

# Exodus 40:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And thou shalt set the altar of gold for the incense before the ark of the testimony, and put the hanging of the door to the tabernacle.

## Analysis

The golden incense altar 'before the ark' (לִפְנֵי אָרוֹן, lifnei aron) positioned prayer closest to God's presence (though separated by the veil). The 'hanging for the door' (מַסְךָ הַפִּתְחָה, masakh haPetach, screen of entrance) separated the Holy Place from the courtyard, creating graduated holiness—courtyard, Holy Place, Most Holy Place. This teaches that approaching God involves increasing consecration. The incense altar's position teaches that prayer brings believers nearest to God. Christ, our Intercessor (Hebrews 7:25), stands perpetually 'before the ark,' pleading our case.

## Historical Context

The incense altar stood directly before the veil (Exodus 30:6), closer to the ark than any other furniture. When the high priest burned incense, its fragrant smoke filled the Holy Place and penetrated the veil into the Most Holy Place. The door's hanging screened the Holy Place from common view.

## Related Passages

**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

## Study Questions

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1. What does the incense altar's position (closest to God's presence) teach about prayer's supreme importance?
2. How do graduated holiness zones illustrate the believer's progressive sanctification?

## Interlinear Text

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וְתַ֨תֵּן לְפָנָ֣י אַתָּה And thou shalt set	H853	מִזְבֵּחַ אֲתָה the altar	H4196	מִזְבֵּחַ הַזָּבֵב of gold	H2091	לְקַרְבָּן כְּתָבְתָּן for the incense	H7004	לְקַרְבָּן כְּתָבְתָּן before	H6440	לְפָנָי אַתָּה the ark	H727
בְּעֵד תְּשִׁמְךָ of the testimony	H5715	וְתַּ֨תֵּן לְפָנָי and put	H7760	מִסְבֵּחַ אֲתָה the hanging	H853	מִסְבֵּחַ תְּחַנֵּן of the door	H4539	לְמִשְׁכָּן to the tabernacle	H6607	לְמִשְׁכָּן H4908	

## Additional Cross-References

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**Hebrews 9:24** (Parallel theme): For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

**John 14:6** (Parallel theme): Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.