27. Exodus 30:1-31:18

(8/31/16)

The Altar of Incense

Exodus 30:1-6 (NKJV)
1 "You shall make an altar to burn incense on; you shall make it of acacia wood. 2 A cubit *shall be* its length and a cubit its width--it shall be square--and two cubits *shall be* its height. Its horns *shall be* of one piece with it. 3 And you shall overlay its top, its sides all around, and its horns with pure gold; and you shall make for it a molding of gold all around. 4 Two gold rings you shall make for it, under the molding on both its sides. You shall place *them* on its two sides, and they will be holders for the poles with which to bear it. 5 You shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. 6 And you shall put it before the veil that *is* before the ark of the Testimony, before the mercy seat that *is* over the Testimony, where I will meet with you.

If you were a priest in those days and you entered into the Tabernacle, directly in front of you, standing in front of the veil or curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was this small golden altar called the **altar of incense**.

The altar of incense was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold and measured 18" by 18" and stood 3 ft. tall.

It was made with a decorative molding (rim) of gold around its top edges and had four golden horns (like the horn of an animal) one in each of its four corners.

On the bottom of the decorative golden molding on two sides of the altar were placed golden rings (four in all) through which poles made of acacia wood overlaid with gold could be slid through so that the altar could be carried on the shoulders of the Levites.

Exodus 30:7-9 (NKJV)
7 Aaron shall burn on it sweet incense every morning; when he tends the lamps [Menorah], **he shall burn incense on it. 8 And when Aaron lights** ['trims'] **the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense on it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations.**
9 You shall not offer strange incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering; nor shall you pour a drink offering on it.

So this altar was an altar for burning incense—not an altar for sacrifices and offerings.

In the Bible incense is often symbolic of prayer—

Psalm 141:2 (NKJV)
2 Let my prayer be set before You *as* incense, The lifting up of my hands *as* the evening sacrifice.

Revelation 5:8 (NKJV)
8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

Now even though this little golden altar was not to have any animal sacrifices offered upon it or grain offerings or drink offerings poured upon it—those things were only allowed on the brazen altar of sacrifice which stood outside the Tabernacle in the courtyard.

And yet there was a connection between the two altars—in that the fire for the burning of the incense had to be taken from the fire of the altar of sacrifice (Lev. 16:12-13).

The idea behind this was that if prayer is going to be acceptable to God—it must be based on and connected to the sacrifice for sin—or for us in the new covenant, the sacrifice of Jesus.

Any unbeliever can pray—but without the sacrifice of Christ applied to their life it is nothing more than empty words.

The only prayer that God has promised to answer an unbeliever when they pray—is the prayer of salvation, *"God be merciful to me a sinner."*

As one pastor put it,
"Prayer is not the place sacrificial atonement is made; it is the place sacrificial atonement is enjoyed. We don't save ourselves through prayer; we pray because of Jesus' saving work on the cross."

Exodus 30:10 (NKJV)
10 And Aaron shall make atonement upon its horns once a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonement; once a year he shall make atonement upon it throughout your generations. It *is* most holy to the LORD."

Now even though the altar of incense wasn't a place of sacrifice—it was a place of atonement.

You see once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest had to anoint the horns of the altar of incense with blood from the sacrifices offered to God on the altar of sacrifice—those that had been offered for the sins of the nation.

Why did God require this—because once again He was illustrating the connection between atonement and prayer.

As we just said, prayer doesn't atone for our sins but must always be offered up to God *after* the sacrifice has been made for the atonement of the sinner.

The Day of Atonement was only once a year, but every day when the priests brought a morning and evening offering of incense they saw the blood stained horns of the altar.

This was a constant reminder of the work of atoning blood—and for the Christian it reminds us that only through Jesus' sacrifice are we now worthy to come into God's presence in prayer.

Isaiah 59:1-2 (NKJV)
1 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. 2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden *His* face from you, So that He will not hear.

Ephesians 2:13 (NKJV)
13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

The Ransom Money

Exodus 30:11-16 (NKJV)
11 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 12 "When you take the census of the children of Israel for their number, then every man shall give a ransom for himself to the LORD, when you number them, that there may be no plague among them when *you* number them. 13 This is what everyone among those who are numbered shall give: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (a shekel *is* twenty gerahs). The half-shekel *shall be* an offering to the LORD. 14 Everyone included among those who are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering to the LORD. 15 The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when *you* give an offering to the LORD, to make atonement for yourselves. 16 And you shall take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shall appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of meeting, that it may be a memorial for the children of Israel before the LORD, to make atonement for yourselves."

So God is saying that whenever He commanded the people to take a census (the first one was commanded by God in Numbers 1)—then every male twenty and above must pay a half shekel of silver as a ransom (to buy himself out of death) that there may be no plague among them.

This payment was the price of redemption.

As we've already said, silver was the metal of redemption—all the men twenty and above (age of accountability) paid a half shekel of silver to redeem themselves from death.

Notice what God said, **"The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when *you* give an offering to the LORD, to make atonement for yourselves." (v.15)**

In saying this the Lord was preparing His people (and all of us) to understand that the price of redemption is the same for all—the blood of Jesus:

1 Peter 1:18-19 (NLT)
18 For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver. 19 It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God.

Exodus 38:25-26 tells us that almost five tons of silver was collected from 603,550 men who were twenty and above.

Much of that silver went to make to silver base plates that the golden wall boards of the Tabernacle sat in—the rest was used for other Tabernacle expenses.

Later, the 'half-shekel' became an annual temple tax (Matthew 17:24).

The Bronze Laver

Exodus 30:17-21 (NKJV)
17 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 18 "You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base also of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. And you shall put water in it, 19 for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it. 20 When they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the LORD, they shall wash with water, lest they die. 21 So they shall wash their hands and their feet, lest they die. And it shall be a statute forever to them--to him and his descendants throughout their generations."

Now, we already talked about the laver a couple of weeks ago—but just to review quickly.

When you entered into the outer courtyard of the Tabernacle the first object standing directly in front of you was the brazen altar of sacrifice—the altar where sin was atoned for through the blood of animal substitutes.

After you passed the bronze altar of sacrifice, directly behind it and in front of the Tabernacle proper was another bronze object called the **laver**.

The laver looked like a large 'bird bath' and was used for washing after the priest had offered the animal sacrifice and before he could enter the Tabernacle proper.

Interestingly, this was the only object in the entire Tabernacle complex that God didn't specify any dimensions for—He left that up to the people how large or small to make it.

The reason the Lord did this was because the laver represents the Word of God.

After our sins are atoned for by the blood of Jesus (altar of sacrifice) we then, as priests of the new covenant, need to wash constantly in the water of the Word (Eph.5:26) so that our practical everyday fellowship with the Lord is maintained.

And that's why God didn't specify how large to make the laver because it represented the Word of God and we decide how much of the Word we're going to wash in and feed upon every day.

This was something God demanded from His priests—that they maintained purity and holiness in their service to Him—

"**So they shall wash their hands and their feet** [their service and walk had to be pure]**, lest they die. And it shall be a statute forever to them--to him and his descendants throughout their generations." (v.21)**

The Holy Anointing Oil

Exodus 30:22-30 (NKJV)
22 Moreover the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 23 "Also take for yourself quality spices--five hundred *shekels* of liquid myrrh, half as much sweet-smelling cinnamon (two hundred and fifty *shekels),* two hundred and fifty *shekels* of sweet-smelling cane, 24 five hundred *shekels* of cassia, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil. 25 And you shall make from these a holy anointing oil, an ointment compounded according to the art of the perfumer. It shall be a holy anointing oil. 26 With it you shall anoint the tabernacle of meeting and the ark of the Testimony; 27 the table and all its utensils, the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense; 28 the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the laver and its base. 29 You shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy; whatever touches them must be holy. 30 And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that *they* may minister to Me as priests.

Oil in the Bible, and especially this oil, is emblematic of the Holy Spirit Who must anoint us before our service to God will be acceptable—

2 Corinthians 1:21 (NKJV)
21 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us *is* God,

1 John 2:27 (NKJV)
27 But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

All of the spices that went into the recipe for this special holy anointing oil were *sweet*—nothing bitter was used in this oil.

And that was because it represented the Holy Spirit—and He is sweet in the way He moves and works in our corporate services—not chaotic or weird.

Many Christians (and unbelievers) have been left with a very bitter taste of what the Holy Spirit is like from visiting churches that are misrepresenting Him.

Their services are marked with chaos, confusion and weirdness (the Toronto 'blessing'—holy laughter, people barking like dogs and being 'drunk in the Spirit').

In other churches their services come across bitter and condemning of anyone or any group that doesn't agree with them on social issues or biblical doctrine.

These churches don't represent the true anointing of the Holy Spirit—they are trying to manufacture the anointing of the Holy Spirit—the very thing God forbid Israel from doing with this special anointing oil.

Exodus 30:31-33 (NKJV)
31 And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'This shall be a holy anointing oil to Me throughout your generations. 32 It shall not be poured on man's flesh; nor shall you make *any other* like it, according to its composition. It *is* holy, *and* it shall be holy to you. 33 Whoever compounds *any* like it, or whoever puts *any* of it on an outsider, shall be cut off from his people.' "

Too much of what passes for the anointing of the Holy Spirit today in many churches is nothing more than a counterfeit anointing *"poured out on man's flesh".* (Comment)

The true anointing of the Holy Spirit will only glorify God by focusing on His Son, Jesus Christ—it will never, ever glorify the instrument (pastor, preacher or church).

John 16:13-14 (NKJV)
13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority,* but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you.

The Incense

Exodus 30:34-38 (NKJV)
34 And the LORD said to Moses: "Take sweet spices, stacte and onycha and galbanum, and pure frankincense with *these* sweet spices; there shall be equal amounts of each. 35 You shall make of these an incense, a compound according to the art of the perfumer, salted, pure, *and* holy. 36 And you shall beat *some* of it very fine, and put some of it before the Testimony in the tabernacle of meeting where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. 37 But *as for* the incense which you shall make, you shall not make any for yourselves, according to its composition. It shall be to you holy for the LORD. 38 Whoever makes *any* like it, to smell it, he shall be cut off from his people."

So here God gives the recipe for the incense that was to be burned on the altar of incense (v.7-9).

Notice that the incense, like the holy anointing oil, was to be made from a very special recipe that had to be carefully followed.

Also the Lord made sure that His people understood that it was holy to the Lord—in other words none could be made like it for personal use of any kind or else that person would be "cut off" (executed) from his people.

We said earlier that the incense represented prayer—and true biblical prayer consists of certain ingredients (a 'recipe') that make it holy to God—adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, and intercession.

1 Timothy 2:1 (NKJV)
1 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made for all men,

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

Now even though God wants us, as His children, to bring our requests before Him for our physical needs (food, rent, and other necessities)—which is absolutely legitimate.

Understand that all prayer is holy in the sense that it is directed to God for <u>His</u> glory not our own glory or personal selfish gain.

James 4:2-3 (NKJV)
2 …you do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

John 16:23-24 (NKJV)
23 And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. 24 Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. *(Comment)*

Matthew 6:9-10 (NKJV)
9 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven.

1 John 5:14-15 (NKJV)
14 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

It's been well said—*"Prayer is a mighty instrument, not for getting man's will done in heaven, but for getting God's will done on earth."* (Explain)

"We have no right to ask God for anything that will dishonor His name, delay His kingdom, or disturb His will on earth".

Chapter 31

Artisans for Building the Tabernacle

Exodus 31:1-11 (NKJV)
1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. 3 And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all *manner of* workmanship, 4 to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, 5 in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all *manner of* workmanship. 6 And I, indeed I, have appointed with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and I have put wisdom in the hearts of all who are gifted artisans, that they may make all that I have commanded you: 7 the tabernacle of meeting, the ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat that *is* on it, and all the furniture of the tabernacle-- 8 the table and its utensils, the pure *gold* lampstand with all its utensils, the altar of incense, 9 the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the laver and its base-- 10 the garments of ministry, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, to minister as priests, 11 and the anointing oil and sweet incense for the holy *place.* According to all that I have commanded you they shall do."

There are many people in the Body of Christ that are not gifted or called to be pastors, preachers or teachers—however God has gifted them in other areas.

They are gifted musicians, singers, artists, and/or performers.

Others are gifted in woodworking, construction, finances, administration and organization.

Each of us has been given gifts and abilities by God—and when we offer them to Him in service—He puts a special anointing upon us, as He did with Bezalel and Aholiab, and those gifts are then used in ways we never thought possible for His glory.

The Sabbath Law

Exodus 31:12-17 (NKJV)
12 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 13 "Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: 'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it *is* a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that *you* may know that I *am* the LORD who sanctifies you. 14 You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for *it is* holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does *any* work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. 15 Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh *is* the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does *any* work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. 16 Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations *as* a perpetual covenant. 17 It *is* a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.' "

As we have already said numerous times in this study—the Sabbath was the sign of the covenant that God made with the children of Israel through Moses.

It was not something He commanded the Church in the new covenant to observe—

Colossians 2:16-17 (NKJV)
16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths,
17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

The Sabbath pointed symbolically to our rest in Christ. (For more information on this get the teaching in chapter 20:8-11 on the Sabbath).

Exodus 31:18 (NKJV)
18 And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

So Moses has been up on Mt. Sinai receiving God's laws for forty days and forty nights.

Along with the other laws God gave him were the Ten Commandments written on two tablets of stone—and that was the inherent flaw of the old covenant was that it contained external laws written on tablets of stone.

The old covenant worked from the outside to change behavior but it couldn't change the heart—the nature of man.

And that's where the weakness and failing of the law was located—in the fallen nature of man which the law could never touch or change.

Those who tried to use the law as a vehicle to make them righteous became 'Pharisees'—those who looked holy and righteous on the outside but in reality their hearts were as dirty and defiled as everyone else's. (white-washed tombs)

That's why religion fails—it is external rules, regulations and laws that can only change outward behavior but can't change the heart.

The new covenant is vastly different in that God deals, not with externals, but with the root cause of man's problem—his defiled heart.

In the new covenant God gives us a new heart with His laws written in it—a heart that desires to obey Him from the inside out.

Hebrews 8:10 (NKJV)
10 ***For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.***