

EXODUS

Chapter 30

The Altar of Incense

“You shall make an altar on which to burn incense; you shall make it of acacia wood. 2 A cubit shall be its length, and a cubit its breadth. It shall be square, and two cubits shall be its height. Its horns shall be of one piece with it. 3 You shall overlay it with pure gold, its top and around its sides and its horns. And you shall make a molding of gold around it. 4 And you shall make two golden rings for it. Under its molding on two opposite sides of it you shall make them, and they shall be holders for poles with which to carry it. 5 You shall make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. 6 And you shall put it in front of the veil that is above the ark of the testimony, in front of the mercy seat that is above the testimony, where I will meet with you. 7 And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it. Every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it, 8 and when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it, a regular incense offering before the LORD throughout your generations. 9 You shall not offer unauthorized incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering, and you shall not pour a drink offering on it. 10 Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once a year. With the blood of the sin offering of atonement he shall make atonement for it once in the year throughout your generations. 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)

30:6 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)

put it in front of the veil...mercy seat. 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 *atonement once a year.* 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)

The Census Tax

11 The LORD said to Moses, **12** "When you take the census of the people of Israel, then each shall give a ransom for his life to the LORD when you number them, that there be no plague among them when you number them. **13** Each one who is numbered in the census shall give this: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs), half a shekel as an offering to the LORD. **14** Everyone who is numbered in the census, from twenty years old and upward, shall give the LORD's offering. **15** The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than the half shekel, when you give the LORD's offering to make atonement for your lives. **16** You shall take the atonement money from the people of Israel and shall give it for the service of the tent of meeting, that it may bring the people of Israel to remembrance before the LORD, so as to make 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)

give... a ransom for his life. An extension of the principle stated in 13:13, 15. (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 $\frac{1}{5}$ 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 and upward.* 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)

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)

The Bronze Basin

17 The LORD said to Moses, 18 “You shall also make a basin of bronze, with its stand of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it, 19 with which Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet. 20 When they go into the tent of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn a food offering to the LORD, they shall wash with water, so that they may not die. 21 They shall wash their hands and their feet, so that they may not die. It shall be a statute forever to them, even to him and to his offspring throughout their generations.”

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. (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)

The Anointing Oil and Incense

22 The LORD said to Moses, 23 “Take the finest spices: of liquid myrrh 500 shekels, and of sweet-smelling cinnamon half as much, that is, 250, and 250 of aromatic cane, 24 and 500 of cassia, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil. 25 And you shall make of these a sacred anointing oil blended as by the perfumer; it shall be a holy anointing oil. 26 With it you shall anoint the tent of meeting and the ark of the testimony, 27 and the table and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense, 28 and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils and the basin and its stand. 29 You shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy. Whatever touches them will become holy. 30 You shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests. 31 And you shall say to the people of Israel, ‘This shall be my holy anointing oil throughout your generations. 32 It shall not be poured on the body of an ordinary person, and you shall make no other like it in composition. It is holy, and it shall be holy to you. 33 Whoever compounds any like it or whoever puts any of it on an outsider shall be cut off from his people.’” 34 The LORD said to Moses, “Take sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum, sweet spices with pure frankincense (of each shall there be an equal part), 35 and make an incense blended as by the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and

holy. 36 You shall beat some of it very small, and put part of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting where I shall meet with you. It shall be most holy for you. 37 And the incense that you shall make according to its composition, you shall not make for yourselves. It shall be for you holy to the LORD. 38 Whoever makes any like it to use as perfume shall 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 *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*. He would lose his salvation. (TLSB)

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 *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)