

Elder Vernon Johnson
Colors

Gold -The King's Incense Altar

In the scriptures there is a strong correlation between the color or metal, gold, and the subject of kings and kingdoms.

In the furniture of the tabernacle that God instructed Moses and the children of Israel to build in the wilderness there was an altar of incense overlaid with gold:

Ex. 30:1 "And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: of shittim wood shalt thou make it.

2 A cubit shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; foursquare shall it be: and two cubits shall be the height thereof: the horns thereof shall be of the same.

3. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, the top thereof, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns thereof; and thou shalt make unto it a crown of gold round about.

4. And two golden rings shalt thou make to it under the crown of it, by the two corners thereof, upon the two sides of it shalt thou make it; and they shall be for places for the staves to bear it withal.

5. And thou shalt make the staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold.

6. And thou shalt put it before the veil that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee.

7. And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it.

8. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations.

9 Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon.

10. And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto the LORD."

While the main thrust of the above points us to Christ in his role as High Priest, it also points us to role as King, hearing the petitions of his subjects and either granting or denying their requests.

There are several points we make from the above passage:

1. The altar consisted of two types of materials. Since the altar is a type of Christ, this points us to both the fleshly nature of Christ and to his Deity.
2. Incense was burned upon the altar. This was a sweet smell unto God. As we will see the incense points us to the intercessory work of Christ.
3. The incense was to be a perpetual incense. Christ ever liveth and maketh intercession for us (Rom. 8:34).
4. The altar was crowned with gold. Since the altar is a type of Christ, we find that Christ is crowned with glory and honor:
 - a. Heb. 2:7 "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands:"
 - b. Heb. 2:9 "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."
5. The incense altar was set before the mercy seat and the ark of the covenant. This shows us that Christ's intercession on our behalf is based on the covenant work of Christ and the mercy of God.
6. An atonement was made upon the horns of the incense altar. This teaches us that it took the atoning blood of Christ for our prayers to find acceptance before God.
7. When Aaron dressed and lit the lamps, he was to burn sweet incense upon the altar. The lamps show forth the shining forth of the lives of Christ's disciples in his Church kingdom. Notice the continual intercessory work of Christ on our behalf as we try to worship and serve him in his church.

Next, we go to Rev. Chapter 8 where the above is unfolded for us: 8:1 "And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. 2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. 3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. 5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of

the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake."

This passage points us back to the Old Testament tabernacle service in which the High Priest interceded on behalf of the people. In the Old Testament service there was a golden altar, a golden censer, a brazen altar with fire, and incense that was burned in the golden censer upon the golden altar. Also the throne in the Old Testament tabernacle service was a mercy seat that set upon the Ark of the Covenant. This service took place in the Most Holy Place.

While all the priests (the sons of Aaron) had censers with which to burn incense only the High Priest was to burn incense on the golden altar: Ex. 30:7 "And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. 8 And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations." This represented the intercessory work of the Lord Jesus Christ:

1. Rom. 8:34 "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." 2. Heb. 7:25 "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Next this incense was burned with fire from off the altar. God warned the children of Israel that they were not to burn strange fire:

1. Ex. 30:9 "Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon."

2. Lev. 10:1 "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. 2 And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD."

The fire that was to be used to burn incense was fire from off the brazen altar. It was upon the brazen altar that the sacrifice was burned. This represented the sacrificial atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is on the basis of his sacrificial atonement as the Lamb of God on the cross of Calvary that Jesus Christ, our High Priest, intercedes on behalf of his elect.

This intercession of the High Priest came with the prayers of the saints: Luke 1:10 "And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense." Our prayers gain acceptance with God because of Christ's sacrificial atonement and because of his intercession on our behalf.

Thus the angel that stood at the altar having a golden censer is the Lord Jesus Christ in his High Priestly office interceding on behalf of the saints. Here he offered up much incense upon the golden altar with the prayers of the saints. The sacrifice on the brazen altar is frequently said to be a sweet savour unto God. The incense that was burnt on the golden altar was sweet incense. Thus God is pleased with the sacrificial atonement of Jesus Christ and he is pleased that his people pray unto him because of the intercessory work of our High Priest Jesus Christ.

It is important to remember that the smoke of the incense comes with the prayers of the saints and ascends up before God. Thus our prayers are fragrancd with Christ's intercessory work. It is his intercessory work that gives the sweet odour to our prayers that God receives.

"And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth." When a person is born of the Spirit he is sprinkled with the blood of Jesus (fire of the altar) and the Holy Spirit takes up His abode in his heart making intercessions that cannot be uttered: Rom. 8:26 "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."