

Matthew 13:47-52

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[0 : 00] You will remember that we're in Matthew 13, if you'd like to turn there. This morning's introduction is going to be very similar to previous weeks because we're still going through the parables of the kingdom.

So if you recall, Jesus has started speaking in parables for a particular reason. In chapter 12, he was fully and finally and officially rejected by the Jews.

This Jesus fellow, we want no more to do with him. In fact, we want to find a way to kill him. Despite the fact that he had proven beyond doubt that he was the Messiah, he had done messianic miracles in their midst, he'd fulfilled hundreds of scriptures during his lifetime, he had shown himself to be loving and compassionate, he had answered all their queries when they accused him of working on the Sabbath, he straightened out their thinking on that.

He was a force to be reckoned with and they knew, and I want to state this unequivocally, they knew he was the Messiah because he was fulfilling the very, very things that they had said only Messiah could fulfill.

And so they knew he was Messiah, but not only did they refuse to accept that publicly, but they actually used their power as leaders to drag other people away from the Lord.

[1 : 39] Probably the greatest sin you could commit really is to knowingly prevent someone else from finding Jesus. It was absolutely awful. And so he said to them at the end of chapter 12, you are not going to get any more signs, apart from the sign of Jonah, which was the sign of resurrection, which was yet to come.

And even then he graced them with it twice because he raised Lazarus from the dead. And then later on, of course, he was raised from the dead. But he said, no more signs for you. And so signs that he did from then on were for the disciples.

They weren't for the unbelieving Jewish nation. And he also began to teach in parables, fulfilling a prophecy from the book of Isaiah that he would speak in parables.

And through those parables, we've learned that the main actor in those parables is always Jesus or at least God in some form. There is some question as to whether bits of it might have been the Holy Spirit.

But in any event, it's a divine presence that is the main actor in those parables. So you have he was the sower. He was the one who said, don't sort out the wheat from the tares until the harvest time.

[2 : 58] And then when at the harvest time, then they can be separated. And we have that picture language there, which to some extent we're going to deal with again this morning of the separation of evil and good.

And the tares being thrown into the fire to be burned. And we had the mustard seed where Jesus was the one who planted the mustard seed to create this church.

And these parables came at the beginning of the church age. So what we saw was the church emerging. But we realized that that contravened the law of diverse kinds from Deuteronomy.

That the mustard was planted in a place where you'd never plant mustard. And that it's very likely that that represented the church growing up in this environment that was foreign to it.

And in its branches were the birds, which we concluded was probably the Gentiles who were considered to be unclean, just as the birds were considered to be unclean.

[4 : 05] But there was this place where the unclean could make their home. And if you remember, we looked at the translation. These birds didn't just perch there, but they made their home there. Then we had the parable of the leaven and we saw how that linked up to the grain offering.

And how the grain offering, which was a representation of Jesus, became leavened. And this is a picture of Jesus becoming sin for us.

Oh, and then there was the treasure and the pearl of great price. The treasure being Israel and the pearl of great price being the church. And we saw how in the final picture of the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven and the new heaven, the new earth and the new Jerusalem.

We have this picture of the amalgamation of what the apostles did. The apostles' names were on the gates and the foundation stones were the tribes of Israel, had their names written on them.

And the precious stones in the foundations were also the same precious stones that the priest wore on the ephod. And so we have this amalgamation of the two into one new man.

[5 : 17] That is a very brief synopsis of the past six weeks or something. And so we come to this final parable in this series of parables. And each one has described an aspect of the kingdom of God.

And this one this morning, as seems to have been the case for the rest of, like some of the songs we have sung, and certainly that psalm, it's sobering.

It's not one of those where we all dance around the room and go hooray. It's actually a very sobering parable. Let's read it. So it's the parable of the dragnet, and we read from verse 47.

And we're going to go through to verse 52 this morning. And it starts with the word again. Now, if you look back, the hidden treasure, that was a description of the hidden treasure.

And then the costly pearl, he says, again, the kingdom of God is like the costly pearl. So there's a link there. You have the Jew, or the Jews, and you have the church, and there's a link.

[6 : 28] Because it's a very, very similar principle in both. But they do represent two distinctly different people. And then the dragnet starts with, again, so this is also linked.

And I believe the way it's linked is that it draws together all the ends. From wherever people come, they're drawn together in this parable.

So again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind. And when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach, and they sat down and gathered the good fish into containers.

But the bad they threw away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth and take out of the wicked from among the righteous. I'll read that again, because I misread it.

Will take out the wicked from among the righteous. And will throw them into the furnace of fire. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Have you understood all these things?

[7 : 33] They said to him, yes. And Jesus said to them, therefore, every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household who brings out of his treasure things new and old.

So, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet. Let's just clarify this one. If you fish in the Mediterranean, we all know how to fish with a rod and line. And that's kind of very discriminant, really.

If you choose your bait right, you can get whatever fish you want. But you only get them one at a time. This is another way to fish. But this is not a dragnet.

But they throw out a net. It's circular. It's got weights all around the edge. And it lands in the water. And then the weights sink. And they encompass all the fish.

And then they pull a drawstring together at the bottom. And then they yank it out. And they've got a bag of fish. This, again, can be quite discriminatory. In that you know where the shoal of fish is.

[8 : 39] And they happen to be a shoal of fish that is particularly tasty. So you throw the net over that shoal. And you gather that shoal. The dragnet, however, is a different thing.

The dragnet is indiscriminate. And this is an important aspect of this parable. It is utterly... It describes an indiscriminate process of gathering.

And what you do is you have a wall of netting. Floats on the top. Lead weights on the bottom. The lead weights go down to the seabed. And you draw the whole thing.

You've usually got either a man on the shore that end. And then a boat on the other end pulling it round. Or sometimes you've got two boats. Or sometimes it's just shore to shore.

Just with men like this one. But the net catches everything. And then you have to work out, what do I want to keep? And for Jews that is significant.

[9 : 38] Because you can read in the law that they're allowed to eat fish with scales and fins. But they're not supposed to eat things like catfish. Sharks.

Anything that doesn't have fins and scales. Octopus. Squid. Shellfish. So there's a whole load of sea life. That they shouldn't be eating.

So there's a selection process. And I think what's happening with the Lord giving this parable in the way that he's giving it. He's talking to them in a language they understand. The kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet.

And they would think, oh, dragnet. Yeah, that gets you a lot of fish. But my goodness, you have to spend some time sorting it through. But it all gets drawn in. And then it gets drawn up onto the beach.

And then you sort it through. Now, I'm going to take the notes off the screen. Because it will distract both you and me if I don't. So this wall of netting, the picture is it just gathers everything.

[10 : 38] The kingdom of God is like this net that gathers everything. Interestingly, the word fish in your Bible should be in italics. It isn't actually in the original text.

And they've assumed that because it's a net and it's in the sea, then it's talking about fish. Which, of course, it was. But it's left ambiguous. So it says it gathered many.

Many types. The other interesting thing is when it talks about gathering, it uses the word *genos*. Which is the word from which we get our word *genus*.

And the Bible doesn't normally use that word of animals. In fact, I can't find another instance where it does use that word of animals.

It uses that word of humans. And it means families or tribes or basically gatherings of people with something in common. And so what this, if you apply the analogy to this, the analogy is that God's net gathers humans of all types, shapes, sizes, ethnicities, creeds.

[11 : 55] You name it, you get gathered. You can't miss this net. I probably also need to make another point because the parable goes on to talk about this is the way it's going to be like at the end of time.

By the time this dragnet goes out, the church will have already been gathered. Because the church would have been raptured.

Now you may be one of those that believed in a post-tribulational rapture. Talk to me afterwards. I'm not going to spend this morning trying to study that. But at the point where God does the gathering, it's after the second coming.

And the church has already been gathered. So this speaks of everybody else. That doesn't mean it speaks only of unbelievers though. Because if you get to this period of great tribulation, the last seven years of the history of this age as we know it, which is effectively the last seven years of Jewish history, it's the last seven years prophesied by Daniel.

It's Daniel's 70th week. And if you want more explanation of that, see me afterwards. So this period of seven years is a time when Jesus comes back and he takes ownership of the earth.

[13 : 17] And then he gathers. Now during that period of tribulation, you have 144,000 evangelists spreading the gospel and lots of people getting saved. So this is still a net that doesn't just gather the rubbish that's left, but it gathers a mixture of believers and unbelievers, if you apply the analogy.

So it will have occurred to you probably that this is a very similar message to the wheat and the tares. Because in the wheat and the tares, you've got the wheat and the tares coexisting.

And then Jesus says, don't uproot the tares because you might uproot the wheat. So leave it to the harvest time and then we'll take the tares and burn them and you'll be left with the wheat.

This is saying that we're going to gather all these fish and then we're going to separate them out. And the bad ones we're going to chuck away. So similar message.

So it's important to know what, if any, is the distinction between the two. And the distinction very simply is this. As far as I can see, and if you've got better ideas, do find me afterwards and tell me what they are.

[14 : 27] But the wheat and the tares spoke specifically about the church as it grew through the church age. And having in it those people who were actually poisonous.

Remember the tares were a poisonous aspect of the crop. So having those in it that were actually poisonous, planted by the enemy to ruin the church.

So it was a relatively small, distinct group of people. Those sent to wreak havoc in the church.

Whereas this speaks of the whole of humanity at the end of time. It's a much wider, much broader group and deals with the sin of mankind. So you've got this picture then of God's metaphorical dragnet surrounding what remains of humanity during those last years.

And dragging it all in together. What I didn't manage to find out. I didn't manage to suss it for myself. So I'm not going to make a dogmatic comment upon it. But I don't know whether this includes past believers, people who've died previously.

[15 : 40] I suspect it does. But the scripture isn't clear on it. So no dogmatic statement on that. If any of you want to make a dogmatic statement, see me afterwards.

And so, as we've read it through, if we go to verse 49.

So it will be at the end of the age, the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous. A couple of things here that are worthy of note. Many of you would have seen what was actually a very good film series or read the book about the left behind scenario.

This kind of knocks a hole in that. And because you notice that this is on the earth and the judgment of God has come down.

And this net has gone out and everybody's been dumped up on the beach and separated out. And the wicked are removed, leaving the righteous on the earth. Being left behind is a good thing, not a bad thing in this scenario.

[16:55] And I raise that only to say, just be careful when you read scriptures on this topic. Because to those of us who are being raptured, being taken away is a wonderful thing.

And being left behind, I wouldn't even want to countenance it. But the final judgment of God, when he comes, the wicked are taken away and cast into the lake of fire.

And what left on the earth are the righteous. But of course, we will have come back with the Lord at that time anyway. So it's another Bible study entirely. So he's gathered everyone that's left.

And it says they gathered the good into containers. And when you look up the Greek for the word containers, and I can't remember what the Greek word is, but I remember the definition.

It means it can mean boxes, but it can also mean pails or buckets. And there's just a hint there, just a hint, again, nothing dogmatic, that this might mean that they're preserved alive.

[17:59] Now, I'm not stating that stridently, that God's preserved them alive. But the analogy would fit, wouldn't it? That when you're talking about the souls of humanity, some are saved and put safely into containers to be preserved, not for eating, but to carry on living with the Lord.

So the scripture is sufficiently ambiguous to leave you that hope, is all I'm saying. So he's saying this is what it's going to be like at the end of time. What does he actually say?

He says, at the end of the age. When you look up that, in most dictionaries, you'll find that this can easily be translated, can just as accurately be translated as the consummation of the age.

Which is what leads us to believe that this is the very end. This is the, I would say, this is the great white throne judgment. I have to say, it's quite difficult when you study this to work out which bit you're getting.

But you see, the church doesn't face this judgment. The church faces a judgment of their works. That's what's called the beamer seat judgment. This is the other judgment, the one that we really don't want to face.

[19:18] Because everybody's called to give an account for their own works to God. And I'm reminded of that scripture in Colossians 2. That says he has cancelled out, he has removed the handwriting from the certificate of debt which was against us and which was hostile to us.

Having cancelled, having nailed it to the cross. So I get this mental picture of everybody being sorted in this dragnet.

And facing the Lord. And the angels are there. And he's saying, can you give me the decree against this one? Oh yeah, yeah.

Stole sweets when he was a kid. Went on to take drugs. Always drunk. Committed adultery. Lake of fire. And what about this one? Let's have his decree.

Oh, it's blank. So why is it blank? Because he removed the handwriting from it. And I don't think we sometimes realise, we sometimes agonise that we've committed a sin and has this robbed us of our salvation?

[20 : 31] Have we become unsaved because of sin in our lives? And sometimes we agonise over that. When it really comes to it, is the Lord going to take me in? But he's cancelled out the handwriting.

He's removed the writing from the decree which is against us and which was hostile to us because he nailed it to the cross. It's gone. And so, for those of us who are in the raptured church, we'll already be enjoying the benefit of that, having had the marriage supper of the lamb and so on.

But for those people who live in Daniel's 70th week, they're going to be faced with this judgment. And those who've given their life to Christ, oh look, no handwriting on the decree.

Put that one in the good pile, put them in the bucket, keep them alive. The rest, what does it say? It says, verse 50, And we'll throw them into the furnace of fire in that place.

There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. A picture of hell. Let's deal with this whole concept of hell. Obviously, I can't deal with it in any great depth in a fairly short meeting like this.

[21 : 43] But it's worth dealing with it because it's an issue over which lots of people get very, very mixed up, confused. And there's an awful lot of wrong teaching out there from surprisingly scholarly people.

And lots of people don't know where they stand. Is there really a hell? Can a loving God consign someone to eternal torment?

Is that how do those two marry up? The late John Stott. John Stott, not Scott. Stott. The late John Stott became an annihilationist at the end of his ministry, just before he died.

So he was preaching that you didn't go to hell. You just ceased to exist. You were annihilated. I was talking not too many weeks ago to a man who was a Christian universalist.

A very, very bright man. But the Christian universalist, and to be honest, there's a huge panoply of different beliefs in Christian universalism. But broadly speaking, it says everyone's going to make it.

[22 : 52] And it allows, depending on which branch of it you get into, it allows for things like post-mortem evangelism. So you can give your life to Christ after death, which is a completely unbiblical concept.

Or God's love is such that God will relent and let everybody in in the end anyway. And that leads to those of us who love the Lord. What's the point of his sacrifice if that's the case?

Why does anybody? There's no need for evangelism because if everybody's going to make it anyway, why bother? And if you do bother and some get saved in this life and they get to enjoy the kingdom of God in this life for a while.

But you don't need to worry about your friends, your relatives. It's a very convenient belief. Because what it does is it allows you to relax and allows you to, you know, I don't even need to pray for them.

They're going to make it anyway. It takes all the pressure off evangelism. And I don't think the Lord does pressure us to evangelism. But we feel that, don't we?

[24 : 00] Especially if we've got loved ones who are not saved. I, at the moment, I've got a family member who lives in another part of the country who's just contacted me to say that he's actually very ill.

And he's terrified. He's absolutely terrified. But he won't give his life to Christ. Now this might provide me with an opportunity to encourage him to do so.

But he's absolutely terrified. And he hasn't got a clue where he's going or, indeed, even if there is anywhere to go. Now I think it's worth, first of all, embracing what these views do.

If you have a view where there either is no hell or if there is, and the Bible's clear that there is, and we'll look at that in a moment. But if there is, God's not going to send any of us there. The first thing it does is it makes one attribute of God's nature superior to all the others.

Yes, he is a God of love. No doubt about that. He would not have died for us if he wasn't. But he's also a God of wrath. He's also a God of justice.

[25 : 11] He's also a God of holiness. He's also a God of wisdom. And a just God cannot live in heaven alongside unpunished, unrepentant sin.

When you come to Christ, you repent of what you were and you repent towards Christ. So your sin becomes paid for. So justice is satisfied. Your sin has been punished.

He took the punishment. Isaiah 53. So that's the first thing. You can't make one attribute of God's nature senior to others. And his justice is just as important to him as his love.

The second thing is it underestimates the severity of sin. We talked about the pearl of great price, didn't we? And we said how the pearl is formed because something gets in the oyster and creates a wound.

And what God does is he surrounds the thing that created the wound and covers it and turns it into something precious. And that's what he's done with us because we've wounded him with our sin.

[26 : 15] And he has covered that sin and he's turned us into something precious in his sight. But unatoned sin, the wound is left gaping. I mean, there is no way he can deal with sin where someone has not said, Lord, please forgive me.

So it underestimates the severity of sin. The third thing is it underestimates the cost of paying for that sin. And we read in previous weeks, we've read about the massive sacrifice that Jesus made.

And only last week we talked about what Jesus gave up. Apart from giving up his life when he got here, what did he give up to even come here? Opulent, riches, beauty, surrounded only by righteousness, no sin.

And he comes from that wonderful, indescribable place to this pit that's full of sin, full of unrighteousness, hates him, wants to kill him.

And pays the price for the very people that wanted to put him to death. He gave up so much. He gave up fellowship with the Father. Close, I mean close fellowship with the Father for that period of time.

[27 : 26] And then he gave up life itself and suffered that moment where he cried out on the cross, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

He was forsaken of the Father. There's nothing more he could have given up. And to just dismiss hell with a wave of the hand and say hell doesn't really exist.

It does those three things. And I have to say, it's just wrong. But let's look a little more deeply. Because if everybody gets there anyway, what's the point of that sacrifice?

And Jesus was precious to God. Why would he give up the most precious thing to him? If there was no point anyway. So let's look at, first of all, Mark 9, verse 43.

If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than having your two hands go into hell.

[28 : 31] Into the unquenchable fire where their worm does not die and their fire is not quenched. So the point here is that hell is a real place according to Jesus.

And I've only picked the one scripture because we'd be here all morning if I picked all of them. So I've taken one scripture that makes each point. Mark 9, verse 43 makes the point that hell is a real place.

And a place to be avoided. I mean, the prospect of their worm does not die and their fire is not quenched.

To be eternally eaten by worms and burned by fire is a horrible prospect. And it does make you understand why the likes of John Stott said, A loving God couldn't possibly do that.

But a loving God and a just God couldn't possibly not do that. That's the point I would make. And we touched on it there, but turn to Matthew 25 and verse 41.

[29 : 38] Matthew 25, verse 41. Then he will also say to those on his left. Now this bit of scripture is another bit of a description of the sorting out that I think is also covered in the parable of the dragnet.

So let's start with verse 40. The king will answer and say to them, Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of mine, even the least of them, you did it to me.

Then he will also say to those on his left, Depart from me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire, which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.

So this place, hell, is a place prepared for the devil and his angels. And yet humans can be cast into it. And once again, this is Jesus speaking.

So depart from me. This is he, God, will also say to those on his left, Depart from me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire, which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.

[30 : 48] So this is a place for the devil and his angels, into which those who continually rebel and do not turn to Christ in this life will be cast. There's no post-mortem evangelism here.

What we also learn, staying in Matthew, go to chapter 8. And we've already read that it's a fiery place.

Matthew 8, verse 12. But the sons of the kingdom, and this is the disobedient sons of the kingdom, by the way, the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness.

In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. So it's a dark place, but it's also a fiery place. If we turn to Matthew 25, and verse 30.

Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. So we've got more darkness there. And chapter 13, verse 42.

[31 : 57] Matthew chapter 13, and verse 42, which is the previous parable in the same chapter that we're studying this morning.

And we'll throw them into the furnace of fire. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. So, the punishment involves fire and yet no light.

Just darkness. Now, lots of people will put symbolic overtones on that and say darkness simply means that it's a spiritually dark place.

But I think God means it's going to be pitch black. That you won't be able to see anything. And the idea of being in a fire where there is no flame and no light forever, it should motivate us to evangelise.

And I'm not trying to put a burden on people to go out there and, you know, go knocking doors or whatever. If that's your calling, go do it. But at least we should be sharing the gospel with our friends and our family.

[33 : 06] And it can be a sad process when they don't respond.

The fourth thing is those dwelling there will share their abode with Satan and his demons or fallen angels.

So, if you go to... So, if you go to... We've read it in Matthew 25, 41 already. But go to Revelation 20, verses 14 and 15.

Revelation 20, verses 14 and 15. So, we've already read that the lake of fire was prepared for Satan and his angels or demons.

And this tells us that if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he's thrown into that lake of fire. So, a place that wasn't created for human habitation can be for human habitation for those who reject him.

[34 : 24] I've got a note to read Isaiah 66. And this chapter, Isaiah 66, is an end times prophecy chapter. And I'm just going to take the one verse out, but it does well to read the whole chapter.

Then they will go forth and look on the corpses of the men who have transgressed against me, for their worm will not die, and their fire will not be quenched, and they will be an abhorrence to all mankind.

So, this morning's sermon is not full of the joys of spring, I will admit. But these are important doctrines to hold on to. First of all, because if we are tempted to sin, these things should straighten us out.

I believe that once you're saved, you're saved. And I don't think you can finish up in hell because you sin once you're saved, because the handwriting's been removed from the decree. But it should certainly prick up my ears to the fact that the Lord wants me to walk righteously.

And it should certainly make me want to tell others that if you don't want this as an ending, you really need Jesus. And what you also get from Isaiah 66 and verse 24 is the fact that people think that, you know, people joke about hell.

[35 : 53] Or, I'd be better off in hell, that's where all my mates will be. They have a complete misapprehension of what hell will be like.

It'll be awful. And if your mates are there, you won't recognise them because it's dark. And you'll be too busy crying out in your own pain to worry about theirs.

But more than that, they will go forth and look on the corpses of the men who have transgressed against me. And their fire will not be quenched, and they will be an abhorrence to all mankind.

For their worm will not die, and the fire will not be quenched. The point that I wanted to make, and we'll look at it in Mark 9, 48 as well, just to give you a New Testament take on it.

A quotation from the same part of Isaiah. But if we start in verse 47, the Lord is saying to people, if your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out.

[37 : 04] It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than having two eyes be cast into hell, where their worm does not die and their fire is not quenched. For everyone will be salted with fire.

So, the point that I was trying to get to is, this place is not a place where God is absent. It's a place where our omnipresent God is present.

But instead of being present in blessing, as he is in heaven, he'll be present outpouring his wrath all the time. There is a famous sermon, Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.

Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God. And it makes this particular point, that the destiny of sinners is to spend eternity in the hands of an angry God.

It doesn't just mean that you go to not such a nice place. It means the place you go to, you are exposed to the outpouring of the wrath of God forever. And it should be a huge disincentive to go there, especially as to not go there is completely free.

[38 : 19] You have to pay no price other than humility, I suppose. Other than to say, Jesus, please save me. So I think the point I'm trying to make is there is no remit in Scripture to think hell is anything other than a real place of eternal punishment.

And I just wanted that to be clear for us because it's a question you may well come up against when you talk to people. Oh, I can't believe God would do that. God's a God of love. Yeah, he's also a God of justice and a God of wrath.

And these are balanced in his nature and character. The Bible tells us that we will be in the presence of God with wrath poured out and we'll drink the cup to its dregs.

That's what Jesus did. The Bible tells us that's what Jesus did. And Jesus did what was necessary to deliver us from our sins. He drank the cup of God's wrath to the dregs.

So if we're not in Christ, why should we presume that we have to do any less? We'll have to drink the cup of God's wrath to the dregs.

[39 : 25] It's one of the reasons we don't want to go there and we don't want our loved ones to go there. So, coming towards the end, back in Matthew 13, verse 51, he said, have you understood these things?

And they said to him, yes. And whether they really had is a point of conjecture. They may have done, they may not. And Jesus said to him, therefore, every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household who brings out of his treasure things new and old.

The people to whom this parable was spoken were the initial disciples of Jesus at the very beginning of the church age. In fact, the church didn't start till Pentecost.

So these are the preamble group, the ones that were preparing for the launching of the kingdom of God. And those people wrote the New Testament.

They're the ones who handed down the faith that we follow today. And in that sense, they became masters of the household of God. And this describes them, I think, perfectly.

[40 : 38] You know, every scribe, the word scribe simply means a writer. Every writer. Well, you know, we have the writings of Paul, the writings of Peter, the writings of James, the writings of Jude, the writings of John, the gospel writers.

They've all written stuff so that we know how to behave in the household of God and know what to expect. We know what the rules are. So these very disciples, the fact that we're sat here today studying what they wrote and trying to live to a level of conduct that they prescribed shows that this prophecy came to pass.

These disciples at the time, they were at times a bit useless. You know, they said daft things and did daft things and they abandoned him when he went to the cross and apart from the apostle John and Peter.

But they all, they did things that you wouldn't think would lead to the fulfilment of them being the masters of the house. But then the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost and they were transformed.

And every one of them barred John gave their life to martyrdom. John was the only man who lived to die a natural death and they tried to kill him.

[42 : 07] In fact, history has it that they tried to boil him in oil but it didn't work. He lived despite being dropped into a vat of hot oil. So they tried to kill them all but they died handing us down the faith that we now follow which we'll find, there's a verse in Jude.

Jude verse 3. So some considerable time later, Jude is saying, he says, Beloved, while I was making every effort to write to you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

So, some of them were dead, some of them were shortly going to be dead, and Jude is saying to them, just grab a hold of this that was handed down to you and never let it go.

And the fact that they didn't let it go means that we're still following it today and we're still reading that same instruction from Jude. Right? Grab a hold of that faith which was handed down to us by the masters of the house that the Lord set in place.

Shall we pray? Oh, Father, you are amazing. I am so glad that we study the whole of your word and that we do it verse by verse because it means that we don't dodge awkward scriptures like this or awkward topics like this.

[43 : 46] And I pray that as we deal with them, you will keep us on a straight path and that you'll always, particularly those of us who teach in this church, that you'll keep us focused where we need to be focused to make sure that your word is fully understood so far as we can do that.

Father, we thank you that you have set aside for us a destiny other than the one we've just read about. Lord, I thank you that that dragnet describes you scouring the sea, a biblical symbolism for humanity, scouring the sea to find the good and to reject the evil.

And I thank you that through no good work of ours and not because we deserve it, you have selected us to be among the good. And Father, I pray that you'd influence our lives so that we can take the gospel to friends and family and that we can take it with us wherever we go, that there might be more good fish.

You said to Peter you would make him a fisher of men. And I pray that likewise you would make us fishers of men. In Jesus' name.

Amen.