

THE ALTAR OF INCENSE

(Heavenly Communication)

The altar of incense was placed at the far end of the holy place, immediately in front of the veil which partitioned off the most holy place. Like the table of showbread, the altar of incense was made of acacia wood overlaid with pure gold. It was one cubit long and one cubit wide. The height was two cubits, or about three feet. Like the brazen altar, it was foursquare and it had four horns, one on each corner. The two poles with which it was carried, were also made of wood overlaid with gold, and the four rings, that held the poles were of pure gold (Ex. 30:1-10). Nothing but the sacred fire and the prescribed incense was ever placed upon it. (Ex 30:9,10). In offering of incense the priest was brought more directly into the presence of God than in any other act of his daily work.

1. Who was to offer the incense on the altar?

Exodus 30:7, 8 *"Aaron shall burn on it sweet incense every morning; when he tends the lamps, he shall burn incense on it. "And when Aaron lights the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense on it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations.*

Note: Each day the priest was to conduct a service of consecration on behalf of the people, and this service was called the "Daily." This service was performed at the altar of burnt offering in the court of the tabernacle and in the holy place. The "daily" service consisted of the morning and evening burnt offering (A lamb each time), and the offering of sweet incense on the golden altar. Upon this altar the priest was to burn incense every morning and evening.

2. What did the multitude do at the hour of incense in the morning and evening service?

Luke 1:9, 10 *According to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense.*

Note: Israel understood that the morning and evening "daily" service was a call to prayer. At the time of prayer the priest acted as mediator, or intercessor, between God and the sinner.

3. What did the incense symbolize?

Psalms 141:2 *Let my prayer be set before You as incense.*

4. Who does Paul say the priest represents?

Hebrews 7:24, 25 *"But He (Jesus), because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."*

1 Titus 2:5 *"For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus."*

Note: The altar of incense is a call to God's people to start day and end each day with prayer. Here Jesus brings our prayers to the Father pleading His blood for each one. Thus, the altar of incense is a call to prayer.

Our Call To Prayer

5. What is God's invitation to us?

Hebrews 4:14-16 *"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*

1Pe 5:7 *"Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."*

Note: The altar of incense is the third step in sanctification, our Christian growth. As the oil of the lampstand represented the Holy Spirit, and the bread at the table of showbread represented the Word of God, so the incense represents prayer which is essential to our "growing up" in Jesus.

6. Upon what conditions are we promised needed blessings?

Matthew 7:7,8 *Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."*

Jas 4:2 *Yet you do not have because you do not ask.*

Note Prayer is not the overcoming of God's unwillingness to help us, but rather it is taking hold of God's willingness to do so. Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend.

7. What has God promise to do with my needs?

Philippians 4:19 *And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

Note: There is a difference between "needs" & "greeds." All that that the child of God needs is theirs for the asking. What we cannot do in our own strength can be accomplished when our efforts are united with divine power. Those who ask will not be disappointed. But even after we ask we must remember to say... *"not my will but your will be done."* Finite beings that we are, do not always know what is best for us, but Jesus can be trusted to answer our request the way we would want them answered if we knew the end from the beginning. In short He knows what is best for us.

Conditions to Answered Prayer

8. How must one ask in order to receive?

James 1:6,7 *But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;*

Heb 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

Note: When we come to God with our needs we must believe that He cares of us, and has our best interest in mind. However, disbelieving is love, and power jeopardizes our request.

9. Under what condition does the Lord not hear prayer?

1 John 3:22 *“And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.”*

Palms 66:18 *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear.”* (See Isaiah 59:1, 2 James 4:3)

Note: Rebellion, contention and discord quench the spirit of prayer. (1 Peter 3:1-7)
Many grieve the Spirit and wound Jesus by giving into impatience, unkind words, disobedience, strife, and an unforgiving attitude.

10. When praying, what must we do in order to be forgiven?

Mark 11:25 *“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.”*

Note: If Jesus is so ready and willing to forgive us our sins, how can we be unwilling to forgive another? (see Matthew 18:23-35)

Time, Place, And Content Of Prayer

11. What example did Jesus give of how to start each day?

Mark 1:35 *“Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.”*

12. What did Jesus say concerning secret prayer?

Matthew 6:6 *“But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”*

13. With what should our prayer be mingled?

Philippians 4:6 *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.*

Note: Prayer does not change God, but it does change us and, our relation to Him. It places us in a frame of mind where God can consistently and safely grand our requests.

14. How often should we pray?

Ephesians 6:18 *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.”*

Note: This doesn't mean we should be always on our knees, but that we should live in an attitude of prayer. We must remember too, that prayer does not change God, but it does change us and, our relation to Him. It places us in a frame of mind where God can consistently and safely grand our requests.

15. What are some examples of things to pray for?

- (1) For the **forgiveness** of sin, 2 Chron. 7:14; 1 John 5:16; Matt. 5:44;
- (2) for the **Holy Spirit**, John 14:16; Luke 11:13;
- (3) for **deliverance in the hour of temptation and danger**, Matt. 6:13; John 17:11; Prov. 3:26; Ps. 91;
- (4) for **wisdom and understanding**, James 1:5; 1 Kings 3:9; Dan. 2:17-19;
- (5) for the **healing** of the sick, James 5:14, 15; 2 Kings 20;
- (6) for the **prosperity of the ministers** of God, Eph. 6:18, 19; 2 Thess. 3:1;
- (7) for those who **suffer** for the truth's sake, Heb. 13:3; Acts 12:5;
- (8) for **rulers**, Ezra 6:10; Acts 23:5;
- (9) for our **enemies**, Matthew 5:44;
- (10) for temporal prosperity, that the **work of God be not hindered**, James 5:17, 18; Zech. 10:1;
- (11) for the **Lord to vindicate His cause**, 1 Kings 18:30-39;
- (12) for **laborers**, Luke 10:2
- (13) for the **coming of Jesus**, Matt. 6:10; Rev.22:20.

16. If an answer does not come at the time and in the manner expected, what should be our attitude?

Psalms 37:7 *Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him*

17. What if I don't pray just right or worse, I don't know what to pray for?

Romans 8:26 *Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

Note: What a joy to know that our prayers are delivered to the throne intelligently through the power of the Holy Spirit..

Your Response

Is it your desire to erect an altar (figuratively speaking) in your home by starting and ending each day in prayer?

Answer _____