

Where Do You Find Wisdom?

Where shall wisdom be found? Job 28.12

The discussion of Job & his friends really hinges on one critical topic that goes beyond just good and evil, sinning, cursing and the like. The issue is wisdom. For at the heart of the issue the 4 of them are trying to figure out what it going on with Job. 3 think they have the answer, but they are wrong. The 4th, Job, does not know the answer but wants to. And he is the one who knows what he is looking for. Because at the heart of what is going on in Job's life is the matter of wisdom. How else will you know what you have found, once you have found it?

In the Depths of the Earth (1-11)

Man digs deep into the earth for all kinds of things. Silver, gold, iron, copper. He digs shafts far beyond the travels of the average person. The depths are so far away, even the birds of prey & the mighty lion do not see or go there.

Man—not the animals—digs not for a place to sleep or hide, but for what he considers valuable. Metals & minerals; precious metals and gems.

But there is one thing beyond his reach as he travels in the depths of the earth: Wisdom.

The Question: Where can Wisdom be Found? (12-14)

Where is wisdom to be found? Where do we find understanding?

More than that, how valuable is it? Especially compared with silver, gold, gem stones.

To answer the first questions, it is not in the depths of the earth, nor is it in the depths of the sea. Why? Because it something completely different from what we materialists know about, and thus seek for. It is on a different plain of existence altogether.

It is for that reason that the normal human commodities of exchange are insufficient to acquire it. Insufficient funds!

The Poor Comparisons (15-19)

Gold, silver, onyx, sapphire, coral, crystal, pearls, topaz, no matter how rare, no matter how precious, cannot secure a bit of wisdom. The exchange rate it much too high!

The Question Again: Where is Wisdom Found? (20-22)

What is the source of wisdom? Where is understanding stored? A mystery!

No living thing has seen it. The sharpest eyes of the birds of prey cannot catch a glimpse of it. Even the ultimate repositories of humanity—death and destruction—can only acknowledge that they have heard of wisdom and understanding—but never have seen or known them.

So what hope is there for Job and his friends to find wisdom? Where can they find real understanding of the deep issues of life?

More than that, where can you find wisdom? Where do you go to find the understanding of what is going on, and thus, how to live successfully?

The Answer: (23-27)

God knows. Unlike the animals, the birds, even man, he sees everything. At the very beginning of creation, he saw wisdom. He declared what wisdom is. He established wisdom, searched it out and then provided the answer that Job and his friends were looking for.

He provided the answer that you and I are looking for: Wisdom lodges with God. It began with him, it remains with him.

The Heart of the Matter: (28)

The fear of the LORD is wisdom. Turning away from evil is understanding. Wisdom—true wisdom—is found in relationship with God alone.

This is what Moses had in mind when on the east bank of the Jordan River, on the plains of Moab, he gave a summary of the history and relationship of the new nation of Israel.

See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today? (Deuteronomy 4:5-8)

One nation had the special relationship with the Creator of heaven and earth. One nation that was chosen, established, protected and then guided to this very spot next to the promised land.

One nation was given a set of laws to obey—not to get into the relationship, but because they were already in that relationship by God's choice. And once there, the keeping of the laws and commandments was for their benefit, not harm. It was their wisdom as well as their righteousness.

A later biblical author will tell us that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom (Psalm 111.10), and that by practicing the fear of the LORD good understanding will come.

At the most basic of levels, fearing God and keeping his commandments is the most essential thing. Isn't that the summation of Qoheleth's searching in Ecclesiastes? After all of his delving into all aspects of human existence, his conclusion is very simple: *Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man (12.12).*

Proverbs 8.13 tells us that *the fear of the LORD is hatred of evil.*

What then is the fear of the LORD? Is it to be terrified of him? Is that why we should obey all these commandments, because he will punish us?

Not at all. God knows his creation intimately, because he made it. He established the laws of how things work. And so he gives us commands to that in time, we will also know how things work—and there is the wisdom and understanding that we need.

Later in Proverbs 8, wisdom says this: *"And now, O sons, listen to me: blessed are those who keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors. For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD, but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death."* (Proverbs 8:32-36)

It begins with relationship, and obedience then follows. What results from that obedience is understanding, which is exactly what we need in times of trouble.

Understanding is what Job needs as he tries to figure out what is going on—why he, how has obeyed the revealed will of God, is suffering so much. He has the relationship, he knows where wisdom is found—now he is looking for the understanding of what is going on.

Understanding is what we need when we ask those “why?” questions.

Who we fear makes a difference, however. Let us not forget that.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.

But many of us fear other things, even other people. And there is where we get into trouble. Proverbs 29.25 tells us that *the fear of man—other people—lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.*

When we listen to those competing voices, as Adam did in the garden, instead of God’s, we are caught in a snare.

Why? Because by listening to the competing voices, we make a decision that we will trust someone other than the God who created heaven and earth with wisdom. And thus we get snared, just like a bird or animal in the trap of a hunter who intends harm, not good for what is caught.

And thus the author of Proverbs provides us with a very secure command with a promise:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Note that the trust cannot be fleeting, half-hearted. It must be a total commitment to take God at his word, to trust his word, to do his word.

Note also that it is a commitment to avoid self-trust instead of God-trust. My understanding is very limited. So is yours. We do not see very far. Even our sense of history only goes back to about age 2. God’s knowledge goes back to the beginning, and encompasses everything.

All of God’s commands are pure and good—read Psalm 119 for conformation. But God gives more than just commandments. He gives promises. He gives salvation. He gives assurance. And with each of these categories, he calls for us to trust. When we do, because we fear him, that will be our wisdom.

Moses gave that wonderful sermon on the east bank of the Jordan before the people were to cross. In a similar fashion, we stand on the bank of another river, waiting to go into a much better promise land—a land where we will be with him, in fullness of joy.

Are you trusting him as you begin to put your foot in the water? If you are his, he promised to bring you through to the other side. As you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, the only reason not to fear evil is because he promised to be with you. Trust him with all your heart. He will never leave you or forsake you.