and bringing all men onto the

shores of eternity for that inevitable separation. The net draws in all kinds of fish; it is indiscriminating. So, as verse 47 says, the Kingdom of heaven is like a net that moves silently through the sea of life. By the time people awaken to what God is doing, they will have already been brought to the shore to be separated.

The only spiritual application the Lord makes from the parable is from the separation process on the shore. He does not comment on anything else. I think we too ought to focus on that one thing, and learn from the parable what the Lord intended to teach.

1. The Time of the Separation

Verse 49 says that the separation will "be at the end of the age." The judgment of man will occur when Jesus returns to earth to set up His glorious Kingdom. Jesus was not trying to pinpoint chronologically every element of judgment when He said that. He didn't specify whether He meant the Great White Throne Judgment, the separation of the sheep and the goats, or the bema Judgment (when believers are rewarded after the Rapture). He was just making a general statement that, ultimately, all of the people in the world will be caught in the net of judgment.

2. The Agents of the Separation

Notice that verse 49 says that angels are the ones that will separate the good from the evil. They were also mentioned as the separators in the parable of the wheat and the tares (Mt. 13:41). The Bible makes it clear that angels will be the agents of God's judgment (Mt. 24:31; 25:31; Rev. 14:18-19).

God will tolerate good and evil growing together in His Kingdom for now, but the time of separation is moving closer every day. Jesus also spoke of the separation of believers and unbelievers in Matthew 25, where He said, "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory. And before Him shall be gathered all the nations; and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats....Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world....Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (vv. 31-32, 34, 41). In John 5:25-29, Jesus said there was coming a resurrection of all men: some "unto the resurrection of life," and some "unto the resurrection of damnation." At that final separation, God will determine an eternal destiny for every soul that has ever lived.

B. The Functions of the Parable

Some people wonder why Jesus taught the parable of the dragnet, which talks about the separation of good and evil, when He already talked about that separation in the parable of the wheat and the tares. One reason He taught it was because the parable of the wheat and the tares emphasizes the coexistence of good and evil, not the separation of good and evil. Another reason Jesus had for teaching the parable of the dragnet was because of His compassion for men. He wanted to warn them about hell. He said, "Watch, therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of man cometh" (Mt. 25:13; cf. Mk. 13:35). Jesus cautioned people not to take their sins lightly because inevitably they would be accountable before God. He said that there would come a time when men would live as they did in the days of Noah, and that judgment would follow soon after (Lk. 17:26-27). Through His prophet John the Baptist, He said that He would come to burn the lost "with unquenchable fire" (Mt. 3:12).

When Jesus looked at the people around Him in Matthew 9:35-38, He saw a harvest moving toward judgment. His heart was filled with compassion for people on the way to damnation. Jesus showed His compassionate heart for men by warning them of the inevitable separation in the parable of the dragnet.

God does not take pleasure in seeing the wicked die. He is "not willing that any should perish" (2 Pet. 3:9). First Timothy 2:3-4 says that God, our Savior, "will have all men to be saved." Jesus wept over Jerusalem and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them who

are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Mt. 23:37). He also said to the Jewish people, "...ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life" (Jn. 5:40). Jesus warns men because He loves them.

The Kingdom of heaven is like a net. That net moves through the world unseen. When the net touches the back of a fish, the creature simply swims a little further ahead of it, enjoying what appears to be permanent freedom. Men move about in this world imagining themselves to be free, fulfilling their own desires, with little knowledge that the net of judgment is coming closer and closer. Each time men are touched by the net, they move a little further along. Eventually they will find themselves hitting the part of the net in front of them. They will make a wild dash to escape, yet find themselves totally surrounded by the net. Finally, they will be dragged onto the shore, flailing as they enter death.

Men may not see God moving in the world, but He is moving. When they are touched by the gospel of Jesus Christ, or become scared by the threat of judgment, they dart away into the freedom they think is ahead of them. But sooner or later, they will find they are still caught in the net that is moving them toward judgment. The Kingdom will ultimately engulf all men, and God will separate them with His angels.

III. THE PERIL (v. 50)

"And shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

That is a horrifying verse. If there were any doctrine in the Bible that could be wished away, it would be the doctrine of hell. But hell cannot be eliminated from the Bible. The wicked will be cast "into the furnace of fire"--those are terrifying words from our Lord. He spoke of hell more than anyone else in the Bible, and for a good reason. People probably wouldn't listen if anybody else tried to teach about hell. Christ had to be the one who taught about hell. We cannot conceive of eternal damnation. Christ emphasized hell in His preaching. If you don't think that is true, then you haven't paid attention to His ministry.

A. The Discussion of Hell

1. Matthew 5:22, 29-30

Read what Jesus said about hell in Matthew 5: In verse 22, He said, "...whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." He then said in verses 29-30, "...if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."

2. Matthew 8:12

Here, He said that "the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

3. Matthew 11:20-24

"Then began He to upbraid the cities in which most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not." Jesus condemned people who did not repent of their sin and said they would go to hell (vv. 21-24). Those were serious words from our Lord.

4. Matthew 12:36-37

Jesus said, "But I say unto you that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account of it in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

The Lord constantly taught about hell. He talked about it in Matthew 23:14-15, 33; 25:29-30, 41, 46; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 6:24-26; and 12:5. In Luke 16:19-31, Jesus told a story about a rich man that died and went to hell. The man was in such torment that he screamed for Abraham to send Lazarus

with water to cool his tongue (v. 24).

Based on the example of Christ, the emphasis of preaching should be on hell. But people don't do that today. It is convicting that we say so little about hell. The truth about hell is so terrifying and awesome that if the Lord had not taught about hell, we would not believe it existed.

B. The Description of Hell

What is hell? Let me give you four truths about hell that I think will answer that question:

1. The District of Punishment

Hell is a place of unrelieved torment and horrible misery. The Bible defines it as outer darkness (Mt. 8:12; 22:13). It is a place of impenetrable darkness without light. Have you ever been in the darkness of night and longed for daylight, or been in a dark room and wanted light? Darkness will encompass those who will be in hell for eternity; there will be no hope of ever seeing light.

The Bible also says that hell is a place of fire (Mt. 25:41). The fire in hell isn't like the fire we use to burn something. God uses the word fire to describe hell as a place of torment--a place where there will be no relief from suffering. God uses both darkness and fire to describe the torment of the damned.

The Bible gives us two insights into how people will respond in hell. One is in a parable the Lord tells in Luke 16, where a man who went to hell cried, "...Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame" (v. 24). The other is a statement Jesus frequently made, saying that in hell "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mt. 8:12; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Lk. 13:28). Hell is not going to be a place of fun; it is going to be a place of weeping, screaming, grinding of teeth, and unrelieved torment.

2. The Details of Punishment

Hell is a place of unrelieved torment for both body and soul. When a nonbeliever dies, his soul leaves the presence of God, and goes into hell. His soul probably doesn't go into the lake of fire that all unbelievers will be thrown into after the Great White Throne Judgment (because a transcendent body would be required to endure the fire), but it still goes to a place of torment (as was illustrated by the rich man who died and went to hell in Luke 16).

When an unsaved person dies, his soul descends into hell. In the future, there will be a resurrection of the bodies of the damned, and at that time the condemned will be given a transcendent body so they can be thrown into the lake of fire. Christians will also be resurrected at that time, and be given a transcendent, glorified body to enable them to live eternally in heaven. Those who are condemned to hell will be raised and given new bodies for the sole purpose of being punished forever in those bodies (Jn. 5:25-29; Rev. 20:11-15). That's why Jesus said, "...fear not them who kill the body...but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mt. 10:28). Some people think that hell will only be experienced by the inner consciousness. But hell will be experienced by the body, too. Transcendent, eternal bodies are going to be given to the damned; they will suffer in those bodies forever. The bodies men have now wouldn't be able to endure hell because they would be consumed in a moment.

How do we know that the damned will have eternal bodies for hell? First, the Lord said that hell is a place "where their worm dieth not" (Mk. 9:44, 46, 48). When a body is put into a grave, worms begin to consume it. Once the body is consumed, the worms die. But in hell, the worms that consume the bodies will never die because the bodies will never be totally consumed. In other words, the Lord was saying that the unrelieved torment of the body will go on forever in hell. Second, the Lord described hell as a place where "the fire is not quenched" (Mk. 9:44, 46, 48). A fire always dies out when there is nothing to give it fuel. But because the fire in hell will never run out of fuel, it will never die out. Hell will be a place of unrelieved torment for both body and soul.

3. The Degrees of Punishment

The unrelieved torment in hell will be experienced by different people in varying degrees. Hell will be

horrible for everyone there, but some people will suffer more than others. Hebrews 10:29 says, "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant...an unholy thing...." In other words, those who received full knowledge of what Christ did for them but still rejected Him will receive more severe punishment in hell.

In Matthew 11, when Jesus condemned the people in the cities that rejected Him, He said, "...it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee" (v. 24). Hell won't be tolerable for anyone, but Jesus was saying that it will appear to be more tolerable for the people of Sodom (who hadn't seen Christ's miracles and heard His words) than for those who had witnessed His miracles and heard His words. In a parable about His Second Coming, Jesus said, "...that servant, who knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes" (Lk. 12:47-48a).

So, hell will be a place of unrelieved torment of body and soul in varying degrees. John Gerstner said, "Hell will have such severe degrees that a sinner were he able would give the whole world if his sins could be one less."

4. The Duration of Punishment

Hell will be a place of unrelieved torment for body and soul in varying degrees, and it will be endless. The worms there will never die; the fire will never die out; light will never shine there, and the sweet relief of death will never come. The only reason some people are able to endure life with all of its suffering and diseases is because they believe that death will bring relief. But it won't. Because hell is eternal, the people there will go insane. You say, "Are you sure hell is everlasting?" Yes, because Jesus said that the wicked "shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal" (Mt. 25:46). Both heaven and hell are eternal.

God never meant for hell to be for people. He made it for the devil and his angels. But people choose to go to hell by rejecting Christ. Some souls are suffering that torment right now, and have been waiting for their resurrected bodies for thousands of years. But even after they receive their transcendent bodies, they will be no closer to the end of eternal punishment than when they first entered hell. No wonder Jesus had to teach about hell!

The great saint John Bunyan wrote, "In hell thou shalt have none but a company of damned souls, with an innumerable company of devils, to keep company with thee. While thou art in this world, the very thought of the devil's appearing to thee, makes thy flesh to tremble, and thine hair ready to stand upright on thy head. But, oh, what wilt thou do when not only the supposition of the devil's appearing, but the real society of all the devils of hell will be with thee, howling, roaring and screeching in such a hideous manner that thou wilt be even at thy wits' end, and be ready to run stark mad again for anguish and torments. If after ten thousand years, an end should come, there would be comfort. But here is thy misery, here thou must be forever. When thou seest what an innumerable company of howling devils thou art amongst, thou shalt think this again, This is my portion forever. When thou hast been in hell so many thousand years as there are stars in the firmament, or drops in the sea, or sands on the seashore, yet thou hast to lie there forever. Oh, this one word ever, how will it torment thy soul!"

Many people are in the net and moving toward that inevitable furnace of fire.

We have seen the picture, the principle, and the peril. Let's look now at...

IV. THE PROCLAMATION (vv. 51-52)

A. The Comprehension of the Message

1. The Remark (v. 51a)

Jesus asked the disciples in verse 51, "Have ye understood[lit. 'put together'] all these things?..." He was asking them, "Have you been able to put together in your mind all the information in the

parables? Do you understand that in the Church Age good and evil will coexist, yet the good will continue to grow in influence? Do you understand that the only way to become a part of the Kingdom is to purchase all that Christ is by giving up all that you have? Do you see how in the end, there is an inevitable separation of good and evil?"

2. The Reply (v. 51b)

The disciples said, "Yea, Lord," to confirm that they understood all that Jesus had said. I believe Jesus accepted their affirmative answer; otherwise, He couldn't have said what He did in verse 52. Why did Jesus ask the disciples if they understood Him? In Matthew 9:36-38, when Jesus saw the world as a harvest that God would soon judge, He said, "Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest" (v. 38). In Matthew 10, He called the disciples, and in chapters 11 and 12 He trained them. Here in Matthew 13, He taught the disciples about the mystery form of the Kingdom. Then He asked them in verse 51, "Do you understand what I've said? Are you ready to go out in the harvest and warn people of the coming judgment?" The disciples said, "We understand what you said. We are ready."

B. The Conclusion of the Message

1. The Comment (v. 52a)

"Then said He unto them, Therefore, every scribe [Gk. grammateus='learner, teacher, or interpreter of the law'] who is instructed [Gk. matheteuo='discipled'] concerning the kingdom of heaven...."

Jesus had instructed the disciples about the Kingdom of heaven. He said to them, "You are now discipled, biblical scholars." That is what a scribe was: a student and interpreter of the Scripture, a theologian, lawyer, and preacher. Some were members of the Sanhedrin. A scribe was an authority on the Old Testament and tradition, and called "rabbi." They were influential. Jesus is saying here that just as the Jewish leaders trained their scribes, He had trained the disciples to become biblical scholars.

2. The Commission (v. 52b)

"...is like a man that is an householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." Jesus trained the disciples to be laborers in the harvest and warn men about the coming judgment. He says here that the disciples are now like a householder who dispenses supplies from his storehouse to meet peoples' needs. If someone needed clothing, food, or care, the householder gave it to him.

The householder was also wise enough to dispense both old and new things, so that the old things didn't ultimately become useless. He was a wise steward of everything he possessed.

The disciples are now householders with a storehouse filled with both old and new things. In other words, they knew the Old Testament and knew about the mysteries of the Kingdom. They could not only teach about the Old Testament and Jewish tradition; they could dispense the new mysteries of the Kingdom. They now knew more than the Jewish scribes. All that the scribes knew was the Old Testament. But the disciples had knowledge of both old and new things in perfect balance. God had called and trained them, and now wanted them to spread their knowledge.

The term "bringeth forth" near the end of the verse means "to fling out, or to scatter abroad." Jesus is saying, "You've got all this treasure now, so fling it out." He's telling them to be liberal with the riches they have: "Now that you are trained biblical teachers, give out both what God said in the past and what I have told you about the Kingdom."

Jesus saw men on their way to hell (Mt. 9:36-38). That is why He taught the disciples about the Kingdom. He said that good and evil will coexist for a while, but there is coming an inevitable separation and judgment. Jesus wanted the disciples to proclaim that truth.

C. The Continuation of the Message

We are to proclaim the same message that the disciples were to proclaim: The people of the world are destined for hell. In Matthew 22, the Lord gave a parable similar to the parable in Matthew 13:47-50. In that parable, a king had a wedding feast. Many people showed up for it. When the king came

to see the guests, he saw one man without a wedding garment. (That man was like a fish caught in the dragnet of the Kingdom.) The king said, "Friend, how camest thou in here not having a wedding garment?..." (v. 12). The man without the wedding garment was speechless. Then the king said to his servants, "Bind him hand and foot...and cast him into outer darkness.... For many are called, but few are chosen" (vv. 13-14).

The Kingdom net will catch many people, but not everyone that is caught will belong to the Kingdom. Since we know the mysteries of the Kingdom, we have the responsibility to make them known to others. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:11, "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...." If we aren't concerned about the fact that people are dying and going to hell, then we are selfish. Christians today seem to have lost their concern for unsaved men.

D. The Circumscription of the Message

Recently, a "Christian" broadcasting organization sent me a letter with a list of things that they did not want discussed on their programs. The letter said that they wanted to be a good neighbor to their variety of listeners; therefore, when preparing material for their stations, the following topics were to be omitted: criticism of other religions, conversion, missionaries, believers, unbelievers, the Old Covenant, the New Covenant, the church, the cross, the crucifixion, Calvary, Christ, the blood of Christ, salvation only through Christ, redemption only through Christ, the Son of God, Jehovah, and the Christian life. Then the letter said, "Our listeners are hungering for words of comfort. We ask you to adhere to these restrictions so that God's Word can continue to go forth. Please help us to maintain our position of bringing peace and comfort to those suffering people."

That's not comfort; that's damnation! False comfort damns people. We must tell people the truth.

Focusing on the Facts

1. If we were to use Christ's preaching as an example of how we should preach, what would our major theme be?
2. What does the last parable in Matthew 13 tell us about?
3. What were the three ways of fishing in Jesus' time? Where in the New Testament do we find examples of the first two kinds of fishing?
4. What was the casting net a picture of? What was the dragnet a picture of?
5. What two things did the Lord emphasize in Matthew 13:47?
6. What element in the parable of the dragnet did the Lord focus on? What does that element picture?
7. When will the judgment of man occur? Who will be the agents of God's judgment (Mt. 13:49)?
8. Why did Jesus teach the parable of the dragnet?
9. How does God feel about seeing the wicked die? Support your answer with Scripture.
10. Describe the darkness of hell. What does the word fire mean when it is used to describe hell?
11. Give two insights into how people will respond in hell. Use Scripture to support your answer.
12. What happens to unbelievers when they die? What will happen to them in the future?
13. Why will God give unbelievers a transcendent body at the resurrection of the damned? How do we know that the damned will have eternal bodies in hell?
14. How do we know that there will be different degrees of punishment in hell? Use Scripture to support your answer.
15. How long will people be punished in hell?
16. What did Jesus ask the disciples in Matthew 13:51a? Why did Jesus ask that question?
17. What was Jesus saying in Matthew 13:52a? What does "scribe" mean in that verse?
18. Now that the disciples were instructed about the Kingdom of heaven, what were they like (Mt. 13:52)?
19. What did Jesus mean when he described the disciples as householders with a storehouse fill with old and new things (Mt. 13:52)?

20. What does the term "bringeth forth" imply the disciples were supposed to do with their treasure (Mt. 13:52b)?

21. Because we know the mysteries of the Kingdom, we have the _____ to make them known to _____.

22. What does false comfort do? What must we tell others?

Pondering the Principles

1. When Jesus looked at the world in Matthew 9:36-38, He had compassion toward the multitude of men headed for judgment. What attitude do you have toward the wicked? Although it is right to hate sin, does that free us from the obligation to be compassionate to unbelievers? Jesus came to the world "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mk. 2:17b). Think of some specific examples of Jesus' compassion for the unsaved. Do you show the same kind of compassion toward unbelievers? Ask God to give you a heart that continually expresses Christlike compassion toward unbelievers, yet still does not overlook the need for sin to be removed from peoples' lives.

2. The Bible teaches that unsaved people are going to hell (Mt. 25:41), and that hell is eternal (Mt. 25:46). Read John 12:48; Romans 2:3-6; Colossians 3:25; and Revelation 20:12-15. Will anyone escape judgment? We do not know when God's judgment will come upon man; all we know is that it is inevitable. Jesus, not wanting any man to die, knew the importance of letting men know that they could be redeemed. He taught the disciples all they needed to know to carry on His work of calling sinners to repentance. Jesus had a strategy: In Matthew 10, He called the disciples. In chapters 11 and 12, He trained them. In chapter 13, He told them about the mystery form of the Kingdom, and the coming judgment of all men. Then He sent His disciples out to preach the message of salvation, and to train others to carry out that message. Do you have a strategy for reaching the unsaved people you know? If not, make a list of people who you'd like to share the gospel with; then decide how you will go about doing it. Keep those people in prayer. Do you know how to witness to an unsaved person? If not, ask a knowledgeable Christian or read a good book that explains how to share the gospel with an unsaved person. Find out what verses to use. Make a commitment to memorize those verses.

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