

# THE FRAGRANCE OF THE LORD

HOW THE GOLDEN INCENSE ALTAR LEADS US TO EFFECTIVE PRAYER  
EXODUS 30:1-10



## THE FRAGRANCE OF PRAYER

- ◆ HAS HONOR
- ◆ HAS POWER
- ◆ HAS ASSURANCE
- ◆ HAS MOBILITY
- ◆ HAS PENETRATION

**“Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up  
of my hands as the evening sacrifice.” (Psalm 141:2)**

Bill Kirk

# THE FRAGRANCE OF THE LORD

**Text:** Psalm 141:2, Revelation 5:8, 8:3, Exodus 30:1-10; 34-38

**Subject:** YOUR GREATEST ENCOURAGEMENT IN PRAYER WITH GOD

## INTRODUCTION

1. The tabernacle of Moses is the greatest of all the Old Testament types of Jesus.
2. The 45-foot-long tabernacle was designed to represent the most important teachings of Jesus.
3. The type or shadow of the tabernacle points us to Jesus, the one who casts the shadow.
4. The tabernacle was the center of worship for God's people.

### The tabernacle itself had six furnishings

1. **The Brazen Altar** - where the sacrifices of burnt offerings were presented and where blood was sprinkled.
2. **The Brazen Laver** - made of brazen mirrors which allowed the priests to wash in before entering into the service of the Lord.
3. **The Golden Candlestick** – which was the lamp stand and only light in the windowless tabernacle.
4. **The Table of Shewbread** – with 12 loaves of fresh bread for each Sabbath, to be eaten by the priests.
5. **The Ark of the Covenant** - which was the wooden box with the mercy seat, the place where God chose to reveal His glory.

### In Our Text Today

6. **The Golden Altar of Incense** – where pure frankincense was continually offered up to God.

### What was this altar?

- ◆ The incense altar was foursquare (18 inches in length, 18 inches in breadth and three feet in height).
- ◆ It was made of wood, overlaid with gold and surrounded by a golden crown.
- ◆ There was a horn on each of the four corners; there were also rings attached to the altar so that poles could be used to carry the altar from place to place in the journey.
- ◆ The incense used to burn was costly and preserved by God from being counterfeited.

### Most important was the altar's location

- ◆ It stood at the far end of the Holy place over against the beautiful veil that shielded the Holy of Holies (where God's presence was manifested).
- ◆ When the incense was burning, it filled both chambers with a fragrance of perfume.

**Question:** What was the purpose of the altar of incense?

**Answer:** Its purpose was for burning incense.

**Question:** Why the burning incense ascending up to God?

**Answer:** To teach us something about God **hearing** and **answering** and **wanting** and **receiving** our prayers!

**Question:** What was the incense made of for burning?

**Answer:** It was compounded of five ingredients (all equal in weight).

1. **Stacte** – a fragrant sap of gum from a tree
2. **Onycha** - a ground up shell fish from the Red Sea
3. **Galbanum** – a bitter gum used to repel insects
4. **Frankincense** – a white substance from tree sap
5. **Salt** – a seasoning as well as a preservative

**Question:** Why the sweet, pure and perpetual incense of equal weights?

**Answer:** To reveal to us that God desires us to have a balanced life of incense rising up to God in prayer.

1. **Worship** – praising God for who He is.
2. **Confession** – repentance of any known sin.
3. **Thanksgiving** – for the many blessings from God.
4. **Petition** – for our own specific needs.
5. **Intercession** – praying for others and the work of God.

### **In Other Words**

- ◆ Incense begins on the altar with man, and as it burns it ascends upward to God.
- ◆ Likewise, your prayers begin within your heart and ascend upwards to God.

### **Never Forget This**

1. The altar of incense was for burning incense unto the Lord.
2. Incense in scripture always speaks to us of prayer ascending to God.

### **Psalm 141:2**

“Let my prayer be set forth before God as incense.”

**Question:** How can my prayers be a sweet fragrance to God?

**Question:** What encourages me in the place of prayer?

**Question:** What motivates me to pray when outside of the church building?

**Question:** Why was the incense altar the tallest piece of furniture in the tabernacle?

**Question:** What is the significance of the horns on the altar of incense?

**Question:** Why the crown (or ledge) of gold around the top of the incense altar?

**Question:** What is the guarantee that my prayers will ascend and make it to God anyway?

**Question:** How can I grow and excel in prayer when I see my weaknesses and all my imperfections?

**Today, "The Fragrance of the Lord"  
At the incense altar or,**

### SECRETS FROM THE INCENSE ALTAR OF PRAYER

**I. The Fragrance of Prayer has Honor (Exodus 30:1,2)**

(V. 1) "Make an altar to burn incense upon."

(V. 2) "Two cubits shall be the height thereof."

**Fact:** The altar reveals the honor God places upon your prayers.

**Fact:** The altar (with burning incense) reveals the honor God places upon communion with you.

**Fact:** The altar of incense reveals the privilege we have to approach a living and Holy God.

**Question:** Why was the altar several inches higher than any other tabernacle furnishings?

**Answer:** To remind us of one thing we should never forget.

- ◆ That prayer is the most exalted of all ministries.
- ◆ That prayer is the highest honor of the Christian.
- ◆ That prayer is the most effective service you can offer God.
- ◆ That you on your knees, are more elevated with God than any other time.

#1 – The Fragrance of Prayer has Honor

**II. The Fragrance of Prayer has Power (Exodus 30:2)**

(V. 2B) "The horns thereof shall be of the same."

**Fact:** The altar of incense had four horns, one on each corner.

**Fact:** Horns in the Bible always signify power.

#### Habakkuk 3:4

"God had horns coming out of His hand, and there was the hiding of His power."

#### In Other Words

- ◆ God has power in waiting, when He shares His strength with us at our altar of prayer!

### III. The Fragrance of Prayer has Assurance (Exodus 30:3)

(V. 3) "Overlay it with pure gold, the top, the sides, the horns, and make unto it a crown of gold round about."

**Fact:** The incense altar was crowned with a ledge of gold.

**Fact:** The crown around the square altar was to keep the burning coals of incense from falling to the ground.

**Fact:** The crown is to give us assurance and confidence in our praying.

#### **In Other Words**

- ◆ Our incense of prayer is crowned by the Lord.
- ◆ Our incense of prayer doesn't fall off the altar.
- ◆ Our incense of prayer won't fall to the ground.
- ◆ Our incense of prayer is never wasted.
- ◆ Our incense of prayer is given attention at heaven's court.

**Fact:** The devil tells you "You're wasting your time."

**Fact:** The Lord tells you "Keep praying, I've got all your prayers hedged in on the altar."

**Revelation 8:3** The angel came with incense having a golden censer, and offered it with the prayer of all the saints."

### IV. The Fragrance of Prayer has Mobility (Exodus 30:4,5)

(V. 4) "Put two golden rings on each side of the altar."

(V.5) "Make the staves (or poles) and cover them with gold."

**Question:** What are the rings and the poles?

**Answer:** The rings and the poles were used to carry the altar everywhere Israel traveled through the wilderness.

**Question:** Why carry the incense altar for 40 years in the journey?

**Answer:** One reason alone:

- ◆ To assure Israel that wherever they were they could touch God in prayer.
- ◆ To assure Israel, that there was not one place, not one where they could not pause and reach God in prayer. (The rings and poles speak of mobility).

#### **But most of all:**

- ◆ To assure us today, that you and I can reach the Lord in prayer at any time, in any place, for any reason.

### V. The Fragrance of Prayer has Penetration (Exodus 30:6)

(V. 6) "Put the incense altar before the veil, where I will meet you."

### **What an awesome revelation.**

- ◆ The incense altar was placed between the two chamber rooms (the Holy Place, with the lamp stand and table of showbread and the Holy of Holies – with the Ark of The Covenant).

### **In Other Words**

- ◆ The altar was located on the earthy side (in the Holy Place).
- ◆ But the burning incense filled the heavenly side (in the Holy of Holies).

**Question:** What is the great meaning of this location?

**Answer:** It is your greatest encouragement in prayer.

- ◆ That your praying on this earthly side is reaching into the heavenly side!
- ◆ That praying here on earth is penetrating eternity!
- ◆ That praying on earth elevates us to heaven's attention.
- ◆ That praying here is getting through the veil and being heard and received and answered in heaven.

### **But, you might say:**

- ◆ "I feel ashamed to come boldly to God in prayer."
- ◆ "I'm not as close to God as I should be."
- ◆ "There are still some things in my life I have to address."

### **God knew all that ahead of time.**

1. In V. 7, the lamps must be dressed.
2. In v. 8, the lamps must have fire.
3. In V. 9, the strange incense must go.
4. In V. 10, the blood must be applied.

### **What do these four have to do with me today?**

1. The dressing of lamps was to remove the charred trimmings of the wick, and carry them off to never come back again.
  - ◆ It means the Lord will trim off anything in your life that hinders you in prayer.
2. The lamps must have fire because there was no incense without fire to burn it.
  - ◆ It means the Lord will rekindle the fire (the incense of prayer) if the flame is low.

3. The “strange fire” warning was because God supernaturally lit the fire originally at the Brazen Altar during the tabernacle dedication.
- ◆ Coals were then taken from the Brazen Altar and placed upon the altar of incense.
  - ◆ Any fire that doesn’t initiate with God is strange fire.
  - ◆ It means only God can give you the fire of the Holy Spirit (and you can have the genuine and no counterfeit).

**Strange Fire** – is all the spiritual junk that is not born of God.

**Subtle Fire** - is pretending we have something we really don’t.

**Silly Fire** - is coming to God in prayer with a careless spirit (and no reverence).

**Selfish Fire** - is having an attitude of “God exists to do my will”.

**Sinful Fire** - is trying to worship and pray and offer incense to God with an impure heart.

### **And finally**

4. The blood on the incense altar has an awesome meaning to us all in V. 10:  
(V. 10) “And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns once a year with blood.”
- ◆ The horns speak of power.
  - ◆ The blood speaks of atonement and access to God.

**Question:** Why the horns sprinkled with blood by the priest?

### **One reason only:**

- ◆ To show us that God has the power to atone for, or cover, every sin.
- ◆ To show us that God wants to forgive us of every sin!
- ◆ To show us that God wants to deliver us of every sinful habit!
- ◆ To show us that God will remove every sin that condemns you today?
- ◆ To show us that God has given us access to come to Him for answered prayer, divine healing, a miracle of deliverance, the fire rekindled, a life of incense (the fragrance of prayer) restored.

Amen!  
Bill Kirk