

SERMON: BLACK GOLD

Job 28:12-16

(12) But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? (13) Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. (14) The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. (15) It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. (16) It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire.

Introduction

When Job described wisdom, he said that it superseded the value of the gold of Ophir. When I read this passage for the first time, years ago, I was struck by the word gold and more so by the word Ophir. Ophir is a city in East Africa. Just as today the Persian Gulf is known for oil, Paris for its perfumes, Napa Valley for its vineyard, Georgia for its peaches, and Maine for its lobsters, Ophir was known all over the ancient world for its pure gold. The Romans prized it and Solomon used the gold of Ophir in the building of the temple in Jerusalem.

There are eleven references in the Bible to the gold of Ophir. Not only did they have the natural resources, but they also had the human resources to develop it into a beautiful beneficial product.

This Scripture and the other ten that mention the gold of Ophir are reminders that some of us need to rethink our image of Africa in a more positive way. They also let us know how close, geographically, Africa and the Holy Land are. Before the Suez Canal was dug, you could easily walk from one to the other.

These Scriptures also remind us that if we use the standards to determine race that has been historically used in America, just about everybody in the Bible would be considered black. It was the one drop rule: that if you have any ancestor of African descent, no matter how far removed, you were considered black. No matter how light the complexion, or the shape of the nose or lips, or the texture of the hair, you had to call a "spade a spade."

The gold of Ophir is indicative of what blacks have contributed to civilization before, during, and after slavery. The contributions have been called by some "black gold." The list could go on forever. I will just name a few.

The Moors controlled a large portion of Europe for centuries and were instrumental in the Italian Renaissance. Misguided scholars tried to wipe this fact out of the history books and called that period the Dark Ages. Shakespeare let the cat out of the bag when he wrote *Othello the Moor* and Beethoven could not deny his African physical features even if he wanted to.

There was black gold when a slave named Onesimus told his master Cotton Mather of a procedure he had undergone back in his homeland that protected him from illness. This was during the small pox epidemic of 1721. He explained that people in West Africa discovered that they could fend off contagions by using splinters to inoculating themselves with a specimen of the fluid from an infected person. Mather was intrigued but still skeptical. He tried it on his other slaves and none of the slaves contracted small pox. By 1750 vaccination, based on the method introduced by Onesimus, was the standard practice in Massachusetts and later in the rest of the country. Every time you took a Covid-19 shot or a flu shot you experienced black gold.

There was black gold when Lincoln reluctantly drafted slaves of the north into the union army. Without their support the southern armies would have won and taken over the entire country. Black soldiers helped preserve the union. Lincoln freed some of the slaves, but the slaves freed the union from insurrection and succession.

There was black gold when George Washington Carver, a castrated ex-slave, saved southern agriculture by developing hundreds of products from the peanut and soybeans. The boll weevil had taken the profit out of growing cotton and the land had been depleted of the nutrients that produced bumper cotton crops. Cotton was “rough” on the soil. The south changed from growing cotton to growing peanuts and soybeans, and the economic system was saved, thanks to Carver.

Moreover, Carver’s work with the peanut and the soybean ushered in a new era of manufacturing and production. After he made hundreds of synthetic products from these two plants, others began to consider the same and visited him many times to learn his techniques. Goodyear began to make synthetic rubber. There was now no need to extract the sap from rubber trees in the tropics. This allowed Goodyear to meet the rising demand of rubber used in automobile tires. DuPont began to make synthetic fibers, such as nylon and rayon. This was easier and more profitable than harvesting the cocoons of silk worms or harvesting wool by shearing sheep. All of this was inspired by the work of Carver.

We experience black gold every time we hear a spiritual, the blues, jazz, gospel music, rhythm and blues, or hip hop.

Now let’s look at how gold is processed and extract some spiritual and practical principles. Remember this is what the metallurgist of Ophir did.

Exposition

- 1. Gold Must Be Mined for Practicality.**
- 2. Gold Must Be Refined For Purity.**
- 3. Gold Must Be Designed For A Purpose.**
- 4. Gold Must Be Confined For Preservation and Protection.**

Closing Thoughts

There are heritage and legacy. Heritage is what was here when you got here. Legacy is what will be here when you are no longer here. The challenge of every generation is to use their heritage wisely and leave something better and more beneficial for the next generation.

This challenge was penned in the final portion of the last verse of *Lift Every Voice And Sing*, which we all know is part of a fervent prayer.

“Keep Us Forever in the path we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee,
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand, May we forever stand,
True to our God, True to our native land.”

This verse acknowledges our great heritage and challenges us to stay with God and leave an even greater legacy to those who come after us.

Give God Glory! Give God All The Glory!

Related Scriptures

1st Kings 9:28; 1st Kings 10:11; 1st Kings 22:48; 1st Chronicles 29:4; 2nd Chronicles 8:18; 2nd Chronicles 9:10; Job 22:24; Psalm 45:9; Isaiah 13:12.

**Copyright © 2023 by James C. Ward
All Rights Reserved**