

DEVOTIONAL 7



# GOD IN OUR MIDST

# EXODUS 27:20-21; 29:10-18, 31-34; 30:1-10

<sup>27:20</sup> “You shall command the people of Israel that they bring to you pure beaten olive oil for the light, that a lamp may regularly be set up to burn.

<sup>21</sup> In the tent of meeting, outside the veil that is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening to morning before the LORD. It shall be a statute forever to be observed throughout their generations by the people of Israel.

<sup>29:10</sup> “Then you shall bring the bull before the tent of meeting. Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the bull. <sup>11</sup> Then you shall kill the bull before the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting, <sup>12</sup> and shall take part of the blood of the bull and put it on the horns of the altar with your finger, and the rest of the blood you shall pour out at the base of the altar. <sup>13</sup> And you shall take all the fat that covers the entrails, and the long lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, and burn them on the altar.

<sup>14</sup> But the flesh of the bull and its skin and its dung you shall burn with fire outside the camp; it is a sin offering.

<sup>15</sup> “Then you shall take one of the rams, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram, <sup>16</sup> and you shall kill the ram and shall take its blood and throw it against the sides of the altar.

<sup>17</sup> Then you shall cut the ram into pieces, and wash its entrails and its legs, and put them with its pieces and its head, <sup>18</sup> and burn the whole ram on the altar. It is a burnt offering to the LORD. It is a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the LORD.

<sup>29:31</sup> “You shall take the ram of ordination and boil its flesh in a holy place.

<sup>32</sup> And Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram and the bread that is in the basket in the entrance of the

tent of meeting. <sup>33</sup> They shall eat those things with which atonement was made at their ordination and consecration, but an outsider shall not eat of them, because they are holy. <sup>34</sup> And if any of the flesh for the ordination or of the bread remain until the morning, then you shall burn the remainder with fire. It shall not be eaten, because it is holy.

<sup>30:1-10</sup> “You shall make an altar on which to burn incense; you shall make it of acacia wood. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> You shall make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it. Every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it, <sup>8</sup> and when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it, a regular incense offering before the LORD throughout your generations. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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.”

# DAY 1

EXODUS 27:20-21

<sup>27:20</sup> “You shall command the people of Israel that they bring to you pure beaten olive oil for the light, that a lamp may regularly be set up to burn. <sup>21</sup> In the tent of meeting, outside the veil that is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening to morning before the LORD. It shall be a statute forever to be observed throughout their generations by the people of Israel.

Jesus’s stunning declaration that he is the light of the world culminated and defined centuries of history, and identified him as God. From the beginning, God revealed himself as essential light. He spoke to what was void of light, unformed, and unable to sustain life by saying, “Let there be light.” The living Word that creates what it speaks began his good work of creation by separating light from darkness. It was the first day, the birthday of a world God was creating where he could dwell with sons and daughters made in his image.

All of us know the sad events that destroyed the family fellowship and banished Adam and Eve from their beautiful home in Eden. We all know the continuing drama of God’s judgments on rebel sinners who loved darkness in the stories of Cain, the flood, and the tower of Babel. Eventually, God revealed his plan to call out a people to be his treasured possession, a light to the nations. He would make a binding covenant with them, teach them his ways, and instruct them to build a tabernacle where he would dwell, an earthly picture of a heavenly reality. Each piece of furniture and each ritual was carefully prescribed to portray the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

One of the prescribed pieces in the tabernacle was a large, golden lampstand placed just inside the holy place where the priests performed their ritual duties. You can imagine how penetratingly dark it was inside a tent constructed with layers of heavy woven curtains overlaid with animal skins! The lamps allowed the priests to do their work and illumined the showbread, a picture of God’s continual provision for his people. The lampstand itself was fashioned from pure gold, not molded like the golden calf but hammered until it was pure and formed to represent an almond tree with a trunk, branches, and buds. The lampstand supported seven lamps, fueled by pure beaten olive oil. Twice each day the priests filled the lamps so that there was continuous light in the tabernacle.

When Jesus said he was the light of the world, he was saying the provisional lampstand was no longer needed. The true, eternal, perpetual Light is here! What was promised and longed for has entered our world. His stunning words still pierce the darkness of our hearts and our world. How we respond reveals our character and our destiny. "Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your heart." (Heb. 3:15)

## PRAYER

*Jesus, Light of the World, thank you for coming, for finding us in our darkness. Sometimes we feel overwhelmed by the darkness around us and within us. Your promise never to leave us or forsake us sustains us and gives us peace, joy, and hope as we keep reflecting your light day by day. Thank you for your Word, Lord! It is truly the lamp for our feet and the light for our path. Help us follow it so that your Name can be known and honored. In Jesus's name, Amen.*

# DAY 2

EXODUS 29:10-14

<sup>10</sup> “Then you shall bring the bull before the tent of meeting. Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the bull. <sup>11</sup> Then you shall kill the bull before the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting, <sup>12</sup> and shall take part of the blood of the bull and put it on the horns of the altar with your finger, and the rest of the blood you shall pour out at the base of the altar. <sup>13</sup> And you shall take all the fat that covers the entrails, and the long lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, and burn them on the altar. <sup>14</sup> But the flesh of the bull and its skin and its dung you shall burn with fire outside the camp; it is a sin offering.

Have you ever had to sacrifice something? I’m not talking about sacrificing time to do something you *need* to do as opposed to something you *want* to do. Or about choosing one set of circumstances over another. I’m referring to the kind of sacrifice Exodus 29:10-18 talks about.

Most of us have not killed an animal with our hands, especially a bull, so reading about animal sacrifices in the Old Testament can be a barrier to us. We don’t have tangible experiences to help us understand what it would be like. It’s so distant from our current cultural moment. So what does God want to teach us through these sacrifices?

One of the patterns we see throughout the Old Testament is God showing the Israelites what it meant to be his people, their agreeing to live as people of YHWH, and then shortly thereafter their falling away or sinning against God and offering another sacrifice. This pattern appears not only in this section (think golden calf coming up) but it’s part of the YHWH-followers’ journey as well until Christ came and offered his life as a once-for-all sacrifice.

God has laid out for followers of Jesus what it looks like to walk with him. Perhaps not in as great a detail as some of the Old Testament laws and statutes, but pretty clearly throughout the New Testament. As followers of Jesus, we acknowledge his authority and power (Matt. 21-22), we repent of our wrongdoing and sin (Rom 1-3), and confess to God and others how we have wronged him (Mark 1:5; Matt 3:6; 1 John 1:9).

It’s that last reference in 1 John 1:9 that’s a key link between sacrificing a bull and confessing our sins: “If we confess our sins, *he is* faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Who does *he* refer to? In the context, he refers to Jesus—Jesus,

the faithful one, was the sacrifice offered to cleanse us of our sin and present us as righteous before the Father. In the same way, the Israelites were called to offer a bull to YHWH *for their sins*. YHWH was just and would offer forgiveness of their sins and righteousness as his people. Yet this practice had to continue because the sinning of the Israelites would continue. Not so with Jesus. With Jesus, we bow our knee to him, call him Lord and Savior, and follow him in everything. He is just to forgive, for he is the forgiver and the sacrifice, all in one. Praise be to God!

## PRAYER

*Father in heaven, thank you that you sent your Son as the perfect sin offering for us. We are forgiven of our sin, cleansed, and called righteous NOT because of what we have done or because of our status or position, but because of Jesus Christ, the saving Messiah. Praise be to you today as we live out that reality as followers of Jesus. Give us the grace we have received to continue in this walk. In Jesus's name, we pray. Amen.*

# DAY 3

EXODUS 29:15-18

<sup>15</sup> “Then you shall take one of the rams, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram, <sup>16</sup> and you shall kill the ram and shall take its blood and throw it against the sides of the altar. <sup>17</sup> Then you shall cut the ram into pieces, and wash its entrails and its legs, and put them with its pieces and its head, <sup>18</sup> and burn the whole ram on the altar. It is a burnt offering to the LORD. It is a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the LORD.

Consider Frances Havergal’s hymn “Take My Life and Let It Be,” whose first line reads, “Take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord to thee.” This is sacrificial language. Over the course of the hymn she speaks of offering her hands, her feet, her lips, her intellect, her money in dedication to the Lord. In many ways, this song of dedication reflects the heart of the whole burnt offering described in our verses today. The entire burning of the animal signifies the giving over of one’s whole life back to God—the complete dedication and renewed commitment/loyalty of the worshiper. It is a powerful image that speaks to this dedication being a pleasing aroma to the Lord.

It does make one stop and think about the nature of our lives and what parts of our burnt offering we are holding back? Are we holding back money? Relationships? Sexuality? Accomplishments? Time? It is the WHOLE burnt offering that is pleasing to the Lord.

But that leads us to our second observation. The order in which these offerings come is important. The whole burnt offering that we are looking at today *follows* the sin offering that we looked at yesterday. This is the pattern that we see all over scripture—grace precedes law; what God does for us comes before our response. The sin offering is for the justification of the sinner; the whole burnt offering is a response to that justification. The upshot is that no matter how hard one tries, we cannot be justified through our dedication. We become dedicated because we are justified. This is exactly the pattern that Paul picks up in Romans 12:1: “*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.*” Note the order: (1) in view of the mercies of God, (2) present your (whole) bodies.

Do you know the mercies of God in Christ? He has paid it all, all to him I owe.

*Take my life and let it be  
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.  
Take my moments and my days,  
Let them flow in endless praise.*

*Take my hands and let them move  
At the impulse of Thy love.  
Take my feet and let them be  
Swift and beautiful for Thee.*

*Take my voice and let me sing,  
Always, only for my King.  
Take my lips and let them be  
Filled with messages from Thee.*

*Take my silver and my gold,  
Not a mite would I withhold.  
Take my intellect and use  
Every pow'r as Thou shalt choose.*

*Take my will and make it Thine,  
It shall be no longer mine.  
Take my heart, it is Thine own,  
It shall be Thy royal throne.*

*Take my love, my Lord, I pour  
At Thy feet its treasure store.  
Take myself and I will be  
Ever, only, all for Thee.*



# DAY 4

EXODUS 29:31-33

<sup>31</sup> “You shall take the ram of ordination and boil its flesh in a holy place.  
<sup>32</sup> And Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram and the bread that is in the basket in the entrance of the tent of meeting. <sup>33</sup> They shall eat those things with which atonement was made at their ordination and consecration, but an outsider shall not eat of them, because they are holy.

This passage, the third and final part of the consecration of the Levitical priests, describes the fellowship offering where the priests are given a meal of boiled meat and bread. The three parts of the consecration ritual were necessary so that the priests could serve in the newly established tabernacle. The sin offering (Exodus 29:10-14) atoned or cleansed the priests from sin, and the whole burnt offering (Exodus 29:15-18) transports the priests up into the presence of God through the substitutional sacrifice that is transformed from flesh into smoke. This allows the priests to not only fellowship with each other through this meal but to fellowship with God. The first two parts are the means towards this end. God’s desire to fellowship with his people, and in that fellowship meal the priests are strengthened and sustained—not merely because of the food but because of their proximity to the source of life.

We too participate in a meal—the Lord’s Supper. The consecration of the priesthood helps us to understand the significance of that meal. First, in the Lord’s Supper we are called to remember that Jesus Christ atoned for our sins once and for all. Second, while the priests were transported to the heavens through the whole burnt offering, we are connected to the heavenly tabernacle and presence of God through the ascension of Jesus. When we partake of the bread and wine, we experience the real presence of God through the Holy Spirit that Jesus sent. Third, when we partake of the meal in fellowship with our brother’s and sister’s in the presence of the Lord, we are strengthened and sustained by the Lord of life to serve as a new priesthood with new sacrifices.

*<sup>12</sup> So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood...<sup>15</sup> Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. <sup>16</sup> Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.* Hebrews 13:12,15–16

Finally, both the fellowship offering and the Lord's Supper are reminders that there is a greater feast to come, which we will eat in the presence of the Father.

*On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples  
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,  
of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.  
And he will swallow up on this mountain  
the covering that is cast over all peoples,  
the veil that is spread over all nations.  
He will swallow up death forever;  
and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces,  
and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth,  
for the Lord has spoken.*

Isaiah 25:6-8

## PRAYER

*Lord of life, thank you for freeing me from sin by your sacrifice. Sustain me and give me wisdom in how I may serve you. Let me sing your praises and open my eyes to the good works that you have called me to.*

# DAY 5

EXODUS 30:1-10, PSALM 141:2

<sup>1</sup>“You shall make an altar on which to burn incense; you shall make it of acacia wood. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>You shall make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. <sup>6</sup>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. <sup>7</sup>And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it. Every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it, <sup>8</sup>and when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it, a regular incense offering before the LORD throughout your generations. <sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>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.”

Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!

Today we consider the incense offering; in the tabernacle it was beautifully fragrant and covered the stench of blood from other sacrifices. Have you ever been in a space where incense was being burned? If a neighbor in an apartment building uses it, it will waft under the door and be smelled easily; if it's burned in a worship service, it permeates every area of the sanctuary and is a palpable presence that lingers.

*In Exodus: The Story of God Bible Commentary*, Christopher Wright points out that the symbolic meaning of the incense is not explained initially. While it may have reminded the people of Israel of the cloud on Mt. Sinai that both revealed God's presence and concealed his glory, it was only later in scripture that the incense was connected with the prayers of the saints.

*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.* Revelation 5:8

*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.* Revelation 8:3-4

When we pray, our prayers ascend naturally upward to God as did the aroma of the incense from the tabernacle--a pleasing aroma. The prayers of God's people are as inescapable and palpable as incense. God smells our prayers!

Have you gone through times where God seems to not hear? When he is silent? These verses today show us to persevere. The passages in Revelation say that the prayers are as incense before God. And the fragrance of that incense was covering the smell of the needed, redemptive blood of the sacrifices. So in our prayers, we can know that they can cover needed and redemptive difficult parts of our lives. And it doesn't say just the well-worded or timely prayers are incense. It just says the prayers of the saints. So be of good cheer, saints. God receives our prayers and will work through them. Let's go to him...

## PRAYER

*Lord, do you truly hear us? Give us wisdom when things we pray over don't go in the ways we long for them to go. Give us endurance. Hear our prayers . . . smell our prayers as we pray to you now . . . Amen.*