



Introduction

I wonder if I was to ask you to think of a metal – which one would you think of first?

(I would not be surprised if quite a few of the ladies in the room are wearing something made of gold. It is quite likely that there are men too wearing a gold ring on their finger. My grandfather used to wear a gold watch in his waistcoat pocket.)

Gold has been known and used freely and fashioned skilfully in the oldest of civilisations. Indeed gold makes its first appearance in the second chapter of the Book of Genesis, verse 11, .right at the beginning of the Bible. We are told that in the land of Havilah (probably in Saudi Arabia), in the vicinity of the Garden of Eden, there was gold and further that the gold was good.

But my question to you is this? Why has man valued gold so highly? Why is gold good? Why do miners – hundreds of thousands of them – spend their working lives searching and digging for gold?

Reasons

First of all, gold is good and highly prized because it is so **warmly beautiful**.

Gold is simply a beautiful metal – and it retains its beauty. It is also so adaptable to shaping and forming. It can be melted without harm. It can be hammered into thin leaves, being extremely malleable. Remember the Queen of Sheba? In 1 Kings, Chapter 10, verses 1 and 2, we read how she came to visit King Solomon in Jerusalem. She brought Solomon spices, large quantities of gold and precious stones. She presented 120 talents of gold – which represents about 4 metric tons. That is a huge amount! But there was much more! We also read that Solomon received yearly 666 talents of gold – about 23 metric tons. Most of this gold was used to beautify the Temple in Jerusalem where much of it was used as gold leaf to overlay the wood inside the building, the altars, the cherubim, the doors and the pillars. It must have looked magnificent!

Secondly, gold is so **enduring**. It never rusts like iron nor tarnishes like silver, neither does it dissolve away. We have all heard about the fabulous treasure of the Egyptian Pharaoh, Tutankhamen. He reigned some 3350 years ago. Yet today we know about this boy king mainly because of the wonderful gold objects found in his tomb. After all the thousands of centuries, when the tomb was opened, the gold objects were just like 'new'.

Thirdly, gold has been valued because of its **scarcity**. It is difficult to extract from the earth. Miners have worked down the centuries seeking this precious metal. Many have given their lives in the pursuit of gold. The 'lure of gold' is very strong. Ancient kings fought wars to gain access to gold mines. There have been several dramatic gold rushes throughout history. Having gold means power! Even today the values of the currencies of the world are set every day to the price of gold.

From the beginning to the end of the Bible there are so many references to gold that you would need an extensive Bible Concordance to find them all. Remember in the book of Revelation, Chapter 21, verses 15, 18 and 21, gold is mentioned extensively. Here, the most precious of metals is envisioned as constituting the Holy City and its streets – gold transparent as glass. Even the instrument used to measure the Holy City of God was a gold reed.

Gold cannot buy wisdom

Gold is truly been part of human civilisation – some people think that the book of Job is the oldest part of the Bible. In Chapter 28 of Job we read the most detailed description of the miner working deep underground. The writer of Job asks the most fundamental question "**Where is wisdom to be found?**" The answer comes back, "It cannot be bought with the finest gold nor can its price be weighed in silver." (It is worth remarking that in Chapter 28 of Job gold is mentioned five times, while each of the other most precious items is mentioned but once.)

So here is the nub of the matter. Gold may be important in men eyes but what can be said about wisdom? It is hard enough finding gold, but where is wisdom to be found? Can you buy wisdom with gold? Well, you could say that that gold could purchase you an education, but all the gold in the world cannot buy true wisdom. So how do we get wisdom? Where is it to be found? Job found the answer in verse 23 "God understands the way to it and He alone knows where it dwells".



Remember how we noted the three attributes of gold. Can they help us find out **true wisdom – the wisdom of God?** Proverbs Chapter 16, verse 16 says: “How much better to get wisdom than gold, to choose understanding than silver!” We need to seek out the wisdom of God with even more effort and determination than miners do to find gold. Where do we find these glorious nuggets of wisdom? Most surely we find them in God’s Word.

First then we said that gold is **warmly beautiful**. Remember right at the beginning of the apostles’ ministry in Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 3 verses 1 – 9 we read how Peter and John entered the Temple courts. A crippled beggar asked them for money. Peter, you remember looked straight at the beggar, as did John. Then Peter said “Look at us!” so the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. Then Peter said “Silver and gold have I none, but what I have I give you. **In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.**” Then taking him by the right hand, Peter helped him up, and instantly the beggar’s feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the Temple courts, walking and jumping and praising God! Truly here we see something warmly beautiful – this is the true wisdom of God, to accept the offer of the Lord Jesus into your life. Peter went on to say to the people watching, “**By faith in the Name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ Name and the faith that comes through Him that has given him this complete healing, as you all can see.**” Oh friend how true that is! Truly the salvation of Jesus Christ is warmly beautiful!

The apostle James sums up the beauty of the wisdom of God in Chapter 3, verse 17 of his epistle – “But the wisdom that comes from the Kingdom of Heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.” Yes, God’s wisdom is warmly beautiful.

Secondly we said that gold is **enduring**. Surely the most enduring work of God is revealed in this tremendous nugget of truth from God’s Word:

First Chapter of Paul’s epistle to the Colossians, verse 15, Paul writes, “He (that is Jesus Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.” Paul continues, “**For by Him (that is Jesus Christ) all things were created, things in heaven and on earth** (and that includes gold found in the earth), **visible and invisible....He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.....For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him (i.e. Jesus Christ), and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things....by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross.**”

What a nugget of God’s wisdom! Jesus Christ is before all things, in all things, reconciling all things. Hallelujah! Jesus is the same yesterday, today and for ever! Amen!

Here is another golden nugget of God’s wisdom. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians Chapter 1, verse 18 onwards and in particular read verse 30 (one of my most favourite verses of Scripture) “**It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.**” Here is the true enduring wisdom of God – the Lord Jesus Christ is our wisdom. Verse 24 – “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God”.

Outwardly, we are wasting away, says Paul, yet inwardly we are being renewed every day. Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all! We fix our eyes not on what is seen (gold) but on what is unseen (eternal glory).

Finally we have said that gold is prized because it is so **scarce**. What can be said here about God’s wisdom? What nuggets can we find from the Word of God? Here are some well-known words of Paul in his letter to the Romans, Chapter 11, verse 33 which spring to mind. **They should be known by all Christian miners!** “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgements, and His paths beyond tracing out!”

The epistle of Paul to the Colossians, Chapter 2, verse 2, “My purpose is that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

Two words stand out (that all miners understand) – “depth” and “hidden”. In South Africa some of the largest and deepest gold mines of the world are to be found. Huge volumes of rock are brought to the surface by tens of thousands of miners, sweating deep underground – up to two miles deep. The gold bearing rock produces tiny quantities of gold – just a few hundred tons a year, I understand. Gold is truly buried at great depth, a scarce metal found in deep places, hidden from man, until the miner brings it out. Similarly the wisdom of God, needs to be



brought out and revealed – for many Jesus Christ is only a swear word – but for the few that find Him, Jesus is the “riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God”.

Are we surprised then that the men who hew and drag this precious metal to the surface do not experience the satisfaction gold would seemingly promise to bring them? Klondike and Johannesburg saw men who were disillusioned even in the possession of great wealth. Generally speaking, where gold is, men often lose the ability to control themselves. Witness the terrible scourge of HIV/AIDS. Quite a few miners suffer from this terrible disease. Men die in the prime of life, leaving widows and sometimes orphans. It is sadly often the case that where any material is mined, some insatiable demon seems to grip the minds and souls of men who work below.

The International Miners' Mission is interested in people – especially those who work in mines. Because of their working conditions they are often regarded as a race apart, even in their own country.

The International Miners' Mission seeks to enable men and women, who are on fire with the love of the Lord Jesus Christ to go out into the mining towns and villages to live, work and witness for their Saviour. Wherever possible, they are evangelists and pastors drawn from the people of their own country. Indeed in a few cases they have been miners themselves. The aim is to come alongside miners and their families in their many difficulties and sorrows, care for physical and spiritual needs as they are able and point them to the fount of all wisdom, Jesus Christ, who alone can save them.

Believers, who find Christ, where is the hidden treasure of wisdom and knowledge, are then encouraged to grow in the faith and become disciples of the Kingdom of God. Miners' missionaries have a constant motivation – the love of Christ in their hearts. They care that the hidden treasure of the precious Wisdom of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, is brought to those who are helpless, lost and in need of salvation. May the Holy Spirit motivate us all, through prayer and giving so that miners and their families throughout the world hear the Gospel.

One more nugget from the Lord Jesus himself in Revelation, Chapter 3, verse 17 onwards – words of Christ to His church: **“You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But do you not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor and blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so that you may become rich; and white clothes to wear... here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with Me.”**

Amen