52 Days of Building a Wall with the Word and Wisdom

Aroma of Our Prayers

Day 13 – May 26, 2013

**As we send up our praise and prayers to God every day, we are sending up a delightful aroma to God.** The sweet aroma of His Presence will fill us and set a delightful atmosphere in our homes. As Jesus is setting this atmosphere, He has instructions for us that we must understand. He is preparing the remnant for His return and then instructing us in how to prepare the Bride of Christ.

This statement is worth repeating again; because The Lord wants us have instructions for leaving the wilderness. We must study and understand the commandments and instructions that were given to us in the Torah - first five books of the Bible. The more we read His Word, the more understanding we get of what is expected of us. The Word cleanses and prepares us as we get closer and closer to Almighty God! He loves to teach us about Himself in His Word so we can have greater faith and confidence in who He is.

Yesterday we mentioned the Altar of Incense in the Tabernacle, and today we will look at it in more detail. With the Altar of Incense, we are at a point in our Christian walk where we are drawing very near to God.

**Hebrews 10:22 “**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.”

In this season of preparation He wants us to send up incense that is holy and acceptable to Him. Remember this is the acceptable year to proclaim Father God.

Please read Exodus 30:1-10, 34-38.

Priests, chosen by lots, would go into the Holy Place twice a day to put hot coals and incense on the Golden Altar. As they were doing this, they would offer up prayers and worship to God. Their prayers mixed with the smoke and wonderful aroma of the incense was to always be going up to God as a sweet aroma to His nostrils. **The Altar of Incense signifies our prayer life.**

**Exodus 40:5** “You shall **set the golden Altar of Incense before the Ark of the Testimony**, and set up the veil for the doorway to the Tabernacle.”

**Exodus 30: 10 “**It (Altar of Incense) is most holy to the LORD.”

With these two scriptures we see that **the Golden Altar, the ministry of prayer, is most holy to the Lord, and closest to His heart.**  The placement of the Altar of Incense directly in front of the veil leading into the Most Holy Place demonstrates how important prayer is to God and to our intimacy with Him. It is through prayer that we are able to come into His Presence.

In the Old Testament, when the priests would pray at the Altar of Incense, the veil was blocking them from His presence. This was the closest they could come to God in their daily worship. **We as Christians can come close to God in prayer every moment of every day!** Today there is no veil separating us from the throne of God. The veil was torn at the crucifixion, giving us direct access to the throne of God through the veil of Christ’s flesh and His shed blood.

Matthew 27:50-51 “And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.”

The Tabernacle of God no longer exists, but there will be on build before the Lord Jesus Christ returns. In this future tabernacle, the golden altar is in the Holy of Holies, again showing the importance God places on prayer.

**Hebrews 9:2-4** “For there was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place. Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the **Holy of Holies, having a** **golden altar of incense and the Ark of the Covenant**”.

 **Revelation 8:3-4** adds further to this future tabernacle placing the Golden Altar of Incense before His throne, as an everlasting testimony to the prayers of believers that have ascended to God from all time.

The Altar of Incense had four horns on the corners. At certain times of the year, the priest would take blood from a sin offering and sprinkle it on these horns. They would then pray to God to pardon sins, interceding on behalf of the people.

1Chronicles 6:49 “But Aaron and his sons offered on the altar of burnt offering and on the altar of incense, for all the work of the most holy place, and to make atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded.”

Just as the Israelites had a high priest to pray for their sins, so we too have a high priest, Jesus Christ, who is always interceding for us before God.

**Hebrews 7:25** “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.”

**John 17** records a prayer Jesus prayed to God about us. He asks God to provide: protection for us from the world and from Satan, sanctification through the Scriptures, spiritual unity within the body of Christ, and the presence of believers with Him to behold His glory. It is a great comfort to know that Jesus is praying these things for us!

Prayer is our highest privilege, gravest responsibility, and the greatest power God has put in our hands. Do you realize the honor God has given us to actually talk to Him, Almighty God, the God who created everything, and who keeps everything in His loving hands? If you wanted to talk to the president about something that is bothering you or even to tell him he is doing a good job, you can’t. **But God is always leaning over, bending His ear to our prayers.**  He longs to have conversations with us. **He longs for us to share our hearts concerns with Him and for us to listen to His.** God holds prayer in great honor, do we?

**James 5:16b** “The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. “

God gave Moses **strong warnings** about the way incense was to be made and presented to Him. Why do we think we can throw up prayers any way we want?

Let’s look at the warnings God gives to Moses about this most holy altar.

Exodus 30:9 "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.”

The first warning is not to offer any incense that is not what God instructed them to use; in other words, any **prayers that do not honor God**. These can be casual prayers that we throw up to the air not really expecting that anyone is listening to them. One of the most offensive “prayers” we offer up to God as strange incense is cursing using God’s name.

**Please read Leviticus 10:1-3.**

Two of Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu, offered strange incense before the Lord. They took it upon themselves to do their own thing and present it to God. Fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them and they died! God was very clear that He was offended by their disrespect. Offering “strange incense” prayers is dishonoring to God and we need to repent every time we do this, and ask Him to forgive us.

Exodus 30:37-38 "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. "Whoever shall make any like it, to use as perfume, shall be cut off from his people."

The next warning is to **not make incense for ourselves** that is the same formula as the incense to be used on the golden altar. This is when we pray with selfish motives, to try to manipulate Him into giving us something we want. Those selfish prayers are not pleasing to God. This is not to say that should not pray for ourselves. God desires for us to share our heart’s concerns with Him, which is part of our intimate relationship with Him.

When we are in a proper relationship with God and come before Him with our prayers in a way that honors Him, then we can have the full assurance that He will answer our prayers.

**DIGGING DEEPER**:

There is a third warning in **2 Chronicles 26:16-21**. Please read this passage and see what King Uzziah did that was so offensive to God.

**Please read through Psalm 119:1-24 again**. We must continue to read this passage to let it go deep into our hearts.

Have you memorized **Psalm 119:10** yet?