

# Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

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## The significance of colours in the Bible: Silver

Over the last few weeks we have been studying the significance of colours in the Bible. The subject of this talk is the colour silver.

Traditionally in this country silver represents the celebration of the 25th anniversary and is related to the graceful aging of those with silver coloured hair. Silver cars are very popular; they are sleek, shiny and classic. Silver jewellery is something that many women like. Silver is also synonymous with money. In Bible times there was no Royal Mint as such that churned out money; the currency of trade was gold and silver. Today, apart from its face value, a note is worthless. However you can still buy, for example, a one ounce silver coin which will always be worth something because of the weight of the silver. Silver has long been valued as a precious metal.

Silver is mentioned throughout the Bible as a commodity of value that was traded with the first mention being in Genesis 13:2: *“Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold.”* The last mention in the Bible is in Revelation 18:11-12: *“and the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her; for no one buys their merchandise anymore: merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones”* and so on.

I would like to use four points as structure for this talk.

1. The value of silver;
2. The love of silver;
3. The refining of silver; and
4. The significance of silver.

### 1. The value of silver

The first point then is the value of silver. What we have read of Abram (see Genesis 13:2) shows his wealth in an ascending scale of value, cattle, silver and gold. Abram had accumulated a huge amount of riches whilst he was in Egypt. The Hebrew word for riches is heavy, something that could become a burden. God did not allow this to happen to Abram; we will mention how riches can affect us later in the talk. The Egyptians knew how to mine and refine precious metals. In Exodus 3:22 we read that the Egyptians gave articles of silver to the Israelites before they left Egypt. This is very significant because God would use the silver in the making of the tabernacle and its services, the sockets of silver for the boards to stand on so it would not fall to pieces (see Exodus 26:19-32). Silver was used a lot in the building of the tabernacle.

In Solomon's day silver was as common as stones in Jerusalem because it seems there was so much of it. Solomon imported silver from Egypt and then exported it to the kings of the Hittites and to the kings of the Arameans. All of Solomon's drinking vessels were of pure gold, none were of silver (it seems it was because he was so rich). This may refer to Solomon's personal use because when we come to Belshazzar's feast (see Daniel 5:1-12), he drank out of the golden and silver vessels which his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple that was in Jerusalem.

It seems that the silver that was in the temple was given by David. 1 Kings 7:51 reads: *“So all the work that King Solomon had done for the house of the LORD was finished; and Solomon brought in the things which his father David had dedicated: the silver and the gold and the furnishings. He put them in the treasuries of the house of the LORD.”* David had prepared with all his might for the house of the LORD. He had set his affection on the house of God. David gave his own gold and silver to overlay the walls of the houses. David challenges the people in 1 Chronicles 29 as to who was willing to consecrate his service to the LORD (1 Chronicles 29:5). The people offered willingly, giving ten thousand talents of silver amongst other things (1 Chronicles 29:7). They all gave with a pure heart because of their love for David and the LORD.

There are two incidents in the Bible of men being sold for pieces of silver. The first we find in Genesis 37:25-28 which is a type or picture of the second which is found in Matthew 26:15. In Genesis 37:28 we read how Jacob's sons sell their brother Joseph to the Midianites, and they in turn sell him into Egypt (see Genesis 37:36). This speaks in type, of Christ being rejected by Israel and delivered to the Gentiles. But it was the price that was placed on the head of the

individuals that is most interesting. Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of silver (Genesis 37:28) whereas the Lord Jesus was sold for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:15). Was this because the price of a slave had gone up throughout the years? Was it because Judas was a better trader and had a buyer who was desperate? In Hebrew culture, thirty pieces of silver was not a lot of money; in Exodus 21:32 we are told it was the exact price paid to the master of a slave if his slave was gored by an ox. The slave's death was compensated by the thirty pieces of silver. The Lord Jesus was priced no higher than a common slave.

In the New Testament we read in Luke 15:8 of a woman who had ten pieces of silver and lost one. The woman searched her house very diligently until she found it. The piece of silver was of low value but it was very valuable and precious to her. Does this not show how precious we are individually to Christ as the Holy Spirit seeks out the lost sinner?

In Matthew 10:9 the twelve disciples were sent out without gold, silver or brass in their purses. They were to have faith and rely on the Lord to supply their daily needs. In Acts 3:1-10, Peter and John came across a lame man who was begging as they were entering the temple. Peter asked the man to look at him (Acts 3:4); the man looked expecting to receive something from him (Acts 3:5). Peter was able to tell him truthfully that they had neither silver nor gold, but they had something so much more precious to give him (Acts 3:6). Peter and John had the power to heal him: "*In [the most powerful name of all], the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth*" (Acts 3:6). Peter lifted the man up, he stood, walked and went into the temple with them to praise God (Acts 3:7-8).

## 2. The love of silver

My second point is the love of silver. It is sad to say but it seems that the only disciple to covet silver was Judas. Judas bargained with the leaders for thirty pieces of silver to betray the Lord Jesus (see Matthew 26:15). There are few examples in the Old Testament of men who sadly coveted silver. In Numbers 22:18, Balaam wanted silver and gold. In Joshua 7:22, Achan not only coveted silver but took it from the spoils of war and buried it under his tent. 2 Kings 5:20-27 is probably the saddest of all. Elisha's servant, Gehazi, after seeing that Naaman had been cured of his leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-15) and seeing Elisha rightly refusing to take any payment for a miracle that God did (2 Kings 5:16-19), followed Naaman (2 Kings 5:20-27). Gehazi lied that his master had sent him and asked for talents of silver amongst other things (2 Kings 5:22-25). Because of Gehazi's sin, he and his family were smitten with the leprosy from which Naaman had just been cured (2 Kings 5:26-27).

In Acts 20:33, Paul honestly said that he coveted no man's silver or gold. 1 Timothy 6: 10 tells us that "*the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*" Having lots of silver or money is not an issue, but it's the love of it that is the problem. Abram was the richest man around all those years ago but his heart was fixed on God and he remained faithful to Him.

Ecclesiastes 5:10 warns: "*he who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver.*" Silver as with many things will never satisfy you; only Christ can satisfy the longing heart. Proverbs 16:16 describes how it is better to have understanding rather than silver. In 1 Corinthians 3:12 we read of the foundation for this life and the future is only secure in Jesus Christ, His person and His work. However 1 Corinthians 3:13 warns you that if you build your life upon a foundation of gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay and stubble you will be found out at the judgment seat of Christ where your life as a Christian will be reviewed. A Christian builds every day and the results of your work will be manifested in a coming day where rewards will be handed out.

## 3. The refining of silver

The third point is the refining of silver. During our lives God allows us to go through circumstances which test us. As we go through these circumstances we should come out of them stronger with more faith and trust in God. God teaches us through these times for our benefit and His glory, so we can be used better for Himself. God gives us grace to cope in these times of trial. Psalm 66:10: says; "*For You, O God, have tested us; You have refined us, as silver is refined.*" In Psalm 12:6 David tells us that "*The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver is tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.*" Every time we read the Bible it should have a purifying effect on us.

Some time me ago, a few ladies met in a certain city to read the scriptures, and make them the subject of conversation. While reading the third chapter of Malachi they came upon a remarkable expression in Malachi 3:3: "*And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.*" One lady's opinion was that it was intended to convey the view of the sanctifying influence of the grace of Christ. Then she proposed to visit a silversmith and report to them what he said on the subject.

She went accordingly and without telling the object of her errand, begged to know the process of refining silver, which he fully described to her. "But Sir," she said, "do you sit while the work of refining is going on?" "Oh, yes, madam,"

replied the silversmith; "I must sit with my eye steadily fixed on the furnace, for if the time necessary for refining be exceeded in the slightest degree, the silver will be injured."

The lady at once saw the beauty, and comfort too, of the expression, "*He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver*" (Malachi 3:3). Christ may see it needful to put His children into a furnace; His eye is steadily intent on the work of purifying, and His wisdom and love are both engaged in the best manner for them. Their trials do not come at random; "*the very hairs of your head are all numbered*" (see Matthew 10:30, Luke 12:7).

As the lady was leaving the shop, the silversmith called her back, and said he had forgotten to mention that the only way that he knows when the process of purifying is complete is when he sees his own image reflected in the silver. God allows us to go through hard times so that we may grow and become smooth and shiny. His goal is for us to become a reflection of Him that not only He can see, but also so others can see Him in us.

#### 4. The significance of silver

The fourth point is the significance of silver. In the Bible silver clearly speaks of redemption because of the money that was to be paid for atonement for sins, and the treatment of refining silver clearly speaks of the purification of our sins. In Exodus 30:11-16 we read of how God ordered every male Israelite twenty years old and above to pay half a shekel as a ransom for himself. This payment was the same for rich and poor, it was levied whenever there was a census and was used to finance the service of the tabernacle. It also guaranteed protection against the plague (Exodus 30:12). At the outset it was used to make silver sockets to support the boards of the tabernacle.

Silver speaks of redemption which is the foundation of our faith. Redemption is needed by all and is available to all on the same terms. 1 Peter 1:18-19 tells us that you cannot be redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but only with the precious blood of Christ. Titus 2:13-14 says that Jesus Christ "*gave Himself for us, to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a special people for His own possession.*"

Redemption is a biblical word that means "a purchase" or "ransom". Historically redemption was used in reference to the purchase of a slave's freedom. A slave was "redeemed" when the price was paid for his freedom. God spoke of Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt in this way: "*I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment*" (Exodus 6:6). The use of redemption in the New Testament includes this same idea. Every person is a slave to sin; only through the price Jesus paid on the cross is a sinful person redeemed from sin and death.

In the Bible, it is clear every person stands in need of redemption. Why? Because every person has sinned (Romans 3:23) "*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" Romans 3:24 then reveals that we are "*being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*" When we are redeemed, we become different people. When God redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt, He made them a new nation and gave them a new land. Likewise, the Christian has a new identity in Christ. No longer is the Christian a captive to sin and death. Instead, he or she has become a citizen of God's kingdom. Christians now live in anticipation of our eternal home with God our Father.

There are various verses in Isaiah where God speaks of Himself as the One who redeems. For example Isaiah 44:6: "*Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and His redeemer, the LORD of hosts: I am the First, and I am the Last; and beside me there is no God.*"

Just as Boaz was the kinsman-redeemer of Ruth (see Ruth 2:20, 3:9, 3:12, 3:13, 4:1, 4:3, 4:6, 4:8, 4:14), Jesus redeems us (Galatians 3:13): "*Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree).*" The Lord Jesus paid a high price for our redemption, the ultimate sacrifice of His own life to free us from sin. Even more than this, the One who knew no sin was made sin for us. What a wonderful Redeemer and Saviour is the Lord Jesus Christ!

#### Conclusion

Let me finish with an illustration about the boy who lost his boat, to help you understand the meaning of redemption.

Tom carried his new boat to the edge of the river. He carefully placed it in the water and slowly let out the string. How smoothly the boat sailed! Tom sat in the warm sunshine, admiring the little boat that he had built. Suddenly a strong current caught the boat. Tom tried to pull it back to shore, but the string broke. The little boat raced downstream.

Tom ran along the sandy shore as fast as he could. But his little boat soon slipped out of sight. All afternoon he searched for the boat. Finally, when it was too dark to look any longer, Tom sadly went home. A few days later, on

the way home from school, Tom spotted a boat just like his in a shop window. When he got closer, he could see - sure enough - it was his! Tom hurried to the shop manager: "Sir, that's my boat in your window! I made it!"

"Sorry, son, but someone else brought it in this morning. If you want it, you'll have to buy it for a pound." Tom ran home and counted all his money. Exactly one pound! When he reached the shop, he rushed to the counter. "Here's the money for my boat." As he left the store, Tom hugged his boat and said, "Now you're twice mine. First, I made you and now I bought you."

Dear friend, God made you and He loved you so much that He was prepared to buy you back at such a great cost to Himself, the death of His only son the Lord Jesus Christ. Redemption provides several benefits for the believer: eternal life, forgiveness of sins, and a right relationship with God, peace with God, the Holy Spirit to live within, adoption into God's family and a home in Heaven!

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