

# The Parable of the Treasure

by A.W. Pink

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*The Parable of the Treasure teaches that the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which represents Israel, God's elect people, and Christ's death and purchase of Israel.*

**Scripture:** Exodus 19:5, Deuteronomy 14:2, Deuteronomy 32:8, Psalm 135:4, Isaiah 62:1-4, Amos 9:14-15, Matthew 13:44, Matthew 15:24, John 1:11, 2 Peter 2:1

**Topics:** "Redemption", "God's Plan for Israel"

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## Description

A.W. Pink expounds on 'The Parable of the Treasure' from Matthew 13:44, emphasizing that the treasure represents Israel, hidden in the world, and that the man who finds it symbolizes Christ. He critiques common interpretations that equate the treasure with the Gospel and the field with the Scriptures, arguing instead that the parable illustrates God's plan for Israel and the significance of Christ's redemptive work. Pink highlights the importance of understanding the context in which Jesus spoke this parable, specifically to His disciples, to reassure them of God's ongoing purpose despite Israel's rejection. The parable ultimately points to the future restoration of Israel as God's chosen people, emphasizing the distinction between the earthly and heavenly elect. Pink concludes that the completion of the parable, which involves Christ possessing the treasure, is intentionally omitted as it pertains to a future time beyond the current age.

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## Transcript

The Prophetic Parables of Matthew 13

Chapter 5:

THE PARABLE OF THE HID TREASURE.

"Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; that which when a man has found, he hides, and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field" (Matthew 13:44). The common interpretation of this parable, both by Calvinists and Arminians, is as far removed from what I am fully assured is its true meaning as is the explanation they give of the earlier ones in Matthew 13. Dr. John Gill tells us that the treasure in this parable is "the Gospel," that the field in which the treasure is hidden is "the Scriptures," and that the man who sought and found the treasure is "an elect and awakened sinner."

It is amazing how such an exegete of the Scriptures, and a man so deeply taught of God, could wander so far astray when he came to this parable. In the first place, the "field" is mentioned in two of the preceding parables--the field in which the good Seed was sown, and the field that was over-sown by tares; and in verse 38 of this very chapter Christ has told us the field is the world. Then why should it be supposed that the field means something entirely different in this fifth parable of the same chapter?

Again, we have already had a "man" before us in the first two parables--a man who sowed good Seed in his field (v. 24). The Lord Jesus Himself has told us who that man is: "He that sows the good seed is the Son of man" (v. 37). If, then, the man in the second parable represents the Son of man, why, in this fifth parable, without any word to the contrary, are we to understand Him to point to someone entirely different? Against the popular interpretation of the parable we advance these objections: First, if in this parable the Lord Jesus was setting forth the way of salvation, teaching that earnestness and diligence are needed on the part of an awakened sinner if he is to reach the treasure and make it his own (which treasure is hidden from the dilatory and careless), then how strange it is that it was not spoken in the hearing of the multitude!

Instead, we are told that Christ had sent the multitude away, had entered the house and spoke this parable to His disciples only. Second, in this parable the treasure is hid in "the field," and, as we have seen, the field is the "world." In what possible sense is Christ or the Gospel hidden in the world? In the third place, when the man had found this treasure he hid it again: "the which when a man has found, he hides." If the treasure represents the Gospel and the field be the world, and if the man who is seeking the treasure be an awakened sinner, then our parable teaches that God requires the awakened sinner, after he has found peace and obtained salvation, to go out and hide it in the world!

How absurd! Christ plainly told His disciples to let their light, so shine that men might see their good works and glorify their Father which is in heaven. In the fourth place, in the parable we are told that after this man had found the treasure and then hid it again, that he went and "sold all that he had" and "bought it." What does an awakened sinner have to sell, and what is it that he purchases? Surely not the world! Such a loose interpretation may suit and satisfy lazy people who are too dilatory to carefully examine the parable for themselves, but it certainly will not do for those who, by the grace of God, have become prayerful and diligent students of the Word.

We need hardly say that any interpretation that contains such absurdities must be promptly dismissed. Now the first key to this parable is found in the fact that it was spoken by Christ after He had dismissed the multitudes and had taken His disciples into the house. This parable, unlike the four which precede it, was spoken to the disciples only. Those disciples must have been perplexed and dismayed at the gloomy picture which Christ had drawn of the form which His kingdom was going to assume in this world after His departure.

He told them, or at least He had said in their hearing, that they would go forth and scatter the good Seed broadcast, but, with meager results. The sowing which had been begun by Him was to be continued by them, and He had warned them that, though there should be a broadcast sowing throughout the field, only a fractional portion of the good Seed would take root and bear fruit. Second, He had said that the Devil would turn farmer and over-sow the field with tares. And they were forbidden to pluck them up: the tares and the wheat were to grow side by side until the harvest, and then the tares would be found in such quantities it would be necessary to bind them in "bundles!"

Third, He had warned them that His professing cause on earth would develop so extensively and rapidly that it would be like a little mustard-seed growing up into a herb, ultimately becoming a tree, with wide spreading branches; but that the Devil and his agents would find shelter in them; Fourth, He announced that into the meal, which was the emblem of His pure truth, a foreign and corrupting element would be introduced, stealthily and secretly, and the outcome should be that ultimately the whole of the meal would be leavened.

Yes, there was every reason for the poor disciples to be perplexed and dismayed. Then the Lord Jesus (it was just like Him), took them apart, and in the parables of the treasure and pearl He spoke words to reassure their hearts. He made known to them that, though the outward professing cause of Christianity upon earth would develop so tragically, yet there will be no failure on the part of God. He tells them there are two bodies, two elect peoples, who are inexpressibly precious in His sight, and that through them He will manifest the inexhaustible riches of His grace and glory--and that, in the two realms of His dominion--on the earth and in heaven.

Two distinct elect companies, one the "treasure" hid in the field, symbolizing the literal nation of Israel; the other, the one "pearl," symbolizing the one body which has a heavenly calling, destiny, citizenship, and inheritance. The order of these next two parables is this: "To the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Therefore, the hidden treasure in the field, the symbol of Israel, is given before the pearl, which is the figure of the Church. The second key which unlocks the parable before us, and the two which follow, is indicated in the way in which the Lord divided the whole series.

There are seven parables in all, and He divided them into four and three: the four being spoken by the seaside in the hearing of the multitudes, the last three being spoken inside the house to the disciples only. Four is the number of the earth, the world. God has stamped "four" upon it. There are four points to the compass; four seasons to earth's year, and so on. Four then, is the number of the earth or the world; hence in the first four parables of Matthew 13 Christ has described the kingdom of heaven as it appears in the world, as it is manifested here on earth.

Three is the number of the Holy Trinity, and therefore in the last three parables the kingdom is looked at from God's viewpoint. We have God's thoughts upon it, we are shown what God has in the kingdom--a hidden treasure, a pearl of great price. With this somewhat lengthy introduction, let us take up the parable in detail. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field." If scripture is allowed to interpret scripture there will be no difficulty whatever in discovering what this "hid treasure" actually and definitely signifies.

Go back to Exodus 19:5, "Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice--it was the house of Jacob, the children of Israel that was addressed--and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is Mine"--corresponding with "the field" in which the "treasure" is found! Again "For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God and the Lord has chosen thee to be a peculiar treasure unto Himself" (Deut. 14:2). The Hebrew in this verse is the same as in Exodus 19:5.

Again, "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance (that means their earthly portion), when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance" (Deut. 32:8): that is. here, on earth, for the context is speaking solely about earthly things--the apportioning of the earth to the nations. Once more: "For the Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar

treasure" (Ps. 135:4).

These passages have no reference at all to the saints of this present dispensation, or to the church which is the body of Christ, but speak of the earthly Israel according to the flesh. They are God's treasure on earth, His earthly elect people. Confirmation of this definition of the "treasure" in our parable, is found in the fact that never once in the twenty-one Epistles in the New Testament is the word "treasure" used of the Church! It is never applied to the saints of this present dispensation.

Now the first thing we are told in Matthew 13:44 about this treasure is that it was hid in a field, and the field was "the world" (see v. 38). This is precisely the condition in which God's earthly elect people were found at the beginning of His dealings with them. The parable starts with the treasure hid in the field, and the Old Testament begins with Israel hidden in the field! Who was the father of Israel according to the flesh? Abraham. Go back to the starting-point in Abraham's life.

Where was he when God's hand was first laid upon him? Was he living in separation from the idolatrous people around him? No, he was hidden away among them--one of them! Take a later point in their early history. After Abraham came Isaac, and after Isaac Jacob, for Esau was not in the elect line. Look at Jacob, away from the promised land, an exile in Padan-aram, working for an unprincipled godless Gentile--for that is virtually what he was. Look at Jacob there among all the servants of Laban, hidden--nothing to indicate that he was one of the high favorites of God.

Proceed a little further. Abraham's and Jacob's descendants have become a numerous progeny, until they number some two million souls. Where are they to be found? Working in the brick-kilns of Egypt, a company of slaves. What was there to distinguish them? What was there to denote that they were God's peculiar treasure? Nothing, indeed: the treasure was "hidden." That is where the parable begins, and that is where their history as a nation began--buried, as it were, amid the rubbish of Egypt.

That is why we read. "And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein; that thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shall put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place His name there . . . And thou shalt speak and say before the Lord thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father" (Deut. 26:1, 5).

Yes, the treasure was hidden in the field at the beginning. From Isaiah 51:1,2, we learn how, at a later point in the history of Israel, God reminded them of their lowly origin, of the humble start that they had as a people: "Hearken to Me, you that follow after righteousness, you that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence you are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence you are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bear you." One other passage on this point: "For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance.

He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness" (Deut. 32:10). There is their lowly origin mentioned again: the treasure was "hid," buried in the field. Coming back to our text let us turn to the second detail in it: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man has found." That is the next point, the finding of the treasure. That is so very simple it needs no interpretation. The "man" here is Christ Himself--as the "man" is Christ in verse 24, see verse 37; and in the parable that follows, verse 45.

The "finding" of the "treasure" by Christ refers to the days of His earthly ministry. We are told in John 1:11, "He came unto His own;" that does not mean His own spiritually, for we read that "His own received Him not." It was His own people according to the flesh. As He said to the Canaanitish woman in Matthew 15:24, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Christ, the Man, came to Israel, the Jews. His ministry was confined unto them. The "treasure" was "found"--it was no longer hidden when Christ came here.

The Jewish nation was not as it was in the days of Moses in Egypt. The sons of Jacob were in their own land. They had their own temple; the priesthood was still intact. And it was to them, this Man, Christ, came. "Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man has found, he hides." There is a distinct step in each clause. He "hides" it. That is the most solemn word in the chapter, with the one exception of the furnace of fire. Remember what was before us in the 12th of Matthew, which furnishes the key to the 13th.

In Matthew 12 Christ presented Himself to the Jews and the Jews rejected Him, and because of their rejection He rejected them, pronounced sentence of doom upon them--the evil spirit coming back and taking with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, "Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation." Then at the close of the chapter Christ intimated He would no longer acknowledge any bond or tie, any kinship except a spiritual one--"Whosoever shall do the will of My Father": it was Christ severing the link which, according to the flesh, bound Him to Israel.

So here in the parable: first we have the treasure hid in the field: that was Israel's condition at the beginning of their national history in Old Testament times. Second, we have the Man coming to the treasure: that was the earthly ministry of Christ. Third, we have the treasure hid once more: that was Christ's rejection of Israel. The "hiding" of the treasure referred to the last dispersion and scattering of the Jews throughout the whole earth. And, so effectually has He "hidden" the treasure that ten out of the twelve tribes are still lost!

Yes, they are hidden, so securely hidden that no man to this day knows where they are! One passage of Scripture in proof of what we have said above on Christ's "hiding" Israel: "For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end" (Deut. 32:28,29). How often is a sermon preached on this as though it applied to every man on earth, and his "latter end" is made to mean his deathbed!

But the "latter end" here is of the nation of Israel, and it is the latter end of their history on this earth. Now read the next verse: "How shall one chase a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the Lord had shut them up!" Yes, they "sold" Him for thirty pieces of silver. But "whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap," and God delivered them into the hands of the Gentiles! Their Rock "sold" them, and "the Lord shut them up."

That is parallel with the treasure "hidden" again. They are "shut up." When a thing is shut up you cannot see it, it is hidden from sight. Consider now the fourth point in our text: which is the most puzzling detail in the parable. Look at it closely: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man has found, he hides, and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field." The purchase is made after the treasure had been "hidden," and, as we have seen, the hiding of the treasure had respect to Christ's judgment upon Israel and His dispersion of them throughout the earth.

Turn now to John 11:51, 52: "And this he spoke not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied." What did he prophesy? "That Jesus should die for"--for whom?--"for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that He also should gather together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad." Now what could be plainer than that? We have two distinct objects there, two distinct companies--"that nation" and also the gathering together in one of "the children of God" that are scattered abroad.

The gathering together in one of the children of God that are scattered abroad is what God is doing in this present dispensation, taking out of the Gentiles a people for His name, and gathering them together into one Body. That is what we have in the sixth parable--one pearl. But before that, we are told here in John 11:51, He also died for "that nation." This is what you have in the fifth parable, the earthly people, hid in the field, the world, the earth. This is God's earthly elect, "that nation."

In the sixth parable, the pearl, you have His heavenly elect people, the one body. But we are told in the parable that "for joy thereof He goes and sells all that He has and buys that field." Turn to 2 Peter 2:1, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them." These false teachers are reprobates, yet this very verse says the Lord bought them.

Many have created their own difficulty there in failing to distinguish between ransoming and redeeming. The Lord has "bought" the world, but He has not "redeemed" the world. There is a big difference between the two things. The first Adam was placed at the head of the world: God said "Have thou dominion over all": and he lost it, he forfeited it; the Devil wrested it from his hands: and the last Adam, as man--"the second Man front heaven"--needed to purchase that which Adam had lost; therefore He bought the field.

He has bought the whole world, but He has not redeemed it. Particular redemption is for God's elect only, but ransoming, purchasing, is much wider. He bought the field--"Denying the Lord that bought them"---you cannot get away from it. Now, then, He bought the field also because of the treasure that was hidden in it. The treasure in the field is Israel. The man in the parable is Christ. He went and sold all that He had. He who was rich became poor, and bought the field. Now that is mentioned after the re-hiding of the treasure in the field for this reason: the Jews do not enter into the value and the benefits of Christ's atonement until after this age is over.

It is not until the Millennium that Israel will enjoy the benefits of that purchase of His. He bought the field because of the treasure that was in it, and that is why the purchasing of the field is mentioned after the re-hiding of the treasure in it. To summarize. First, we have the treasure hid in the field: that takes us back to the beginning of Israel's history as a nation. Second, we have the Man finding that treasure; that is Christ coming to this earth and confining His message to the Jews in Palestine.

Third, we have the Man hiding the treasure; that is Christ's judgment upon Israel because of their rejection of Him referring to their dispersion abroad throughout the earth. Fourth, we have the Man purchasing the treasure and the whole field in which it was found, referring to the death of Christ. Now, have you noticed there is a fifth point omitted?--the logical completion of the parable would be the Man actually possessing the treasure that He purchased. He hid it, then He purchased it.

Logically, the parable needs this to complete it--the Man owning and possessing the treasure. Why is that left out? Because it lies outside the scope of Matthew 13. This chapter, dealing with the "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," has to do with the history of Christendom. It describes the cause of Christ on this

earth during the period of His absence, and therefore there is nothing in this parable about the restoration of Israel and the Lord possessing His earthly treasure, because that comes after this dispensation is over, after the history of Christendom has been wound up, after the new age has been inaugurated, namely, the Millennium!

How perfect is Scripture in its omissions! For passages treating of Christ's recovery and possession of the treasure see Amos 9:14, 15; Acts 15:17. In due time the Jews shall be manifested as God's peculiar "treasure" on "earth"--see Isaiah 62:1-4.

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