

Series: Exodus
Title: Christ in the Golden Altar
Text: Ex 30:1-10
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Everything a believer thinks and does is sin. We recognize our sin when we commit some outward offense. But we forget that even our best thoughts and deeds are sin—“*ALL our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*”; “*In our flesh dwells NO good thing.*” Oh that we could look down on our own sin as quickly and readily as we do in others! Without Christ even our prayers are sin.

Proposition: The only way sinners saved by grace can enter God’s presence in prayer and acceptance is through Christ our High Priest who ever lives to make intercession for us—that is what is typified in the golden altar of incense.

Subject: Christ in the Golden Altar

Exodus 30: 1: And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon:...6: And thou shalt put it before the vail that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee. 7: And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. 8: And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations. 9: Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon. 10: And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto the LORD.

This was a different altar we saw before: that altar was brass, this altar gold; that altar for sacrifice, this altar for burning incense; that altar was in the courtyard before entering the holy place, this altar was in the holy place before entering the holiest of holies; the brazen altar typified Christ our Redeemer’s sacrifice by whose blood we enter into the holy place, the altar of incense typifies Christ our risen High Priest by whose intercession we enter God’s presence accepted in the holiest of holies.

Divisions: 1) Picture 2) Person 3) Presence 4) Place 5) Perpetuity 6) Prohibition

THE PICTURE

Exodus 30: 1: And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon:

The incense pictures Christ’s intercession together with the prayers of his saints rising up into God’s presence in the true holiest of holies. We have a scripture to show us that.

Revelation 8: 2: And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. 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. 4: And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand.” (Re 8:3-4)

We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—why? We see it pictured in the Altar of Incense. The prayers of Christ’s people are offered unto God in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ so that Christ presents them to God as he intercedes for his people. Therefore, our prayers rise up to God accepted by the merits of Christ’s sin-atonement blood. Speaking of this gospel age in which every true believer prays *in the name of Christ our King and Savior*, he said,

Malachi 1:11: For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name *shall be* great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense *shall be* offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name *shall be* great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.

THE PERSON OF CHRIST

Exodus 30: 1: And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: of shittim wood shalt thou make it. 2: A cubit shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; foursquare shall it be: and two cubits shall be the height thereof: the horns thereof shall be of the same. 3: 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.

The altar of incense was made of “shittim wood and gold.” Shittim wood represents Christ’s humanity. It was incorruptible wood. In his humanity, Christ is holy and without sin, therefore without corruption. Gold represents Christ’s divinity. Christ is God. He is the holy and righteous, eternal, and all-powerful God

As a Man our Lord Jesus was made under the law to redeem his people from the curse of the law. As a Man without sin he could willingly obey the law. He could willingly take and bear the sins of his people, willingly shed his precious blood, and die in the place of God’s elect. Also, as a Man he was touched with the feeling of our infirmities, yet without sin. Therefore, he is able to comfort us in all our trials

As God our Lord Jesus Christ is eternal and all powerful. His divinity made all his accomplishments eternal: eternal redemption, eternal righteousness, eternal life.

As both God and Man our Lord Jesus can lay hold of God and lay hold of his people bringing us together. That is why Paul said,

1 Timothy 2: 5: For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

Brethren, it is Christ being both God and Man that gives us boldness to come to God in the holiest of holies.

Hebrews 4:15: For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16: Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. 5:1: For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: 2: Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.

Romans 8:34: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Brethren, the “horns” and the “crown” on this golden altar of incense picture Christ’s power and Kingship as our resurrected victorious Redeemer in whom we have power with God. Like as the gold glorified the shittim wood now our King all Powerful sits at God’s right hand as the GodMan—in our very nature—glorified!

THE PRESENCE

Exodus 30: 4: 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 *it*; and they shall be for places for the staves to bear it withal. 5: And thou shalt make the staves *of* shittim wood, and overlay them with gold.

The staves were so that they could carry the altar of incense wherever they went—so it was always present with them. So it is for every believer. Christ is always present with us to intercede for us with God in the holiest of holies.

Hebrews 7: 22: By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. 23: And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: 24: But this *man*, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. 25: Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. 26: For such an high priest became us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; 27: Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. 28: For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, *maketh* the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

Brethren, the intercessions of Christ are ours, in every place or circumstance, and that continually. — “*Lo, I am with you alway*” (Matthew 28:20).

THE PURPOSE

Exodus 30: 6: And thou shalt put it before the vail that *is* by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that *is* over the testimony, where I will meet with thee.

Now this is where we see the picture really portray Christ our Intercessor. This golden altar of incense was placed *in the holy place before the vail*. Picture this. The priest had to come through altar of incense to enter into the holiest of holies where the ark of the covenant was—the holiest of holies pictures the very presence of God where Christ is at God’s right hand.

In the last chapter, everything took place outside the holy place in the courtyard. We saw how God sanctifies and consecrates his child so that we have communion with God. *The sin-offering*—typified Christ who laid down his life in our place and put away the sin of his people by his one offering. *The burnt-offering*—typified Christ’s obedience on our behalf coming up to God a sweet-smelling Savor making his people accepted of God. *The ram of consecration*—typified Christ’s blood applied through the Holy Spirit sanctifying us and bringing us into communion with God. *The peace offering*—typified Christ our Peace in whom we commune with God our Father. That offering was made on the brazen altar outside of the holy place in the courtyard.

So here we have the altar of incense inside the holy place before the vail. Beyond the vail is the holiest of holies picturing the presence of God with the ark, our mercy seat—Christ Jesus our Propitiation—at his right hand. So the picture is of you and I who Christ has already made priests by Christ’s blood. We have been brought into the holy place into Christ the Sanctuary. We are now sanctified, made holy, brought into the holy place in Christ. By Christ’s blood every believer is now without sin in the holy place.

But God is pictured here beyond the veil in the holiest of holies—it typifies how that though we are holy in Christ, God is yet in heaven with Christ at his right hand. But now by Christ our High Priest we have welcome access into God's presence in heaven. The altar of incense pictures Christ making intercession for us bringing our prayers up to God perfect and accepted where God meets with us in Christ the Mercy Seat.

Hebrews 10:17: And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. 18: Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. 19: Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20: By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; 21: And having an high priest over the house of God; 22: Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

So brethren the altar of incense in the holy place before the veil pictures Christ's intercession giving us access into God's presence when we pray in his name. Our Lord Jesus, our great High Priest, not only prays for us, but takes our prayers and presents them with the incense of His infinite merit before the Father's throne causing our prayers to come up to God perfect and accepted.

THE PERPETUITY

Exodus 30: 7: And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. 8: And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations.

The key here is to see that Aaron the high priest, and every high priest after him, keep this sweet incense burning every morning and every evening perpetually before the LORD throughout their generations. No matter where a sanctified child of God is, Christ is always present with us. No matter our condition or circumstance, Christ ever lives to make intercession on our behalf.

Brethren, we cannot sin away grace. At no time will even one chosen, redeemed child of God be turned away from the throne of grace. Christ ever lives to make intercession for us. There will never be a time that we will not have perpetual access and acceptance in God's presence.

But there have been times when God did not grant access and acceptance. God killed Aarons' sons. Why? They offered stranger fire. King Uzziah became lifted up in pride and by-passed the high priest, offering incense himself and God killed him with leprosy. So let's heed the prohibition

THE PROHIBITION

Exodus 30: 9: Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon. 10: And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto the LORD.

This is what God prohibited. No strange fire could be used. The fire had to come from the brazen altar where the sin-offering was consumed (Leviticus 16:12-13). That is where Nadab and Abihu departed from the plain Word of Jehovah. By it they said that worship may be offered to God on another foundation than our crucified Christ. So the Lord killed them. He will kill anyone who attempts to worship him in any way except his prescribed way Christ and him crucified. (Hebrews 9:22).

No strange incense could be used, only the incense God required—it declares Christ alone is our High Priest and Intercessor and his intercession alone is accepted of God.

Exodus 30:34: And the LORD said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; *these* sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each shall there be a like *weight*: 35: And thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure *and* holy: 36: And thou shalt beat *some* of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you most holy. 37: And *as for* the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for the LORD. (38) Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people."

These ingredients represent the sweet incense of Christ's merit and efficacy as our Redeemer. His Righteousness, his obedience is made to be his people's righteousness through faith in him. His blood, his atonement, is how we are reconciled to God our Father. His advocacy, his intercession, is our acceptance at God's throne of grace.

Now, picture Aaron the high priest offering the incense. He was a figure of our Lord Jesus Christ in heaven offering up prayer on behalf of those who are His (Hebrews 9:24). Aaron offered incense only for the children of Israel, and so it is our Lord Jesus said, "*I pray not for the world but for them thou hast given me out of the world.*" (John 17:9). The same ones who died ceremonially in the sacrifice on the brazen altar were included in the prayers of the golden altar—Christ prays for those for whom he laid down his life and redeemed.

Also, no burnt offering, with its meat and drink offering could be offered on this altar. Remember, the burnt sacrifice with the meat offering and drink offering was a thank offering. They represent spiritual sacrifices that every believer makes, the calves of our lips in gratitude to God. But those offerings were not to be made on the altar of incense. Why? Because it is not our spiritual sacrifices that makes God receive us; it is not our gratitude and praise that makes God receive us—it is Christ alone with his sin-atonement blood!

In order to show this once a year Aaron the High Priest was to put *the blood of the sin-offering of atonements upon the horns of the altar of incense*. What did it picture? As the incense was burned on that blood-stained altar it reminded them the one-way God receives us into his presence, the one way our prayers and thank offerings of praise and gratitude are accepted is by the horn/power of the sin-atonement blood of Christ Jesus our High Priest by his one offering. In Hebrews 10, before telling us we have access into God's presence, he gave the one reason:

Hebrews 10: 14: For by one offering Christ hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. 15: Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us:...17: [God makes known in our hearts] their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. 18: Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

Prayer is not an offering for sin. Our thanksgiving is not an offering for sin. Nor are our good works of gratitude an offering by which we are accepted. Christ makes them acceptable.

Hebrews 10: 19: Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20: By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; 21: And having an high priest over the house of God; 22: Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Remember, that sprinkling of our hearts and washing of our bodies was done in the last chapter in the courtyard at the brazen altar whereby we were made priests, sanctified, and brought into communion with God in the holy place. Now as priests our High Priest offers up incense—continual intercession—giving us and our prayers acceptance in the God's holy presence by the continual intercession of Christ alone. There is no acceptance by strange incense. There is no acceptance by our offerings of thanksgiving. Our acceptance is only by Christ our High Priest interceding on our behalf through his sin-atonement blood. Christ takes our persons, our prayers and our performances and presents them before God in the fragrance of his high priestly character and perfect sacrifice, giving us perpetual acceptance in all things with God

1 Peter 2: 5: Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Ecclesiastes 9:7: Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.

Amen!