

An outline of the Book of Job up to this point is as follows:

- Job 1-2: The Background of Job's Suffering
- Job 3-27: Three Cycles of Speeches Between Job and his Friends
- Job 28: The Wisdom of God

Chapter 28 is critical to understanding the entire book of Job. It is inserted by the author after the three cycles of speeches between Job and his friends end, dividing the book in half. They are not the words of Job or of his friends. The challenge of the chapter is to answer the question in Job 28:12: "Where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell?"

28:1 "There is a mine for silver and a place where gold is refined.

28:2 Iron is taken from the earth, and copper is smelted from ore.

28:3 Man puts an end to the darkness; he searches the farthest recesses for ore in the blackest darkness.

28:4 Far from where people dwell he cuts a shaft, in places forgotten by the foot of man; far from men he dangles and sways.

28:5 The earth, from which food comes, is transformed below as by fire;

28:6 sapphires come from its rocks, and its dust contains nuggets of gold.

28:7 No bird of prey knows that hidden path, no falcon's eye has seen it.

28:8 Proud beasts do not set foot on it, and no lion prowls there.

28:9 Man's hand assaults the flinty rock and lays bare the roots of the mountains.

28:10 He tunnels through the rock; his eyes see all its treasures.

28:11 He searches the sources of the rivers and brings hidden things to light.

Job 28:1-11 gives an example of mining in order to contrast human skill and ingenuity with Divine wisdom.

People mine into the earth and bring forth precious stones and metals. They enter into the deepest darkness dangling by ropes, cutting shafts, and going places where no other creature on the earth has gone. Nothing else on earth sees what man has seen, not even the falcons which soar in the sky and have the keenest of sight (28:7). The greatest beasts have not gone where man has gone (28:8).

In short, humans have been made in the image of God and so they do these wondrous things that no other creature can do. Even so, he does not have the ability to find wisdom.

28:12 "But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell?

28:13 Man does not comprehend its worth; it cannot be found in the land of the living.

28:14 The deep says, 'It is not in me'; the sea says, 'It is not with me.'

28:15 It cannot be bought with the finest gold, nor can its price be weighed in silver.

28:20 "Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell?

28:21 It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing, concealed even from the birds of the air.

28:22 Destruction and Death say, 'Only a rumor of it has reached our ears.'

Man is industrious; he is skillful; he accomplishes great achievements in science and technology, but he cannot find wisdom. It is beyond his grasp. It cannot be found in the land of the living, nor in the depths of the sea. It cannot be purchased. It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing. Even death has only heard rumor of it.

The object of the passage is to show that wisdom is not to be found in the most profound science, nor by penetrating to the farthest extent of which man is capable in the earth, nor by any human investigations whatsoever. None of these things revealed the great plans of the Almighty in reference to His moral government, and particularly to the points which engrossed the attention of Job and his friends. Where true wisdom is to be found he proceeds to state in the subsequent verses (Barnes).

**28:23 God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells,
28:24 for he views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens.**

Only God knows the way to wisdom and its dwelling place. It belongs to Him and Him alone. God sees and knows everything. He looks upon the whole universe (28:24). Man sees only a few things at a time. He cannot fully grasp what has come before him and he does not know what is to come.

In order to understand this passage clearly, we need to differentiate between the kinds of wisdom that are in the Bible. Wisdom might be divided into three different categories.

1. The Bible refers to academic knowledge or skill as wisdom.

For example, the wisdom that God had given Bezalel in Exodus 31:2-5 was wisdom related to craftsmanship. There God says, "See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. *I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship, to make artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze, and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, that he may work in all kinds of craftsmanship.*"

2. The Bible refers to wisdom as the application of truth to life.

This second category of wisdom is most well-known. It is common in the Book of Proverbs. Proverbs gives us truths that tell us how to deal with life, and how to function in this world on a day-to-day basis. It teaches us right from wrong. Many of the things in this category are common sense. See examples:

- Proverbs 10:4: Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth.
- Proverbs 11:14: Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.
- Proverbs 11:22: Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman without discretion.
- Proverbs 25:14: Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of his gifts falsely.
- Proverbs 26:4: Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will also be like him.
- Proverbs 26:14: As the door turns on its hinges, so does the sluggard on his bed.

3. The Bible refers to wisdom as God's secret ways; this is wisdom beyond man's power to see or discern.

The first two categories of wisdom are easily discernable. However, there is also a wisdom hidden in God. This wisdom is far beyond our innate human ability to understand. This type of wisdom is spoken of in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 1:21-24

21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

22 Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom,

23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,

24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Notice first that God decided, by His wisdom, to make it impossible for people to know Him through their wisdom. God's wisdom involves concealing knowledge of Himself from those who rely on human wisdom.

Secondly, the wisdom of God that Paul is speaking of is counterintuitive. It is a wisdom that is above and beyond anything humans could imagine. In this case, God's wisdom is seen in Jesus Christ crucified; He is the means of overcoming evil and bringing salvation to the world. The cross reveals more wisdom than could ever enter the mind of man.

The wisdom in Job fits into this third category. That is the whole point of verses 1-11. Man can discover many things, even things hidden in the depth of the earth that no other creature has seen, but he cannot find the hidden wisdom of God.

Creation and Wisdom.

Proverbs 8 is of particular importance in understanding wisdom. In verses 22-35 wisdom speaks. She says,

22 "The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old;

23 I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began.

24 When there were no oceans, I was given birth, when there were no springs abounding with water;

25 before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth,

26 before he made the earth or its fields or any of the dust of the world.

27 I was there when he set the heavens in place, when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep,

28 when he established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep,

29 when he gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep his command, and when he marked out the foundations of the earth.

30 Then I was the craftsman at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence,

31 rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind.

Wisdom was present at the creation. When God made heaven and earth, wisdom was there. When God set the boundary to the sea, wisdom was there. Wisdom was constantly at His side. In short, wisdom is built into creation. In a sense, it is embodied in the creation. We see a marvelous and conspicuous manifestation of God's wisdom in the natural world around us. And yet there are many things that are hidden as well.

For example, we can see wisdom of the second category in the behavior of creation. Look at ants, for example. They work hard, they store food and they flourish. Their behavior portrays wisdom; it shows that those who are industrious prosper (Prov. 6:6ff.). Yet creation is full of the hidden wisdom of God (things we cannot understand) as verse Job 28:25-27 shows.

**28:23 God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells,
 28:24 for he views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens.
 28:25 When he established the force of the wind and measured out the waters,
 28:26 when he made a decree for the rain and a path for the thunderstorm,
 NAS 28:27 then He saw it and declared it; He established it and also searched it out.**

It is God's wisdom that sets things in exact order and measure. God understands wisdom for He is the one who appoints every wind to blow in its season; He determines its intensity, its bounds, when, where, how much, and how long each gust shall blow. In a similar way, God made a decree for the rain. He lays up the rainwaters in His storehouses, the clouds, and thence draws them forth, and sends them down upon the earth, in such times and proportions as He thinks fit (from Benson). But more importantly to the Book of Job, not only does He know how to do these things, but *He knows why He does these things as He does*. Man does not. His working in creation is not by chance or hap-hazard. It operates under settled laws (decrees; 28:26).

In verse 27 four verbs are used: God saw wisdom, declared it, established it, and searched it out. Each of these actions implies the operation of God's mind. The things He does are thought through. Verse 27 emphasizes God knows wisdom deeply.

God saw wisdom: He saw it when He displayed it in His works. "He looked upon it in His own eternal mind, as the rule by which He would proceed in the creation and government of all things" (Benson).

God declared wisdom. He made that which was formerly hidden in Himself "evident, first to angels, and then to man, when He created this lower world" (Benson).

This might also mean that God saw wisdom when He made the world and executed His decrees concerning rain, lightning, and thunder. He looked upon it and approved it, and "declared it to others, by His works of nature and providence; for they declare the glory of God, and particularly the glory of His wisdom" (Gill).

God prepared wisdom (or, "**established** it"): Either "prepared" or "established" are possible translations. Both make sense. He **prepared** wisdom for doing all His works, "as if He had, for a long time, been preparing materials for them" (Benson). Or, He **established** wisdom by continuing the order of things which He first set in motion at creation. In other words, for example, there was wisdom when He made a law for the winds. He established this wisdom through the continuation of this law.

God searched wisdom out: This, of course, is figurative. God knows all things; He did not need to search out wisdom in order to understand it; rather, this means "that it was not the result of chance, nor did it spring up of its own accord, but it was a matter of 'intelligent investigation' on the part of God to know what constituted true wisdom" (Barnes).

28:28 And he said to man, 'The fear of the Lord-- that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.'"

Job 28:28 sounds very much like Proverbs (see Prov. 1:7), but it relates to the hidden wisdom of God. God has made us according to wisdom. God has made the whole world according to wisdom. Therefore, to live rightly, we must follow the precepts of wisdom.

In relation to the Book of Job and answering the questions of “Why do the righteous suffer?” and “Why is there evil in the world?” we need to see that the answers to these questions fall in the third category of wisdom – the hidden wisdom of God. We do not comprehend this wisdom. We cannot know God’s ultimate plan and the way it will come to pass. We cannot see how evil and suffering accomplish God’s perfect purposes. We must be content in knowing that God is working in wisdom that is often counterintuitive to the way that we think.

When we find ourselves asking, “Why did God do that, or allow this, or not stop that?” we must be content in knowing that His wisdom is beyond our grasp. All we can do is continue to live a righteous life, a life in the fear of God.

SUMMARY / REVIEW / CONCLUSION:

The first level of wisdom is attainable by many. People can learn how to do woodworking. They can learn to sew. They can learn to play an instrument.

The second type of wisdom is also easily accessible. It is not obscure. It is not hard to find. It is seen everywhere. It is “common sense wisdom.”

The third type of wisdom is hidden in God. It belongs to Him alone and can only be understood if God chooses to reveal it. In Job 28 this is the wisdom being spoken about.

God is infinite in wisdom (He is omniscient). We can learn of the wisdom of God for all eternity and never come to know it all. However, God has made known His hidden wisdom to us in part. We have been given the Holy Spirit, and have come to know the wisdom of God through the Spirit who “searches all things, even the depths of God” (1 Cor. 2:10). As 1 Corinthians 2:12-13 says, “We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.” However, we also need to know that “now we see in a mirror dimly” (1 Cor. 13:12). We will never fully get all the answers we want unless God reveals them to us. Meanwhile, the fear of God is wisdom; and to shun evil is understanding. We continue in our faith until more is revealed.

This passage serves as a pivot point in the book of Job. We are now aware that there is a hidden wisdom of God that only God can reveal.

Job will give his speech (Job 29-31).

Elihu (a new character) will jump in and give his opinion (Job 33-37).

Then finally, God will speak (Job 38-41) and the book will conclude (Job 42).