

Job 28:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies.

Analysis

No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls—even naming these precious items in comparison to wisdom is inappropriate. Hebrew ramoth (רָמוֹת, "coral") refers to red coral, highly prized for jewelry. Gabish (גָּבֵישׁ, "pearls") may refer to crystal or pearls. **For the price of wisdom is above rubies** uses meshek (מְשֵׁךְ, "price"), meaning acquisition or drawing out, and peninim (פְּנִינִים, "rubies"), probably referring to corals or pearls, possibly rubies. The comparison is dismissed—wisdom so transcends these valuables that mentioning them together seems absurd.

This verse echoes Proverbs 3:15 ("She is more precious than rubies") and 8:11 ("wisdom is better than rubies"), establishing a canonical theme: wisdom's incomparable worth. The repetition across wisdom literature emphasizes this foundational truth: no earthly treasure compares to fearing the Lord. Jesus commanded: "lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:19-20). Earthly treasures—coral, pearls, rubies—are temporary; wisdom is eternal. The wise merchant sold all to purchase the pearl of great price (Matthew 13:45-46)—Christ Himself, God's wisdom incarnate.

Historical Context

Coral from the Red Sea, pearls from the Persian Gulf, and rubies from India were luxury trade goods circulating in ancient Near Eastern commerce. Mentioning

them together represents the sum of commercial wealth. Job's dismissal—they're not even worth mentioning in comparison to wisdom—would shock an audience familiar with these items' astronomical value. The passage exposes materialism's bankruptcy regarding ultimate values.

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 obsession with luxury goods (modern equivalents of coral, pearls, rubies) reveal misplaced values?
2. What does it mean practically to 'sell all' to obtain the pearl of great price (Christ, God's wisdom)?
3. How should recognizing wisdom's supreme worth affect our daily choices about time, money, and priorities?

Interlinear Text

שָׁבֵן	בְּנֵי	שְׁבִיבָה	לֹא	בְּאַמְתָּה	וְתִּתְּנִשְׁאַל	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי
shall be made of coral	or of pearls			H3808	No mention	for the price	of wisdom	
H7215	H1378			H2142	H4901		H2451	

מִפְנִים:
is above rubies

H6443

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 3:15 (Parallel theme): She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

Proverbs 31:10 (Parallel theme): Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

Ezekiel 27:16 (Parallel theme): Syria was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of the wares of thy making: they occupied in thy fairs with emeralds, purple, and broidered work, and fine linen, and coral, and agate.

Lamentations 4:7 (Parallel theme): Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire:

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