

Exodus – Lesson 22

Constructing the Tabernacle – Part 3

Read Exodus 30:1-31:11

1. (a) From Exodus 30:1-6, briefly describe the *altar of incense*. Where was it to be placed?

The altar of incense was to be 1 cubit (18") square and 2 cubits (36") high. It was to be made out of acacia wood with horns on its corners, overlaid with gold. It was to have a golden molding around the top and was to be carried by poles put through rings on its sides. The ark was to be placed *inside* the Holy of Holies (i.e. "*in front of the veil, in front of the mercy seat,*" v. 6) along with the ark and the table of showbread.

- (b) What is the *purpose* of the altar of incense? What does the incense *represent* (see Rev. 5:8)?

The altar of incense was to be used by the High Priest (i.e. Aaron) to burn incense before the Lord each day. The incense was designed as a "fragrance" of righteousness that would rise up before the Lord. This "fragrance" (figuratively speaking), represented the collective prayer concerns of the people; as they related to a personal God, they would bring their needs before God constantly. The constant rise of the incense would be a figurative way for the prayers of the people to rise up before God, and God would take notice of their needs in a personal and caring way as he "smelled" the fragrance.

2. (a) According to Exodus 30:16, *why* was Moses to take a census of the people?

The census of the people was done to collect the "ransom" tax or "atonement" monies that would be used to carry on the work of the tabernacle. Failure to perform this census might result in a "plague" upon them (v. 11) – God considered this numbering very important to the on-going work of the tabernacle and the collective life of the people. It is also possible that this census had some other benefits: 1) to number the people so that divisions could be made among them, 2) to establish the size of their fighting force (i.e. those over 20), and 3) to show the people their size and their strength in numbers.

- (b) Who was to pay the *census tax*? What did the census tax *do* for the people before the Lord?

Moses would collect this money from every person over 20 years of age, a ½-shekel from every person. The money would act as a "ransom" (or "atonement"), a covering for sin and a ransom for their very lives before a holy God. It would *not* be just a tax in the modern sense used for the upkeep of the tabernacle. Instead, it would act as a *personal responsibility* for each person in relation to the tabernacle, and connect everyone to its ransoming and atoning work.

- (c) Connect this tax to Jesus' statement of Mark 10:42-45.

The census tax would be used as a *ransom*, a monetary payment designed to release someone from the captivity of another. It was given for the purpose of upkeep of the tabernacle, and acted as a *personal connection* to the tabernacle and its work of atonement. Jesus, in pointing out the need for Christians to be *primarily* the servants of others, identified *his work* as a ransom. Christ paid a price to release *believers* from the bondage of sin; he paid a *ransom* for Christians to redeem them from the slavery of sin and their captivity to Satan. Just as the Israelites would pay a price to be freed from their slavery to sin, so Christians are freed from slavery through the price paid by Christ.

3. Briefly describe the *bronze basin* from Exodus 30:17-21. What was its *purpose*?

The bronze basin, other than the fact that it is constructed of bronze, is not described in detail. Obviously, it had to hold water, and enough water to perform the various kinds of human and animal washings that would be required. However, other than having a bronze stand, the basin itself is not outlined. It would serve as the place where both the priests would wash themselves and where the various sacrificial animal parts would be washed before being sacrificed. This washing was symbolic of *cleansing*; making clean anything that would come before the Lord and be offered to him.

4. (a) How was the *anointing oil* (see Exodus 30:22-33) to be made? What was its *use* and *purpose*?

The anointing oil was to be made by mixing a number of aromatic compounds (e.g. myrrh, cinnamon, aromatic cane, and cassia) with olive oil. It was to be used to *anoint* the various elements of the tabernacle, including the tent, the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars (both incense and sacrificial), and all of the utensils used to manage these items. It was also to be used to anoint Aaron (see the previous lesson). The anointing oil was *special* and *unique*; it was not to be made for any other purpose or used to anoint anything else. The oil (as mentioned earlier) represented the *presence of God* (or, more specifically, the *Spirit of God*) as he “dwelled” within the tabernacle and was “present” in the various activities that took place there.

- (b) What was the purpose of the *perfumed incense* (see Exodus 30:34-38)?

The perfumed incense was to be made as a mixture of various spices and seasoned with salt. It was to be powdered and placed before ark (probably on the ground). Again, like the anointing oil, it represented the *presence of God*, the place where God would “*meet with you*.” Both the anointing oil and the perfumed incense were reminders that God was “there” in the tabernacle, and that the presence of God made the entire place (and the people who worked there) holy.

- (c) Connect these passages to the events of Luke 7:36-47 and John 12:1-8.

In two *unrelated* instances, a woman comes to “anoint” the feet of Jesus. In the first case, a “sinner” (probably a prostitute) comes to anoint Jesus, while in the second case it is Mary, Jesus’ friend. Jesus gives an explanation of this in the Luke 7 passage: the anointing of Jesus is commiserate with the forgiveness of sin. The woman was *begging* for the forgiveness of God through Jesus, and she demonstrated her willingness to anoint Jesus in order to receive that forgiveness. Her *intimate* and *personal* relationship with God (through Christ) was restored by this anointing: her sins were forgiven by her willingness to humble herself before Christ and the anointing of his feet was symbolic of her desire to have a relationship with God restored. This is *precisely* what the anointing oil and perfumed incense of the tabernacle represented: the restored relationship with God that would come through the tabernacle and its efforts of atonement. As the people would *humble* themselves before God at the tabernacle, God would *restore* his relationship with them. As their sins were forgiven through the bringing of a sacrifice, so their relationship with a personal God would be restored. The oil and the incense would be *constant* reminders of this work of the tabernacle.

5. (a) From Exodus 31:1-11, name the men who would supervise the work of constructing the tabernacle.

God had appointed *Bezalel*, the son of Uri (from the tribe of Judah) to act as the *foreman* of the construction team. His assistant would be *Oholiab*, the son of Ahisamach (from the tribe of Dan). Other men, specifically gifted by God, would serve under these men to complete the construction of the tabernacle, the priestly garments, and the various accoutrements of the tabernacle.

(b) What made these men *unique* and *qualified* to do this holy work?

God did not choose men who were *naturally* talented. Instead, he *gifted* certain men with the “Spirit of God” and set them apart to this work (i.e. nothing was left to chance). Bezalel and Oholiab would receive “special” gifting, including the knowledge necessary to do all of the work and supervise the construction. Like the men gifted by God to make the priestly garments (see Exodus 28:3), these men would be supernaturally gifted by God to finish the elements of the tabernacle. Since God considered these items to be special, he superintended who would make them, and gifted them uniquely to do so.