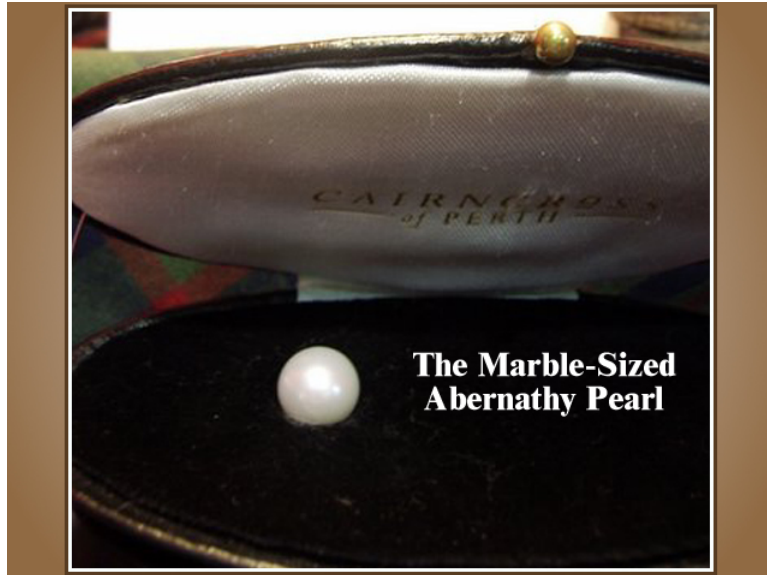


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PEARL FACTS AND TRUTHS
By Duane V. Maxey



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Digital Edition 11/01/06
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A VERY BRIEF INTRODUCTION

I have compiled facts about pearls in this article from online sources combined with portions written by myself. Read in the article about **THE WORLD'S LARGEST PEARL**, along with some other very interesting facts and truths related to this organic gem -- the only gem created by a living creature. First, more of the facts:

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01 -- PEARL FACTS

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The Word "Pearl"

Our English word "pearl" is derived from the Middle French "perla" which in turn was perhaps an alteration of the Latin "sphaerula" -- denoting the spherical shape of many pearls. Pearls are mentioned only 9 times in the Bible -- once in the Old Testament and 8 times in the New Testament. The Hebrew word for "pearl" is "gabysh" -- pronounced gaw-beesh" -- not so interesting, but in the New Testament, the Greek word for "pearl" is "margarite" -- from which such names as Margarita, Magaret, Margie, and Rita are derived.

* * *

Types Of Pearls

(a) Natural Pearls -- formed inside of various mollusks, including oysters and clams, when a foreign particle, by chance, invades the mollusk which cannot be expelled. In order to isolate the particle, such as a grain of sand, the mollusk

excretes a layer of nacre (pronounced nay-ker = Mother of Pearl) all around the particle which hardens. Then layer after layer of nacre is coated and hardened upon the encapsulated particle, creating the pearl. Natural Pearls are found both in salt-water and fresh-water.

(b) Cultured Pearls -- formed exactly the same as Natural Pearls, except the foreign particle is intentionally placed inside of the mollusk for the express purpose of having a pearl formed.

(c) Imitation Pearls, sometimes called Plastic Pearls. These are made by mechanical processes from beads of glass, ceramic, shell, or plastic which are varnished with a substance that imitates the iridescence and color of genuine pearls. They have no real value. So, in order to hide the fact that they are "Plastic Pearls" these fake pearls are given misleading names, such as "Fashion Pearls," "Faux Pearls," "Organic Pearls," and "Mallorca Pearls".

(d) Spiritual Pearls -- This is the type of pearl referred to in Matthew chapters 7 and 13, and probably in Revelation 21 -- where the Natural Pearl is Symbolical of important Spiritual Truth. I will later relate and comment upon all 9 Scripture references to pearls.

Natural, Cultured, and Imitation Pearls all come in various colors, including black -- and Natural and Cultured pearls are also classified by their location and even by name of the company selling them, but I shall not go into all of this.

* * *

The History of Pearls

It is said that pearls are the oldest gem, having a longer history than that of gold or semi-precious stones. According to one online source, "it may be that the first time anyone took pearls seriously was in the third millennium BC, when Sumerians and their neighbors began wading out into the Persian Gulf to pick up pearl oysters from the bottom near the low-tide line." This same source stated that "in the late 3rd millennium.. was when deep pearl diving in the Persian Gulf is thought to have begun." In early history, diving for natural pearls was one of the most dangerous occupations. It was not until the 1600s that a European scientist learned that a pearl is created when a mollusk (such as an oyster) does not have sufficient strength to expel a foreign particle and the natural pearl is formed as a protective reaction to the intruder within.

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What Determines The Value of Pearls

The value of a pearl depends upon various factors, the first being that to have any appreciable value it must be a genuine, Natural or Cultured Pearl. Both Natural Pearls and Cultured Pearls are considered to be valuable gems, but it is said that the most highly valued pearls are Natural Pearls, and of course there were no Cultured Pearls in early history.

Another factor in the value of a pearl is its shape. Spherical pearls are round, and symmetrical pearls are pear-shaped, or other shapes having symmetry from one side to the other. For centuries, the rounder or more perfectly symmetrical the shape of the pearl, the higher was its value. However, since the manufacture of cheap imitation pearls began (many of which imitate spherical or symmetrical shapes) shape has been less of a factor in valuing genuine pearls.

Irregularly shaped pearls are called "Baroque pearls" and these are often the least expensive category of pearls, but can be unique, quite beautiful, and also very expensive. Another category of pearls relative to their shape are called "Blister pearls" -- having blister-like formations on their surface. These are also probably of lesser value most of the time, but sometimes they too are very valuable.

Another factor in the value of a pearl is its iridescence and luster. The higher the luster of genuine pearls, the greater their value. A beautiful, shimmering, iridescent luster adds to the value of either a Natural or Cultured Pearl.

Size and weight also have a bearing on the value of Natural and Cultured pearls. Natural Pearls are usually sold by carat weight. Cultured pearls are sold by their size in millimeters.

* * *

How To Detect An Imitation Pearl

How can one tell a genuine pearl (Natural or Cultured) from a cheap Imitation Pearl? Pearl experts can readily discern the difference between imitation and real pearls by sight alone, but due to the sophisticated polishing of fake pearls it is difficult for the average pearl-buyer to detect an Imitation Pearl from a Natural or Cultured pearl. Thus, "the tooth-test" is recommended to the amateur as a means of detecting fake pearls. When a strand of Imitation Pearls is slowly rubbed across the front teeth they will feel smooth. But, when a strand of Natural or Cultured pearls is rubbed across the front teeth they will feel a little gritty. The "grittiness" that is felt on genuine pearls is from the crystalline structure of nacre that forms Natural or Cultured pearls.

* * *

About Cultured Pearls

Cultured pearls are also known as Mikimoto pearls. Natural Pearls are formed after a foreign particle or parasite enters an oyster (or other mollusk) without human involvement. Cultured pearls are developed within a mollusk after a human being has purposely placed a foreign particle within it. This means of creating a pearl was discovered and developed by Japanese businessman, Kokichi Mikimoto (1858-1954). He obtained a patent for his cultured pearls in 1908.

Can a Cultured Pearl be detected from a Natural Pearl? Yes, sometimes skilled jewelers can peer down the drill hole of a pearl and determine whether it is natural or cultured, but the only sure way to determine whether a pearl is natural or genuine is to X-ray the pearl.

But since Cultured Pearls really ARE genuine pearls, they too are highly valued. Indeed their appearance on world markets has actually begun the gradual demise of Natural Pearls. Although it took many years for cultured pearls to be accepted, it is said that they now account for over 95% of the world's production, and that it is only a few Middle Eastern countries which still have a preference for Natural Pearls today.

*** * ***

An Interesting Fact and Story About Natural Pearls

One of the most interesting stories about Natural Pearls involves the fact that PEARLS WILL DISSOLVE IN VINEGAR! Yes, as greatly as they are prized and valued, these organic gems can be ruined with wear, marred, scratched, and dissolved in acidic vinegar. The following story cannot be verified, but involves this latter fact. I found the story online at two or more sites:

In 41 BC Mark Antony summoned Egyptian queen Cleopatra for an audience. Cleopatra arrived and proceeded to throw elaborate banquets for Antony for several evenings straight. So impressed was Antony at these lavish feasts that Cleopatra wagered him a large sum of money that she could host the most expensive meal in history. He accepted the wager. The next day, Cleopatra held another lavish banquet for Antony, but since it was no more so than the previous ones, he was not convinced it was anything like the most expensive meal ever given.

Cleopatra was wearing a set of pearl ear-rings of extraordinary value -- each said to be worth 30 million sesterces -- \$6.75 million U.S. dollars -- an immense fortune. She removed one of her ear-rings, placed it into a glass of wine-vinegar, whereupon it was dissolved, and Cleopatra drank it down. Antony conceded defeat -- the value of that single drink alone (with none of the rest of the lavish banquet) had made it more expensive than any meal in history.

*** * ***

Other Pearls of Great Price

The Romans highly prized pearls, and it is said that the Roman general Vitellius once financed an entire military campaign by selling just one of his mother's pearl earrings.

One of the most famous pearls in the world is called La Peregrina (The Wanderer) and was found in 1560 by a slave diving off the coast of Panama. It is pear shaped and the size of a pigeon's egg. Famous owners of this pearl have included Philip II of Spain, Mary Tudor of England and Napoleon III. The last owner is believed to be actress Elizabeth Taylor, who received it in 1969 as a gift from Richard Burton.

The Abernathy Pearl is a famous freshwater, Natural Pearl that was discovered in 1967 by William Abernathy, a Scottish pearl diver, who found it in the River Tay. This light pink spherical pearl is also endearingly referred to as "Little Willie" and weighed 93 grains which is about 2200mm. It was sold to Cairncross Jewelry store in Perth, Scotland for an undisclosed amount -- probably a handsome sum! It came from a Union Margaretifera mussel, and is quite perfectly round, comparable in size to a marble, with full of glowing lustre. One beholder of it said, "It was like you could look into it, not just at it. What a treasure! Fortunately, the Abernathy pearl is on display for the public to view at Cairncross Jewelry Store in Perth, Scotland."

The Myanmar Pearl is said to be the world's largest natural blister pearl. It was found on April 19, 2001, during oyster fishing at Macleod fishing ground near southern tip of Myanmar-Thailand border. Though the surface of the pearl looked liked a brain, the color was silvery and lustrous. It weighs 45.06 mm and measures 62 x 50 x 31 mm (2.4 inches X 1.96 inches X 1.2 inches). It is the largest-ever natural pearl which is nacreous and extracted from a mother of pearl oyster.

But, **THE WORLD'S LARGEST PEARL**, and perhaps as well **THE WORLD'S MOST HIGHLY VALUED PEARL** is **THE PEARL OF LAO-TZU** -- found under the Palawan Sea by a Filipino diver in 1934. This giant treasure is presumed to be 600 years old, weighs 14 pounds, is 9 1/2 inches long by 5 1/2 inches in diameter and is now valued at \$42 million U.S. dollars! I presume it is the size, weight, and age of this monster pearl that gives it most of its value. It was found in a giant Tridacna (clam). I viewed a picture of it, and it is obviously neither a Spherical nor Symmetrical pearl, but a Baroque pearl. Nevertheless, it seems to be "The Grand-Daddy of All Pearls!" at least in size, and perhaps also in value. I hate to tell the reader this, but besides being known as The Pearl of Lao-Tzu, it is also known as The Pearl of Allah.

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From Job 28:18

In presenting these truths, I shall use the Biblical references to pearls in the order of their appearance in the Bible, the first being Job 28:18 -- "No mention shall be made of coral, or of PEARLS: for the price of wisdom is above rubies."

Genuine, God-given wisdom is of more value than The Pearl of Lao-Tzu. Those who make it into heaven will be forever grateful for the "wisdom that descendeth from above" which brought them into and kept them in the Salvation of Christ.

In commenting on pearls relative to Job 28:18, Adam Clarke stated that he had seen one pearl that "formed the whole body of a Hindoo idol, Creeshna, more than an inch in length, and valued at 300 guineas." But of course Clarke knew that Divine Wisdom from Above transcends that of any Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, or what have you. Men may value the profundity of such religions, when, in fact their vaunted wisdom is as worthless, "As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout" (Prov. 11:22)! -- or as void of value to deliver the soul on the Day of Judgment as The Pearl of Lao-Tzu!

* * *

From Matthew 7:6

In Matthew 7:6 Jesus spoke of Spiritual Pearls when He said, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your PEARLS before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."

I have heard professed Christians call and talk to profane, swine-like Talk Show Hosts on the radio and try to persuade them of some Biblical Truth -- only to have that man (or woman) "trample under foot" that sacred and precious truth. There are times, places, and audiences where it is proper to present precious, Scriptural Truths. There are many other times, places, and audiences, where it is entirely improper to do so! Too often, too many fail discern one from the other. To present eternally valuable spiritual pearls of truth to a coarse and vulgar ingrate who is sure to refuse, rebuff and trample them into his (or her) filthy disgust and disregard, is to do precisely what Jesus said should not be done! "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Prov. 25:11). A word unfitly spoken is like pearls cast before swine!

* * *

From Matthew 13:45-46

Next, let us consider Jesus parable in Matthew 13:45-46, ""Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly PEARLS: Who, when he had found one PEARL of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

Dr. Adam Clarke has some interesting information and comments on these verses which I thought I might present, at least in part. However, I have decided to refer the reader to his commentary for those and use only my own observations here.

The "Pearl of Great Price" to which Jesus refers here is certainly nothing akin to "The Pearl of Great Price" coming from the lying lips of the Mormon False Prophet, Joseph Smith Jr. This fraud's so-called "Pearl of Great Price" is, at best, an Imitation Pearl, a piece of Plastic Junk! I could tell you much about what a complete fabricator and impostor on the prophetic office Joseph Smith Jr. was, but I forbear. Let any and all who read this who have any doubt about it, BEWARE! His phony Book of Mormon and all of the rest of his writings were no more inspired of God than the utterances of the earlier False Prophet Mohammed!

But let's talk about the REAL PEARL OF GREAT PRICE to which Jesus referred. It is a Spiritual Pearl -- HIS SALVATION. In comparison to every other truly valuable and "goodly pearl" on earth, ITS VALUE STANDS ETERNALLY GREATER THAN ALL!

In the parable, the "Merchant Man" who found it was an expert. He knew, by sight, that he had found the most valuable and precious pearl of all -- but the seller was asking a huge sum. Nevertheless, perceiving that it was worth far more than the price asked, he quickly went and sold every other pearl and every other thing he had, in order to buy it!

Let me put this in modern terminology. Watch him as he goes home.

"Wife," he says, "we are going to have to sell the place and everything in it and on it!"

"For what!?" she asks.

"For a pearl," he replies.

"For A SINGLE PEARL!!!??" she asks incredulously.

"Yes," he replies.

"Why on earth must we do THAT??!!" she exclaims.

"Well, honey," he says, "I have already sold all of my other pearls and other land, and I do not have enough to buy it yet. We're just going to have to sell our place, and everything on it and in it to have the asking price. We will probably have to even sell every stitch of clothing we own except the ones we are now wearing."

"YOU ARE INSANE!" she replies. "ABSOLUTELY INSANE! I'LL LEAVE YOU IF YOU DO!"

"Honey, I know I sound crazy, but please bear with me. This one pearl weighs thus and so, and measures thus and so, and it is worth \$42 millions dollars! -- enough to get us into a mansion where our labors will be forever past and where we will dwell with the finest and riches people ever known, and live happily ever after!"

"Are you sure?" she asks.

"I'M POSITIVE!" he replies.

"Well, dear," his wife replies, "You know your business -- How much is the seller asking?"

"\$150,000.00 dollars," replies her husband.

"THAT CHEAP!?" cries his wife, "COUNT ME IN!"

So, the Merchant Man and his Wife sell out, lock, stock, and barrel, but they lack \$20,000.00 dollars.

"Honey," says the man, "We're gonna have to sell the car too, but with that we can buy the pearl."

"Sell it quick!" she says, "and take a cab over across town and get that pearl, while it's still available!"

And, he DID.

But this, of course, is only a very feeble comparison to the ETERNAL VALUE OF THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE to which Jesus referred, and to the ETERNAL HABITATION which it shall bring.

*** * ***

From 1 Timothy 2:9-10

"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or PEARLS, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works."

The pearls mentioned here are those which are worn either by vain worldlings who care not a whit what the Bible says, or by professed Christians who purposely ignore this command. I need say little more. I will simply observe that it is beyond me how anyone who is conscientious about obeying God's Word could write this command off as non-applicable today. Does someone say, "Well, the pearls I wear are Imitation, and thus not "costly array." I reply that the Word also says in 1 Peter 3:3, "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning.." Whatever a person puts on their body for the purpose of adornment is forbidden by the New Testament. That should settle the question.

*** * ***

From Revelation 17:3-5 and Revelation 18:10-12

"So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and PEARLS, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (Revelation 17:3-5)

"... Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of PEARLS, and fine linen.." (Revelation 18:10-12)

The pearls mentioned in these passages are Natural Pearls and no doubt Cultured Pearls also -- of great value to the Merchant Men of this world. But at the Second Coming of Christ, THESE PEARLS SHALL ALL BE DISSOLVED -- QUICKER THAN THE PEARL OF CLEOPATRA! They are the pearls found, sold, bought, owned, and worn by those who comprise Babylon the Great. Here they all cry in bitter loss: "... Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more! -- The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of PEARLS, and fine linen.." -- all gone, FOREVER! -- when The Emporium Empire of the Man of Sin suddenly falls!

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From Revelation 21:16, 21

"And the city lieth foursquare... And the twelve gates were twelve PEARLS; every several gate was of one PEARL: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass."

In his commentary, Adam Clarke says the following regarding these pearls:

"The twelve gates were twelve pearls] This must be merely figurative, for it is out of all the order of nature to produce a pearl large enough to make a gate to such an immense city."

Well, I agree that 12 pearls large enough to be the gates of the Holy City would indeed be "out of all the order of nature to produce," but the stupendously huge pearls of that size would not be beyond GOD'S ability to produce! However, I tend to agree with Clarke that the 12 Gates of Pearl in the walls of New Jerusalem are probably figurative -- Spiritual Pearls. As I see it, such would have to be the case, for the New Jerusalem is, at once, both Christ's Bride, and the dwelling place of Christ's Bride.

How can the Holy City be both Christ's Bride and the dwelling place of Christ's Bride at the same time? Ah! That is a mystery which shall be revealed to mankind only when Time is forever past and Eternity begun. Those who have "The Pearl of Great Price" by selling their all to Jesus to obtain it, shall then know how this can be so -- and, like the Merchant Man and his Wife in the little scenario I wrote, they shall REALLY "dwell with the finest and richest people ever known, and live happily ever after!"

* * * * *

03 -- THE CONCLUSION

Saint of God, be encouraged! A blissful Eternity awaits you! and even now you can join in the words of the song, "I've Found The Pearl of Greatest Price":

I've found the Pearl of Greatest Price,
My heart doth sing for joy;
And sing I must, for Christ is mine;
Christ shall my song employ.

Christ is my Prophet, Priest, and King;
My Prophet full of light,
My Great High Priest before the throne,
My King of heav'nly might.

For He indeed is Lord of lords,
And He the King of kings;
He is the Sun of Righteousness,
With healing in His wings.

Christ is my peace; He died for me,

**For me He shed his blood;
And as my wondrous Sacrifice,
Offered Himself to God.**

**Christ Jesus is my all in all,
My comfort and my love;
My life below, and He shall be
My joy and crown above.**

* * * * *

THE END