

PARABLE

THE HIDDEN TREASURE

(Mt 13:44)

Explained by Robert Ferrell

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The next parable that Jesus tells is of a hidden treasure. He says: “Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto treasure hid in the 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.”

Before I can really get into this one, I must make it clear that it is part of a series of parables which Jesus concludes thus: “Have ye understood all these things?...Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven is like a man that is an householder, which bringeth out forth out of his treasure things new and old.”

It is evident that this conclusion is meant to reveal something more about the preceding parables, since he uses the word ‘therefore’. So the treasure that is hidden in the parable above has the quality of containing both a ‘new’ aspect to it and an ‘old’ aspect to it. Moreover this ability to bring the treasure out is predicated on one’s “being instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven.” In other words, there is a secret that one must know before one can decode it.

Since one needs to have this ‘instruction’ before one can understand, it is evident that the reader cannot simply deduce a conclusion merely from the facts given, but rather would have to bring this understanding to bear on the parable. The theory that I proposed at the beginning of this treatise can be applied in a way that is both consistent throughout the Scriptures and with Church history.

If the mystery is that apocryphal books were to be popular for

a time, then lost, and then recovered at the end of the age, then this is the kind of sense we can make of it: The treasure is itself this mystery. What is brought forth from this 'treasure' is both 'new' and 'old'. What is new is the fact that the secret is only now being revealed to us, and is hence new to us. What is old is the fact that it was revealed to some during the early Church age. By extension, these Scriptures are also to be understood as being both new and old.

If this is so, we can deduce that the field is the Scriptures, since that is where the mystery of the Kingdom is embedded. So the man who found this treasure hidden in the field can be understood as having found this mystery in the Scriptures.

The next thing this man does is hide this treasure again. Now if this treasure is the mystery, and this mystery gets hidden again, then it is clear that this 'man' could not be referring to any particular person, since this process of hiding the mystery and then recovering it would take close to two thousand years to complete. It makes more sense, therefore, to see this man as representing the faithful man in general, or faithful Christians spread out over the age. When, in the previous parable, Jesus refers to the wheat and the tares growing together, he represents the development of both as a single growth cycle, rather than many, so it is probably within acceptable limits to apply this to the 'man' in this parable.

The last element that needs to be worked out is the part about the man selling all that he has, and buying the field. Now it is almost a given that anything that one is willing to sell all that he has for must be more precious than anything else the man had, so if the man represents the believing Christian, then this is an exhortation to not only abandon his (or her) worldly possessions, but also his or her theology, since the buying of the field (the Scriptures) entails transcending any belief system that acts as a

hindrance to that end.

We are fortunate to have a related parable in the recently discovered Gospel of Thomas. This is a little like checking one's math, because we can see that the theory also seems to work in it. Saying 109 reads: “The father's imperial rule is like a person who had a treasure hidden in his field (the Scriptures) but did not know it. And when he died (i.e. when the canon was fixed and the apocryphal books were rejected, etc.,) he left it to his son. ‘The son (the Protestants) did not know about it (the mystery) either. He took over the field and sold it. (i.e.- the Protestants ‘sold’ the Scriptures by getting rid of the remaining apocryphal books.) The buyer (the Elect Ones) went plowing, discovered the treasure, and began to lend money at interest to whomever he wished.” (Meaning he had an unlimited source of knowledge to draw upon, for “to whomever he wished” also includes the ‘richest of the rich’, so presumably even the most knowledgeable people can benefit from this man.)

Thus we may conclude that the Elect Ones, by abandoning the lesser understanding, and scrupulously searching the Scriptures (the field) for the truth (the treasure) came to possess great riches (of wisdom), and the whole world would come to be indebted to them.