

# The Servant



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*The purpose of this newsletter is to pass along information and ideas to help the Lord's servants as they minister to others. Feel free to use any of it in your ministry*

## Where God Dwells

*"Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell in"*  
Ex. 25:8

God provides a pattern and a parts list for the tabernacle. Included are things the Israelites carried out of Egypt when they spoiled the Egyptians. They did not come out empty handed. As the Roman Triumph a thousand years later displayed the riches and spoils of conquered nations through the streets of Rome, Jesus Christ "led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men" (Eph. 4:8). These Hebrew slaes, now free, were weighted down with riches which they gave "willingly" (vs. 2) for the construction of the Holy Tabernacle. Gold, silver, and brass, along with blue, purple and scarlet colored cloth, ram's and badger skins, oils, spices, precious and semi-precious stones are among the articles to be used in the Tabernacle. A closer look at these "articles" will reveal that they are actually "articles of faith." Each one is a picture of something sacred in the life of the believer.  
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## Holy Smoke

It rose from the altar of incense, which sat before the veil of the ark of the testimony. It was as close as an ordinary priest could get to the holy of holies. It was in the heart of the tabernacle. That is where prayer must be in the assembly and in our personal life. It must be in the center and rising from the heart. Morning and evening, a specially prepared and sacred incense was placed on this table of prayer. From its golden surface, sweet smelling smoke would rise up from the holy place to the heavens.

The word incense means a "burning or fuming." In order for incense to work it must burn. Cold prayers are not prayers at all. Real prayer must be on fire. On the way to the table of incense a priest must stop at the brazen altar where he would borrow a burning coal and carry it to the center of the sanctuary. Then he would gently blow or pour the consecrated compound made of the ingredients listed in Exodus 30. The recipe is obscure enough to protect its patent, and yet plain enough to make it educationally potent. It included a warning not to manufacture or make merchandise of God's holy things.

No thing in the modern assembly is more important, sacred, or centermost than this now invisible altar of prayer. Like the brazen altar and the life-washing laver, it sits before the New Testament table holding the bread and wine. Before we partake of the wine and the bread and pass it from hand to hand, we each must pass by the cross of Christ (brazen altar), which is the first article of faith, both then and now. Both cross and altar were a place of slaughter where blood was shed and the fire of judgment burned. There at the cross, Jesus gave his life for me. At the cross, as with the brazen altar, I find not only the fire of my faith, but also the sweetest ingredient for the apothecary of prayer. The ancient formula included stacte, onycha, gabanum and pure frankincense, which are called "sweet spices." Today the most important, significant, and sweetest ingredient of prayer is my Savior's name. Jesus is the sweetest name I know.

The holy place in the tabernacle was illuminated by the light of the golden candlestick. The Holy Spirit must illuminate our assemblies and our hearts or they will be dark. That light enables us to glance over at the showbread which speaks of the eternal

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### Golden Altar

Oh, rise my praise and accolade  
Return ye from whence ye came  
And like an army on parade  
March as a Triumph to that Name.

Oh, rise ye banners and unfurl  
Victory's flags that won the day  
As incense off the altar curl  
I in the Name of Jesus pray.

Oh, rise sweet smoke on Angel's wings  
Up from a gratitude for grace  
And many thanks for all the things  
Thou has sent to bless this place.

With the saints betwixt two altars  
With warm hearts that once were cold  
Now past judgment, faith n'er falters  
But humbly stands before the gold.

promise and word of God. And there before the holy of holies and the Testimony (which is still in the ark, hidden by the mercy seat, and covered with blood) is the place of prayer. Never was our Savior more “incensed” than when he found it to be otherwise and that man had made his Father’s house, which was meant to be a house of prayer, into a den of thieves.

Not only were they stealing from the people and making merchandise of holy things, they were stealing from God the glory he deserves, and worship which he desires in spirit and in truth. If God placed prayer in the heart of the tabernacle, and prayer is so dear to the heart of God, why is this altar so hard to find in our meetings and ministry? Why do so few of those who say they believe in the “priesthood of believers” fail to take their place beside this golden thing? And when prayers are offered, where is the warmth, the heat, the fire? We need not wait for others to answer. We each may and must come to the sacred inner sanctum of prayer and witness a smoke rise of a glowing and grateful heart. ■

*(“Where” continued)*

The tabernacle was a wonder in the wilderness. Each part followed a pattern and each part had its place and purpose. The tabernacle was filled with beautiful things. The most important of all, of course, is God. Take God out and all we are left with is an old dead religion, a totem more than a tabernacle. Without God, the tabernacle is a pile of curtains, curtain rods, silver sockets and acacia wood. God told Moses to “Make **me** a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.” The tabernacle is really all about Him wanting to be in the center of our lives.

The same can be said about the assembly. It is really all about Him and yet, we make it so much about us. Whether it is talk about programs or principles, let us remember that the right pattern always points to a person, not to the pattern. Jesus is all the glory. The tabernacle spoke of Jesus and his atonement for our sins. “*Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*” Mt. 18:20 ■

## Sacred Places

The pulpit should be a sacred and holy place. Those who speak of “platform ministry” have probably never been called to preach. By using the word “platform” they are really bringing it down, rather than holding it up. In preaching, it is not the man who is lifted up, but the Bible. The word is the thing that is sacred and makes the pulpit an awesome place. It is the “Thus saith the LORD” that makes it so special. Every minister would do well to visit the holy place of the tabernacle to learn what real ministry is. The holy place is found between the outer court and the holy of holies.

The ministry of the priest was to help bring people close to God. Prophets, on the other hand, help bring God before the people. The church needs both spiritual priests and spirit-filled prophets. Notice the furnishings there in that holy place. Each article was simple but sacred. There was the table of showbread, the altar of incense, and the candlestick. All three speak of the ministry of Christ. They also speak of the ministry of the minister. No preacher should step into the holy place of the pulpit without first having fire. The table of incense would not be what it was intended to be without fire. The burning coals were what made the incense smoke and rise to heaven. No strange fire was to be used. The fire must come from the brazen altar, which in turn came from God. Nothing is colder than coals carried from carnal altars and worldly wisdom. One cannot stand like Peter, warming cold hearts by this world’s fires and expect to have anything to say to a world that needs to know God.

Second, there must be light. The candlestick illuminated the place. Good preaching makes things clear and more easily seen and understood. It does not make simple things complex. It is always more clear than clever.

Thirdly, there is the bread. A good sermon must set the bread of life before the hearer. Preaching must not just be a spectacle of heat and light, it must also feed the soul. Faith comes by hearing the word of God. In the tabernacle, the bread must be made fresh every seven days. To make the Lord’s Day like any other day is to make it less than God meant it to be.

While every child of God has a right to pray “give us this day our daily bread” when speaking about daily needs, never is our need greater than it is on the Lord’s Day to both worship God and for our souls to feed on him.

If the lot should fall on us to minister in such a sacred place this coming Lord’s Day, may we humbly take our place and be even more humbled as we realize we are standing on holy ground. ■

## God’s Word

*“Thus saith the LORD ‘Let my people go that they may serve me.’ Ex.8:1*

The King of Egypt spent much of his life preparing for what he imagined to be the after-life. The pyramids and embalming fluids were sincere attempts to live forever. Little did he realize how close he was to the truth and to heaven when God’s servant stood before his throne with a message from the Almighty and Great I AM. How we respond to the WORD of GOD determines our eternal destiny. Pharaoh is gone. Perhaps his corpse is encased in glass. God alone knows what became of the soul of the one who said “Who is the LORD, that I should obey him?”

**1. The Pattern-** Thus saith the LORD. God’s word should be the template for everything we do, and “Thus saith the LORD” the answer for why we do what we do.

**2. The Pardon-** “Let my people go.” God wants to set the prisoner free.

**3. The Purpose-** “That they may serve me.” Hollywood usually leaves this part out. We are saved to serve.



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