

Scripture Reading: Genesis 2:7-15

“7 And Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. 8 Jehovah God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. 9 And out of the ground Jehovah God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. 10 Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads. 11 The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 And the gold of that land is good. Bdelium and the onyx stone are there. 13 The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which goes around the whole land of Cush. 14 The name of the third river is Hiddekel; it is the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates. 15 Then Jehovah God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.”

'The Gold of Havilah'

We have begun a long journey through the Book of Genesis which I will often refer to as the Book of Beginnings!

- Genesis lays the proper foundation for all the rest of Scripture and if we get things wrong here, or pay little attention to what God reveals here, then we will have problems with the rest of the Bible!
- At the same time, the rest of the Bible often expands, enhances and enriches our understanding of what is first revealed here in the Book of Beginnings.

We saw this in the first chapter where we were told of the six days of creation.

Then we looked to Psalm 19, the closing chapters of Job, the first chapters of John and Colossians as well as Hebrews to more fully understand how the Triune God created and controls all that we can see & touch or even know of His creation.

Here in the second chapter we are seeing God expand on His work of the sixth day with a focus on the creation of man & woman. That is obviously the major theme and thrust of this chapter and we will see how it flows together with the story of the fall and redemption in chapters three & four.

- The doctrine of man and the institution of marriage are then fleshed out in all the rest of the Scriptures.

There are also some not so minor details that are given here which also lead to some major themes and discussions in the rest of the Scriptures and that is what we have been considering these past few weeks. Two weeks ago we looked at Gardens and last week we considered rivers and this week we will consider the treasures mentioned in the Land of Havilah. As we did with gardens & rivers we will look at the physical properties of precious metals & jewels as well as how they have been used down through history....

- AND Lord willing, we see how they play a significant part in God's great story of salvation.
- With man seen as the crown jewel of God's Creation

It is interesting to note that with all three, we see them here before the fall as part of what God declared was very good...

- AND we see them all again in the new creation described in great detail in the final chapters of Revelation!

Our text says that in the land of Havilah, “there is gold. 12 And the gold of that land is good. Bdelium and the onyx stone are there.”

- God at the very beginning makes mention of precious metals and jewels that are to be found in His good creation.

Gold and its close cousin silver have unique properties that make them very valuable and they are no strangers to the Scriptures.

You will find almost 400 references to gold in the Bible and almost another 300 for silver.

- **Adding the references to the various jewels would put us well over a thousand verses to consider, so obviously this could be an entire series of sermons rather than just one!**

Even after the fall of man, precious metals and jewels were seen as having great value, as great objects of beauty and utility. As with everything else in the creation that groans under the sin of man, such beauty and wealth comes with a caution after fall: The Apostle Paul tells young Timothy, “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

Jesus warned His disciples about such straying when He said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

So this led me to ask a couple of questions...

- **Will there be precious metals and jewels in heaven or our eternal state?**

The answer to this is pretty obvious from the Bible, but IS IT something that we think enough about?

We read about all the gold and jewels in the New Jerusalem, but do we really see how they delight God and should delight us as well? God created this earth full of gold and other precious metals as well as many jewels and He goes on to tell man about them!

- **It should be obvious He wanted us to use them & appreciate them!**

OK, so the New Heaven and the New Earth are going to be beautiful places with lots of precious metals and jewels adorning its structures. BUT when we consider the gold of Havilah we know that down through history it has been much more than just a thing of beauty... It has always been used as a medium of exchange in commerce in some way.

- **So perhaps the tougher question to ask is whether there will be money in the New Creation?**

It is pretty safe to say there will be NO fiat currencies after the 2nd Coming of Jesus, but could there be an honest means of exchange for transactions that take place in eternity? I was asked by one of our young men this past week if there would be work in heaven and I assured him that there would be because Adam was given tasks to do before the fall. Even after the fall, work itself is not condemned, just the toil and futility that have resulted from the fall as we shall see in chapter three.

The ‘what if’ speculations are always dangerous, but God did give us these details about life and the creation before the fall: There would be work and there would be valuables.

- **In other words, we have some hints as to what a glorified Adam & Eve going forth to fill the earth and taking dominion would have looked like?**

Now some are going to think that I am WAY out on the skinny branches thinking about money or individual property before the fall or into eternity, but think about what Jesus told the disciples before his death, burial and resurrection in John 14: “‘Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

Is all the wisdom that is given in Proverbs about wealth & property; about just weights & measures; and honest transactions, there just to keep us in line in our fallen state? The two Great Commandments to love the Lord your God with all your heart soul mind and strength and to love your neighbor as yourself, will surely be carried on perfectly for all eternity in our glorified state... So why would the just and productive society that is also called for in these other commands not be the way we love our neighbors in eternity?

- Certainly something to ponder!

However, whatever we may or may not believe could or could not have happened before the fall or into eternity, we do know that the precious metals and jewels first mentioned here in chapter two will go on to play a major role in human history and in God's story of salvation.

It is very important that we have the right perspective on that history. Our secular friends want property rights and commerce and money to evolve in much the same way that man lifted himself up from the slime to be homo sapiens with evolution.

- You begin with the primitive and simple and move to the more civilized and complex.

So you begin with the primitive tribe that knows nothing of property rights and has a basic barter system: Someone who has too many potatoes trades them for corn or whatever they might need.

As the civilization advanced they started to use common objects as money so they did not always have to make a straight trade: They would use sea shells or stones as money. As man advanced he discovered gold and silver and saw how useful they could be to use instead of shells. Of course in our advanced modern societies today, we don't need the physical stuff anymore, we just have electronic accounts and wise money managers at central banks who decide how much we can have and what it will be worth.

Even someone with a PhD. & a Noble Prize in economics like Paul Krugman cannot see the folly in this, because as a proud humanist [*who is a Proverbs fool*] he knows how man has been 'developing' economics since the beginning.

- Now all of this stands in stark contrast to the history given to us here in the Book of Beginnings.

Man does not rise up from the slime, he is made in the image of God and given the task to rule the earth. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, and man was to be a good steward of what God created. The work of filling the earth and taking dominion would have required work and growing families. There would have been many garden/cities as man advanced across the globe & precious metals and jewels would have played a key early role in their beauty and commerce.

- God made a point of telling man where the gold was and He expected him to make good use of it!

Of course things are quite different after the fall, BUT the principles of commerce under God's Law do not change. Man did not begin with sea shells or any other means of exchange, but rather with the precious metals God had provided using just weights and measures. [*example of Abraham in Genesis 29*]

Only as sin progressed in the fall of man did dishonest exchanges & theft come forth as did all other sins. When civilizations were thus ruined & wandered far from God they became very primitive and often resorted to a barter system or sea shells to handle what little economy they had left. When we see primitive conditions in history or even today, we must not think of them as an ancient group that has not yet advanced, but as a group whose rebellion has taken them far from God. We must also remember that ANY advanced civilization that turns from God's order can quickly end up there as well.

- So what is the responsible position that we as Christians should hold with regard to money & riches?

God is NOT opposed to wealth and riches: He is the one that created all those vast quantities of precious metals & jewels and other natural resources!

- **Jehovah God is the one that planted the Garden and made the mountains and rivers to demonstrate what it meant for man to take dominion and fill the earth!**

The problem is the love of money where we allow these riches to take our eyes off of the Lord and turn to whatever means available to expand our wealth. When tempted we need to remember that Jesus said even if we could gather ALL the wealth of this world to ourselves, what would that be in comparison with losing our soul?

- Many times converting to Christ requires that we give up our love of money or being a workaholic.

This is why Jesus told the rich young ruler that he had to sell everything and follow Jesus to be saved: Something he apparently was unwilling to do. So as new creatures in the Body of Christ we have obligations in both directions...

- We are called upon to prosper by loving God and our neighbor: Working hard and creating wealth and beauty.

It might be the kind of riches that we saw God giving King Hezekiah last week or it might be the simple two mites that the widow Jesus saw at the temple had, but each of us should be doing our part.

At the same time we must avoid the love of money that Peter warned us about: Let me return to that passage in its full context:

I Peter 6:6 “Now godliness with contentment is great gain. *[our true riches]* 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.”

- So how do we know if we have strayed into the love of money?

I have always found what I call the rich young ruler test to be very helpful. At various times Linda and I have had honest discussions about the material things that God has brought into our lives. We have always wanted to be able to honestly say that IF God took it all away the next day: It would not change our relationship with Jesus. We should always be ready to ‘sell all’ but we should never fear the prosperity that God might bring to us.

These are evaluations that we have to make all the time in our lives.

You men face this with your calling, and you young men should be watching and learning as you see those older than you seek God’s will. Some of you who are running your own businesses or building a career may be feeling like workaholics because of the long hours, but just as a farmer who does not put in long hours during the planting season does not get much of a harvest, this might be the time where you have to do those hours.

- Just remember what Jesus said about the man who just kept building bigger & bigger barns!

On the other hand some of us in later years may be putting in an incredible amount of hours to keep up a life style that does look like those many barns and it might be time to adjust our priorities.

Both of these require great wisdom and discernment and that is why we will soon learn that it was not good for Adam to be alone...

- You wives have an obligation to be the helpmeets who know their husband and his situation well enough to provide the wise counsel about what should be done.

And yes, young ladies, preparing for marriage is a lot more than ‘finding the right guy’...

- It means learning to be the type of hard-working and wise helpmeet that your husband will need.

Are these types of priorities and decisions important?

The Apostle Paul certainly thought that they were and gives a stunning illustration in the third chapter of his first epistle to the Church at Corinth. Now remember, Paul is the one who most clearly teaches us that our salvation is entirely of grace and NOT of works...

- But he does know that works will follow our conversion, telling the Saints at Ephesus that we were created in Christ Jesus to walk in such works.

Well it turns out that those works will be judged and that is what Paul explained to the Corinthians: In chapter three he accuses them of needing more spiritual milk because of the divisions they have among them, reminding them that God is in control.

I Corinthians 3:7 “So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. 8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. 9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. 10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. 11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

- So the foundation is Christ & our works build on that foundation...

12 “Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” *[saved by Grace & not by works!]*

- The good works we were created in Christ Jesus to do, here represented by the Gold, Silver, and precious stones stand for eternity!

And we begin to understand this right here in Genesis chapter two as God reveals the treasures He has created. Over the next two weeks we will again focus on the importance of man being made in the Image of God and some of what that means:

- In part it means that the most precious jewels of all are God's Saints.

From the precious stones representing the tribes of Israel on the High Priest's Breastplate to the jewels on the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem that carry the names of the Apostles, we see God's precious jewels.

We will sing a hymn of response this morning that focuses on this theme and it should be special to my children who sang it often in our home because it was one of only two hymns we had for family devotions... Humble efforts are better than no efforts!

It may be seen as a children's hymn but it is a hymn that reminds us that God is building His Kingdom and bringing in the fullness of the Gentiles.

Consider how the prophet Malachi looked forward to the coming of God's Kingdom...

Malachi 3:17 ““They shall be Mine,” says Jehovah of hosts, “On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.”

May we be those who celebrate our standing as God's precious jewels and may we strive to build on the foundation of Jesus Christ only those works that will stand for eternity: Gold, silver and precious stones, not wood hay or stubble.

- **And as I said at the beginning, God has given us over a thousand verses in the Bible to help us understand what all of this means!**
- **Something for each of us to ponder for the rest of our days!**

Communion Meditation: Exodus 25

“[instructions for the ark of the covenant] 11 **And you shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and out you shall overlay it, and shall make on it a molding of gold all around.**

[details of the rings & poles] 16 **And you shall put into the ark the Testimony which I will give you. 17 You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits shall be its length and a cubit and a half its width. 18 And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. 19 Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it of one piece with the mercy seat. *[think of Mary at the tomb of Jesus!]***

20 **And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat. 21 You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. 22 And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.”**