



The Inscrutable Question: Building Materials that Convey Rewards: Gold, Silver, Precious Stones; Retention of Rewards: Wood, Fodder, Stubble, 1 Cor 3:12

- 20) Believers have an option based on the academy they choose to enter. Those in the Divine Academy produce divine good which results in the conveyance of rewards. Those in the Satanic Academy produce human good which results in permanent retention of rewards.
- 21) Notice in verse 12 that believers have the option of building on the secure foundation with materials that have either intrinsic value and are resistant to fire—gold, silver, and precious stones—or materials that are worthless and easily ignited—wood, hay, and stubble.
- 22) The building materials produced by the cadet in the Divine Academy are made up of those that represent different concepts of divine good.
- 23) Gold (**χρυσός, *chrusos***) represents the wisdom that results from spiritual growth. The nature of gold illustrates this concept.

Douglas, J. D. and Merrill C. Tenney (eds.). *New International Bible Dictionary*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 655:

Gold is highly prized because it is enduring, never rusts, or dissolves away. It retains its beauty. Pliny [first-century Roman scholar and writer] mentions gold as the only metal unharmed by fire. In fact Pliny said each time it went through the fire it came out better or more refined than before. Gold is good because it is so adaptable to shaping.

When Job asks where wisdom can be found, he responds by observing that wisdom is so priceless that gold, silver, and precious stones cannot buy it.

Job 28:12 - “Where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?”

v. 15 - “Pure gold cannot be given in exchange for it, nor can silver be weighed as its price.

v. 16 - “It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir \ O-fer \, precious onyx, or sapphire.”

v. 23 - “God understands its way and He knows its place.”

v. 28 - “And to man He said, ‘Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.’”

- 24) The gold built on the foundation of the spiritual life for the Church Age is wisdom. It is like gold in that it has intrinsic value, it never decays but maintains its beauty. Wisdom is the result of using doctrine to pass momentum testing in four categories. Each category moves the believer ever closer to the purity of thought associated with spiritual maturity. Gold is malleable and thus very adaptable to shaping. So it is with wisdom. Reciprocity and knowledge develop understanding and renovate the soul into a vessel of honor.



- 25) Silver (**ἄργυρος, arguros**) is commonly present in native gold forming an alloy that is 85-90 percent gold and 10-15 percent silver. We just noted how gold is not harmed by fire but it is purified by it. Heat causes the molten gold to shed its dross, or impurities, thus refining it. Also if silver is present, as it commonly is, then silver is also extracted from it. This is an illustration of the development of wisdom through testing which produces divine viewpoint while it disposes of human viewpoint. Divine viewpoint functions under the three spiritual skills and produces divine good, symbolized by silver. Gold is more valuable than silver because there is less of it. Thus wisdom which is rare produces abundant fruit in the life of the spiritual sophisticate.
- 26) The final building material is precious stones (**τίμος λίθος, timos lithos**). The adjective indicates a certain category of gem stones that are hard, durable, and as a result, more valuable. Some in the “precious” category that are mentioned in the Bible include chalcedony, emerald, topaz, ruby and sapphire.
- 27) These precious stones are found in clusters in four major passages of Scripture: (1) the breastplate of the Aaronic High Priest (Exodus 28:17-20), (2) the passage just noted in Job where precious stones listed are compared to wisdom (Job 28:16-19), (3) the precious stones that form the twelve foundations of the new Jerusalem in the eternal state (Revelation 21:19-20), and (4) the breastplate of Lucifer before his fall (Ezekiel 28:13). These suggest that divine viewpoint produces divine good that is rewardable in several categories: (1) for advance in the spiritual life to the level of spiritual maturity, (2) for advance in the knowledge of doctrine to the point of maximum wisdom; (3) for achieving escrow blessings in time that are parlayed into eternity, and (4) for qualifying to hold maximum authority among Church Age believers over angels in the eternal state.
- 28) Thus gold, silver, and precious stones are figurative for maximum advance in the sophisticated spiritual life of the Church Age to the point of maximum glorification of God.
- 29) On the other hand, the carnal and reversionistic believers are content to become self-deluded and thus are easily convinced that human viewpoint, human energy, and human good are sufficient in their service to God. On the perfect foundation laid down by Christ these believers use the flammable building materials of wood, hay, and stubble.
- 30) Wood (**ξύλον, xulon**) is in the plural and refers to the dead wood from a tree. This is highly flammable. Further, there is absolutely no fruit that comes from a dead tree.
- 31) In fact, our Lord on His way to Golgotha compared His execution on the cross with the fifth cycle of discipline to client nation Judah. He is a living tree while Judah is a dead tree. If Rome is about to execute Him as an innocent Man what will its punishment be like to Judah who falls under the discipline of God? He illustrates with two forest fires in:
- Luke 23:31 - “For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?”**
- 32) The Lord states in context that it would be better if the women were barren when this discipline occurs. It was prophetic of some 30 years later under Titus when Jerusalem fell after a three-year siege. Many of the details of that siege cannot be repeated here, but here are some of the more repeatable things that occurred to the “dry wood” of Judah:



Josephus, Flavius. *Wars of the Jews*. In *The Life and Works of Flavius Josephus*. Translated by William Whiston. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston), Bk VI, Chapt. IX, par. 2,4:

Caesar gave orders that they (Titus' army) should kill none but those that were in arms, and opposed them, but should take the rest alive. But, together with those whom they had orders to slay, they slew the aged and the infirm; but for those that were in their flourishing age, and who might be useful to them, they drove them together into the temple, and shut them up within the walls of the court of the women; over which Caesar set one of his freed-men, Fronto, which was to determine everyone's fate, according to his merits. So this Fronto slew all those that had been seditious and robbers, who were impeached one by another; but of the young men he chose out the tallest and most beautiful, and reserved them for the triumph; and as for the rest of the multitude that were above seventeen years old, he put them into bonds, and sent them to the Egyptian mines. Titus also sent a great number into the provinces, as a present to them, that they might be destroyed upon their theatres, by the sword and by the wild beasts; but those that were under seventeen years old were sold as slaves.

The entire nation was now shut up by fate as in prison, and the Roman army encompassed the city. To speak only of what was publicly known, the Romans slew some of them, some they carried captives, and others they made a search for underground, and when they found where they were, they broke up the ground and slew all they met with. There were also found slain there above two thousand persons, partly by their own hands, and partly by one another, but chiefly destroyed by the famine. And now the Romans set fire to the extreme parts of the city, and burnt them down, and entirely demolished its walls.

- 33) Thus Josephus describes the dry wood of Judah being consumed by the fire of the conquering Roman army in A.D. 70. Such is the fate of the believer who is in status quo carnality. He seeks to build on the foundation laid down by Christ with the dry, dead wood of human good. It will be burned at the evaluation throne of Christ and result in loss of reward.
- 34) The next building material is hay (*χόρτος, chortos*) and refers to cattle fodder.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, s.v. "grass":

There are 243 species of true grasses in Palestine. Young green barley is used in the neighborhood of towns as fresh fodder for horses and cattle. It is not the native custom to cut herbage for hay.

- 35) Now the apostle is comparing human good with the food fed to cows: green barley, another building material that will not be able to endure the flames at the evaluation throne.
- 36) The final insult is the use of the word stubble (*καλόμη, kalame*) but what actually is this? It refers to the stalks of wheat that are left about knee-high in the fields by the reapers. This is not straw. The Jews are very familiar with straw. The Hebrew word is *שֵׁבַע qash* and is actually a mixture of chopped straw and chaff produced in threshing, which is winnowed out by the fan.