

Buying a Field

I live in Iowa, and here you never have to drive very far to find a field stretching to the horizon. Every spring these fields promise new life and hope. Storytellers come to spin their tales of dreams in these fields. And these fields remind us of the potential of each of our lives.

We make investments in our lives, investments of time and effort and passion. It is like buying a field. If we're thoughtful about it, we expect a return on this investment, for our own glory, or for the glory of God. Thinking along this line, I noticed recently *seven fields* that were purchased in Scripture.

These seven fit into three groups: two remind us of Christ's investment in us; three of our investment in this present world; and two of our investment in the world to come.

Christ's Purchase

"The kingdom of the heavens is like a treasure hid in the field, which a man having found has hid, and for the joy of it goes and sells all whatever he has, and buys that field" (Matt. 13:44). In the field of this world, Christ has found a treasure. What a wonder, that He found in you and me something that has filled His heart with joy, so much so that He paid the ultimate sacrifice that He might purchase us for Himself!

"And Boaz said, On the day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. And he that had the right of redemption said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance. Redeem thou for thyself what I should redeem, for I cannot redeem it" (Ruth 4:5,6). Read the whole book of Ruth to get the complete story. Here is its symbolic meaning: Like Ruth the Moabitess, we were under a curse, outside of God's blessing. The law could not redeem us, unless it compromised its own integrity—it rightfully demanded we be cast out. But Christ has stepped forward, like Boaz, and brought us into the inheritance because of His love for us. He is our blessed Kinsman and Redeemer.

The Fields of This World

"And the chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, 'It is not lawful to cast them into the Corban, since it is the price of blood.' And having taken counsel, they bought with them the field of the potter for a burying-ground for strangers" (Matt. 27:6,7). The

money paid to Judas for our Lord's betrayal was used to buy a cemetery for homeless people. Because Christ has been crucified by the princes of this world, the believer finds this present world to be a field stained by innocent blood. To us, it is a place of death, no longer a suitable place to build our dreams.

"Abraham weighed to Ephron the money that he had named in the ears of the sons of Heth—four hundred shekels of silver...So the field of Ephron...the field, and the cave that was in it, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all its borders round about, were assured to Abraham for a possession... And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field at Machpelah, opposite to Mamre: that is Hebron" (Gen. 23:16-19). Our hearts sorrow for Abraham, watching him bury his beloved Sarah. Sorrow is the universal experience of mankind, and believers are not exempt; for sure, the more we learn to love, the more we feel sorrow and disappointment when it visits us. But this burial was in Hebron, a place that throughout the Bible reminds us of fellowship with God. How precious when the sorrows of this life bring us to the place of sweet communion!

"Jacob...bought the portion of the field where he had spread his tent" (Gen 33:19). *"And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem in the portion of the field which Jacob had bought of the sons of Hamor"* (Josh. 24:32). This field is a lot like Abraham's, but there is added hope here. By faith Joseph had given commandment concerning his bones, that they were not to stay behind in Egypt where he died, but to be carried to the promised land. So too, our buried hopes, our daily dying, are carefully noted by the Lord, and He will reward faith when we likewise reach our promised land. A valley of dry bones will spring to life at His breathing!

Fields for Eternity

"She considereth a field, and acquireth it; of the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard" (Prov. 31:16). Here is an encouragement to invest our lives in service to others. This worthy, priceless woman was tireless in her service to her husband, her family, and to the poor around her.

"And I bought of Hanameel, mine uncle's son, the field which is in Anathoth...Take these writings, this writing of the purchase, both that which is sealed and this writing which is open; and put them in an
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earthen vessel, that they may remain many days” (Jer. 32:9, 14). Sometimes it seems pointless to try to serve the Lord, especially when everything around us is depressing. But the Lord told Jeremiah to go ahead, buy the field even though the Chaldeans were breathing down his neck. The evidence of his purchase would be in an earthen vessel, a reminder of his own weakness; some evidence others would be able to see, other evidence would be hidden and known only to God. But the day of joy and payback was coming...read the rest of the chapter!

Seven fields. Reminders of the price Christ paid to redeem us. Burial grounds in a place guilty of the blood of Christ, a place of sorrow and disappointment, but after all a lesson in faith. Encouragements to be occupied in service to others, and to keep eternity in view. Let's then take what He has given us and invest it wisely. *E.S.* □