

## Message #59

## Exodus 30:1-10

The thing that seems somewhat odd about this part of Exodus is that all of the other furniture items have been made and one would think that this piece of furniture would have been designed and made along with the others before the ordaining of the priests.

However, there can be no denying the fact that until you have everything in place, including the priests, the whole operation is lacking as being a beautiful, fragrant, sweet smelling offering to God.

So what that would suggest is until you have all of the parts in place, the operation is not a sweet smelling fragrance to God. Until everything is in place in the way it should be, it is not sweet smelling to the Lord.

**Now we know from Scripture that this fragrant smoke that is coming from this burning of incense is that which symbolizes prayer (Ps. 141:2; Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4).** Any who carefully study the Bible may observe that. We may assume that as the incense was being offered, prayers were being offered to the Lord. It is very possible that when this incense was being offered, Moses and the priests and people in Israel realized this did symbolize prayer because David certainly understood this in Psalm 141:2.

We know from Hebrews that the earthly tabernacle reflected God's heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 8:2-5; 9:24). We may assume that Moses had some perspective of the fact that this incense altar did have a purpose of symbolizing the prayers of the people that would be offered day and night.

**AN ALTAR OF INCENSE WAS TO BE MADE ACCORDING TO GOD'S SPECS AND IT WAS TO BE PLACED INSIDE THE HOLY TENT/TABERNACLE AND WAS TO CONTINUALLY BURN WITH THE IDEA OF OFFERING PERPETUAL PRAYER.**

We are presently looking at designing a couple of banners to hang in this new sanctuary. One of the banners that we want to design will read "Preach The Word" II Timothy 4:2. The other banner will read "Pray Without Ceasing" II Thessalonians 5:17. This idea of continual prayer starts right here at this altar of incense in the tabernacle.

Now as near as I can determine, there are 16 specs that must be met for this:

**SPEC #1 – The altar was to be made for burning incense. 30:1a**

This is the purpose of it. As we will see, it is not a place for burning sacrifices. This is a place for burning incense. Incense is something that is sweet smelling to the Lord. The prayers of God's people are a wonderful fragrance to the Lord.

**SPEC #2** – The altar was to be made of acacia wood. **30:1b**

This is that same tough wood that was used in making everything else.

**SPEC #3** – The altar was to be one cubit or 18 inches or 1 ½ feet long. **30:2a**

**SPEC #4** – The altar was to be one cubit or 18 inches or 1 ½ feet wide. **30:2b**

**SPEC #5** – The altar was to be two cubits or 36 inches or 3 feet high. **30:2c**

**SPEC #6** – The altar was to have corner protuberances known as horns made as one piece.  
**30:2d**

**SPEC #7** – The altar was to be overlaid with pure gold. **30:3a**

**SPEC #8** – The altar was to contain a gold molding all around it. **30:3b**

This gold molding would prevent anything from falling off the top. We cannot help but be impressed with the tremendous systematic detail in the mind of God.

**SPEC #9** – The altar was to contain two gold rings on each side. **30:4**

Four specific details are given about this:

**Detail #1** - The gold rings were to be placed under the molding. **30:4a**

**Detail #2** - The gold rings were to be made on two sides. **30:4b**

**Detail #3** - The gold rings were to be on opposite sides. **30:4c**

**Detail #4** - The gold rings were to be holders to carry the poles. **30:4d**

**SPEC #10** – There were to be two poles made to carry the altar. **30:5**

The poles were to be made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold.

**SPEC #11** – The altar was to be put in front of the Holy of Holies veil. **30:6**

This altar was to stand in front of the curtain that housed the ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat that is over the ark which was the place God would meet with man.

The placement of this altar is given in details that are very precise, even more so than the other items of furniture. It may be that God wanted this altar precisely placed outside the curtain so that the incense could drift into the Holy of Holies. **Prayer is what gets us very near to God.**

Keep in mind that outside the Tabernacle were sacrifices that were being offered. There would have been several different unpleasant odors on the outside. This altar of incense would prevent any unpleasant odor from being in the place of God's presence. It would fumigate this part of the Tabernacle with sweet odors.

**SPEC #12** – Aaron was to burn fragrant incense on the altar every morning. **30:7**

When he trimmed the lamps and took care of the wicks in the morning, he was to burn incense. It is clear that God wants His people talking with Him every morning.

**SPEC #13** – Aaron was to burn fragrant incense on the altar every evening. **30:8a**

It is clear that God wants His people talking with Him every evening.

When Aaron went back in the evening to check and care for the lamps, he was to burn incense.

So this was a twice daily regimen. The timing of these morning and evening matters coincided with the morning and evening sacrifices that were being offered. So there were things going on outside the Tabernacle/Tent and things going on inside the Tabernacle/Tent.

The sacrifices outside the tent took care of the sin problem and the incense inside the tent illustrated communication one may have with God once the sin problem has been resolved.

**SPEC #14** – Incense was to be burned on the altar perpetually from one generation to another. **30:8b**

Israel did a relatively good job of maintaining this custom for many years. In fact, one of the main episodes in the program of God occurred while this very ritual was being followed.

Zacharias was functioning as the high priest of Israel and was actually in the temple burning incense, while the people outside were praying and it was at that very moment that an angel of the Lord appeared to him and actually stood to the right of the incense altar. That angel revealed to Zacharias that his wife would give birth to John, who would be the forerunner of Jesus (Luke 1:8-17)

**SPEC #15** – No foreign or strange incense or offering was ever to be made on this altar. **30:9**

This altar was not an altar for offering burnt offerings, meals offerings or drink offerings. The only incense that God would accept here was incense He prescribed that was offered in conformity to His standards.

We cannot offer up prayer to God on our terms, it must be on His terms. Three specific terms we know are:

**Term #1** - We must offer up prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. John 14:13

**Term #2** - We must not hide iniquity in our hearts. Psalm 66:18

**Term #3** - We must abide in fellowship with Christ based on God's Word. John 15:7

So a person could offer up as many prayers as they want and be offering strange incense which is not acceptable to God. It must be in conformity with the prerequisites of God.

**SPEC #16** – A special sin removing and sin cleansing ceremony was required on this altar once a year. **30:10**

One time per year Aaron was to place blood on the horns of this altar as atonement for sin. This is a holy place and even a high priest like Aaron was still a sinner.

Now only the priests could get into this place at this altar and pray at this place. But all priests were still fleshly sinners.

It does not matter how high the position, we are still all fleshly sinners. The Apostle Paul near the end of his life called himself the “chief of sinners” (I Tim. 1:15). The Greek grammar of Paul's statement “I am the foremost of sinners” is written in such a way that Paul emphatically saw this about himself continually all of the time.

Paul did not strut around viewing himself as some sinless saint. He recognized his need of cleansing just like these priests needed to recognize it.