

## Exodus 30 • A Kingdom of Priests

### Introduction

With all the history and instructions provided within the contents of the book of Exodus, we may rush past the greater purpose God stated for Israel the Old Testament nation, which as it turns out, is the same for Israel the New Testament Church:

<sup>5</sup>Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; <sup>6</sup>and **you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.** These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.” (Exodus 19:5–6)

We know this for sure because this is the exact text from which Peter will quote in his own Epistle:

<sup>9</sup>But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; (1 Peter 2:9)

In other words, we are not simply members of a church, or congregants of a particular denomination, but supposed to function in a New Testament capacity which fulfills that which God established in the Old Testament. What are the characteristics of believers in their corporate role as “a kingdom of priests” who serve to preserve the holiness necessary for the whole to serve and worship the One True God?

<sup>1</sup>Moreover, you shall make an altar as a place for burning incense; you shall make it of acacia wood. <sup>2</sup>Its length shall be a cubit, and its width a cubit, it shall be square, and its height shall be two cubits; its horns shall be of one piece with it. <sup>3</sup>You shall overlay it with pure gold, its top and its sides all around, and its horns; and you shall make a gold molding all around for it. <sup>4</sup>You shall make two gold rings for it under its molding; you shall make them on its two side walls—on opposite sides—and they shall be holders for poles with which to carry it. <sup>5</sup>You shall make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. <sup>6</sup>You shall put this altar in front of the veil that is near the ark of the testimony, in front of the mercy seat that is over the ark of the testimony, where I will meet with you. <sup>7</sup>Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it; he shall burn it every morning when he trims the lamps. <sup>8</sup>When Aaron trims the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense. There shall be perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations. <sup>9</sup>You shall not offer any strange incense on this altar, or burnt offering or meal offering; and you shall not pour out a drink offering on it. <sup>10</sup>Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once a year; he shall make atonement on it with the blood of the sin offering of atonement

### [Read v.1-10]

**Q: How is this altar different in form and function from the other altar found in the Temple?**

A: Whereas the bronze altar is used for the blood sacrifices and found in the more commonly accessed area of the Temple, the golden altar of incense is used for prayer and is located in the Holy Place just outside the Holy of Holies.

**Q: How do we know that incense in Scripture represents prayer?**

<sup>2</sup>May my prayer be counted as incense before You;  
The lifting up of my hands as the evening offering. (Psalm 141:2)

<sup>8</sup>When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. (Revelation 5:8)

<sup>3</sup>Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. (Revelation 8:3)

**Q: Why is their position in the Temple important? How might they relate to each other?**

A: One must go through the bronze altar of sacrifices first before gaining access to the golden altar of incense. It means that there is no getting around first addressing the issue of sin before coming into the presence of God.

**Point:** The golden altar of incense, by being placed just outside the veil of the Holy of Holies, may be illustrating that we always pray by faith, shown by the High Priest facing the Mercy Seat but not being able to actually see it.

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once a year throughout your generations. It is most holy to the LORD.”

**Q: How do their different materials represent their greater spiritual representation?**

A: Bronze is associated with sacrifice, whereas the wood covered by gold represents the dual nature of the Messiah’s deity and humanity. It is a reminder we can only pray to the Father because of the intercession of the Son.

*<sup>12</sup>“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. <sup>13</sup>Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. <sup>15</sup>If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. (John 14:12–15)*

**Q: What is the significant difference about when this Temple prayer takes place under the Old Testament model, compared to now under the New Testament?**

A: Originally the incense—a symbol of prayer, was offered by the High Priest each morning and evening; we are now granted this kind of access continually.

*<sup>19</sup>Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup>by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, <sup>21</sup>and since we have a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup>let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:19–22)*

**Q: What might be the physical side-effect of the High Priest offering the incense twice a day? How might this speak to our approach to prayer?**

A: The priest would have personally born the incense’s fragrance all day in a reminder that we are “pray without ceasing”.

*<sup>16</sup>Rejoice always; <sup>17</sup>pray without ceasing; <sup>18</sup>in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18)*

*<sup>18</sup>With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, (Ephesians 6:18)*

**Q: Why do you suppose that there are accompanying warnings against “strange incense”, and prohibitions against transacting a “burnt offering or meal offering” or “drink offering” on the altar of incense?**

A: All of the sin offerings are supposed to be properly handled **before** coming to the Lord in prayer. The “strange incense” is a warning against straying into unbiblical approaches to God.

**Q: What is the ultimate quality God is seeking in this process according to v.10?**

A: Holiness. This is the quality of becoming spiritually pure—that is, unpolluted by sin, so as to be qualified to come into His presence. This is only achievable by first going through the bronze altar.

**Q: How is this all accomplished under the New Testament model?**

A: Through Christ.

*<sup>25</sup>Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. (Hebrews 7:25)*

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**Application:** A royal priesthood is biblically qualified to come into God's presence by addressing the issue of sin through Christ alone so that they may be holy—that is, separated exclusively to God according to His standards.

<sup>34</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take for yourself spices, stacte and onycha and galbanum, spices with pure frankincense; there shall be an equal part of each. <sup>35</sup>With it you shall make incense, a perfume, the work of a perfumer, salted, pure, and holy. <sup>36</sup>You shall beat some of it very fine, and put part of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting where I will meet with you; it shall be most holy to you. <sup>37</sup>The incense which you shall make, you shall not make in the same proportions for yourselves; it shall be holy to you for the LORD. <sup>38</sup>Whoever shall make any like it, to use as perfume, shall be cut off from his people."

**[Read v.34-38]**

**Q: To what is this speaking in New Testament terms?**

1. God sets the standard for effective and qualified prayer.
2. Prayer is special and cannot be corrupted by unbiblical practices.
3. "Strange incense" will not be accepted no matter how passionately offered.
4. God only accepts that which is holy, first beginning with us personally, and then in our approach to Him.
5. Others?

**Q: What might be modern-day examples of corrupted, or unholy, prayer?**

1. Contemplative prayer
2. Repetitive prayer
3. Combinations with other religions such as "Christian Yoga".
4. Others?

**Application:** Prayer not offered in 100% compliance with God's Word and ways will never be answered.

**Bonus Question:** How might this reflect the purpose of our gathering together for "church"? How should this be implemented in our particular congregation or gathering? How do we know when unbiblical or corrupted worship is taking place?

<sup>11</sup>The LORD also spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>12</sup>"When you take a census of the sons of Israel to number them, then each one of them shall give a ransom for himself to the LORD, when you number them, so that there will be no plague among them when you number them. <sup>13</sup>This is what everyone who is numbered shall give: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs), half a shekel as a contribution to the LORD. <sup>14</sup>Everyone who is numbered, from twenty years old and over, shall give the contribution to the LORD. <sup>15</sup>The rich shall not pay more and the poor shall not pay less than the half shekel, when you give the contribution to the LORD to make atonement for yourselves. <sup>16</sup>You shall take the atonement money from the sons of Israel and shall give it for the service of the tent of meeting, that it may be a memorial for the sons of Israel before the LORD, to make atonement for yourselves."

**[Read v.11-16]**

**Q: The two altars were respectively made of bronze and gold. What is the greater representation of silver?**

A: Silver is the price of redemption. (Examples: Joseph & Jesus)

**Q: How might this explain King David's sin in 1 Chronicles 21 when he took a census?**

A: It was undertaken without receiving this "redemption" offering for the Lord. Without it, the focus of the census was a statistical exercise for man's glory rather than a reminder of the greater glory and purposes of God. It was essentially a counting of the earthly king's people rather than the Heavenly King's.

**Q: Is this a voluntary contribution or another freewill offering?**

A: It is characterized as "a ransom". (v.12) It's a representation of something holding us over until the complete work of salvation is accomplished.

**Q: Some of the other required offerings have a differing requirement for the financially rich or poor. Why is there no distinction here?**

A: The price of redemption is the same regardless.

**Q: So how might this apply to us? What is the nature of this requirement of God's people?**

A: It is to maintain a sanctuary—a place holy and dedicated to God alone, "to make atonement" (v.16) until we are ultimately redeemed.

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**Application:** A royal priesthood maintains the same spiritual state of God's house corporately as for themselves individually.

<sup>17</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,  
<sup>18</sup>"You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base of bronze, for washing; and you shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it. <sup>19</sup>Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet from it; <sup>20</sup>when they enter the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water, so that they will not die; or when they approach the altar to minister, by offering up in smoke a fire sacrifice to the LORD. <sup>21</sup>So they shall wash their hands and their feet, so that they will not die; and it shall be a perpetual statute for them, for Aaron and his descendants throughout their generations."

**[Read v.17-21]**

**Q: Why is it specified the priests "shall wash their hands and feet"?**

A: Their hands would be defiled by the handling of the sacrifices, and due to the fact that the Tabernacle had no floor, their feet would become dirty from contact with the world.

**Q: What is this a greater representation of?**

A: This ceremonial cleansing represents our washing by the Word.

<sup>3</sup>"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. (John 15:3)

<sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, <sup>26</sup>so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup>that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. (Ephesians 5:25–27)

**Q: From what was the laver in the Tabernacle constructed?**

A: It was made from mirrors.

<sup>8</sup>Moreover, he made the laver of bronze with its base of bronze, from the mirrors of the serving women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting. (Exodus 38:8)

**Q: How does this provide an additional metaphorical representation of the Word?**

A: A mirror is the exact illustration James used to also describe God's Word.

<sup>23</sup>For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; <sup>24</sup>for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. <sup>25</sup>But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does. (James 1:23–25)

**Application:** The royal priesthood trusts in Christ and thus is "completely washed" once and for all, but continually confesses its sin and washes its hands and feet to enjoy fellowship with Christ while still in the world.

<sup>9</sup>If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

<sup>22</sup>Moreover, the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>23</sup>“Take also for yourself the finest of spices: of flowing myrrh five hundred shekels, and of fragrant cinnamon half as much, two hundred and fifty, and of fragrant cane two hundred and fifty, <sup>24</sup>and of cassia five hundred, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and of olive oil a hin. <sup>25</sup>You shall make of these a holy anointing oil, a perfume mixture, the work of a perfumer; it shall be a holy anointing oil. <sup>26</sup>With it you shall anoint the tent of meeting and the ark of the testimony, <sup>27</sup>and the table and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense, <sup>28</sup>and the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the laver and its stand. <sup>29</sup>You shall also consecrate them, that they may be most holy; whatever touches them shall be holy. <sup>30</sup>You shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister as priests to Me. <sup>31</sup>You shall speak to the sons of Israel, saying, “This shall be a holy anointing oil to Me throughout your generations. <sup>32</sup>It shall not be poured on anyone’s body, nor shall you make any like it in the same proportions; it is holy, and it shall be holy to you. <sup>33</sup>Whoever shall mix any like it or whoever puts any of it on a layman shall be cut off from his people.”

## [Read v.22-33]

**Q: What is the final step in the sequence?**

1. Address sin.
2. Unceasing prayer.
3. Continual immersion in and cleansing by the Word.
4. God’s anointing.

**Q: Is the anointing for anyone/everyone?**

A: “...it shall be holy to you”. (v.32) In other words, it must meet the same standards of being pure—that is, unpolluted by sin, and having been washed by the Word. And as it turns out, this anointing was restricted “that they may minister as priests to Me”. (v.30)

**Q: How is this accomplished today?**

<sup>20</sup>But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. (1 John 2:20)

<sup>27</sup>As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him. (1 John 2:27)

<sup>21</sup>Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, <sup>22</sup>who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge. (2 Corinthians 1:21–22)

**Q: How does this show us the error asserted by some that one person can transfer an anointing to another person?**

A: First of all, the sequence here clearly shows it comes from Christ as a result of living a crucified and sanctified life obedient to His Word. Second, there is no instance in Scripture of one person transferring an anointing to another.

**Q: What do all the things to be anointed listed here have in common?**

A: They are all instruments for the service and worship of God.

**Application:** By being cleansed of sin through the washing of the Word and with an attitude of unceasing prayer, Christ anoints the royal priesthood for the worship and service of God.

## Overall Application

**Q: What is the three-fold nature of the royal priesthood in terms of God’s overall plan?**

First, it was the **past** plan for God’s people under the Old Testament in this life:

<sup>5</sup>Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; <sup>6</sup>and **you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.** These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.” (Exodus 19:5–6)

Second, it is the **present** plan for the Church in this life:

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<sup>9</sup>But you are A CHOSEN RACE, **A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION**, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; (1 Peter 2:9)

Third, it is the **future** plan for the Millennial Kingdom in the life to come:

<sup>6</sup>Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but **they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.** (Revelation 20:6)

How well do you recognize that your calling in Christ does not just end in this life? Do you see that you are already supposed to be living in this life that which you will continue in the next?