

Precious Stones of Scripture

by H.J. Vine

The sermon explores the symbolism of precious stones in the Bible, highlighting the significance of the chrysolite, pearl, and sardonyx in representing the assembly, divine righteousness, and the love of Christ.

Topics: "Divine Righteousness", "Christ's Glory"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches on the symbolic significance of precious stones in the Bible, focusing on the Chrysolite, the One Pearl, the Sardonyx, and the Sapphire. He delves into the divine inspiration and harmony found in the Bible, emphasizing the righteousness and consistency of God. Through these precious stones, he explores the themes of divine righteousness, Christ's sacrificial love for the assembly, heavenly glory, and the universal administration centered in Christ. The sermon highlights the heavenly character of the assembly, the bride of Christ, and the unique symbolism of each precious stone in revealing God's glory and grace.

Transcript

1. The Chrysolite

"The seventh, chrysolite" (Revelation 21:20).

The harmony which any simple believer is enabled to trace all through the Bible confirms him as to its divine inspiration in a way that no mere literary study could do. And that beautiful harmony in which he rejoices also provides him with interesting instruction, as he recognizes everywhere the righteous consistency of his God and Father.

In the closing book of the Bible, where every religious and political matter is seen to reach its complete development; where the manifested righteousness of God is confessed again and again, it is noticeable that the number "seven" is very prominent; and, in chapter 21, where the glory of God shines out, we are told that the heavenly city's wall has twelve foundations, and the seventh is chrysolite. Let us see if we can discover in the writings of the Holy Spirit the reason, and also the meaning of this; for it surely shines there as a symbol of special significance. The city itself is of pure, transparent gold; and that the seventh place in the foundations of its jasper wall is given to the gold stone, or chrysolite, has some important instruction for us.

It might be thought that the most brilliant, the most beautiful, and the hardest of all the precious stones--the diamond--would occupy this place. For that, however, we should have to examine the symbols of Christ's glory; not those of the well-loved bride, the Lamb's wife. The chrysolite is a soft stone comparatively. Its nature is exceptional. Its colour, in accord with its name, is yellowish; and it yields a lustrous polish, with a golden green hue. It is called chrysolite from chrysos, gold; and lithos, a stone--the gold stone. It is transparent--a feature of the city of God, and also of the saints of God now, when they are walking rightly.

Turning to the Old Testament we find there are three large groupings of precious stones. They occur in Job 28, Exodus 28, and Ezekiel 28. The second is repeated in Exodus 39. In the first, the creation group, the chrysolite is not mentioned. In the second, of grace, it is the first of the last three: "the chrysolite (not beryl), the onyx, and the jasper." In the third, the government symbol, it is the first of the second three; and, remarkable to notice, the same three precious stones are placed together again as before. (There is a small group in Isaiah 54:11-12 illustrating the blessing of the earthly city, but as in the creation group the chrysolite is not mentioned.) Ezekiel, however, when he sees the glorious cherubim and their wheels, tells us that the appearance of the wheels and their work was as the look of a chrysolite (1:16 and 10:9, N.Tr.). These wheels of God wrought His righteous work like a wheel within a wheel. Daniel, too, observed that the heavenly messenger sent to him on matters of grace and government was clad in linen, and girded with pure gold of Uphaz; and that his body was like a chrysolite (11:6). Finally, in the Song of Songs, when the Beloved is described, we are told that His hands were as gold rings set with chrysolite (5:14). Here we may find the answer to our inquiries.

We can only discover this precious stone mentioned in the Old Testament in the above scriptures. It will be noticed they are exactly seven. When we come to the New Testament we find it but once, and that in the scene of glory--"the seventh, chrysolite." It is well known that the number seven in Scripture stands for completeness and divine perfection. For instance, the seven days making a complete period of time. But even in the numerical system in daily use, seven stands in perfect harmony with its use in the Bible by the Holy Spirit. Others have pointed out that in 1 to 10 (the foundation of numerical sequence) only 7 combine these two peculiarities: multiplication does not produce it, nor does it produce any other number within those limits by multiplication. It is therefore called the virgin number. In the dual or binary system $111=7$; thus, $111214=7$; and every seventh number thus reached is always a square and a cube; for example, 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64. We find this in Revelation 21 when completeness and perfection in glory is reached. It is the completion and repose of all progressive labour. The city has the glory of God; and it is foursquare and a cube. Seven seems to be the complete unfolding of the thoughts of the Trinity, $111=7$. And with this also agrees the sevenfold mention of jasper--the stone used for divine manifestation by the Spirit. In the Old Testament 3 times, and 4 times in the New (Ex. 28:20; 39:13; Ezek. 28:1; Rev. 4:3; 21:11, 18, 19).

Doubtless we noticed that the chrysolite, the gold stone, is nearly always found associated with that which speaks of divine righteousness--the well-known symbol of gold. Ezekiel is the only exception, and there we have the cherubim, the executors of divine righteousness. Now our blessed Lord, who knew no sin, was made sin for us upon the cross that we might become God's righteousness in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). He, blessed for ever be His holy name! stooped to be made what we were that we might become what He is! What grace! What love! The hands of the Beloved--expressive of His work--are as gold rings, we are told. All His work is in perfect righteousness. But mark the settings for display in those golden rings: "His hands are as gold rings SET WITH CHRYSOLITE." Here the gold of divine righteousness and the gold stone are found inseparably together. This speaks eloquently to the hearts of those who know the love of Christ; to

those who are of His assembly--His body and His bride. If HE is called Jehovah-tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness, in Jeremiah 23:6, SHE is also called by the same name in chapter 33:16; that is the city.

We are the work of His hands. Even when in glory we shall say: It is He that has made us, and not we ourselves. We shall shine then for His glory. His name shall be on our foreheads. We shall show forth His praises. He shall be glorified in His saints, and admired in all that have believed. The woman shall indeed be then the glory of the man. But the golden ring speaks not only of righteousness, it tells us also of His deep and endless love for the assembly. In making her His own, righteousness and love are found together; and she can say in truth: "I am His and He is mine." The gold, the ring, and the chrysolite set speak of this; and in glory she is the bride, the Lamb's wife. The beautiful and lustrous radiance which softly shines there from the chrysolite, the gold stone, shows forth God's righteousness in this blessed and completed result. God counselled it; and so great was Christ's love for her that He gave Himself to make her His own; and being His, He now nourishes and cherishes the assembly; and soon He will present her to Himself all glorious, as the result of His own love and of His own labour. Then when her shining is seen by universal intelligences, that which "every precious stone" symbolizes shall be her adorning, and THE SEVENTH IS CHRYSOLITE.

"Fruit of wisdom without measure!

'Tis a bright, eternal treasure!"

2. The "One Pearl"

"One pearl of great price" (Matthew 13:46).

"Every several gate was of one pearl" (Revelation 21:21).

It is well known that the pearl is a symbol of the assembly. It is formed in the depths of the ocean within the shell of the pearl oyster, as a result of the intrusion of some foreign matter. The irritation set up calls forth the best energies of the bivalve, for failing to oust the intruder it proceeds to cover it with fine concentric layers of pure pearl; there is thus formed as a result of that which seemed only evil one of the most pure, beautiful, and valuable things in the creation; a pearl, distinct from the oyster itself, and yet of it. Such is the symbol the Spirit uses to teach us what the assembly is.

But when this type is taken up in Scripture there are not many pearls but one only in the mind of God. And it is so treasured by Him, that He names it thus but once on the sacred page, "one pearl of great price" (Matt. 13) It is His own workmanship; formed and fashioned in the darkness of this sinful world; but soon to shine back its iridescent beauty, in answer to His own light, in glory. It is the fruit of His own omniscience and omnipotence; to the praise of His glory, who works all things after the counsel of His own will. In spite of the intrusion of sin, nay the very intrusion of sin has yielded the opportunity for the manifestation of His wondrous wisdom and grace, He will through redemption bring up out of the dark waters of this world the well-loved assembly, the bride of Christ, which shall be to His eternal glory, and in doing this the love of Christ which passes all knowledge has also been shown out, for He is the merchantman who sold all that He had in order to purchase this one pearl of great price. It is written, This is a great mystery . . . concerning Christ and the assembly (Eph. 5:32).

The Lord Jesus Christ when on earth gave to His disciples this parable to teach them the precious truth as to how He would find and secure the assembly (Matt. 13:46). He distinguishes His own from the multitude

by saying, "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, but to them it is not given." What then would He have those who belong to Him to know by this interesting parable? That He saw the assembly in all its beauty according to the glorious thought and purpose of God. It is this of which the "one pearl of great price" speaks. It did not historically begin to exist before Pentecost: it was nevertheless in the mind of God before the world began: but in its beautiful perfection, it will first be seen as the future city of glory, described in Revelation 21, when each of its twelve gates shall be of "one pearl."

In its completed perfection, the outcome of the counsel and work of God, our Lord Jesus Christ viewed it; He saw and estimated its value; and He, who was the rightful heir of David's throne as Matthew 1 shows, and the heir of world-wide glory came from His heavenly glory to seek it, and gave all that He had to secure it for Himself. This assembly embraces every believer washed by the Saviour's precious blood and indwelt for the Holy Spirit. During its historical development in this sinful world they pass through repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Sanctification, cleansing, chastening, purging, tribulation--sorrow and joy in various exercises, are experienced by them, as they grow up to that beautiful perfection in Christ which shall be seen in glory. Christ loved His assembly with such a complete devotion that not only did He give "all that He had" for it, but, as Ephesians 5:25 tells us: He "loved the assembly and gave Himself for it." Behold Him hanging on that cross to make us His! And that great sacrifice did not exhaust His love for, ascended to God's right hand, He tenderly cares for His assembly and awaits the moment when we shall be presented to Him "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing." The assembly is His; and He is worthy to possess that pearl of great price!

That this assembly, the bride of Christ, is not found in the Old Testament has often been pointed out. In keeping with this, neither is the pearl the symbol of it, mentioned there. Job 28:18 is no exception, for gabiys means crystal, not pearl. In the singular, it is only spoken of once in the New Testament (Matt. 13:46); except in Revelation 21:21; where, like the gold which is called "transparent," beyond anything known naturally, each gate of the heavenly Jerusalem is "of one pearl." Such symbols strikingly confirm the heavenly character of the assembly, the Lamb's wife. How blessed it is, too, to look beyond all the present exigencies of the way, and see at every approach to that glorious city the witness of "each gate of one pearl," the testimony to THE ONENESS OF THE ASSEMBLY as well as to its purity and preciousness, in short what it is to Christ who purchased it by His own blood.

When the Lord establishes the earthly metropolis in millennial magnificence, He says to her: I will make thy gates of carbuncles (Isa. 54:12). The fiery-red splendour of these earthly gates are quite distinct from the out-of-the-depths soft, iridescent beauty and purity of the pearl gates of the heavenly metropolis. Indeed, the pearl is not a precious stone at all like the carbuncle; nor even as those found in the wall of the heavenly city itself. It is entirely unique; and the exquisite exactness of Scripture is seen in this, as in other cases; for it carefully distinguishes them thus, "precious stones and pearls" (Rev. 17:4; 18:12, 16). The out-of-the-world, heavenly character of the assembly is kept distinctly before us. Doubtless the glory of the earthly city will be exceptional. It will be like the new creation (see Isa. 65:17-18; and 66:22); even if not that. This may explain the special and peculiar position in which the carbuncle is always found. If, as we have seen, the pearl is not found in the Old Testament, neither is the carbuncle found in the New. But always, save in the verse we have spoken of, it is found with the sapphire and the emerald before and after it (see Ezek. 28:13 Ex. 28:17 and 3:10, N.Tr.). The sapphire symbol of universal glory, and the emerald of earthly, might well be placed in juxtaposition to that of the carbuncle. Its four appearances in the Old Testament, and its absence from the New, may show its earthly significance. In its origin, formation, growth, and beauty, the pearl stands singularly alone, as a unique and striking symbol of the

assembly, the new and heavenly Jerusalem, the Lamb's wife.

When writing or speaking on such a blessed and holy theme as this one feels what watchfulness is needed, that there may be ministered to those to whom these realities belong, the heavenly grace that should accompany them. None others can appreciate them, we must not cast our pearls before swine (Matt. 7:6); the unregenerate have neither the heart nor capacity to understand these things. The unfaithful woman, Babylon, described in Revelation 17 and 18, is decked with pearls; and in her unholy traffic she trades in them, as well as in the "bodies and souls of men" (18:12-13). How sunken and sinful does this loathsome system become! On the other hand, as preserved in a holy sense of the rejection of Christ, the pious women who truly belong to the house of God, the assembly, are exhorted to "adorn themselves with modesty and discretion, not with plaited hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly clothing" (1 Tim. 2:9), We are told what is beautiful and valuable before God now, "the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price." These divinely inspired words remind us again of that which arrested the gaze of the seeking merchantman--"ONE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE." In its completeness; in its beauty; in its value; He saw it, loved it, and made it His own.

How deep and divine will be His joy to have us with Him in the Father's house above! What an answer His satisfied heart will find in the assembly, to all that He suffered to make her His! And when she shines in surpassing splendour, showing the glory of God, the bride, the Lamb's wife, the heavenly Jerusalem, shall show at every avenue of approach, the oneness of the assembly, for every several gate is of one pearl.

The most beautiful and valuable pearls are apt to suffer from a peculiar trouble called pearl sickness. The pure and lovely iridescence becomes dimmed; and the only known means of righting them is, to put them back under the waters of the ocean till they recover themselves once more. Is there not a lesson for us in this? The influences of this world, if we are not watchful, cause us to lose our heavenly hue and brightness; and we have to taste, it may be, once again, the darkness and hopelessness of all in this world, so that our faith and hope may soar up to where Christ is--the heavenly Bridegroom of the assembly; and take on afresh of His supernal lustre, as we long more ardently for His coming; when He will take us beyond the influences that obtain here, to shine with Him eternally in glory that can never be dimmed.

3. The Sardonyx

"The fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius" (Heb. 21:20).

"Ye have come to . . . the city, . . . and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enregistered in heaven, . . . and to the blood of sprinkling" (Heb. 12:22-24).

The sardonyx is mentioned but once in the whole Bible--in the fifth place, in foundations of the wall of the heavenly metropolis in Revelation 21:20. There it shines as a symbol between the emerald and the sardius.

The "precious onyx" is the first stone named in the writings of the Spirit, as well as being the first in the creation group of Job 28. It is a striking symbol of Christ's glory and dignity as the Firstborn of all creation. Therefore it is absent from the bride's adorning in Revelation 21. But the mention of the sard-onyx there, shows a special relation of the assembly with Christ in this distinction; and its connection and combination with the sardius stone have a meaning of divine importance for us, in its one appearance on the inspired

page, as we shall presently see.

The sardius is the deep blood-red stone--very precious. It is named next after the sard-onyx, as the emerald is the next before it. The sard-onyx is a combination of onyx, sard, and milky-white chalcedony, in alternate layers. Like the onyx itself, it was used for beautiful ornamentation, cameos, and engravings. What then does this stone, of such singular mention and association, speak of as a symbol, in its fifth place in the heavenly city's wall?

The answer will be found in another scripture which speaks of the heavenly Jerusalem, where the distinction which is symbolized again finds but one mention in the Bible. It is "the assembly of the firstborn (or firstborn ones, plural) who are enregistered in heaven" (Heb. 12:23, N.Tr.). Our Lord Jesus Christ stands alone as the Firstborn; but there is an ASSEMBLY OF FIRSTBORN ONES in glorious association with Him through divine grace; redeemed by His blood; and taken out of the world to be exalted in heavenly glory.

Set in the fifth place, the sardonyx beams brightly as a witness to divine grace. Its connection and combination with the sardius reminds us that our glory and blessedness is through the precious blood of Christ. And as set after the fourth stone, the numerical symbol of earth, of which the emerald also speaks, we are thus reminded from whence we were taken. The assembly of the first-born are enregistered in heaven. On the onyx were engraved the names of God's earthly people (Ex. 28.); and the sardonyx was similarly used; but now, those who share in this new dignity and blessedness are themselves enregistered where Christ Himself is--in heaven itself.

"Called from above, and heavenly men by birth,

(Who once were but the citizens of earth)

As pilgrims here, we seek our heavenly home,

Our portion in the ages yet to come."

If we would better understand the distinctive glory into which these firstborn ones are brought, in contrast to the assembly as seen in other ways, we must learn of Him who is Himself THE FIRSTBORN, PRE-EMINENT IN ALL THINGS. The very expression Firstborn involves others being brought in; and it is striking that the eleven times that the onyx is mentioned in the Old Testament is completed by the one mention of the sard-onyx in the New; thus:--11+1 = 12; the number of administration. He associates us with Him in this through redemption; and we must learn in His presence that in which He would give us to have part with Him; for on the ground of His blood-shedding He has already reconciled us to the Fullness that dwells in Himself, in the body of His flesh through death; even as all things will be presently reconciled to that fullness by Him. May we enter into it more.

4. The Sapphire

"They saw the God of Israel and there was under His feet as it were the work of transparent sapphire, and as it were the body of heaven for clearness" (Exodus 24:10).

"A throne as the appearance of a sapphire stone" (Ezekiel 1:26).

"The first foundation jasper, the second sapphire" (Revelation 21:19).

The sapphire stone has been singled out by the Spirit of God as a symbol which He uses beyond all others. No other precious stone is spoken of so often in God's Word. It must therefore have some very special significance.

The beautiful blue lustre of the sapphire stone is well known. It is transparent. The diamond alone surpasses it in preciousness. In the wall of the glorious city, the heavenly Jerusalem, the sapphire is the second foundation. This fact, coupled with its soft blue hue, has caused it to be spoken of as a symbol of what is heavenly. When we examine its use in the Scriptures, however, we find that this interpretation is scarcely satisfactory.

Wherever we turn in the various parts of the Word, we find the lovely lustre of the sapphire. In the law, in the prophets, in the poetical books, and in the New Testament, we discover its soft blue radiance. If we examine the main gatherings together in the Bible of precious stones, in Job 28:5, 16; Exodus 28 and 39; Ezekiel 28, and Revelation 21, the sapphire is always present, filling a place of distinction. And even if we look at that smaller group, of the earthly city's glory, we find it there (Isa. 54:11). In creation, grace, government, and glory--heavenly and earthly--it is seen. Beneath the feet of the God of Israel, at Sinai, there appeared a work like transparent sapphire (Ex. 24:10). Above the crystal-like expanse over the glorious cherubim there was seen a throne like a sapphire stone by Ezekiel (1:26 and 10:1). The princes of Zion appeared like a sapphire (Lam. 4:7). Finally, in the description of the Beloved, in the Song of Songs, it finds a place which will help us to discover its true significance (5:14). The above twelve scriptures, where alone the sapphire is named in the Bible, show us the universal use that is made of this striking symbol by the Spirit of God.

When the metropolis of the earth is established in righteousness and splendour, according to God, in a coming day, "we are told that her foundations shall be laid with sapphires (Isa. 54:11). It is clearly a symbol of earthly glory there. But in Exodus 24:10, Ezekiel 1:26, and Revelation 21:19, it symbolizes divine, regnant, and also heavenly glory. In the heavenly Jerusalem the second foundation is sapphire! Is there then a contradiction in the use of the sapphire symbol? That could not be in the writings of the Spirit of God. All is harmonious there, even if at first we do not see it. We must seek the explanation of the difficulty in Him who is God's answer to all man's questions.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the antitype of the one who was rejected by his brethren; He is the true Joseph--Zaphnath-paaneah--the Revealer of secrets (Gen. 41:45); for so Pharaoh named Joseph in his place of exaltation. It is in the beautiful description of the Beloved in the Song of Songs that we find the use of the sapphire stone that provides us with the needed explanation (5:14). King David's Son and Lord is here typified. This is the anointed One! Transparent, shining sapphires are about Him! The stones of soft blue beauty overlay the hidden energies of this beloved One! In one Person we find then the centring up. In one harmonious whole, the vast, and varied glories of which our Scriptures speak: "In the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offence; according to the riches of His grace; which He has caused to abound toward us in all wisdom and intelligence, having made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself for THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE FULNESS OF TIMES; TO HEAD UP ALL THINGS IN THE CHRIST, THE THINGS IN THE HEAVENS AND THE THINGS UPON THE EARTH" (Eph. 1:6-10, N.Tr.).

For this full and far-reaching administration, all upon the earth, as well as all things in the heavens, are centred in the anointed One--in our Lord Jesus Christ. In plain words, it is universal! Not simply world-wide! Not only heavenly! but universal. Here then we have the blessed symbolic significance of the

sapphire of beautiful blue brilliance. If there is one colour more than another that might be spoken of as the universal colour, it is blue. How precious it is then to see in its twelve connections in the Word, and in the universal symbolic use that the Spirit makes of it, that Christ's glory is in view, in His universal administration; in that in which the assembly is associated with Him--the twelve-gate city--the bride, the Lamb's wife. "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it" (Rev. 22:3); and the second foundation is sapphire.

"Then let Him come in glory,
Who comes His saints to raise,
And perfect all the story
Of wonder, love, and praise."

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