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Parables of Atonement and Assurance: Matthew 13:44-46

Jeffrey A. Gibbs

The purpose of this study will be to take a fresh look at two of the parables of Jesus. The Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price (Matt. 13:44-46) form a pair of parables within the context of Matthew's "parable chapter." Although interpreters uniformly have treated this pericope as parables of sanctification which portray the "cost of discipleship," I will argue for a completely different *sensus literalis*. Some years ago, a seminar on the First Gospel raised the possibility of an alternate meaning for Matthew 13:44-46. That original question has led to this present study. Important insights gleaned from recent studies on the parables of Jesus have helped in determining the exegetical method to be followed in pursuing the meaning of the pericope. The conclusions reached in this study indicate that the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price are parables of the atonement. Offered in their Matthean context to the disciples of Jesus, the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price proclaim the grace of God, and the security that Christ's disciples possess — even in the midst of a fallen hostile world.

The Challenge to the Traditional Exegesis

Let it clearly be stated that virtually every exegete from Irenaeus through modern times has understood Matthew 13:44-46 as descriptive of the value of the kingdom of heaven and of the process by which one lays hold of that kingdom. With only slight variation, the parables are understood in this fashion. The treasure — pearl stands for Jesus and the blessing that he brings as *autobasileia*. Each disciple must discover the value of this great gift. Each disciple willingly must make the kingdom his highest good. Each disciple must "sell all that he has and buy." Most exegetes focus almost exclusively on the meaning of the figures of the treasure and the pearl. Some do not even comment on the significance of the concept of "selling and buying" that occurs in both parables. The majority of exegetes who treat the act of purchasing in the stories refer the act of buying (*agorazein* in both parables) to Christ's call to self-denial and cross-bearing (cf. Matt. 16:24-26).¹ Others are most sensitive to the overtones of purchase and exchange in the repeated phrase, "goes and

sells all that he has and buys." Such writers maintain that *agora-zein* in the parables means no more than "to appropriate" (Isaiah 55:1).² But regardless of this and other slight differences, the vast weight of centuries of Christian study and exposition supports the view of Christ as the thing of value. We must lay hold of him.³

It is no small thing to contradict such a monolith of exegetical tradition. I propose to do just that, however, because the traditional exegesis of Matthew 13:44-46 completely ignores the obvious conceptual core of both the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price. It is obvious that these parables are linked inseparably by a common phrase. Despite their many differences in structure and theme, they communicate a parallel meaning. And the concept that is central to these parables is precisely that theme which has been avoided or diluted by the traditional exegesis. For the meaning of these parables is inextricably intertwined with the meaning of the phrase, "he goes and sells all that he has and buys."

The importance of this repeated theme is emphasized by the remarkable number of differences between these two short parables. The chart below illustrates the number of ways in which the parables are divergent.

<i>Hidden Treasure</i>	<i>Pearl of Great Price</i>
Datival introduction with the object acted upon	Datival introduction with the actor in the parable
The themes of "hiddenness" and "joy"	No themes of "hiddenness" or "joy"
No emphasis on "seeking"	Strong emphasis on "seeking"
Use of the historical present	Use of the aorist throughout

With regard to "paired parables" that are as short as these, such divergence is extraordinary. In contrast the other pair of "paired parables" in Matthew 13 contain *no* major differences. Both the Mustard Seed and the Leaven (Matt. 13:31-33) share a common datival introductory reference. Both of them use the aorist. As Matthew presents them, both share the themes of little beginnings and the concept of large growth. Both the Mustard Seed and the Leaven incorporate the important theme of "hiddenness."

Granted, the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price share the theme of "finding," *heurōn*. Also a valued object is presented in both parables. But these convergences only exist to support the main theme of both parables. A "finding" necessarily precedes

“selling and buying.” It must be a thing of value in order to require “*all* that he had.” But without a doubt, the climax of each parable is the closing phrase of each. Conceptually they are identical. Verbally they are extremely close in choice of language. The Hidden Treasure concludes at verse 44, *hupagei kai polei panta hosa echei kai agorazei*. The Pearl of Great Price concludes at verse 46, *apelthon pepraken panta hosa eichen kai egorasen*. The slight variety in vocabulary (*hupagein* and *apelthein*; *polein* and *peprakenai*) nevertheless communicates an identical meaning. And the precise duplication of *panta hosa echein kai agorazein*⁴ demands that we search for the crux of both parables in this common theme. The central thrust of both parables clearly is to be found in this vivid and unmistakable link. Jesus has told two parables about the kingdom of heaven which have the concept of “selling and buying” at the core of their intended sense. Those who dilute the impact of “selling and buying” do so without proper regard for the centrality of this concept in each parable. Jeremias ignores the import of “selling and buying” in typical fashion when he writes,

The double parable is generally understood as expressing the demand of Jesus for complete self-surrender. In reality, it is completely misunderstood if it is interpreted as an imperious call to heroic action. The key-words are rather *apo tes charas* (v.44; they are not expressly repeated in the case of the merchant, but they apply to him as well).⁵

I will, however, allow the impact of the narratives to remain as it stands in Matthew 13:44-46. I will, therefore, challenge the traditional exegesis of this pericope, primarily on the basis of the composition and structure of the parables themselves.

The primary question, then, is the meaning of “selling and buying” in Matthew 13:44-46. And, on the face of it, it is unlikely that such a theme in the teaching of Jesus could apply to the action of the disciple with regard to his Master. To anticipate the exegesis below, a brief look at the two verbal parallels to this terminology in the First Gospel leads in a direction directly opposite to the traditional exegesis.

Within Matthew’s parabolic material, the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matt. 18:21-35) contains this same theme of “selling and buying.” Only here the phrase refers to the righteous sentence of God over against the sinner. The king confronts his heavily

debted servant, and angrily orders him "to be sold . . . along with all that he had" (Matt. 18:25). *Ekeleusen auton ho kurios prathenai . . . kai panta hosa echei*. Here "selling and buying" is a symbol for the sinner's just condemnation to eternal punishment. And, as the parable progresses, we see that it is this action which is not required of the slave, for "the king, having pity on that slave, released him and forgave him the debt" (Matt. 18:27): *spagnistheis de ho kurios tou doulou ekeinou apelusen auton kai to daneion apheken auto*. The servant is *not* required to "sell and buy."

The other incident to note briefly as a part of the challenge to the traditional exegesis is the story of the Rich Young Ruler (Matt. 19:16-26). Here Jesus challenges a young man to do exactly what the parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price describe; "Go, sell your possessions . . ." (Matt. 19:21). But the young man is unable to do what Jesus requires. Indeed, this pericope is about the inability of men to do what Jesus requires in general. Some will be saved, but it is only through the action of God, with whom nothing is impossible (Matt. 19:25-26).

The center of Matthew 13:44-46 is the meaning of the phrase, "going, he sold all that he had and bought . . ." This crucial theme has been ignored or diluted by those exegetes who take the parables as descriptive of the disciple's attitude and action with regard to Jesus and the kingdom. At the very least, the presence of this theme also at Matthew 18:21-35 and 19:16-26 gives cause to reconsider our two parables.

Exegetical Principles Extracted from Recent Parable Studies

Significant changes in the interpretation of the parables have taken place in fairly recent years. Several scholars have brought to light new insights regarding Jesus' parables. Such insights have not always received the recognition due them. Brief mention of several significant studies will be made here, in order to incorporate those concepts into the exegesis of Matthew 13:44-46 below.

Kenneth Bailey's recent work in parable studies has produced important insights into the interpretation of Jesus' parables. In a very commonsense fashion, Bailey notes that every parable presses upon its listeners, in order to elicit a response from them. In order to carry out this function, every parable contains

a *combination* of theological motifs in the parable that

together pressed the original listener to make that response . . . Thus, one or more symbols with corresponding referents in the life of the listener impel him to make a single response which has in view a *cluster* of theological motifs.⁶

To paraphrase Bailey, parables contain individual symbols which together combine to create a unified theme or appeal. Most surely, each parable has one major theme, or (to use the hackneyed phrase) one *tertium comparationis*. But in the task of interpreting any given parable, this major theme may not be immediately obvious. Thus, the exegete will examine the individual symbols within the theological cluster, both in light of common parabolic themes (see below), and in the context of the Gospel. A look at the parts may enable us to determine the meaning of the whole. Parables are to be understood according to their own degree of complexity. Each parable will be unique. There will be one central message, supported by a more or less complex matrix of symbols, woven together to create the parable. The first important principle of parable interpretation, then, is this: it is legitimate, and sometimes necessary, to begin the exegesis of the parable with a search for the meaning of individual symbols within the parable.

A second insight of great importance for parable studies was noted by Martin Dibelius, among others, some years ago. Dibelius pointed out that when Jesus taught in parables, he was probably using a form of teaching with which his listeners were extremely familiar. The presence of parables in both the Hebrew Scriptures and extant rabbinic literature indicates that first century Palestinians knew what parables were, and how to hear them.⁷ This in itself is a point of no little significance. But of even greater import is Dibelius' observation that rabbinic parables often used a number of "stock" images or mataphors that held a consistent meaning across different parables. Thus, parables about a "king" were understood to be about "God." The figure of the "vineyard" in rabbinic parables stands as a picture of "Israel" (cf. Isaiah 5). Examples could be multiplied. Dibelius commented that

certain metaphors were already customary in Jewish exhortation, and the hearers were therefore prone to understand the words concerned in the usual sense, even when the parabolic narrative gives no occasion to do so.⁸

The importance of all this is that Jesus also used such stock

metaphors in his parables. A few obvious examples are listed:

King = God	Matthew 18:23; 22:2ff.
Vineyard = Israel	Matthew 20:1-15; 21:28-30; 21:33-41; Mark 12:1-9; Luke 20:9-16
Harvest = Eschaton	Matthew 13:24-30; Mark 4:26-29
Wedding = New Age	Matthew 9:15; 22:1-13; 25:1-13; Luke 12:36-38

In her very important treatment of the parables, Madelaine Boucher confidently asserts that Jesus' listeners, when encountering one or more of these clues, would then have been able to interpret Jesus' intended meanings.⁹ Thus, our second principle may be stated: exegetes today may search the parabolic teaching of Jesus for common themes as an aid to the interpretation of any given parable.

A third insight into the proper exegesis of parables comes from an article by Norman Huffmann. Along with others, Huffmann has noted that a very large number of Jesus' parables contain elements which are exaggerated, unlikely, or virtually impossible. In a word Jesus' parables are not "true to life stories." A few examples will suffice. In the Workers in the Vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16), Huffmann notes the foolishness of hiring workers at the eleventh hour and the incredible fact that all the workers receive equal pay. The father's goodness in the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:32) is exceptional; a more conditional love and a more dignified behavior would have been true to life. Huffmann points out that mustard seeds do not become trees (Matt. 13:31-32) and that the woman has leavened enough bread for over one hundred people (Matt. 13:33). A harvest yield of one hundredfold would have been an agricultural miracle in Jesus' day (Matt. 13:8). The entire premise of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) is so unlikely as to be impossible.¹⁰

The parables of Jesus are not just "comparisons from every day life." In order to communicate their message, the parables can present unique or exaggerated images. Therefore, the criterion as to "what would have been likely" in Jesus' day and time should not be used to raise questions which the parable itself does not ask. Without a doubt insights such as those yielded through Bailey's "Oriental exegesis" must be used to throw light on the implications of the parables' narratives. But if the parable leaves a question unasked, the exegete must not try to answer it in the interests of making

the parable "more true to life." Our third principle, then, is this: the parables of Jesus are original literary creations. They must be interpreted as they stand. Only such "true to life" insights as are *demand*ed by the parables' cultural context may be emphasized by the exegete today.

These insights into the interpretation of the parables can be brought together in the form of a general working definition of a parable.¹¹ A parable is a fictional narrative which contains symbolic elements in need of theological interpretation. The parable may or may not be "true to life." The symbolic elements in the parable require treatment. Careful exegesis will penetrate to the parable's deepest legitimate level of complexity and meaning. When the overall meaning of a parable is uncertain or obscure, the examination of its parts in context will lead the way in the exegetical task. Comparison with other parabolic material in search of common themes will be of primary importance. We turn, then, to Matthew 13:44-46. We will begin with a contextual study to set the stage for the exegesis of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price.

Contextual Study

The central theme of the First Gospel is the proclamation of Jesus as the only Christ, fulfiller of Old Testament prophecy and founder of the New Israel. Against this backdrop, the motif of conflict in Matthew is highly visible, and more forcefully presented than in Mark or Luke. The parables of Matthew 13 stand as a sort of mini-climax within the overall context of the gospel. In an emphatic way, Matthew presents the truth that Jesus' rising conflict with the establishment of Israel has led to the beginning of a *new* Israel. This motif of contrast between "old" and "new," false disciple and true, clearly can be demonstrated.

Matthew uses both structure and the inclusion of unique material to make his point clear. He presents a mounting contrast between Jesus and his disciples and between the Pharisees and leaders of Israel. John the Baptist's fiercest denunciations are aimed directly at the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. 3:7; Luke writes only, "he said to the *crowds*," *elegen ochlois*, Luke 3:7). After his temptation, Jesus returns to Galilee. After choosing the first disciples, he presents to them the Way of the new Messianic Community, the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus' authority is not to be questioned; it far exceeds that of scribe or Pharisee (cf. Jesus' *ego de lego homin*; also see Matt. 7:29). Jesus' closing words of the Sermon contain repeated

warnings against false disciples. The gate is narrow, false prophets are many, barren trees will be cut down, etc. (Matt. 7:13-17). Following Matthew 8, in which the divine power and authority of Jesus are manifested, the conflict of "old" versus "new" continues to develop. Jesus is accused of blasphemy (Matt. 9:3) and of collaboration with Satan (Matt. 9:34, unique to Matthew). Following this strife with the religious leaders, Jesus calls the Twelve and commissions them; the "new" Israel has formally begun. The extended warning that Jesus gives concerning persecution is uniquely Matthean in location and forcefulness (Matt. 10:5-42). The "old" *will* oppose and hate the "new." But the disciples are not to fear. They are of much value to the Father in heaven (Matt. 10:29-31).

After the Twelve are commissioned, Matthew continues to present the mounting conflict between true and false Israel. Jesus' deeds proclaim him truly to be the Christ (Matt. 11:1-15). The present opposition and apathy toward his ministry in Israel surely will not go unpunished (Matt. 11:16-24). Again the contrast forcefully appears between the "babes" who receive Jesus and the "wise" who reject him (Matt. 11:25). After confrontations concerning the Sabbath law, the Pharisees begin to plan Jesus' destruction (Matt. 12:1-14). The scribes and Pharisees continue their blasphemous opposition to Jesus. They will be condemned for rejecting the new, greater way of the Christ (Matt. 12:24-45, with special force; compare Mark 3 and Luke 11). In starkest contrast the true Israel, Jesus' disciples, are closer to him than the members of his own family (Matt. 12:46-50). It is at this point that Matthew presents the collection of Jesus' parables in chapter 13.

The parables of chapter 13 represent a significant climax in the First Gospel. The rejection of Jesus by Israel's leaders has resulted in the formation of new, faithful Israel. The parables of Matthew 13, viewed in this context, offer a summary of teaching concerning the difference between the disciples and Jesus' opposition. The Sower (Matt. 13:1-9) teaches that only a few will respond appropriately to Jesus' ministry (Matt. 13:18-23). The Wheat and the Tares (Matt. 13:24-30) and the Dragnet (Matt. 13:47-50) both emphasize the final, eschatological separation of the wicked from the righteous. Although the progress of Jesus' ministry may seem overshadowed by the rising opposition of the Pharisees, the word that he sows will continue to bear fruit, as the Mustard Seed and the Leaven declare (Matt. 13:31-33). True disciples are able to receive the truth that Jesus proclaims, and to proclaim it themselves (Matt. 13:11,52). The

Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price stand in this context of overwhelming conflict and contrast. We come now to the exegesis of these parables. I will treat the Hidden Treasure first and then use the exegesis of the Pearl of Great Price to draw out the unique features of each parable.

Interpretation of Matthew 13:44

As noted above, the context of Matthew 13:44 provides a starting point for the exegesis of the parable. The stark contrast between those who oppose Jesus and those who follow him reveals Matthew's intention with regard to the Hidden Treasure. Even though the parable receives no explicit interpretation from Jesus in the Gospel, in some way it too must add to Matthew's presentation of true Israel and false Israel. In addition, the concept of the kingdom of heaven as portrayed in the First Gospel provides an important piece of contextual understanding. Both parables in our pericope begin with the formula *homoia estin he basileia ton ouranon* (see also Matt. 13:31, 33, 47; 20:1; also the similar parabolic introductions as 13:24; 18:23; 22:2; and 25:1). In Matthew the kingdom of heaven is spoken of in a variety of ways. For our purposes, it is most important to note Matthew's identification of the kingdom with the person and work of Jesus. The act of following Jesus is equated with entrance into the kingdom (Matt. 19: 16-26). Because the Pharisees oppose Jesus, they shut the kingdom of heaven to themselves and to others (Matt. 23:13). The Pharisees flirt with blasphemy against the Holy Spirit because they refuse to acknowledge that the kingdom has come upon them through the ministry of Jesus (Matt. 12:22-32). Jesus' ministry is the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, parables about the kingdom of heaven will be parables about the person and ministry of Jesus.

As we turn to the text of verse 44, it should be noted that the presence of the dative *thesauro* does not force the equation of *thesauro* with *he basileia ton ouranon*. Rather, the entire action of the parable is "what the kingdom of heaven is like." Paul Fiebig has pointed out many examples from rabbinic literature in which parables begin, "the matter is like 'X' . . ." but 'X' is not really the focal point of the parable at all.¹² The interpretation of Matthew 13:44 should not begin with the "treasure," but with the meaning of "he went and sold all that he had and bought that field." Parallels to this theme in the parabolic teaching of Jesus will first be examined. Then, the synoptics and the rest of the New Testa-

ment will be examined.

In terms of Matthew's parabolic material, only in the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matt. 18:23-35) does parallel use of this language occur, as was noted above. In Matthew 18 the verbal and conceptual parallel is extremely close. The meaning of the parabolic symbol in Matthew 18:25 is precisely that of exchange and purchase. There the "sell and buy" concept represents the debt which men owe to God. We are able to identify with the first servant, whose debt was so great that his master ordered him to be sold, along with all that he had: *auton . . . prathenai . . . kai panta hosa echei* (Matt. 18:25).

The message of the Unforgiving Servant, however, is not that this price is required of those who desire to enter the kingdom of heaven. The "selling all that he had" stands for the punishment of God against the sin of men. But men need not undergo this sentence. The ministry of Jesus has brought to light the mercy of God, by which the great debt that we owe is forgiven (Matt. 18:27). The kingdom of heaven does *not* demand that we pay our debt. We are *not* required to "give all that we have." This one parabolic parallel to the Hidden Treasure's central theme shows us what the theme does *not* mean. "Going and selling all that he has" is a requirement from which men are freed by the coming of the kingdom. They, in turn, are required to free others. As they have been forgiven, they also must forgive.

There are no other parallels to the "sell and buy" theme in the parabolic material in the First Gospel. With regard to the Gospel as a whole, three significant conceptual parallels occur within the narrative and teaching material. The incident of the Rich Young Ruler was mentioned above (Matt. 19:16-26). A second important parallel is Matthew's use of *lutron* at Matthew 20:28. There, Jesus summarizes the purpose of his ministry: *ho huios tou anthropou ouk elthen diakonethenai alla diakonesai kai dounai ten psuchen autou lutron anti pollon*. The *lutron* of Jesus' own life is a ransom, a payment. Clearly the payment is made to God.¹³ The presence of *anti pollon* in this saying accentuates the substitutionary overtones of exchange already present in the use of *lutron*. The meaning of *anti*, unless otherwise demanded by contextual factors, is "in the place of," "instead of."¹⁴ Jesus offers his life as a payment. The many do not have to offer up their lives, for his life is an exchange for theirs. He pays the necessary price. In this saying, the concept of "sell and buy" describes the redemption by which Jesus brings freedom

from sin, death, and devil.

The ransom saying in Matthew 20:28 also points us to the third conceptual parallel in the First Gospel. In Matthew 16:26 Jesus points to the utter futility of man's attempt to go his own way, or to save himself. It is the man who follows Jesus and, as a result, "loses" his life who will "find" it (16:25). But this is no "price" by which a man "purchases" his redemption. On the contrary, those who attempt such a transaction will discover that it cannot be done. There is no price that a man can pay in order to purchase his own life (v. 26). Buchsel correctly correlates this logion and the ransom saying in Matthew 20:28:

The ransom saying undoubtedly implies substitution. For even if the *anti* be translated "to the advantage of", the death of Jesus means that there happens to Him what would have had to happen to the many. Hence, He takes their place. The saying plainly looks back to Mk. 8:37, Mt. 16:26 . . . What no man can do, He, the unique Son of God, achieves.¹⁵

Once again, as at Matthew 18:25 and 19:21, Jesus' teaching denies that any man can "sell and buy" his life for entrance into the kingdom. No one can offer an exchange *antallagia* for his life.

Thus, the four parallels in the First Gospel to the central theme of the Hidden Treasure uniformly oppose the traditional understanding of this parable. Within the parabolic material of the gospel the use of "selling all that he had" at Matthew 18:25 denies that this is the way that leads to the kingdom. Rather, it is the penalty that leads to damnation.¹⁶ Both Matthew 16:26 and 19:21 also reject the notion of any man "selling and buying" in order to become a disciple. The remarkable saying at Matthew 20:28, however, offers an example of what "selling and buying" can mean. Jesus has come to exchange his life for others. This is why he has come. This is his earthly ministry. This is the central meaning of the kingdom of heaven. Clearly, this evidence culled from the gospel indicates that the phrase *polei panta hosa echei kai agorazei* at Matthew 13:44 most probably refers to the activity of Jesus on behalf of others.

When we turn our attention to the other synoptics and to John, we discover that, aside from passages parallel to those already considered, there is no other material in which the concept of "sell and buy" occurs. In the remainder of the New Testament, however, it is the use of *agorazein* that is most significant for our study. In Paul,

Peter, and the Revelation to John *agorazein* is used to describe the work of Jesus on behalf of men. At 1 Corinthians 6:20 and 7:23 both the act of "buying" and the "price" are mentioned: *egorasthete times*. In Revelation 5:9, the required price is explicitly stated: *egoras to theo en to haimati sou*. The "purchasing" of men by Christ is also taught at 2 Peter 2:1 and Revelation 14:3-4, although the price is not specifically mentioned there. The only metaphorical use of *agorazein* in the New Testament that does refer to man's action over against God is Revelation 3:18. This passage clearly alludes to Isaiah 55:1. With regard to the use of *exagorazein*, at Galatians 3:13 it refers to the work of Christ, specifically mentioning the exchange and substitution that has taken place. Galatians 4:5 echoes this passage's use of *exagorazein*. Twice (Eph. 5:16 and Col. 4:5) the middle voice of *exagorazein* occurs in a phrase of uncertain meaning, *exagorazomenoi ton kairon*. A probable rendering of this phrase is, "making the most of the time."¹⁷

When this weight of evidence from the remainder of the New Testament is added to Matthew's use of the "sell and buy" concept, it reinforces the contention that *polei panta hosa echei kai agorazei* at Matthew 13:44 refers to Jesus' action on behalf of men. We turn now to the other themes in the parable of the Hidden Treasure, aware that the traditional exegetical position is now "on the defensive." It will require an extraordinary weight of evidence to counterbalance what we have discovered with regard to the probable meaning of "sell and buy" in the parable of the Hidden Treasure.

The theme of "finding" (*heuron*) is present in the parable, as well as in the Pearl of Great Price. As noted above, its presence is virtually required by the central theme. In order to have something to "sell and buy," one first must "find." It is significant, however, that Jesus uses the theme of "finding" in other parabolic teaching. At Matthew 18:13 Jesus describes his ministry, and the ministry of his disciples after him, as "finding" of lost sheep. In the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard the owner of the vineyard goes out the eleventh hour and "finds" more workers (Matt. 20:6). In the parable of the Wedding Feast the king sends his servants to "find" guests for the feast (Matt. 22:9, 10). Within the parabolic material in Matthew, then, "finding" *always* refers to God's activity through Jesus to reach out to the lost. True, "finding" can also refer to the disciples' search for Jesus, as at Matthew 7:7; 11:29; 16:25. But the First Gospel's use of the theme in parabolic material exclusively refers

to God's activity in Jesus. And in our parable it is Jesus who finds in order that he may purchase.

With regard to other parabolic use of "finding," Luke 15 adds confirmation to Matthew's usage. All three of the parables in this chapter have God in Christ "finding" the lost sinner (Luke 15:4, 5, 6; 15:8, 9; and 15:24, 32). Luke also contains a parallel to Matthew's "seek and you will find" (Luke 11:9). But within the parabolic teaching of Jesus, "finding" seems always to refer to God's active search for men, and not the opposite.

There is no real development of this theme in the remainder of the New Testament. Both Philippians 3:9 and 2 Peter 3:14 speak of "being found in Christ," especially on the last day. Hebrews 9:12 says that Christ, having entered the holy place once and for all, "has found eternal redemption" (*aionian lutrosin heuramenos*).

Thus far our exegesis has indicated that the parable of the Hidden Treasure tells the story of God's activity in Jesus to purchase and possess his disciples. Our examination of the themes of "sell and buy" and "finding" has yielded this result. We now turn to the theme of the "treasure," the third common element which the Hidden Treasure shares with the Pearl of Great Price. Treatment of this theme will be most important, for this is the focal point of the traditional exegesis of Matthew 13:44-46. For centuries it has been assumed that the "treasure" must refer to the treasure of Christ, the Gospel, the Sacrament, or some such point of reference. But we shall show that it is not inconsistent with the teaching of Jesus for the point of reference of the "treasure" to be the disciples of Jesus. Indeed, the concept of God's own people as precious in his sight is present in the Old Testament as well. Jesus simply transfers the concept from "old" Israel to the "new" Israel of his disciples.

To most commentators, the understanding of *thesauros* in Matthew 13:44 comes automatically and requires no explanation. Tasker's unquestioning approach is completely typical:

Finally, because the kingdom of heaven is the only lasting reality, and its worth so incalculably precious, the person who is really eager to obtain its benefits . . . will readily and joyfully make the necessary sacrifice . . . That is the teaching of the twin parables of the costly pearl and the hidden treasure.¹⁸

But Matthew does not employ the noun *thesauros*, nor the concept

of "a thing valued," with any such automatic theological meaning. When Jesus teaches about "treasure" in the First Gospel, the word means "that which is valuable to one." Thus, there is a *good* man with *good* treasure — and an *evil* man with *evil* treasure (Matt. 12:35; Luke 6:43). There is also a contrast between "earthly" treasure and "heavenly" treasure (Matt. 6:19-20; Luke 12:33). Certainly, the disciples of Jesus are exhorted to seek after heavenly treasure (also Matt. 19:21; Mark 10:21; and Luke 18:22). But whatever choice is made, it remains the person's treasure (Matt. 6:21). The blessings of the kingdom must be designated as *heavenly* treasure (Matt. 6:20; 19:21) or *good* treasure (Matt. 12:35). On the basis of the use of *thesauros* in Matthew alone, it is not permissible to invest any particular use of the term with a pre-determined meaning. The context must decide.

The use of *thesauros* in the remainder of the New Testament is limited to two Pauline citations which do refer to Christ or his kingdom or spiritual blessings as *thesauros* (2 Cor. 4:7, Col. 2:3). But this is not a strong case for an automatic Christological meaning with regard to the use of *thesauros* at Matthew 13:44. Neither can such a case be made from the use of *thesauros* in the Septuagint. In the Septuagint *thesauros* once refers to God as a "wealth of salvation, wisdom, and understanding" (Is. 33:6). Twice the reference of *thesauros* is to wisdom and her blessings (Prov. 2:4; 21:20). But *thesauros* is also used as a metaphor for God's stored-up wrath (Deut. 32:34; Jer. 27:25; 50:25 MT) and for death (Job 3:21). The most frequent use of *thesauros* in the Septuagint is as a reference to the sky, where God stores the rain and the snow (Deut. 28:12; Job 38:22; Ps. 32:7, 33:7 MT; 134:7, 135:7 MT; Jer. 10:13, Jer. 28:16, 51:16 MT).

Thus, the use of the Greek vocable *thesauros* in the New Testament and in the Septuagint does not invest a heavy amount of automatic meaning into the term. Examination of the Hebrew Scriptures also demonstrates that the concept of "treasure" does not always refer to God and his ways. Of the Hebrew words which the Septuagint translates *thesauros* only two of them are used with any metaphorical meaning. The word *'osar*, "treasure, store, treasury,"¹⁹ very often refers to literal treasure and treasuries. But it also refers to wisdom (Prov. 21:20), salvation, and knowledge (Is. 33:6), the armory of the Lord (Jer. 50:25), the wrath of the Lord (Deut. 32:34), and the sky (Deut. 28:12; Job 38:22; Jer. 10:13; 51:16; Ps. 135:7). The word *matmon*, "hidden treasure, treasure,"²⁰ refers to death

(Job 3:21) and to wisdom (Prov. 2:4).

Both the paucity of usage and the variety of reference in the metaphorical use of these terms prevents us from finding a thematic use of "treasure" in the Hebrew Scriptures as a symbol for God. There is, however, another word which the Hebrew Scriptures do use as a fairly consistent metaphorical expression of "treasure." The noun *segullah* may also be translated "possession, property; valued property, peculiar treasure; treasure."²¹ Occurring eight times in the Hebrew Scriptures, twice it refers to literal treasure (1 Chron. 29:3; Eccles. 2:8). But five times *segullah* is used as a reference to Israel as God's chosen people (Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6, 14:3, 26:18; Ps. 135:4), and once, in a passage that is extremely important for our purposes, *segullah* refers to the righteous within apostate Israel (Mal. 3:17).

Israel is the Lord's chosen people, picked out from among all other nations (Ex. 19:5). Because of their identity, the Israelites must refrain from the idol worship of the nations around them (Deut. 7:6) and from their detestable practices (Deut. 14:2). Israel has made a solemn covenant with the Lord their God, and he will give them fame, praise, and honor above all other peoples (Deut. 26:18). The praise and worship of Israel's God also includes gratefulness that he has chosen them as his own possession (Ps. 135:4). Whereas the use of *'osar* and *matmon* does not become focused, the use of *segullah* in the Hebrew Scriptures does focus upon Israel as God's treasure. Granted, nowhere does the Septuagint translate *segullah* with *thesauros*. But the concept is present and used often enough to be obvious. The Septuagint translates *segullah* with *periousios* at Exodus 19:5 and Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2; 26:18. (At Psalm 135:4 the Greek translation is *periousiasmos* and at Malachi 3:17 it is *peripoiesis*.) Indeed, in his brief article on *periousios*, Preisker has a fortuitous choice of expression:

periousios is the people which constitutes the crown jewel of God. Because Israel is the precious stone, the pearl in His possession, it has a duty to avoid idolatry (Dt. 14:2) and to keep the commandments and statutes of Yahweh (Ex. 19:5; 23:22; Dt. 7:6-11; 26:18).²²

The importance of this theme of the people of God as his "treasured possession" is illustrated when we realize that the New Testament epistles twice make specific and direct use of the theme. At Titus 2:14 Paul writes that Jesus Christ "gave himself on our behalf, in order that he might ransom us from all lawlessness,

and purify to himself a precious people (*laon periousion*), zealous for good works." Here Paul clearly echoes the phrase *laos periousios* from Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2; 26:18. Peter does the same thing at 1 Peter 2:9, echoing the use of *peripoiesis* at Malachi 3:17 as well. The crucial shift that has taken place here is obvious. It is the disciples of Jesus, and not Israel, who are now God's "special, treasured possession."

It is also important to note that an explicit part of this motif of the people of God as his "treasure" is the contrast between God's people and the wicked around them. Thus, Egypt (Deut. 19:5), Israel's neighbors (Deut. 7:6; 14:2), and the nations of the earth (Deut. 26:18) are held up as contrasts to the chosen people. However, in the passage from Malachi 3:17 the contrast receives further development. In Malachi 3 the contrast is between the righteous and the wicked *within Israel*. For the Lord is coming to purify Israel (Mal. 3:1-4). The wicked among the covenant people will be judged (Mal. 3:5-9). Those who hear the call to repentance will be prepared as God's own special possession on the day when God distinguishes between the righteous and the wicked (Mal. 3:10-18). The righteous will then belong to the Lord as his own special treasure, his *segullah* (LXX, *peripoiesis*).

It is in this context of the distinction between the righteous and the wicked that the Hebrew Scriptures and the Septuagint designate true Israel as God's "special possession," God's "treasure." This motif occurs in the Gospel of Matthew as well. Jesus calls his disciples to a life-style that rejects the earthly priorities of unbelievers (Matt. 6:24-32). In so doing, he reminds them, in ironic fashion, that they are valuable to the Father in heaven: "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?" (Matt. 6:26; Luke 12:24). This use of *diapherein* to express the disciples' value is repeated at Matthew 10:31. Again the context is the security and value of the disciples in the face of opposition by the wicked: "Do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul . . . Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? . . . Therefore, do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Matt. 10:31; Luke 12:7).

The First Gospel employs the motif of contrasting the righteous with the wicked. The righteous, Jesus' disciples, are of much value to the Father. Indeed, as noted above in the contextual study of our pericope, Matthew has emphasized this tension between true and

false Israel more than Mark or Luke. The theme of the parables of Matthew 13 as a whole is the distinction between the righteous and the wicked. Even the significant passage from Malachi 3 occurs within the context of Matthew 13. At Matthew 11:10 Jesus proclaims the ministry of John the Baptizer as a fulfilment of God's visitation upon Israel to prepare a purified people (Mal. 3:1-4). As indicated by both the Malachi reference and the structure of the Gospel, part of this preparation is the resulting separation between the "gold and silver" of the righteous (Mal. 3:3) and the wicked, who will be rejected.

To summarize, the evidence for regarding the "treasure" of Matthew 13:44 as a figure for the disciples of Jesus may be presented thus: (1.) Neither the Hebrew Scriptures nor the New Testament anywhere develop the theme of God or Jesus or his kingdom as the believer's treasure. The concept obviously exists. But it is not often present, and we are not compelled to understand *thesauros* at Matthew 13:44 in this way. (2.) The Hebrew Scriptures do portray Israel as God's treasure by a consistent use of *segullah* (Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6; 14:2, 26:18; Ps. 135:4). Once it is the righteous within Israel who are thus portrayed (Mal. 3:17). The New Testament twice utilizes this theme directly, substituting the church for Israel (Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:9). (3.) As noted by Feldman and Jones, the rabbinic literature also appropriates and uses this theme of Israel as God's treasure — in parabolic form.²³ (4.) It is Israel on the righteous, as they are distinguished from other nations of the wicked, which receives the approbation as God's special possession and treasure. (5.) Matthew's Gospel twice uses this motif, applying it to the disciples (Matt. 6:26, 10:31). The crucial passage from Malachi 3 also occurs within the framework of the First Gospel's portrayal of true Israel versus false Israel.

All of this in itself seems sufficient to demonstrate the meaning of *thesauros* at Matthew 13:44. The final verification, however, occurs in the pericope immediately preceding our text. In the explanation of the parable of the Wheat and the Tares (Matt. 13:36-43) the righteous and the wicked are separated at the end of the age. The wicked will be cast into the fire, there to weep and gnash their teeth (Matt. 13:42). But the righteous, as God's own special treasure, will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. 13:43). The quotation from Daniel 12:3 once again contrasts the righteous with the wicked. The righteous are precious, beautiful, and valued. And in the parable of the Hidden Treasure it is the disciples of Jesus

who are the treasure, the valued possession of Jesus, the "kingdom-in-himself." He has found them, given his all, and purchased them.

What of the theme of being "hidden in the field"? The treasure is hidden (*kekrummeno*) when found by the man. In turn, he hides it again (the intent of *ekrupsen*).²⁴ The theme of something being "hidden" or "planted" in a field occurs in the parables of Jesus as a figure for those in the world who hear his word and grow in response. Examples of this include the Sower (Matt. 13:3-9), the Wheat and the Tares (Matt. 13:24-30, especially the interpretation, v. 38), the Mustard Seed (Matt. 13:31) and the Spontaneous Seed (Mark 4:26-29). It is possible that the use of *kruptein* in the Hidden Treasure has overtones of persecution or obscurity for the disciples of Jesus. Not only is the treasure discovered while hidden, but it remains hidden, even after the man purchases the field. However, the use of *egkruptein* in the Leaven (Matt. 13:33) may mean that the hiddenness of the treasure adds no particular emphasis to the Hidden Treasure. On the whole, I would suggest a probable theme of persecution as a result of Jesus' use of *kruptein*. I would relate the theme of joy over the discovery of the treasure (*apo tes charas autou*) to such Scriptures as Matthew 18:12, Luke 15:6,9,32, and Hebrews 12:2, which speak of Christ's joy over those whom he has found and saved.

To sum up the interpretation of Matthew 13:44, the kingdom of heaven here described is the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth on behalf of his disciples. Jesus portrays himself as a man who rejoices at finding a treasure hidden in a field. So he rejoices over his disciples, "found" as they have heard Jesus' call to follow him. Jesus' disciples are valued by him to the extent that he will be willing to sacrifice himself to possess them. He will "go, sell all that he has, and buy the field." As his possession Jesus' disciples will not expect to be protected and insulated from the pressure and opposition of those who hate their Master. Rather, they remain in the world, just as they were found by Jesus. But they need not fear that they have been forgotten, even when they seem to be "buried." They are his treasure. He has purchased the entire field in order to possess them.²⁵

The Interpretation of Matthew 13:45-46

As noted above, the parable of the Pearl of Great Price, as short as it is, contains a striking number of features in contrast to its "partner parable," the Hidden Treasure. All the more important, then, is that connecting link that is the center of both parables: *panta hosa*

echein kai agorazein. As we turn, then, to the exegesis of Matthew 13:45-46, it is assumed that this parable also concerns itself with the kingdom of heaven as God's action in Jesus to find and save His people, the disciples of Jesus. The unique theme in Pearl of Great Price is the emphasis upon searching. The process leading up to the discovery of the treasure in Matthew 13:44 is unknown and, therefore, outside the concern of the exegete. But in verse 45 the parable describes *anthropo emporo zetounti kalous margaritas*. We must search, then, for the meaning of the theme of "seeking."

Once again, as with the theme of "finding" treated above, the theme of "seeking" may stand for one of two things within the teaching of Jesus. Jesus uses this picture to describe both the action of God with respect to men and vice versa. In the Sermon on the Mount, the disciples are told to seek the kingdom, knowing that they will find that for which they search (Matt. 6:33, 7:7; Lucan parallels are Luke 12:31; 11:9.) At Luke 13:29 Jesus exhorts those following him to strive to enter by the narrow door, for many will one day seek it and not be able to enter. With regard to these exhortations for disciples to "seek," it is crucial to note that these passages do not speak of entrance into the kingdom. Spoken to those who are already disciples (Matt. 5:1; Luke 13:22-23), these sayings of Jesus are encouragements to those already following Jesus. Here, Jesus calls disciples to maturity and endurance.

But when Jesus uses the image of "seeking" with regard to God's action toward men, he does refer to entrance into the kingdom. At Matthew 18:12, the shepherd searches (*zetei*) for the *lost* sheep. At Luke 15:8 the woman searches carefully (*zetei epimelos*) for the *lost* coin. And, in describing his own mission, Jesus declares that he has come *zetesai kai sosai to apololos* (Luke 19:10). Jesus taught that God, through him, was seeking out men in order to save them. The presence of this motif in the teaching of Jesus supports this present interpretation of Matthew 13:45-46. Although the idea of "seeking" as used throughout the teaching of Jesus does not demand such a meaning here, such a view is certain in the light of the entire exegesis of the pericope.

And what of the pearl, *margarites*? We saw above that "treasure" at verse 44 clearly reflects the Biblical theme of God's people as his own "precious possession." Clearly a "pearl" is just one specific kind of "treasure." But is there more involved in the use of *margarites* here, especially with regard to other passages in the New Testament? Perhaps there is. The term *margarites* is not found in

the Septuagint. Hauck notes that the rabbis spoke of the utterance of wise sayings as "the mouth which produces pearls."²⁶ Outside our pericope there are two other instances in the New Testament in which *margarites* is used figuratively. In Revelation 21:21 the twelve gates of the heavenly Jerusalem are each a giant pearl. On each of the pearls is written the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel (Rev. 21:12). In addition, the twelve foundation stones of the city have the names of the twelve apostles written upon them (Rev. 21:14). Each of the foundation stones is adorned with precious stones (Rev. 21:19-20). The connection here in Revelation 21 is between the honored saints of God and the glory they will possess in the new heaven and earth. Along with other precious stones, *margarites* is used as a symbol for the glorious chosen of God, who comprise the holy city. This use, obviously, is not inconsistent with our contention that *margarites* and *thesauros* refer to the disciples of Jesus at Matthew 13:44-46.

The second use of *margarites* poses a greater challenge. At Matthew 7:6 Jesus warns the disciples, "Do not give the holy thing to dogs, nor throw your pearls in front of swine; lest, trampling them underfoot, they, turning, may rend you." We may note two things concerning this difficult saying of Jesus. First, like the traditional exegesis of Matthew 13:44-46, Christians have understood Matthew 7:6 from earliest times as a warning not to offer spiritual things to those who are unworthy or unprepared to receive them. Already in the Didache, we read:

But let none eat or drink of your Eucharist except those who have been baptised in the Lord's Name. For concerning this also did the Lord say, "Give not that which is holy to dogs."²⁷

The second thing to note about Matthew 7:6 is the extent to which, given the traditional exegesis, it sticks out in its context like a sore thumb. Some simply claim that this saying is inserted into its present context artificially, in violation of its original sense.²⁸ More conservative scholars describe Matthew 7:6 as a "commonsense corrective" to an over-enthusiastic understanding of the prohibition against judging just preceding the saying (Matt. 7:1-5). Typically, Lenski comments that "the command not to judge others . . . has its obvious limits."²⁹ Thus, by interpreting the "holy" and the "pearls" as "spiritual treasures," Matthew 7:6 must be understood as "reasonable" precaution given to the disciples. Note the phrasing of exegetes at this point: "unless care is taken . . .",³⁰ "but on

the other hand . . .";³¹ "one simply does not waste something of value on an inappropriate and undeserving object."³² With regard to this last comment, is not that the Gospel in a nutshell? To paraphrase Paul, "while we were inappropriate and undeserving objects, Christ died for us . . ."

But when does Jesus ever do this in the Sermon? Is it not the very "unreasonableness" and "exaggeration" of the Sermon that lend to it its unique power? The Sermon on the Mount completely lacks any sense or "feel" of "prudent caution." Thus, Jesus teaches, poverty is wealth, lack is fulness, and persecution means blessing (Matt. 5:1-12). Anger is murder, lust is adultery, divorce is always sin, and oaths must not be taken — at all (Matt. 5:21-27). Turn the other cheek, unquestioningly go the extra mile, loan without hope of repayment, and love even your enemies (Matt. 5:38:48). Shun *all* hypocrisy, forgive *all* offenses against you, serve *one* Master only, and, forgetting earthly needs, seek *only* the kingdom (Matt. 6:1-34). Do not judge, ask *any* good thing of the Father, enter the narrow gate, and build upon the only rock which will stand — Jesus and his words (Matt. 7:1-5, 7-29). Throughout the entire Sermon, the tenor is the urgent, foolish, total abandonment of oneself to God's kingdom, regardless of the consequences. Jesus allows for no exceptions, no "buts." The call of the Sermon, from beginning to end, is "Follow Me!"

Can Matthew 7:6 be a "reasonable caution"? All are aware of the weakness of arguments from silence. But is it probable, or even possible, that the strident call to radical discipleship in the Sermon would be "softened" or "made reasonable" at Matthew 7:6? I think not. Mohr has demonstrated that, against the opinion of the many, Matthew 7:6 fits perfectly into its present context.³³ This logion of Jesus is a saying that climaxes and summarizes Jesus' teaching about judging others. Judge not, Jesus has said. Do not reject your brother on the grounds of some offense that he has committed. Do not cast your brother from you. He is holy to you. You must not reject him. He is as precious as a pearl in the sight of the Father, and so he must be to you. Thus, *margarites* in the New Testament is used uniformly. At Revelation 21:21, in our passage, and even at Matthew 7:6, the picture of a pearl expresses the standing of the disciples in the sight of God and the proper perspective toward the Christian brother. All of these things buttress the exegesis of Matthew 13:44-46 here presented.

Having dealt with the unique elements present in the parable of

the Pearl of Great Price, it may also be helpful to wrestle briefly with an overall comparison of the two parables in Matthew 13:44-46. Do the contrasts and divergences serve any particular function? The differences may be noted below once again.

	<i>Hidden Treasure</i>	<i>Pearl of Great Price</i>
Subject:	<i>anthropo</i>	<i>anthropo emporo</i>
Process:	(unexpressed)	<i>zetounti kalous margaritas</i>
Find:	<i>thesauro kekrummeno</i>	<i>hena polutimon margariten</i>
Reaction:	<i>apo tes charas autou</i>	(unexpressed)
Tenses:	historical presents <i>hupagei, polei echei, agorazei</i>	aorists <i>pepraken, eichen, egorasen</i>

What seems to happen in these verses is that the second parable intensifies and focuses on the first. Thus, "man" becomes a specific "merchant," who is deliberately "seeking fine pearls." The "treasure" in the second parable is a specific "pearl of great value,"³⁴ and the vivid historical presents are supplanted by terse aorists. The parable of the Pearl of Great Price is more narrow, more sharpened than the Hidden Treasure. We may speculate that Jesus paired them together in order to intensify and underscore his message.³⁵

Thus, the pairing together of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price functions to intensify and reinforce the basic message of each parable. The kingdom of heaven is the work of God in Jesus Christ on behalf of his treasured, faithful people. In the eyes of the God of grace, these sinful, imperfect disciples appear as treasure; nay, as pearls! In the midst of conflict and opposition, trouble and uncertainty, the disciples of Jesus may rest secure in their identity in him. They will not be forgotten or abandoned, for the one who has sought and found them is also the one who has come to give his all for them.

Endnotes

1. A typical comment follows: "Buying, translated into other language, means showing by action that we really do esteem the king of God to be the chief good." Alexander Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ* (New York: A.C. Armstrong and Son, 1884), p. 78.
2. Richard Trench, *Notes on the Parables of Our Lord* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1948), p. 50.
3. A very few exegetes have differed from the traditional interpretation of Matthew 13:44-46. While their work was not consulted for the exegesis of this article, it may be noted in passing: David Cooper, *Messiah: the Historical Appearance* (Los Angeles: Biblical Research Society, 1961); John A. Sanford, *The Kingdom Within* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1970); and in the past Campegius Vitringa, *Verklaring van de Evangelische Parabolen* (Amsterdam: Hendrik Strik, 1715).
4. Below I will decide in favor of the longer reading, *panta hosa*, at verse 44.
5. Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), pp. 200-201.
6. Kenneth Bailey, *Poet and Peasant* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976), p. 38.
7. Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), p. 133.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 255.
9. Madelaine Boucher, *The Mysterious Parable* (Washington: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1977), p. 27.
10. Norman Huffman, "Atypical Features in the Parables of Jesus," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 97 (1978), pp. 207-220.
11. Students of the parables have long noted the diversity in meaning of the term *parabole* in the New Testament. But close examination shows that the Palestinian parable can be fairly defined as above and distinguished from simple metaphor, simile, proverb, comparisons to the world of nature, and "exemplary stories." For a full treatment, see my *The Parable: Definition and Interpretation, with Special Application to the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price* [Ft. Wayne: unpublished manuscript, written in partial fulfillment of M.Div. requirements, 1979], pp. 25-53).
12. Quoted by G.V. Jones in his work, *The Art and Truth of the Parables* (London: SPCK, 1964), p. 23.
13. "What has been said leaves us in no doubt but that God is the recipient of the ransom. Jesus serves God when He dies, and God inexorably demands suffering from His Son. God smites Him. All possibility that Satan might receive the ransom is thus ruled out. Satan does not figure at all in the passion story in Mk. and Mt. Satan desires the death of Jesus so little that he tries to divert Him from his path, Mk. 8:33, Mt. 16:23." So F. Buchsel, "*Iuo*,"

- in Gerhard Kittel, ed., and Geoffrey Bromiley, trans. and ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), IV, p. 344.
14. Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), p. 34.
 15. Buchsel, op. cit., p. 343.
 16. This, of course, fully accords with the classic way of describing what Jesus experiences "for us," namely, the wrath of God (Matt. 26:39,42).
 17. W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and adapted by W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 271.
 18. R.V.G. Tasker, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 138.
 19. Brown, Driver, Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 69-70.
 20. Ibid., p. 380.
 21. Ibid., p. 688.
 22. Preisker, "periousios," in Gerhard Friedrich, ed., and Geoffrey Bromiley, trans. and ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), VI, p. 57.
 23. Feldman, *Parables and Similes of the Rabbis* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 22. "To the key of a precious jewel-box in his possession the king fastened a chain so that it might not easily be mislaid or lost. Even so did God attach His name 'El' 'el to 'Israel' yisra'el to guard against their being lost in the world." Also Jones, op. cit., p. 65, notes Israel's possession by God with his parable: "What is the matter like? A man who inherited a field in a distant province; and he sold it for a small sum. And the purchaser went away and dug and found in it treasures of silver and gold and precious stones and pearls. Then the seller began to get very angry."
 24. Jeremias, op. cit., pp. 198-199.
 25. Some might want to emphasize the fact that the man purchased the entire field in the parable to infer the action of Jesus as the sacrifice for all mankind. This is obviously the Biblical message. But it does not seem to be a part of the parable's meaning here. The parable, and indeed the entire context, is focused on the disciples, and not the work of Jesus as universally intended for all.
 26. Hauck, "margarites," in Gerhard Friedrich, ed., and Geoffrey Bromiley, trans. and ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 174.
 27. Didache 9:5, quoted in T.W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957), p. 174.
 28. Ibid., p. 174.

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29. R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), p. 291.
 30. Robert Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), p. 122.
 31. Tasker, op. cit., p. 80.
 32. Robert A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Waco: Word Books, 1983), p. 376.
 33. For Mohr's full treatment of Matt. 7:6, see Gerry Mohr, *The Meaning of Matthew 7:6 in the Light of Its Context* (Springfield: unpublished manuscript, written in partial fulfillment of M. Div. requirements, 1976).
 34. Jeremias, op. cit., p. 200, speculating concerning the translation of *hena polutimon margariten* from Aramaic, writes, "hence, it is not: 'the one, precious pearl,' but, 'a specially valuable pearl.' "
 35. Jesus seems to do the same thing at other places. Thus, also in Matthew 13:31-33, the message of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven is basically identical. But with an astonishing freedom, the second parable utilizes more striking imagery to convey its message. A woman stands as a symbol for God, and leaven, normally a symbol for isn, stands as a symbol for the kingdom. Also, at Luke 15:3-10, the shepherd of verse 4 becomes a woman at verse 8, while one sheep in a hundred becomes one coin in ten.

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