

The All-Varied Wisdom of God

by H.J. Vine

The all-variegated wisdom of God is revealed in Christ, who is the centre of God's wisdom and the key to understanding God's wisdom.

Topics: "Gods Wisdom", "Redemptive Plan"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches on the precious stones mentioned in the Scriptures, emphasizing God's great love and grace in saving sinners through Christ. He highlights the eternal thanksgiving we owe to God for His mercy and care over us, as well as the wisdom and glory displayed in His redemptive plan. The sermon delves into the significance of the precious stones in Ezekiel 28, Exodus 28, and Revelation 21, symbolizing government, grace, and glory, ultimately pointing to the wisdom and beauty of Christ as the central figure in God's divine plan for humanity's redemption and future glory.

Transcript

Ephesians 3:10

A Study as to the teaching of the precious stones mentioned in the Scriptures, Exodus 28; Ezekiel 28 and Revelation 21.

That God should call such as we are, and save us by His grace, is a cause for eternal thanksgiving and praise! We were once far away from Him, undone by sin, held in darkness under the authority of the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that energizes those who are disobedient. "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ," and saved us by His grace; "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:7).

We have cause also to give Him thanks for His present care over us. It is unceasing! Do we recognize this sufficiently? Not a sparrow is forgotten before Him! "The very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Luke 11:7)--such are the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was amidst much tribulation that the Apostle Paul said, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort who comforts us in all our tribulation" (2 Cor. 1:3-4). How little we bless God for the grace and for the mercies which He makes to abound towards us continually!

The spring of all God's ways with us is found in the great love wherewith He loves us; in the love that was manifested in the sending of His beloved Son into the world, that we might have life eternal. He is, however, not only known to us as our God who has called us and saved us, and as the Father of mercies whose care and compassion for us is so unremittent; but He is also made known as "the God of glory" and as "the Father of glory". Love, and grace, and mercy, and glory, and wisdom all shine out resplendent in the way He has wrought for our blessing in Christ; "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; wherein He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence" (Eph. 1:7-8).

When in the riches of His rich grace He called us by the Gospel, He had the glory in view, just as it was with the calling out of Abraham; God had in view the blessing of all nations, and the filling of the earth with His glory. So it is said, the God of glory appeared to Abraham (Acts 7:2). Only there is this difference now--we are called out in view of universal glory, and of heavenly glory especially. Therefore it is desired in Ephesians 1:17, that we should be granted the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of the Father of glory; for He is the divine Source of that universal glory--the Beginner and the Begetter of it all. How blessed that this is so! The one Source of it all is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our God and Father, too, through His grace; but the glory itself, like the wisdom with which it is brought about, is both vast and varied as we shall see.

The centre of it is Christ. He is the One in whom it shall be headed up; and He is Head of the body, the assembly. He is the Lord of glory. When He was in this world, the great and the wise did not recognize Him, for "none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory". He was God's hidden wisdom, predetermined before the ages for our glory. He is now exalted in heaven, and is known to our glad hearts as the Lord in glory. His unsearchable riches, and the riches of the glory of the mystery, concerning Christ and the assembly, in relation to the glory we speak of, are now revealed. It is in this that all the divine treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid (Col. 2:3).

"Oh way of purposed blessing

In Christ made known to man!

The fruit we're now possessing,

Of Wisdom's wondrous plan."

God's great love for us has been fully declared in His Son. His grace is gloried in the way He has made us His. His manifold mercies are new every day. Soon we shall shine with Christ above to the praise of His glory. But even now the secret of His wise counsel of love is made known to His own,

The Wisdom of God

When we say 'It is now made known', we mean in contrast to the times before Christ was exalted as the Lord in glory, after He had secured eternal redemption by His work on the cross. Previously, we are told, "Silence was kept in the times of the ages" (Rom. 16:25) as to this mystery, but it "has now been made manifest". That is the way of "God only wise". In Ephesians 3:5 and 9 we read that in other generations it "has not been made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed", for this mystery was "hidden throughout the ages in God", who created everything in view of the making known to the heavenly dignities and intelligences His "all-variegated wisdom", through the assembly in Christ, in accordance with

His purpose in Him. In Colossians 1:26, it is said, "The mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but has now been made manifest to His saints". The treasury of the varied stores of divine wisdom and knowledge are hidden in this mystery. Indeed, "all the treasures" of wisdom and knowledge are there (Col. 2:3). The philosophies that have originated in the minds of men can add nothing to the assembly, but are "vain deceit", leading away from Christ, in whom our fullness is, and in whom also the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily.

Stepping back in our thoughts for a moment, we may well ask, where could the wisdom be found, to bring man who is sinful into right relation to God who hates sin? How can man who is unrighteous be made right with God who is righteous? How can man who is unholy be made suitable to the presence of a holy God? Can fallen man be blessed before a just God? If this cannot be done, where shall the mercy of God be displayed? Where shall His forgiving grace and love be known? His long-suffering, His goodness, His kindness, His pity, His compassion--where shall these be seen? Could divine wisdom devise a way whereby righteousness and grace could meet together in peace? A way for justice and mercy to greet each other in truth? A way by which all the holy attributes of God could abide in perfect harmony with His nature of love, in the blessing of sinful man who had merited His judgement, and do so in such a manner that His wisdom in its all-variegated perfection and beauty might be made known to the heavenly dignities, who had witnessed man's sin and degradation?

Job asks, where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knows not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living (Job 28:13). Gathering up the gold and silver and precious things of creation, he shows that wisdom outvalues them all. The precious onyx, and the sapphire, and the crystal cannot equal it; the price thereof is above coral or pearls or rubies; the topaz of Ethiopia cannot compare with it. If it is not to be found in Creation, whence then comes wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living. In answer, we are told, "God understands the way thereof"; also that, "Destruction and death" had heard the fame thereof. This is surely an intimation of the Cross of Christ. Yes, the necessary wisdom was known to God, and when that "hidden wisdom" came forth in Christ, and the world crucified the Lord of glory, then death and destruction heard its fame! It was there in that wonderful Cross that the conciliation of the attributes and nature of God was expressed, in regard to the blessing of sinful man. The sinless Son of God took the sinner's place, and bore the righteous judgement which the sinner's sins demanded: God the Son there glorified God the Creator in respect of His creature's sin.

"Holy claims of justice finding

Full expression in that scene

Light and love alike are telling

What His woe and sufferings mean."

Upon the cross, the holy, sinless Son of God was made sin for us, and then and there made atonement for our guilt, and secured eternal redemption for us. He both satisfied and glorified God in regard to our terrible guilt, and we know Him now as our Lord and Saviour; Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. He is God and Man. Who else could bring fallen man back to God in a right way in happiness and blessing, and glorify God in doing it? And in what other way could even such an One do it righteously and abidingly, save by bearing the judgement we deserved? There was none other who could do it! There was none other way! To Christ on the Cross we look to see the way of God's wonderful wisdom.

We may look at Creation, and see the glory of His power and divinity; but we must look at the Cross to see His glorious moral perfections, and His great love. Nor can we read His glory in the present state of Government in the world, even though God Himself has set up the authorities that exist. There is government; and we have reason to be thankful for this; knowing that all true justice comes from God's wisdom; even as He tells us in Proverbs 8:15-16; "By Me kings reign and princes decree justice. By Me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth". In such as Solomon, remarkable wisdom in government was seen; but it has been corrupted like all else committed to man's responsibility.

The Precious Stones of Ezekiel 28--Government

The King of ancient Tyre is brought before us in Ezekiel 28:12, as an example. He, doubtless, pictures for us that great unseen dignity--Satan, now fallen--the devil. He had been in the holy mountain of God, the place of divine government; and in "Eden the garden of God", the sphere of national order according to God (compare 28:13 with 31:8-9, 16, 18). He sealed up the sum of perfections in regard to government as 'king'. He was "full of wisdom and perfect in beauty"; but he sinned, and corrupted his wisdom by reason of his brightness. He became the great enemy of God and the oppressor of mankind. He cruelly used the might of death to keep in bondage the children of God through the fear of it; and Christ partook of flesh and blood, so that He might go into death and deliver them from this bondage by annulling him (Heb. 2:14-15). In regard to government, we should remark, It was no matter of mockery, when in that very high mountain, the devil showed the Lord "all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory", and said to Him, "All these things will I give Thee if, falling down, Thou wilt do me homage". It was a real temptation, even though our blessed, adorable Saviour and Lord triumphed over it. The remarkable position of Satan is seen in his being able to approach the holy Son of God, and make such an offer. The Lord Jesus spoke of him as the prince or ruler of this world.

In regard to Creation, Job showed that wisdom was beyond all its riches of gold, and silver, and precious stones. Ezekiel, too, when he speaks of this great dignitary--"the anointed cherub"--in his place of Government, full of wisdom, groups these stones of beauty about him, and tells us that every precious stone was his covering:

1. "The sardius, the topaz, and the diamond;
2. The chrysolite, the onyx, and the jasper;
3. The sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle; and gold" (Ezek. 28:13, N.Tr.).

The light for guidance in government was thus gloriously reflected in him, the creature, though not originated in him. The variety and beauty were there; but he fell from his high estate; and another must come--a greater and wiser than even Solomon--Christ, the true King (as Matthew introduces Him), and take up the dignity and glory in a way that shall be for abiding blessing to all creation, and for the glory of God. In the holy mount the three disciples saw His majesty. His face shone as the sun, and his garments were white as the light; and from the excellent glory the Father's voice was heard saying, "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I HAVE FOUND MY DELIGHT".

The Precious Stones of Exodus 28--Grace and Glory

The Son has the glorious position of Firstborn in all the Creation; and following upon the overthrow of Satan through His death, He takes the highest place in Government. He is "the Firstborn from the dead,

and the Prince of the kings of the earth". All things in heaven and earth are put under Him; He is given to be Head over all to the assembly, which is His body. He is set above every principality, authority, power and dominion. This is not yet publicly seen, but it will be in God's own time; meanwhile, anointed with the oil of gladness in glory above His co-heirs, He is preparing them to inherit with Him the glory that is His.

It is here that His grace is active on our behalf. Before He reached the exalted place which is His, He suffered here, being tempted; He is therefore now able to succour us who are tempted on our way to the glory. He sympathizes with our infirmities, and as our High Priest he saves to the uttermost those who approach by Him to God. Such is His present grace! The service of Aaron for Israel, saved out of Egypt, is a type of this grace. On his shoulders and on his breast Aaron bore the names of the tribes when he represented them in the holy presence of God. On his shoulders were two onyx stones; and like the engravings of a signet, six names were cut into each precious stone, to glisten there before the Lord for a memorial (Ex. 28:2). These two stones were on the shoulders of the priestly ephod; but inseparably connected with this ephod was the breastplate, in which there was set a precious stone for each name. We are told, the breastplate shall not be loosed from the ephod (v. 28). Aaron bore their names on his heart also for a memorial before the Lord. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ"? "He ever lives to make Intercession for us." His present service of power and love prevails on our behalf.

Another feature in this beautiful type is, the Urim and the Thummim were put in the breastplate of the High Priest. The wisdom of God for guidance was connected therewith. The lights and perfections (for that is the meaning of Urim and Thummim) of God were associated with priestly grace. Urim began with the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet, and Thummim with the last. Christ is the Alpha and the Omega. The language of God is expressed in Him. He is the wisdom of God. We learn the mind of God in Him. It is remarkable that this undescribed Urim and Thummim should be "put in the breastplate", upon which the names of God's people glistened. Is there not some indication (then hidden), of the riches of the glory of the mystery (now made known among the nations), "which is Christ in you the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27)?

The precious stones in relation to government are arranged in three threes (Ezek. 28). In connection with grace there are four threes (Ex. 28); this order is also given in relation to glory (Rev. 21). In Job 28, where the precious things of Creation are grouped, the order is not so clear; but seven seems to be the number given. The stones in Exodus 28:17 are arranged thus:

1. "A sardius, a topaz, and an emerald;
2. A carbuncle, a sapphire, and a diamond;
3. An opal, an agate, and an amethyst;
4. A chrysolite, and an onyx, and a jasper; enclosed in gold in their settings" (N.Tr.).

It should be remarked that the jasper, which is the last of the twelve here, is the first in Revelation 21:19. In the likeness of jasper and sardius, the One who sits on the throne appears, in Revelation 4, that which grace teaches and leads up to, is reached in perfection, glory; when the church, which will come forth as the holy city, will reflect the glory of God, and shine as a crystal-like jasper stone most precious. This is as yet unknown. The opaque jasper of earth, with its elegant polish and varied colours, is known; but the clear, crystal-like jasper, like the heavenly, transparent gold, has not been seen. Such symbols speak of splendours yet to come. The radiance of that day will be altogether heavenly, according to divine wisdom; and the glory of God will enlighten all, as it shines upon the face of the Lamb, our blessed Lord Jesus

Christ.

"Undazzled in that glory bright,

Which shines upon His face,

Where every eye beholds unveiled

The mysteries of His grace."

The foregoing anticipates a little; but it prepares us to understand what is said in Ephesians 3:10 as to the all-variegated wisdom of God. The word for all-variegated is only used this once in the Bible. It is *polupoikilos*. If a Grecian saw a magnificent picture, a masterpiece of brilliance and design, blending its colours in the most beautiful harmony, this is the word he would use to describe the varied and yet harmonious combination of colour, with its rich hues and delicate tints, presented as pleasingly to his eye. In the times past, before the redemption work of Christ was accomplished on the cross, before He had ascended to God's right hand, and sent down the Holy Spirit, the mystery, in which the treasures of wisdom are found, was hidden in God. He had created all things, having in view the purpose which He purposed in Christ before He created the universe; and according to that purpose to provide a way for the making known of His all-variegated wisdom. Such a thought transcends the natural mind altogether; but God has revealed it that we may rejoice in it, in the power of the Spirit, even as we read concerning the administration of this mystery, "hidden throughout the ages in God, who has created all things, in order that NOW to the principalities and authorities in the heavenlies might be made known through the assembly the all-variegated wisdom of God, according to the purpose of the ages, which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord". Creation becomes the sphere for this. Sin and failure had been seen in it before; but now, in contrast to the past times, God has found a means for the display of His glory through the assembly in Christ, according to His eternal purpose of love. What love! What glory! What surpassing grace! To quarry sinners such as ourselves out of the pit, and to connect us with such princely and supernal splendour. Eternal praise to our God and Father, even as there shall be glory to God "in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of the ages" (Eph. 3:21, N.Tr.).

The Precious Stones of Revelation 21--The Climax

When the assembly is seen in glory in Revelation 21:10, as the bride, the Lamb's wife, she shines out as a city of pure gold, like transparent glass. A great and high wall of jasper is also seen; and twelve gates, which is the well-known symbol of her administrative character. The wall has twelve foundations, and it is in this that we have the final grouping of the precious stones; and that in inspired keeping with the order of the other groupings in Scripture. The foundations of the wall are adorned thus

1. "The jasper, the sapphire, and the chalcedony;
2. The emerald, the sardonyx, and the sardius;
3. The chrysolite, the beryl, and the topaz;
4. The chrysopterus, the jacinth, and the amethyst, and the twelve gates, twelve pearls; each gate one pearl."

The absence of the ruby here is both striking and instructive. The value of this stone would appeal to the natural mind as meriting a place in this group, where there is none other of greater value or hardness. Why, then, does the Holy Spirit give it no place in this heavenly scene? Because He uses it as a distinctive earthly symbol elsewhere. Jerusalem on earth is to have her "battlements of rubies", not "windows of agates" (Isa. 54:12), and her princes "more ruddy than rubies". Unlike other stones, this rich red ruby of carmine here, is always spoken of in the plural in Scripture. The heavenly bride, the assembly, is characterized by oneness, of which each gate of "one pearl" witnesses. In view of this, it is not surprising to read of the worthy woman. Her value is "far above rubies" (Prov. 31:10) and of wisdom, "she is more precious than rubies" (Prov. 3:15; 8:11, etc.).

As we pointed out before, these precious stones, representing the varied reflections of the light and perfection of God, do not originate that which shines from them. "God only wise" does this. But how glorious is the display which He is about to bring to pass through the assembly, the heavenly bride, according to His purpose in His beloved Son. The administration will be blessed indeed; and the nations of the earth will benefit thereby. It will not be angelic then. The administration will be in the hands of Man glorified. It will be perfect! What is man? God has set Him over the works of His hands! This is seen in Jesus crowned with glory and honour as Man at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens. Those who are glorified with Him as His co-heirs, share in His glory as Man.

The Lord of Glory

Christ was the Wisdom of God in a mystery--the hidden Wisdom; though all true guidance in government emanated from Him at all times (compare 1 Cor. 2:7 and Prov. 8); but the rulers and princes of this world, whose own wisdom comes to nought, did not know Him when He came in flesh. They displayed their ignorance, as well as their hatred, by crucifying the Lord of glory. But that which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, God has revealed to us by His Spirit. Christ is the wisdom "which God had predetermined for our glory" (1 Cor. 2:7), and when the assembly shines out in heavenly radiance, He shall be "glorified in His saints, and wondered at in all that have believed".

His glory as the Firstborn in the Creation may be set forth in the first precious stone mentioned in the Bible, the onyx (Gen. 2:12). It is also the first in the group of Job 28:16-19; and it is there distinguished as the "precious onyx". The only separate stone so designated, except where Christ is spoken of as the Stone, Elect, Precious. The onyx stones were on the shoulders of the High Priest; and a glance at the groups of government and grace (Ezek. 28 and Ex. 28) shows that the onyx retains a special place of distinction; being the centre stone in government, and the centre of the last three in grace; whilst in each case it is set between the chrysolite and the jasper. The fact that the onyx is not seen in the wall of the city, emphasizes that Christ Himself is indicated. The bdellium is mentioned with it alone in Genesis 2:12; and this is only named again once in Scripture, in Numbers 11:7, in connection with the manna. This, again, confirms what we have said, for if we have the glory of Christ as the Firstborn of all Creation in the onyx, we are reminded that when He came into His Creation, He came in lowly grace as the Manna, whose appearance was as bdellium. He was the One who humbled Himself, blessed be His Name; but He could ask those who murmured in the presence of this lowly grace, "What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before"?

There are many features in these groups of precious stones in the law, and the prophets, and the apocalypse, which speak eloquently to the true believer of the same Spirit inspiring all; and of the glories of our blessed Lord to Whom all the Scriptures point; but we must leave the reader to trace them out

himself, in prayerful dependence upon the guidance of the Spirit, and bring our meditation to a close, or it will occupy too much space.

A word must be said as to the most valuable and most beautiful of all these precious stones; for the diamond seems to single out some special and supreme glory of Christ. It is the hardest and most precious of minerals. Nothing but diamond can cut diamond! Like the onyx it is not found in the wall of the city in glory. Where is it? Surely, it must be found in glory somewhere, if the other precious stones are there! The fact that it shines in the first three of Ezekiel 28, and that it glistens on the breastplate of Aaron, although absent from the city wall, tells us that the diamond points to Jesus, who takes up the Kingly dignity in governments, and the priestly place in grace. He is both King and Priest; and as such will fill the throne (Zech. 6:13). This supreme glory is His alone! and He is worthy!

Oh, that our hearts knew His love, and His grace, and His glory in a deeper way. We lose nothing by so doing; but rather are we led to know our own portion better, as we meditate upon, and rejoice in, His the more. May our blessed God and Father enable us to do so in the power of the Holy Spirit. "NOW TO THE KING ETERNAL, INCORRUPTIBLE, INVISIBLE, THE ONLY WISE GOD, BE HONOUR AND GLORY FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN."

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