



In the last contribution to the study of the previous verse, we supplied this picture, which is a good artists impression, describing what John saw in his vision. The twenty-four elders are shown bowing down before the throne. However, the four Living Ones also bow down before the throne, but maybe it was difficult to draw that.

In previous Bible classes we have discussed these Living Ones and the twenty-four elders. The Living Ones represent the Royal and Militant aspect of the saints, whereas the twenty-four elders represent the Priestly aspect of the saints.

It is worthwhile to consider this for a moment. What does this mean exactly? The saints we remember are those who have been judged worthy of entering into the Kingdom and given eternal life. During their mortal lives, they have been called out – which is what saint means- [saint -Greek – *hagios* – to consecrate, make holy, separate]. In other words, being called out into the Ecclesia [which means called out ones -*Ek Kallio* called out] means being a saint. See 1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:1,2; 14:33; 16:1; 16:15 and another further 30 references in the New Testament that show that the word saint refers to those

within the Ecclesia, who have been made holy through the act of being called out.

Not all of these saints will be accepted at the judgement seat. During our life we have to produce characteristics which render us suitable to be accepted at the judgement seat. These are Priestly characteristics and Kingly – Royal characteristics.

Priestly characteristics include – Mercy, being merciful is the readiness to forgive. Grace – to maintain composure and dignity despite loss and harm, and freely pardon. Discretion – is the willingness to pass over a matter which causes us offence. Compassion – the ability to understand the feelings of others, and intercede on their behalf. Self-sacrifice – to go without, to help another.

Kingly characteristics include – Self-control, being able to rule one's spirit. Self-discipline, able to maintain commitment and dedication. Loyalty, unwavering in support, Law-abiding – regulating self, careful in keeping the laws God has supplied. Leadership – aware of the direction of purpose and encouraging others. Wisdom – able to discern right and wrong in an instant.

These characteristics act as righteous clothing, which cover our sinful bodies. They come only from the reading of the Word, and following the example of the Lamb. Getting these characteristics is a lifetimes pursuit, and a lifetime's work. They are worth more than gold and rubies.

We notice how all of these characteristics are simple. Basic and straightforward. They are all to do with maintenance of self.

In the passage seen before us in Revelation 5, we see Jesus Christ described as a Lion, but appears as a Lamb. He can only be a Lion by first being like a Lamb. We recall the Proverb: Proverb 16:32 *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that rules his spirit than he that taketh a city.*

So it is, that all of the saints – only can be elevated to the Throne, can only have a place in the Kingdom in immortality, if they regulate themselves in the humble insignificant obscurity of their short little lives.

Even that is not enough – because of sin. The symbol of The Lamb is therefore apt, in receiving the unsealed scroll. It is only through the life, death, and resurrection - sacrifice of the Lamb, that the way to Life Eternal is possible.

The Lamb that Had Been slain – the resurrected Lamb is the one who receives the Unsealed Scroll, only he can open it. Only through him are all things made possible through God, because only he lived as the single qualified King Priest.

When in vision the Lamb receives the scroll – the Divine Commission, all the Living Ones and the twenty-four Elders fall down to worship. It is exactly as they have done in their mortal lives. This time in symbol they have harps in their hands and golden containers full of incense. Not literally of course it is only a vision.

The harp is a simple handheld instrument, and is frequently referred to in Scripture. It was held close to the body, with both hands, and in the hands of a skilful player was able to sooth the angriest moods of the moodiest of people (1 Samuel 16:16,23)

But more than this the harp represents the yearnings, the very expression of the innermost thoughts, as its sounds touched the 'heart-strings' of the tortured mind. Take for example Isaiah 16:11 – compare the innermost emotions with the harp. But the harp only sounds good when each string is plucked in an ordered and disciplined way – not randomly, but with a sensitivity, perhaps two strings together, but always creating a sense of uplifting unity.

Along with the harps, the Saints are depicted as having vials, or bowls full of glowing incense, giving off a delicious smell. The Revelation,

the angel even tells John what that represents – the prayers of the saints.

In the vision, the saints are depicted in an immortal state- able to stand in the Divine presence. But as immortal, there is no need to pray, or to pray through Christ Jesus, as they have an abundant entrance to the presence of God and are in full unity with God. They have become part of God.

Therefore the harps and golden censors in their hands belonged to the former mortal life and enabled them to get to where they are. Their prayers and songs were heard. They took the passage in Hebrews 13:15,16 very seriously: *By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased*

So verse 9 of our study... *And they sung a new song, saying, You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;*

These words are an expansion of Revelation 1:5,6: *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.*

Is this a new song? This Revelation is a prophecy written some 2000 years ago, and has been read many times by each believer. They have echoed the sentiment over again, in their lives, - we even sing similar words in our hymn books.

In one sense yes, because the words ... *you have redeemed us*... Even those who lie buried in the grave, who died in hope of eternal life after the resurrection – even they have not been redeemed, as they

are still mouldering away in the dust. We have not yet been fully redeemed as we still are offensive to God because of our bodies of sin and death. The Price has been Paid, but the transaction not yet complete – even though God speaks *as those things that are not as though they are*. The Final Redemption, and efficacy of the work of the Redeemer will only be witnessed when the Gracious and Merciful Father allows His Spirit in the power of the Lord Jesus to bestow the Gift of Eternal Life. This has not yet happened. Only at this Final Consummation, can it be truly said in every sense of the word – Redeemed. By thy blood. The blood of Jesus Christ which never energised him to do sin. Only this blood can be turned to Spirit. The Power of This Blood is able also to redeem men and women out of every nation, people and tongue – the Gentiles, who were outside of the Covenant of Abraham. See Malachi 1:11 for further thoughts.

It is a New song in another sense, in that the word *new* in the Greek can also mean refresh and renew. The Saints are refreshed and renewed with immortality – the Spirit Man has won the victory over the Old man of the flesh, *behold all things are become new*.

10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

We note the words: on the earth, not over the earth...

The qualifications, of the characteristics produced with the aid of the harp and incense during the mortal life, have produced a people, who manifest the Name of God, who have ruled over their own spirits, and now are suitable to rule, some over two cities, some over five cities... as kings, and as priests, all to minister from time to time in the House of Prayer for all Nations to sing that New Song again and again.

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