

Job 28:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof.

Analysis

It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof—wisdom is not a market commodity. The Hebrew sugar (רָגַד, "gotten") in some manuscripts, or natan (נָתַן, "given") in others, emphasizes exchange impossibility. Shaqal (שָׁקַל, "weighed") refers to the ancient practice of weighing precious metals for payment. Job asserts that no amount of wealth purchases wisdom—it exists in a different economy entirely.

This verse begins a series (15-19) listing increasingly valuable treasures, all inadequate to obtain wisdom. The progression demonstrates that multiplying earthly wealth—even to astronomical amounts—doesn't approach wisdom's value. Jesus taught this same principle: "what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). The rich young ruler possessed great wealth but lacked wisdom, departing sorrowfully when confronted with the cost of discipleship (Matthew 19:22). Material prosperity and spiritual wisdom operate in different spheres; the former cannot purchase the latter. Wisdom comes through grace, not transaction.

Historical Context

In ancient economies, gold and silver functioned as universal currency. Job's assertion that these precious metals cannot purchase wisdom would shock his audience—what couldn't be bought with gold and silver? This rhetorical strategy prepares for verse 28's revelation: wisdom comes through fearing God, not

through any human resource or achievement. The passage critiques both ancient and modern materialism that assumes wealth solves all problems.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does our culture's confidence in wealth's power to solve problems blind us to wisdom's different economy?
 2. What does it mean that wisdom is received as grace rather than earned or purchased?
 3. How should recognizing that 'it cannot be gotten for gold' reshape our priorities regarding career, wealth accumulation, and spiritual formation?

Interlinear Text

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|-------|----------------------------|-------|-----------------|-------|---------|-------------------|
| לֹא | יִתְקַחַת | יְהִי | סְגָוָר | לֹא | יִלְאַת | לְשָׁקָל |
| H3808 | It cannot be gotten | | for gold | H8478 | H3808 | be weighed |

בְּ סֶעֶד מִחִירָה:
neither shall silver for the price
H3701 H4242

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 16:16 (Parallel theme): How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!

Proverbs 8:19 (Parallel theme): My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver.

