

Exodus-Part 20 (Chapter 30:1-10)

The Altar of Incense

Exo 30:1 "Make an altar of acacia wood for burning incense.

Exo 30:2 It is to be square, a cubit long and a cubit wide, and two cubits high--its horns of one piece with it.

Exo 30:3 Overlay the top and all the sides and the horns with pure gold, and make a gold molding around it.

Exo 30:4 Make two gold rings for the altar below the molding--two on each of the opposite sides--to hold the poles used to carry it.

Exo 30:5 Make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold.

Exo 30:6 Put the altar in front of the curtain that shields the ark of the covenant law--before the atonement cover that is over the tablets of the covenant law--where I will meet with you.

Exo 30:7 "Aaron must burn fragrant incense on the altar every morning when he tends the lamps.

Exo 30:8 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.

Exo 30:9 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.

Exo 30:10 Once a year Aaron shall make atonement on its horns. This annual atonement must be made with the blood of the atoning sin offering for the generations to come. It is most holy to the LORD."

The Altar of Incense in the Old Testament Tabernacle, which was used for burning fragrant incense to God, finds its primary New Testament fulfillment in Jesus Christ as the supreme Intercessor and High Priest. It symbolizes the perpetual nature of Christ's mediation, the prayers of believers (the saints), and the sweet-smelling aroma of Christ's sacrifice.

Key Connections to the New Testament:

[Christ's Intercession](#): Just as incense burned continually on the altar, Jesus is portrayed in the New Testament as always living to make intercession for believers in heaven (Hebrews 7:25).

Heb 7:25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

Key Aspects of Jesus' Intercession:

High Priesthood: Jesus fulfills the role of a [high priest](#), representing humanity before God, a concept detailed in Hebrews.

Advocacy: He acts as an advocate or lawyer, pleading the case for believers, whose sins are covered by his sacrifice.

Perpetual Prayer: He is not just a past figure but a living Savior who continually prays for his followers, offering comfort and support.

Based on His Sacrifice: His intercession is effective because it's founded on his completed work on the cross, which paid the debt for sin.

Example (John 17): Jesus' prayer in John 17 is a key biblical example of his intercession, where he prayed for his disciples' protection, unity, and holiness.

The High Priestly Prayer

Joh 17:1 After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed:
"Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.

Joh 17:2 For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.

Joh 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Joh 17:4 I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.

Joh 17:5 And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

Joh 17:6 "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.

Joh 17:7 Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you.

Joh 17:8 For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.

Joh 17:9 I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.

Joh 17:10 All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.

Joh 17:11 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the

world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.

Joh 17:12 While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

Joh 17:13 "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.

Joh 17:14 I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.

Joh 17:15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

Joh 17:16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.

Joh 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

Joh 17:18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

Joh 17:19 For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

Joh 17:20 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,

Joh 17:21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

Joh 17:22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one--

Joh 17:23 I in them and you in me--so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Joh 17:24 "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

Joh 17:25 "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me.

Joh 17:26 I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

Comfort and Assurance: Knowing Jesus intercedes brings assurance that God sees believers through Christ's righteousness, not their own failings, and that their faith won't ultimately fail.

In essence, Jesus' intercession means he is actively engaged in heaven, pleading for the welfare and salvation of those who believe in him, bridging the gap between a holy God and

sinful humanity.

[Prayers of the Saints](#): In Revelation 5:8 and 8:3-4, the prayers of the saints are depicted as fragrant incense ascending to God's throne, indicating that believer's prayers are now, through Christ, acceptable to God.

Rev 5:8 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 God's people.

Rev 8:3 Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God's people, on the golden altar in front of the throne.

[Rev 8:4](#) The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God from the angel's hand.

[Christ's Sacrifice as Aroma](#): The sweet aroma of the incense represents the "fragrant offering" of Christ's sacrifice (Ephesians 5:2).

Heb 5:2 He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness.

The Heavenly Tabernacle: Hebrews 9:2-4 mentions the altar of incense within the context of the heavenly tabernacle where Christ serves, highlighting its shift from a physical, temporary item to a spiritual reality.

Heb 9:2 A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand and the table with its consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place.

[Heb 9:3](#) Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, [Heb 9:4](#) which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant.

[The Annunciation to Zechariah](#): Luke 1:11 notes an angel appearing at the altar of incense, setting the stage for the coming of John the Baptist, the forerunner to Jesus.

Luk 1:11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense.

Essentially, the altar of incense ceased to be a physical object and became a functional, spiritual reality in the New Testament, representing the ongoing, perfect ministry of Jesus as mediator between God and humanity.