

Sanctuary Messages Series
Lesson 10: Altar of Incense
Bible Sermon Study Notes by Cary Rodgers, pastor

The altar of incense is the third article of furniture in the holy place right before the veil that separates the Holy place from the Most Holy place. We will study about the physical design and the spiritual lessons that we can learn from the altar of incense. We will also see its connection to the Altar of Sacrifice outside in the court yard of sanctuary right at the entrance.

What is the description of the Altar of Incense?

Exodus 30:1-6

- 1 And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: *of* shittim wood shalt thou make it.
- 2 A cubit *shall be* the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; foursquare shall it be: and two cubits *shall be* the height thereof: the horns thereof *shall be* of the same.
- 3 And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, the top thereof, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns thereof; and thou shalt make unto it a crown of gold round about.
- 4 And two golden rings shalt thou make to it under the crown of it, by the two corners thereof, upon the two sides of it shalt thou make *it*; and they shall be for places for the staves to bear it withal.
- 5 And thou shalt make the staves *of* shittim wood, and overlay them with gold.
- 6 And thou shalt put it before the veil that *is* by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that *is* over the testimony, where I will meet with thee.

Description of altar of incense:

- The Altar of Incense like the Table of Shewbread was made of shittim wood (Acacia wood) overlaid with gold.
- Four horns on each corner overlaid with gold
- Crown of gold at the top
- Four gold rings under the crown on two sides
- Staves made of shittim wood covered with gold that went through the rings for easy transport

The size

one cubit = 1.5 feet

Length = 1.5 feet; Width = 1.5 feet; Height = 3 feet

The Altar of Incense was also a small article of furniture. It was $\frac{3}{4}$ inches taller than the Table of Shewbread (2 $\frac{1}{4}$ feet)

The Altar of Sacrifice in the outer court is where a spiritual transaction takes place between you and God. This is where God illustrates that He sacrificed his ALL through Jesus Christ and the you must sacrifice your ALL, give up harmful sinful practices. Altar of Sacrifice is a place of submission and surrender. It is a covenant of victory between God and us.

What does “sacrifice” practically mean? = To give something of great value and receive something MUCH less in return.

The fire on the Altar of Sacrifice was holy fire because it was started by God Himself. The priest were instructed to never let this Holy fire go out. They were instructed to NOT only keep this fire going but they were instructed not to use any other fire, except the one started on the Altar of Sacrifice by God.

How does God describe His acceptance of a sincere offering to God on the Altar of Sacrifice?

Genesis 8:20, 21

20 And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

21 And the LORD **smelled a sweet savour**; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

Leviticus 1:5 – 10, 17

5 And he shall kill the bullock before the LORD: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that *is by* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

6 And he shall flay the burnt offering, and cut it into his pieces.

7 And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire upon the altar, and lay the wood in order upon the fire:

8 And the priests, Aaron's sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat, in order upon the wood that *is* on the fire which *is* upon the altar:

9 But his inwards and his legs shall he wash in water: and the priest shall burn all on the altar, *to be* a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a **sweet savour** unto the LORD.

10 And if his offering *be* of the flocks, *namely*, of the sheep, or of the goats, for a burnt sacrifice; he shall bring it a male without blemish.

17 And he shall cleave it with the wings thereof, *but* shall not divide *it* asunder: and the priest shall burn it upon the altar, upon the wood that *is* upon the fire: *it is* a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a **sweet savour** unto the LORD.

Sweet (Greek): *nîychôach* (*nee-kho'-akh, nee-kho'-akh*) - From [H5117](#); properly **restful**, that is, **pleasant**; abstractly **delight**: - sweet (odour).

Savour (Greek): *rêyach* (*ray'-akh*) - From [H7306](#); **odor** (as if *blown*): - savour, **scent**, **smell**.

A proper and sincere sacrifice on the "ALTAR" is a sweet (restful and pleasant) smell to God. It is delightful.

What are more instructions concerning the altar of incense?

Exodus 30:1, 6 - 9

1 And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: *of* shittim wood shalt thou make it.

6 And thou shalt put it before the vail that *is by* the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that *is* over the testimony, where I will meet with thee.

7 And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it.

8 And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall **burn incense upon it**, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations.

9 Ye shall offer **no strange incense** thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon.

Where did the coals from the altar of incense come from (VERY IMPORTANT)?

Leviticus 16:12, 13

12 And he shall take a censer full of **burning coals** of fire from off the altar before the LORD (**Lev. 9:24 – altar of Sacrifice**), and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring *it* within the veil:

13 And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that *is* upon the testimony, that he die not:

What was incense made from?

Exodus 30:34-38

34 And the LORD said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, **stacte** [stack t], and **onycha** [onkneeka], and galbanum; *these* sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each shall there be a like *weight*:

35 And thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary [/'ə'pəTHə,kerē/], tempered together, pure *and* holy:

36 And thou shalt beat *some* of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you most holy.

37 And *as for* the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for the LORD.

38 Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people.

Frankincense was one of the gifts the wise men gave to Jesus as a young child. (Matthew 2:11)

Here is the link between the Altar of Sacrifice and the Altar of Incense. The coals from the Altar of Sacrifice are used on the Altar of Incense to burn the sweet smelling incense in the HOLY Place. Remember the fire at the Altar of Sacrifice was started by God Himself.

Blood and the FIRE – link to the altar

The Coals and Blood

The coals off the altar is a memorial of His power and sacrifice. Also the coals are memorial of where we lay our sins as an offering on the Altar of Sacrifice. The coals are a consistent reminder of what Jesus did for us at the cross, He took away our sins.

When a priest offered a sin sacrifice for himself what was he instructed to do with the blood?

Leviticus 4:3-7

3 If the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people; then let him bring for his sin, which he hath sinned, a young bullock without blemish unto the LORD for a sin offering.

4 And he shall bring the bullock unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD; and shall lay his hand upon the bullock's head, and kill the bullock before the LORD.

5 And the priest that is anointed shall take of the bullock's blood, and bring it to the tabernacle of the congregation:

6 And the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle of the blood seven times before the LORD, before the vail of the sanctuary.

7 And the priest shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the LORD, which is in the tabernacle of the congregation; and shall pour all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering, which is at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

What does the Altar of Incense represent and what is the main lesson that Jesus is teaching us at the Altar of Incense?

Psalm 141:2

2 Let my **prayer** be set forth before thee as **incense**; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

Revelation 8:3, 4

3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

4 And the smoke of the incense, *which came* with the **prayers of the saints**, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

Prayer is deeper than just our silent or audible request, or thanksgiving to God. In the Greek, prayer is also referred to as worship. Who you worship will determine how you worship. You are to worship the true God of Heaven as revealed by your strict obedience to Him. **The highest form of prayer, worship and praise is obedience to God's Word!**

Hebrews 13:15, 16

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.

16 But to **do good** and to communicate **forget not**: for **with such sacrifices God is well pleased**.

Our sacrifices are LIVING not dead!

Romans 12:1, 2

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

The smoke and fragrance represents the life and prayers of the saints.

Remember after the first phase at the Altar of Sacrifice you make commitment to leave worldliness and the second phase of the sacrifice is to enter into the holy place and live a holy life. Your prayers and life at the Altar of Incense are sweet smelling before God!

Even if we claim the sacrifice of Jesus, but don't go into the holy place to learn and live a holy life and hold on to worldliness and sin how does God see and smell our lives? In other words, How does a "sacrifice with just the ceremony and no obedience smell to God?

Proverbs 15:8

8 The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright *is* his delight.

Proverbs 28:9

9 He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer *shall be* abomination.

God does not accept a sacrifice in which sin and worldliness is NOT forsaken. Such a sacrifice stinks to God and is an abomination to Him. The same is true for those who claim to keep the seventh-day sabbath, but break the other commandments of God.

Ephesians 5:1, 2

1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;
2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a **sweet smelling savour**.

Christ's righteousness that covers His faithful and their lives are sweet smelling unto God. Their lives and prayers were the incense represented on the Altar of Incense.

"The incense, ascending with the prayers of Israel, represents the merits and intercession of Christ, His perfect righteousness, which through faith is imputed to His people, and which can alone make the worship of sinful beings acceptable to God. Before the veil of the most holy place was an altar of perpetual intercession, before the holy, an altar of continual atonement." {Patriarch and Prophets 353.2}

Remember: **Sacrifice is not complete without going to the altar of incense.** Those seen under the altar who died for the cause of Christ experienced true holiness. They daily went through both phases of sacrifice at the altar of sacrifice (separated from worldliness) and the altar of incense (lived holy lives). They burned their curious arts of the past. They were not afraid to dress simple. They dropped the outward ornamentation or jewelry of the world and chose to adorn themselves with the character of Christ. They stopped listening to the pagan music of rebellion. Their lives and prayers were a sweet savour unto God.

There were four horns on both the Altar of Sacrifice and the Altar of Incense. The horns represented the power of God and the power of prayer.

Habakkuk 3:3, 4

3 God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.

4 *And his* brightness was as the light; he had horns *coming* out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power.

Power of Prayer

Psalms 55:17

17 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.

What is the Holy Spirit's role when we pray?

Romans 8:26, 27

26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.

Jesus is praying for you! - 1 John 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: