

The Incense Altar

“Make an altar of acacia wood for burning incense. It is to be square, a cubit long and a cubit wide, and two cubits high — its horns of one piece with it. Overlay the top and all the sides and the horns with pure gold, and make a gold molding around it. Make two gold rings for the altar below the molding — two on opposite sides — to hold the poles used to carry it. Make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold.

Put the altar in front of the curtain that is before the ark of the Testimony — before the atonement cover that is over the Testimony — where I will meet with you.

“Aaron must burn fragrant incense on the altar every morning when he tends the lamps. He must burn incense again when he lights the lamps at twilight so incense will burn regularly before the LORD for the generations to come. Do not offer on this altar any other incense or any burnt offering or grain offering, and do not pour a drink offering on it.”

- Exodus 30:1-9

The Incense Altar

The Design

- Size: 19 inches square and 3 feet high (46 cm² and 91 cm high)
- Made of wood overlaid with gold

The Placement

- Stood in the middle in front of the curtain.

The Usage

- Incense was burned morning and evening.
- Special incense was used which was only to be used for God.

“Then the LORD said to Moses, “Take fragrant spices — gum resin, onycha and galbanum — and pure frankincense, all in equal amounts, and make a fragrant blend of incense, the work of a perfumer. It is to be salted and pure and sacred. Grind some of it to powder and place it in front of the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. Do not make any incense with this formula for yourselves; consider it holy to the LORD.

Whoever makes any like it to enjoy its fragrance must be cut off from his people.”

- Exodus 30:34-38

The History of the Altar

“Once when Zechariah’s division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to

you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous — to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Zechariah asked the angel, “How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.” The angel answered, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time.”

- Luke 1:8-20

The Meaning of the Altar

It was a picture of prayer.

“May **my prayer** be set before you **like incense**; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.”

- Psalm 141:2

“And when He had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of **incense**, which are **the prayers of the saints**.”

- Revelation 5:8

The Lessons We Learn

1. Three pieces of furniture were “before the Lord.”

These are the practices expected of believers:

- *Candlestick — The Word*
- *The Table of Bread — Fellowship*
- *The Incense Altar — Prayer*

2. You cannot expect to know the joy of prayer unless you have come through the steps ordered by God.

3. Prayer (Incense Altar) is the closest thing to the Lord.

“Put the altar in front of the curtain that is before the ark of the Testimony before the atonement cover that is over the Testimony where I will meet with you.”

- Exodus 30:6

4. Your communion with the Lord is a special communication unlike your communication with anyone else.

“Do not make any incense with this formula for yourselves; consider it holy to the LORD.”

- Exodus 30:37

Our Response

Let’s follow this plan for prayer. This week...

- Pray morning and evening for five minutes!

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These are the practices expected of believers:

- *Candlestick* — The _____
- *The Table of Bread* — _____
- *The Incense Altar* — _____

2. You cannot expect to know the _____ of prayer unless you have come through the steps ordered by God.

3. Prayer (Incense Altar) is the _____ thing to the Lord.

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