

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure

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The parable I am going to cover in this article starts what I call the hidden parables. They are the last four parables in Matthew 13. These parables are related to each other, not only because they build off each other, but also because Jesus did not give these parables to the multitudes. Jesus spoke them only to His disciples. We learn this several verses before Jesus actually spoke these parables. Matthew 13:36 says, "Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field." Jesus then explained that parable, and we have covered that in, "The Parable of the Tares of the Field" (<http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/par2tares.htm>). But then, staying in the house with His disciples, Jesus gave four more parables that were meant only for them. Let's look at the first of these.

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure and the three parables that follow it appear only in Matthew.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

Matthew 13:44

Symbols and Explanation

As we have seen with some other parables, Jesus does not give a direct, detailed explanation of this parable. Nevertheless, using the Bible, it is not difficult to understand the symbols.

I. The Treasure: "Treasure" in this parable comes from the Greek word, *thēsauros*. If you think that sounds like the English word, "thesaurus," you're right. In 1805, Peter Mark Roget put together into a book a collection of synonyms and near synonyms. He considered this to be a treasury of these words. Ever since, we have associated

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the word "thesaurus" with *Roget's Thesaurus*. Thus, we think of it as meaning a book of synonyms. But originally, it meant a collection of important or precious things. And that is what the Greek word in this parable means. But what specifically is this treasure?

In Exodus 19:5, God says the following to Israel: "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine." Remember from this verse that not only does God call Israel a treasure, but He also says that the earth is His. This will help us understand the "field" in the parable.

The Old Testament also tells us, "For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure" (Psalms 135:4). The Hebrew word translated "peculiar treasure" in these verses is translated as "jewels" in Malachi 3:17: "And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." This is a prophecy of a time future to Malachi. God is not speaking of national Israel, but of spiritual Israel, of which national Israel was only a shadowy type. Today, we understand that true Israel is the assembly of God's called out people, His *ekklēsia* (Romans 9:6-8; "church" is a common mistranslation of *ekklēsia*). Thus, in this parable of the kingdom of heaven under the New Covenant, the "treasure" is the *ekklēsia*, all of God's people in the New Covenant.

Treasure= <i>ekklēsia</i> , the people God has called out of this world and assembled before Him

II. The Field: In Jesus' explanation of the Parable of the Tares just a few verses earlier, Jesus defined the "field" as "the world" (Matthew 13:38). That definition carries into this parable. Remember that above, we looked at Exodus 19:5. In that Scripture, we saw that God told national Israel (which was a physical type of true, spiritual Israel—the *ekklēsia*) that if they kept His covenant, they would be His peculiar treasure "above all people: for all the earth is mine." In other words, although all the earth and its people are God's—as God He created and owns everything—Israel would be His special treasure. This should begin to help us understand what Jesus is saying in this parable about His New Covenant treasure.

Field=the world

III. A Man: In these parables, we have seen that the man, the central figure who, until now, has been depicted as a sower, is Jesus Christ. Jesus specifically states this in Matthew 13:37. There is no reason to think that there has been a change in this regard when we come to this parable. The man is Jesus Christ.

Man=Jesus Christ

IV. Selleth...Buyeth: The Bible tells us that the man, Jesus Christ, sells all that He has and buys the field. At this point, we must notice that the picture in this parable is not focused on the treasure. In other words, the parable tells us that the man, Jesus Christ, buys the field. We understand, of course, that He does it for the sake of the treasure. But it says that He bought the field. After His death and resurrection, Jesus declared to His disciples, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). With His death, Jesus bought the world. Why? To save every individual? No. We will see Jesus' limited atonement in the parables that follow. He bought the world to have authority over it. The word "power" in Matthew 28:18 is from *exousia*, and it more properly means "authority." Since His resurrection, Jesus has been ruling the world: "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Revelation 19:15, see also Revelation 12:5).

Of course, you might wonder why Jesus would need to buy the world. Isn't He God who owns the entire universe? Yes, He is. But, since His incarnation, He is also a man. And man does not have all authority in heaven and in earth. Jesus, as a man, had to purchase it from God. Remember, the parable pictures Him as a man. Because as a man He had to purchase the world, that's why He made the announcement in Matthew 28:18 after His resurrection that He had been given all power in heaven and in earth.

But why did Jesus buy the world and gain this authority? After telling His disciples that He had authority over the world, Jesus says, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:19-20). Notice the "therefore." This is why He has the authority over the world. It is so His disciples could teach the nations. Satan has been bound, and Jesus is plundering his house. "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or

else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house" (Matthew 12:28-29). "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season" (Revelation 20:1-3).

So Jesus gave up what He had before the incarnation, He was born a man, and He gave up His life so that He could have the authority to plunder Satan's domain through the preaching of the Gospel to the nations and the salvation of those who believe. This is why the events in the parable are what they are. Jesus finds God's elect people in the world, but He keeps them hidden until He first buys the world. Then they can be dug out.

Sells...Buys=Jesus giving up His heavenly privileges and His life to purchase the world for the sake of extricating His elect people, the <i>ekklēsia</i>

The Common Misinterpretation

Almost all Bible commentators and preachers misinterpret this parable as being a picture of an ordinary man—a sinner—stumbling across the church, or the kingdom, or the Gospel and giving up all that he has for its sake. But, not only does this not fit the Bible's interpretation of the symbols (especially for the man), it also leaves unexplained what can be the meaning of buying the field. First of all, our salvation from beginning to end is by grace alone (Ephesians 2:8-9). Therefore, neither the church nor the kingdom nor the Gospel should have any price to us. It is God's good pleasure to *give* us the kingdom (Luke 12:32). Secondly, the field can hardly be understood as anything other than the world. But in what way does a man buy the world in order to gain the church or the kingdom or the Gospel? This makes no sense at all. Even as a purely logical argument, it falls on its face. In order for the man to buy the field, he would have to pay something of at least equal value. The parable says that he sells all that he has. An ordinary man can only have worldly goods. How can a man sell his worldly goods, which are a portion of the world, in order to buy the entire world? This is nonsense. Yet, distinguished Bible scholars through the

centuries have interpreted this parable this way. This illustrates why it is so important to let the Bible interpret itself.

The Lesson of the Parable of the Treasure

The Parable of the Treasure shows us the great love that Jesus Christ has for His *ekklēsia*. But it shows this love by focusing on His buying the world to get us. He gave up all so that He could purchase the world, not in a saving way, but for the purpose of being able to exercise his authority over the nations—something that previously Satan did by completely blinding them so that they could not believe the truth (and he still does blind unbelievers—2 Corinthians 4:4). God's people were hidden in the world and remained hidden until Jesus paid the price. But now Satan is bound and Jesus plunders his house. Jesus now has the authority to have His Gospel spread where He decides and, through that Gospel, calls His people out of the world. Another way of looking at this is as it is described in the Scripture (Isaiah 61:1-2) Jesus read in the synagogue: "And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:17-19). That was part of Jesus' mission, and now He carries it on through us. Although we are still in the world, we are to be a light set upon a hill. "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid" (Matthew 5:14). Instead of being hidden in the world, we are dead to the world and hidden in Christ: "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3). So, today we are to understand that Christ has purchased the field—the world. He is digging us out—the treasure—out by calling us out of the world.

Application of the Parable to Our Lives

We are to understand that Jesus has purchased this world with a great price. Premillennialists are waiting for Christ to rule the world upon His return. But He is already ruling the world, and He is doing it so that all of His elect can be saved. When Jesus was in the world, His people were hidden. As long as He was in the world, He was the light of the world (John 9:5), and we were hidden. He is no longer in the world but we are (John 17:11). Thus, we are now to be the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). Since Jesus now has all authority, we are now to go

into the world and "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever" Jesus has commanded us (Matthew 28:19-20) because "now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). This is the sense in which Jesus has purchased the world: not that He has redeemed it so that everyone has the potential to be saved, but so that He can exercise His authority over it in making sure that the Gospel goes where He wants and all of His elect are called out of the world and saved.

In the next article in this series, "The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price," the focus is not upon the buying of the world, but upon another purchase.