

5. The Hidden Treasure And The Precious Pearl

“ **The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field.** When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.”

“Again, **the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls.** When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.”

(Matthew 13:44-46 NIV)

Both of these parables are declaring certain aspects of the same truth, hence they need to be considered together. First and foremost, Jesus is the man who finds the treasure hidden in a field, and he is also the merchant looking for fine pearls. In both instances the man purchases the precious things he has found through personal sacrifice by selling everything he has – and he does this with great joy! The basic truth revealed here is very simple really, but there is a little more that can be gleaned from it. These principles of love and sacrifice in accordance with God's righteousness are at the heart of the kingdom of God. So not only do these things apply to the Master, Jesus, but they also apply to His people, His followers, who are the children of God.

Firstly, let us consider the treasure. This particular treasure is already hidden in a field. In the Greek, it actually reads *'the field'* rather than *'a field.'* Now at the time when Jesus was telling these parables to His disciples, He had left the crowd and gone inside the house where He was staying. He had just revealed to them the meaning of the parable of the Wheat and the Darnel. As we have learned earlier from this parable, the field represents the whole world.

Exodus 19:5-6 shows us clearly that the nation of Israel was viewed as God's treasure in the world.

“Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, **then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession.** Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me **a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**” (NIV)

This text indicates that the ultimate purpose of God, which began with Israel, is to form *'a called out group'* or *'assembly'*, commonly called the Church (Gk. *ekklesia*), who are to be a kingdom of royal priests ruling the earth and the heavens as the sons of God. Israel according to the flesh could only temporarily fulfil this purpose in the past, but it is ultimately fulfilled in the Body and Bride of Christ, which is composed not only of a faithful remnant of Israel, but a large remnant out of the nations as well, who are the complement or fullness of Israel (Romans 11; Ephesians 2:11-22). This Assembly of God is the Treasure and the precious Pearl, the heavenly Holy Nation of the Israel of God.

Israel and the Nations – as One

The nation of Israel, as those who were originally given the promises and the covenants of God, were scattered throughout the world, with the vast majority of them hidden in the field. Then Jesus came as the Messiah of Israel and the world, firstly, to seek and to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:5-6; 15:24). Yet those of Israel who followed the true Shepherd of the sheep were again hidden in the field of the world, while a new secret administration of grace was introduced, with the Gospel being proclaimed to all nations.

In the meanwhile, Jesus gave His own soul as the ultimate Sacrifice and Ransom, selling all He had to purchase the Treasure, the apple of His eye, the sheep of His pasture. For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross. Yet in doing so, He not only purchased the treasure, *He bought the whole field!* The whole world - in fact, the whole of creation - now legally belongs to Christ Jesus. He holds the title deed to this earth, as well as the heavens.

This truth about the NT people of God is what the Apostle Peter was referring to in 1 Peter 2:9-10.

“But you are **a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation**, a people belonging to God... Once you were not a people, yet now you are the people of God.” (NIV)

Nevertheless, this little flock and bride-assembly of Israel was not enough. There were to be others from amongst the nations, those of another sheep pen, who would join the remnant of Israel to become one flock under the One Shepherd, Who gave His soul for the sake of the sheep (John 10:14-16; 11:51-52). This flock of faithful followers would become the Firstfruits of a new humanity offered to God. They would be the Wife of the Lamb, the heavenly Israel, ruling from the New Jerusalem as a kingdom of royal priests ruling the heavens and the earth. This is what Paul was ultimately revealing in Ephesians 2:11-22, which is worth quoting here in full.

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)—¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, **excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.** ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, **who has made the two groups one** and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. **His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace,** ¹⁶ **and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.** ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

¹⁹ **Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household,**

²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

(Ephesians 2:11-22 NIV)

So what about the precious pearl? A pearl is a very precious gem that is formed in an oyster shell, which comes from the sea. Throughout Scripture, the nations and peoples of the earth are often symbolised as the sea (Isaiah 57:20; Revelation 17:15). So Jesus, the Merchant, finds one pearl of great value and sells everything to purchase it. This 'very precious pearl' represents the remnant of the nations who belong to the spiritual Body of Christ.

Yet the Treasure *and* the precious Pearl together represent the whole Bride and Body of Christ as the kingdom of royal priests, composed of Jew and Gentile, Circumcision and Uncircumcision, as clearly revealed in the above text. Therefore we find that the twelve gates of the heavenly New Jerusalem are twelve *pearls*, symbolising the governmental authority and mediatorial or priestly position of the sons of God, who together *are* the Holy City of God (Revelation 21:21).

The Kinsman-Redeemer & the Jubilee

In the book of Ruth we have the tender account of the role of a special kinsman redeemer named Boaz, who, because of his love for Ruth, a woman of the nations, who was also the widowed daughter-in-law of his poor relative, Naomi, sets out to redeem her. He was a man of renown and Ruth worked among the servant girls who collected the wheat and barley from his field. In accordance with the Law, and yet using much tact and wisdom, Boaz redeemed Naomi's property, which included Ruth as well, and Ruth became his wife. [The law of the kinsman-redeemer can be found in Leviticus 25.]

This is a wonderful allegory of Jesus redeeming His bride. Christ is the Kinsman-Redeemer. Not only did He become a Man so as to redeem mankind from its poor, helpless state, but He was also born an Israelite of the tribe of Judah, descended from David, to rescue Israel from their poor, helpless state of hopelessness under the Old Covenant. (Interestingly enough, Boaz and Ruth were Christ's ancestors according to the flesh, as Ruth became the great-grandmother of David).

This means that Christ had the divine legal right as a Kinsman-Redeemer to redeem not only Israel, but also the whole of mankind. Yet His heart was set on a Bride, a precious treasure and pearl, chosen from among those who served in His field. Yet the legal basis for this is the fact that Jesus is the rightful Heir to the throne of David, and all of the covenants and promises given to Israel were to be fulfilled in Him as the Messiah – the only One Who could establish the New Covenant due to His own blood, having paid the Ransom price.

Nevertheless, we mustn't forget that Christ purchased *the whole world*, and He is the Kinsman-Redeemer *of all humanity*, for there is only one Saviour and Redeemer for all mankind. The law of the kinsman-redeemer in Leviticus 25 is intimately tied up with the law of sabbatical years and the year of Jubilee. These laws reveal the divine principles of freedom and restoration for God's people.

The year of Jubilee (or liberty) for Israel was to occur every forty-ninth/fiftieth year, and this was to be the year for cancelling all debts and restoring everyone to their original inheritance. The Sabbatical years, which occurred every seventh year, were also to be years of cancelling debts, but this was to apply only to fellow Israelites (Deuteronomy 15), whereas the Jubilee was to be applied to foreigners as well who dwelt in the land of Israel – this being a foreshadowing of Gentile inclusion in the Assembly of God. Both the Sabbatical year and the Jubilee were to be years of rest for the land, dedicated to Yahweh.

The Sabbath 'rests', the cancelling of debts, and the freedom and restoration of slaves and property in the Jubilee, were all types and shadows of the spiritual freedom, restoration and forgiveness that was to come through Jesus' death, which paid the ransom/redemption price for Israel and all humanity (Hebrews 4:8-11; Colossians 2:16-17; Galatians 5:1; Matthew 20:28). This 'freedom' was initially made available to the Israel/bride assembly of the apostolic generation, who were the first century 'firstfruits' of a greater harvest. The Gentile nations though were also to be included in the total sum of God's people, along with all those of Israel from past generations, who, as 'the whole creation' or 'all Israel', would experience the liberty and restoration of the creation's Jubilee – that is, resurrection into the spiritual kingdom of God (Romans 8:19-21; 11:25-32).

In Daniel 9:24-27, in the prophecy of the Seventy Sevens (or Weeks), a period of seventy sabbatical years ($70 \times 7 = 490$) was proclaimed to the Jews, during which time the promised Messiah would arrive and complete his mission for Israel and Jerusalem, after which the Temple and the holy city would be destroyed. This period symbolises the fullness of the Jubilee (49×10). The NT reveals that these things were fulfilled in the events of the 1st century in relation to Jesus as the Messiah.

After the full conclusion of this period, by the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD at the end of the age, Jesus had fully established the spiritual kingdom of God, having secured the Ransom for the New Covenant.¹ This in turn has become the basis for the Redemption and Restoration of all God's creatures.

Jesus also alluded to this prophecy in a different context, that of forgiveness and mercy, in Matthew 18:21-22. The principle of the Jubilee expressed as 7×7 or 70×7 is placed over against the principle of avenging justice laid out in Leviticus 26:21, where the punishment for sin was said to be multiplied by 7 under the law. Jesus taught his disciples the principle that mercy and forgiveness triumphs over judgment (cf. James 2:13); that is, that the principle of the Jubilee is the focus of God's heart and mind because he is loving, merciful and gracious. Having said that, we are also to leave room for God's wrath, for his mercy can be spurned (John 3:36; Romans 12:17-21).

In summary, Jesus has purchased the whole world by paying the correspondent Ransom for humanity so that He legally owns the whole lot, and in turn, he has also secured His hidden treasure and His precious pearl – the firstfruit bride assembly of the Israel of God (1 Timothy 2:5-6; Revelation 1:5, 18; 14:1-5). As one who holds to the interpretive position known as Consistent Premillennial Preterism (for want of a better description),² I fully believe that Christ kept his promise to his disciples and the early church by returning for them in the Day of the Lord of 70 A.D., thereby fully establishing his spiritual, heavenly kingdom over the whole world (Revelation

11:15-18; 20:6). Ever since then, a greater harvest amongst the nations of the world has been, and is being, gathered into the kingdom of God to join with the New Jerusalem assembly that is the bride, the wife of the Lamb (Revelation 21:1-5, 9-10, 22-27; 22:1-7).

Endnotes

¹ Jesus himself had indicated that the writings of the Hebrew prophets (OT) would be fulfilled by, and in, the events of 70 AD (cf. Luke 21:22; "*These are days of vengeance to fulfil all that is written.*") This was based in particular on Daniel 9:24 ("*to seal up vision and prophecy*") and 12:7 ("*When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.*") The apostle Paul also spoke of 'the ends of the ages' as having already arrived on the Christians of the 1st century AD (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:11; see also Hebrews 9:26-28).

² British theologian and Congregationalist minister J. Stuart Russell expounded this view in his classic work *The Parousia* in the late 1800's, although he didn't attach this specific label to his position. Russell was not a 'Full Preterist', and neither am I. The modern full preterist position may seem very similar, but there are some marked differences. Yes, Russell viewed the Second Advent as occurring in 70 AD, but contrary to the full preterist position, he saw this as *the beginning* of the 'millennium' and not its end. All spiritual powers are subjected to Christ at the beginning of his reign with his people. Nevertheless, in relation to earth history, there is yet a future consummation event after the symbolical 1000-year-reign has finished (cf. Revelation 20:7-10).

This view is termed *Consistent Premillennial Preterism*; although it would be more accurate to say Premillennial/Amillennial Preterism; for it recognises the 'premillennial' pattern of Revelation 19-20 (i.e. Second Advent --> First Resurrection --> 1000-year-reign), while at the same time largely accepting the 'amillennial' hermeneutic of a current *heavenly* reign of Christ and his people over the nations, viewed as a *symbolic* '1000-year-reign' leading to a future consummation of world history. For further illustration of this, see my chart *Two Ages/Two Realities*.