

Job Chapter 28

Verses 1-28: Though Job had agreed that the wicked suffer (27:13-23), that explained nothing in his case, since he was righteous. So Job called on his friends to consider that maybe God's wisdom was beyond their comprehension. That is the theme of this chapter. The wisdom of God is not gained by natural or theoretical knowledge. What God does not reveal, we can't know.

This chapter is one of the most beautiful poems on wisdom found in the Scriptures. After describing how laboriously man works to extract the ores and precious metals from the earth (verses 1-11), Job raises the ultimate question of the sufferer: "where shall wisdom be found" (verse 12). It cannot be purchased with earthly wealth (verses 13-19), but is conveyed only through the controlling factor of "the fear of the Lord" (verse 28). This concept of the fear of the Lord unites all the wisdom books (compare Prov. 1:7; Eccl. 12:13).

Job poetically affirms the nature and "value" of biblical wisdom. As precious metals are mined from the earth by daring men, so wisdom may be mined from creation by righteous searchers, but only if their quest centers around a "fear of the Lord".

(In verses 1-19), we see a shift from imprecations (condemning language), to a discourse on "wisdom" is abrupt but not surprising, given Job's shifting emotions. Human ingenuity cannot unearth wisdom or properly value it because of all this takes more than intelligence. It demands humility and spiritual perception.

(In verses 1-11), we see references to mining silver, gold, iron, sapphires and flint, as well as smelting copper. Tremendous effort is made by men who seek these precious things (compare Prov. 2:1-9).

Job 28:1 "Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold [where] they fine [it]."

In this chapter Job draws out a magnificent contrast between human skill and ingenuity and Divine wisdom. The difficulty to the ordinary reader is in not perceiving that the person spoken of in (Job 28:3) is man, and not God. Man possesses and exercises this mastery over nature, but yet is ignorant of wisdom unless God bestows it on him. That Job should say this is but natural, after his painful experience of the want of wisdom in his friends.

"Where they fine it": Rather, which they (men), refine. The most precious ores, both silver and gold, have a place where they may be found. However distant and dark and deep in the earth their place be, such a place is known, men penetrate to it, and bring them forth. The antithesis is presented in (Job 28:12). But whence shall Wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? It hath no place known to man.

This is actually a continuation of the statements that Job began to make in the last lesson. Job in this lesson, comes to the conclusion that God was beyond finding out by the human mind. Some things about God we will never know, until we are with Him in heaven. We accept Him on faith. Job was speaking of nature above, when he spoke of silver being in a vein. Refining the gold had

to do with heating it to the melting point, and skimming all of the impurities off the top. Gold and silver were discovered very early on in the history of man.

Job 28:2 "Iron is taken out of the earth, and brass [is] molten [out of] the stone."

Being made of earth, concocted by the heat of the sun into that hardness, and by miners dug out of the earth.

"Brass": Or copper.

"Is molten out of the stone": Wherewith it is mixed and incorporated in the earth, and by fire and the art of the mentalist it is separated from it, and taken out of it, as Pliny observes (Job 34:1, 10; 36:27).

Again, iron and brass are products of nature. These were things that Job had noticed, that God had provided for the use of man. Both iron and brass were plentiful in the areas around the Mediterranean Sea. Iron does come from the earth, and brass has to be melted out of stone.

Job 28:3 "He setteth an end to darkness, and searcheth out all perfection: the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death."

Man, in his desire to obtain these metals, "setteth an end to darkness," i.e. letteth in the light of day, or the artificial light which he carries with him, upon the natural abode of darkness, the inner parts of the earth. The miner's first operation is to pierce the ground with a shaft, perpendicular, horizontal, or oblique, as suits his purpose. Through this the light enters into what was previously pitch darkness.

"And searcheth out all perfection: the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death": Rather, and searcheth out to the furthest bound the stones of thick darkness and of the shadow of death. Explores, i.e. the entire murky area within the earth, notwithstanding its fearful gloom and obscurity.

The discovery of these metals was a tremendous breakthrough for mankind. In a sense, this does away with darkness and brings the use of these metals to light. This was very much like death that awaited man, until the Light of the world came and gave the possibility of life to all who would accept Him.

Job 28:4 "The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant; [even the waters] forgotten of the foot: they are dried up, they are gone away from men."

Or, "so that there is no inhabitant"; of the mine, as the miner may be said to be, who lives there continually. And when a flood of water arises, which is a usual thing in mines, he is obliged to flee and make haste to save his life.

"Even the waters forgotten of the foot": Such as never any foot of man touched or was acquainted with, being subterraneous water, and never seen with the eye of man before. And who

before knew not there were such floods underground. A like figurative expression in (Psalm 137:5).

"They are dried up, they are gone away from men": Though such a flood of waters rise apace, and flow in with great force, and threaten the miners' lives, and the ruin of their works; yet they are not discouraged. But by means of engines, pumps, buckets, and such like things, draw up the waters, and clear the mines of them. And they are gone from the workmen, who return to their work again, and go on with their mining. And so sometimes spiritual miners are interrupted by a flood of Satan's temptations, the world's persecutions, and various afflictions. But by the assistance of the spirit and grace of God, whereby a standard is lifted up against them, they get clear of them, and receive no hurt by them. But go on cheerfully in the work of the Lord (Isa. 59:19).

Where gold is found and if the people know of it, there is a flood of people coming to get some of the gold. Generally, gold is found in a very remote area where there are not many people walking. It is generally found in or near a stream of water.

Job 28:5 "[As for] the earth, out of it cometh bread: and under it is turned up as it were fire."

Man's cleverness is such that he turns the earth to various uses. By tillage of its surface he causes it to produce the staff of life, bread: and by his mining operations the under part of it is turned up as fire, or rather, as by fire.

"And under it is turned up as it were fire": Coal, which is fuel for fire; for, as in the earth are mines for gold and silver, iron and brass, out of which they are dug. Or the ore of them, so there is coal under the earth; which, when turned up, or dug, is taken for firing; or brimstone, or sulphurous matter, which is easily inflammable. And sometimes the same earth, the surface of which is covered with corn, out of which bread cometh; underneath are coal, or sulphur, and such like combustible matter. Some think precious stones are meant, which glitter and sparkle like fire (see Ezek. 28:14).

Job was speaking of the treasures of the earth in all of these verses. In this particular verse, he spoke of the very food we eat coming from the earth. There is a heat in the center of the earth. About our only chance to see that, is when a volcano erupts. Someday, I am told, the heat for people's homes could come by tapping into that heat in the center of the earth.

Job 28:6 "The stones of it [are] the place of sapphires: and it hath dust of gold."

I.e. of precious stones; the sapphire, as one of the most eminent, being put for all the rest. In some parts of the earth the sapphires are mixed with stones, and cut out of them and polished. Of this stone (see Exodus 24:10; SOS 5:14; Lam. 4:7; Ezek. 1:26).

"It hath": I.e. the earth contained in or under it.

"Dust of gold": Which is a distinct thing from that gold which is found in the mass or lump, of which (Job 28:2). Both sorts of gold being found in the earth.

Gold and diamonds many times, are found in remote areas where there had been volcanic actions. They are thought to come out of the earth in something called a pipe. When the volcano erupted, it threw diamonds and gold all over the area. They settle in beds of rivers or streams nearby.

Job 28:7 "[There is] a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen:"

Or, his is a path which no bird of prey knoweth (see the Revised Version). The miner's path through the bowels of the earth is intended.

"And which the vulture's eye hath not seen": The vulture is probably the keenest sighted of birds, but it cannot even get a glimpse of the subterraneous path which the miner treads.

This could be possibly speaking of the areas of the underground mining.

Job 28:8 "The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it."

Literally, the sons of the fierce: the whelps of lions, tigers, or leopards may be intended. These beasts would haunt the mountains and penetrate into natural caverns, but would never adventure themselves in the shafts and passages of miners.

"Nor the fierce lion passed by it": Rather, passed thereby (see the Revised Version).

This again, could be speaking of the underground shafts that were built to mine the gold, and silver, and precious stones. Lions are found in wild country, but they would not go down under the earth because they would be afraid of getting trapped.

Job 28:9 "He putteth forth his hand upon the rock; he overturneth the mountains by the roots."

The process described is that of tunneling and excavating, and that of making canals and lining them with stone; and in the course of such works many precious things would be discovered. The canals and cisterns were made so accurately that they retained the water, and did not even weep or trickle.

"He overturneth the mountains by the roots": Or turns them up from the roots. He roots them up, he undermines them; he turns up the earth at the roots of them, to get what is hid at the bottom, or in the bowels of them. Some understand this, and what is said in the following verses, of God, and of wonderful things done by him.

This could be speaking of the great trouble that man goes to, to get to the gold and silver, or precious metals. They will actually take the top off a mountain or drill through it, or whatever it takes to get to the precious metals or stones.

Job 28:10 "He cutteth out rivers among the rocks; and his eye seeth every precious thing."

He cuts channels to drain off the waters, which hinder his mining; and when the waters are gone, he is able to see the precious things in the earth.

In South America, the rivers are dredged for gold nuggets and diamonds. All of the last few verses were saying, is that man would go to any extent to get the wealth of the precious stones and metals. He would not overlook anything in the search for wealth. It is such a shame that man will not spend this kind of effort to find the greatest riches of all, the LORD.

Job 28:11 "He bindeth the floods from overflowing; and [the thing that is] hid bringeth he forth to light."

As the miner finds ways and means of cutting through rocks, and draining and carrying off the waters in his mine; so he makes use of other methods of restraining and keeping back the waters from coming into and overflowing his works, and even "from weeping". As in the original text; he binds them up so firmly, and stops every avenue and passage so close, that the waters cannot so much as ooze, or distil and drop as a tear from the eye.

"And the thing that is hid he bringeth forth to light": The concealed treasures; the gold and gems that are buried deep in the earth. He brings them out of their darkness, and converts them to ornament and to use. This ends the description which Job gives of the operations of mining in his time. We may remark in regard to this description. That the illustration was admirably chosen. His object was to show that true wisdom was not to be found by human science, or by mere investigation. He selects a case therefore, where man had shown the most skill and wisdom, and where he had penetrated farthest into darkness. He penetrated the earth; drove his shaft through rocks; closed up gushing fountains, and laid bare the treasures that had been buried for generations in the regions of night. Yet all this did not enable him fully to explain the operations of the divine government.

This could be speaking of man and all of the dams and such that he makes to control the rivers. I believe these statements that Job had made here were to show the limits that man would go to for earthly wealth and fame. He was comparing it to the very little effort man makes to find God.

Verses 12 and 20: These verses sum up the message of the chapter with the point that no amount of effort, even as vigorous and demanding as mining, will yield God's wisdom. It can't be valued or found in the world (verses 13-14). It can't be bought for any price (verses 15-19). The living can't find it (verse 21), and neither can the dead (verse 22; compare 26:6).

Job 28:12 "But where shall wisdom be found? and where [is] the place of understanding?"

With magnificent effect comes in this question, after the gigantic achievements of man just recounted. Notwithstanding his industry, science, and skill, he is altogether ignorant of true wisdom. Neither his knowledge nor his wealth can make him master of that; nor can he find it where he discovers so many other secret and precious things.

"Where is the place of understanding?" There is no vein for that upon the earth, as there is for gold or silver.

Wisdom is a gift from God, and understanding has to be given by the Holy Spirit of God. Solomon made the statement that wisdom was better than gold. It is the best thing a man can possess. When God granted Solomon one wish, Solomon's wish was for wisdom to lead his people. The Holy Spirit of God is our Teacher and our Guide. He opens our understanding to the things of God.

Job 28:13 "Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living."

Its immense, its unspeakable value: nor can it be purchased with all that he hath to give for it. Neither is it found in the land of the living. It is not a thing that any part of this world affords.

"Neither is it found in the land of the living": That is, it is not found among human beings. We must look to a higher source than man for true wisdom (compare Isa. 38:11; 53:8).

Wisdom and understanding are not purchased. They are not something that a person can seek and find, as he does gold and silver. Wisdom and understanding are not physical things that can be found in the land of the living (earth). These are spiritual things that come from God.

Job 28:14 "The depth saith, It [is] not in me: and the sea saith, [It is] not with me."

The deep abysses of the ocean declare that it is not with them; and the wide reaches of the far-extending sea proclaim that it is not with them either.

You could travel the world over and go to the deepest part of the sea, and never find wisdom and understanding.

Job 28:15 "It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed [for] the price thereof."

Having in general said that there is nothing in the whole compass of the terraqueous globe, nothing that is upon the surface of the earth, or in the bowels of it, or in the vast ocean, that is an equivalent price for wisdom. Job descends to particulars, and instances first in gold, that being the most valuable of metals. The word here used for it signifies "shut up", because it is first shut up in the earth, out of which it is dug. And when taken from thence, and refined, and made into coins or vessels, it is shut up among the treasures of men. The words may be more literally rendered, "gold shall not be given instead of it"; as a sufficient price, or valuable consideration for it.

"Neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof": In former times this metal used to be delivered, in buying and selling, not by the number and value of pieces, but by weight. In rude masses and lumps, and even when coined into shekels (see Gen. 23:16).

Job 28:16 "It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire."

"Ophir" (see note on 22:24).

Job 28:17 "The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it [shall not be for] jewels of fine gold."

Rather, gold and crystal. This second mention of gold (see verse 5), seems superfluous, but perhaps the patriarch is thinking of some goblet or ornament in which crystal and gold were combined together. Ornaments of this kind have been found in Phoenicia.

"And the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold": Set in fine gold; or "vessels" of it, more valuable than gold itself, being made of gold, purified, refined, and wrought by art into curious forms. And yet wisdom is so valuable as not to be exchanged for these. Mr. Broughton takes this fine gold, or gold of Phaz, to be the same with Fess in Barbary, which had its name from a heap of gold there found when its foundation was laid.

We find that not all of the money accumulated in the world, not all of the silver and gold, not even all of the precious stones of the earth can purchase wisdom and understanding. There is nothing in this life that can compare with these two precious things. God alone can give you the gift of wisdom, and only the Holy Spirit of God can quicken your understanding of spiritual things. A person who possessed these things would be rich indeed. These are not things that the world can take away. They are of God.

Job 28:18 "No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom [is] above rubies."

They are of no value, if compared with wisdom, nor fit to be mentioned as a price wherewith to purchase it.

"For the price of wisdom is above rubies": Or, the possession of wisdom is above (or, more than) pearls, i.e. pearls cannot acquire it or give possession of it. The meaning is scarcely that Wisdom is a more precious thing to possess than pearls.

Job 28:19 "The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold."

Not Ethiopia Abyssinia, or that which lies beyond Egypt in Africa; but Cush, as the word is, or Arabia Chusaea, the same with the country of Midian, and the parts adjacent.

"Neither shall it be valued with pure gold": That is most refined and freed from dross; they are not to be laid together as of equal value (see Job 28:16), where the same word is used.

Job continued to mention things that on this earth are valued very highly. None of this compares to the value of wisdom and understanding.

Verses 20-24: God knows the "way" to "wisdom"; to seek wisdom apart from Him is futile.

Job 28:20 "Whence then cometh wisdom? and where [is] the place of understanding?"

This is a repetition (of verse 12), with a mere variant of the verb in the first line. Job's elaborate inquiry of (verses 14-19), having given no light on the subject, the original question recurs". Where does wisdom come from?

Job had convinced them with his words that wisdom and understanding were the most valuable things they could have. Now he posed the question, where do you get wisdom and understanding? I will repeat that wisdom is a gift from God, and understanding is by the Holy Spirit of God.

Job 28:21 "Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air."

Man cannot see it, because it is immaterial, but he cannot even conceive of it, because its nature transcends him.

"And kept close from the fowls of the air": (compare verse 7). The sight of birds is far keener than that of man; but even birds cannot detect where wisdom is.

Physical eyes cannot see the things of God. The things of the Spirit are not discerned in the physical.

Job 28:22 "Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears."

Hebrew: Abaddon and Death. Abaddon is Sheol, the realm of the dead, here personified, as also is Death (compare Rev. 1:18; 9:11, Job 26:6).

"We have heard the fame thereof": We know it only by slight and uncertain rumors. But though they cannot give an account of it themselves, yet there is a world, on which these dark regions border, where we shall see it clearly. Have patience, says death, I will fetch thee shortly to a place where even this wisdom shall be found. When the veil of flesh is rent, and the interposing clouds are scattered, we shall know what God doth, though we know not now.

This was speaking of death of those who were never saved. They heard a glimmer of it, but it was too late.

Job 28:23 "God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof."

"God understandeth the way ... knoweth the place": These are perhaps the most important thoughts in the chapter for the debates. Job and his friends have probed God's wisdom for 3 court rounds and basically have arrived nowhere near the truth. Finally, Job made the point clearly that the divine wisdom necessary to explain his suffering was inaccessible to man. Only God knew all about it because He knows everything (verse 24). True wisdom belongs to the One who is the Almighty Creator (verses 25-26). One can only know it if He declares it to him (compare Deut. 29:29).

It is not for physical man to know the wisdom of God. Only God knows perfect wisdom. He is Wisdom to the utmost. Only God can give a portion of wisdom to man.

Job 28:24 "For he looketh to the ends of the earth, [and] seeth under the whole heaven;"

His glance as creator and ruler of all extends over all, to the ends of the earth and to all that lies under the whole heavens.

"And seeth under the whole heaven": As his knowledge of earthly things is unlimited, so is his knowledge of heavenly things also. And not only of heavenly things in a material sense, as of sun, moon, stars, comets, planets, nebulae, etc., but also of causes, principles, ends, laws, and the like. Whereby both material and immaterial things are governed, ordered, and maintained in being. Of matters of this kind and character man can only say, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; I cannot attain unto it" (Psalm 139:6).

Verses 25-28: Creation itself is evidence of the vastness of God's wisdom (Psalm 104; Prov. 8:22-31).

Job 28:25 "To make the weight for the winds; and he weigheth the waters by measure."

His wisdom it is which sets things in such exact order, and gives them such just measures, that the wind cannot blow but in those proportions which he hath prescribed. He appoints to every wind that blows its season, its degree, its bounds, when and where, how much and how long, each shall blow. He only knows why he doth these things. He gives examples in some few of God's works, and those which seem to be most trivial and uncertain. That thereby he might more strongly imply that God doth the same in other things which are more considerable, and that he doth all things in the most exact order, weight, and measure.

"And he weigheth the waters": Namely, the rain waters, which God lays up in his storehouses, the clouds, and thence draws them forth, and sends them down upon the earth, in such times and proportions as he thinks fit.

"By measure": For liquid things are examined by measure, as other things are by weight: and here are both weight and measure, to signify with what perfect wisdom God governs the world.

Now we are aware of some of the manifestations of the wisdom of God.

Proverbs 3:19 "The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens."

Job 28:26 "When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder:"

This "decree" comprises all the laws that regulate the rain, appointing its measure and its seasons as early and latter rain.

"And a way for the lightning of the thunder": God gave laws to the electric current, and prescribed the "way" that it should take in its passage from heaven to earth, or from cloud to cloud, or from earth to heaven. Everything was ruled beforehand by Infinite Wisdom.

This was speaking of the laws of nature that God established. He set limits on everything in and on the earth. The lightning, thunder, and the rain are all activated by the command of God.

Job 28:27 "Then did he see it, and declare it; he prepared it, yea, and searched it out."

His own wisdom, when he made and executed his decrees concerning rain, lightning, and thunder. He saw it in himself, and as it appeared in the works of his hands, which he looked on and approved of, and saw that all was very good. And he declared it to others, by his works of nature and providence. For they declare the glory of God, and particularly the glory of his wisdom.

"He prepared it, yea, and searched it out": This is an inversion of what seems to us the natural order, whereof there are many examples. God must first have investigated and searched out, in his own secret counsels, the entire scheme of creation. And afterwards have proceeded to the "preparation" or "establishment" of it.

God foreknew all things, even before the foundation of the world. God is all knowledge. He did not need another to advise Him. He spoke and all became. The universe is God's creation. He has the right to search it, because it belongs to Him and we belong to Him. He has the right to search us out as well.

Job 28:28 "And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that [is] wisdom; and to depart from evil [is] understanding."

"Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom": Job had made the connection that the others would not. While the specific features of God's wisdom may not be revealed to us, the alpha and omega of wisdom is to revere God and avoid sin (compare Psalm 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10; Eccl. 12:13-14), leaving the unanswered questions to Him in trusting submission. All we can do is trust and obey (compare Eccl. 12:13), and that is enough wisdom (this is the wisdom of Prov. 1:7 – 2:9). One may never know the reasons for life's sufferings.

This is the beautiful answer to the question that Job had asked. Fear in this sense, has to do with reverence. The wisest thing any of us can do is fear God. We have understanding, when we follow in the footsteps of Jesus and turn away from all evil. Even this understanding comes by the Holy Spirit wooing us to God.

Job Chapter 28 Questions

1. What conclusion did Job come to in this lesson?
2. We accept God on _____.
3. What is meant by fining the gold?
4. Iron and brass are products of _____.
5. In all of these verses, beginning with verse 1 through verse 5, Job was speaking of the _____ of the earth.
6. What is verse 9 speaking of?
7. Where are concentrations of gold and diamonds found in South America?
8. Wisdom is a gift from _____.
9. Where does understanding come from?
10. _____ said that wisdom was better than gold.
11. What was the one thing he asked God for?
12. Wisdom and understanding are not _____.
13. What question did Job ask in verse 20?
14. Physical eyes cannot see the things of _____.
15. What was destruction and death speaking of in verse 22?
16. Verses 24 and 25 manifests what?
17. The lightning, thunder, and even the rain, are all activated by what?
18. The decree, in verse 26, was speaking of what?
19. The universe is _____ creation.