

(Exodus) Exodus 30:7-10

by J. Vernon McGee

The altar of incense is a symbol of prayer and praise, and represents Christ's presence in heaven, praying for us.

Duration: 7:30

Scripture: Exodus 30:7, Exodus 30:9, Luke 9:35, Luke 18:13, John 14:13-14, Ephesians 1:6, Hebrews 8:3

Topics: "Priestly Prayer", "Intercession"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of priests being the only ones allowed to pray. He warns against the idea that anyone can lead a sinful life and then turn to God in times of trouble. The preacher explains that the only prayer a sinner can pray is for God's mercy, and God will hear and answer that prayer. He also discusses the significance of the altar of incense, where priests would offer prayers, and how the aroma of the incense would cling to their garments, symbolizing the power of prayer. The preacher concludes by highlighting the role of Jesus as our high priest who intercedes for us and the importance of praying in his name.

Transcript

Now, we read here, and I'd like to read verse 7, "...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 at evening, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations." And this is very important to see.

This altar, by the way, was not an altar for a sacrifice. No sacrifice was to be there, and they would use a certain kind of incense. Verse 9, "...ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meal offering, neither shall ye pour drink offerings upon it." In other words, the only thing that it was for, just one thing, and that was incense.

And the priest would go in and burn incense every time that he'd light the lights thereof. Now, this altar is very important to see. It's part of worship.

It's in this worship chapter. And may I say right at the very beginning, it speaks of prayer. And the reason we know that it speaks of prayer, why we are told here, incense is a symbol of prayer and praise in many places.

David said in Psalm 141, 2, "...let my prayer be set before thee as incense." And you find in the book of Revelation, when the angel offered prayer, he also poured out the incense. And David then could say this, "...let my prayer set before thee as sweet incense." And you remember when the New Testament opens, and Dr. Luke, by the way, opens it chronologically with this man Zechariah at the altar of incense. He was a member of the tribe of Levi, and he was serving there, and incense was associated there with prayer.

He was serving at the altar of incense, and it was at the time of prayer. In other words, God spoke after a silence of 400 years here at this altar of incense. Now, incense, therefore, it's a figure of Christ, our intercessor.

Where Aaron ministered, why, it was where the high priest was. Now, Aaron is a figure of Christ in this particular sense, although he's a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Why, we find that the altar of incense, when you turn over to the 8th chapter of Hebrews, is in the Holy of Holies.

It looks like the writer of Hebrews didn't know where it belonged. Oh, yes, he did. But why did he put it in there? Because when he wrote that veil had been rent and twain, Christ had offered himself down here.

His flesh had been rent, and he had died upon the cross, but he ascended back to heaven. And that altar of incense is in heaven today. You and I come to God through Christ.

He's our great intercessor. He's up there. That altar speaks of the place where he stands.

And when you and I come to God in prayer, we have to come through him. Now, I can't buy this today when I hear folks say, now that I've been saved, I can come directly to God. No, you can't.

You come through Christ, my friend. He's the one that brings us into the presence of God. Now, Christ is in heaven praying for us.

It was wonderful for the people of Israel to know that their great high priest was in there at that altar praying for them. It's wonderful today to know that our great high priest is praying for us also. And it's a beautiful, wonderful picture.

And it says that he doesn't pray for the world. Did you know Christ does not pray for the world? He says in his own prayer in John 17, verse 9, look it up. He says, I pray not for the world.

I pray for those that thou hast given me. Somebody says, you mean to tell me he doesn't pray for the world? He says he doesn't. Why doesn't he? He died for the world.

And the Holy Spirit is down here to make the offering of Christ real to those that will accept and receive it. He could do no more than what he did dying for the sins of the world. But he's up yonder today praying for you and me.

And I'm glad he is because if it wasn't for him up there, we couldn't do very much down here today. It's wonderful to know that we have a great high priest praying for us. When we all come to God in prayer, none of us bring anything that makes us to be heard above someone else.

We are heard because of Christ. We're told that very definitely over in Ephesians 1, 6. Let me turn and read this. To the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

And the father said, this is my beloved son, hear him. And we're not only to hear him, but we're to pray through him. Christ said we're to pray in his name.

Whatever you ask in my name, I'll do it. And that's what it means, I think, praying in the Spirit. Now, this article of furniture you notice is separated from the other articles of furniture.

The consecration of priests had to take place before this altar is brought before us. It's an altar of incense. Only priests could worship.

Even the King Uzziah was smitten with leprosy when he tried to intrude in here. And friends, only priests can pray today. There's a great deal of sentimental rotten rubbish that a person can lead any sort of sinful life, reject Christ, and then in time of trouble, maybe his poor mother's in the hospital, in this old reprobate, he gets down on his knees before God.

The moving pictures have shown that. I think sometimes some sentimental preachers talk about these things. God says he'll not answer.

Let's be very careful about that, my friend. The altar of incense is where the priests came. The only prayer that any sinner can pray is, God, be merciful to me.

And God will hear and answer that when it's brought to him. Now, there's to be continual praise. And you notice God says, perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations.

We're to pray without ceasing. There it was in the morning and in the evening. Now, when the high priest went inside, offered incense, and he spent time in there, you know what happened? That incense got in his garments.

And when he came outside, the people, you know, very frankly, they could smell him. You talk about having the right deodorant. He had the right deodorant.

And when the great high priest walked by, people just sniffed. They said, my, doesn't he smell good. Trouble today with a lot of the saints is they don't have the right deodorant.

The right deodorant is prayer. Let my prayer send before thee sweet incense. And it'll get in your garments when you spend time in prayer.

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