

May 31, 2009

**THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN: PRICELESS  
MATTHEW 13.44-58**

*Though the kingdom of heaven is, at present, a mixed bag and is rejected by some, it is of inestimable value to both God and the man who is willing to give up everything for it.*

**1. HIDDEN TREASURE (44)**

**As the story of God:** Jesus' parables have focused upon God's activity throughout history, esp in and through Israel. Does not rule out our response to the kingdom but puts it in proper context.

Evidence: "the man" of parables = God or Son of Man; field = God's field; sower = God or Son of Man; in Scripture Israel = God's "special possession/treasure" (cf. Ex 19.6; Dt 7.6; cf. also 1Pt 2.9; Ti 2.14).

Treasure is "hidden." Who is doing this hiding and why? Parallel with the parable of the leaven and the dough.

"We are filthy, rotten sinners. We are not priceless treasure." Cf. Isa 64.6; Pss 14.1-3; 53.1-3; Rom 3.10, 23.

Worth is based upon what God declares about us and his choice of us. Cf. Dt 7.6 again.

"Hidden" - plays in well with the fact that the kingdom is a "mystery;" i.e. the hidden plan of God that will be/is being revealed.

There have been hints and foreshadowings of the kingdom, but for the most part it has remained hidden. God chose a small people out of all the nations of the earth, the least of all people (Dt 7.7). He took them and hid his kingdom in them. Through them he would eventually reveal his kingdom plan for the entire world.

"Joy" - God buys this field w/ the treasure b/c of joy. God has joy/rejoices over his people; cf. Dt 28.63; 30.29; Isa 62.5; Jer 32.41; and Zeph 3.17.

Mt 3.17 - "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased/in whom I take delight." God delights over us.

The obtaining of this joy will not come without cost. It will be for the joy that is set before him that God in Christ will endure the cross, despising the shame (Heb 12.1-2). God in Christ expends all that he is to purchase his "precious possession."

**As the story of those who purchase the kingdom:** We are images of God. What he loves we should love, and we should respond like God responds; namely be willing to sell all we have for the sake of obtaining the kingdom (cp Eph 5.1; Phil 2.5).

What about the "morality" of this parable? Is the man who buys the field deceiving and snookering the owner? Yes, in a sense he is. But this must be put in the light of the biblical story. Think of Jacob and Esau and the selling of the birthright and the deception to receive the blessing from Isaac.

God declared that the older would serve the younger (Gen 25.23). Jacob is the seed, the faithful covenant-keeper. Esau is a wicked man who despises his birthright (Gen 25.34) and has no regard for the covenant. Jacob loved it, and it was declared to be his. The wicked had to have things hidden from them and deceived so that the blessing might be obtained.

Israel, who has the privilege of the firstborn, has become Esau, despising the treasure. It will be taken from them (cf. Mt 21.33-43).

**2. THE MERCHANT AND THE PRICELESS PEARL (45-46)**

**As the story of God:** The sea is emphasized. Pearl = a jewel from the sea. Describes another aspect of the kingdom.

Sea = allusion to the nations. In the first parable the original owner of the field is oblivious to the value and the buyer "discovers" the treasure. In this parable the merchant *seeks* "good/fine/beautiful pearls." Then he sells everything to purchase it.

This parable is emphasizing the kingdom as it comes into its fullness. At the climax of the story of the kingdom, Gentiles, the nations, are brought in to be true worshipers; a huge theme in the NT. Gentiles are a precious possession.

**As the story of those who purchase the kingdom:** summing up both parables: 1. The kingdom is of great worth to those who love it.

2. Those who desire the kingdom sell everything they possess to obtain it.

Kingdom loyalty must have no rivals; e.g. mammon (6.24), blood family (10.34-39).

Is there a pearl or some treasure that you are unwilling to sell in order to possess the kingdom?

### 3. A DRAGNET (47-50)

Sea = Gentiles/the nations; the unformed, unfilled nations of the world.

Dragnet & fishermen: recall the calling of the first disciples in 4.18-22. Jesus will make them “fishers of men.”

Fulfillment of prophecy in Jer 16.14-16: “... Behold, *I will send for many fishermen*,” says YHWH, “and *they shall fish them...*” This is the time that God will gather his people out from among the nations. This is happening now in Jesus’ ministry.

Note: men drag the net to shore and “sit down” to sort out the fish. A picture of Jesus’ disciples sitting upon 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes in the regeneration (i.e. the new creation; Mt 19.28).

Angel may = men as well as spirit beings.

“End of the age” = the end of the old world in Adam.

Only fate of the wicked emphasized. They will suffer the wrath of God.

### 4. TREASURES NEW AND OLD (51-52)

Question about understand refers to all of the parables. Understanding calls them to a new responsibility. They will have a responsibility as “scribes who have been disciplined/instructed concerning the kingdom” to bring things out “new and old.”

“Scribes.” Not the enemies of Jesus in this case, but scribes of the kingdom. Scribes are those who study, understand, and explain the Scriptures. Scribes of the kingdom understand the Scriptures as they have been fulfilled in Jesus.

“Householders” - These scribes are the new “lords of the house” of Israel; cf. Rev 21 and the 12 foundations for the new Jerusalem.

Treasure has been paralleled with the kingdom. New = that which has now been revealed in Jesus (Mt 9.17) as the fulfillment of all the Law and the Prophets (Mt 5.17-20). Never seen until this time.

Old = the fact that this is the same story brought to its climax. Not abandonment of the story, but its fulfillment. Cp. Lk 24.13-27.

### 5. REJECTION OF THE KINGDOM (53-58)

People of Nazareth, in questioning Jesus authority, put themselves in the same category as the Pharisees (cp 12.24)

Their familiarity with Jesus caused them to stumble over him. Even his own family didn’t believe him at first (cf. Jn 7.3-5).

This is yet another indication of the overall rejection of the Jews. As the apostle John said, “He came unto his own and his own received him not” (Jn 1.11).

“A prophet ...” - His own will reject him, but he will receive proper honor outside of his country/house; i.e. from the Gentiles.

Jesus didn’t do many mighty works there b/c of their lack of faith. God has chosen to work in the presence of and by the means of faith.

1. Your God delights over you.

2. We must delight in the kingdom to the point that we are willing to give up everything for it.