

The Altar of Incense



And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: of shittim wood shalt thou make it. A cubit shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; foursquare shall it be: and two cubits shall be the height thereof: the horns thereof shall be of the same. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, the top thereof, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns thereof; and thou shalt make unto it a crown of gold round about. And two golden rings shalt thou make to it under the crown of it, by the two corners thereof, upon the two sides of it shalt thou make it; and they shall be for places for the staves to bear it withal. And thou shalt make the staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. And thou shalt put it before the vail that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee. And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations. Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon. And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto the LORD. Exodus 30:1-10

And the LORD said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each shall there be a like weight: And thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy: And thou shalt beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you most holy. And as for the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for the LORD. Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people. Exodus 30:34-38

What does this Altar with its burning incense represent?

Psalms 141:2; Revelation 8:3, 4

The Altar of Incense was placed directly in front of the Vail that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle. The Ark of the Covenant, where God's presence was visible, was just on the other side of the Vail. When the Priest would burn incense and pray as the people's intercessor, the smoke of the incense would rise and float over the Vail into God's presence, symbolizing the prayers of the people rising to God.

According to a dictionary, what does it mean to intercede?

Who is our Intercessor?

Hebrews 7:22-25

Where is He doing His priestly work?

Romans 8:34; Hebrews 9:24

Jesus said He would send the Holy Spirit to be with His people to teach and guide them. (John 14:26; 16:13) What else does the Holy Spirit do for us?

Romans 8:26

Jesus is our Intercessor in the very presence of God and the Holy Spirit is with us here on earth to help us in our prayers. We can be very thankful that we have that much help to receive what we need.

The Holy Incense

What were the four ingredients of the incense that was burned on this Altar in the Tabernacle?

Exodus 30:34

All of these ingredients are some form of aromatic sap from various trees, bushes, or other plants growing in the Middle East.

This blended incense was used during the morning and evening prayer times and on the Day of Atonement as a symbol of prayers rising to God. We might ask the question, Why did God specify this particular mixture? And why did He forbid it being used for any other purpose? We should keep in mind that every detail that God specified for the Tabernacle has some symbolic meaning. Let's look at these ingredients and their characteristics as symbolic of our Intercessor and the work He is doing for us.

Stacte is a form of myrrh which was used as medicine to treat infections and wounds, and for embalming dead bodies. (John 19:39)

What is third in the list of gifts that the Wisemen brought to Jesus when He was born?

Matthew 2:11

Stacte is a reminder that Jesus died for us.

The Hebrew word for **onycha**, *shechêleth* (H7827), comes from the same root word as *shâchaṭ* (H7819) “to kill,” and *shâchaṭ* (H7820) “to beat.”

How does Isaiah describe what happened to the Messiah?

Isaiah 53:4-8

Onycha reminds us of how our Savior was treated by those He came to save.

The Hebrew word for **galbanum**, *chelbenâh* (H2464), refers to being rich, choice, and is very similar to the word for the fat, *chêleb* (H2459), the choicest part, of certain sacrifices that was burned.

For which sacrifices was the fat burned on the Altar of Burnt Offering?
Leviticus 3:3

Leviticus 4:8

Galbanum points to Jesus as our Peace Offering and Sin Offering.

Frankincense has been used all through history in many cultures as an incense used during worship of the gods. In the Tabernacle services it was included with certain food offerings to be burned on the Altar of Burnt Offering.

What is second in the list of gifts the Wisemen brought to the baby Jesus?
Matthew 2:11

How does Paul describe what was in Jesus?
Colossians 2:9

Frankincense is a symbol of Jesus' Divinity.

The mixture of ingredients in the holy incense symbolizes some of the essential qualities of Jesus, our Intercessor in Heaven:

Stacte is a reminder that Jesus died for us.

Onycha reminds us of how He was treated by those He came to save.

Galbanum points to Him as our Peace Offering and Sin Offering.

Frankincense is a symbol of His Divinity.

How often should we pray?
1 Thessalonians 5:17

We should always be in an attitude of prayer. We can't always be on our knees with our head bowed and our eyes closed, but we can always be instant in prayer when it is needed.

What did Jesus say should be combined with our prayer to make it effective?
Mark 11:22-24

Unceasing prayer is the unbroken union of the soul with God, so that life from God flows into our life; and from our life, purity and holiness flow back to God. We should pray in the family circle, and above all we must not neglect secret prayer, for this is the life of the soul.

Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of His children. "The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." James 5:11. His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice.

Jesus said, "Ye shall ask in My name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself loveth you." John 16:26, 27. But to pray in the name of Jesus is something more than a mere mention of that name at the beginning and the ending of a prayer. It is to pray in the mind and spirit of Jesus, while we believe His promises, rely upon His grace, and work His works.³⁶