

Bible and the Headlines: Treasure Hunting

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This week the price of gold reached a record high of nearly \$4000 an ounce. Perhaps it will have crossed that price barrier by the time this article goes to print. Despite the high value of the metal, coins stamped from this material can be worth even more if they are misplaced for a significant time as some headlines illustrate. These stories also testify to the determination of those seeking ancient treasure.

The October 3rd edition of the New York Times carried the story, “Over \$1 Million Worth of Treasure Is Recovered From 1715 Spanish Shipwreck.” The article was about efforts of a salvage company to find the contents of a ship that sank in a hurricane over three hundred years ago. A company director stated, “Each coin is a piece of history, a tangible link to the people who lived, worked and sailed during the golden age of the Spanish Empire.” The salvage company had been searching the area around the discovery since 1990.

On October 4th, Popular Mechanics featured, “A Metal Detectorist Found a Bunch of Ancient Gold Coins. It Turned Out to Be ‘Devil’s Money’.” The golden hoard was found in the Netherlands in an area believed to be the site of cultic worship before the arrival of Christianity. An archeological study claimed, “The coins are from around 700 A.D.—including some rare finds from the mints of the Frankish Empire.” The coins were intermingled with the remains of animal sacrifices made to the pagan gods worshipped by the local people.

Microsoft’s news portal MSN on October 6th reprinted another Popular Mechanics story, “A Man Spent 6 Years Searching the Same Farm—and Finally Discovered a 1,900-Year-Old Roman Treasure.” The man featured in the piece was an amateur treasure hunter who was convinced the English farm he scoured contained a treasure left behind by the Romans. The detectorist came “. . . every spring and fall until he uncovered the 1,900-year-old coin, considered the first of its kind found in the United Kingdom.” The coin was stamped with the image of Emperor Aulus Vitellius who ruled for just eight months in 69 A.D.

Jesus used treasure hunters to illustrate the value of the Kingdom of Heaven. In Matthew 13 Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure, buried in a field, that a man found and reburied. In his joy the man goes and sells everything he has and buys that field” (v. 44). Jesus also exhorted his disciples to persist in their search for heavenly treasure, “Keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who searches finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened” (Mat 7:7-8). The person who persists in this ‘treasure hunt’ finds something worth much more than gold- no matter its current market value.