



THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

"Harp Heroes" 5:8-10

Revelation 5:8 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.

Revelation 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

Revelation 5:10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

One of the most popular video games is *Guitar Hero* on the Wii. A Christian version might be called *Harp Heroes*. Here's why.

According to *Vincent's Word Studies*,

...[the word for] harp signifies an instrument unlike our harp as ordinarily constructed. Rather a lute or **guitar**... Anciently of a triangular shape, with seven strings, afterwards increased to eleven. Josephus says it had ten, and was played with a plectrum or small piece of ivory.

Get ready to jam! The apostle John gave us advance notice we will be performing together as harp heroes before the throne.

Revelation 5:8 Now when He had taken the scroll...

We established the **scroll** is what we would call the title deed to planet earth. When Adam sinned the earth was, in a sense, forfeited to Satan. But land that God grants must stay with the original owner. It cannot ever be permanently lost or sold. The forfeited earth once given to the human race thus needs to be redeemed by an able and willing redeemer. In the mean time the deed is held in trust for us by God.

We also saw that Jesus is the only possible redeemer. As He steps forward and takes the **scroll** the prophetic clock is about to start ticking down seven years to His Second Coming.

Revelation 5:8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb...

The **four living creatures** are cherubim and probably are an order of angels. The **twenty-four elders** is the church in Heaven. We saw this when they were first introduced. We'll get another reason why we believe they represent the church in just a moment.

We will fall **down**. Considering we fall down with **harps** and **bowls** in our hands and that we sing, it may mean that we *bow* or *kneel* before the Lord.

Revelation 5:8 ...each having a harp...

Yes, this is the primary text from which all the jokes about people playing **harps** in Heaven derive. It doesn't seem so old-fashioned if you understand the **harp** is more like a guitar. In fact, it seems kind of cool!

I'm assuming that in my glorified body I will be able to pick up my **harp** and play it without lessons. Think of the most gifted people in every area – music, math, science; whatever. In Heaven we will each far exceed their earthly excellence. It's staggering to think what God had in mind for Adam and Eve.

You and I, in our glorified bodies, will play our harps perfectly. We will sing perfectly. We will know by instinct exactly when to bow or kneel or fall prostrate. Yet we won't be robots; we will possess a perfect free will to worship our Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation 5:8 ...and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

In the Tabernacle and Temple on earth there was an altar of incense upon which the priests would burn incense every morning and every evening. It stood just outside the holy of holies. Psalm 141 was sung to accompany the burning of the incense in the evening sacrifice.

Psalms 141:2 Let my prayer be set before You *as* incense, The lifting up of my hands *as* the evening sacrifice.

Thus burning **incense** represents the prayers of God's people rising before Him as something He delights in.

In Revelation 8:2-3 we will read,

Revelation 8:2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.

Revelation 8:3 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.

The **incense** and the **prayers** are distinct. Burning the **incense** is what releases the prayers to be a pleasing aroma to God.

It was the responsibility of the priest to burn the **incense** that ascended before the holy of holies. There was no fragrance to the praying of God's people without the priest.

Jesus was and is our great high priest. His ministry ignites and releases our prayers as something sweet for the Father to experience.

How was the **incense** lit in the Tabernacle and Temple? The coals used to burn the **incense** on the altar of incense were taken from the

altar of burnt offerings. Only *after* the sacrifice could praise rise as **incense** before God.

God prescribed burning **incense** in the Old Testament as a representation of what Jesus' sacrifice does to our access to the Father. It will be burned again in Heaven when Jesus takes the scroll and again afterward.

Should we burn it in church on a regular basis or on special occasions? If so it must be the correct incense.

Listen carefully to this from Exodus chapter thirty:

Exodus 30:34 And the LORD said to Moses: "Take sweet spices, stacte and onycha and galbanum, and pure frankincense with *these* sweet spices; there shall be equal amounts of each.

Exodus 30:35 You shall make of these an incense, a compound according to the art of the perfumer, salted, pure, *and* holy.

Exodus 30:36 And you shall beat *some* of it very fine, and put some of it before the Testimony in the tabernacle of meeting where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you.

Sounds good... except no one knows anymore what these compounds are – except for **salt**. And it was only to be burned in the altar of incense. There was a warning to those who used it in any other manner:

Exodus 30:37 But *as for* the incense which you shall make, you shall not make any for yourselves, according to its composition. It shall be to you holy for the LORD.

Exodus 30:38 Whoever makes *any* like it, to smell it, he shall be cut off from his people."

You might find this interesting; I did. Rabbi Avraham Sutton writes:

In April 1992, Vendyl Jones and his team of Bnei Noah volunteers discovered 600 kilos of "reddish-brown organic substance" in a carefully sealed rock silo in a part of the Qumran cave complex just west of the northern end of the Dead Sea. Subsequent analysis determined that this reddish-brown substance contains traces of at least eight of the eleven spices that were used in the manufacture of the Incense Mixture burned in the Temple. Avraham Sand of Tiferet International Aromatherapy [and] is a master perfumer...he has been trying to unravel the

secret of exactly which ingredients and processes were used to formulate the finely ground Incense.¹

Although there is a long tradition in church history of burning incense I think it is better we avoid it and simply enjoy the substance of which it was the shadow. Just pray!

Revelation 5:9 And they sang a new song...

It will be **new** in the sense that it can't be sung until this future time in the whole drama of redemption. And it can only be sung by a select group:

Revelation 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

Have angels been **redeemed** to **God** by the **blood** of Jesus? No, they haven't. This is not a song that will be sung by angels.

Can you describe Jews as having been **redeemed** out of **every tribe and tongue and people and nations**? No, you wouldn't. They are God's unique, distinct, chosen nation. This is not a song that will be sung by Israel.

Only the church can sing this song! It is yet another reason to believe that the twenty four elders are the resurrected and raptured church.

Revelation 5:10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

This line in our song declares the triumph of Jesus through the Great Tribulation over the enemies of God, both celestial and terrestrial. In order for Him to make us **kings and priests** to **reign on the earth** He must first be victorious and return to set up His kingdom.

We will be **kings and priests** in the sense that we will share the authority with Jesus over the earth.

¹ <http://www.jewishmag.com/11MAG/MYSTIC/mystic.htm>

The Great Tribulation will leave the earth and its survivors in a devastated state. The Lord will heal the nations and restore the land – **and we will share in the work!**

Christian groups like Gospel for Asia and Samaritan's Purse are rushing to aid victims of the Myanmar cyclone. I'm sure they will do the same for the quake victims in China.

Imagine the help and healing we will bring to the Millennial earth as we partner with Jesus. Listen to this description of that future time:

Isaiah 35:5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

Isaiah 35:6 Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert.

What you would want to do now to heal and restore you will be able to do then as one who reigns with Jesus as a king and a priest.

One more quote from Isaiah:

Isaiah 61:1 "The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to *those who are* bound;

Isaiah 61:2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn,

Jesus applied these words to Himself in His first coming. But He stopped quoting them after He said, **to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord**, and before He said, **and the day of vengeance of our God**.

We live in-between. This is the age of grace, the church age, **the acceptable year of the Lord**. When we are resurrected and raptured Jesus takes the scroll and it starts **the day of vengeance of our God** – the Great Tribulation.

After that what do you read? **To comfort all who mourn**. We will help the Lord as He brings the comfort of His reign over the earth.

