

Hopewell ARP Prayer Meeting, Wednesday, November 4, 2020
Devotional from Revelation 5:8

⁸ Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

The physical features here are almost certainly symbolic. The Lord Jesus is again pictured as a Lamb. The twenty-four elders have harps, which are not difficult to understand, as they appear sometimes in the Psalter, accompanying the singing of the saints. For the bowls of incense, the apostle gives us some explanation: they are the prayers of the saints. This is not a warrant for incense in the church's public worship any more than it is a warrant for the use of priestly harps in the church's public worship.

What it does for us, however, is show us something about the connection of our prayers to the worship that takes place in glory. This image (the saints' prayers as incense in glory) appears a few more times in John's revelation, but the question is: "which saints?"

Most of the time in this book, the "saints" are believers who are still on earth upon whom the beast may still make war (cf. Rev 13:7; although, certainly this is not to the exclusion of those who have graduated to the glorious assembly).

It is wonderful to think that heaven is mindful of us. Not only that Christ is mindful of us on the throne—our Redeemer, still always living to intercede, still full of warm love to us, such as we see in His interactions with men on earth during the time of His humiliation.

But, as we would expect, the glorified saints are of the same heart and mind as the Lord Jesus. And, they continuously present our prayers at His throne. Praise and prayer are joined together in our worship on earth. And, it is especially our prayers on earth with which the songs of heaven are joined.

What a wonderful thing our praying is! How acceptable and pleasing and worthy it must be—offered, as it is, through the merits of Christ—since even in glory the prayers of imperfect saints are offered.

How sad, then, that we are so slow to prayer. As has been said, we go more reluctantly to prayer than Christ did to the cross. Surely, the simple fact that it glorifies Christ ought to be incentive enough. But, we are dull of heart and not easily motivated. So, here the Lord gives us an surprising and wonderful incentive to come to Him and offer prayer: these prayers are treasured and offered in heaven like that "secret recipe" incense that was commanded for the tabernacle on earth (cf. Ex 30:34–38).

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are welcome to listen to the audio recording, which you may find via tinysa.com/hopewellarp)

Revelation, five verse eight. Those are portion for tonight.

I'm gonna start in verse six reading. Says and I looked and behold in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders. Stood a lamb. As though it had been slain. Having seven horns and seven eyes. Which are the seven spurts.

God sent out into all the earth. Then he came and took the scroll out of the right hand of him who sat on the throne. Now when he had taken the scroll. The four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the lamb. Each having a harp. And golden bowls full of incense.

Which are the prayers. Of the saints. And it's that last verse there that especially that our study on prayer tonight is especially concerned with now when he had taken the scroll. The four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the lamb each having a harp and golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the Saints.

Now the physical features here are almost certainly symbolic. Otherwise we will come to an understanding of the passage in which there is a woolly bleating seven horn seven eye bold mammal on the throne of heaven. That somehow has the capacity to receive a scroll from someone's right hand.

The 24 elders have harps. The Lord Jesus is presented to us as the lamb we know who the lamb is because he is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world and he has been slain. And risen again for us. The harps aren't difficult to understand either.

They appear sometimes harps appear sometimes in the salt or accompanying the singing of the saints and we know that there were priestly plans who played instruments in the Old Testament worship that anticipated the priesthood of the Lord Jesus. So, it doesn't tell us who the Lamb is we know who the Lamb is it doesn't harp are.

We know what the harps are but it does tell us what the Golden Bulls full of incense are. And the Golden Bulls full of incense which are the prayers of the Saints. So the Apostle gives us some explanation on those. But if we understand it rightly if we're understanding this rightly we're not going to see here a warrant for burning bulls of incense in the public worship of the Christian church anymore than we're going to see a warrant for using harps or exclusive use of harps to other instruments and the musical accompaniment of the congregational song of the church.

Just as we do not believe that this means that there is a woolly bleating seven horned seven eye bold mammal on the throne of heaven. So the lamb is the Lord Jesus and the harps or associated with or the praise of the Saints and it tells us here the golden bowls full of incense are the prayers of the saints.

Now, if you have familiarized yourself with the rest of Scripture as. The Lord teaches us to do and I hope we are all pursuing more and more throughout the rest of our life on earth. We immediately think of Exodus chapter 30. And incense being

used in the tabernacle and the incense in the tabernacle being of a very particular recipe so that if someone made incense of the same recipe they were to be cut off from the people.

So the incense in the tabernacle which anticipated it was a shadow a copy of the heavenly thing that would come when our Lord Jesus would lead our worship from glory. The incense in the tabernacle was very special very precious very valuable and so in the context of what scripture teaches us about that it says an amazing thing in this verse about our praying.

That it is valued that it is special that it is treasured even in the worship that takes place in glory. Now we want to know which saints the this image of the incense being the prayers of the saints is going to appear couple more times in John's revelation, but which things.

I've already given away it's the saints especially on earth most of the time in the book of Revelation the saints are believers who are still upon the earth, they are the ones with whom for instance revelation chapter 13 tells us the beast is still allowed to make war. The saints in glory the beast can't touch it's the woman on earth from chapter 12 that the serpent the dragon the devil continues to attack and surely that is the still imperfect and yet set apart to God holy ones the saints are believers who are on the earth, so there's this word picture here in which John saw or as relating to us what he saw in terms of.

Our prayers being having a participation in the worship that takes place in glory as wonderful to think and to remember that heaven is mindful of us sadly we are not so mindful of heaven we do not live well in this world as citizens of another kingdom pleasing our great king and all of our eating or drinking or whatever we do.

Our thinking of heaven is the exception rather than the rule, but the reverse isn't true. Hebrews tells us that the Lord Jesus always lives to intercede for us. That he is continuously mediating for us thinking about us loving us. One of the books I hope they have enough of them that said they had six in stock so I bought all six but sometimes when you do that somebody else already had it and it doesn't end up shipping.

Thomas Goodwin's appearance and he has a wonderful little book. The heart of Christ in heaven towards Saints on earth demonstrating from the scripture that the Lord Jesus thinks about us loves us as mindful of us every bit as much and even more than the way we saw him interacting with people in the Gospels during the time of his humiliation and that all of that tenderness and compassion and love that we saw in the Lord Jesus Christ has not been diminished by his essential.

In in glory and it's not diminished by the fact that he's receiving this worship and the it's wonderful to think about him being mindful of us. But now, we see here and it's not surprising right because when you and I are sinless. When you and I are finally come at last and our up and down progress and sanctification that we've been making in this world is suddenly perfected when we come to die that's one of the things we're looking forward to at our deaths is being made perfect and holiness.

When you and I are sinless wound our minds feed conformed to the mind of Christ and loan our hearts be conformed to the heart of Christ. Sometimes we think of departed saints as being further from us and it is true that we are no longer in their presence. But there is a sense in which the parted saint is more mindful of

you and affectionate towards you than he or she has ever been during your earthly knowing of them.

They are offering as it were presenting joining with you in your praying on earth and presenting and remembering not mediating the way Christ is but here pictured as having bowls full of our prayers. Join joining with us in spirit. As it were in our praying. And so glorified saints being of the same heart and mind as the Lord Jesus continuously present our prayers at his throne.

Praise and prayer are joined together in our worship on earth. Says why even families that feel like they don't sing well? I try to encourage to sing in their family worship. Because the Lord has joined praise and praying together in the worship that He has given us in His Word.

And we see here that prays and prayer are joined together in the worship in heaven. And that even it is especially our prayers on earth. With which the songs of heaven. Are joined. What an amazing thing it is then when we sit here on a Wednesday night or you kneel by the edge of your bed or wherever it is, if you have private prayer or family prayer and we form thoughts and we lift up our hearts and speak words.

Not only is it heard by him who sits on the throne but it is treasured and precious and offered and joined with by the glorified saints who are worshipping in. How acceptable and pleasing and worthy a thing believing prayer must be. It is offered through the merits of Christ and glorifies him and even in glory the imperfect prayers of the imperfect saints on earth having been perfected by Christ.

Are offered as sweet incense. Unto God. When we think of what a wonderful thing then our praying is. Our consciences are approached us that we are so slow to it. As multiple men have said we go more reluctantly to prayer. Than our Redeemer went to his cross. Surely the simple fact that our praying glorifies.

Christ ought to be incentive enough for us to be quick to it and glad for it. But since we are dull of heart and not easily motivated. Rather than reproaching us at least in this particular text. We are given here a surprising and wonderful extra incentive to come to God and offer him prayer.

Because our prayers are treasured and offered and joined with in heaven. Just like that secret recipe incense, that was commanded for the tabernacle on earth. In Exodus 30 verses 34 through 38, so. It's a wonderful thing that we get to come to do together tonight that we'll be doing when we hear this verse in the public worship Lord today morning.

I hope when you hear Mr. Rentschler read it that you will remember how our praying on earth is precious in glory and joined with there.