

Introduction:

Silver is spoken of in 195 texts in the Bible.

What is usually meant is the metal, used in the construction of the tabernacle and the temple, or as a monetary value.

Silver is also occasionally used as a **symbol**.

In order to understand the meaning of silver as a symbol, it is interesting to know how silver is obtained.

Extracting silver:

Silver is found in silver mines and as a by-product of digging for gold, copper, zinc and lead. According to Wikipedia it appears from excavations that silver was already being extracted from lead on islands in the Aegean Sea and Anatolia in 4,000-3,500 B.C.

In this study it is supposed that this was also the method in Bible times, i.e. that silver was obtained as a by-product of lead mining.

When lead is extracted 1 part of silver is extracted for 40 parts of lead.

In order to separate the silver from the lead the rough lead is heated above the temperature at which silver melts (962°C).

When the liquid metal then cools slowly, the silver solidifies first and it floats as a crust above the liquid lead, which solidifies at the much lower temperature of 327°C.

The crust of silver is skimmed off, melted once again, and poured into bars in order to be traded.

However, this rough silver still contains some small particles of lead that have to be removed if pure silver is to be left over.

Purification of silver:

In order to purify the rough silver it is melted again in a melting pot on a fire.

Melting and purifying silver is a precise little job that requires the silversmith's full attention.

He will sit beside it to observe carefully that the temperature does not climb too high, as a result of which the silver would burn because of the heat.

He must also ensure that the silver remains hot enough, to prevent it from solidifying too soon and little lead particles, which make the silver brittle, from remaining.

The silversmith strews borax powder on the molten silver in order to remove any lead that is still present. This powder melts into a glass-like mass.

Any lead that is still present is dissolved in this, as a result of which the glass-like borax changes into dirty foam that floats on the surface and can be skimmed off by the smelter of the liquid silver.

He then adds borax once again, stirring it through the molten silver and skimming the dirty foam off once again.

He continues doing this **until he sees his face mirrored in the molten silver**.
He then knows that the silver is pure and he can pour it into a mould.

Silver in the Bible:

Melting and purifying silver as a symbol in the Bible.

God's Word as pure silver.

- *And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver **purified** in a crucible, like gold **refined seven times**. (Psalm 12:6)*

It seems a little strange that the words of God are purified in a crucible **in the earth**.
The Words God speaks are not contaminated. His Word is like pure silver by nature.

The Psalmist apparently sees the Word of God as words from heaven, from the spiritual world,
which are meant for the earth.

He compares the **purity of the Word of God**, the Bible, to silver that is refined in the crucible and
has been put through the refining procedure seven times.

Anyone reading the Bible without prejudice and trying to understand what is written in it, sees
mirrored therein the face, the personality of God, just like Jesus mirrors the face, the personality
of the Father.

He said:

- *Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. (John 14:9)*

And:

- *... I always do what pleases him. (John 8:29)*

The disciple as purified silver:

A disciple is intended to mirror the personality of Jesus Christ in the same way.
This does not simply happen automatically.

The prophet Malachi prophesied concerning the coming of Jesus:

- *But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears?*
- *For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap.*
- *He will sit **as a refiner and purifier of silver**;*
- *he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver.*
- *Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, ... (Malachi 3:2-3)*

But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears?

Natural man is incapable of living in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

That is why He came to the world to bring forgiveness of sins through faith in Him.¹

¹ Study: Receiving new life.

As a disciple of Jesus Christ² it hereby becomes possible to live in a relationship with God, with Jesus and with the Holy Spirit.

This does not happen without a refining process, however, ...

For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap.

John the Baptist testified:

- *I baptize³ you **with (in)** water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you **with (in)** the Holy Spirit and fire. (Luke 3:16) (2 x "in" as the translation of the Greek "en", the place where the act takes place⁴)*

Jesus came to the world so that whoever believes in Him, would live as 'silver', separated from the 'lead', the impurities of the world.

Anyone living in a relationship with Jesus and entrusting his life to Him⁵, comes like 'rough silver', from the 'lead', floating above the world.

A disciple of Jesus Christ lives **in** the world, but **no longer according to the norms** of the world, for:

- *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Corinthians 5:17)*

Every disciple of Jesus Christ will have to undergo a refining process in order to be completely set free from the past.

Taken into the household of God⁶, old ideas and habits will have to be unlearned and new ones learned.

Studying God's Word, the Bible, together with other disciples of Jesus Christ, will thereby work 'like the lye of the bleachers'.

The life and way of thinking of a disciple of Jesus Christ will be purified by the Word, as Jesus said to His disciples:

- *You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. (John 15:3-4)*

Afterwards:

He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.

Purifying silver is a precise little job. The Smelter will sit beside it, on order not to be distracted and to be able to give his full attention to the refining process.

As the Psalmist writes:

- *For you, God, tested us; **you refined us like silver.** (Psalm 66:10)*

As the rough silver is purified by melting it again in the fire, so will a disciple of Jesus Christ be immersed in the Smelter's fire, to be purified through the lye of the Word of God.

2 Study: Discipleship (1).

3 Study: Baptism – word study.

4 Study: Word study of the little Greek words epi, en, eis.

5 Study: Believing in Jesus Christ.

6 Study: Child of God.

Jesus does not simply throw anyone into the fire. He supervises this sanctification process with full attention, so that the “silver”:

- does not burn through the heat and the disciple does not become discouraged,
- but also that it does not cool prematurely, so that the disciple becomes lukewarm and the sanctification process stops.

Paul writes:

- *Christ loved the church (the fellowship: the gathering of His disciples) and gave himself up for her*
- *to make her holy, **cleansing her by the washing with water through (Greek: en = in) the word (rhema),***
- *and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but **holy and blameless.** (Ephesians 5:25-27)*

The authoritative Word of the Bible is like the silversmith’s lye.

A disciple who reads and meditates the Bible will discover that his own ideas and habits that are not in accordance with the Truth, will rise to the surface in his way of thinking. He can thus dispense with them and direct his life, his thinking and his acts in accordance with the will of God.

This is a sanctification process that has to be repeated during the whole of one’s life, if a disciple wants to continually mirror Jesus.

Only thus will he remain a useful instrument in God’s hand.

Ecclesiastes puts it as follows:

- *Remove the **gross from the silver**, and a silversmith can produce a vessel; ... (Proverbs 25:4)*

Jesus, the Silversmith, said of this vessel:

- *You are the salt of the earth. (Matthew 5:13)*

However:

- *But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?*
- *It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. (Matthew 5:13)*

A disciple of Jesus Christ can weaken spiritually and eventually be contaminated anew by influences from the world, as a result of which he runs the risk of being lost for eternity.

Every disciple who, like a silver vessel, becomes contaminated by human thinking and behaviour, will have to undergo the refining process in the crucible again.

- *Everyone will **be salted with fire.** (Mark 9:49)*

In this respect the Silversmith has only one goal in view, i.e. for His face, His character, to remain visible in the life of the disciple.

As Malachi said:

He will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver.

The sons of Levi were the Levites, who served in the temple.

From them came the priests as well.

The purification Jesus has in view has as its goal that a disciple achieves his full potential in this life and in the life hereafter, and also:

Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness.

This is the calling for every disciple of Jesus Christ.

Peter writes:

- *you also, like living stones, are being **built into a spiritual house** to be a **holy priesthood**, ...*
- *... **offering spiritual sacrifices** acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:5)*

Practically:

The calling of every disciple of Jesus Christ is to take his place, as a living stone, in the spiritual house, the (universal) church, the body of Jesus Christ.

On the basis of his life in a relationship with Jesus Christ the disciple will be able to bring about reconciliation between God and people, and between people mutually.

This requires spiritual sacrifices that are able to endure the touchstone of Jesus Christ.

There are two kinds of these spiritual sacrifices:

1. Romans 12:1

- *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your **bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God** - this is your **true and proper (also: intelligent) worship (also: servitude)**.*

As a disciple of Jesus Christ it is **intelligent** to live under His dominion and authority, and to consult Him when making any decision.⁷

Offering life in His service is **true and proper worship** In view of the price Jesus paid on the cross of Golgotha for redemption from eternal darkness.

2. Hebrews 13:15

- *Through (literally: throughout) Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God **a sacrifice of praise - the fruit of lips that openly profess his name**.*

A disciple of Jesus Christ bears the responsibility of mirroring the face, the character of Jesus in word and deed, and of spreading His Name in the world.

Jesus longs for those who do not yet know Him to be able to see Him like He is and receive Him into their life.

⁷ Study: A different schematic presentation.