
Worship and Work

Exodus 30-31

Introduction All of us have bought or received Christmas presents that we had to put together. Hopefully we read the instructions. When you come to last page of the instructions, what do you have?

The People's Worship

Chapter 30

Moses brings us to worship. Here is instruction for the people's worship.

Prayer: the Altar of Incense

(30:1-10)

"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."

God instructs them to build an altar for the burning of incense. It is to be 18 inches square and 36 inches high. It is made of the now familiar acacia wood and overlaid with gold. It should have the set of golden rings so that it can be carried about on the gold overlaid poles.

It was to be placed in the outer room of the of the Tabernacle just in front of the curtain that divided the rooms.

Regular offerings were to be offered on it by the High Priest. Every morning and every evening, At the time when the lamp stand was tended, the incense was to be offered. Only the appointed incense was to be offered. The altar was to be sanctified, set apart each year with the blood of the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement.

Listen to Revelation 5:8 and 8:3-4. *And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. —and - And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel..* The altar of incense

points to Christ in our praying. The prayers of the saints filled with the person and promises of God rise up like sweet incense to the Lord. We take our place on our knees before the mercy seat and there *is no veil*. We pray and He is pleased.

Membership: the Census Tax (30:11-16)

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."

Moses is instructed to count the people and then to collect a tax from everyone of them. It is collected and it is a poll or head tax. This is not according to their means; everyone regardless of wealth was charged the same amount. It was an atonement for their lives. It paid the necessary price lest they be struck with a plague. The money collected was set aside to support the needs of the tabernacle.

We do not give like this. We do not pay the poll tax in the New Covenant. Because this is paid as an "atonement" it locates the fulfillment in the cross. Each person on the census rolls of the New Covenant have had their full penalty and "poll tax" paid by the blood of Christ. Thus the plague as punishment for sin is averted.

Cleansing: the Bronze Basin (30:17-21)

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."

Included in the instructions for the people's worship is the bronze basin for cleansing. This was a large bronze basin set on top of a bronze pedestal. It was to be filled with water changed daily. Every time a priest was to enter the Tabernacle, he was to wash his hands and feet in the basin. In the mess of slaughtered sacrifices, this was provided for washing off the splattered blood as well as the defiling dust and dirt.

This points us to the cleansing work of the cross, both in our salvation and in our daily walk. Jesus picks up the language as he serves the disciples in washing their feet. The bronze basin was not a place to take a bath, but a place to clean up from the work and filth of the day before entering into the Tabernacle. This is 1 John 1:9-10 for us. There, as we confess our sins as believer-priests, we are forgiven and cleansed.

Praise: the Anointing Oil and Incense (30:22-38)

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."

The Lord instructed them to make an oil and powder. The oil was for anointing and the powder as incense for burning. Both had special recipes that were not to be used in any other oil or incense. They were unique and reserved for use in the Tabernacle.

The oil was used for anointing to consecrate or set aside everything in the tabernacle service. This oil was made in fairly large quantities and was used lavishly throughout the tabernacle ministries.

The spice mix was burnt as incense. It gave off a fragrant smoke whose aroma filled the tabernacle. Whenever an incense was to be burned during the tabernacle ministries, this spice mix was to be used. It was set aside wholly for the Lord. The tabernacle, the place where God dwelt and met with His people, had its own, uniquely identifiable aroma.

This unique combination of oil and incense speaks of the praise of God's people. Our praying in the Spirit and by the Spirit rises up to God as praise to Him. 1 Peter 2:4-5 connects us to the Temple in these words, "*As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*" This reaches its culmination in Revelation 4-5 where the praying of the saints before the throne rises up as praise to Him.

The People's Work

Chapter 31

In closing this long section of instructions for the Tabernacle, God now identifies who will do the work and when the people will rest in God.

By their Servants**(31:1-11)**

The LORD said to Moses, ² "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, ³ and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, ⁴ to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, ⁵ in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft. ⁶ And behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. And I have given to all able men ability, that they may make all that I have commanded you: ⁷ the tent of meeting, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is on it, and all the furnishings of the tent, ⁸ the table and its utensils, and the pure lampstand with all its utensils, and the altar of incense, ⁹ and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the basin and its stand, ¹⁰ and the finely worked garments, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, for their service as priests, ¹¹ and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense for the Holy Place. According to all that I have commanded you, they shall do."

The servants who are to carry these instructions are identified. God names them and their families so that who they are is unmistakable. To them is committed the work of actually making and building what has been directed by God.

The servants who are to do this work are enabled by God. He puts His Holy Spirit in them so that their natural ability is enhanced by the Spirit's power. They have a creative ability and are granted creative freedom.

The servants are appointed to the task they have been enabled by the Spirit to do. They are publicly affirmed as being the craftsman who will, under God, design and lead and make what God has given.

The servants are ordered to do what they have been identified, appointed and enabled to do.

What was special and extraordinary in their day is now the common way ministry functions in the New Covenant. God has a pattern and design that generally shapes and forms ministry. He then gives His Spirit's gifts and abilities to people. He then gives those gifted people to church to do the work of ministry, equipped, enabled and exhorted by the leadership.

Because of the Sabbath**(31:12-17)**

¹² And the LORD said to Moses, ¹³ "You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you. ¹⁴ You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. ¹⁵ Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. ¹⁶ Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. ¹⁷ It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.'"

The worship and the work of God's people is a Sabbath focused. In the intricate instructions for all that enabled the e and drawing near of His people and the dwelling of God among His people, God highlighted the central feature of their covenant with Him. The Sabbath was the sign of their national covenant with God. Circumcision was the sign of their familial covenant with Abraham. But the

Sabbath was to be honored and never ever profaned. It was to be kept exactly as God required.

Why? Because at the heart of the gospel to which all this points is the Sabbath rest. No, not the Sabbath rest of a certain day of the week or a cycle of festival celebrations, but rather, the centrality of a rest because work is done. At the heart of all that God patterned and pointed to in the Tabernacle is the Sabbath rest. Israel celebrated a Sabbath that looked backward to God's rest after the completion of the creative works. Israel's Sabbaths point to a future work that will be finished when Jesus came and finished the saving acts of God. In Jesus' death and resurrection, the saving work is done. Now, we have entered and do enter that rest by faith. We believe that what the Tabernacle pointed to in a substitutionary, penal sacrifice for our sin is now our Sabbath rest. We rest because has finished the work.

Conclusion

¹⁸ And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

Lest we forget, all that has been given from Exodus 20 through Exodus 31 is given from the fearful and fenced mountain of Exodus 19. Into Moses' hand is given the two tablets with Ten Commandments.

You may take your place as a cleansed person before the throne of God to lift of the sweet incense of your praying, your sin tax paid and your soul enabled for serving and savoring God in ministry only by entering into the Sabbath rest. Hear then the exhortation of Hebrews 4:6-16.

So God's rest is there for people to enter, but those who first heard this good news failed to enter because they disobeyed God. ⁷ So God set another time for entering his rest, and that time is today. God announced this through David much later in the words already quoted: "Today when you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts."

⁸ Now if Joshua had succeeded in giving them this rest, God would not have spoken about another day of rest still to come. ⁹ So there is a special rest still waiting for the people of God. ¹⁰ For all who have entered into God's rest have rested from their labors, just as God did after creating the world. ¹¹ So let us do our best to enter that rest. But if we disobey God, as the people of Israel did, we will fall.

¹² For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. ¹³ Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable.

¹⁴ So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. ¹⁵ This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

