

Message Twelve

The Incense

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:34-38; Psa. 141:2; Rev. 5:8; 8:3-5

I. The holy anointing oil (Exo. 30:23-25) signifies Christ as the all-inclusive Spirit coming to us from God, whereas the incense (v. 35) signifies Christ going to God from us; this is a divine traffic in two directions:

- A. The anointing brings God to us in Christ and through Christ for our participation in the divine element.
- B. The incense is our going to God with Christ and as Christ in prayer for God's enjoyment—John 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23-24, 26.
- C. This traffic has much to do with our Christian experience, which is a matter of God's coming to us in Christ and our going to God in Christ and with Christ.

II. The incense consisted of five ingredients—Exo. 30:34-35:

- A. The three spices signify the Triune God in resurrection, and the addition of pure frankincense, making the number of ingredients four, signifies the humanity of Christ.
- B. Each of the three spices signifies the death of Christ—v. 34:
 - 1. Stacte, a kind of myrrh, a resinous gum produced by a tree, signifies the sweet death of Christ's generating life (signified by the plant life—John 12:24).
 - 2. Onycha, the shell of a small animal that grows in the marshes of the Red Sea, signifies the death of Christ with His redemptive life (signified by the animal life—1:29).
 - 3. Galbanum, also a resinous gum from a tree, signifies the powerful death of Christ's generating life.
 - 4. The second of the spices, being of the animal life, signifies that the second of the Godhead was slain to accomplish redemption.
 - 5. The three spices indicate that Christ's death in His generating life and His redeeming life has three functions: to generate us as sons of God, to redeem us from the fall, and to expel the serpent, the Devil—cf. 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Heb. 2:14.
- C. The fourth ingredient, frankincense, is a white resinous gum, signifying the sweet resurrection of Christ—Phil. 3:10.
- D. The three spices and the frankincense are seasoned with salt (Exo. 30:35), making the ingredients five, the number five signifying responsibility—Matt. 25:2:
 - 1. In typology salt signifies the killing power and preserving power of Christ's death—Mark 9:50.
 - 2. The seasoning of the four ingredients of the incense with salt signifies that our prayer needs to be "salted" by the cross so that all the impurity and bias within us may be killed.
- E. According to Exodus 30:35-36, the incense must be salted, beaten, and burned:
 - 1. Beating the incense and putting it before the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting signify the blending of Christ's sweet death and His fragrant resurrection

and the offering of His death and resurrection to God on the incense altar as a base for the intercession of Christ and His members—Rom. 8:34.

2. In order to have Christ as the incense to offer to God as a sweet-smelling fragrance, we need the genuine experiences of Christ with all the ingredients of the incense, and these experiences must be salted, beaten, and burned.

III. In both the Old Testament and the New Testament, incense signifies our prayer—Psa. 141:2; Rev. 5:8:

- A. In particular, the incense refers to the resurrected and ascended Christ with all His work, fruits, and merit—all that He is, all that He has accomplished, and all that He does—Eph. 1:7, 19-23; Heb. 7:25.
- B. In Revelation 5:8 the bowls are the saints' prayers, whereas the incense is Christ added to the saints' prayers.
- C. In 8:3 incense signifies Christ with all His merit added to the prayers of the saints so that the saints' prayers offered upon the golden altar might be acceptable to God:
 1. Prayer with Christ as the incense is actually Christ Himself ascending to God; this is a sweet-smelling fragrance to God.
 2. This kind of prayer simultaneously satisfies God with a sweet fragrance and carries out God's economy, God's administration—v. 3.
 3. The smoke of the incense indicates that the incense is burned and ascends to God with the prayers of the saints—v. 4:
 - a. This implies that the prayers of the saints become effective and are acceptable to God.
 - b. The smoke indicates that the saints' prayers are effective because Christ has been added to them as incense; it is the incense, not the saints' prayers, that causes the smoke to rise.
 - c. The smoke of the incense goes up with the prayers of the saints to the throne of God, and the prayers are answered—vv. 3, 5.
 4. The incense typifies the resurrected and ascended Christ, the unique One who is received by God and acceptable to Him; thus, He becomes a sweet savor to God—vv. 3-4.
 5. Since the incense signifies Christ, to burn the incense means to pray Christ; God's desire is that when we pray, we pray Christ.

IV. The two altars—the bronze altar and the golden incense altar—are closely related in our spiritual experience—Exo. 40:5-6; 30:6-10, 26-28:

- A. We need to see how the two altars—the bronze altar and the golden altar—are connected:
 1. The two altars are connected by the anointing—vv. 26-28:
 - a. The anointing signifies God's move.
 - b. According to God's move, the golden altar and the bronze altar are connected.
 2. The two altars are connected by the blood of the sin offering—Lev. 16:18; 4:7:
 - a. On the Day of Expiation, the most important sin offering was offered.

- b. After the blood of this offering was shed, the blood was brought from the bronze altar and was applied to the four horns of the incense altar.
 - c. The expiating blood connected the two altars.
 - 3. The two altars are connected by the fire that burned the offerings—6:13; 16:12:
 - a. The only fire that could be used to burn the incense was the fire from the bronze altar, the fire that had come down from the heavens.
 - b. No strange fire was allowed to be on the incense altar for the burning of the incense—10:1-11.
- B. We need to have the burning and the ascending both from the bronze altar and from the golden incense altar—1:17b; 23:18; 16:12-13; Exo. 40:26-27:
 - 1. Both from the burning on the bronze altar and from the burning on the golden incense altar a sweet savor ascends to God for His satisfaction.
 - 2. At the bronze altar we have the sweetness of Christ in His death for our redemption, termination, and replacement; at the golden incense altar we have the sweetness of Christ in His resurrection and ascension for our acceptance.
- C. When we pray at the golden incense altar, there should be neither strange fire nor strange incense in our prayer—Lev. 10:1; Exo. 30:9a:
 - 1. To have strange fire in our prayer is to have some kind of motive that is natural and that has not been dealt with by the cross—Lev. 10:1.
 - 2. To have strange incense in our prayer is to have prayer that is not related to Christ—Exo. 30:9a.
 - 3. When we are one with the Lord at the incense altar, interceding for others and for the Lord's interests, our prayer is a fragrant incense to God—v. 7; 40:26-27.