

The Alter of Incense

Ezekiel 28

INTRODUCTION: We are a series of sermons where we are looking at the Tabernacle old Testament Tabernacle as a pattern for prayer.

Remember Jesus said - **Luke 19:46 (ESV)**

⁴⁶ ... “It is written, ‘My house shall be a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a den of robbers.”

So whatever else the temple or tabernacle might be - it is to be a **HOUSE OF PRAYER**.

Now what is the House of Prayer after Pentecost? YOU ARE! Do you not know you are temples of the Holy Spirit.

PRAYER GUIDE - So in this series we are looking back at the prototype, the shadow, of all we are to be as a people motivated by prayer.

Now when the temple was right - the glory of God came upon it, but when the temple was wrong, you could write **ICHOBAD** on the threshold meaning, “The Glory has Departed”.

I wonder if there are some Christians in here this morning and you are saved, if you die you’ll go to heaven, **but for all practical purposes the GLORY has departed from your life**. The touch and the presence of God is absent. This series is about getting that back!

We have been examining the furniture in the Tabernacle.

- The **Brazen Altar** - where sacrifices were made, reminds us that we can only pray by way of the cross of Christ - the lamb of God who takes away our sin.
- The **Laver** - where washing took place symbolizing the appropriation of grace. We said - if we cherish iniquity in our heart the Lord will not hear us... but the fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.
- The **7 branch Candlestick** which is symbolic of the 7 fold Spirit of God - We talked about Praying in the Holy Spirit. If you missed that one get on the Maximum Life podcast and listen to it. One of the most important sermons you’ll ever hear.
- **The Table of Shewbread** - The Word of God.
- **The Alter of Incense** - Points to the Worship of God

COMMENTARY ON THE ALTER OF INCENSE - Daily life in the ancient world was anything but clean and sanitary, especially in agrarian societies. Living in close proximity to their animals, the smells and other elements of animal life objectionable to the human senses could not be escaped.

On account of this unpleasantness, incense was burned in the king's presence to mask the odors of the livestock and to pay tribute to his position. It is therefore not a surprise that incense was also burned before the one, true creator God in the tabernacle of Israel, which was His earthly throne room under the old covenant. Exodus 30:1–10 describes the altar of incense that was placed alongside the lamp-stand and the table of showbread in the Holy Place outside the Most Holy Place (40:1–8).

The Alter of Incense was a significant piece of furniture because it acknowledged the *actual* presence of God and the need to approach him as a Sovereign Ruler in Authority.

- **Malachi 1:11 (ESV)** ¹¹ For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place *incense will be offered to my name*, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts.

So incense speaks of the *Kingly Worship* of God.

WORSHIP - A Big Deal in scripture for a number of reasons.

- **The First Sin** - Not the least of which is the fact that the first sin was a sin of worship. When theologians speak of original sin, they are typically referring to the sin of Adam. But the real original sin was the sin of Lucifer (or Satan)

The bible teaches that before God created man he created untold numbers of angels. There were different kinds of angels. Cherubim, Seraphim, there were ruling Angels called Arch Angels. There were three ruling angels and their names are given in scripture -

- **Michael** - Answered the *Prayers* of God's people.
- **Gabriel** - Brought the *Word* of the Lord (when Jesus was to be born Gabriel declared it)
- **Lucifer** - Carried administered the Praise and *Worship* of God.

INTERESTINGLY:

- Every **Worship service** has 3 parts - the Word, Prayer, and Worship.
- Your **Quiet time** with God should have 3 parts - the Word, Prayer and Worship.

Lucifer fell and became **Satan** and took 1/3 of Heaven's angels with him and they became **demons**.

We are told how and why Satan was cast out of Heaven in Ezekiel 28.

TEXT: Ezekiel 28:11-19 (NASB95)

¹¹ Again the word of the LORD came to me saying, ¹² “Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “***You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.***”

Now whatever the King of Tyre might have been, he was not perfect, he was not full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

13 "You were in Eden, the garden of God;

Now the King of Tyre wasn't in the Garden of Eden - so Ezekiel is speaking beyond the earthly King to the power behind him.

Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald;

13b. And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, Was in you. On the day that you were created They were prepared.

*These words are words that describe **musical instruments**.*

- **TABERETS** - That is a percussion instrument. Tambourines.
- **PIPES** - that is a wind instrument or flute.

*So Lucifer could offer worship with Sound and Percussion. **By the way, so can you. You have a voice and you have percussion.***

14 "You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I placed you *there*. You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire. 15 "You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created Until unrighteousness was found in you. 16 "**By the abundance of your trade** You were internally filled with violence,

That phrase in the Hebrew speaks of ***taking a prophet from the trade of another.***

EXAMPLE: If Pastor Dan had a clothing store and I worked for him and sold you a suit for \$300, but kept back \$50 for myself... that's what Lucifer did.

ILLUSTRATION: So Lucifer was suppose to receive the Worship of creation and pass it on to God. But he decided to keep back some for himself. **He embezzled the worship of God.**

16b. And you sinned; Therefore I have cast you as profane From the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the stones of fire.

So Satan was Heaven's Worship Leader -

When Satan fell God didn't replace him with another angel - God created you:

- The image bearer to be the reflector of God's Glory.
- God gave you built in instruments, built into you to bring worship to Him.

So do see why Satan hates you so much? You took his job.

- **NOW WHEN JESUS CAME** - what was the main thing Satan tempted Jesus to do?
Bow down and worship him.

Notice Satan didn't only want Jesus to worship him in His heart, he wanted Jesus to EXPRESS worship. Because Satan knew that true **worship MUST be expressed.**

Let me show you how Satan is still doing this:

Back in Exodus Miriam wrote a song of Praise about God. It was called the Song of Moses:

- **SONG OF MOSES - Exodus 15:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ "Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?"

- **SONG OF THE BEAST - IN the Last Days: Revelation 13:3–4 (ESV)**

³ One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. ⁴ And **they worshiped the dragon**, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they **worshiped the beast**, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

Well the Bible says that Jesus comes back and destroys Satan, the Beast and all his followers. And at the end we see....

- **SONG OF THE LAMB - Revelation 15:2–4 (ESV)**

² And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. ³ And they sing the **song of Moses**, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! ⁴ Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."

Satan's greatest desire is to get you to stop worshipping God and eventually to get you to start worshipping Him. **Can I be honest with you - for some of you, he's winning.** My greatest desire for you is to set you free to worship God like you've never been set free before.

LET'S TALK ABOUT YOUR WORSHIP.

What is it? Well we've talked about it in technical terms before - worth ship, appraising the value of God. But let's talk about it in really practical terms.

Worship Expressed is when the MIND believes the TRUTH about God and the SOUL and BODY expresses feelings about God.

John 4:23–24 (ESV)

²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

Notice the S in SPIRIT is lower case, this isn't referring to the Holy Spirit, but rather your Spirit. It is speaking of internal feelings, based on truth being expressed externally.

Worship happens when you are reflecting on Truth in such a way that you feel it and express it.

That's why the STYLE and the CONTENT of music does matter.

Worship happens at the intersections of TRUTH and EMOTIONS.

ILLUSTRATION: Suppose we found the greatest worship leader in all of China and brought them here to lead us in worship. Would it work? No! Because it's not in our language. ***Your emotions can't be stirred by what your mind can't understand.***

That's why we do two types of services - we are trying to offer an opportunity to worship in your heart language.

ILLUSTRATION: One of our ladies, a dear friend said to me recently - well our people just aren't that expressive. Ironically, it was just before the Florida/Georgia game. I said, "let's be honest, they aren't that expressive about God".

Here's the deal - I'm not getting on to you about that.

The truth is, you have to know you have permission. Frankly, you have to be coached and taught a bit. Let me try.

If you say, "Pastor, I've never been one to lift my hands, clap, or really engage in worship, maybe you don't even sing much....but you believe it's something you should do", this is what I would suggest.

1. REMEMBER -

Romans 12:1 (ESV)

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

By the MERCIES of God.... Present your bodies....

It begins with the Mercies of God.

Luke 7:36–48 (ESV)

³⁶ One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. ³⁷ And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸ and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. ³⁹ Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." ⁴⁰ And Jesus answering said to him, "**Simon, I have something to say to you.**" And he answered, "Say it, Teacher." ⁴¹ "**A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.** ⁴² **When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?**" ⁴³ Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "**You have judged rightly.**" ⁴⁴ Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "**Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.** ⁴⁵ **You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet.** ⁴⁶ **You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.** ⁴⁷ **Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.**" ⁴⁸ And he said to her, "**Your sins are forgiven.**"

Here is the deal - WE'VE ALL BEEN FORGIVEN MUCH. SOME JUST FORGET TOO EASILY.

2. REFLECT -

Study and reflect on TRUTH.

You see, worship doesn't begin with the song, it ends with the song. The idea is you have been remembering the mercies of God all week... you have been reflecting on truth... and then when you hear a song that echoes all you have been meditating on... you can't help but worship. You see?

Sometimes people get the idea that because they are educated they ought not get too loud in their praise. Friend, I praise because I'm educated.

- **The more you study, the more you should worship. If your study doesn't lead to worship... WHO ARE YOU STUDYING???**
- **I remember growing up at Fellowship Missionary Baptist church... the worship was so pure and wonderful... those people were not educated... but they**

REMEMBERED... and the REFLECT on the truth they were given... and oh my it was glorious.

3. RESPOND - That is Express - Try different ways of expressing worship.
Add to your vocabulary means of grace.

Worship - is very simply Love Expressed

EXPRESS YOUR LOVE TO GOD. Everyone doesn't have to express their love to God in the same way, but we all need to express our love to God.

I'm not advocating any particular way - but there needs to be something.

There 7 Primary Hebrew Words translated Praise .

1. Todah - A Thanksgiving Choir - Worship is always communal, choir remind us that we are joining in with others from all place, all times, and all types (angel worship with us).
2. Barak - to Kneel in Thanksgiving (It is appropriate, very appropriate to kneel before God in worship).
3. Tehillah - To sing a song of Thanksgiving (Do you sing when you pray? How many of you incorporate singing into your quiet time?)
4. Halal - to give thanks by being clamorously foolish (its the word for hallelujah)
5. Yadah - to give thanks with extended hands. Did you know we are commanded to lift holy hands unto the Lord. It is a sign of recognition, reception, and surrender.
6. Zamar - to give thanks with a musical instrument - Praise him on the bass, guitar, drums.
7. Shabach - to give thanks with a loud tone (shout) - I thank God that I'm in a Baptist church where people still shout occasionally.

There is one verse in the Old Testament has 4 of the 7 Hebrew Words

Psalm 100:4 (ESV)

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving (Todah - a Choir of Thanksgiving), and his courts with praise (Tehilah)- Singing Songs of Praise)! Give thanks (Yadah - to extend hands) to him; bless (Barak - Bow Before) his name!