

## The Altar of Incense

The Altar of Incense is what prepares the believer to know God in the Holiest. [Includes a picture of the Altar of Incense.]

Specifically, the fire on this altar is God-fire, the incense is beaten fine, the fire turns the incense into an aroma, and the aroma enters into the Holiest first, before the High Priest.

The incense is the “prayers” of the holy ones.

**An In-Part Purpose.** The Altar of Incense is the least understood and the most abused furnishing on the way into the knowledge of God.

Even though contrast is necessary to understand truth clearly, we will try to limit this lesson mostly to the in-part role of the Altar of Incense as God intends.

And it is a tremendous relief to realize that God intends everything in the Holy Place to be in-part on the way in. It is only by living inside the full knowledge of God, sharing Hheart with Him as His Mercy Seat, that we can know any of these things in full. And such living is entirely through faith, which is part of why most refuse to enter.

**Through Faith.** We walk through faith and not through sight (2 Cor. 5).

**And everyone having this hope on the basis of Him, purifies himself** [devotes Himself to God], **just exactly as He is pure** (1 John 3:3). – **Possessing therefore these promises, beloved, we should cleanse ourselves from every lack and defilement of flesh and spirit, completing holiness inside of the fear of God** (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Everyone seems to define this cleansing and purification by outward performance, by “ceasing from sin.” They live through sight, but God is speaking of the heart.

**Giving Thanks.** The first work of the Altar of Incense in your life is to give thanks in and for all things. This is the real turning of the heart towards God.

And this is so cool – in the Holy Place, we learn this practice only in-part. In-part is fully enough for us to be carried by Jesus into the Holiest. Nothing in the Holy Place needs to be complete for us to switch over fully to living only in John 14:20, for it is already the only thing true.

Nonetheless, there is a sense of deep gratefulness found in those who live inside of Jesus – nurtured by giving thanks.

**Into the Holiest.** That brings us to the purpose of this Altar. Each of the three entrances has with it a piece of furniture whose entire purpose is to prepare us to enter into the next place in the knowledge of a Salvation already complete.

Even though the Altar of Sacrifice is inside the Gate, of necessity, there is a sense where it begins outside the Gate, for Jesus' dying for us is what first wins our hearts. Then, the purpose of the Laver of Washing is to send us through the Door into the Holy Place.

And the purpose of the Altar of Incense is to send us through the Veil into the Holiest.

**Life in the Holiest.** Here is the clearest and most specific description of what living inside the Holiest is and means. – **In that day you shall know that I am inside of the Father and you inside of Me and I inside of you** (John 14:20).

We add to it, then, this definition – **This is age-unfolding life to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent** (John 17:3).

And each of the three entrances takes us straight there – **put on the Lord Jesus Christ** (Romans 14:13). God would take us straight there as quickly as He could; the problem is the (un)willingness of our hearts.

**Expressions of the Altar.** The reason we Christians waste so much time unnecessarily in the Altar of Incense is that it's quite a tricky thing for Jesus to win our hearts.

Here are some expressions of that Altar in our lives.

**But we possessed inside ourselves the sentence of death, that we should not be confidencing upon ourselves, but upon God. – Count it all joy, brothers and sisters, when you fall into all sorts of difficulties. – For our momentary and easy-to-bear pressure of travail within and without is working out for us an unending excessiveness of the weight and substance of glory.**

**Washing with “Crap.”** Now, these same things become our ministry together with Father in setting creation free once we are turned around inside the Holiest. On the way into the knowledge of God, however, God is battering our hearts to fit His heart.

The first thing God must persuade us of is to have no sufficiency in ourselves.

No one performed “godliness” better in all human history than Saul of Tarsus, and Paul called all of it “dog crap.” The preaching of “hear and obey” does not cleanse, for it uses human performance, that is “dog crap,” as its soap.

**Becoming Honest.** More than that, the preacher of “obedience” presents a hard forehead of being righteous in himself, even though God says clearly that he is not.

Yes, it is the Altar of Incense that removes the leaven of the Holy Place with the realization that, if I am to be saved, Someone Else must do that for me. You see, the very moment when you step through the Veil into the Holiest is that moment when you cease all effort to enter into union with Jesus and realize with the deepest of gratefulness that He has already entered into full union with you.

The purpose of the Altar of Incense is to make you honest.

**The “Things of God.”** Christians who don’t need Jesus have no need to live inside of the Holiest; the “things of God” are enough for them.

To enter into the Holiest is to enter into knowing you live inside of another Person, and that other Person lives inside of you. You have to like this other Person for that to work. Jesus must win your heart.

Your problem, however, is those very “things of God” as you have known them in the Holy Place, for you identify yourself by them, and not by Jesus now your only life.

And, remember, that my use of “you” is referencing God’s intention for this in-part time in every believer’s way.

**Self- Identity.** People identify with the mighty moving of God in power, in deliverance, in glorious moments of worship. As a result, they imagine it is those things that signify “God with them.”

If you think that the moments of power and glory are “God with me,” then you cannot know God with you. The things of God are not God and they do not signify God with you.

And because people are afraid of God and unwilling to place all that they are, including their sin and their shame, entirely upon Him, they spin a story of self-identity based on their experience of the power and glory. Then they look at themselves when they are at the bottom and condemn God by condemning themselves.

**Rebellion.** The desire to become a “better person” is the rebellion of Adam; it comes out from an inherent unthankfulness – “*God, You are NOT.*”

Three things, then, come out from this wicked rejection of God with you now – first, an arrogant superiority, second, a contempt for others, and third, a fake self-condemnation. These three things CANNOT enter the Holiest; you cannot know God with you, as age-unfolding life, if the root of your self-story is a desire to become a “better person.”

This is the purpose of the Altar of Incense, to burn out from you all false imagination that you would ever please God.

**The Veil, His Flesh.** We cannot understand the Altar of Incense without understanding the Veil. The Veil is the flesh of Jesus (Hebrews 10:20). Your flesh IS the flesh of Jesus, one flesh with Him (Ephesians 5).

To pass through the Veil is to accept with all finality that Jesus IS the ONLY life you are, that you have NO other life. To pass through the Veil is to accept that your flesh in all of its selfish misery belongs only to Jesus, that He is fully responsible for all that you are.

To pass through the Veil is to know that God is with you utterly BECAUSE God IS.

**Your Human Weakness.** My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is brought to full perfection and completion inside of your weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

No human weakness means no Christ revealed.

The burning of the Altar of Incense is intended by God to remove from you all your false stories of self, all your lust to “do better,” all your pretend “obedience,” all your self-rightness, all your dependence on outward appearance. And when you are able to say, with all finality, “I can do nothing of myself”: that is, “Nothing I experience can be of me, but all things are Father with me,” then you are ready.

**Jesus Alone.** Except – here is the most wonderful thing about the Holy Place. Your experience with the Altar of Incense does not need to be complete. It is Jesus alone who carries you into the full knowledge of God with you, and He always carries you.

In fact, you will spend some time in the joy of learning Christ in your weakness before God will suggest to you the possibility of turning around.

Nonetheless, one thing is required of you, one thing in which you alone must say “Yes, Lord.” Contempt for other believers cannot know God.

**Self-Exaltation.** That brings us back to the critical importance of the Altar of Incense during the season when you are experiencing the power of God by the Spirit and the revelation of a Spirit word.

You cannot live the Christian life, and what keeps you out of knowing God is your stubborn insistence that you can.

I looked down on my older brother and sister (that is, held them in contempt) because they had become buried under debt and were forced to declare bankruptcy. When I had to declare bankruptcy because I was buried under debt, my self-exaltation came to an end.

**Because He IS.** But when my eyes were opened, in the middle of the night, to see the horror of what I had done, in spending and losing other people's money, I tried my very best to bring condemnation upon myself.

I failed completely, I failed because by morning, Jesus was laughing inside of me, saying, "Son, I carry you through all things, even through this. I AM fully responsible for you."

In the light of the Holy Place, you continue seeing you as you and God with you because of you. The Altar of Incense switches you over to knowing Jesus as your life in your lowest places, when you are at your worst, BECAUSE HE IS.

**Christ Our Life.** We had no idea how much these three wicked siblings, self-exaltation, contempt for others, and self-abasement, were married together with our identity of self inside the power and revelation of the Holy Place.

We remember "*die to your self*," "*put your flesh under control*," "*stay on the cross*," and we know it was all a morbid worship of rebellion, even inside the experience of the glory and power of the things of God.

The change of the Altar of Incense is that moment when you know that you CANNOT live the Christian life, that you NEED **Someone Else** to carry you into God and to live your life as you, fully responsible for ALL that you are.

**Christ who IS our life.**