



"Shall be Offered to My Name and In Every Place"

For it is written, *"From the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My Name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place incense shall be offered to My Name, and a pure offering; for My Name shall be great among the Nations, said the Lord God of Hosts"* (Malachi 1:11).

This prophecy is related to the Church of the New Testament as evidenced by:

1. The Jews were only allowed to offer incense in the Temple. Deuteronomy states, *"take heed to yourself that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every place that you see; but in the place which the Lord chooses, in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you"* (Deuteronomy 12:13-14). In Malachi's prophecy, he specifically states, *"incense shall be offered in every place"* (Malachi 1:11).
2. Only after Christianity, was the Lord's Name exalted. In Malachi's prophecy the Lord said, *"incense shall be offered to My Name, for My Name shall be great among the Nations."*
3. Malachi's prophecy foretells the future as is the general rule regarding "prophecies". Jews offered incense thousands of years before Malachi's prophecy. Therefore this supports the other evidence of this prophecy being directed toward the Christian Church and not the Jews.

The offering of incense is documented in the Book of Revelations:

1. *"And the 24 elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of saints"* (Revelations 5:8).
2. *"Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. And he was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne, and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand"* (Revelations 8:3-4).

Symbolism of Incense:

First, incense is a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is symbolic of His Priesthood and for this reason the Wise Men gave Him frankincense. With its sweet odor, the incense is similar to the fragrance of the Lord Jesus Christ during His life on earth. The Song of Solomon tells us, *"Because of the fragrance of Your good ointments, Your Name is ointment poured forth; therefore the virgins love you"* (Song of Solomon 1:3).

The symbol of the incense as related to the Lord Jesus Christ is apparent in the Coptic Church's rites and hymns. For example, in the Hymn of Tishori we say, "The golden censor is the Virgin; her aroma is our Savior." Also while the priest says in the Divine Liturgy "was incarnate and became man" he puts incense in the censor symbolizing the coming down of the Lord Jesus Christ (the incense) in the Virgin's womb (the censor).

Incense has a second symbolism. It is of the Church. In Song of Solomon 3:6 we read, *"Who is this coming out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the merchants' flagrant powders?"* St. Paul uses this symbolism when making this statement, *"Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing"* (II Corinthians 2:14-15).

Characteristics of Incense:

1. Carries prayers, offerings and confessions bringing them to the throne of God. (Revelations 5:8 and 8:3-4).
2. Always ascends up, therefore it reminds us of Heaven. It is a reminder that our lives should be directed upward towards Eternity.
3. Forms clouds when offered. *"Then he shall take a censor full of burning coals of fire from the altar before the Lord, with his hands full of sweet incense beaten fine, and bring it inside the veil. And he shall put the incense on the fire before the Lord that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the Testimony, lest he die"* (Leviticus 16:12-13).

The cloud is a sign for the presence of the Lord. *"The Lord said He would dwell in the dark cloud"* (I Kings 8:12). The clouds further remind us of the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. *"They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory"* (Matthew 24:30).

Often those unfamiliar with the offering of incense, question its use as related to worship in the Coptic Church. Its existence from Jewish times to the New Testament Church is well documented Biblically. As a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ, as a symbol of the Church, and in reference to prayer, the use of incense in worship is indisputable. It is found in every revelation of the worship of God in Heaven (Exodus 30:1-8, Matthew 2:9-11, and Revelations 5:8).

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