

The Tabernacle 05 the Altar of Incense

by J. Henry Brown

The sermon explores the significance of the altar of incense in the tabernacle, highlighting its connection to Christ's work on the cross and the importance of not adding to Christ's work.

Duration: 43:07

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 4:7-14, John 4:19-24, Revelation 8:3

Topics: "True Worship", "Spiritual Fulfillment"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher recounts the story of Jesus sitting by a well and asking a woman for a drink of water. He explains that Jesus offers her living water, which symbolizes spiritual fulfillment. The preacher then discusses a conversation between Jesus and the woman about where to worship God. Jesus explains that true worship is not limited to a specific location but is done in spirit and truth. The preacher emphasizes the importance of worshiping God with our souls, rather than just our feelings or emotions.

Transcript

Shall we turn again to that book of Exodus? We're going to read in chapter 30. Exodus chapter 40. We're going to read about the altar of incense which is inside the sanctuary.

Exodus 30, reading from verse 1. And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon. Of sitting wood, or a case of wood, shalt thou make it. A cubit shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof.

Four square shall it be, and three cubit shall be the height thereof. The horns thereof shall be of the same. 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. 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 them.

And thou shalt make the stage, and thou shalt put it before the veil that is where I will meet with thee. And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning. When he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it.

And when Aaron lighteth the lamps of Eden, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations. Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering, neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon. And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns

of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonement.

Once in the year shall he make atonement upon it. It is most holy unto the Lord. Well that is the art of incense.

Now let us read about the incense itself. Verse 34, in the same chapter, verse 34, And the Lord said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, staxia, and olica, and galbanum, these sweet spices with pure frankincense. Of each shall there be a like weight.

And thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together. And thou shalt beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tavern. It shall be unto you most holy.

And as for the perfume which thou shalt make, you shall not make to yourself. It shall be unto thee holy for the Lord. Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people.

And just a little picture in the book of Revelation, chapter 8, just a little picture there that may be a help to us. Revelation chapter 8. Now reading from verse 3, Revelation chapter 8, verse 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. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angels' hands.

Now, just a little picture. Well now, we can turn our attention once again to this model of the tabernacle, and again let me remind you that it's all of a piece, and I'm trying to keep it together, and trying to bring you into as much of the value of it as I possibly can. As much as I don't yet understand, I'm still praying about it and still asking the Lord to reveal it to me.

But what I have, I'm very pleased to be able to make it over to you. So then, remember that we have got before us a straight line, and that straight line began as we saw when Moses was in the mount, and God gave him to see what he wanted by way of a dwelling place in the midst of these people, and he began first of all by showing Moses how the tabernacle was set up, showing him the layout, and then began to show it to him in detail. And he began with what we find within the holiest of all.

We are not yet able to see that, but I've opened up the tabernacle so that you can see into the holy place. Now, for any who are here for the first time, I hope you won't think that this is the shape of it in ordinary. I've opened it up, I've opened the sides out, so it's got a different shape now from what it was the first few nights we were dealing with it.

So do remember, this is not really the shape. The width of it is what you can see there. I've taken the door down, but they're still in the same position that they would be, but the sides have been opened out so that you can look inside.

So beyond the veil was the mercy cherubim, and that's where God began, and he came out step by step, dealing with that table on the far side, and then the lampstand on this side, but not that altar of incense that we've read about tonight. Then coming outside, he looked back at the building to speak of it, then moving down, didn't deal with the labourer, but came to the altar of burnt offering. Having dealt with that, looks around at the court and the gate, and then decides to bring in the priesthood, and now we're deeply interested in the priesthood because it also is typical.

Aaron the high priest, the title of Christ, Aaron's son, Christ of Christians. So now our interest is in the priesthood. So we're seeing how God is going to bring it in.

First of all, they clothed with the priestly garment, and then a sin offering was taken. They identified themselves with it, putting their hands upon it, says, it was slain. All the fat kidneys of the sin-offering self went right away outside the camp.

So now you can see God beginning with his own very throne, coming out step by step, until in bringing in the priesthood, the first thing is a sin offering, and it was taken outside the camp. It was not burned in the altar. Only the fat kidneys, midriff, those in which the offering must go outside the camp, because there God is dealing with that which is offensive, that which is hateful, and so here is God coming right out to the place of sin, the same word in Hebrew and Greek for both sin and sin offering, coming right out to the place of sin, there to make provisions for these that they may be brought into the priesthood, the sin offering.

Now they are availing themselves of all the value of that sin offering to make their way into the presence of God. So we too are availing ourselves of what God has provided for us in the Christ, the sin offering, as with the sin offering, by placing their hands solely by faith, our hands upon the head of Christ, identified with him in that way. Then remember there were two other offerings, there was consecration.

We've taken them up, we've seen how all three offerings are taking us to the cross. Christ was sin offering, he was burnt offering, he was offering of consecration, and the priest identified with all three offerings. Now then, as we've gathered that up, we have seen how that this is a perfect work, this is a completed work, and the priest stood there before God as if they had suffered.

They hadn't, but that's how God saw them, because they had identified themselves with those offerings. So we too identified with Christ on the cross. God sees us as if we have been to the cross, suffered, shed our blood, and died.

We haven't, but that's how God sees us, because we were identified with Christ by faith, therefore he there and then became our substitute. So we have walked into all the value of a work which is complete and perfect, nothing to be added to it. And the priest never went back again, neither do we go back again to that cross.

But again, there may be that second application of all that precious blood of Christ. But look, once and for all, by one offering, he has perfected us forever. So we saw then that we were brought into all the value of this so that we could say, there on the cross, Christ was for us, and there on the cross, he was there as us.

More than that, we saw the burnt offering was that which brings before us with being accepted. The burning of the sin offering, that was a burning in judgment. The burning of the burnt offering, and we are brought into all the value of that.

And then the offering of consecration. Seven days throughout our life, this consecration is going to go on. As the Lord enables us, we are to be brought into it more and more, practical sanctification.

So then, now we come into all the value of that, and we say, well, although it's a perfect work, complete, and we stand before God is all the value of that which is perfect and complete, we're not perfect in ourselves. So we saw that here in the priesthood, God made provision for them in case they became

defiled. Even in their priesthood, even in their service, they could become defiled.

So God made provision in the labor. The priest must wash hands and feet thereat. Whenever they go into the sanctuary, whenever they serve at the altar, they must wash hands and feet that they die not.

Very serious thing. So then, now we see two things. Down here, it has to do with condemnation, but here at the labor, it has to do with communion.

Now, as far as condemnation is concerned, we've been brought into all the vice. We shall not come into condemnation. We are eternally secure.

By one offering, He is perfected. That question of sin has been settled once and for all. That is, there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.

That's something settled once and for all. But we still may sin. We still may stumble and fall, and if so, did we go back? Did the priest ever go back again? Did they close for another sin offering, another burnt offering, another offering of consecration? Well, they came in.

But remember, they washed hands. Now, we've got to remember that. We are brought in, but we are not perfect.

We still may stumble and fall. If so, God has made provision for us, and we saw it. If we confess our sins, we Christians, He will be faithful just to forgive and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And if we sin as the children of God, we have an advocate with the Father. Not with God. We are in communion.

Thank God, then, that they're pleading on our behalf. And the moment we sin, we have another advocate. So, the labor means the Lord Himself, the eternal word is applying the written word in the power of the Spirit.

We must also see to it that we confess our sins, and so we are faithful, and just to forgive, to cleanse, and so we are restored to fellowship. Not condemnation. Communion shall not come into judgment, but our communion may be interrupted, it may be spoiled by sin, and something must be done about it.

They must wash hands and feet that they die now. Now, let us remember, it's very important for us. All right.

Now, I've added up all the value of that for you, and I've said once or twice, now remember, all that is not something in itself. Many are inclined to make the cross of Christ, the sin offering, the burnt offering, they're making the cross to be everything. They're making the cross to be something in itself, an end in itself.

But it isn't so. The cross of Christ, and all that Christ suffered, you look at what's going on down here, what for? That they might just remain down there, and continue to be occupied into the sanctuary. Now, notice, there's a tremendous difference between what we find down there in the court, and what we find inside that sanctuary.

Down here in the court, there is suffering, agony, bloodshedding, and death going on all the time. Down there in the court, that drizzling blood is doing its deadly work. Blood is being applied to the halls of the

altar, blood is being poured around the foot of the altar, and all this is going on day in and day out.

And I'm persuaded no one would want that. It's not a very pleasant place to be in. Think of all that is going on, all that bloodshedding, that suffering, that agony, that sprinkling of blood, that pouring of blood.

Think of the burning flesh, and all that's going on down there. A dreadful place to be in. Plainly, all of it is taking us to the cross.

To Christ, suffering, agonizing, shedding his blood, dying. All takes us there. You step out of the court, through the door, into the sanctuary.

What a difference. The moment you pass through that door inside, there's no drizzling blood doing its deadly work. That's all down here.

But inside there, all is peaceful, all is calm, all is quiet, all is glory. What you see down here, the copper, is in evidence in the altar, in the laver, in the sprinkling before us, the agonizing death of Christ. The moment you step through the door, you're entering into the sanctuary to be with what is all.

Even the boards were overlaid with gold. And when you looked above, you would see those beautifully embroidered. What a difference.

And the difference is what? The difference is that all that we find down here, all that we have here, takes us to the cross, to Christ, and increases up yonder to the glory. Remember, the one leads to the other. You can never enjoy what you find in the sanctuary.

Those things that have to do with Christ up yonder, and the power of accepting as you come into all the values of the suffering and death of Christ. These priests could never enter in there until they see the one leads to the other. Remember, the cross of Christ is a means to something else, a means to our going on to the other.

And yet, you see, so many today are brought to the cross and taught that's where they must stay. They're brought to the cross in which you understand the cross is everything. It isn't, you know.

The cross is of vital importance, and we cannot make the least bit of progress until we are brought into all the value of it. But remember, we are brought into all the value of it, but we will go on to what God had in his mind when he brought in his son to suffer and die on that Christ's cross was something tremendous. It wasn't that we should just be there singing, Jesus, keep me near the cross.

You know what I mean? We'll never forget that cross. In our minds, in our hearts, we go back there again and again, but we might refresh our thoughts. But we are not making that cross something in itself.

We are realizing more and more what it has made possible. And then we want to go on, as the writer to the Ephesians of the Hebrews said, let us go on unto perfection. Let us go on unto full growth.

Let's make spiritual progress. That's the big thing. So it's all portrayed for us here.

They went on and in. When they went in, they were having to do with Christ up there. So then we have read about the altar of incense.

The altar of incense is there immediately in front of the veil. We remember there was an altar down in the court. That altar in the court was made of acacia wood.

We saw there that which has to do with the suffering and bloodshedding and death of Christ. We enter into the sanctuary, we find it made of the same acacia wood overlaid with pure gold. If the acacia wood down there spoke of his perfect humanity, so the acacia wood in there would speak of that perfect humanity.

If the copper down here brings before is the thought of his deity, that is beyond the glory. Christ and him glorified. But he first of all must be the altar of burnt offering.

The first there must be the cross, the one leading to the other, you see. So then, now you have it. There in the court, the altar of burnt offering.

We move on, having been brought into all the value of that, coming in front of the veil, and this again is Christ. But not Christ down here. It's Christ up there.

He's our altar of incense. More than that, he's our great high priest. And as you see here, a picture inside of Aaron the high priest, he's standing before the altar of incense and he's bringing out that cloud of sweet perfume.

What a lovely picture. It's a picture of our great high priest, up yonder in the glory. It's a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ as He's everything.

He's the altar of incense. He's the incense. He's the high priest.

All of it, it all speaks of Christ. We've seen the fin offering, burnt offering, offering of consecration. Even the gate, it's Christ.

He's the way into that. He's the high priest. He's the incense.

It is everything. And he's up there as the altar of incense. He's up there as our great high priest.

And he's up there and he's bringing out that cloud of sweet perfume. He's there ever living to make intercession for you and for me. Our great high priest.

We will never fail. What a wonderful thought this is. So let us remember that we have got to first of all come into all the value of what we find with regard to the altar of burnt offering before we can enter into that altar.

Now let me get this before you. Evidently, every day, and we are thinking now for a moment, every day on behalf of the children of Israel, Aaron the high priest took a lamb in the morning and he took a lamb in the evening. That lamb was slain and it was prepared, cut up into its pieces and put together in a very orderly way and it was lifted and put within that altar of burnt offering.

And then he went up to God as a sweet servant on behalf of these people Israel. Now every morning he did that and every evening he did it. Now I'm bringing this before you because I want you to see the connection between the altar of burnt offering and the altar of incense.

It's all of a piece. Remember the sin offering was burned outside the camp. The burnt offering was burned in the altar of burnt offering.

You see it's all of a piece. Now we look at this altar of burnt offering morning and evening. Here is Aaron and when that offering is being made in the morning and he goes down to that altar of burnt offering and he carries it through the courts of the door and then he fills his hands with that sweet perfume and he sprinkles it upon the fire and he fills the holy place with a cloud of sweet perfume.

Every morning he did that and every evening he did that. So you see the connection. The same fire that's burning there in the altar of burnt offering consuming the sacrifice.

The same fire is carried inside and put on the altar of incense and it brings out the cloud of sweet perfume. Remember it's Christ up there. So now you see here is Christ in all the value of that.

Now we have the thought of the altar of burnt offering. He's up there in the presence of God as the altar of incense. The same fire from the altar of burnt offering taken inside to bring the incense out.

That same thought that we have concerning Christ and him crucified, taken out. And he's there bringing before God that cloud of sweet perfume. He's there in all the value of that work of the cross.

He's there ever living to make intercession for us. Now we need to be very careful. All this was written for our learning and we are told as we were reading the scriptures that they were to offer no strange incense, no strange fire.

This is a very serious thing. No strange fire, no strange incense. Only that fire that was there burning in that altar and which was burning, always burning, ever burning, never to go out.

They put wood on it, yes. They had their work to do in putting wood there, but the fire itself was kindled by God and it kept burning. So now we have this thought before us.

No strange fire, only that. And this had to do with their going inside to deal with that altar of incense to bring out that cloud of sweet perfume, only that fire. Aaron must have been a very, very sad man because two of his sons who were priests, they kept strange fire in their censers and they offered up probably strange incense.

And fire came out from heaven and consumed them. You think of it? Aaron, the high priest, lost two of his sons to priests because they offered strange fire. God says no strange fire, no strange incense.

Only that which God himself said should be made. No strange incense. Isn't this a lesson for us? Only a few moments ago we were sitting together with the bread and the wine before us, that we might remember our Lord Jesus Christ, that we might worship.

We were gathering together, we were going to that cross and we were remembering, but we were also looking up and we were offering to God our thanksgivings and our praise. All this was going up to him. I wonder how much strange fire was in it? How much strange incense? How much of the natural man? How much of the flesh? God says no.

Some years ago I had this model of a tabernacle up in a place and I went rather early for the meeting and I was sitting waiting for the people to come in. And the door opened and a tall gentleman came walking in and he stood in front of the model and he was looking at it and I could hear him talking to himself. Then he moved over the south side and he looked at it from that, still talking to himself, and then he came over this side and looked at it from this angle.

Then he looks around and he saw me sitting there and he came and he said, oh excuse me, are you the gentleman who's going to speak? Well he said, you know this is wonderful to me. I've never seen anything like this. I've read all about it many times, but I could never visualize it.

It's terribly difficult. But he said, now this is really wonderful. Now I've got this.

Now I can see. It's wonderful. He said, you know I'm going to be very pleased tonight.

I trust the Lord will bless you. And he went and sat there. He didn't say who he was and I didn't ask.

So the people started coming in and I saw everybody sort of looking across at this man. Then one of them came to me and said, this is a man sitting over there. I said, no.

He said, he's the Dean of the Church of England. Oh I said, is he? He said, he's the Dean of the Church of England. I said, that's fine.

So another one came and said, that gentleman sitting over there is the Dean of the Church of England. I said, so I believe. Now another one came and said, you know that's the Dean of the Church of England.

I said, well we've evidently got a distinguished visitor. I said, I'm very pleased about this. He said, he's the Dean.

I said, yes I know. He's a distinguished visitor. I'm glad he's there.

So the Dean listened to all I had to say. And when I finished he came to me and said, Mr. Brown, this has been most interesting to me. It's wonderful the way it's hit me.

I said, I'm very glad that you've been helped in this way. Oh he said, I trust the Lord will bless you. And then he looked at me and said, I don't believe it.

The Dean's coming here. Anyway, he won't come again. He made a mistake.

He was there the next night. The first night he hadn't got a Bible with him, but the next night he had. And every night he was there.

And after about four or five nights, you know, I could see his face was getting a bit longer. And he came up to me and he said, Mr. Brown. I said, yes sir.

He said, you know, some of your remarks have rather distressed me. I said, I rather thought they would. Oh, did you? I said, yeah.

And I said, tell me what remarks distressed you? Well, he said, you know, you said that a building is not essential to the worship of God. I said, yes, I remember saying that. I said, just a minute, sir.

Now, I said, a building is not essential to the worship of God. Now, am I right? Am I wrong? Well, you see, he said, what I was thinking, I said, well, you keep your thoughts for a moment. I said, can we get this settled? I said, a building is not essential to the worship of God.

Now, am I right? Am I wrong? Well, he said, you see, what I had in my mind, I said, well, can you keep it in your mind for a moment? Can we get this settled? I said, a building is not essential to the worship of God. Now, am I right? Am I wrong? Oh, well done, yes. Yes, I agree.

Yes, that's right enough. I said, all right. Now, we agree that a building is not essential to the worship of God.

Yes, yes, yes. I said, now you can tell me what you were thinking and tell me what you have in your mind. Well, he said, I'll tell you.

You know, when I go up to London, when I go up to St Paul's Cathedral, when I go to Westminster Abbey, he said, what I see there, he said, you know, that beautiful architecture. Oh, he says, these places are wonderful, you know. He said, that great organ, when it sounds up, that choir there, he said, and Mr. Brown, when I go into these places, I said, yes, sir, I quite understand.

I said, tell me. When you go into these places, all that you see and all that you hear makes the most powerful appeal. Well, he said, to my feelings.

Well, I said, that's not the word I'm thinking of. Well, he said, to my heart. I said, that's not the word, is it? Well, he said, it makes the most powerful appeal to my soul.

I said, that's it. Now, that's the word. So, you go in and all that makes the most powerful appeal to your soul? Yes.

And then I said, you feel you want to worship God? Yes. And can you do it? Well, he said, surely I can do it. I said, can you really? Well, he said, now, Mr. Brown, now, what have you got in your mind? I said, I'll tell you.

What I have in my mind is, that the Lord was sitting by a well, and he was very thirsty, and a woman came, and he said, give me to drink. She said, you, Mr. Brown, he's asking me, you, you were asking me, Mr. Brown, for a drink, and what surprised you? He said, if you knew who's asking you, you'd ask a drink, and he would give you living water. Now, I said, sir, you remember that this woman said, sir, I perceive thou art a prophet.

You know, our father said that we should worship God in that mountain. The new Jews say, we worship God in, I said, sir, what did he say? Oh, he said, neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem. Yes, I said, go on.

But he said, that they that worship the Father shall worship him in spirit. That's what I was thinking of. You said, oh, this makes the most powerful appeal to your soul, and you want to worship God in your soul.

They that worship the Father must worship him in soul. Oh, no, no. They must worship him in spirit.

I said, sir, we've got to be very careful. Can the man who is spiritually dead worship God? You may have thousands of people in your churches today. They are spiritually dead.

Oh, they're there. They're members of the church, you see. But they've never come to know Christ in the way that we've been talking of here.

But they believe they can worship God in soul. How can the man who is spiritually dead worship God in spirit? No, sir, I said, you see, all that makes that most powerful appeal to you makes that powerful appeal to your soul. And you feel you want to worship God in your soul.

There are thousands of people like that, but they're spiritually dead. They've never been brought into all the value of the finished work of Christ. They've never been quickened.

They're using strange fire, and they're using strange incense. And God said you're not to do it. But we are doing it.

Ah, Mr. Brown, well, this is rather new to me. I said, well, sir, this is what I feel. True worship is communion with God in all that concerns the personal work of his beloved Son.

That's worship. And no strange fire, and no strange incense. This is a very serious thing, isn't it? You see them here? Only that fire, only that incense, no other.

And the same fire that is consuming the sacrifice is the one that brings out the sweet perfume. And when we enter in, remember, picture first of all what Christ is there as the altar of incense, as the high priest, and he's bringing out that cloud of sweet perfume in the very presence on our behalf, and he's left with all the value of the finished work of the cross. What about us? We can enter in, and we can stand before God.

We can enter in, and we can worship God. But we have to worship him in spirit and in truth. No strange fire, no strange incense.

We are there to commune with him in all that concerns the personal work of his beloved Son. That's worship. I trust the Lord will help us in these things that, when we do come together, that we may worship, we may remember.

No strange fire, no strange incense. And it's brought before us so clearly. I trust the Lord will really bless these words to us and help us.

We shall go on again this evening, and this evening is a very, very interesting and very important subject, and I'm sure the Lord will bless this to you. Now, shall we close with a word of prayer? O Lord, our Father, again in the name of thy dear Son, we thank thee for the We have been before thee and asked of thee to help us as we gather together. We have asked thee to bring before us that which will exercise our hearts.

We have asked thee to help us as we may put into practice these truths that thou bringest before us day by day. And we ask thee now to grant thy blessing upon what we have had before us this morning. Help us by thy Spirit to enter into it more and more that we may realize what true worship is.

Only if we have been born again, quickened by thy Spirit, brought into that spiritual relationship with thee, only then can we really and truly worship thee. And so help us, we pray thee, that we may avoid that strange fire and that strange incense, but that only we should stand before thee in all the value of that finished work of Christ, to commune with thee. And we know it will delight thee, our God, when we are before thee, and we are bringing before thee all that concerns a person, the work of thy dear Son.

So receive our thanks, grant us thy blessing, be with us throughout the rest of the day. For we ask it in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/9/SID9763.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/j-henry-brown/the-tabernacle-05-the-altar-of-incense/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net