

Numbers 4:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And upon the golden altar they shall spread a cloth of blue, and cover it with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put to the staves thereof:

Analysis

The golden altar's covering procedure—'spread a cloth of blue, and cover it with a covering of badgers' skins'—paralleled other holy objects but was distinct in its placement 'before the vail' (Exodus 40:5). The golden altar (incense altar) stood nearest the holy of holies, representing prayers ascending to God (Psalm 141:2; Revelation 5:8). Its transport maintaining ceremonial protection teaches that prayer access to God requires proper mediation. In the Old Covenant, priestly intercession; in the New, Christ's high priestly work (Hebrews 7:25). Prayer is not casual but sacred, requiring Christ's mediatorial covering.

Historical Context

The golden altar of incense (distinct from the bronze altar for animal sacrifice) burned fragrant incense morning and evening when priests trimmed the lamps (Exodus 30:7-8). This daily practice symbolized continual prayer. Later, Zacharias was offering incense when Gabriel announced John the Baptist's birth (Luke 1:9-11). The altar's position before the veil—closest to God's presence—symbolized prayer penetrating to God's throne.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does the incense altar representing prayer inform our understanding of prayer's sacredness?
2. What does Christ's mediation of our prayers mean practically?
3. How should we approach prayer—casually or with reverence befitting access to God's presence?

Interlinear Text

מִזְבֵּחַ וְעַל לֵו	הַזֶּה ב	וְפָרְשׁוּ	בְּגָד	לְתֹכְךָ לְבָיִט
H5921				
altar	And upon the golden	they shall spread	a cloth	of blue
H4196	H2091	H6566	H899	H8504
וְכִסּוּ אֹתוֹ	בְּמַכְסֵה	עֹר	תְּחַשׁ	וְשָׂמוּ אֹתוֹ
H3680	H4372	H5785	H8476	H853
and cover	it with a covering	skins	of badgers	and shall put
בַּדִּיּוֹ:				
to the staves				
H905				