

Exodus 30:1-38

“Come let us worship”

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Intro.

We have just finished looking at the clothing and ordination of the priests, now we come back to the last two pieces of furniture in the tabernacle. Again it is from God's perspective. First we will look at that which is closest to the Ark, the altar of incense or the golden altar. Then we shall move outward and look at the bronze laver, which was located in the courtyard. What a beautiful chapter this is as we see what it takes to enter into worship of the Lord. Everything in this chapter prepares the priest for worship. Much like how people prepare themselves for a special occasion, the priest daily prepared himself for worship.

We live in a culture that now sees fit to have a casual day for work but still I think dressing nice does create in some an attitude that says, “What I'm going to do is important enough for me to take the time to get ready for it!” So how about it do you have the right mindset when you come to worship the Lord? Or do you come in late and wait for the worship team to jumpstart your heart in a right attitude? This section gives us some clues on what will produce the right heart for worship.

II.) Vs. 1-10 Prayer like incense

Vs. 1-6 Here we are given the dimensions, materials and location for the altar of incense or the Golden altar. You will remember that there were two altars in the tabernacle. Both were made of acacia wood but that is where their similarities ended. The Brazen Altar was overlaid with bronze hence the name Brazen Altar. It was much larger than the Altar of incense, which was, overlaid with gold, hence its name "Golden altar". Their locations were different as well; the brazen altar was in the courtyard just before the bronze laver and to the right after door into the tabernacle. It was the first thing that you would see as you entered the tabernacle. The golden altar was inside the holy place right in front of the curtain on the most holy place. It was the last thing you would see before you entered the most holy place with the ark of the covenant.

The dimensions of the altar of incense was 18 inches square by 3 feet high which made it the tallest piece of furniture in the holy place. It had a golden border or crown around it with four corners that were raised called horns. It was built to move like the other pieces of furniture with gold rings and poles overlaid with gold that would be placed into it.

Vs. 7-10 Moses is told how Aaron and those that would follow him as high priest were to use the altar of incense. They were to go in twice a day and burn incense on it. Moses is told specifically that nothing but the prescribed incense was to be burned on it ever. The high priest would go into the temple in the morning and evening to trim the wicks or to light the golden lampstand. One of the other priest would have first gone to the brazen altar where the sacrifice for sins had taken place and take some coals from there. Then he would take them into the holy place and put them on the altar of incense. The incense was made up of 11 ingredients and divided into separate portions by weight for each day of the year. 1 ¼ pound was burned each day, half in the morning and half at night. He would gently sprinkle the altar with the incense then go about his business.

Once a year on the day of atonement the high priest would sprinkle some of the blood of the sacrifice upon the horns of the altar on incense.

So what does all of this have to do with my worship of the Lord? In Psalm 141:2 David says “*Let my prayer be set before You as incense, The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.*” Then we read in Rev. 5:8 in heaven that there are, “*golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.*” Then of course there is that passage of scripture dealing with Zacharias the father of John the Baptist. Who we are told in Luke chapter one “*was, serving as priest before God*” and it was his turn to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. Outside we are told that whole multitudes of the people were praying because it was the hour of incense. For four hundred years there had been no prophet of the Lord in Israel and Zacharias and Elizabeth were well passed childbearing age. But in answer to prayer an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. To tell him that God had heard and was about to grant him as well as the nation the answer to their prayers. **It’s simple this altar is always associated with prayer!** In fact, later on they revered to this as a prayer time known as the “*hour of incense*”.

So what is it that we need to have to as we get ready to enter into worship of the Lord? **A PRAYFULL HEART!** Now again look at the facts that I have just presented above about this altar and you will see what a prayerful heart will look like.

- a. When was the incense to be burned? Why twice a day, in the morning and evening. It is good practice to start your day and end your day with prayer. But more than this it speaks of a continual attitude of prayer.
- b. Where did the fire come from? Why it came from the bronze altar of sacrifice. The fire that kindled the flame of prayer came from an innocent sacrifice on behalf of our sins! Wow, can you imagine this as we prepare our hearts for worship? Sitting down before the Lord in prayer recognizing that it is because He has laid down His life that we are even here!
- c. What about the blood stained altar? Well this reminds me that “*the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*” (Heb. 10:10) Everyday they would see that they

were there because of the final act of another on their behalf. They were reminded of the atoning work of the blood of an innocent lamb and so are we of the Lamb of God that once for all took away my sins.

- d. What about the fact that only special incense could be burned there? Well this reminds us of the fact you can not come to God in prayer offering what ever you want. A fact brought home by the truth of 1 Tim. 2:1 and Phil. 4:6 where we are told that prayer is to be made up of, “*supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks*”. Notice as well that no animals were ever to be sacrificed here. Why? Well prayer is not where we atone for our sins; it is where Jesus’ sacrifice for our sins is enjoyed. We don’t save ourselves through prayer, we pray because we are saved by Jesus’ death upon the cross.

The high priest was inside a closed room where smoke filled the air. Have you ever been in a room where people have been smoking? The smell of incense stayed on the clothing of the high priest, it was in his hair as well. You could tell that the high priest had been in the presence of the Lord. Why you could smell it on him! The fragrance of prayer was all over him. How about it? As you came here this morning to worship before the Lord is there the fragrance of prayer all over you? Or were you late because you were watching too much T.V. and missed most of the songs. Folks, if we had spiritual noses what would we smell on you?

III.) Vs. 11-16 Only the redeemed

Vs. 11-12 Another aspect of preparing your heart for worship comes to us by way of a practice described in these verses. Every year in the month of Adar which is our February and March every Jewish male 20 years and up had to pay a half of a shekel of pure silver (5 ¾ grams). It was mandatory that they paid it and it had to be paid in full. If need be they were to sell one of their garments to get the money which was for the two lambs that were sacrificed daily for the sins of the people. In so giving they were taking ownership of their sins even though they did not place their hands upon the lambs. It did not matter whether you were rich or poor the price was always the same.

The key to understanding this practice is found in the text its self. If you count the times that the words “*number or numbered*” appear in these verse you will find that five times in six

verses, we read that these men were to be numbered. Simply put this was a census. This ransom money was connected with a census taken each year. But what was being counted was not the men 20 years and up but rather the half shekel. *What was important was not how many people but rather how many took ownership in their redemption!* David caused a plague to break out among the nation when he took a census apart from the ransom money. Think of it this way you don't count things that you don't own! When you count things you are saying, "*These are mine and I am assigning them a number to show that they are mine.*"

Vs. 13-16 Now we are told that this was atonement money, (verse 16), which was a flat tax that showed that all were equal in God's sight and all were in need of redemption. You could not get in on the money of others even if they were in your own house.

This relate to us about our hearts in worship, as it speaks to the fact that as we go before the Lord in worship we need to realize that we are owned by ransom of Jesus Christ. It does not matter how big or how little your sins are His one price is for all. Now, the Lord owns me and I take ownership of this truth. There is no such thing as "public worship" of God apart from us taking part in owning up to the fact that we are sinners who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus. We are not our own we belong to Jesus.

IV.) Vs. 17-21 Washed in the Word

Vs. 17-21 The last piece of furniture that we are to look at is unlike the rest as no dimensions are given. We know that it was made of bronze and specifically we are told in chapter 38:8 that the bronze that was used to make it came, "*from the bronze mirrors of the serving women.*" This act of washing was ceremonial in nature and it started the moment the priests came into the tabernacle, it was repeated each time they came in and out of the Holy Place in to the courtyard.

What a great thing to see that these women gave up their own appearance so that God's priests could be prepared to worship. Are we more concerned with how we appear before men than we are the Lord?

In scripture we have another beautiful picture of what this washing was all about. The Bible speaks of drinking water as a picture of the Holy Spirit. Yet when water is mentioned as washing us it speaks of the Word of God. Psalm 119:9 says, *"How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word."* Or in John 15:3 where Jesus says, *"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you."* And of course there is that familiar passage in Eph. 5:25-27 where husbands are admonished to treat their wives as Christ treat us, *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish."* To further add to this James 1:22-24 reveres to the Word of God this way *"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was."* This speak to our heart in the area of being prepared to worship as we need to washed by the Word of God. It is the Word that cleanses us daily. I find it interesting that most of the time we use worship to set up the time for the teaching of the Word. Now that is the structure we use here, but when you think about it really it is the word that ought to set up our time to worship. As we look into the mirror of the word of God what reflection do we see? If we see ourselves then we need to by washed so that we are prepared to worship!

V.) Vs. 22-38 The sent of the anointed

Vs. 22-33 Now we are going to conclude with the last thing necessary to be prepared to worship.

So far we have seen:

- We need to be prepared by prayer
- We need to be remembering our redemption
- We need to be washed by the Word
- And lastly we need to be altered by anointing

This oil was to be used for anointing the priests as well as consecrating everything that was used in worship. It was never to be imitated neither was it to be used for everyday things. And it was especially not to be used to pour on the flesh to cover up the smell. In other words, **it was never to be used to glorify the flesh.** The Oil for anointing speaks of the Holy Spirit. We see that we are not cover the weirdness of our flesh by saying that it is the Holy Spirit. Neither is the Holy Spirit ever to be imitated. A lot of what is called worship today has nothing to do with what we have studied so far. There is a lot of hyper emotionalism all under the cloak of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. All they are is at best fleshly imitations and no matter how much they try they never smell the same!

Vs. 34-38 The same is true of the making of the incense. God did want the sweetness of prayer to be mixed up with human effort and energy. Notice that it was to be salted which always speaks of purity in scripture. Far too much of what the Church calls worship and prayer is nothing more than human effort and energy trying to maintain a level of emotion. we can not fake worship or prayer it comes about through proper preparation of prayer, as we reflect on our redemption, meditate on the Word of God. It is then that the Holy Spirit will anoint us with the fragrance of Him self which will come back to the Lord in a heart of sweet prayer of devotion. This can not be faked neither should it be taken lightly!