

Matthew 13:48

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

Which, when it was full, they drew to shore—This concludes the parable of the dragnet (vv. 47-48), illustrating final judgment. The Greek πληρώω (plēroō, 'to fill') emphasizes completion of the gospel age. **Gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away** (τὰ καλὰ εἰς ἀγγεῖα...τὰ δὲ σαπρὰ ἔξω ἔβαλον) depicts divine discrimination—καλός means 'beautiful, noble, useful' while σαπρός means 'rotten, worthless.'

The shore represents the end of redemptive history where angels execute separation (v. 49). Unlike the wheat and tares parable where separation occurs at harvest, this emphasizes the fishermen's action after catching, showing both divine sovereignty and creaturely agency in God's purposes. The careful gathering into vessels (ἀγγεῖα) contrasts with the casting away, depicting the tenderness toward the elect versus the finality of judgment.

Historical Context

First-century Galilean fishing employed dragnets (σαγήνη) that indiscriminately caught all species. Fishermen would haul the catch ashore and sort the clean fish (per Leviticus 11:9-12) from unclean, illustrating a familiar economic practice to explain eschatological reality. Jesus spoke this parable after a day of kingdom parables (13:1-52), concluding His public teaching before facing increasing rejection.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What does the indiscriminate nature of the dragnet reveal about the visible church versus the invisible church?
2. How should the certainty of final separation affect your evangelistic urgency and pastoral patience?

Interlinear Text

ἦν	ὅτε	ἐπληρώθη	ἀναβιβάσαντες	ἐπὶ	τὸν	αἰγιαλὸν
Which	when	it was full	they drew	to	shore	
G3739	G3753	G4137	G307	G1909	G3588 G123	
καὶ	καθίσαντες	συνέλεξαν	τὰ	καλὰ	εἰς	ἀγγεῖα, τὰ
and	sat down	and gathered	the good	into	vessels	
G2532	G2523	G4816	G3588 G2570	G1519	G30	G3588
δὲ	σαπρὰ	ἔξω	ἔβαλον			
but	the bad	away	cast			
G1161	G4550	G1854	G906			

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 13:30 (Parallel theme): Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

Matthew 3:12 (Parallel theme): Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

