

## God's Treasured Possession

Imagine several centuries from now an historian coming across a reference to a “safety deposit box” and trying to determine exactly what such an item was. Was it a container used for the disposal of sharp objects such as needles and pins? Why would I have one, and what was it good for?

Understanding a safety deposit box depends on an understanding of banking. Perhaps at some time in the future banking will no longer exist, making it that much more difficult for future generations to decipher the usage of implements associated with the outmoded trade.

Looking back to means of wealth preservation in ages past, in Bible times every man was his own banker. If a man had wealth, he was on his own to try to find a way to secure it. A frequent method of concealment was to bury the valuables in a field in a spot known only to the owner. If, for whatever reason, the owner should fail to return at a later date to retrieve his treasure, then what became of it? Perhaps it would remain undiscovered, or someone seeking for signs of buried treasure might find it and take possession of it. The safest way for the discoverer to protect his find without arousing suspicion was to keep the secret to himself and buy the field so he could take ownership, both of the field and of all that was in it. For valuable treasure, it would be well worth the expense.

A verse that refers to these customs can be found in the Gospels.

I will read this verse and all other scriptures shared in this teaching from the English Standard Version, or ESV. If you are reading along in King James, take note of each

## God's Treasured Possession

occurrence of the word “peculiar”, which will provide a common thread to the topics I will discuss.

Matthew 13:44:

“The kingdom of heaven is like [treasure hidden in a field](#), which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Why would a man cover up treasure after finding it? So that he could secure title of the land before anyone else found out. Now we understand why a man would sell all that he had to buy such a field: it was indeed that valuable!

With this background in biblical culture, I'd like to share with you a little bit about “God's treasured possession”.

In the Old Testament, Israel was God's personal property.

Psalms 135:4:

For the Lord has chosen Jacob for himself,  
Israel as his [own possession](#).

The words “own possession” are frequently translated “[treasured possession](#)”. Literally, the phrase indicates a [treasure acquired for a possession](#).

King James translates “own possession” as “peculiar treasure”, with the word “peculiar” indicating “[that which belongs to a person and to him only](#).”

We are God's [exclusive property](#) – how wonderful is that!

As God's own possession, Israel were a treasure that He had personally acquired for His very own. Today, in the age of grace, we – the Church – are the Israel of God.

## God's Treasured Possession

When did this all get started? Let's take a look at what God said to Israel when they covenanted with Him at Sinai:

Exodus 19:4-5:

You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be **my treasured possession** among all peoples, ...

“Treasured possession” is translated from the same Hebrew word as “own possession” in Psalm 135:4. Among all peoples, Israel would be the one treasured.

... you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for **all the earth is mine**;

God has full ownership of His possession because all the earth is His. Psalm 24:1 expresses further aspects of this truth, answering the question “What is the Lord's?”.

Psalm 24:1:

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein,

The first word in the Hebrew verse is actually “The Lord's”. A literal translation of this verse would be:

The Lord's is the created earth, and all that fills it; the inhabited world, and those who dwell in it.

Two things, then, are here stated as being the Lord's:

- The created earth, and all that fills it; and
- The inhabited world, and those who dwell in it.

## God's Treasured Possession

This is why Israel were God's treasured possession, for the whole world is His to do with as He pleases. And it pleased the Lord to choose Israel from among all peoples.

Exodus 33:12-16:

Moses said to the Lord, "See, you say to me, 'Bring up this people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, I **know you by name**, and you have also **found favor in my sight**."

Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that **this nation is your people**."

And he said, "My **presence** will go with you, and I will give you **rest**."

And he said to him, "If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here."

For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in **your going with us, so that we are distinct**, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?"

Israel were distinct and found favor in God's sight because of the presence of God among them — God going with them! This is what truly set them apart.

Deuteronomy 7:6-9:

"For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be **a people for his treasured possession**, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."

## God's Treasured Possession

It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord **set his love on you and chose you**, for you were the fewest of all peoples,

but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations,

There was no doubt about the faithful God keeping covenant and steadfast love according to His oath. Israel, for her part, was then to love Him and keep His commandments with all her heart and soul.

Deuteronomy 26:16-19:

“This day the Lord your God commands you to do these statutes and rules. You shall therefore be careful to do them **with all your heart and with all your soul**.

Watch now for the two parts of the covenant: Israel's declaration, and God's declaration.

**You [Israel] have declared today that the Lord is your God**, and that you will walk in his ways, and keep his statutes and his commandments and his rules, and will obey his voice.

**And the Lord has declared today that you are a people for his treasured possession**, as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments,

## God's Treasured Possession

and that he will set you in praise and in fame and in honor high above all nations that he has made, and that you shall be a people holy to the Lord your God, as he promised.”

Israel were to declare God's Lordship in their lives, walk in His ways, keep His commandments, and obey His voice.

The Lord, for His turn, would declare Israel as His treasured possession, setting her above all others in praise and honor and setting her apart as a holy people unto Him. What an incredible relationship between the Lord and His people!

This special relationship did not vanish with the coming of grace; in fact, it grew deeper and even more meaningful. In the Old Testament, it was Israel who were the people whom God set apart. Today, we – the Church – are the Israel of God.

Galatians 6:16:

And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

Because we are the Israel of God, we are also God's treasured possession. Look at what Titus 2:14 has to say about it.

Titus 2:14:

who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself [a people for his own possession...](#)

“A people for his own possession” is the same expression translated in the Septuagint as “treasured possession”. Specifically, this Greek expression means:

## God's Treasured Possession

- What is over and above
- Property laid up
- A people [as] an acquisition

Jesus Christ gave himself for us to redeem us. Sounds like the man who sold all he had to buy the field of hidden treasure!

Continuing in the verse we read:

... to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are **zealous for good works**.

“Zealous for good works” doesn’t mean “zealous for the law” – quite the opposite! What distinguishes mere works from good works is *grace*. Good works are works done *with God*. As we saw earlier, what distinguishes us as God’s people is God’s going with us. We partner with Him, and He with us. That is the essence of our relationship, acknowledging **His (God’s) Lordship** in our lives.

When we make Jesus, the agent of our salvation, **lord**, we recognize God, the Source of our salvation, as **Lord**, even of the Lord Jesus Christ. For though Jesus is **lord of all** (according to Acts 10:36), it is God Who is ultimately **All in All** (according to 1 Corinthians 15:28).

1 Peter sums up who we are as God’s treasured possession in a single passage.

1 Peter 2:9-10:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, **a people for his own possession**, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

## God's Treasured Possession

Once you were not a people, but now you are **God's people**; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Not only are we chosen, royal and holy, but most importantly, we are *His own*!

Now that we have received mercy, let us go forth with Him in our very midst, proclaiming His excellence to all who will hear. No longer are we not a people, but we are now the people of God: **His treasured possession**.