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Sermon Notes

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## **Human Wisdom, True Wisdom, Eternal Wisdom**

### **Job 28**

We come this morning to a magnificent poem, or hymn to WISDOM!

This chapter will celebrate God's wisdom over against man's science by using the illustration of MINING... it will say "We men know how to mine precious materials from the earth, but we don't know where to find wisdom!"

How does Job 28 fit into the flow of this magnificent book?

Well, at one level, it gives us a welcome break from the overwhelming themes of Job's suffering... and from the cycles of dialog and contentious debate with his three unsympathetic friends. For twenty-five grueling chapters, we have been swimming in the turbulent and dark waters of Job's agonies... the loss of most of his possessions, the death of his ten children, and the overwhelming pain of his diseases. For twenty-five chapters, we have seen this godly man try to make some sense of his afflictions in the context of his understanding of Almighty God.

Making matters much, much worse... we have watched his three friends, Eliphaz, Zophar, and Bildad, unfold with ever-increasing intensity and heartlessness their basic theology: you are suffering greatly because you have sinned greatly. And we have heard Job refute them again and again with increasingly intense cries of his innocence. Before we get Job's final defense

in chapters 29-31, the book of Job gives us a sweet interlude... this magnificent hymn to wisdom.

Who spoke this hymn? We don't know. The text seems to ascribe it to Job himself who says these words as part of his final speech.

It doesn't really matter. Since the ultimate author of all scripture is God the Holy Spirit, we must see this as a magnificent hymn to wisdom given us by God himself. Since it is in the Old Testament, we expect its insights to be both perfect and limited. The Old Testament is the shadow... Christ is the reality. So while we expect the wisdom literature of the Hebrew people to be inerrant, we also expect to see an infinitely better wisdom in Christ and in the gospel of Christ.

#### I. Human Wisdom on Display in Mining (Job 28:1-11)

##### A. This Section Celebrates the Staggering Levels of Human Ingenuity

1. Human technology is a stunning marvel
2. It far exceeds the capabilities of even the most extraordinary animals and birds, as we shall see
3. Human beings do amazing things by virtue of their brain power
4. The example in this chapter is the extreme complexity of mining
5. But as we shall see... human ingenuity... technology, science as we know it... is not ultimate wisdom; we may be able to extract gold and gemstones from the depths of the earth, but we cannot trade that gold and those gems for true wisdom
6. So however far human science—human wisdom, human technology and ingenuity—takes us, it will fall far short of the wisdom God yearns to work in human hearts
7. Let's walk through how this chapter celebrates human skill in mining

##### B. Human Ingenuity in Mining

1. The existence of rare and valuable materials is a feature of the earliest description of the magnificent earth God made for man to discover from the beginning
2. Gold is the first precious metal mentioned in the Bible... it is mentioned in Genesis 2 as found in the Pishon River flowing from the Garden of Eden to the land of Havilah... gold was a feature of human history right away, and much of human trade and many human wars have been fought over the preciousness of gold
3. The reason gold is so precious is that it is beautiful, malleable, meltable, and incorruptible... but also because it is rare... you don't just walk along a beach or through a forest path and find gold lying on the ground; the old economic law of supply and demand
4. So, gold had to be mined from the earth; so also onyx mentioned in Genesis 2:12
5. Job 28 describes the extreme efforts men have gone to to draw precious materials from below the surface of the earth
6. The history of mining must be fascinating; when did people realize that these precious materials could only be brought forth into the light of day by extreme efforts down into the dark recesses of the earth?
7. Perhaps early on, men found caves that led ever downward... cold, dark, dripping with little trickles of water; they brought torches with them as they explored; maybe it was water they were looking for as they searched; but the flickering torches showed a different kind of shine on a wall here or there; maybe they pried a rock off the wall and brought it up into the daylight and saw that rock flecked with shiny specks
8. In the course of time, they learned to melt and smelt and work and hammer... an early milestone along the way is marked in Genesis 4 with the discoveries of Tubal-Cain:

***Genesis 4:22 Zillah also had a son, Tubal-Cain, who forged all kinds of tools out of bronze and iron.***

Tubal-Cain seems to have been the first blacksmith, learning to work metals like iron and bronze. Given that he was in the lineage of Cain, and a son of Lamech who delighted in being able to wreak vengeance on his enemies, some of this black-smithing must have been for forging weapons.

Herein lies a big part of the problem of man's ingenuity... man is brilliant in science, and then uses his discoveries to make better and more destructive weapons. Mankind learns HOW to do things, but not WHY or WHY NOT to do things... thus to man's amazing brain is given a low level of wisdom that makes him vastly superior to all animals and other creatures; but man's essential wickedness and foolishness makes that low-level technological wisdom actually damaging

#### 9. Ancient Near East mining

John E. Hartley: Civilizations yearned for these precious materials that could only be mined from deep within the earth. They organized expeditions to go to likely sources for various precious materials... "For example, from earliest times Egyptians undertook mining expeditions into the Sinai Peninsula, a sparsely inhabited wilderness with an austere climate. There intense heat and the dry winds, combined with a scarcity of water, made survival next to impossible. Under these severe working conditions, scores of men lost their lives. That is why miners were usually slaves or conscripted gangs. In those distant places, miners sunk tunnels into the earth. Sometimes they worked in vertical shafts, hanging from ropes. They swayed back and forth precariously as they labored to dislodge the minerals from the side of the shaft."

Under the hard rocky earth, the ground had to be essentially assaulted to pry loose its riches. It was a forceful, violent effort and it was deadly dangerous. In some mining endeavors, a large fire would be kindled in the shaft or tunnel which heated the rock to a high temperature. Then, cold water was poured on the superheated rock, causing it to crack. Chunks of rock fell

down and the miners would gather them and haul them up out of the mine for processing.

### C. Mining Celebrated Poetically in Job 28

#### 1. The topic introduced

***Job 28:1-2 There is a mine for silver and a place where gold is refined. <sup>2</sup> Iron is taken from the earth, and copper is smelted from ore.***

#### 2. The challenges of the search for precious materials...

a. the need for light... torches, lanterns to push back the darkness

***Job 28:3 Man puts an end to the darkness; he searches the farthest recesses for ore in the blackest darkness.***

b. Cutting the shaft in austere places where no one wants to live... hanging on a trapeze to do the work

***Job 28:4 Far from where people dwell he cuts a shaft, in places forgotten by the foot of man; far from men he dangles and sways.***

c. The challenge of transforming the earth... mining is not natural; the earth has to be changed

***Job 28:5 The earth, from which food comes, is transformed below as by fire***

d. The products are precious:

***Job 28:6 sapphires come from its rocks, and its dust contains nuggets of gold.***

#### 3. Mankind's technology makes him far superior to all other creatures

***Job 28:7-8 No bird of prey knows that hidden path, no falcon's eye has seen it. <sup>8</sup> Proud beasts do not set foot on it, and no lion prowls there.***

a. Eagles and falcons rule the air; lions rule the earth

b. But these lordly creatures never do anything like this!

c. They know nothing about the subterranean regions of the earth

- d. It is mankind, with his relentless thirst for exploration and knowledge... his scientific mind, his sharp eye; his ability to reason and put together technologies—using iron tools forged in a smith to mine other precious materials... no eagle or falcon or lion or chimpanzee or dolphin can do these things

#### 4. The violence of the effort

***Job 28:9-10 Man's hand assaults the flinty rock and lays bare the roots of the mountains. <sup>10</sup> He tunnels through the rock***

- a. The earth does not yield its precious treasures easily or free of cost; in later years powerful explosives would be used to crack open the earth's treasures
- b. Human lives are lost; mining accidents occur regularly... massive boulders are loosened and roll into the shafts blocking miners down below

#### 5. The discovery of hidden treasures

***Job 28:10-11 his eyes see all its treasures. <sup>11</sup> He searches the sources of the rivers and brings hidden things to light.***

- a. These amazing efforts bring forth treasures from the depths of the earth
- b. They were hidden from view... now the sunlight captures their glory and makes them shine

BUT...

## II. True Wisdom Cannot Be Mined or Purchased (Job 28:12-19)

### A. The Analogy

- 1. The chapter now makes its point...

***Job 28:12-14 "But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell? <sup>13</sup> Man does not comprehend its worth; it cannot be found in the land of the living. <sup>14</sup> The deep says, 'It is not in me'***

2. We know how to mine hidden treasures from the depths of the earth... but we don't know where to find wisdom
3. The true hidden treasure is not found that way; human science cannot discover it
4. We are brilliant at technology... but fools toward God and eternity

#### B. We Don't Know Where to Find Wisdom

1. Vs. 12 ***"Where can wisdom be found?"***
2. We can search for diamonds deep in the earth... we can discover lapis lazuli and sapphires that have a stony fire and it will captivate our eyes and be the envy of our neighbors
3. But we are essentially fools...
4. Where is wisdom to be found on the earth? Where does it dwell?

#### C. Nowhere on Earth Can We Find Wisdom

***Job 28:13-14 it cannot be found in the land of the living. <sup>14</sup> The deep says, 'It is not in me'; the sea says, 'It is not with me.'***

#### D. Furthermore: What is Wisdom Worth?

1. And what is it worth? We cannot set a market price on wisdom
2. We cannot trade our physical treasures for this greater treasure

***Job 28:15-19 It cannot be bought with the finest gold, nor can its price be weighed in silver. <sup>16</sup> It cannot be bought with the gold of Ophir, with precious onyx or sapphires. <sup>17</sup> Neither gold nor crystal can compare with it, nor can it be had for jewels of gold. <sup>18</sup> Coral and jasper are not worthy of mention; the price of wisdom is beyond rubies. <sup>19</sup> The topaz of Cush cannot compare with it; it cannot be bought with pure gold.***

- a. Some rich fool can be surrounded with a rarest gems and gold aplenty

- b. But his restless heart has led him to all manners of corruption... his marriage is ruined, his children hate him, he has enraged and motivated enemies who want to steal all his wealth
- c. He is a rich fool... and he cannot trade his gold and jewels for wisdom
- d. Wisdom was far more valuable than all of them all along, and he was allured and deceived
- e. He learned how to assault the earth for its hidden treasure... but the true treasure was truly hidden

### III. True Wisdom Comes from God Alone (Job 28:20-27)

#### A. The Hymn Reveals the Source of True Wisdom: God Alone

1. Again it asks the same question:

***Job 28:20 "Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell?"***

2. It presses it deeper still

***Job 28:21-22 It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing, concealed even from the birds of the air. <sup>22</sup> Destruction and Death say, 'Only a rumor of it has reached our ears.'***

3. If you could search every square inch of the surface of the earth, you would not find wisdom openly displayed anywhere... like gold and diamonds, it starts out hidden from view... it is concealed treasure
4. But even if you could move all the mountains and probe down into the realm of the grave—the place where death and destruction live—the subterranean regions of the earth—if you could probe deeper and wider than any mining enterprise had ever reached, it would still elude you
5. A rumor of wisdom, a whiff, an aroma would be around you through the whole search as though tantalizing you and tormenting you



6. You would know that something called WISDOM existed, but you could never find it
7. You are smart... a genius... with all manner of technological achievements which have enriched you with the rarest gems the earth possessed—you uncovered them all and have them on display in your dining halls and storehouses; but you are a fool, ruining your life and finding no lasting peace or joy or pleasure... you are a rich, intelligent, accomplished fool... and you know it
8. A RUMOR of the existence of wisdom is there... a whiff... but you cannot find it anywhere

#### B. BUT God Knows Where to Find It!!

***Job 28:23-24 God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells, <sup>24</sup> for he views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens.***

1. God knows how to find what you are looking for
2. God understands THE WAY to it... a journey to a place where it exists... but it is not a physical journey, rather it is a spiritual one
3. God knows the way to wisdom, for he made the earth and sees every part of it... nothing escapes his notice

#### C. God's Creation Shows His Credentials in Wisdom

***Job 28:25-27 When he established the force of the wind and measured out the waters, <sup>26</sup> when he made a decree for the rain and a path for the thunderstorm, <sup>27</sup> then he looked at wisdom and appraised it; he confirmed it and tested it.***

1. If man is wise in his science... how much wiser is the God who made the world he is studying?
2. God is the creator... we are the students of creation
  - a. God made light; Isaac Newton analyzed it
  - b. God made time and relativity; Albert Einstein studied it and made formulas and harnessed it for nuclear physics

- c. God made all life; biologists and botanists and zoologists analyzed the species and studied their natures and habitats and genes and all that
3. The evidence of God's wisdom is everywhere around us
    - a. God is wise in the force of the wind... sometimes a light gentle zephyr which cools the face of the laborer in the field and causes the magnolia aromas to waft across the town bringing delight; but sometimes, he unleashes gale force winds, ripping and rending and toppling and whipping the ocean into a frenzy; God wisely uses the movements of the air currents to change the weather patterns all over the earth as he alone sees fit and understands
    - b. God is wise in measuring out the waters; there is more than enough water to cover planet earth, as he showed in the days of Noah; but God caused the ocean floor to lower to a hidden topography as he saw fit... he limits the oceans saying "Here your proud waves must halt"; God also measures out the fresh water, knowing how much the plants need in order to survive... and how much man needs as well
    - c. God is wise in making a decree for the rain... deciding very carefully how much to sprinkle on the farms and how frequently; sometimes causing the perfect amount of rain to fall for the farmers to have a bumper crop; other times choosing drought or flood, ruining the crops as he determines best
    - d. God is wise in the path of the storms... the thunderstorms may seem completely random, as the lightning has a jagged, bizarre path of blue-white terror across the sky... but its every movement is dictated by God's wisdom
  4. God made and sustains the entire world by daily wisdom... daily nothing! How about second by second!
  5. Verse 27: God "confirmed and tested" wisdom by creation and by his daily sustaining of creation

Everything in creation, and in daily providence, is a display of the wisdom of God... but only in heaven, when we get to look back

by the revelation of God at what he did every day of human history will the dimensions and details of his wise works be clear to us

***Psalm 111:2-4 Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them. <sup>3</sup> Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever. <sup>4</sup> He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and compassionate.***

D. So... We Who Lack Wisdom... We Can Only Find it from ONE SOURCE: God Himself

1. Human ingenuity and scientific accomplishment will NEVER result in wisdom
2. It will only produce arrogance and tyranny and materialism and warfare and agonies if not tempered by the wisdom God alone can give

IV. Job's Preliminary Definition of True Wisdom (Job 28:28)

***Job 28:28 And he said to man, 'The fear of the Lord-- that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.'***

A. Here is the Beginning of Wisdom!!!

1. The fear of the Lord... which leads to: **Shunning evil**
2. As Job will make very clear in his final defense in chapter 31, his reason for all his zeal for purity is the fear of the Lord

***Job 31:4 Does he not see my ways and count my every step?***

***Job 31:13-14 "If I have denied justice to my menservants and maidservants when they had a grievance against me, <sup>14</sup> what will I do when God confronts me? What will I answer when called to account?"***

B. Understanding the Nature of God's Infinite Power

1. Many verses in Job celebrate the infinite majesty of Almighty God

***Job 37:2-5 Listen! Listen to the roar of his voice, to the rumbling that comes from his mouth. <sup>3</sup> He unleashes his lightning beneath the whole heaven and sends it to the ends of the earth. <sup>4</sup> After that comes the sound of his roar; he thunders with his majestic voice. When his voice resounds, he holds nothing back. <sup>5</sup> God's voice thunders in marvelous ways; he does great things beyond our understanding.***

2. Perhaps no book in the Bible has so many stunning passages that do this!
3. True wisdom consists in believing that such a mighty God exists and is powerfully active in ruling his creation
4. So, the beginning of wisdom is to fear such an awesome God! Not to ignore him as though he doesn't exist or is irrelevant to your life

#### C. Understanding the Nature of Evil

1. Part of the wisdom of God is to identify evil—to expose its nature and treachery
2. At the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam and Eve sought this WISDOM... “what is EVIL?” And for 6000 years we have been accumulating knowledge on the nature of evil
3. The Law of God defines evil by commands and prohibitions... it gives names to evil patterns in long sin lists

***Galatians 5:19-21 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; <sup>20</sup> idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions <sup>21</sup> and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.***

4. Evil is relentless, treacherous, devious, deceptive... the Bible as a whole gives a long treatment of evildoers—kings of Israel and of the Gentiles, merchants, fathers, mothers, children... people in all walks of life doing evil deeds... and seeing where it leads

5. Salvation consists in the people of God being transformed in our minds and hearts so that we HATE EVIL like God does
6. Christ was the perfect man because of this:

***Hebrews 1:9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.***

#### D. Understanding that God Cannot Tolerate Sin

1. Wisdom consists also in us realizing a Day of Judgment is coming
2. God is patient, and does not bring his righteous judgment on sinners immediately; but he warns us to REPENT and FLEE the wrath to come

E. Job Lived this Out: as we will see in great detail in chapter 31!

#### F. BUT True Wisdom is Infinitely Deeper and Broader Than That!

1. Job's sense of true wisdom is, like his sense of everything else, limited by when he lived in redemptive history
2. Jesus Christ had not yet come to be wisdom incarnate, and to live and die to make his followers truly and eternally wise
3. To that we now turn!

#### V. Christ Is God's Eternal Wisdom

##### A. Christ is the Wisdom of God

***1 Corinthians 1:23-24 we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.***

Christ was the wisdom of God incarnate!

- It was wise for God to send his Son into the world to humble us and to show us that we couldn't save ourselves.

- It was wise for Christ to be born in humble circumstances... a stable, a poor and helpless infant wrapped in cloths and laid in a manger
- It was wise for Christ to grow up in the normal way, as it says **“He grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men.”** (Luke 2:52)
- It was wise for him to be concealed from Israel until John the Baptist announced him to the nation as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world
- It was wise for Jesus to live every single moment of his life in perfect obedience to the Law of God – always righteous, always holy, always doing the will of his Father, weaving together a history of perfect righteousness lived out in daily life
- It was wise for Christ to do great signs and wonders among the people, showing his status as the only begotten Son of God
- It was wise for Christ to teach perfect doctrine, speaking with authority unlike any man that ever lived
- It was wise for Christ to display all the attributes of God in his life – holiness, power, truth, love, justice
- It was wise for Jesus to be despised and rejected, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering so he could be a merciful and faithful high priest for us sinners
- It was wise for Christ to die on the cross as a substitute for our sins... equally condemned by both Jews and Gentiles
- It was wise for Christ’s death on the cross to be in perfect fulfillment of many prophecies

- It was wise for Christ to rise from the dead on the third day and show himself to five hundred eyewitnesses
- And it was wise for Christ to send out his church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to be his witness to the ends of the earth and to the end of time

Christ is the WISDOM OF GOD in infinite ways and dimensions we will study and celebrate for all eternity

***Colossians 2:3 in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.***

#### B. Christ Makes His Followers Wise for Salvation

1. Nothing is more foolish than to lose your eternal soul for the powers, possessions, and pleasures of this temporary world

***Matthew 16:26 What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?***

2. Christ came to make US wise for salvation
3. He does this through SCRIPTURE!!!

***2 Timothy 3:15 the holy Scriptures ... are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.***

It is wise for that salvation to come to us in stages... justification by faith alone is WISE... it is wise for God to humble us and save us by simple faith in Christ

It is wise that salvation next unfolds in sanctification... progressive growth in wisdom in the pattern of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit...

IS THIS HAPPENING TO YOU?

Does the FEAR OF THE LORD cause you to be holy every day? To hate sin and put it to death by the Spirit

It will be wise for God to finish our salvation instantly at the end of the world:

***1 Corinthians 15:52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.***

Then for all the redeemed from every tribe, nation, people, and language on earth, these words will be perfectly true:

***1 Corinthians 1:30 Christ Jesus... has become for us wisdom from God-- that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.***

So... as we conclude... wisdom is found in Christ and Christ is found in the BIBLE... saturate your mind and heart in this book, this treasure trove of God's wisdom for the salvation of your soul!