

Is God WORTH IT?

Pastor Colin Rieke ~ July 17, 2016



Then Solomon began to build the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David. It was on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the place provided by David. ² He began building on the second day of the second month in the fourth year of his

reign. ³ The foundation Solomon laid for building the temple of God was sixty cubits long and twenty cubits wide (using the cubit of the old standard). ⁴ The portico at the front of the temple was twenty cubits long across the width of the building and twenty cubits high. He overlaid the inside with pure gold. ⁵ He paneled the main hall with pine and covered it with fine gold and decorated it with palm tree and chain designs. ⁶ He adorned the temple with precious stones. And the gold he used was gold of Parvaim. ⁷ He overlaid the ceiling beams, doorframes, walls and doors of the temple with gold, and he carved cherubim on the walls. ⁸ He built the Most Holy Place, its length corresponding to the width of the temple—twenty cubits long and twenty cubits wide. He overlaid the inside with six hundred talents of fine gold. ⁹ The gold nails weighed fifty shekels. He also overlaid the upper parts with gold. ¹⁰ In the Most Holy Place he made a pair of sculptured cherubim and overlaid them with gold. (2 Chronicles 3:1-10)

I call out to the Lord, and he answers me from his holy mountain,

In a little under three weeks, the Olympic Games, the once every four years' sporting event will commence in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. During the two week games, athletes from around the world will compete in 42 different events, and 306 sets of medals will be awarded to the victors. The tradition of awarding 1st with gold, 2nd with silver, and 3rd with bronze has been practiced since 1904. And while the original gold medals were made from solid gold, that is no longer the case. In fact, now, the gold medals which you will see hanging around the athletes' necks are 92% silver, and only covered with 6 grams of gold. A primary reason for this is the value and quantity of gold available.

Gold has long been seen as one of the most precious metals in the world. And even though now you have metals that are worth more than gold, generally speaking, gold is the "gold standard." The going rate for gold today is over \$1,000/ounce. I'm also pretty sure you noticed all of the gold being used by Solomon in the building of the temple from our first lesson this morning. I'm also pretty sure that you were thinking, "Wow, that's a lot of gold." The figure that the Bible gives us for the amount of gold used in the temple Solomon built was over 8 million pounds of gold. Now, maybe you're a visual person like me, and when I say 8 million pounds of gold, that's a lot, but how much is that really. Here's a few pictures for you.



This is a representative value of one bar of gold. Solomon used the equivalent of 360 pallets full of gold bars in the temple

Now, that is a lot of gold that Solomon used. And no doubt there would have been people around when Solomon was building it who said, "why do we have to use that much gold?" just like I'm sure there are people around now that would say it. Why do people think that, and why is it important for me to think about that? It all really boils down to a simple question: IS GOD WORTH IT?

1. God's not worth it
2. God's worth more

(1)

One of the first things we need to understand about the building of the temple is that this was a long time coming, going all the way back to when the Israelites were wandering in the desert after escaping Egypt. God gave them a portable worship structure called the tabernacle, the first "Church in a Box", which they carried along with them in the desert for about 40 years. Then they went and conquered the Promised Land, but was a permanent house of worship built? No. Instead, for the next 200-300 years everybody did as they saw fit and there was not a central place for worship. Even after Israel asked for a king, and got Saul, they still were using the tabernacle. David wanted to build the temple, but God wouldn't let him. And so it was finally during the time of Solomon that God's house was going to be built. For a comparable time frame, just imagine if from the time our country was first settled and only now were we building our first central house of worship. That's a long time.

"Then Solomon began to build the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David." In an interesting account from 2 Samuel 24, God had actually selected the place for where his temple would eventually be built. But like I said, it wasn't going to be David to build it, rather it would be his son. And while David was not allowed to build the temple, what he did made the eventual build all that much easier. He had all of the materials prepared for the temple – he had all of the stone cut, he had all of the boards sawed, he had prepared everything for his son Solomon. All so that Solomon could build the temple, like it describes in our account for this morning.

But in addition to the boards, in addition to the slabs of stone there was an inordinate amount of gold that went into the temple. Like I mentioned before, all in all, the total amount of gold used in the temple is ½ of the US reserve of gold. That's a lot of gold for one building, a building that in reality is not as large as people think it is. In reality, it is comparable in size to a basketball court. All that gold to worship God. I can't help but wonder how many people thought it was a little excessive? Is Solomon doing this for God or is he doing this for himself? IS GOD WORTH IT? There could have been so many other things that could have been done with the gold.

In essence I think it was people looking for an excuse to not bring God as much. This is well attested to in the Scriptures. It was one of the reasons God eventually had his people enslaved again, because they weren't following his commands, and they didn't think God was worth it to bring him sacrifices.

And how often is that the excuse that we bring to God's house? IS GOD REALLY WORTH IT? OK, so maybe we won't actually ask that question, I have no doubt you think God is worth it. But I don't just want you to think it, I want you to act it as well. IS GOD REALLY WORTH IT can be brought

into all areas of our life, not just in the offerings we bring to God, although they're part of it too. We ask IS GOD REALLY WORTH IT for me to give up 10% of my income to him? IS GOD REALLY WORTH IT to get out of bed for every Sunday morning and come to church? IS GOD REALLY WORTH IT to change the patterns of my life to line up with what he wants? "IS GOD REALLY WORTH IT?" is what the devil asks us every time we are led into temptation.

And then we may try to act all sanctified and say God doesn't need us to give, that I can worship God on my own, that God knows my heart, that those temptations aren't so bad. But every time we give those answers to our conscience is it because we believe those things, or because we don't want to change, or we don't want to be inconvenienced? Whether it's been by thoughts, our words, or our actions, time and time again we confess (without actually saying it) that God is not worth it. And unfortunately, even when we try to give God our best, we fail miserably. This truth is incredibly hard to accept, and unfortunately it's true – God is not worth it to us.

(2)

When we come to that realization – that God is not worth it to us, when we act like God is not worth it – then, and only then are we ready to hear what the Bible says. And the thing is, the Bible also says, God is not worth it. But not in the sense that God's value is insignificant, but rather the opposite. God's not worth it, because God's worth more.

Think about it in comparison to a child receiving an allowance. That child might receive \$10/week as his allowance. And it would be like that child giving back \$1 and thinking dad's going to be happy with me, or that's all dad is worth. When in reality, even if that child would give back all \$10 of his allowance, even that is not all dad is worth. The same is true with God. Even if we were able to give him our all, everything in the world, even all of that, would just be like we're giving back to God what he originally gave us. But like that father, God is worth even more.

And so even when all the gold in the world would not be enough to buy one single person back from the fires of hell, God gave of himself, his own Son Jesus to buy us back. This is where the symbolism in the temple's construction comes into play. The temple was not a place where worshipers would gather – sing songs and hear God's Word (that took place elsewhere). The temple was a place for sacrifice. It was God's house. And there was a special room in that house called the holy of holies – a room 30'x30'x30' – a perfect cube as a reminder to a perfect God. And each year, the high priest would enter on just one day, and sprinkle the blood of a sacrifice on the altar in there. He did this to cleanse the sins of the people.

All of this was pointing to an even greater high priest, who would offer an even greater sacrifice, in an even greater temple. In fact, this is what the Bible says in the book of Hebrews, **“When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made...He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.”**

Why did he do all of this? Not just to win heaven for us, but “**so that we may serve the living God!**” This is what makes God worth it, not that we could ever bring enough to him, but that we might bring our best to him, to him who loved us. Our service to God is not out of a sense of duty, but

out of a sense of joy. So we can bring him joyful and generous offerings. We can joyfully come together with the Lord's people in worship. We can joyfully look to act out our Christian faith in our everyday lives in our local communities.

Here's a goal I'll set for you this week. Serve your God in such a way, at least for this one week – seven days – that you blow people away with your generosity, your kindness, your love. I want you to do this, not so that someone might say “You're awesome!” but rather so that you might be able to say how much your God has blown you away. I would love to hear those stories. Amen.