

The Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Value

Matthew 13.44-46

Jews in Jesus' day wanted a kingdom, but not the kind He offered. His kingdom was 'entered' through repentance and changed hearts. Earthly treasure seems great, but kingdom life is more precious than everything you own! In two little parables, Jesus corrects our flawed perspective.

Two Parables of the kingdom of heaven

- *Something that is found*
- *Worth more than anything*
- *Something of great value*
- *You give your all to buy*

Guidelines for Interpreting Parables

- Know the historical and cultural setting.
- Look for the central truth of a parable.
- Look for its relationship to the kingdom.
- Don't base doctrine only on a parable.

What's the 'treasure' and the 'pearl'?

- Eternal life? (NO: Eternal life is a free gift!)
- Israel and the church? (OK.)
- Experiencing the joy of 'kingdom life'? (My choice.)



1. As much as any parables, the hidden treasure and the pearl of great value are subject to widely divergent interpretations. If you have a commentary or a study Bible, read the meaning they give to these parables. Go online and read a few interpretations by theologians. Then, following the guidelines for interpreting parables listed on this study sheet, put yourself in the shoes of Jesus' first-century audience. What was He calling people to do? How did His call relate to 'the kingdom of heaven'? Now review different meanings you have read. Which of them fit the context? Which of them do not? Which interpretation are just someone reading their theology and meaning into the parable?
2. 'Lordship Salvation' or Reformed Calvinist teachers interpret these two parables as describing the way of salvation, showing that there are 'conditions' that a person must meet (usually a 'laundry-list' of good works we must do, and bad works we must avoid) in order to get to heaven. What are some problems with this interpretation? How can eternal life be a "free gift" (Rom. 6.23) and be "not of works" (Eph. 2.9), yet only be received if we "sell all" we have and "buy" it with our good works?!
3. The kingdom prophecies in the Old Testament foretell of a Jewish kingdom, but because they rejected their Messiah Jesus in His first coming, it's ultimate fulfillment will include all those Gentiles who believe in Jesus in this present age. Some see a reference to Israel and the church in these parables. Do you? Why or why not?
4. Jesus' parables not only revealed hidden truths about His coming kingdom; they also implicitly motivated people to live their lives in preparation for the kingdom – to bear fruit, to impact the world with the gospel, to be wary of the devil's schemes. How could the parables of the hidden treasure and valuable pearl motivate Jesus' followers to pursue 'kingdom living' here and now? Is anything in this life worth more than the joy of discovering and experiencing a rich walk with Christ?