



INCENSE OFFERINGS AND PRAYER

1. The golden altar was located in front of the veil that separated the holy place from the holy of holies (Exod. 30:6; 40:5, 26–27).
2. It was used to make incense offerings to God (Exod. 30:7; 40:27; 1 Chron. 6:49; 2 Chron. 26:18; Luke 1:11).
3. This altar of wood and gold was a copy of the golden altar of incense in heaven.
4. Incense was made from equal amounts of stacte, onycha, galbanum, and frankincense (Exod. 30:34–38; 37:29). These fragrant spices were finely pounded and thoroughly mixed together, producing a fragrance like perfume when burned. About a pound of incense was burnt every day, half a pound in the morning and another half pound in the evening.
5. The gently rising smoke of the incense represents the prayers of the saints ascending to heaven (Psalm 141:1–2; cf. Heb. 5:7; 13:15; 1 Peter 2:5).
6. Incense was burnt on the golden altar every morning (*babboqer babboqer*) and every evening (*ha'arbayim bên*)—twice a day (Exod. 30:7–8; 2 Chron. 13:11. Cf. Luke 1:10; Acts 3:1).
7. Worshipers prayed in the temple "at the hour of the incense offering" (Luke 1:10). The people gathered in the courts of the men and the women. The ninth hour was "the hour of prayer" in the temple: "Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer" (Acts 3:1). The evening incense offering, then, took place between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. When the temple lay in ruins, pious Jews still prayed "about the time of the evening offering"—facing Jerusalem (Dan. 9:21; cf. 6:10). Cornelius was praying in his house "during the ninth hour" (Acts 10:3, 30).
8. Burning incense in the holy place is paralleled by burning incense before God's throne in heaven (Rev. 8:3–4). The heavenly incense also represents the prayers of the saints (Rev. 5:8; 8:3–4).

The temple service on earth closely parallels the temple service in heaven (Rev. 8–11). The golden altar on earth is a copy of the one in heaven—the latter mentioned seven times in Revelation (6:9; 8:3 *bis*, 5; 9:13; 14:18; 16:7). Vessels and implements used with it are also mentioned: golden bowls (5:8), incense (5:8; 8:3, 4), and a golden censer (8:3, 5). This altar is the closest piece of furniture to God's throne. Much incense is offered by angels, representing the prayers of the saints alive on earth (Rev. 5:8; 8:3–5). Perhaps the amount of incense burnt is proportional to the number of prayers offered.

Twenty-eight golden bowls held by angels surround the throne and represent the value of our prayers to God. The incense represents the prayers of the saints. The fragrance represents how pleasing our prayers are to God. The closeness of the golden altar to God's throne represents the great importance of our prayers to God. The incense burnt in God's sight shows our prayers are not forgotten. They're remembered twice a day in heaven at the morning and evening offerings. They're called memorial offerings (Acts 10:4, 31). And the highest angels in heaven, those closest to the throne, offer them on our behalf. Our prayers are remembered twice every single day in God's palace! The morning offering honors prayers made after the evening offering; the evening offering honors prayers made after the morning offering. They're not allowed to accumulate for long before being recognized. Anyone near the throne can smell the perfume filling the heavenly holy of holies. It's a gift from you to the Great King. You can give gifts of incense to God and to Jesus on a regular basis right now. Every prayer you offer adds to the fragrance that fills the throne room. This fragrance reminds those in heaven—men, angels, demons, Satan, Jesus, and God—of the prayers being offered on earth. Do you want angels to burn incense on your behalf in heaven?