

Holy Smoke

Of our five senses, sight is probably the one we protect and rely on the most. Next, would be hearing and speech. So, what about our senses of smell and taste?

It might surprise you to know that there are many scientific studies in the areas of taste and smell. In fact, the sense of smell is quite powerful. Americans, however, have generally desired to mask unpleasant odors, which makes us an exception among the nations of the world.

According to *"The Smell Report"* by the Social Issues Research Center (yes, this is real), humans are able to detect thousands of odors even when present in infinitesimally small amounts. Yet this pales in comparison to many animals whose sense of smell is 10 to 20 times more sensitive than that of humans.

Discoveries have shown an amazing connection between our sense of smell and our memory. Most adults can probably relate from experience what 'smell studies' have concluded through research: *A single odor smelled in years past can immediately bring back vivid memories of the original event.*

Certain fragrances have been shown to bring about a positive response in people. Most odors, however, whether pleasant or unpleasant, bring about a response that is closely associated with a past experience associated with that odor. An odor experienced repeatedly at the same or similar occasion will tend to 'represent' that occasion. For example, for many folks, it is the sense of smell that brings back fond memories of a special holiday.

Did you know that God actually created a specific aroma for the ancient Israelites to use in their worship?

The book of Exodus contains a special formula for anointing oil and incense (Exodus 30:22-38). The anointing oil was 'Holy' Oil, and the incense

was 'Holy' Incense. Each was to be used *only* in the tabernacle and *only* for the worship of God. Neither of these could be used on the body as a perfume. They were prescribed by God and belonged exclusively to God: *Holy*.

The purpose seems clear: *The fragrances from the Holy Oil and Incense were used as a call to worship through the sense of smell.* After smelling the distinct fragrances of God's Holy Oil and Holy Incense, it would not have been long before the Israelites would have associated those fragrances with God.

The unique fragrance communicated "worship" to the mind of the people. It was the smell of *surrender to God*; the smell of *praise and honor to God*; the smell of *security in the arms of God*.

Whenever a person had been away from Israel for a period of time and then returned, they would breathe deeply of that sweet smelling aroma and remember their God, their Deliverer, their Creator.

A specific fragrance for worship? Wise God!

There is another aroma found in the Bible. The Apostle Paul reminded Christians:

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing....

--2 Corinthians 2:14-15

Just as the aroma from the Holy Oil and the Holy incense reminded the Israelites of God, Christians are the aroma of Christ in the world to remind people of Christ. May we conduct ourselves in this world so that we will be the sweet smelling fragrance of Christ to those around us.