EXODUS

Chapter 30

*The Altar of Incense*

**“Make an altar of acacia wood for burning incense. 2 It is to be square, a cubit long and a cubit wide, and two cubits high—its horns of one piece with it. 3 Overlay the top and all the sides and the horns with pure gold, and make a gold molding around it. 4 Make two gold rings for the altar below the molding—two on opposite sides—to hold the poles used to carry it. 5 Make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. 6 Put the altar in front of the curtain that is before the ark of the Testimony—before the atonement cover that is over the Testimony—where I will meet with you. 7 “Aaron must burn fragrant incense on the altar every morning when he tends the lamps. 8 He must burn incense again when he lights the lamps at twilight so incense will burn regularly before the Lord for the generations to come. 9 Do not offer on this altar any other incense or any burnt offering or grain offering, and do not pour a drink offering on it. 10 Once a year Aaron shall make atonement on its horns. This annual atonement must be made with the blood of the atoning sin offering for the generations to come. It is most holy to the Lord.”**

**30:1** *altar*. Also referred to as the “golden altar” as it was overlaid with gold (v 3). (TLSB)

*incense.* Its fragrant smoke symbolized the prayers of God’s people (see Ps 141:2; Lk 1:10; Rev 5:8; 8:3–4). (CSB)

Incense was first placed on the table for the bread of the Presence (Lv 24:5–9) and then burned on the altar of incense. (TLSB)

**30:3** *gold.* See note on 26:37. (CSB)

**30:4** *rings.* See note on 25:12. (CSB)

**30:6** The altar of incense stood in front of the second curtain (Heb 9:2–3), before the Most Holy Place (cf Ex 26:31). (TLSB)

*curtain that is before the ark of the Testimony.* See notes on 25:16, 22; 26:31. (CSB)

Note on 25:16 The Ten Commandments (20:1–17), the basis for the covenant (24:7–8). Also referred to as the “covenant” or the “tablets” (34:27–28). (TLSB)

**30:7** *fragrant incense*. Once pure frankincense was made, it was placed on the table for the bread of the Presence alongside the bread and wine (Lv 24:7). Jesus was a fragrant incense to the Father (cf Eph 5:2). All prayer that is accepted by the Father is presented through Jesus. (TLSB)

Note on Lev. 2:1 *frankincense*. Aromatic gum resin procured from three types of trees found in southern Arabia and East Africa. For the Israelites, frankincense was mixed with the grain offering and also provided a central ingredient to the sacred incense burned twice daily in the incense altar inside the tent of meeting (cf Ex 30:34). (TLSB)

**30:8** *incense offering*. Incense was burned as nearly as possible to when the lamb was being slain at the bronze altar and when the priests dressed the lamps (cf v 7). Incense was needed for a practical purpose: to sweeten the air. As the incense was lit, the assembled people silently offered their sacrifice of prayer (Lk 1:10. (TLSB)

**30:9** Anyone who gave an unauthorized offering transgressed God’s holiness and was slain. (TLSB)

**30:10** *annual atonement.* See Lev 16:34. (CSB)

*sin offering*. Once a year, the high priest sprinkled the shed blood of the lamb on the mercy seat (Lv 16:34). (TLSB)

**30:1–10** The Lord describes the use of incense in the sanctuary; it is offered with the people’s prayers. Without faith, it is impossible for us to pray rightly and to please God (Heb 11:6). Jesus’ life and work was pleasing incense before His Father. Through Jesus’ intercession, our prayers are acceptable. • May the Good News impel us to intercede continually before You, Jesus, on behalf of the Church and for the needs of all people. Amen. (TLSB)

*Atonement Money*

**11 Then the Lord said to Moses, 12 “When you take a census of the Israelites to count them, each one must pay the Lord a ransom for his life at the time he is counted. Then no plague will come on them when you number them. 13 Each one who crosses over to those already counted is to give a half shekel, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty gerahs. This half shekel is an offering to the Lord. 14 All who cross over, those twenty years old or more, are to give an offering to the Lord. 15 The rich are not to give more than a half shekel and the poor are not to give less when you make the offering to the Lord to atone for your lives. 16 Receive the atonement money from the Israelites and use it for the service of the Tent of Meeting. It will be a memorial for the Israelites before the Lord, making atonement for your lives.”**

**30:11–16** This census tax served to bolster the freewill offering raised in 25:1–9. (TLSB)

**30:12** *take a census.* Perhaps such censuses were taken on various occasions (and at stated intervals) to enter the Israelites into an official roll for public duties in the Lord’s service (see Nu 1:2; 26:2). (CSB)

A onetime event. (TLSB)

*pay … a ransom for his life.* An extension of the principle stated in 13:13, 15 (see note on 13:13). (CSB)

*plague*. The tax reflected faith in the Lord. To break faith with the Lord would lead to disaster. Cf 1Ch 21:1–22:1. (TLSB)

**30:13** *shekel*. A standard unit of weight for silver or gold. A half-shekel was 1/5 oz. (TLSB)

*offering to the Lord*. A gift in response to the blessings the Lord gives us (cf 1Ch 29:14, 16). Moses conducted the census (vv 11–12). (TLSB)

**30:14** *twenty years old or more.* Of military age (see Nu 1:3). (CSB)

The age Israelites became eligible for military service (Nu 1:3). (TLSB)

**30:15–16** Poll tax (v 12). (TLSB)

**30:15** *not give more* … *less*. Each gave the same amount. (TLSB)

**30:16** *service*. Maintenance. (TLSB)

*Tent of Meeting.* See note on 27:21. (CSB)

*remembrance*. Reminder that guilt incurred by sins was removed before the Lord. The Lord treated the people as reconciled because of this payment. Cf Mt 17:24–27. (TLSB)

**30:11–16** The census tax is established for upkeep and atonement at the sanctuary. No amount of labor on our part can remove the guilt that our sins incur. Jesus paid the ransom for every soul that walks on the earth. • Lord Jesus, may Your Holy Spirit lead us to give generously, so the work of proclaiming the Gospel may go forth in Word and Sacrament, for You have paid the price for all. Amen. (TLSB)

*Basin for Washing*

**17 Then the Lord said to Moses, 18 “Make a bronze basin, with its bronze stand, for washing. Place it between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and put water in it. 19 Aaron and his sons are to wash their hands and feet with water from it. 20 Whenever they enter the Tent of Meeting, they shall wash with water so that they will not die. Also, when they approach the altar to minister by presenting an offering made to the Lord by fire, 21 they shall wash their hands and feet so that they will not die. This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants for the generations to come.”**

**30:17–20** Priests began their service after they washed. This washing foreshadowed the washing of Holy Baptism. (TLSB)

**30:18** *basin.* Made from bronze mirrors contributed by Israelite women (see 38:8). *washing.* See note on 29:4. (CSB)

**30:19** *hands and their feet*. The parts of the body that became soiled most often during work. Washing one’s feet naturally causes a person to wash his hands. (TLSB)

**30:20** *die*. Whoever ministered in a profane manner would die, for God’s holiness consumes sin (Lv 10:1–3). (TLSB)

**30:17–21** The priests must wash their hands and feet before they minister before God. Our High Priest, Jesus, was washed (Mt 3:13–17) before He began His work of redemption on our behalf. • Lord Jesus, through our pastors ’ service in Holy Baptism, You wash our hands, feet, and conscience (1Co 6:11; Heb 10:21–22). May this “washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit” (Ti 3:5) move us to serve You by serving our neighbor. Amen. (TLSB)

*Anointing Oil*

**22 Then the Lord said to Moses, 23 “Take the following fine spices: 500 shekels of liquid myrrh, half as much (that is, 250 shekels) of fragrant cinnamon, 250 shekels of fragrant cane, 24 500 shekels of cassia—all according to the sanctuary shekel—and a hin of olive oil. 25 Make these into a sacred anointing oil, a fragrant blend, the work of a perfumer. It will be the sacred anointing oil. 26 Then use it to anoint the Tent of Meeting, the ark of the Testimony, 27 the table and all its articles, the lampstand and its accessories, the altar of incense, 28 the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the basin with its stand. 29 You shall consecrate them so they will be most holy, and whatever touches them will be holy. 30 “Anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them so they may serve me as priests. 31 Say to the Israelites, ‘This is to be my sacred anointing oil for the generations to come. 32 Do not pour it on men’s bodies and do not make any oil with the same formula. It is sacred, and you are to consider it sacred. 33 Whoever makes perfume like it and whoever puts it on anyone other than a priest must be cut off from his people.’ ”**

**30:22–38** The sanctuary had a distinct fragrance. Three liquids purified the priests and the tabernacle: blood (29:19–21), water (30:17–21), and fragrant oil. Cf 1Jn 5:6–8. (TLSB)

**30:23–24** *myrrh … cinnamon … cane … cassia.* See note on 25:6. (CSB)

**30:23** *finest spices*. The best for the Lord. (TLSB)

*liquid myrrh*. Balsam sap. (TLSB)

*sweet-smelling cinnamon*. From the bark of cinnamon trees, imported from the region of India. (TLSB)

*aromatic cane*. Spongy tissue from the root of a reed plant. (TLSB)

**30:24** *cassia*. Produced from the dried flowers of cassia cinnamon trees. (TLSB)

**30:25** *blended*. Thoroughly mixed. (TLSB)

**30:27** When the high priest was anointed into his office (v 31), the tent and artifacts were anointed as well. (TLSB)

**30:29** *consecrate*. Sin defiled the tabernacle and court. The consecrated utensils were transferred from the human to the divine sphere. (TLSB)

*Whatever touches them will become holy*. Through these rites, the Lord shared His holiness with the priests, tabernacle, and furniture.(TLSB)

**30:33** *cut off from his people.* See note on 12:15. (CSB)

He would lose his salvation. (TLSB)

*Incense*

**34 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Take fragrant spices—gum resin, onycha and galbanum—and pure frankincense, all in equal amounts, 35 and make a fragrant blend of incense, the work of a perfumer. It is to be salted and pure and sacred. 36 Grind some of it to powder and place it in front of the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. 37 Do not make any incense with this formula for yourselves; consider it holy to the Lord. 38 Whoever makes any like it to enjoy its fragrance must be cut off from his people.”**

**30:34–36** *stacte*. Resin that oozes from certain trees. (TLSB)

*onycha*.Made from the shells of mollusks. (TLSB)

*galbanum*. Rubbery sap extracted from the roots of flowering plants native to Syria and Persia. (TLSB)

**30:34** *gum resin, onycha and galbanum.* See note on 25:6. (CSB)

*frankincense.* A resin from the bark of *Boswellia carteri*, which grows in southern Arabia. (CSB)

**30:36** *beat*. Pulverize. (TLSB)

*before the testimony*. Offered on the golden altar (vv 6–8). See notes, vv 1, 6; 25:16. (TLSB)

**30:37** Any deviation in composition resulted in punishment (Lv 10:1–3). (TLSB)

**30:22–38** The Lord gives details for the anointing oil. This perfumed oil distinguishes the Lord’s priests and the tabernacle. Today, the Lord sends the Holy Spirit, who sets us apart from the world by His work of sanctification and the fruit of the Spirit. • Thank You, Lord, for anointing us in Baptism (2Co 1:21), that we may serve You in holiness and approach You in “all boldness and confidence … as dear children ask their dear father.” Amen. (TLSB)