

The Sanctuary – Holy Place - Altar of Incense

ST Series 12

Altar of Incense

The **golden altar** of intercession breathed incense from its diadem of beauty, and the holy place was fragrant with the lovely name of Jesus. The Spirit specified its location to teach us the importance of its ministry: *“Thou shalt put it before the veil that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat”* (Ex 30:6 cf 40:26) *“before the Lord”* (Lev 16:13). **The priest who ministered at it came closest to the mercy seat.**

The Natural Elements: Construction of the Altar of Incense (Ex 30:1-6; 37:25-28)

Dimensions

The golden altar was made of _____ wood overlaid with pure gold. The altar stood “foursquare” (Ex 30:2), a cubit the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; and _____ cubits the height thereof or about 3 to 3 ½ feet. The horns thereof of the same. {cubit = 18” or 22” if royal cubit}

Unlike the brazen altar, it had a “crown of gold round about.” (30:3; 37:26) The two staves with which it was carried, were also made of _____ overlaid with gold. (30:5) The four rings that held the staves were of pure gold.

The Spiritual Application

Wood and Gold Blend in the **Altar of Intercession** (Ex 30:1,3)

God designed this altar of acacia wood encased in gold. Discern the incarnation in these types:

- 1) **Gold** points >> to **Christ** as the manifestation of **God’s love**
- 2) Wood whispers of His **frail humanity**

Two natures mysteriously blended in Him Who is “the same yesterday, and today and forever” (Heb 13:___). For God’s Son to intercede on man’s behalf He must first become the Son of Man (Heb 2:1___), and trudge the lowly road we daily travel.

And then our **Brother Priest**, Who once wore sinner’s rags in innocency, must die a criminal’s death because of miscarried justice. Now He shares **God’s throne** in **transformed humanity**. To suggest these truths **the Spirit** ordered **perishable wood** encased in **durable gold** to form the **pedestal of prayer**.

A wooden horn enclosed in gold stood at each corner of the altar's top (Ex.30:2; cf Zech. 1:18-21). These fourfold spikes proclaim the power of the Intercessor.

David contemplated these, as he sang: *"for Thou has heard me from the horns of the wild oxen* (Psalm 22:21). The saga of these horns is of conflicts won and captives freed. Their anthem is of our Interceder Whose triumphant horns have pierced the adversary's heart (Hab 3:4; cf. Zech 1:18-21)

This phrase, "for Thou has heard Me" is Full of Significance. It is truly a statement of faith when Christ obtain the victory for us—His faith, the Faith of Jesus on the cross.

Beyond this tapestry faith perceived eternal Light ruling in love. How awesome was the site of this "golden altar which was before the throne" (Rev 8:3, with a ministry "belonging" to the Most Holy Place (1 Kings 6:22, ARV). Let us take off our shoes to contemplate its meaning. Gracious Spirit, grant us light to read this sign aright.

Horns Signal the Power of our Intercessor

The horns of the copper altar provided a citadel of refuge for those who held them fast (1 Kings 2:28). But the horns of the golden altar could be reached only by priests. As royal priests we now may grasp these powerful prongs. So cast away all fear. John saw Christ on God's throne armed with "_____ _____" (Rev 5:6), HEAVEN'S SIGN for PERFECT MIGHT. Their call to us from the heavenly Sanctuary is that our Saviour is now interceding for us, not "as a mere petitioner . . . but as a conqueror claiming His victory" (COL 156; cf. EW 38).

A coronet of gold was placed around this altar's head (Ex 30:3). Crowns link this altar with the table's fellowship meal and the ark's mercy throne, and proclaim that our Intercessor is our King. When placing the government upon His shoulders (Isa 9:6), the Father declared, "I have set My King upon My mountain Sanctuary in Zion" (Ps 2:6). The crown on this altar's summit should keep our eyes upon our sovereign Saviour and omnipotent Advocate.

The top of the golden altar is called "a roof" (Ex 30:3, margin), while the crown is likened to a parapet surrounding it (Deut 22:8). Since dwellings in Palestine were flat roofed, God's law required this guard rail to be strong enough to prevent the unwary from falling off. The apostle Peter climbed to such a protected roof-top to pray at noon (Acts 10:9), and received a vision which purged racism from his thinking. This crenelated altar signaled a safe and lofty place, open to heaven and away from the hustle of life, where prayer might be made to God in seclusion.

The horns of Abraham's ram caught in the brambles (Gen 22:13) pictured the brow of God's submissive Ram encircled by a crown of thorns. **The thistles of Adam's curse** (Gen 3:18) became the **second Adam's chaplet of victory** (Matt 27:29). The Father hears Christ's voice as the "sound of many waters" (Rev 1:15; cf. Dan 10:6), the sobbing wail of peoples (Rev 17:15) everywhere, and the echo of my words! As the Spokesman of humanity His lips frame *my unspoken cry*, and even my inarticulate groans in celestial eloquence (cf. Rom 8:26). And because of His triumphant intercession, **His royal crown glows with radiance**, bejewelled with bought souls.

Prayer Brings the Saint into Contact with Heaven

When ministering at this altar the **priest** moved nearest to **God's throne**. The copper altar with its crimson script mapped the pilgrim's **road to glory**. **Its blood** authorized the ministrant to enter the holy place, and move confidently past the light and the bread to intercession's golden stand. Two altars marked his progress toward God's **mercy-throne**, and the **blood** he splashed on each was one. At the copper altar death's fiery struggle had raged so that the golden altar's fragrant breath might proclaim: **Live in peace!** The **blood** on these altars *links the **cross and crown***, and marks the voyager's earthly progress, for **only glory** lies beyond.

Then by faith lift the veil in Christ's celestial Sanctuary and gaze with boldness on the scene within. Your Advocate stands before the throne of grace. He who attains the joy of this fellowship in prayer's secret place holds mercy in his hands and glory in his eyes. Sins blotted out sink into the ocean's depths, and heaven's peace breaks upon his soul. The altar's blood-stained gold gleams with these truths.

The priests of Israel considered this ministry the choicest ever performed (*Tamid* 5:2), because they came closest to the Shekinah. As their numbers increased, it became customary to wait until the others in the course had enjoyed an opportunity, before repeating this service. As gospel priests our greatest privilege and dearest work should be to help others through intercessory prayer. There is no limit to the times we may petition God's throne. Pray, then, always, everywhere.

In the brazen altar >>> (sacrifice of Christ) >>> in His work on earth for us

In the golden altar >>> (mediation of Christ) >>> in His work in heaven

Where "He ever liveth to make intercession" for us (Heb 7:25).

"Before the veil of the most holy place was an altar of perpetual intercession, before the holy, an altar of continual atonement. By blood and by incense God was to be approached, --symbols pointing to the great Mediator, through whom sinners may approach Jehovah, and through whom alone mercy and salvation can be granted to the repentant, believing soul. -PP 353

Homework Assignment:

Fire, Censer, Incense

- 1)--what do these elements have to do with the Golden Altar?
- 2)—what ingredients were used to make the incense? (Hint—in same chp)

- *3)—What the difference was between the Incense and the Anointing oil and why the difference?