

Overlaid With Pure Gold

by T. Austin-Sparks

The gold on the ark represents the glory of God, which is precious to Him and is the ultimate goal of the Christian life.

Scripture: Exodus 32:17, Isaiah 53:2, John 5:23, Galatians 1:24

Topics: "Spiritual Transformation", "God's Glory"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the significance of the ark of the covenant, made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold, symbolizing God's glory and His jealousy for it. He illustrates how Satan attempts to steal God's glory, as seen in the incident of the golden calf, and highlights the importance of recognizing the true value of Christ, who embodies that glory. Sparks encourages believers to look beyond the surface and see the inner beauty and glory of Jesus, which is only visible to those who are spiritually 'inside.' He concludes by stressing that our faith, refined through trials, is precious to God and aligns us with the glory of Christ, ultimately leading to our transformation into His image.

Transcript

Now we come to the second thing about the ark. We have seen that the ark was made of acacia wood, and that it was overlaid with pure gold. If you make a study of gold in the Bible you will see that it always speaks of glory, and you will also see that God was always jealous about the gold. He claimed the gold, and said: 'That is Mine. It belongs to Me.' It was that which represented the glory of God, about which He is very jealous, and Satan tried from time to time to steal the gold away from Him.

When Moses remained in the mountain forty days and forty nights the people said: 'Well, we don't know what has become of this Moses. Let us make us gods', and they called upon the people to bring their gold and out of that gold they made a golden calf. Then they said: 'This is thy god, O Israel', and they worshipped the calf.

You see, Satan had stolen the glory from God - God's glory was taken from Him by Satan. There is so much in that incident about which we have no time to speak, but there was one man who discerned the meaning of it, and it is that man's connection with the ark that we are going to look at more fully. When Joshua heard the noise of shouting in the camp, all this noise of worshipping the calf, he said: "There is a noise of war in the camp" (Exodus 32:17). There was registered upon the spirit of Joshua a conflict that was going on. That was how he interpreted the situation, and he was more right than he knew, for it was a battle between the glory of God and the glory of Satan. You know that Joshua was a man of war. His

whole history, as you will see, had to do with warfare, and that warfare was in relation to the ark. This spirit of conflict in Joshua was for the jealousy of God's glory.

You will remember that later on, when they were in the land, they came to the city of Ai, and there Israel met their first defeat. Joshua fell down before the ark of the Lord and asked Him why this defeat, and it was as though the Lord lifted up His finger, and that finger came down upon a wedge of gold. Achan had stolen a wedge of gold and hidden it in his tent. He had taken what had belonged to God alone and made it his own. In another way, you see, Satan had taken the glory of God and given it to man, and God says: 'My glory will I not give to another.'

Satan always has his eye on the gold: that is, he is always concerned to take the glory from God to himself. Oh, what a lot there is in the Bible about this! I am tempted to spend hours on the gold in the Bible, for it is a wonderful revelation of what belongs to God alone.

This ark, then, is covered with pure gold, and that speaks of how very precious Jesus Christ is to God, and how jealous God is for His Son, Jesus Christ. The Scripture says that all should "honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (John 5:23). If we want to be in the good pleasure of God we must make everything of the Lord Jesus. If we want to know why it was that God was so wonderfully with the first Christians and Apostles, the explanation is that they only had one Person in view, and everywhere at all times, they were magnifying the Lord Jesus. They knew something about the value of gold in God's sight. Wherever they went people glorified Christ. The Apostle Paul was able to say about certain Christians: "They glorified God in me" (Galatians 1:24).

Now will you notice that this gold of the ark and of the tabernacle was only seen from the inside. There was very much gold in the tabernacle. It covered all the boards, there were crowns of gold upon the pillars, there was the golden altar of incense, there was the golden lampstand, there were the gold vessels, and then there was the golden ark, the golden mercy seat upon the ark and the golden cherubim over the mercy seat. There was much gold, but it was all covered over by the many curtains and you could see none of it from the outside. If you had looked at that tabernacle from the outside you would have seen something very plain and ordinary. The outermost covering was just made from skins of porpoise, and if you had looked at it from the outside you would have said: 'There is no beauty that we should desire it.' Do you know where those words come from? "And when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised, and rejected of men... and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised" (Isaiah 53:2,3). You know those words were spoken about the Lord Jesus, and that is exactly how He was to the world outside, but, thank God, that is not the whole story. Let us get inside. Let us go into this place where God is, and what a changed scene! Wherever we look it is sparkling gold. There is that golden altar, that golden table of shewbread and that gold lampstand with its seven branches. From the inside we can see the gold upon the boards of the tabernacle and there are all the golden vessels. And right at the centre, and more than all, is the golden ark. But the gold can only be seen from the inside. What a lot of meaning there is in that!

See how the world looked at Jesus! See what value the world placed upon Him! See how they despised and rejected Him! And then hear John crying: "We beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). But you have to be on the inside to talk like that. That is the privilege of the Lord's people. There is now no veil between - it has been taken away, and we are all privileged to enter within the veil and to behold His glory. Are you on the inside? Have you come to see the glory of Christ? Are you seeing more and more as life goes on of that glory in Christ? Can you join with

John and say: "I behold His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth"?

Dear friends, as we go on in the Christian life we ought to be seeing more and more of the glory of Jesus Christ. You see, the gold was that which was mostly to God's pleasure; it was that which gave God His true satisfaction, and the thing which satisfies God most of all is the glory of His Son.

You know, the last picture in the Bible of the new Jerusalem describes it as having one street which is all of gold. It is the last picture in this dispensation, and the street is not just something to look at. It is something to walk in, and this symbolism is just saying: 'In the end you and I will be walking up and down in the glory of Jesus Christ.'

Well now, you can see that that opens the door to the great subject in the Bible of our being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Peter says that 'the trying of your faith is more precious than gold'. True faith which has been tried and purified in the fire is the most precious thing to God, because it is the faith of the Son of God. It is reproduced in us from Christ through fiery trials. I think that of all things precious to God faith is the most precious, because unbelief is the thing which is most against God.

Abraham is the embodiment of gold tried in the fire. He was the 'father of the faithful' and a man of gold, that is, when God had finished with him. And you and I, through the fires of trial, difficulty and suffering, are being made precious to God.

Well, I did not expect to take so much time on that one thing, but I should not be exaggerating if I said that I could spend more than this whole week on gold alone. However, there are many other things to say - but not tonight.

May I ask you, please, before tomorrow morning, to read the first chapter of the Book of the Revelation. I am not sure that we shall get to that tomorrow - those of you who know me best wonder when I shall get anywhere! However, sooner or later we shall reach that chapter.

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