

TUTORIAL
4.3

The Treasure

This tutorial continues to build the Biblical foundation for clear communication. It focuses on the nature of God's Word - the Written Word and the Living Word.

God graciously gave His word to the nation of Israel

Not only is God holy, just and loving, but He also communicates His character and His will. He has always spoken to man and is committed to communicating - no matter how rebellious and indifferent men are. After sin entered and communication was broken, God promised the One who would restore things. He also provided a temporary way for men to come to Him - through sacrifices. He also raised up a nation, His own chosen people, and they were to be the line through which the promised One would come.

Genesis 26:4 *I will cause your descendants to become as numerous as the stars of the sky, and I will give them all these lands. And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed.*

They would also be the means by which God would preserve a treasure given - His written Word. He did this despite the many times they were disobedient and turned away from Him. God's unwavering commitment to speaking with man is only because of His grace. There is nothing we can do to earn this incredible gift.

Pride, unbelief and rebellion kept Israel from communicating God's Word to the world

God's intention was for His people to see His Word as a treasure that they should obey and preserve. He gave them the task of taking the Truth about Him, the One True God, to others who did not know Him. They were to do this by being an example in the way they lived so that others would be drawn to Him. They would then teach those people the Truth contained in His Word, and

so in this way, God would speak to all men, no matter what their language or where they came from.

Isaiah 49:6 *He says, "You will do more than restore the people of Israel to me. I will make you a light to the Gentiles, and you will bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."*

Down through history, this did happen sometimes. Other people did come and were taught the truth. But more often than not, God's people, the Jews, failed in the Task God had given them.

They were proud of the fact that they had been entrusted with God's Word. But rather than treasuring it as His gracious communication to them and all men, they spent their efforts trying to follow every word. They thought they could do so in their own strength, but in truth they had no hope of pleasing God themselves. Sometimes, weary of this fruitless effort, they ignored His Law entirely for years at a time.

Under the New Covenant, a new group of messengers was chosen

That was the old agreement, or covenant. With the coming of the living Word, and then through His death and resurrection, God brought about a new covenant. Now God's grace was fully revealed, not only for salvation from sin, but also in how His children could live lives pleasing to Him.

To give His children the strength to live, He sent His Spirit to be here and live in them. At the time when God's Spirit came, He gave special ability to certain people who wrote down His revelation to them. They told the story of the living Word. The story of the beginnings of the church, God's chosen people under the new agreement, was also written. They told how God spoke through His people to the Jews and also other people. And letters were written - to real people in real situations. Instructions from God for how individuals and groups of His children should live. And God's Spirit gave glimpses of the future, as an encouragement for the church to wait for the return of the Master.

The Old Testament is part of the Church's treasure

The New Covenant replaced the Old, but God's original revelation to the Jews still has a place. It contains the story of God's actions in history. It records the fall of Lucifer, the mighty angel who became God's Enemy; it tells how sin entered the world, it records the promises about the Messiah, and it also records God's law, His perfect standards that remain unchanged. Christ

repeatedly quoted from the Old Testament and the early church treasured it as God's Word.

1 Corinthians 10:11 *These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age.*

The New Testament reveals what was left hidden

The Old can only be fully understood in light of the New. In the Old much was still hidden, many mysteries still existed, even for those to whom God gave special knowledge - His prophets. Christ revealed some, but much of what He spoke was in parables and spoken in pictures.

Matthew 13:35 *This fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet:*

"I will speak to you in parables. I will explain things hidden since the creation of the world."

But most could not be fully revealed until the Holy Spirit came into the world to be with the Church and live in God's children.

John 16:12,13 *"There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can't bear it now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future".*

As in the Old Testament, God's Spirit chose men - the Apostles - prophets of the New Testament, to whom He revealed Truth, which they wrote down. The many mysteries left from the Old Testament were made clear. God's plan was revealed - a new group had been chosen. Not based on ancestry or race or language, but chosen in Christ. Those who believed His Word saw themselves as sinners and accepted Christ's sacrifice as the payment for their sins.

Ephesians 3:4-6 *As you read what I have written, you will understand my insight into this plan regarding Christ. 5 God did not reveal it to previous generations, but now by his Spirit he has revealed it to his holy apostles and prophets. 6 And this is God's plan: Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God's children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus.*

We, the Church, are the means God chooses to pass on the Treasure

Just as God committed the older part of the treasure to the nation of Israel, now He has committed the completed treasure to the Church. And just as it was His desire that others, still in darkness, be drawn to the light, so it is for us.

The living Word has gone back to the Father. His Church is now His body, His presence, on the earth. We are now God's communication to the World, by our lives and through our message. We have the complete Treasure. We know the Living Word, we have His Written Word, and we have the Spirit of Truth living in us. We have all that is needed for a man to live as God would have him to live.

2 Peter 1:3 *By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence.*

We are rich. The question is, what will we do with our riches, with this treasure? He was rich but became poor for us. Will we do the same for others?

2 Corinthians 8:9 *You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich.*

God enables us to be His messengers

We are weak and lacking in wisdom. But we are what God has chosen to contain the treasure, and to give it out so that others can also know and speak with the living God as their Father.

2 Corinthians 4:3-7 *If the Good News we preach is hidden behind a veil, it is hidden only from people who are perishing. 4 Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God. 5 You see, we don't go around preaching about ourselves. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who said, "Let there be light in the darkness," has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. 7 We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.*



DISCUSSION POINTS

The Treasure

1. How do you think the Church today understands its role in passing on the Treasure? Is it seen as being a responsibility for just some people within the church, or something that each believer should be involved in? Give examples from your own experience.
2. What would you say is the view of unbelievers in your country/community of the Bible (in general culture)? Can you think of examples of how that view is reflected in the media?



ACTIVITIES

The Treasure

1. Talk to two believers that you know about God's Word and find out the following:
 - What role does God's Word play in their everyday life?
 - Ask them to imagine a believer in another country who doesn't have the Bible in a language they can read - in what ways do they think that person might be effected?
2. Reflect on what it would be like if you did not have access to God's Word in your own language.
3. You could search for and watch videos online that show people receiving God's Word translated into their own language for the first time, e.g. 'Treasuring God's Word', showing the Kimyal Tribe in Papua, Indonesia receiving the New Testament in their own language.