

LESSON ELEVEN

THE ALTAR OF INCENSE

TEXT: EXODUS 30:1-10

The Altar of Incense was situated in the Holy Place before the Veil where the priests were to keep incense burning continually (Exodus 30:1-8). God's Holy Ghost saints are to offer the incense of prayer and praise continually before Him (Revelation 8:3-5; Hebrews 13:15; John 4: 19:24). The special incense that God ordained (Exodus 30:37, 38) was not to be used for any other purpose and no other incense could be used on the Altar. Likewise, God accepts no worship but that which is in spirit and in truth.

The Golden Altar is given several names in Scripture:

1. The Altar of Incense — Exodus 30:27
2. The Incense Altar — Exodus 35:15
3. The Altar of Gold — Exodus 40:5
4. The Golden Altar — Exodus 39:38
5. The Whole Altar that is by the Oracle — 1 Kings 6:22
6. The Altar Before the Lord — Leviticus 16:12, 18
7. The Altar of Sweet Incense Before the Lord — Leviticus 4:7

A. THE PURPOSE OF THE ALTAR: (Exodus 30:1)

The Golden Altar was for burning of Incense unto the Lord. Incense always speaks to us of the prayers, worship and intercession of the saints of God (Psalms 141:1, 2; Revelation 8:2-6). Incense begins on the Altar with man, and as it burns, it ascends upward to an attentive God. Likewise, our prayers begin in man's heart and ascend heavenward unto God.

1. The Bible says, “*He ever liveth to make intercession FOR us*” (Hebrews 7:25; 9:24). Jesus is our advocate and mediator, appearing before the throne of God on our behalf.
2. The ministry of the Holy Spirit can also be associated with the burning of incense. “*The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us...*” (Romans 8:26, 34).

It does appear to be meaningful that the Altar was the closest to the Veil. We are closest to God when we pray and praise.

An altar is for sacrifice and an offering-place. Whether the sacrifice of praise or any other spiritual sacrifice, we, as a royal priesthood, are to “*show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*”

Hebrews 13:15 “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.”

B. THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE GOLDEN ALTAR: (Exodus 30:1-5)

1. “*...OF SHITTIM WOOD...*” - significant of Christ's incorruptible and sinless humanity (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:25-28; 13:35; 1 Peter 1:23).
2. “*...A CUBIT...THE LENGTH...A CUBIT...THE BREADTH...TWO CUBITS...THE HEIGHT...FOURSQUARE*” (Exodus 30:2).

This Altar was foursquare, as was the Brazen Altar. Just as all men may be saved, all men may pray and praise.

“They shall come from the east, from the west, from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God” (Luke 13:29).

3. “*...THE HORNS...*” (EXODUS 30:2).

The Golden Altar had four horns in the four corners. Horns in the Scripture represent power, authority and kingship. All power is given unto Christ both in heaven and in earth (Matthew 28:19-20).

4. “*...OVERLAY IT WITH PURE GOLD...*” (Exodus 30:3).

The Gold represents Christ's deity. Jesus possessed a dual nature. He was God manifest in the flesh. Jesus was the Son of God because His mother was Mary. He was perfect Man and, just as surely, was very God.

5. “...*A CROWN OF GOLD ROUND ABOUT...*” (*Exodus 30:3*).

The Altar of Incense had a golden crown on it just as we have seen was on the Table of Shewbread and the Ark of the Covenant. Crowns are symbolic of Christ our King (Psalm 2:1-6; 45:1-2). A crown in connection with the Altar of Incense reveals Christ as KING-PRIEST (Psalm 110:1; Hebrews 7:1-4, 25; 2:9).

A function of this crown around the Altar of Incense was to keep the burning coals of incense from falling to the ground. Jude 24 describes Christ as being “*able to keep you from falling.*”

6. “...*TWO GOLDEN RINGS...*” (*Exodus 30:4*).

There are varying opinions as to how many rings are involved here. Some expositors feel that there were two rings on each side making a total of four. The other view, probably most widely accepted, is that the Altar had a total of two rings at opposite corners of the Altar.

7. “...*THE STAVES...*” (*Exodus 30:4-5*).

The staves were used to carry the Golden Altar during the wanderings and journeying of Israel. We are strangers and pilgrims on this earth, just passing through on our way to the Promised Land, Heaven (John 16:3; Hebrews 7:25).

C. THE POSITION OF THE GOLDEN ALTAR: (*Exodus 30:7-8*).

The Golden Altar of Incense was positioned immediately before the Veil and directly in front of the Ark of the Covenant (*Exodus 40:5*). It was at the very heart of the Tabernacle. The furniture was arranged in the form of a cross. The Altar, being in the heart, represents the saintly ministry of intercession, prayer and praise as being closest to the Glory of God.

D. “...*SWEET INCENSE...A PERPETUAL INCENSE...*” (*Exodus 30:7-8*).

The High Priest was to offer fresh incense every morning and evening. No one but the priests could minister at the Altar. There was no strange incense to be offered upon it. The fire was a Divine and Sovereign Fire.

1. Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire and incense and were smitten of the Lord (*Leviticus 10:1-3*).

2. Korah and his company offered strange incense and were also destroyed (Numbers 16).

Today God only accepts fire and incense that has been ignited by the Holy Ghost! God lit the fire in the Church on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). He is only interested in worship that is in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

1. No Burnt Offering, No Meat Offering, No Drink Offering: (Exodus 30:9).

No sacrifice of blood here. The Outer Court was the place of death (Repentance). The Holy Place is a place of light and life.

2. The True Incense: (Exodus 30:34, 35, 37, 38).

There were five ingredients involved in the sweet incense. All were to be of equal weight.

- a. STACTE — a fragrant oil or resin from a tree. The word itself means “to drop” or “to distil.” The Rabbis identified it with “balm of Gilead.”
- b. ONYCHA — a ground shellfish taken from the Red Sea. It received its fragrance from the things upon which it fed.
- c. GALBANUM — the sap or gum of a tree-like shrub growing in Asia Minor and Persia. The odor was rather disagreeable in itself.
- d. FRANKINCENSE — white in color and comes from the sap of a tree. It burns with a white color and has a bitter taste.
- e. SALT — (“tempered together”) or “seasoned with salt”; both a seasoning and a preservative. Salt has an enduring quality.

LESSON ELEVEN

SELF HELP TEST

- A. What is the fulfilling of the burning of Incense?
- B. Where was the Altar of Incense located?
- C. The Altar of Incense was made of _____ overlaid with _____.
- D. The Golden Altar had _____ horns and _____ corners.
- E. What was the function of the crown around the Altar of Incense?
- F. What was the use of the two rings and staves?
- G. Why did God not allow burnt, meat, or drink offerings on this altar?
- H. How many ingredients were used in the incense?