The Golden Altar
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Dick shows a number of slides at the start of this evening's talk depicting the layout of the Tabernacle, both the inner and outer courts. There are two clear pictures

1) Every priest had a function to do and nothing could happen without everyone participating in their role

Whether that is carrying in the wood for the altar to be burnt, cutting up the meat, bringing in the animals, washing the sacrifice, filling the basins etc. The tabernacle was a hive of ministry.

2) The High Priest could not approach the glory of God without all the duties of the outer court being performed. No sacrifice – no presence or glory experienced.

In the outer court the first altar you meet is the Brazen Altar, the altar for the burnt offerings, the sin offerings, the trespass offerings, the freewill offerings etc.

Before the veil in the Holy Place stands the Golden Altar (the focus) of tonight's teaching, the altar that represents the prayer, praise and worship that is necessary to approach the Presence of God.

Exodus 30:6 tells us the construction of the altar – it is four square, as is the brazen altar, ie its top dimensions are equal. The brazen altar stands taller than all the other pieces of tabernacle furniture representing our highest calling is to prayer, praise and worship. As with the brazen altar the golden altar has four horns, one on each corner. The horns are scripturally significant of power, and were always anointed with blood.

When the priests ministered in anguish they would symbolically hold onto the horns and plead the blood, and call on the power of a) the sacrifice at the brazen altar, or b) the power of prayer, praise and worship.

The blood of Jesus adds power to our prayers.

Hebrews 9:4 The holy of holies in heaven has no veil as this is replaced with the body of Christ, and the golden altar (censer) stands before the ark of covenant. The only thing in heaven before the Presence is the incense of prayer, praise and worship.

What are the spiritual sacrifices that we are called to offer? They are not a sacrifice of praise which is commonly stated as being praising God when you do not feel like it, which is incorrect, God never accepts anything that is not freely and willingly given.

Hebrews 13:15 we are called to offer a sacrifice of praise continually, so if we are not feeling like it, then our attitudes need to change.

The Golden Altar was only made for offering up incense. Your praises are given to God not to make you emotionally happy.

Psalm 141 – incense – let my prayer be set before you like incense v2 and the lifting of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

Psalm 63:4 – the word translated praise (tehillah) also means prayer – I will lift up my hands

Psalm 102:18ff speaks of God planning a generation to come, a future generation, before His return, to offer praise to the Lord Heb 12:22

1 Tim 2:8 – pray everywhere lifting up holy hands

Leviticus 16:12 tells us that the priests hands were full of incense and the censer standing before the veil. Levitical tradition says that the High Priest was taken beyond the veil supernaturally as he stood before the veil lifting his hands with the incense burning, and worshipping God. The veil was too thick and heavy to kick to one side.

The Presence of God has typically come in all accounts of the supernatural manifestation of His tangible presence including revivals, when hands have been lifted up in broken repentant worship creating a pleasing aroma before the Lord.

Rev 5:8 tells us how the prayers of the saints are represented by the incense, and Rev 8:3

Luke 1:11 the angel appears to Zachrias when he is ministering before the golden altar offering up prayers and incense, all the people outside were also offering up prayers. These accounts give us incredible assurance that all our prayers go up to God even though the answer may appear delayed, they are a fragrant offering to our God.

In this age of the church the ministry of intercession is incredibly important, it is a high calling, and you will know when you are called to it by the promptings in the early hours of the morning, and the travail you feel as Holy Spirit calls you to birth something in prayer.

Deut 10:8, 18:, 18:7 all tell us that the priests, you and I, are called to minister before the Lord STANDING

In fact the only time when the priests could not stand was when the heavy presence of God had come in response to prayer, praise and worship offered. 2 Chron 5:13

Psalm 134 stand before the Lord and lift up holy hands

2 Chron 29:11 My sons, do not be negligent now, for the Lord has chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him, and that you should minister to Him and burn incense." NKJV

There are two rings on the side of the Golden Altar, unlike every other piece of Tabernacle furniture which had four rings.

The rings speak of infinity, and the two represent that which supports our prayer and is infinite, ie Holy Spirit who intercedes with us, and Christ who intercedes for us. Rom 8:26, Rom 8:34. Our prayer is lifted up by the work of Holy Spirit when we pray in the Spirit, a large part of prayer life should include praying in the Spirit. 1 Cor 14:14

The two rings, which were on opposite corners, also meant that whenever the golden altar was carried by the priests, it remained upright. Whether the poles were angled down or up, because the priests were going down hill, or up hill, the altar remained facing directly up to heaven. This has through Jewish tradition been determined to tell us that no matter what we are going through, our highs and lows, our prayer life must remain central and upright.

Be careful not to disturb the tangible manifestation of His Presence by doing your own thing, when He turns up. Maintain that attitude of prayer, praise and worship, stop in the place. It is possible to disturb and dissipate what God is wanting to do.

Exodus 30:1 talks of the horns of the altar, which face North, South, East and West – our sins are removed as far away from us as the East is from the West – the blood of Jesus on the horns (power) of our prayers does not cover our sins, it washes them away – all our prayer, praise and worship travels to the four corners of the eart.

Exodus 30:34 tells of the four ingredients of the incense plus salt to hold it altogether.

Stacte – is a resin freely given from a tree, like the orange gum you find on the edge of pine trees, you can scrape it off – is representative of the fact that our prayer, praise and worship should be freely given.

Garbunum – is a resin that has to be taken from the centre of a tree and thus the branch has to be broken/split – it is representative of the brokenness in our lives which we offer to the Lord

Onycha – is obtained from shell fish which live in the depths of the Red Sea – it is representative of worship that comes spontaneously from the depths of our beings

Frankinsense – is given up from a split tree that is left out over night and is only yielded from the tree during the early hours of the morning scientist do not know why – this is representative of the sorrow that often manifests in the night hours of our lives

All of these elements have healing properties, as does our free giving of worship, our brokenness, our sorrow, and our spontaneity. Every element of our lives when offered to God in prayer praise and worship produces a sweet aroma of incense before our God.

Each of these elements is taken by the High Priest and put in a pestle and mortar, with salt, and crushed to a fine powder before being place on the coals of the Golden Altar. The brokenness, the sorrow are beaten together with the depths of our beings, the free giving, the spontaneity, over and over again and held together by salt.

Who is the salt of the earth – we are – our every experience in life when blended together as a body of believers and offered in prayer, praise and worship – creates the sweet aroma that goes before God and takes us into that place of His Presence.