

Job 28:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold.

Analysis

The gold and the crystal cannot equal it—even combining multiple precious materials doesn't match wisdom's value. Hebrew *zekukith* (זְקֻקִית, "crystal") likely refers to glass, rare and valuable in antiquity, or possibly rock crystal (quartz). **And the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold** uses *temurah* (תְּמֻרָה, "exchange"), meaning barter or substitution, and *keli paz* (כְּלֵי פָז), literally "vessels of refined gold," meaning the finest golden articles.

Job's economic argument escalates: not merely gold (verse 15), but gold plus crystal, plus the finest golden craftsmanship—still inadequate. Wisdom transcends all human valuation systems. This anticipates Paul's language about Christ as wisdom: "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). The supreme treasure is a Person, not a commodity, obtained through relationship, not transaction. Peter echoes this: you were redeemed "not with corruptible things, as silver and gold... but with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18-19). Divine wisdom required divine sacrifice, not human currency.

Historical Context

Glass-making was rare and expensive in the ancient Near East (more common after Roman innovations). Combining gold and glass/crystal represented peak luxury. Refined gold vessels were treasures of temples and palaces. Job's audience would recognize these as the ultimate valuables—yet wisdom surpasses them

infinitely. This subverts materialistic values, pointing toward spiritual priorities that transcend economic calculation.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Christ as 'the wisdom of God' (1 Corinthians 1:24) fulfill Job's search for wisdom beyond price?
2. What does it mean that wisdom's value transcends all human calculation and comparison?
3. How should recognizing wisdom's supreme worth affect our investment of time, energy, and resources?

Interlinear Text

וְתִמְמָה וְכַמְתָה לֹא יִعַרְךְ בָהּ יְבָבֵן יְזִכּוֹן יְתִהְעַכְבֵר
H3808 cannot H6186 H2091 and the crystal H2137 it and the exchange H8545

כַּלְיָן
H3627
of it shall not be for jewels
כְּלֵי
H6337
of fine gold

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 22:1 (Parallel theme): And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.