

Overlaid with Gold

“Thou shalt make a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made. And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold: their hooks shall be of gold, upon the four sockets of silver.”
—Exodus 26:31,32

GOLD, BY VIRTUE OF ITS beauty, value, and natural qualities, is a fitting symbol of things divine. There are many scriptures in the Bible that mention gold, its uses, and the symbolism related to it. In an early reference to gold in the book of Genesis, we read, “A river went out of Eden, . . . and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; And the gold of that land is good.” (Gen. 2:10-12) This is perhaps the first veiled reference to those who will be of the first resurrection, as they are separated from the rest of the world. When proven faithful they will receive the divine nature, of which “the gold of that land” is a fitting symbol.

THE TABERNACLE'S CONSTRUCTION

In the book of Exodus, chapters 25-38, is described the design and construction of the Tabernacle, its structure, and the furnishings of the Holy and Most Holy. We should remember that the Tabernacle pictures the development of the true church. When we read these accounts, we notice how many parts of the Tabernacle were to be overlaid with gold. "Overlaid" means to be covered up, or to be wrapped up. There is significance to be found in these words. The fact that many of the furnishings of the Tabernacle were made of, or overlaid with, pure gold implies that these represented conditions related to those who are called to the divine nature. Only the Priests and Levites, those who were consecrated to the work of sacrifice and service, had access to the Tabernacle. Likewise, only those of the household of faith who are consecrated to sacrifice unto death enter into the divine conditions represented in that typical arrangement.

Concerning the type of wood that was to be overlaid with gold in the Tabernacle's construction, the account states that it was "shittim wood," a species of acacia. This type of tree grows in the desert. We are reminded prophetically that Jesus was as "a root out of a dry ground" (Isa. 53:2), showing that his earthly life and ministry was in the midst of a symbolic desert, devoid of the water of truth. He was this "root" which came up in such dry conditions.

The wood of the acacia tree, sometimes three to four feet in diameter, is close-grained, hard, and easily adapted to cabinetwork. It served as the material that was the base, or frame, upon which

the outer coverings of the articles of the Tabernacle, including gold, would be overlaid. The boards also were made from this wood. It was strong, but light weight, because it had to be easily transported. How fittingly this depicts the church's journey from common things, or the human nature, to glory and honor.

Because acacia wood is very close-grained and strong, the tree itself is able to withstand the harsh conditions that exist in arid land. The church, or body of Christ, must also be strong to withstand their trials and experiences in the desert land of this present evil world. They must be proven faithful to be able to be covered with the gold of the divine nature.

OUR AFFLICTIONS

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.” (Heb. 10:19,20) “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church.” (Col. 1:24) These scriptures allude to the work of self-sacrifice, self-denial, and cross bearing. To be overlaid with gold, the church must share in her Lord's sufferings for righteousness sake. Only such are promised a share in all the glories of her Lord.—I Pet. 5:9,10

When persecutions come as a result of living close to the Lord as part of our service and responsibilities to him, we are to view them as part of our sacrifice. The Body, as well as the Head, must be

subjected to the discipline of suffering. We are to share in the sufferings of Christ, which all believers cleansed by his blood have been invited to do during this Gospel Age. We should give thanks to be counted worthy to suffer with him, so that we might reign with him forever in glory. “Ye are a chosen generation, . . . a peculiar people.” (I Pet. 2:9) Additionally, we are to be “a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”—Titus 2:14

To be a “peculiar people” means to be “a people for a purpose” (*Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*), separated from the world—in the world, but not of its spirit. This is a work of transformation, and includes having new hopes, aims, and ambitions. The church is admonished to “set your affection on things above.” (Col. 3:2) Their hope is to be a partaker of the first resurrection, the divine nature, symbolized by gold. Such are developing a new mind that will lead to spirit birth as a New Creature. Striving to be different from the world in general, these must possess a special love for that which is good, just, noble, and acceptable to God. To do so one must be self-sacrificing, and know no will but that of “the King of kings, and Lord of lords.” (I Tim. 6:15) To assist, the prospective members of the church have been begotten with the Holy Spirit—the influence and power of our great and loving Heavenly Father.

Christ is gathering those who have a hearing ear and a humble and contrite heart. To these has been presented the opportunity to develop and reach the “mark” of perfect love. (Phil. 3:14) By adhering to the word of the Lord as a law of life, each is to have a firm faith. Acting accordingly,

with zeal these are to strive to be in harmony with God's plans and purposes. This should include the desire to praise him and to have a heart filled to overflowing with the spirit of love. This indeed is the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Truth. By putting on the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit, such are to strive each day of their walk to attain the "quarter marks" of love until reaching the mark of perfect love, and thus attaining the "prize of the high calling."

SHARERS IN HIS SUFFERING

The church, with their Head, is being sacrificed at this time, during the Gospel Age. This offering commenced with the Head, and continues with the members of his body. If we are a sharer in the sufferings of Christ, and not in any other kind of suffering, we should lay down our lives, especially on behalf of our brethren. The Scriptures state, "We are buried with him by baptism into death," and are counted as "dead with Christ." (Rom. 6:4,8) We are "made conformable unto his death."—Phil. 3:10

"We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (I John 3:16) "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13) These scriptures indicate that the measure of our love for the Lord will be indicated by our love for, and service to, the fellow members of the body of Christ. In this way, we build up one another in our most holy faith: "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted [knit together in love] by that which every joint supplieth." (Eph. 4:16) The Apostle Paul here reminds

us that each member of the body, as yokefellows in Christ, is important. Our prayers should be rendered on behalf of all our brethren, that they may be gathered together and united in love, both now and beyond the veil. "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." (Ps. 50:5) "Gather the wheat into my barn." (Matt. 13:30) We cannot be gathered in the fullest sense until we are fully ripened, fully developed.

"They shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." (Mal. 3:17) The Father has called us to be part of this "jewel" class, offering us life and the divine nature. To be faithful to this call means we must be fully submissive to the headship of our Savior, Christ Jesus, the Head of the body. Just as Jesus was faithful, we must carry out day by day our covenant of consecration and sacrifice, and be a sharer in his sufferings.

On the typical Day of Atonement, the High Priest first offered a bullock for himself and his house. He then offered the goat, "the sin offering, that is for the people," making atonement for them (all of Israel) as God commanded. (Lev. 16:15) In the antitype, we see that our Head, Jesus, suffers first and then the body follows. We, as his body members, study to comprehend his course, his example, his teachings. We seek to appreciate and copy the meekness, patience, and suffering of Christ, and the fact that he suffered unjustly. We realize that he endured it all with love and the peace that came from knowing his Father was watching over him. The Master knew that he was

performing a work that was designed and blessed by God. Truly he epitomized the words: “Love suffereth long, and is kind.”—I Cor. 13:4

Concerning the development of the body of Christ, these are privileged to assist and serve others who have likewise taken up their cross to follow in the footprints of the crucified one. This body of Christ sacrifices their all for those who likewise love and serve the Truth. Those so doing are identified as adopted sons, heirs of God. Assisting others comes many times by our words. Fitly spoken, they are “apples of gold in pictures of silver.” (Prov. 25:11) The power of the tongue can be very positive. Those following their faithful Head will look for ways to help to build up and serve the brethren. They have been instructed to speak words that reflect the character of a consecrated footstep follower of the Lord, begotten with the Holy Spirit. This begetting illuminates the mind, enabling one to discern spiritual things (I Cor. 2:12-16), providing the holy influence of God and his Son.

A ROBE AND A CROWN

Herein is another aspect of this overlaying or covering. “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.” (Isa. 61:10) God covers our unwilling imperfections with the “robe” of Christ’s righteousness. If faithful in wearing this robe, and embroidering upon it the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit, we have the promise that “I will write upon him my new name.” (Rev. 3:12) In another place, the prophet says,

“She shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.” (Jer. 33:16) The Apostle Paul describes our attainment of righteousness, saying, “That we might be made the righteousness of God in him [Christ].”—II Cor. 5:21

The anointed body of Christ can be joyful even in this present life though it be filled with testings, hard experiences, and sorrows. Even in these, however, our salvation is not complete, as we “have not yet resisted unto blood.” (Heb. 12:4) It has begun, though, in the sense that we are already counted as being on God’s side because of the righteousness of our Lord Jesus.

Each member of the body of Christ is represented as a precious jewel which will be placed in its particular setting by God. “Now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.” (I Cor. 12:18) Each faithful member of this body will be given a place of glory in the royal diadem, which will be a beautiful ornament in the hand of God. Our Lord Jesus was the first setting in this great diadem, and his body members have the privilege of following him.

This diadem, symbolically speaking, is set in gold, picturing the divine nature. This is the crown of life, or crowning life, the reward for faithfulness unto death. (Rev. 2:10) This treasure can be obtained only at the cost of entire consecration and the sacrifice of all that we have in the interest of Christ and our Heavenly Father. Those who have made this consecration have vowed to relinquish their future earthly life-rights to gain an inheritance that cannot be corrupted by rust and decay, but which lasts forever. To gain such a victory requires

faithful and constant submission to the discipline of the Lord in the fiery trials that are necessary to consume the dross and refine the Christian character.

REFINED AS GOLD

The faith and character of the true church is represented in gold, silver, and precious stones. Silver and other precious stones, even diamonds, need polishing. Gold, when rightly refined, does not need polishing. It is therefore representative of the highest heavenly riches, divine things, divine truth, and divine life. Obtaining of this character means we must be imbued with “the wisdom that is from above.” (James 3:17) Not until we fully lay hold upon the precious promises of joint-heirship with Christ, leading to our faithfulness unto sacrificial death, is the gold of the divine nature complete. This is why we are spoken of as being “a new creature” in Christ Jesus. (II Cor. 5:17) It is now only in him that we have this standing before God.

“I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire.” (Rev. 3:18) Just as it is necessary that gold be put into the crucible for refining, so we must also be tried. This requires faithful and constant submission to the disciplines of the Lord. “Examine me, O LORD, and prove me: try my reins and my heart.” (Ps. 26:2) God proves us to determine if we are worthy, to see if we love him above all things, or if we love self. In order for the dross of self to be consumed, we must keep our “living sacrifice” on the altar until the image of the refiner is seen in the luster of the gold. Then, if faithful, we will be

in the hand of God as pure gold. The faithful church will be forever a testimony to angels and men of the marvelous workmanship of the Creator, epistles “known and read of all men.”—II Cor. 3:2

GOD’S TEMPLE

The account of the building of Israel’s Temple in Jerusalem by Solomon is recorded in I Kings 6:1-38. It was probably richer in its ornamentation and more costly than any other temple previously built by man. It represents, in symbol, a glorious work of God, which will result in the bringing of rich blessings to mankind. Solomon was not only a king and prince of peace, but also wise and very rich. He represents the great King and Prince of Peace, our Lord Jesus, described as “greater than Solomon.”—Matt. 12:42

In the Temple construction, great foundation stones were carefully laid first. In the building of God’s symbolic temple, these represent the apostles chosen of God, with Christ as the “chief corner stone.” (Eph. 2:20) Additionally, this greater spiritual temple is built of “lively [living] stones,” representing the body of Christ. (I Pet. 2:5) Each of these stones is fitted and prepared for a unique place in God’s temple, and is made ready in the quarry of this life. (I Kings 6:7) Once fitted and chiseled in the experiences of this life, each stone is brought to its place and added to the temple building until it is complete, having been made so by the resurrection power of God.

Solomon used cedar in the construction of Israel’s Temple. He then overlaid it all with pure gold. (I Kings 6:18-22) The use of cedar and not acacia

wood, as in the Tabernacle, is significant. Cedar is an evergreen tree and represents eternal life. This house was meant to be permanent, showing that the blessings of the coming kingdom will last forever. Although glorious in its construction, the Temple was not complete until “the priests brought in the ark of the covenant . . . unto his place.” (chap. 8:6) The ark being placed in position illustrates that every member of the body of Christ must be changed from the Tabernacle to the Temple, or permanent dwelling place, in the first resurrection. During Christ’s kingdom, the world will approach God through the glorified church—their mediator—and have an opportunity for eternal life on earth. The law of that kingdom will be love, and man’s heart obedience to the New Covenant arrangement will lead them back to favor with God. “Love never faileth . . . the greatest of these is love.”—I Cor. 13:8,13

THE NEW JERUSALAM

Concerning the New Jerusalem, we read, “The building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.” (Rev 21:18) We note that in this finished picture of Christ and his church, the gold is completely pure. All of the dross is gone; there are no impurities such as sin and death; the refining work is complete. “The street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.” (vs. 21) In this, we see a picture of unfading, untarnished glory reflecting the attributes of God.

Under the leadership of the New Jerusalem, all mankind will be raised from the dead to learn of

God's wonderful character. "For they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them." (Jer. 31:34) Having their eyes of understanding opened, man will come to a knowledge of the Truth. "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD."—Isa. 11:9

The "way of holiness" will be so plain that "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." (Isa. 35:8) "He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." (Rev. 22:1) This symbolic river of water—God's word of truth—will lead the willing and obedient ones to human perfection. These will receive restitution—restoration—of what was lost by our first parents when they sinned. The obedient of mankind will be forever turned away from the "broad" way that led them to "destruction" in this life. (Matt. 7:13) They will walk up the "[high]way of holiness," to be finally returned to the character image of God in which they were first created, and will enjoy life on a restored, perfect earth forever.

This will all be accomplished through the carrying out of God's plan to its completion. The fulfillment of this plan began with the giving of that good and perfect gift from heaven, God's only Begotten Son, as man's Redeemer. Now it awaits only the selection and completion of the called-out ones, the "church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven." (Heb. 12:23) Therefore, let us press on to the mark that is before us, being submissive to the refining process. If faithful, we will receive the glorious prize of the divine nature, and be completely overlaid with gold. ■