

## INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS CHAPTER 30

Moses is, in this chapter, further instructed,

- I. Concerning the altar of incense, #Ex 30:1-10.
- II. Concerning the ransom money which the Israelites were to pay, when they were numbered, #Ex 30:11-16.
- III. Concerning the laver of brass, which was set for the priests to wash in, #Ex 30:17-21.
- IV. Concerning the making up of the anointing oil, and the use of it, #Ex 30:22-33.
- V. Concerning the incense and perfume which were to be burned on the golden altar, #Ex 30:34.

Ver. 1.

I. The orders given concerning the altar of incense are,

1. That it was to be made of wood, and covered with gold, pure gold, about a yard high and half a yard square, with horns at the corners, a golden cornice round it, with rings and staves of gold, for the convenience of carrying it, #Ex 30:1-5. It does not appear that there was any grate to this altar for the ashes to fall into, that they might be taken away; but, when they burnt incense, a golden censer was brought with coals in it, and placed upon the altar, and in that censer the incense was burnt, and with it all the coals were taken away, so that no coals nor ashes fell upon the altar. The measure of the altar of incense in Ezekiel's temple is double to what it is here (#Eze 41:22), and it is there called *an altar of wood*, and there is no mention of gold, to signify that the incense, in gospel times, should be spiritual, the worship plain, and the service of God enlarged, for *in every place incense should be offered*, #Mal 1:11.
2. That it was to be placed before the veil, on the outside of that partition, but before the mercy-seat, which was within the veil, #Ex 30:6. For though he that ministered at the altar could not see the mercy-seat, the veil interposing, yet he must look towards it, and direct his incense that way, to teach us that though we cannot with our bodily eyes see the throne of grace, that blessed mercy-seat (for it is such a throne of glory that God, in compassion to us, holds back the face of it, and spreads a cloud upon it), yet we must in prayer by faith set ourselves before it, direct our prayer, and look up.
3. That Aaron was to burn sweet incense upon this altar, every morning and every evening, about half a pound at a time, which was intended, not only to take away the ill smell of the flesh that was burnt daily on the brazen altar, but for the honour of God, and to show the acceptableness of his people's services to him, and the pleasure which they should take in ministering to him, #Ex 30:7-8. As by the offerings on the brazen altar satisfaction was made for what had been done displeasing to God, so, by the offering on this, what they did well was, as it were, recommended to the divine acceptance; for our two great concerns with God are to be acquitted from guilt and accepted as righteous in his sight.
4. That nothing was to be offered upon it but incense, nor any incense but that which was appointed, #Ex 30:9. God will have his own service done according to his own appointment, and not otherwise.

5. That this altar should be purified with the blood of the sin-offering put upon the *horns of it*, every year, upon *the day of atonement*, **#Ex 30:10**; **#Le 16:18-19**. The high priest was to take this in his way, as he came out from the holy of holies. This was to intimate to them that the sins of the priests who ministered at this altar, and of the people for whom they ministered, put a ceremonial impurity upon it, from which it must be cleansed by the blood of atonement.

## II. This incense-altar typified,

1. The mediation of Christ. The brazen altar in the court was a type of Christ dying on earth; the golden altar in the sanctuary was a type of Christ interceding in heaven, in virtue of his satisfaction. This altar was before the mercy-seat; for Christ always appears in the presence of God for us; he is our *advocate with the father* (**#1Jo 2:1**), and his intercession is unto God of a sweet-smelling savour. This altar had a crown fixed to it; for Christ intercedes as king. *Father, I will*, **#Joh 17:24**.

2. The devotions of the saints, whose prayers are said to be set forth before God as incense, **#Ps 141:2**. As the smoke of the incense ascended, so much our desires towards God rise in prayer, being kindled with the fire of holy love and other pious affections. When the priest was burning incense the people were praying (**#Lu 1:10**), to signify that prayer is the true incense. This incense was offered daily, it was a perpetual incense (**#Ex 30:8**); for we must pray always, that is, we must keep up stated times for prayer every day, morning and evening, at least, and never omit it, but thus pray without ceasing. The lamps were dressed or lighted at the same time that the incense was burnt, to teach us that the reading of the scriptures (which are our light and lamp) is a part of our daily work, and should ordinarily accompany our prayers and praises. When we speak to God we must hear what God says to us, and thus the communion is complete. The devotions of sanctified souls are well-pleasing to God, of a sweet-smelling savour; the prayers of saints are compared to sweet odours (**#Re 5:8**), but it is the incense which Christ adds to them that makes them acceptable (**#Re 8:3**), and his blood that atones for the guilt which cleaves to our best services. And, if the heart and life be not holy, even *incense is an abomination* (**#Isa 1:13**), and he that offers it is *as if he blessed an idol*, **#Isa 66:3**.

## Ver. 11.

Some observe that the repetition of those words, *The Lord spoke unto Moses*, here and afterwards (**#Ex 30:17,22,34**), intimates that God did not deliver these precepts to Moses in the mount, in a continued discourse, but with many intermissions, giving him time either to write what was said to him or at least to charge his memory with it. Christ gave instructions to his disciples as they were able to hear them. Moses is here ordered to levy money upon the people by way of poll, so much a head, for the service of the tabernacle. This he must do when he numbered the people. Some think that it refers only to the first numbering of them, now when the tabernacle was set up; and that this tax was to make up what was deficient in the voluntary contributions for the finishing of the work, or rather for the beginning of the service in the tabernacle. Others think that it was afterwards repeated upon any emergency and always when the people were numbered, and that David offended in not demanding it when he numbered the people. But many of the Jewish writers, and others from them, are of opinion that it was to be an annual tribute, only it was begun when Moses first numbered the people. This was that tribute-money which Christ paid, for fear of offending his adversaries **#Mt 17:27**, when yet he showed good reason why he should have been excused. Men were appointed in every city to receive this payment yearly. Now,

1. The tribute to be paid was *half a shekel*, about fifteen pence of our money. The rich were not to give more, nor the poor less (#Ex 30:15), to intimate that the souls of the rich and poor are alike precious, and that God is *no respecter of persons*, #Ac 10:34; Job 34:19. In other offerings men were to give according to their ability; but this, which was the *ransom of the soul*, must be alike for all; for the rich have as much need of Christ as the poor, and the poor are as welcome to him as the rich. They both alike contributed to the maintenance of the temple-service, because both were to have a like interest in it and benefit by it. In Christ and his ordinances *rich and poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker*, the Lord Christ is the Redeemer of them both, #Pr 22:2. The Jews say,

"If a man refused to pay this tribute, he was not comprehended in the expiation."

2. This tribute was to be paid as a *ransom of the soul, that there might be no plague among them*. Hereby they acknowledged that they received their lives from God, that they had forfeited their lives to him, and that they depended upon his power and patience for the continuance of them; and thus they did homage to the God of their lives, and deprecated those plagues which their sins had deserved.

3. This money that was raised was to be employed in the service of the tabernacle (#Ex 30:16); with it they bought sacrifices, flour, incense, wine, oil, fuel, salt, priests' garments, and all other things which the whole congregation was interested in. Note, Those that have the benefit of God's tabernacle among them must be willing to defray the expenses of it, and not grudge the necessary charges of God's public worship. Thus we must honour the Lord with our substance, and reckon that best laid out which is laid out in the service of God. Money indeed cannot make an *atonement for the soul*, but it may be used for the honour of him who has made the atonement, and for the maintenance of the gospel by which the atonement is applied.

Ver. 17.

Orders are here given,

1. For the making of a laver, or font, of brass, a large vessel, that would contain a good quantity of water, which was to be set near the door of the tabernacle, #Ex 30:18. The foot of brass, it is supposed, was so contrived as to receive the water, which was let into it out of the laver by spouts or cocks. They then had a laver for the priests only to wash in, but to us now there is a fountain open for Judah and Jerusalem to wash in (#Zec 13:1), an inexhaustible *fountain of living water*, so that it is our own fault if we remain in our pollution.

2. For the using of this laver. Aaron and his sons must wash their hands and feet at this laver every time they went in to minister, every morning, at least, #Ex 30:19-21. For this purpose clean water was put into the laver fresh every day. Though they washed themselves ever so clean at their own houses, that would not serve; they must wash at the laver, because that was appointed for washing, #2Ki 5:12-14. This was designed,

(1.) To teach them purity in all their ministrations, and to possess them with a reverence of God's holiness and a dread of the pollutions of sin. They must not only wash and be made clean when they were first consecrated, but they must wash and be kept clean whenever they went in to minister. He only shall *stand in God's holy place* that has *clean hands and a pure heart*, #Ps 24:3-4. And,

(2.) It was to teach us, who are daily to attend upon God, daily to renew our repentance for sin and our believing application of the blood of Christ to our souls for remission; for in many things we daily offend and contract pollution, #Joh 13:8,10; Jas 3:2. This is the preparation we are to make for solemn ordinances. *Cleanse your hands and purify your hearts*, and then *draw nigh to God*, #Jas 4:8. To this law David alludes in #Ps 26:6, *I will wash my hands in innocency, so will I compass thine altar, O Lord.*

Ver. 22.

Directions are here given for the composition of the holy anointing oil and the incense that were to be used in the service of the tabernacle; with these God was to be honoured, and therefore he would appoint the making of them; for nothing comes to God but what comes *from* him.

1. The holy anointing oil is here ordered to be made up the ingredients, and their quantities, are prescribed, #Ex 30:23-25. Interpreters are not agreed concerning them; we are sure, in general, they were the best and fittest for the purpose; they must needs be so when the divine wisdom appointed them for the divine honour. It was to be compounded *secundum artem--after the art of the apothecary* (#Ex 30:25); the spices, which were in all nearly half a hundred weight, were to be infused in the oil, which was to be about five or six quarts, and then strained out, leaving an admirable sweet smell in the oil. With this oil God's tent and all the furniture of it were to be anointed; it was to be used also in the consecration of the priests, #Ex 30:26-30. It was to be continued *throughout their generations*, #Ex 30:31. The tradition of the Jews is that this very oil which was prepared by Moses himself lasted till near the captivity. But bishop Patrick shows the great improbability of the tradition, and supposes that it was repeated according to the prescription here, for Solomon was anointed with it (#1Ki 1:39), and some other of the kings; and all the high priests with such a quantity of it that it ran down to the skirts of the garments; and we read of the making up of this ointment (#1Ch 9:30): yet all agree that in the second temple there was none of this holy oil, which he supposes was owing to a notion they had that it was not lawful to make it up, Providence overruling that want as a presage of the better unction of the Holy Ghost in gospel times, the variety of whose gifts was typified by these several sweet ingredients. To show the excellency of holiness, there was that in the tabernacle which was in the highest degree grateful both to the sight and to the smell. Christ's name is said to be as *ointment poured forth* (#So 1:3), and the good name of Christians better than *precious ointment*, #Ec 7:1.
2. The incense which was burned upon the golden altar was prepared of sweet spices likewise, though not so rare and rich as those of which the anointing oil was compounded, #Ex 30:34-35. This was prepared once a year (the Jews say), a pound for each day of the year, and three pounds over for the day of atonement. When it was used, it was to be beaten very small: thus it pleased the Lord to bruise the Redeemer when he offered himself for a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour.
3. Concerning both these preparations the same law is here given (#Ex 30:32-33,37-38), that the like should not be made for any common use. Thus God would preserve in the people's minds a reverence for his own institutions, and teach us not to profane nor abuse any thing whereby God makes himself known, as those did who invented to themselves (for their common entertainments) instruments of music like David, #Am 6:5. It is a great affront to God to jest with sacred things, particularly to make sport with the word and ordinances of God, or to treat them with lightness, #Mt 22:5. That which is God's peculiar must not be used as a common thing.

