

William MacDonald:

“And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.” Rev. 8:3.

We believe that the angel in this passage is none other than the Lord Jesus Himself. And His ministry here is full of comfort and encouragement for us.

What is He doing? He takes the prayers of all saints, adds His precious incense to them and presents them to God the Father.

We know only too well that our prayers and praises are very imperfect. We don't know how to pray as we should. Everything we do is stained with sin, with false motives, with selfishness.

“The holiest hours we spend in prayer upon our knees,
The times when most we deem our songs of praise will please,
Thou Searcher of all hearts, forgiveness pour on these.”

But before our worship and intercession ever get to God the Father, they pass through the Lord Jesus. He removes every trace of imperfection so that when they finally reach the Father they are flawless. And something else that is very wonderful happens. He offers the incense with the prayers of the saints. The incense speaks of the fragrant perfection of His person and work. It is this that gives efficacy to our prayers.

What an encouragement this should be to us. We are all too aware of how we bungle in prayer. We slaughter the rules of grammar, express ourselves inelegantly and say things that are doctrinal absurdities. But this need not discourage us from praying. We have a Great High Priest who edits and purifies all our communications with the Father.

Mary Bowley captured the truth in poetic form when she wrote:

Much incense is ascending
Before th' eternal throne;
God graciously is bending
To hear each feeble groan;
To all our prayers and praises
Christ adds His sweet perfume,
And lo the censer raises
These odours to consume.