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Job 28

(2019)

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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Job 28.

Topics.

- Where, shall the place of wisdom and understanding be found?
- They hang in the air, far away from mankind; they swing to and fro.
- Out of the earth comes bread; underneath it is turned up as by fire.
- The path proud beasts and the Lion have not trodden.
- Man puts his hand to the flinty rock and overturns mountains by roots.
- Man dams up streams and what is hidden he brings out to light.
- Where will wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?
- The deep and the sea say, "Wisdom is not in me."
- Abaddon and Death say, "We have heard a rumour of wisdom."
- The fear of God is wisdom and to turn away from evil is understanding.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION: the book of Job is considered both a theological and a literary masterpiece it is an honest discussion of why God allows good people to suffer. The test of Job's faith, allowed by God in response to a challenge from Satan, reveals God's sovereignty and the supremacy of divine wisdom over human wisdom (personified by Job's four friends). Believing that God is good despite the apparent evidence to the contrary, Job rested in faith alone. In the depths of agony, he could still proclaim, "I know that my Redeemer lives" (Job 19:25). In the end God silenced all discussion against the truth that He alone is wise (Job chpts. 38-41). Yet he vindicated Job's trust in him (chpt. 42), proving that genuine faith cannot be destroyed. The unknown author was probably an Israelite writing sometime between 2000 and 500 B.C.

HELPFUL FACTS: before reading Job, it is helpful to understand when Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and Elihu are speaking they are not speaking, "thus sayeth the LORD", they are simply giving their opinions on how they personally perceive things to be. Amongst their conversations there is truth and wisdom, but it must be kept in mind not everything they are saying is true or even wise, in fact God rebukes Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar and tells them they have spoken foolishness, but Job has spoken what is right (Job 42:7-9). The book of Job is not about doctrinal truth, but human suffering and the questions regarding God that arise during a person's calamity and pain.

JOB SPEAKS

JOB 28:1-11

Where is the place of Wisdom and Understanding to Be Found?

- **Job 28:1-11:** "Surely there is a mine for silver, and a place for gold that they refine. ²Iron is taken out of the earth, and copper is smelted from the ore. ³Man puts an end to darkness and searches out to the farthest limit the ore in gloom and deep darkness. ⁴He opens shafts in a valley away from where anyone lives; they are forgotten by travelers; they hang in

the air, far away from mankind; they swing to and fro. ⁵As for the earth, out of it comes bread, but underneath it is turned up as by fire. ⁶Its stones are the place of sapphires, and it has dust of gold. ⁷"That path no bird of prey knows, and the falcon's eye has not seen it. ⁸The proud beasts have not trodden it; the lion has not passed over it. ⁹"Man puts his hand to the flinty rock and overturns mountains by the roots. ¹⁰He cuts out channels in the rocks, and his eye sees every precious thing. ¹¹He dams up the streams so that they do not trickle, and the thing that is hidden he brings out to light. ¹²"But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?

Throughout this chapter Job refers to various aspects of the work and difficulty involved in mining. Some of the verses are somewhat obscure, this obscurity maybe because mining practises during the generations of Job were carried out in a manner different from what they are now, and so the allusion would be clear to them, but obscure to us. Nevertheless, these and the following verses should be explained in reference to mines and the work and dangers involved in mining them.

JOB 28:4

They Hang in the Air, Far Away, they Swing To and Fro.

The English Standard Bible says:

- **Job 28:4:** He opens shafts in a valley away from where anyone lives; they are forgotten by travelers; they hang in the air, far away from mankind; they swing to and fro.

The King James Bible says:

- **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.

The picture Job presents in these verses is of men digging mine shafts in deserted places so deep into the darkness of the earth that they have to lower themselves down by ropes because their feet have no solid support. These mine shafts are perhaps so big that two or three miners are able to descend on ropes swinging to and fro as they suspend in the air kicking themselves off the sides of the shaft as they descend downwards (perhaps a little like abseiling). Since the mine is dug deep into the earth there is always the danger of subterranean rivers and streams of water, breaking through and flooding the shaft forcing the miners to leave their work and that place. Such floods commonly occur in mines that are dug deep into the earth. Once such a mine is flooded in this manner it is deserted by the miners and eventually forgotten about so that even travellers are unaware of its existence.

JOB 28:5-6

Out of Earth comes Bread, underneath it is Turned up as by Fire.

The English Standard Bible says:

- **Job 28:5-6** As for the earth, out of it comes bread, but underneath it is turned up as by fire. ⁶Its stones are the place of sapphires, and it has dust of gold. (Job 28:5-6).

The King James Bible is translated in the same way.

- **Job 28:5-6** *As for* the earth, out of it cometh bread: and under it is turned up as it were fire. ⁶The stones of it *are* the place of sapphires: and it hath dust of gold.

It is interesting to notice that God has designed the earth in such a way that the things we need most for survival are the things that are not only the easiest to get, but also the least dangerous to obtain.

JOB 28:7-8

The Path Proud Beasts and the Lion have Not Trodden.

The English Standard Bible says:

- **Job 28:7-8:** That path no bird of prey knows, and the falcon's eye has not seen it. ⁸The proud beasts have not trodden it; the lion has not passed over it. (Job 28:7-8)

The King James Bible says:

- **Job 28:7-8:** There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen: ⁸The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it.

Job is saying that the bird of prey (which would embrace the eagle, the vulture and the falcon) and the lion and his cubs have not seen or ventured into the depths and darkness of the solitary places of these mineshafts. Even though these majestic birds soar through the air with the sharpest of eyes and lions roam the earth they have not penetrated into the inmost and darkest recesses of the earth in order to get iron ore, valued metals and gold, silver and brass or to the places where gems and precious stones lie as man has.

JOB 28:9-10

Man Puts His Hand to the Flinty Rock and Overturns Mountains.

The English Standard Bible says:

- **Job 28:9-10:** Man puts his hand to the flinty rock and overturns mountains by the roots. ¹⁰He cuts out channels in the rocks, and his eye sees every precious thing.

The King James Bible says:

- **Job 28:9-10:** He putteth forth his hand upon the rock; he overturneth the mountains by the roots. ¹⁰He cutteth out rivers among the rocks; and his eye seeth every precious thing.

The flinty rock refers to a sharp axe. The picture here is of men putting an axe to the forests of the mountains and laying them bare. The expression, "his eye sees every precious thing," may refer to the gold and precious stones that mankind sieves out of the rivers and streams of the valleys that flow down the mountain side or to the farmers cutting streams and channels of waters into the barren land and cultivating it for crops and livestock.

JOB 28:11

Man Dams up Streams and the Things Hidden He Brings to Light.

The English Standard Bible says:

- **Job 28:11:** He dams up the streams so that they do not trickle, and the thing that is hidden he brings out to light. (Job 28:11).

The King James Bible says:

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

The expression, "He binds the floods from overflowing," refers to the miners binding up the subterranean waters which weep through and trickle down the shaft of the mine so that they do not become a flood and stop any further work in the mine. The expression, "the thing that is hidden he brings out to light," refers to the iron ore, the valued metals

and gold, silver and brass and to the gems and precious stones that were hidden and concealed in the deep darkness of the earth that the miners bring up into the light of day for all to see and craftsmen convert them into objects and ornaments for practical use and treasured jewellery etc. This ends the description which Job gives concerning the various workings of mining in his time.

JOB 28:12

Where will the Place of Wisdom and Understanding be Found?

The English Standard Bible says:

- **Job 28:12:** But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?

The King James Bible says:

- **Job 28:12:** But where shall wisdom be found? and where *is* the place of understanding?

This is the beginning of all that Job has been leading up to in this chapter; man goes to enormous trouble and risks extreme dangers descending to the deepest, darkest recesses of the earth to find the material treasures of this world. Man uses all his skill and knowledge to attain the riches and treasures of this world and become master of them. Mankind has great wisdom when it comes to the things of science, medicine, the works of nature, music and art and the things of this world, but where can wisdom and understanding be found and what trouble and danger will mankind risk to find it? After shining a light upon the gigantic achievements of mankind Job now shines a brilliant spotlight with magnificent effect upon the question: "where can wisdom and understanding be found," which is infinitely worth far more than all the riches this world has. Job is highlighting the truth that wisdom and understanding cannot be brought with money silver or gold and cannot be found by science or by penetrating to the deepest darkness of the earth or by the best of astrologers searching the heavens. The wisdom Job has in mind is the wisdom spoken of in the following verses:

- Ages ago I (wisdom) was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. ²⁴When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. ²⁵Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth, ²⁶before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world. ²⁷When he established the heavens. (Proverbs 8:23-27).

JOB 28:13-20

The Deep and the Sea say, "Wisdom is Not In or With Me."

- **Job 28:13-20:** Man does not know its (wisdom and understanding) worth, and it is not found in the land of the living. ¹⁴The deep says, 'It is not in me,' and the sea says, 'It is not with me.' ¹⁵It cannot be bought for gold, and silver cannot be weighed as its price. ¹⁶It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, in precious onyx or sapphire. ¹⁷Gold and glass cannot equal it, nor can it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold. ¹⁸No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal; the price of wisdom is above pearls. ¹⁹The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it, nor can it be valued in pure gold. ²⁰"From where, then, does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding?"

Man does not know the value of wisdom and understanding their value exceeds the price of:

- Silver and the gold of Ophir and the most valued onyx and sapphire stones.
- Pearls, coral, crystal, topaz and jewels crafted of fine gold.

The value of wisdom and understanding is not found in the land of the living meaning in the secular world nor in the deep of the sea, but only in God and His word. Job in this chapter shines a brilliant spotlight on the value of wisdom and understanding and upon the truth that mankind does not appreciate or realize its great value or where it can be found. He is consciously and deliberately magnifying the value of wisdom and understanding and the questions; from where does it come? How is it found? And how does one purchase something of such great value? Especially the poor since even the richest nation cannot buy it, no-one can find it through archaeology or exploring the bottom of the ocean or the vast expanse of the heavens, so where is the place that wisdom and understanding is to be found?

NOTE: the wisdom in focus here is not upon secular wisdom and understanding which mankind has much of, but upon the following two things:

1. Wisdom and understanding of God and of the way to unite and fellowship with Him and intimately know Him.
2. Wisdom and understanding that shines a light upon the path that leads to eternal life and shows how to safely and without fear walk on it so that one reaches its end and is welcomed into eternal glory by their Saviour and King.

JOB 28:21-22

Abaddon and Death say, "We have heard a Rumour of Wisdom."

- **Job 28:21-22:** It (wisdom and understanding) is hidden from the eyes of all living and concealed from the birds of the air. ²²Abaddon (destruction in KJV) and Death say, 'We have heard a rumor of it with our ears.'

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Abaddon: comes from the Hebrew word (*'abaddown*) and means perishing; Hades (i.e., the grave) and utter destruction.

NOTE: contrary to Job's belief that death is a place of rest and peace (Job 3:11-19) many worldwide believe in the teaching of hell as a place not of rest and peace, but of torture and extreme suffering and pain, but consider the following verses concerning death:

- What happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. ²⁰All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return. (Eccles. 3:19-20).
- For he sees that even the wise die; the fool and the stupid alike must perish and leave their wealth to others. ¹¹Their graves are their homes forever, their dwelling places to all generations, though they called lands by their own names. (Psalm 49:10-11).
- Man in his pomp will not remain; he is like the beasts that perish. ¹³This is the path of those who have foolish confidence; yet after them people approve of their boasts. *Selah* (Psalm 49:12-13).

Their graves are their homes forever (Psalm 49:11) is the true teaching of the Bible, those who are judged unworthy of eternal life do not go to a place of fiery flames called hell where they are cruelly and brutally tortured by evil eternal creatures called demons and their bodies burned by fiery flames so that they suffer the worst of all agonies for all eternity. This age old traditional doctrine is not only a gross misunderstanding of Scripture, but is also a gross misrepresentation of God's character, since it portrays Him as an extremely sadistic God, especially when it is considered that even those in the secular world would not inflict such brutal and cruel torture on a human for their entire life let alone for all eternity. Added to this John tells us that God is love (1 John 4:8) (1 John

4:16). This horrific doctrine of hell was no-doubt perpetuated in the early years of the church by religious leaders to scare the naïve into the church and has been adopted and perpetuated by their followers from generation to generation through tradition and religious institutions and organisations. Eternal life or eternal death (i.e., utter and total extinction) is the only two choices the Bible teaches from Genesis to Revelation. For further information see the titles:

- Hell or the Grave (Final destination of Humans).
- Lake of Fire.
- Both titles are in, Death (ON WEBSITE MENU).

Job is taking us on a search for wisdom and understanding in regards to the ways of God with the earth, the human population and God's ways with the wicked and godless and the innocent and righteous. He says this wisdom is hidden from every living creature including mankind, people may have a vague idea, but no-one fully understands.

JOB 28:23-28

Fear of God is Wisdom, to Turn Away from Evil is Understanding.

- **Job 28:23-28:** "God understands the way to it (wisdom and understanding), and he knows its place. ²⁴For he looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. ²⁵When he gave to the wind its weight and apportioned the waters by measure, ²⁶when he made a decree for the rain and a way for the lightning of the thunder, ²⁷then he saw it and declared it; he established it, and searched it out. ²⁸And he (God) said to man, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.'"

Throughout this chapter Job has been asking the reader where is wisdom and understanding to be found, now he begins to answer his own question with the statement, God who sees everything in heaven above and on earth below understands the way to wisdom and understanding and where it is found, because He established it and it has been with Him from the beginning. Only God can fully know wisdom and understanding regarding His ways concerning the inhabitants of the earth and the beginning and end of all things as the following verses of Ecclesiastes show:

- God has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. (Ecclesiastes. 3:11).
- Man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out. (Eccles. 8:17).
- The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favour to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all. ¹²For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them. (Eccles. 9:11-12)

This means that no man can find out the works of God upon the earth. The LORD has designed the universe this way so that no human whether righteous or wicked can find out their future or know what will happen to them tomorrow. With these truths in mind what is the wisdom and understanding of God that Job has in mind?

The answer to Job's question, what is wisdom, is:

- The fear of the LORD is wisdom (Job 28:28).

The answer to his second question, what is, understanding is:

- To turn away from evil is understanding (Job 28:28).

SUMMARY OF WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING

Mankind will never fully understand God's ways with the earth and the human population or God's ways with the wicked and godless and His ways with the innocent and righteous, because mankind's mind is mortal and limited to only seeing portions and fragments of the entire whole. Only God can see the beginning and final outcome of human history in one glance. Ecclesiastes says God has designed the universe this way so no-one can know their future. There are no guaranteed formulas to human life, God has established basic laws, but He has also set in place multitudes of contradictions so no human can know with absolute certainty what will come to pass tomorrow.

Job has shown that men may make themselves great masters by knowledge and wealth and miners discover the treasure hidden in the darkness of the depths of the earth. He is showing that we should all learn from those who make themselves great masters by worldly knowledge and miners who through much searching, danger and hard work make themselves rich with secular treasures to apply their ways to searching out God and what honours Him and let their courage and diligence in seeking wealth that perishes motivate us to labour for the true riches that are better than gold and silver. Mankind digs for gold, yet neglects salvation to eternal life, he searches for precious things out of the earth, but neglects grace.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.