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## *How valuable are the prayers of the saints?*

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*(Highlighted areas added)*

### **Revelation 5:8 (NKJV)**

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.**

Verse 8. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts, etc. The acts of adoration here described as rendered by the four living creatures and the elders are, according to the explanation given in Revelation 4:4-7, emblematic of the honour done to the Redeemer by the church, and by the course of providential events in the government of the world,

Fell down before the Lamb. The usual posture of profound worship. Usually in such worship there was entire prostration on the earth, Matthew 2:2; 1 Corinthians 14:25.

Having every one of them harps. That is, as the construction, and the propriety of the case would seem to demand, the elders had each one of them harps. The whole prostrated themselves with profound reverence; the elders had harps and censers, and broke out into a song of praise for redemption, This construction is demanded, because

(\*) the Greek word—ἔχοντες—more properly agrees with the word elders—πρεσβύτεροι—and not with the word beasts—ζῶα;

(\*) there is an incongruity in the representation that the living creatures—in the form of a lion, a calf, an eagle, should have harps and censers; and

(\*) the song of praise that is sung (Revelation 5:9) is one that properly applies to the elders as the representatives of the church, and not to the living creatures—"Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." The harp was a well known instrument used in the service of God, Josephus describes it as having ten strings, and as struck with a key.—Antiquities, vii. 12, 3. Isaiah 5:12.

And golden vials. The word vial with us, denoting a small slender bottle with a narrow neck, evidently does not express the idea here. The article here referred to was used for offering incense, and must have been a vessel with a large open mouth. The word bowl or goblet would better express the idea, and it is so explained by Professor Robinson, Lex., and by Professor Stuart, in loc. The Greek word—φιάλη—occurs in the New Testament only in Revelation,

(Revelation 5:8, 15:7, 16:1-4,8,10,12,17, 17:1, 21:9) and is uniformly rendered vial and vials, though the idea is always that of a bowl or goblet.

Full of odours. Or rather, as in the margin, **full of incense**—θυμιαμάτων. Luke 1:9.

**Which are the prayers of saints. Which represent or denote the prayers of saints.** Compare Psalms 141:2, "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense." The meaning is, that incense was a proper emblem of prayer. This seems to have been in two respects:

(\*) as being acceptable to God-as incense produced an agreeable fragrance; and

(\*) **in its being wafted towards heaven-ascending towards the eternal throne.** In Revelation 8:3, an angel is represented as 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".

**The representation there undoubtedly is, that the angel is employed in presenting the prayers of the saints which were offered on earth before the throne. Revelation 8:3.**

It is most natural to interpret the passage before us in the same way. The allusion is clearly to the temple service, and to the fact that incense was offered by the priest in the temple itself at the time that prayer was offered by the people in the courts of the temple. See Luke 1:9-10.

The idea here is, therefore, that the representatives of the church in heaven—the elders—spoken of as "priests," (Revelation 5:10) are described as officiating in the temple above in behalf of the church still below, and as offering incense while the church is engaged in prayer.

It is not said that they offer the prayers themselves, but that **they offer incense as representing the prayers of the saints.**

If this be the correct interpretation, as it seems to be the obvious one, then the passage lays no foundation for the opinion expressed by Professor Stuart, as derived from this passage, (in loc.,) that prayer is offered by the redeemed in heaven.

Whatever may be the truth on that point-on which the Bible seems to be silent-it will find no support from the passage before us.

**Adoration, praise, thanksgiving, are represented as the employment of the saints in heaven:** the only representation respecting prayer as pertaining to that world is, that there are emblems there which symbolize its ascent before the throne, and which show that it is acceptable to God.

It is an interesting and beautiful representation that there are in heaven appropriate symbols of **ascending prayer**, and that while in the outer courts here below **we offer prayer, incense**, emblematic of it, **ascends in the holy of holies above**.

The impression which this should leave on our minds ought to be, **that our prayers are wafted before the throne, and are acceptable to God**.

(\*) "four beasts" Revelation 4:4,8,10

(\*) "harps" Revelation 15:2

(\*) "prayers" Psalms 141:2

(\*) "odours" "incense"

Barnes' Notes on the New Testament.

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**prayers of saints**—as the angel offers their prayers (Rev. 8:3) with incense (compare Ps 141:2). This gives not the least sanction to Rome's dogma of our praying to saints. Though they be employed by God in some way unknown to us to present our prayers (nothing is said of their interceding for us), yet we are told to pray only to Him (Rev. 19:10 Rev. 22:8, 9). Their own employment is praise (whence they all have harps): **ours is prayer**.

A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments.

- As believers in Christ Jesus we should be full of incense, which are our prayers.
- Now, ask the question, are the prayers we pray precious in God sight?

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**Ephesians 1:18 (NKJV)**

<sup>18</sup> the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the **saints,**

**Colossians 1:12 (NKJV)**

<sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the **saints** in the light.

**Colossians 1:26 (NKJV)**

<sup>26</sup> the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His **saints.**

**Revelation 8:3-4 (NKJV)**

<sup>3</sup> Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. **He was given much incense,** that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

<sup>4</sup> And the **smoke of the incense,** with the prayers of the saints, **ascended** before God from the angel's hand.

**Dictionary definition** for the word, “**incense**”:

to burn; to glow, material used to produce a **fragrant** odor when burned, the perfume exhaled from some spices and gums when burned; broadly: a pleasing scent pleasing attention

**Synonyms** for the word, “**fragrant**”: Sweet, perfumed, spicy

**Related Word** delectable, delicious, delightful

**My insight:**

I will think a little more about **what** I am praying and **where** my prayers are ascending and **who** is observing them.