

Exodus 30 ~ Continued

Last week we began our study on the final designs of the furniture and other elements required for the Tabernacle.

The Golden Altar of Incense was used to burn pure incense before the LORD. It was fashioned from acacia wood and overlaid with gold. It faced the Ark with its mercy seat and cherubim that were a shadow of the reality in the heavenly Sanctuary. Facing the Ark was akin to facing God Almighty.

The altar of incense was used for the perpetual burning of special incense. The priests who ministered in the Holy Place would keep the incense burning day and night just as they did with the Menorah.

According to Revelation 8 it is symbolic of the prayers of the saints.

Revelation 8:3 NKJV Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

AND

Psalms 141:2 NKJV Let my prayer be set before You *as* incense, The lifting up of my hands *as* the evening sacrifice.

With this in mind, what does the Altar of Incense teach us?

1. When we pray, we must keep in mind that we are praying to God who is ever before us. Our eyes are lifted up to heaven because that's where the object of our prayer lives.
 - a. **Psalms 121:1-2 NKJV A Song of Ascents.** I will lift up my eyes to the hills— From whence comes my help? (2) My help *comes* from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.
2. The overlay of gold reminds us that Jesus has purified us through His Blood and in some cases a refiner's fire as well. He also grants us access to the Throne Room not by our lofty words or our deeds, but by grace to receive grace and mercy.
3. Prayer is a privilege granted by our Holy God. Anyone can pray but now for all His children can come crying "Abba Father".
 - a. **Psalms 102:17 NKJV** He shall regard the prayer of the destitute, And shall not despise their prayer.
 - b. **Proverbs 15:29 NKJV** The LORD *is* far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous.
4. The strong wood and four horns remind us there is great power in prayer, perhaps not to change the world around us, but to change us to meet it head on by faith given to us. The strong wood can also teach us that we CAN resist the gnats and the fiery darts that come upon us by our flesh and by the enemy. We must remember, when we pray, it's like we are on a loveseat with Jesus, quietly taking together.
5. According to Hebrews 4:16, when we pray, we are petitioning God for mercy and grace. The rising, sweet smoky cloud remind us of all the intangible things we truly need and not the laundry list of "gotta haves" and "fix these things". Perhaps the forbidden "Strange incense" should remind us that God is not an ATM or a pez-dispenser and must be treated with reverent awestruck wonder.

6. We can never be truly satisfied with material things which are consumed or left to rot. We can only be truly satisfied by Jesus.
7. The incense was kept burning day and night. There isn't a right time to pray. God exists outside of time and He is ever-present to receive our supplications, praise and worship.
8. Finally, this was a small piece of furniture: and 18 sq. in. platform on 4-36in legs. Therefore, we too are to be humble before Him. We can be bold and confident (in HIM) but not arrogant.

Next comes the census and the ransom money for each adult man.

Exodus 30:11-16 NKJV Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: (12) "When you take the census of the children of Israel for their number, **then every man shall give a ransom for himself to the LORD, when you number them, that there may be no plague among them when you number them.** (13) This is what everyone among those who are numbered shall give: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (a shekel *is* twenty gerahs). The half-shekel *shall be* an offering to the LORD. (14) Everyone included among those who are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering to the LORD. (15) The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when *you* give an offering to the LORD, to make atonement for yourselves. (16) And you shall take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shall appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of meeting, that it may be a memorial for the children of Israel before the LORD, to make atonement for yourselves."

The only time that Israel was allowed to count their people was when God commanded it. The one time that David did it on his own, it brought a plague upon the people. 1 Chronicles 21 tells the sad story of disobedience and pride that came with severe punishment.

The problem with counting things is that he or she believes they own it. In other words, "it's mine and I have the right to count it". It's not. It's all God's, given for His purposes.

Israel belonged to God. And we do too. **It was up to Him to command a counting.**

Here, God is telling Moses that when told to do so, he could count the people and receive a ransom from them. The ransom was an integral part of the counting and so much so, that a plague would come if the counting didn't include the ransom price.

The ransom served 2 purposes:

1. The money was used for the service of the Tabernacle and then later, the Temple. This was the practical matter as the Tribe of Levi had no inheritance from the LORD.
2. The ransom was also to remind the descendants of Israelites that they too were ransomed by God from Egypt. This was the yearly reminder of the Passover and part of that Feast was the shedding of blood of a perfect, spotless Lamb. In other words, everyone owes God, and everyone is obligated to Him. What do they and we owe? Their very lives!
3. This practice lived on even into the first century.
 - a. **Matthew 17:24-27 NKJV** When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the *temple* tax came to Peter and said, "Does your Teacher not pay the *temple* tax?" (25) He said, "Yes." And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?" (26) Peter said to Him, "From strangers." Jesus said to him, "**Then the sons are free.** (27) Nevertheless, lest we offend them,

go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you.”

- b. Are we free from paying taxes? No, because we render unto “Caesar what is Caesar’s”. Perhaps the message is, if we pay a tax to men (even a Temple tax), how much more do we owe God for our very lives? I’ll let Paul tell you:
 - i. **Romans 12:1-2 NKJV** I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies **a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.** (2) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.
 - 1. Remember, “reasonable” comes from the Word “Logos” which is Jesus and “service” means worship. Our living sacrifice is our continued worship of our LORD and Savior.

This offering was not a free-will offering or was it proportional to what they could afford. It was called “atonement money” but it was not to procure atonement but a recognition of all those who were atoned. The offering was symbolic of how God views us:

1. It was for all. Therefore, it was required for the rich and the poor, for all have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God and all are equally precious in the sight of God.
2. It was an equal amount for all which speaks of the cost of our redemption. The same Blood is for the Greek and Jew, the free and slave and the rich or poor.

BTW: New Covenant giving is proportional with how God has blessed us.

This is not a model for our giving under the New Covenant. New Covenant giving should be proportional, under the principle that we should give in proportion to our blessing ([1Co 16:2](#)).

Our giving is actually based on Levitical 19:9-10:

Leviticus 19:9-10 NKJV 'When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. (10) And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather *every* grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I *am* the LORD your God.

It is difficult to translate what a .5 shekel is worth today.

Since the death and resurrection of our LORD, there is no requirement, no work, no ransom that can bring redemption. As the song says, “nothing but the Blood of Jesus”. The ransom was paid in full by Christ Jesus when His blood flowed out of His Body as He hung on the Cross.

When considering the state of Mankind, it is certain that a ransom for atonement and redemption were in the Mind of God before the foundations of the earth were even laid.

One last comment: Should we take a census today in the Church? Actually, we do it according to the principles laid out here: when we count the people, we also count the gifts that are given. But should we count the people?

Here’s what Pastor Chuck Smith said:

There was a constant emphasis on numbers. People were always being reminded of attendance statistics. "Where are we in relationship to last Sunday?" "Where are we in relationship to a year ago?" "Where is everybody today?" "Why is it that we're down?" The people were constantly interested in numbers. The trap of counting heads is a terrible snare to fall into. Don't do it! Just look at those that are there and realize, "These are the ones that the Lord has brought for me to minister to today." Give them your best, and minister to them from your heart. Minister to them diligently. As you're faithful, and as you prove yourself a faithful steward, the Lord will bring you more people to watch over, to care for, and to minister to. So be faithful to those that God has placed under your tutelage.

He also said that it's not our job to add to the church – that's God's job. Writing to pastors, he said, "Don't constantly be thinking, Oh, but I wish we had a thousand here! or I wish we had five thousand here!" **Minister to those eight or ten people that you do have. Be faithful in ministering to them. Be faithful in nourishing them, and the Lord will add daily, as He sees fit, those that should be saved. The size of the church is not your concern, nor should it ever be."**

Next in the chapter concerns the ceremonial washing of the priests as they approached the Tabernacle Sanctuary.

Exodus 30:17-21 NKJV Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: (18) "You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base also of bronze, for **washing**. You shall put it between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. And you shall put water in it, (19) for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it. (20) When they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the LORD, they shall wash with water, lest they die. (21) So they shall wash their hands and their feet, lest they die. And it shall be a statute forever to them—to him and his descendants throughout their generations."

True washing is **Divine**. They were not to wash themselves in their own homes, the washing was to be in the Tabernacle court of God. Self-purification will not do. We cannot cleanse ourselves from the defilements of sin. Sin is not "skin deep" or is it a "issue" or "problem" of our personality. It can't be washed away or wished away. It can't be cured by secular therapy with its humanistic philosophies. The stains of sin are deep and dark in our nature, and only the Divine Cleanser can purge them away.

Jeremiah 2:22 NKJV For though you wash yourself with lye, and use much soap, *Yet* your iniquity is marked before Me," says the Lord GOD.

John 13:8 NKJV Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "**If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.**"

Psalms 51:2-7 NKJV Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. (3) For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin *is* always before me. (4) **Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done *this* evil in Your sight—** That You may be found just when You speak, *And* blameless when You judge. (5) Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. (6) Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden *part* **You will make me to know wisdom.** (7) Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

The true washing is **spiritual**. It is true that Aaron washed only his hands and feet before he entered the Holy of Holies. But, to enter there he was required to bring the blood of a spotless animal. Tye purification is not *material*.

Some believe that to purify society's ills requires the institution of laws and statutes. How many laws do we have about murder? How many do we have about theft? They simply cannot work because they are trying to deal with an internal matter with an external solution! The flesh cannot be placated by "nice thoughts", secular therapy, visualizing world peace, singing "all you need is love" and any other thing the world has invented. The flesh can only be crucified – and that daily as we carry the cross and walk by faith in the Only Person with the power to purify our very being.

Yes, true purification is that of the soul. The cleansing of *the heart through the truth and grace of Christ*.

John 17:17 NKJV Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

Ephesians 5:26-27 NKJV that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, (27) that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

1 Peter 1:22-25 NKJV Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, (23) having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, (24) because "ALL FLESH IS AS GRASS, AND ALL THE GLORY OF MAN AS THE FLOWER OF THE GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND ITS FLOWER FALLS AWAY, (25) BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

If we cannot find rest or be transformed by mere social conventions, we certainly cannot rest or be transformed by religion rituals or rites. I like most Christian music but there are Christian stations whose advertising and promotion is all about giving "a safe and positive and encouraging programming". "oh, I listened to your music and was transformed". There are more programs about "Christian Living" that appears to be secular ideas with Jesus added here and there. Fear (of loss of market share and advertising dollars) is driving us away from Gospel truth and into some other gospel of compromise.

The washing of Aaron and his sons was critical because the laver stood before the brazen altar and the Sanctuary. They had to wash, or they would die. Our spiritual washing is critical as well because it allows us to enter into fellowship and communion with God. Through the washing of our garments in the blood of the Lamb we have that reconciliation with God. And by our continual confession of sin, in prayer, our garments are kept white here until we are home, in heaven, we our Savior and Friend.

Hear what the LORD had to say:

Ezekiel 36:22-27 NKJV "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "I do not do *this* for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. (23) And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I *am* the LORD," says the Lord GOD, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. (24) For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. (25) Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. (26) I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. (27) I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*. **Ezekiel 36:28 NKJV** Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your

God.

And He ends these promises of a new life with a phrase He spoke about 160 times in the OT and 67 times in Ezekiel alone!

Then they shall know that I am the LORD." ' "

Incense, atonement money and ritual cleansing are all requirements for approaching God who dwells in unapproachable light. So bright is this light that He often appeared as a cloud or in a cloud to shield Himself from the eyes of sinful man.

The things of the Tabernacle that we have been studying (and there's a bit more to include) are shadows of a heavenly reality and a picture of what it would take for sinful man to meet God. That the Israelites could meet with God is a testament to His grace and mercy.

How much more has Jesus "saved to the uttermost" those who are granted access to the Throne of Grace? Guess what? The requirements have always been the same. The difference is that Jesus did it ALL for us. We must bow deep to Him who paid the price for our salvation and even provided the gift of faith to appropriate it! Guess what? Those in the dispensation of the Law were also saved by faith. Those saints who were faithful to believe God at His word and believe that what He commanded would be enough to save them, were saved. **Bottom Line:** We all, like Abraham, who believe GOD, will be made righteous in His eyes. It's important to believe in God, but even more important believe God. There is a difference!