

THE KINGDOM A PRIZE

– MATTHEW 13:44-53. – AUGUST 4. –

Text: – "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." – Matt. 6:33.

TODAY WE HAVE further precious lessons from the Great Teacher respecting His Kingdom. The parable of the "Treasure hid in the Field," and the parable of the "Pearl of Great Price," both picture to us the great value of the Kingdom of Glory which is ultimately to be established amongst men for the blessing of the world. These parables also furnish lessons of what it will cost to secure a share, a place in that Kingdom. A third parable of the lesson treats of the embryo Kingdom; that is to say, the Parable of the "Net Cast into the Sea," pictures the condition of this present Age, during which the Elect, or Kingdom class, the Bride, is being found and gathered by the Lord's providences.

"TREASURE HID IN THE FIELD"

This is not one of the parables which Jesus expounded. His people, therefore, are left to exercise their judgment of its meaning, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the light shed upon it by other Scriptures. Indeed, there might be more than one application of it correct. For instance, we might apply the parable to our Lord Jesus and say that He bought the whole world at the cost of all He had, and that He purchased the world because of the "treasure" which it contained. And that treasure might consist of a variety of treasures of different values – for instance, the Church, the Bride class, the Lord's special "treasure," and such of the world as will ultimately receive and be blessed by the Messianic Kingdom.

But our preference of thought is that the Great Teacher referred, not to Himself at all, but to those whom He instructed. By virtue of His own covenant of sacrifice, the Kingdom was already promised to Him, and He, in turn, in the Father's name, was inviting those who had the

ears to hear, and heart to appreciate, to become members of His Bride class – members of His Kingdom class.

He recommends that these should view the Kingdom after the illustration of this parable. Suppose in their journeying they saw a field for sale at a certain price, and suppose, upon examination of it, they found it to contain a great treasure. The treasure might consist of very excellent soil, especially suited to their purpose, or it might [R5048 : page 200] consist of a valuable vein of precious metal, or it might consist of money buried long centuries ago and forgotten, and not belonging to the owner of the field more than to others who might find it. In such a case, the parable suggests, any one of ordinary intelligence would be willing to invest everything that he possessed to acquire the title.

So the Master declared to those who heard Him then, and to us who receive His words now, that He has information to give respecting a Great Treasure, a Priceless Treasure, which can be obtained, but only by the expenditure of great energy and the investment of everything of value. The Great Treasure is the share in the Messianic Kingdom – that by accepting the terms of discipleship we may become not only sons of God, but, if children, then heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord to His heavenly inheritance. This inheritance was the same as was promised to the Seed of Abraham, and we acquired an interest or share in it, not by being the actual seed of Abraham and the actual heirs to the Kingdom, but by becoming Messiah's Bride and Joint-heir.

When we think how much time and energy are put forth, and how much money and influence are expended to obtain some little, petty earthly honor of worldly renown and glory, and when we reflect that these at most will last but a few years and be unsatisfactory at best, then we can appreciate the better the glory, honor and immortality which God has in reservation for the "called and chosen and faithful," the Bride, the Lamb's Wife.

A PEARL OF GREAT VALUE

In the days of our Saviour pearls were represented amongst the most precious and most desirable of jewels, and the larger and more nearly perfect the pearl the greater its value. The Great Teacher used this familiar matter as the basis for a lesson on the value of the Kingdom. [R5048 : page 201] The Merchant of the Parable found a Pearl so superior in every respect to all other pearls that he considered it cheap to give everything that he possessed to become the owner of that Pearl.

This, said the Master, illustrates the value of the Kingdom, with its glory, honor and immortality, which I am inviting an elect, saintly little flock to share with Me. Those who prize it properly will show their appreciation by the amount they will be willing and glad to pay for it. Whether a man be wealthy or poor, learned or ignorant, influential or otherwise, the cost of this Kingdom Pearl of great value will be – his *all*. It cannot be had for less.

The wealthiest or most talented person in the world could not obtain a share in that Kingdom if he kept back one single atom of his possessions; the price of the Kingdom is self-sacrifice, even unto death, and nothing less will secure it. Nor would any sacrifice that we could make secure a share in this Kingdom for us, except as our sacrifice would first be made acceptable in God's sight through the precious merit of our Redeemer's sacrifice, which He finished at Calvary.

THE PARABLE OF A FISH NET

We are not to think of the Kingdom as like a net, but to understand that the embryo Kingdom resembles a fishing experience with a net, in which were gathered all kinds of fish, which were brought to shore and sorted. This is a parable of the embryo Kingdom because it relates to a work done in this Age, in connection with the finding of the "little flock" who will constitute the Kingdom in glory. The Lord during this Age has not been fishing for all kinds of fish; He has not been seeking

for all kinds of people. He has been calling, drawing especially, and dealing with, only the elect, only the saintly.

But, incidentally, a variety of other kinds of fish have gotten into the Gospel Net, some from worldly ambitions, some because religious systems are a good matrimonial field, others because of social privileges and standing, others because they desire to breathe a moral atmosphere, others because they would use religion as a cloak for business enterprises, etc. But the suitable fish, which the Lord is seeking, and who alone will constitute the Kingdom class, are those who hear His Message with joy and count the cost and appreciate the situation and desire to be "bond servants of the Lord Jesus Christ." They are willing to suffer with Him now that they may be glorified together with Him in His Kingdom.

The parable tells us that "when the net was full it was drawn ashore" and the fish sorted. This evidently signifies that there will come a time in the end of this Age when the Lord will have gathered a sufficient number of saintly ones to serve His purpose – to complete the number foreordained by the Father to be members of the elect Church in glory. Then the fishing will cease. Who can say that the opportunity for entering the "net" as one of the true "fish" of the kind the Lord is seeking may not be almost at an end? Who can say that the Gospel Net, with its full assortment of churchianity of every style, will not soon be drawn ashore that the suitable, the elect, may be gathered into the Kingdom?

The unsuitable "fish" of this parable correspond with the "tares" of the parable considered a week ago. The "furnace of fire" will be the same "time of trouble" which will come upon the whole world of mankind very shortly. The unsuitable fish in the net are all church members – the unprofessing world are not represented in the parable at all.

Jesus asked His disciples if they understood the parable. They answered, Yes, and He told them to consider His parables as a

householder would consider his reserve of food supplies, from which from time to time truths "both new and old" would be brought.

Our text emphasizes this study. If the Kingdom is the Pearl, and the Treasure, which the Master indicated – if we believe His testimony, then by all means let us show our faith, not merely by professions, but in every act and word. Let us seek the Kingdom as the pre-eminent matter of our lives, in comparison with which all other things are inferior, and, as St. Paul declared, "not worthy to be compared." If seeking the Kingdom seems to hinder some of our earthly prospects, so much the better. The Master said it must cost us our *all*. Our earthly considerations we have left in His hands. Let Him apportion our earthly blessings according to His wisdom of what will be most helpful to us in making our "calling and election sure" to a place in the Kingdom.

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