

Message Twelve

The Incense

RK *Hymns*: 791, 1116

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:34-38; Psa. 141:2; Rev. 5:8; 8:3-5

- Exo 30:34 And Jehovah said to Moses, Take fragrant spices-stacte and onycha and galbanum-fragrant spices with pure frankincense; there shall be an equal part of each;
- Exo 30:35 And you shall make of it incense, a fragrant compound according to the work of a compounder, seasoned with salt, pure and holy.
- Exo 30:36 And you shall beat some of it very fine, and put some of it before the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, where I will meet with you; it shall be to you most holy.
- Exo 30:37 And the incense which you shall make, you shall not make for yourselves according to its composition; it shall be holy to you for Jehovah.
- Exo 30:38 Whoever shall make any like it, to smell it, shall be cut off from his people.
- Psa 141:2 Let my prayer be set before You as incense, / The lifting up of my hands as the evening offering.
- Rev 5:8 And when He took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each having a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which bowls are the prayers of the saints.
- Rev 8:3 And another Angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and much incense was given to Him to offer with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.
- Rev 8:4 And the smoke of the incense went up with the prayers of the saints out of the hand of the Angel before God.
- Rev 8:5 And the Angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar and cast it to the earth; and there were thunders and voices and lightnings and an earthquake.

I. The holy anointing oil (Exo. 30:23-25) signifies Christ as the all-inclusive Spirit coming to us from God, whereas the incense (v. 35) signifies Christ going to God from us; this is a divine traffic in two directions:

- Exo 30:23 You also take the finest spices: of flowing myrrh five hundred shekels, and of fragrant cinnamon half as much, two hundred fifty shekels, and of fragrant calamus two hundred fifty shekels,
- Exo 30:24 And of cassia five hundred shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil.
- Exo 30:25 And you shall make it a holy anointing oil, a fragrant ointment compounded according to the work of a compounder; it shall be a holy anointing oil.
- Exo 30:35 And you shall make of it incense, a fragrant compound according to the work of a compounder, seasoned with salt, pure and holy.
- A. The anointing brings God to us in Christ and through Christ for our participation in the divine element.
- B. The incense is our going to God with Christ and as Christ in prayer for God's enjoyment—
John 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23-24, 26.
- John 14:13 And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
- John 14:14 If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.
- John 15:16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and I set you that you should go forth and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give you.
- John 16:23 And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Truly, truly, I say to you, Whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give to you.
- John 16:24 Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be made full.
- John 16:26 In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father concerning you,
- C. This traffic has much to do with our Christian experience, which is a matter of God's coming to us in Christ and our going to God in Christ and with Christ.

II. The incense consisted of five ingredients—Exo. 30:34-35:

- Exo 30:34 And Jehovah said to Moses, Take fragrant spices-stacte and onycha and galbanum-fragrant spices with pure frankincense; there shall be an equal part of each;
- Exo 30:35 And you shall make of it incense, a fragrant compound according to the work of a compounder, seasoned with salt, pure and holy.
- A. The three spices signify the Triune God in resurrection, and the addition of pure frankincense, making the number of ingredients four, signifies the humanity of Christ.
- B. Each of the three spices signifies the death of Christ—v. 34:
- Exo 30:34 And Jehovah said to Moses, Take fragrant spices-stacte and onycha and galbanum-fragrant spices with pure frankincense; there shall be an equal part of each;
1. Stacte, a kind of myrrh, a resinous gum produced by a tree, signifies the sweet death of Christ's generating life (signified by the plant life—John 12:24).
John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
 2. Onycha, the shell of a small animal that grows in the marshes of the Red Sea, signifies the death of Christ with His redemptive life (signified by the animal life—1:29).
John 1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!
 3. Galbanum, also a resinous gum from a tree, signifies the powerful death of Christ's generating life.
 4. The second of the spices, being of the animal life, signifies that the second of the Godhead was slain to accomplish redemption.
 5. The three spices indicate that Christ's death in His generating life and His redeeming life has three functions: to generate us as sons of God, to redeem us from the fall, and to expel the serpent, the Devil—cf. 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Heb. 2:14.
John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
1 Pet 1:18 Knowing that it was not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, that you were redeemed from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers,
1 Pet 1:19 But with precious blood, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, the blood of Christ;
Heb 2:14 Since therefore the children have shared in blood and flesh, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same, that through death He might destroy him who has the might of death, that is, the devil,
- C. The fourth ingredient, frankincense, is a white resinous gum, signifying the sweet resurrection of Christ—Phil. 3:10.
Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
- D. The three spices and the frankincense are seasoned with salt (Exo. 30:35), making the ingredients five, the number five signifying responsibility—Matt. 25:2:
Exo 30:35 And you shall make of it incense, a fragrant compound according to the work of a compounder, seasoned with salt, pure and holy.
Matt 25:2 And five of them were foolish and five were prudent.
1. In typology salt signifies the killing power and preserving power of Christ's death—Mark 9:50.
Mark 9:50 Salt is good, but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you restore its saltiness? Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another.
 2. The seasoning of the four ingredients of the incense with salt signifies that our prayer needs to be "salted" by the cross so that all the impurity and bias within us may be killed.
- E. According to Exodus 30:35-36, the incense must be salted, beaten, and burned:
Exo 30:35 And you shall make of it incense, a fragrant compound according to the work of a compounder, seasoned with salt, pure and holy.
Exo 30:36 And you shall beat some of it very fine, and put some of it before the Testimony in the

Tent of Meeting, where I will meet with you; it shall be to you most holy.

1. Beating the incense and putting it before the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting signify the blending of Christ's sweet death and His fragrant resurrection and the offering of His death and resurrection to God on the incense altar as a base for the intercession of Christ and His members—Rom. 8:34.
Rom 8:34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died and, rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.
2. In order to have Christ as the incense to offer to God as a sweet-smelling fragrance, we need the genuine experiences of Christ with all the ingredients of the incense, and these experiences must be salted, beaten, and burned.

III. In both the Old Testament and the New Testament, incense signifies our prayer—Psa. 141:2; Rev. 5:8:

- Psa 141:2 Let my prayer be set before You as incense, / The lifting up of my hands as the evening offering.
- Rev 5:8 And when He took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each having a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which bowls are the prayers of the saints.
- A. In particular, the incense refers to the resurrected and ascended Christ with all His work, fruits, and merit—all that He is, all that He has accomplished, and all that He does—Eph. 1:7, 19-23; Heb. 7:25.
Eph 1:7 In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offenses, according to the riches of His grace,
Eph 1:19 And what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the operation of the might of His strength,
Eph 1:20 Which He caused to operate in Christ in raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavenlies,
Eph 1:21 Far above all rule and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come;
Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,
Eph 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.
Heb 7:25 Hence also He is able to save to the uttermost those who come forward to God through Him, since He lives always to intercede for them.
 - B. In Revelation 5:8 the bowls are the saints' prayers, whereas the incense is Christ added to the saints' prayers.
Rev 5:8 And when He took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each having a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which bowls are the prayers of the saints.
 - C. In 8:3 incense signifies Christ with all His merit added to the prayers of the saints so that the saints' prayers offered upon the golden altar might be acceptable to God:
Rev 8:3 And another Angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and much incense was given to Him to offer with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.
 1. Prayer with Christ as the incense is actually Christ Himself ascending to God; this is a sweet-smelling fragrance to God.
 2. This kind of prayer simultaneously satisfies God with a sweet fragrance and carries out God's economy, God's administration—v. 3.
Rev 8:3 And another Angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and much incense was given to Him to offer with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.
 3. The smoke of the incense indicates that the incense is burned and ascends to God with the prayers of the saints—v. 4:
Rev 8:4 And the smoke of the incense went up with the prayers of the saints out of the hand of the Angel before God.

- a. This implies that the prayers of the saints become effective and are acceptable to God.
- b. The smoke indicates that the saints' prayers are effective because Christ has been added to them as incense; it is the incense, not the saints' prayers, that causes the smoke to rise.
- c. The smoke of the incense goes up with the prayers of the saints to the throne of God, and the prayers are answered—vv. 3, 5.

Rev 8:3 And another Angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and much incense was given to Him to offer with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

Rev 8:5 And the Angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar and cast it to the earth; and there were thunders and voices and lightnings and an earthquake.
4. The incense typifies the resurrected and ascended Christ, the unique One who is received by God and acceptable to Him; thus, He becomes a sweet savor to God—vv. 3-4.

Rev 8:3 And another Angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and much incense was given to Him to offer with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

Rev 8:4 And the smoke of the incense went up with the prayers of the saints out of the hand of the Angel before God.
5. Since the incense signifies Christ, to burn the incense means to pray Christ; God's desire is that when we pray, we pray Christ.

IV. The two altars—the bronze altar and the golden incense altar—are closely related in our spiritual experience—Exo. 40:5-6; 30:6-10, 26-28:

- Exo 40:5 And you shall put the golden altar for incense before the Ark of the Testimony and set up the screen of the entrance to the tabernacle.
- Exo 40:6 And you shall put the altar of burnt offering before the entrance of the tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting.
- Exo 30:6 And you shall put it before the veil that is over the Ark of the Testimony, before the expiation cover that is over the Testimony, where I will meet with you.
- Exo 30:7 And Aaron shall burn on it fragrant incense; every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it.
- Exo 30:8 And when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it, a perpetual incense before Jehovah throughout your generations.
- Exo 30:9 You shall not offer any strange incense on it, or a burnt offering or a meal offering; and you shall not pour a drink offering on it.
- Exo 30:10 And Aaron shall make expiation on its horns once a year; with the blood of the sin offering of expiation once a year he shall make expiation for it throughout your generations. It is most holy to Jehovah.
- Exo 30:26 And with it you shall anoint the Tent of Meeting and the Ark of the Testimony,
- Exo 30:27 And the table and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense,
- Exo 30:28 And the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the laver and its base.
- A. We need to see how the two altars—the bronze altar and the golden altar—are connected:
1. The two altars are connected by the anointing—vv. 26-28:

Exo 30:26 And with it you shall anoint the Tent of Meeting and the Ark of the Testimony,

Exo 30:27 And the table and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense,

Exo 30:28 And the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the laver and its base.

 - a. The anointing signifies God's move.
 - b. According to God's move, the golden altar and the bronze altar are connected.
 2. The two altars are connected by the blood of the sin offering—Lev. 16:18; 4:7:

Lev 16:18 Then he shall go out to the altar that is before Jehovah and make expiation for

- it, and he shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat, and put it on and around the horns of the altar.
- Lev 4:7 And the priest shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense before Jehovah, which is in the Tent of Meeting; and all the rest of the blood of the bull he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering, which is at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.
- a. On the Day of Expiation, the most important sin offering was offered.
 - b. After the blood of this offering was shed, the blood was brought from the bronze altar and was applied to the four horns of the incense altar.
 - c. The expiating blood connected the two altars.
3. The two altars are connected by the fire that burned the offerings—6:13; 16:12:
- Lev 6:13 Fire shall be kept burning on the altar continually; it shall not go out.
- Lev 16:12 And he shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before Jehovah, with his hands full of finely ground fragrant incense, and bring it inside the veil.
- a. The only fire that could be used to burn the incense was the fire from the bronze altar, the fire that had come down from the heavens.
 - b. No strange fire was allowed to be on the incense altar for the burning of the incense—10:1-11.
- Lev 10:1 And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer, and put fire in them and laid incense on it, and they presented strange fire before Jehovah, which He had not commanded them.
- Lev 10:2 And fire came out from before Jehovah and consumed them, and they died before Jehovah.
- Lev 10:3 Then Moses said to Aaron, This is what Jehovah spoke, saying, In those who come near to Me I will be sanctified, / And before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron was silent.
- Lev 10:4 And Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said to them, Come near; carry your brothers from before the sanctuary to the outside of the camp.
- Lev 10:5 So they came near and carried them in their tunics to the outside of the camp, just as Moses had said.
- Lev 10:6 Then Moses said to Aaron and to his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, Do not dishevel the hair of your heads, and do not tear your garments, that you may not die and that He may not be angry with all the assembly. But let your brothers, the whole house of Israel, weep for the burning which Jehovah has kindled.
- Lev 10:7 And you shall not go out from the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, lest you die; for the anointing oil of Jehovah is upon you. And they did according to the word of Moses.
- Lev 10:8 Then Jehovah spoke to Aaron, saying,
- Lev 10:9 Drink no wine or strong drink, neither you nor your sons with you, when you come into the Tent of Meeting, that you may not die; it shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations,
- Lev 10:10 Both to make a distinction between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean;
- Lev 10:11 And to teach the children of Israel all the statutes which Jehovah has spoken to them through Moses.
- B. We need to have the burning and the ascending both from the bronze altar and from the golden incense altar—1:17b; 23:18; 16:12-13; Exo. 40:26-27:
- Lev 1:17b Then he shall tear it open by its wings without dividing it, and the priest shall burn it on the altar on the wood that is on the fire; ...
- Lev 23:18 And you shall present with the bread seven lambs, a year old without blemish, and one bull of the herd and two rams; they shall be a burnt offering to Jehovah with their meal offering and their drink offerings, an offering by fire for a satisfying fragrance to Jehovah.
- Lev 16:12 And he shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before Jehovah, with his hands full of finely ground fragrant incense, and bring it inside the veil.

- Lev 16:13 And he shall put the incense upon the fire before Jehovah, that the cloud of the incense may cover the expiation cover that is over the Testimony, so that he does not die.
- Exo 40:26 Then he put the golden altar in the Tent of Meeting before the veil,
- Exo 40:27 And he burnt fragrant incense on it, as Jehovah had commanded Moses.
1. Both from the burning on the bronze altar and from the burning on the golden incense altar a sweet savor ascends to God for His satisfaction.
 2. At the bronze altar we have the sweetness of Christ in His death for our redemption, termination, and replacement; at the golden incense altar we have the sweetness of Christ in His resurrection and ascension for our acceptance.
- C. When we pray at the golden incense altar, there should be neither strange fire nor strange incense in our prayer—Lev. 10:1; Exo. 30:9a:
- Lev 10:1 And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer, and put fire in them and laid incense on it, and they presented strange fire before Jehovah, which He had not commanded them.
- Exo 30:9a You shall not offer any strange incense on it, or a burnt offering or a meal offering; ...
1. To have strange fire in our prayer is to have some kind of motive that is natural and that has not been dealt with by the cross—Lev. 10:1.
 Lev 10:1 And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer, and put fire in them and laid incense on it, and they presented strange fire before Jehovah, which He had not commanded them.
 2. To have strange incense in our prayer is to have prayer that is not related to Christ—Exo. 30:9a.
 Exo 30:9a You shall not offer any strange incense on it, or a burnt offering or a meal offering; ...
 3. When we are one with the Lord at the incense altar, interceding for others and for the Lord's interests, our prayer is a fragrant incense to God—v. 7; 40:26-27.
 Exo 30:7 And Aaron shall burn on it fragrant incense; every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it.
 Exo 40:26 Then he put the golden altar in the Tent of Meeting before the veil,
 Exo 40:27 And he burnt fragrant incense on it, as Jehovah had commanded Moses.