

• *A summary of the statistics concerning the metals used in the making of the tabernacle*

• *Tabernacle – kept by Ithamar*

• *Gold and silver contributions by each of the 600,000 people*

• *Copper*

• *Costly generosity*

• *The nearer one came to God, the more valuable the metal*

1. The most valuable blessing - enjoying the presence of God

• *Gold*

• *Jacob*

• *The psalmist*

Now we have a summary of the statistics concerning the metals used in the making of the tabernacle. There was no reference to this matter in Exodus chapters 25–31. Verse 21 begins *‘These are the statistics of the tabernacle ...’* and it goes on to tell how Ithamar, one of Aaron’s sons, was in charge of keeping the records concerning how these metals were used. The verse anticipates Numbers 4:28, 33, which tells us that Ithamar organised the work of the Levites. It is likely that there was one final editor of Genesis to Deuteronomy, perhaps in the tenth century BC. So there is no reason why the editor should not anticipate in Exodus what he knew would appear later in what we call Numbers.

Bezalel was the senior craftsman^{□1} in the work. Oholiab was his assistant^{□2}. There was about 1,000 kilograms of gold used^{□3}, and almost 3,500 kilograms of silver^{□4}. There were about 600,000 people and each person (except the Levites) gave a ‘beka’ or half a shekel of silver^{□5}. The gift of silver anticipated the census that would take place slightly later^{□6}. Exodus 38:27 explains that most of the silver was used to make the base of the vertical structures upon which were hung the tent and the cloth ‘wall’ of the tent. A smaller amount was used to make other parts of the same vertical structures^{□7}.

There was a third metal used. About 2,400 kilograms of copper was used for the bases at the first entrance of the tent, to make the copper altar in the courtyard, and to make the bases of the structures holding the cloth ‘wall’ around the tabernacle area plus a few other items^{□1}.

Two things stand out as the use of these metals is considered. First, there is the generosity of the people. Large amounts of valuable metals were given. It cost the people something to build this symbol of worship and access to God.

Secondly, the use of the metals implies the great value of God’s presence. When one was symbolically outside the presence of God, copper was used. When one came into the holy place, symbolising fellowship with God, silver was used. But in the holy of holies, gold was used. The nearer one came to God, the more valuable was the metal that was used. Several matters invite our attention in all of this.

1. The most valuable blessing in the whole of life is the enjoyment of the presence of God. The great value of the presence of God is highlighted, foreshadowed and recommended by the tabernacle. The priest who went into the tabernacle courtyard and then into the holy place and then (if he was the great high-priest) into the holiest of all, was pressing on to ever greater levels into the presence of God. In the courtyard there was copper around him. In the holy place there was silver around him. In the holy of holies there was gold around him.

The presence of God is life’s most precious blessing. When Jacob knew the presence of God^{□1} it was one of the greatest privileges of his life. ‘You make him joyful with your presence’ said the psalm-writer^{□2}. ‘In your presence is fullness of joy’ says another psalm^{□3}. It was wonderful for the disciples when Jesus came and stood in their

□1 38:22
 □2 38:23
 □3 38:24
 □4 38:25
 □5 38:26
 □6 see Numbers 1
 □7 38:28

□1 38:29-31

□1 Genesis 28:16
 □2 Psalm 29:6
 □3 Psalm 16:11

- Adam
- Job
- We need to learn this truth

midst^{□4}. Something similar can happen to us in spiritual experience today. On the other hand nothing is more terrible than to lose God's presence. This was the original calamity of the human race. Adam when he sinned was deprived of the joy of God's presence^{□5}. If the presence of God is wonderful, the absence of God is terrible. This was what was threatened by God as a result of Israel's sin. There was a moment when God was threatening not to be in their midst^{□6} because of Israel's sin. When God deprives us of His presence it is terrible. Job complained 'I go forward and I go backward but he is not there'^{□7}. We need to learn, everyone of us, that the presence of God is life's most precious blessing.


□4 Luke 24:36
 □5 Genesis 3:23
 □6 33:3
 □7 Job 23:8

2. There are steps and stages in getting to know God


- First copper
- Then silver
- Then gold
- We have to persist in faith
- Not a matter of classes of Christian but levels of spiritual experience
- Aim for gold!

2. There are steps and stages in getting to know God. There is the 'copper' stage, when one is not in the presence of God and yet the possibility of fellowship with God is open to us. There is the 'silver' stage when we are enjoying table-fellowship with God, when we are walking in the light, when we are having our prayers accepted because of the intercession of Jesus. However there is something higher still, the 'gold stage' when one has the presence of God in its highest form. It is not exactly heaven but it is the nearest thing to it that we can reach in this world. It is entering into rest, as the letter to the Hebrews puts it.

The tabernacle encourages us to 'enter into the holiest' in spiritual experience. We have to persist in faith until we inherit God's promises. It is not enough (if we may use tabernacle language) for us to be walking around in the courtyard; we must enter into the holy place of fellowship with God. Yet there is still more. There is something higher. It is not a matter of different classes of Christians, but is a matter of different levels of spiritual experience. The Christian should be pressing on into the 'golden' level of spiritual experience. The 'golden' level is what happens when we so serve God and please God and follow our calling that He is pleased with us, and says (as he said to Abraham), 'Now I know that you fear me; I will indeed bless you.' And we enter into the highest level of all in which we join the cherubim and enter into the richest possible experience of God's presence in our lives. Few there be that find it, but the way into the holiest is open; it was opened by the blood of Jesus Christ.



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