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THE MINISTRY OF PRAYER :
AS REVEALED IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

BY

LARRY ALAN LOCKE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF DIVINITY

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1996

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Department

Date
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A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of Asbury Theological Seminary

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August 1996
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The imperative "Teach us to pray..." has been and continues to be an on-going concern for the church; both corporately and individually. Richard Foster says:

We today yearn for prayer and hide from prayer. We believe prayer is something we should do, even something we want to do, but it seems like a chasm stands between us and actually praying. We experience the agony of prayerlessness.

At a certain meeting of ministers and church officers, Charles Spurgeon heard them doubt the value of prayer-meetings because of the small attendance associated with them. Many of them had given up prayer meetings and replaced them with more popular forms of ministry. Spurgeon responded to this by saying: "Are churches in a right condition when they have only one meeting for prayer in a week, and that a mere skeleton?"

Moved by this concern, many church leaders have written about the ministry of prayer and have developed different strategies for the implementation of prayer in the life of the church; strategies such as "concerts of prayer" and engaging the enemy

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1 Luke 11:1. All scripture references for this study will be from the New International Version, unless otherwise stated.


of God through prayer's "spiritual warfare." Although most of these strategies have utilized teachings from the Old and New Testament, very few have tapped into the revelations of the ministry of prayer as are illustrated in the book of Revelation.

In the church, Revelation is often a book that is ignored, avoided or at best only politely referred to; a book historically shrouded in mystery. The name itself implies an unveiling of hidden truths but it often seems to conceal them. Likened unto the parables of Jesus, Revelation's interpretation seems available only to those who have eyes to see and a heart to understand the book's deep spiritual message. Seldom is it explored to uncover and implement the truths that lie within it. This is regrettable because the book itself promises a blessing to those who "read aloud the words of the prophecy ... and those who hear and who keep what is written in it." It is because of this promise that this paper draws its purpose. This study will examine the elements of prayer as are revealed in the book of Revelation and propose challenging insights and theories about the ministry of prayer.

The Statement of the Problem

Interpretation of Revelation is more often than not historically and eschatologically biased. The blessing that this book promises is often perceived as being received at some future time rather than received now and on into the future.

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4 C. Peter Wagner, Prayer Shield (Ventura, Ca.: Regal Books, 1992), 68ff.


6 Rev. 1:3.
Interpretations of Revelation seem to overemphasize God's repayment upon an unholy world while giving minimal attention to God's redemptive activity through his holy church. Therefore, the interpreters overlook God's redemptive intent for the ungodly; a purpose that God wishes to model and enact through the church.

Richard Bauckham believes that "John's apocalypse...is exclusively concerned with eschatology: with eschatological judgment and salvation..." He goes on to say that the revelation that John receives is mainly concerned with "God's activity in history to achieve his eschatological purpose for the world." Such an interpretation of the book of Revelation [with the exception of chapters 1-3 and 22] displays humanity as outside the fray of God's work, plan and purpose. This could help foster church apathy by indirectly and subtly encouraging the saints to be observers of an assumed planned eschatological drama rather than active participants in God's redemptive plan for the world. The writer of Hebrews supports the church's involvement in that plan when he said: "...God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect." 

This thesis will show that God's will and redemptive plan requires the church's active involvement; and prayer is one ministry that becomes a vehicle of "issuing in the will of God." By examining Revelation's temple imagery, an active and redemptive theory and practice of ministry [with a focus on the ministry of prayer] will be introduced. This foundation, once laid, will enable the church to become more participatory.

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8 Heb. 11:40.

in the plan of God's present and final redemptive act within his creation.

Justification of the Study

The significance of prayer in Christian practice has always been understood to be beneficial for both spiritual-relational development and outward direction. Through Revelation, God addressed the church concerning not just eschatological issues but issues concerning the spirit and practices of the church; one being the ministry of prayer. Wainwright says,

... although much of the Apocalypse seems to be concerned with struggles against outward forces, interpreters have also explained it in terms of the inner conflicts of individuals. The battle between good and evil takes place not only in the arena of history but also in human hearts. 10

To the seven churches the message is clear: "he who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit is saying..." 11 John is instructed to relay what he sees and hears to the seven churches. The writer speaks words to the church of "overcoming" and of "keep[ing] what is written in it [the words of the prophecy]." The message of Christ to the church is not just about heavenly action to be observed but spiritual truths to be reflected upon and instruction to be acted upon. Revelation has much to say about the practice of ministry "in general" and the spiritual practice of prayer "in specific" through its imagery, typology and symbolism. Wainwright sees Revelation's

10 Arthur W. Wainwright, 203.

11 See chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation.
use of these symbols as a way God can address the spiritual dimensions of the church. Historically the church has been preoccupied with the external rituals of religion, while paying little attention to the spiritual development of those called to labor for the kingdom of God. Willard believes that the saints of God seem to wrestle more with their place of ministry than with who God wants them to be [speaking of the inner person]. 12 Most interpretations of Revelation have focused on external eschatological events while overlooking its' deeper message. 13

This study will help to unlock the truths of prayer revealed to John by God himself; truths that will allow the church to lay a strong spiritual and theoretical base for prayer -- enabling the church then to build a biblical structure and strategy for an effective prayer ministry. If such a theory and strategy are not developed, the ministry of the church will be powerless and ineffective in its battle with the spiritual forces of darkness. Prayer is a vital weapon of such a battle; a spiritual battle that must be won if souls are ever to be delivered from the pathway of destruction.

In the Old Testament, prayer is shown to be "the" key concerning victory or defeat against the enemy. In Exodus 17 the victory of the Israelite's over the Amalekite army depended to a great degree on whether Moses could keep his arms held up to God or not. This Old Testament story symbolically illustrates what can happen when continual prayer is offered to God. What happens is God fights for his people. When the church fails to pray properly -- the enemy prevails and souls perish.

The book of Revelation contains a message of hope and final victory; a victory that cannot just be passively observed by the


13 Arthur W. Wainwright, 203-205.
army of God but one that God requests that we actively participate in. If the church is to echo these words of blessing that come from the Spirit of God and the bride [of Christ]:

Come. And let everyone who hears say, Come. And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift, 14

then the saints of God must ready themselves to engage this unholy world by seriously embracing God's call for prayer.

Review of the Literature

This study on the ministry of prayer as seen through the visionary experience of the writer of Revelations will draw from several resource areas. These areas are (1) the usage of symbolism and typology in Hellenistic [especially Jewish] literature; symbolism and typology that specifically surrounded Jewish temple imagery, (2) exegetical examination of particular words and phrases found in Revelation that are associated with prayer and temple imagery, and (3) an examination of prayer in both Jewish and contemporary thought and literature.

This study will first examine how the author of Revelation might have been impressed by his cultural understanding of symbols and types; an impression that enabled the author to grasp and relay to his intended audience the truths behind the prayer images in Revelation. Much of the temple imagery found in Revelation's prayer symbology draws from the Old Testament celebration of the Day of Atonement.

14 Rev. 22:17, RSV.
Alfred Edersheim gives a detailed analysis of the historical use and symbolic significance of temple implements [i.e. censers, incense, bowls] and temple practices [i.e. duties of the high priest, Jewish ritual on the Day of Atonement] surrounding Jewish worship on the Day of Atonement. Not only does Edersheim detail the events within the temple itself, but he also introduces the reader to a detailed description of the actions outside the temple [i.e. the participation of the common Jew in the celebration of the Day of Atonement.] Edersheim's book shall provide this paper with information and analysis of temple imagery and practices.

Craig R. Koester examines the structure of the Jewish Tabernacle -- both the temple proper and the "inner region of the veil" [the Holy of Holies]; showing how the temple's construction was purposefully designed, in type, to give the people of God a glimpse of the realm of the holy. Koester also provides this study with analysis of the altar of incense, the high priest and his practices, the Day of Atonement, and temple typology.

Other writings such as Paul F. Kiene's *The Tabernacle of God in the Wilderness of Sinai*, James Strong's *The Tabernacle of Israel in the Desert* and Julian Morgenstern's *The Fire Upon the Altar* shall also provide this study with an

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understanding of Jewish symbolism associated with the furnishings of the temple; symbols such as "the fire on the altar," "the trumpet," and "the altars of the temple." Through the use of these resources, this paper shall be able to detail God's revelation to the church concerning a strategy of prayer.

This study shall also examine contemporary scholarship's explanation and interpretation of Revelation's symbolic expressions to see in which ways these expressions are presently being applied within the life and ministry of the body of Christ. C.B. Caird provides this study with valuable historical background concerning types and symbols found in Revelation. Although Caird does give the reader some analysis of literary and theological issues, for the purpose of this study, we shall draw from the research he uses to tie together the Old Testament text and Jewish apocalyptic literature with the text found in Revelation. Robert Mounce's *The Book of Revelation* will also be used in a similar fashion. The information obtained for this study from Caird, Mounce, and other New Testament scholars, although valuable for understanding the text and context of Revelation, give mostly a descriptive analysis of the text. For each of these authors, Revelation is seen more as a drama or play in which we, the 20th century believer, are simply spectators of God's redemptive and judicial plan.

Richard Bauckham and M. Robert Mulholland Jr. are two scholars that this paper shall heavily rely upon to challenge such an understanding of Revelation. Richard Bauckham provides this study with a comprehensive examination of the prophetic nature of Revelation. He examines, in great detail, the literary composition of specific texts within Revelation's


literary whole. Bauckham also investigates Revelation's use of the Old Testament; showing that the author of Revelation displayed a "pattern of disciplined and deliberate allusion to the Old Testament text." 22 Other Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature is also brought into the mix of Bauckham's detailed analysis. What is important about Bauckham's book is it's ability to take the literary examination and show its truths in the context of our contemporary world and provide practical application for the church of today. 23

M. Robert Mulholland Jr. takes the reader from being spectators of God's work within his created world to being active participants in his redemptive plan for humankind. 24 Mulholland provides this study with great historical content; showing the symbolism of the first century Jewish-Christian apocalyptic literature. He is able to address the message of Revelation for the first century reader and apply its truths to any age. By doing this, Mulholland's interpretation of Revelation instructs the church to become salt in a tasteless society, to reject compromise with a fallen world, to embrace a life of holiness, and to see the body of Christ as active agents of influence and change in "fallen Babylon." 25

Another area this study shall examine is the language of Revelation; a language that is deeply symbolic in nature. An exegetical examination of prayer terminology found in Revelation will initially be examined. Terms of Revelation's temple imagery will be studied by examining the historic and linguistic backgrounds of each symbol relating to prayer.


23 ibid., xi-xiii.


25 ibid., 346-348.
Several resources will be used to adequately exegete each term. Hermeneutika's Bible Works for Windows is a powerful and comprehensive computer tool; allowing this study to perform complete morphological parsing analysis, complete lemmatization, and comparative exegetical Bible research in the languages of Hebrew, Greek, English and Latin. Through its powerful lexical, morphological, and syntactical concording and reference access, Bible Works will enable this study to see what affect Old Testament Hebrew thought, the Septuagint [LXX], and early Biblical Greek writings might have played in forming the eyeglass through which the author of Revelation saw his visionary experience. Other features found within this powerful program -- such as Friberg's 1994 ANLEX GNT Analytical Lexicon, Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon, Strong's/Englishman's Greek-Hebrew-English Word Linkage/Concordances, A.T. Robertson's New Testament Word Pictures, and Eaton's Bible Dictionary have provided this study with the basic resources for doing thorough literary analysis. 26

Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament 27 will also be used to provide a historical examination of New Testament words; examining the word's formation, usage and understanding within surrounding cultures of New Testament times. Although recent criticism has pointed out the weakness of Kittel's methodology in arriving at some word meanings, Kittel's work still is a valuable resource for historical and literary information. Other word study tools that this study shall use include W. Robertson Nicoll's The Expositor's Greek

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Statement of Purpose

There are a limited number of writings that perform a detailed typological analysis of scripture's temple imagery with the intent of enlightening various aspect of today's ministry within the church. Within the pages of Revelation, perhaps hidden and obscure, God reveals ministry theory and practice; all of which is meant to inform and direct his people through the world's maze of apathy and persecution.

Typology and symbolism are methods by which God clarifies his message to those who have "ears to hear." The book of Revelation is filled with symbols and types; each carrying a message that was clearly understood by John and his audience. For the church today, John's message is seen as very obscure; an obscurity caused for the most part by cultural changes and a general ignorance of ancient Jewish imagery. It is this paper's purpose to uncover the types and symbols found in Revelation that pertain to the specific ministry of prayer and show how God's revelation on prayer calls the church to be an active participant in God's redemptive plan -- both now and in the future.

This study shall focus on the theory and practice of prayer as revealed in the book of Revelation and will not introduce specific prayer programs and ministry strategies that the church

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30 Matt. 11:15.
might implement into their fellowship. It is the hope of this study that the theories uncovered will provide a foundation that the church can build a ministry of prayer upon. From this foundation, the church would then be free to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit as to what ministries might grow from this theoretical base.
CHAPTER 2
PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

A Spiritual Event

Richard Foster describes prayer as the key to the heart of God and "...the central avenue God uses to transform us." Prayer is not just a communication between ourselves and God but it is a communion or union between the divine and the mortal. John's experience on the island of Patmos displays such a union; a union that exhibited both physical and spiritual characteristics. John, while in the flesh, found himself caught up in the Spirit on the Lord's day. It was here that his revelatory experience began. Bauckham describes John's experience as a "rapture by the Spirit...a trance like suspension of normal consciousness" while others see it as "neither a dream nor a trance but simply a revelation through an angel." The Apostle Paul described his understanding of a communion between the realm of the flesh with the realm of the spirit when he said:

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1 Richard J. Foster, Prayer: Finding the Hearts True Home, 2.
I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know -- God knows. And I know that this man -- whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows -- was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.  

Although such an experience leaves us grasping for understanding and explanation; one thing is certain: the divine comes in contact with mortals.

Such divine revelations were not uncommon in the life of the Jewish people or members of the early church. Luke records that Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, experienced such an encounter. Zechariah, a Levite priest, was chosen by lot to burn incense at the golden altar within the temple while all the assembled Jewish worshipers prayed outside the temple. As Zechariah was preparing to offer incense on the golden altar before the Lord, "...an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense."  

It was here that Zechariah was given a revelation concerning his son-to-be, John the Baptist. Luke 9:28-30 tells of Peter, James and John, while engaged in prayer with Jesus upon a mountain, witnessed Moses, Elijah and Jesus in forms of glorious heavenly splendor. Later in the Garden of Gethsemane, while Jesus agonized in prayer, "an angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him."  

In Acts, Stephen, "full of the Holy Spirit," looked up to heaven and saw a revelation of the glorified state of God and Jesus. Stephen said: "Look, I see heaven open and the Son of

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5 I Cor. 12:2-4.
Man standing at the right hand of God." 8 Is it also mere coincidence that during prayer both Cornelius and Peter experience contact with the realm of the spirit world? 9

Reason would tell us that John also experienced his revelation during a season of prayer, "in the Spirit," on the isle of Patmos. Not only did John's Revelation begin from a spiritual prayer event but one can easily find fingerprints of similar spiritual activity throughout the letter [ie."...hear what the spirit says..."] 10 and at it's conclusion:

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life...He who testifies to these things says. "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come Lord Jesus. 11

Therefore, it is important that revelation and prayer are understood as elements of John's spiritual event; an event that was relational and intimate in nature rather than an a mere trance-like event to understand or a religious act of piety to practice. Revelation, like prayer, is when two worlds come together to share, vision and "be" as one. John was able to taste and see the spiritual kingdom of God from God's point of view. Such truth is the key to prayer -- for the saints pray to see what God sees so that they can proclaim his message and not their own. Richard Foster says that true prayer is realized when "...we begin to think God's thoughts after him: to desire the things He desires, to love the things that He loves.

8 Acts 7:55-56.
Progressively, we are taught to see things from His point of view." 12

Revelation also targets a dual audience: the individual member of the church [personal] and the church universal [corporate]. First we see John's message as personal with a specific message to a specific messenger. John is given instructions like: "...come up here," 13 "...take and eat." 14 and "write...what you see and send it..." 15 Second, Revelation's message is also corporate; speaking revelation to the church at large. John's use of the singular form of the pronoun συ in God's message to the seven churches is used as a corporate term; where "one like the son of man" addresses each church as "a body" while also allowing the instructions to be applicable to each member of that church.

The seven churches of Revelation are often interpreted as representing elements of all church life, past and present, and not just the individual congregations listed. 16 Such corporateness seen in Revelation broadens even further when one considers how its message extends beyond the church of John's day. Revelation is the act of God revealing hidden truths to his church. Truth, although necessary for the churches of John's day, remains truth for all ages. When Christ spoke to the "lukewarm" church at Laodicea with a call to repent -- his words echo warning and judgment for today's lukewarm congregations. Prophetic and revelatory truth, like God, is the same yesterday, today and forever; able to be applied to every person and every church once revealed.

12 Richard J. Foster, Celebration of Discipline, 30.
13 Rev. 4:1.
14 Rev. 10: 9-10.
15 Rev. 1:19.
Preparation for Prayer:
Personal and Corporate Preparation

John first witnessed in his vision "one like the son of
man;" an image addressing and preparing the church for what
would soon lie ahead. He does not allow the church to sit back
and watch the unfolding of eschatological events and the
judgment upon the ungodly. Instead the image John sees first
speaks a message of judgment upon the church; a judgment that
begins not with the world but with "the family of God." 18

The first image John uses to illustrate the need for
preparation before the petition of prayer is the ἄγγελος of the
seven churches. Who exactly is God judging when he tells John
τῷ ἄγγελῳ τῆς ἐν ... ἐκκλησίας γράφων,...? Ladd believes
that these angels are "heavenly representatives" of the churches
here on earth; pointing out that nowhere is the term ἄγγελος
used in apocalyptic literature to represent earthly messengers. 19
ἄγγελος as a human messenger was only used four times in the
New Testament. These references were of (1) the scouts Joshua
sent out to Jericho, 20 (2) the men sent by John the Baptist to
Jesus, 21 (3) the men sent by Jesus to a Samaritan village, 22

17 Rev. 1:13.
18 1 Pet. 4:1.
19 George Eldon Ladd, 35. However, ἄγγελος is found in the
New Testament as referring to earthly messengers. See Matt. 11:10;
Mark 1:2; Luke 9:52.
20 James 2:25.
and (4) Jesus's reference to John the Baptist. 

In the case of John the Baptist, he was referred to by Jesus as one who carried the essence or "the spirit of Elijah." Outside of these references, ἀγγελος was used for the basic Jewish view of angelic representatives of the heavenly world and spirit messengers of God. According to Kittel, the Jewish community believed that angels were heavenly representatives who oversaw particular communities of God. Therefore, the angels of the seven churches would have been seen as one angel who would oversee and represent each of the seven churches. The difficulty of interpreting the angels of the seven churches as only angelic beings is found in Revelation's chain of communications. In order to subscribe to such a view one would have to believe that God, a spirit, commanded John, a physical man, to physically write down on a physical scroll what he saw and heard, expecting it to be received by physical congregations read to them by a "heavenly representative." If one were to believe such a theory, would it not have been more logical for God, who is spirit, to simply have addressed this heavenly spiritual representative in heaven rather than through a written communication?

23 Matt. 11:10.


26 Gerhard Kittel, "ἀγγελος," 86. Kittel points out that the Jewish community saw angels as ones who oversaw a particular community; much like the belief that Michael was the archangel who oversaw the Israelite community.
Fekkes expands Ladd's position by interpreting the seven angels as equivalent to the seven spirits of Revelation. Constas echoes this interpretation by saying that the seven angels are "the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth;" sent to convict the world of sin and lead the believers into all truth. In essence, God -- a spirit, is addressing the spirit, or spiritual representation, of each congregation with words of either rebuke or praise.

Walvoord's interpretation contrasts those of Ladd and Fekkes. He interprets these messengers as "the pastors of the churches or prophets through whom the message was to be delivered to the congregation." Although modern church structure ideology strongly supports a head pastor system, such was not the philosophy of the early church. Christ was seen as the head of the church and the church was led by a plurality of leaders called elders. Walvoord's interpretation of ἅγγελος as the pastor of the church would mean that the pastor or principal leader was guilty alone of the specific accusations made by Christ to the seven churches and was solely responsible for the act of repentance. This belief would make the letters unnecessary for public reading to the seven churches of Revelation.

A more accurate assessment of the ἅγγελος imagery of each of the seven churches is described by Safrai and Mulholland. Safrai states that in the "usual structure of the synagogue service, one person would be called upon to represent the

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community before God in prayer." Revelation calls this person the "messenger" of the congregation. Mulholland informs us that this prayer messenger of the congregation was not one set person but simply a "function passed amongst the entire worshipping community." 31

For the Jew, prayer was seen as a community event; and it was to this community, through its messenger, that the message of Revelation chapters' two and three was directed towards. When someone mentions an athletic team we think of the team as a whole; drawing an evaluation of that team based on their spirit and performance. Even if the team has a great player or two, a great coach or a great bench they are still evaluated by their team effort and accomplishments. Christ is examining each church in a similar way. In reference to the five churches of Revelation who were negatively evaluated, 32 John told his audience that although these churches had some good characteristics and good people -- their spirit, image, and representation both in its community and before God was found wanting. Clearly Christ, who stood in the midst of the seven churches, spoke a message through each church's prayer representative; a message that spoke to the ears of their spirit -- addressing the condition of their religious community. As Mulholland puts it, the messenger of the congregation who comes before God in prayer now becomes "the agent for representing God to the church." 33

John's use of the term 'messenger' in Revelation provides the reader with an image that illustrates the need for preparation

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31 Mulholland, 92.

32 The five churches that were negatively evaluated were the church at Ephesus [Rev. 2:1-7], Pergamum [Rev. 2:12-17], Thyatira [Rev. 2:18-29], Sardis [Rev. 3:1-6] and Laodicea [Rev. 3:14-22].

33 Mulholland, 92.
before prayer. The angels of the seven churches have been shown to be the messenger and prayer representative of each church; a function that was passed amongst the entire community of believers. Therefore, Christ's message to each of the churches was addressed to both the individual representative and the corporate community of believers. This message spoke words of instruction and rebuke; words that required self-examination, repenting and overcoming sin for both the individual and community. Such preparation was necessary if the church was to continue its communication with a holy God.

The second image found in Revelation that illustrates the need for preparation before the petition of prayer is the twenty-four elders. Preparation for the ministry of prayer can be seen in the relationship John shows between the twenty-four elders and the bowls filled with incense which they carried. 

Preparation for the ministry of prayer is seen (a) in the fact that they carry the bowls of incense and (b) in John's description of the elders. Before examining this relationship, this section shall determine whom John is referring to when he talks of the twenty-four elders.

Old Testament Hebrew *zaqen* and the New Testament Greek *πρεσβύτερος* were the predominante terms used for an elder. These terms were at times used in reference to those who were old in years. However, these terms were more commonly used as a title for those who were members of the governing body of Judaism and of the church. The apostle Paul says that the *πρεσβύτερος* is to rule and direct the affairs of the church, while Revelation shows these elders performing acts of

34 Rev. 4:4.


37 1 Tim. 5:17.
worship, instruction and exhortation before the throne of God. These elders have been described by some as either representatives of the whole company of believers or an exalted angelic order worshipping and serving God.  

The later explanation seems not to fit well with the items closely associated with these elders. First, Tenney and Mulholland point us to the number of the elders in Revelation. Tenney believes that the twenty-four elders are a symbolic reference to the entire community of God, perhaps twelve of whom represent the 12 tribes of Israel [representative of the Old Testament people of God] and twelve who represent the 12 apostles [representative of the New Testament people of God]. This representation is evident in Rev. 21:9ff where John witnessed the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. John tells his readers that the twelve gates to the city are representative of the twelve tribes of Israel and the wall of the city, which has twelve foundations are representative of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Several times in Revelation John describes the entire community of God as "priests of God." Mulholland echoes this when he states that these twenty-four elders are representative of the "entire community of God's kingdom of priests, citizens of New Jerusalem, whose worship and praise of God and the Lamb form the structure within which God and the Lamb are enthroned ...

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38 Rev. 4:10; 5:8-9, 14; 7:11-12; 11:16-18; 19:4.
39 Rev. 7:13-17.
40 Rev. 5:5.
The fullness of the church is represented in the elders, just as the true nature of the church's worship is seen in the nature of the elder's worship." 44

Second, these elders were dressed in white robes. 45 John tells the reader that those who "overcome" will be dressed in white 46 and those souls under the altar who had been "slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained" were given white robes to wear as they waited for their fellow martyrs to join them. 47 Revelation 7:9 tells of a "... great multitude ... standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb ... wearing white robes;" individuals who have come out of the great tribulation and have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." 48 It seems clear that these elders, wearing white robes, are members of the redeemed in Christ.

Third, Revelation 4:4 describes the twenty-four elders with crowns of gold on their heads. To the church at Philadelphia "the one like the son of man" said, "I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown." 49 Although Rev. 14:14 only associates a crown of gold with "one like the Son of Man." a case could be made for his redeemed to also be joint bearers of such a crown. New and Old Testament passages state that a golden crown was also used to signify a crown of victory to those who overcame the enemy 50, a crown

44 Mulholland, 145.
45 Rev. 4:4.
46 Rev. 3:5.
47 Rev. 6:9-11.
48 Rev. 7:14; others references to this can be found in Rev. 12:10-11; Heb. 9:14; and 1 John 1:7.
49 Rev. 3:11.
50 2 Sam. 12:30; Ps. 21:3; Rev. 14:14.
of priesthood \(^5\) and a crown of honor; \(^5\) terms clearly associated with the people of God. It would appear that the twenty-four elders, with their white robes and the golden crowns, are closely associated with redeemed souls. Scripture just does not support the belief that these elders represent a heavenly angelic order. Nowhere does scripture teach that the blood of Christ redeems a heavenly angelic order or that such an angelic order are given crowns of gold to wear.

Two other items associated with the elders are found in Revelation 5:8-9. John records that the twenty-four elders are holding in their hands harps and golden bowls full of incense. The Old Testament often referred to the harp as an instrument for songs of worship and praise. \(^5\) In Revelation, songs of praise are not just reserved for the heavenly angels and the four living creatures, but are found to come from the mouth of all in heaven -- both the redeemed and the angelic order. \(^5\)

Finally John records in Rev. 5:8-9 that within the hands of the twenty-four elders were the "golden bowls filled with incense," and that these bowls represented the prayers of the saints. Clearly these elders had the responsibility of being the prayer agents for the community of believers. Later in chapter 4 the symbolism of these golden bowls shall be looked at, but for now this study shall examine the people who had responsibility for these bowls.

The golden bowls were temple instruments; used both to take fire [coals] from the bronze altar for the altar of incense in

\(^{51}\) Exod. 39:30; Lev. 8:9; Zech. 6:11; Sir. 45:12; 1 Macc. 10:20; 13:36.

\(^{52}\) Esther 8:15.

\(^{53}\) Ps. 33:2; 71:22; 98:5; 138:2; 150:3; Isa. 24:8.

\(^{54}\) See Rev. 4:8-11; 5:8-14; 7:9-17; 15:2-4; 19:1-8. Each of these scriptures refer to songs of praise and worship from the four living creatures, the twenty-four elders, the angelic host, the multitude in heaven and those who overcame the beast.
the Holy Place and to carry the special incense that would be laid on top of the altar's coals. Only a representative from the Levitical family could carry the special incense and the golden bowl into the temple. With this information it is easy to see how the elders would be closely associated with the priesthood and the redeemed. John records that the redeemed in Christ are made to be "a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father." 55

Both the harp and the golden bowl of incense, instruments in the hands of the elders, further shows the elder to be a priestly servant with a "sympathetic presentation" 56 of the community's offerings of praise and sacrifices of prayer. Mulholland supports this interpretation; seeing these elders as "the entire community of God's kingdom of priests." 57

John shows his reader through the characteristics of the twenty-four elders that the petition of prayer requires preparation. The white robes of the elders signify the need for the priesthood of believers to be pure; unstained from sin. Only the blood of Christ can accomplish spiritual purity and only the redeemed's confession of sin enable them to be "cleansed from all unrighteousness." 58 The elders' harps [images of praise] and their golden crowns laid before the throne of God show that praise and worship must come before petition. Petition of God without praise and worship of God places the focus of prayer on the need rather than on the provider of that need. Even our Lord taught us to pray by beginning with praise and worship: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come,

55 Rev. 1:6a. John also makes similar references to the redeemed in Rev. 5:10 and 20:6. Peter also states in I Pet. 2:5 that the redeemed as living stones, being built into a spiritual house to be a "holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

56 John F. Walvoord, 117.

57 Mulholland, 145.

58 I John 1:9.
your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," before we petitioned him for our needs: "Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one." 59

The last recorded action of the elders, before the incense in their care was offered on the golden altar of incense, was their falling on their faces [perhaps again laying their crowns before the throne as John records earlier in Rev. 4:10] before the throne of God -- worshipping him, singing [perhaps to the music of their harps]: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." 60

In summary, John has given the reader of Revelation two images that display the need for personal and corporate preparation if the ministry of prayer is to be a successful tool for the furthering of the kingdom of God. John's first image, the ἀγγέλος, especially the ἀγγέλος of the seven churches found in Rev. 2 and 3, illustrates Christ's desire that the church prepare itself, both the individuals of the church and the church as a corporate body, by examining themselves to see if they have need of repenting and overcoming sin. Within prayer, as God speaks to the church through the church's appointed prayer messenger, God calls for the church to be pure. Through repentance and overcoming, the believer and the corporate body of believers reopens and clears the communication lines between themselves and God. The church then becomes ready to hear and receive future instructions and revelation from the Spirit of God. The second image John uses is the twenty-four elders. The elders represent the entire community of God's kingdom of priests; redeemed souls who have been prepared by


60 Rev. 7:12. Similar references to such worship and singing of praise to God can be found in Rev. 4:10-11; 5:9-11, 13.
being cleansed by the blood of the Lamb [symbolized by their white robes], victorious in overcoming evil [symbolized by their golden crown] and occupied with the ministry of praise, worship and prayer [symbolized by the carrying of the harps and golden bowls of incense]. Just as the Jewish priests had to prepare themselves before they offered sacrificial animals on the burnt altar and incense on the golden altar of incense, so too does God's present entire community of priests need to prepare themselves before they serve God in the ministry of prayer.

Preparation for Prayer: Personal and Corporate Patience in the Midst of Persecution

God also reveals in John's imagery that patience, often developed through suffering and persecution, is a necessary trait the church needs in preparing for the ministry of prayer. It is during this time that the people of God can see beyond their own awareness; envisioning a new awareness -- an awareness from God's perspective. Where the saints' prayers focus on justice in times of persecution, God's response redirects our focus towards His purpose of redemption. Rev. 6: 9-11 shows that God's response to the slain souls under the altar is a call of patience and hope. The Lord clearly responds to their prayers by telling them to wait a while longer, until the number of saints to be killed [as they had been] was complete. From God's perspective suffering is a part of patient love.

John states in Rev. 1: 9 that he himself, with his readers, was able to share in their Lord's suffering for the sake of the kingdom's message. John also points out in this passage that persecution and patient endurance are soul mates of the kingdom. Later he ties them together with Christ's message to the seven churches. To the church at Ephesus, John writes: "I also know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for
the sake of my name, and that you have not grown weary." 61 To the church at Smyrna he writes, "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Beware, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison so that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have affliction. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life." 62 Later in Rev. 13:10 and 14:12, John calls the saints of God to patient endurance and faithfulness in the midst of trials and persecutions. It would appear that John is telling his reader that the characteristic of patience is formed and developed through persecution. 63

It is also true that persecution can produce the opposite effect. Rather than turning to God in prayer during persecution, some turn away from God. The Israelites, who were under bondage to the Egyptians for over four hundred years, cried out continually to God for deliverance. Yet some of those same people sought bondage again, rather than deliverance from the Lord, when the Egyptian army came against the Israelites at the Red Sea. 64 The author of Hebrews lists the many trials, persecutions and troubles the people of God have had to endure -- each proving to be the testing ground of their faith. 65 For those who endure the test and place their trust in God for deliverance in their times of suffering; patience is

61 Rev. 2:3.
62 Rev. 2:10.

63 Other New Testament passages support this idea. James 1:2-4 states: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." Paul writes to the Corinthian church, pointing them to the comfort God provides in suffering through which "patient endurance is produced." [II Cor. 1:6]

64 See Exodus 14:12.
65 See Hebrews 11:1ff for specific references.
produced. This patience is extremely important in the ministry of prayer; for prayer requires that we wait on the Lord. It is during the wait that the saints of God rest in his promises and listen to his instructions. Throughout Revelation, the churches are continually told "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches;" a message from God that requires the hearer to stop, quiet down and listen.

Patience can also be seen in the "silence" of Revelation 8:1. John records that there was silence in heaven for a half hour before the prayers of all the saints mingled with the incense were offered before the throne of God; an amount of time that saw the participants of this part of John's vision wait for the movement of "another angel." This section will show that silence is a place of waiting and a place where God develops patience in his people.

There is much speculation and uncertainty about the significance of the silence found in Rev. 8:1. Mounce says that D'Aragon's description of the silence as "... a striking contrast between the hymns that go before and the crash that follows," simply shows a "dramatic pause in the action." Others call it "a temporary cessation of revelation," "the expectant awe of the heavenly host as they await the events of God's final judgment revealed by the opening of the seal," or "an allusion to the primordial silence which preceded creation and

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66 Rom. 5:3.


which now precedes the new creation." 71 Each of these interpretations sees Revelation as a drama; with little insight into the historical or religious context of John's day. These views see the silence as nothing more than a theatrical element.

Another view of the silence is that God silences the angels during the day so that the prayers of Israel on earth may be heard by him in heaven. Charles says, "the praises and thanksgivings of the heavenly hosts are hushed, in order that the prayers of the suffering saints on earth may be heard before the throne of God." 72 Richard Bauckham believes that such angelic beings who sing the praises of God by their heavenly movements become silent once told to stop by God. 73 Peterson also believes that the silence is necessary for God to "hear those prayers." 74 This study can find no reference, either in the Old Testament, New Testament or the Apocrypha that speaks of the possibility of drowning out the ears of God -- making him unable to hear the prayers of his people. To believe such an interpretation could shake Christian theology which puts its faith in an all-powerful, all-present God. In contrast to such an interpretation, the scriptures only verify that God himself is the only one able to close his ears; and then only to the voices and petitions of the ungodly. 75

A more plausible interpretation of this silence can be found by examining the imagery of Revelation 8:1-5. Temple imagery


75 John 9:31; Sir. 34:24.
abounds in this text; imagery that can shed some light onto this passage's interpretation. Several Old Testament scriptures describe a close relationship between the temple and silence. Habakkuk 2:20 says, "but the Lord is in his temple; let all the earth be silent before him." The prophet Zephaniah writes:

Be silent before the Sovereign Lord, for the day of the Lord is near. The Lord has prepared a sacrifice; he has consecrated those he has invited. On the day of the Lord's sacrifice I will punish the princes and the king's sons and all those clad in foreign clothes. 76

The prophet Zechariah echoes this same theme when he writes "Be still before the Lord, all humankind, because he has roused himself from his holy dwelling." 77

The Levitical practice of morning and evening incense burning on the golden altar before the temple's Holy Place [before the presence of God] was accompanied by the whole multitude of the [Jewish] people withdrawing from the inner court of the temple; falling down before the Lord and spreading their hands in silent prayer. It was during this period that "... throughout the temple building deep silence rested on the worshipping multitude." 78

Bauckham suggests that the half hour silence ought to be thought of in terms of "liturgical time, such as the context of worship in the heavenly temple suggests." 79 He believes that the morning offering of incense took the priests about one half

76 Zeph. 1:7-8.
77 Zech. 2:13.
an hour. After this offering, which was accompanied by the silent prayers of the Jewish people, the high priest would first pronounce a blessing on the people and then "it was the duty of the priests ... at the proper time to blow the blasts on their silver trumpets." 80 Revelation picks up on these temple practices and displays them in John's visionary experience. After the events of Rev. 8:1-5, John details the trumpet blasts of the seven angels in Rev. 8:6ff. Although this study shall later examine the significance of the trumpet blasts, John clearly shows that the silence is broken by a sounding or proclamation of the trumpets.

The Old Testament provides support to the idea that silence [seen as a period of patient waiting] is understood as a preparatory stage before receiving some form of proclamation. The writer of Deuteronomy said,

Then Moses and the priests, who are Levites, said to all Israel, "Be silent, O Israel, and listen! You have now become the people of the Lord your God. Obey the Lord your God and follow his commands and decrees that I give you today. 81

Also in the Old Testament "silence" is seen as a maturing time; a time of waiting for "teaching," 82 "counsel," 83 "instructions in wisdom," 84 and a time of waiting for one's "salvation" and "hope." 85

80 Alfred Edersheim, 167.
81 Deut. 27:9-10.
82 Job 6:24.
83 Job 29:5.
84 Job 33:33.
85 Ps. 62:1, 5.
In order to receive this counsel, the scriptures instruct the people of God to wait and wait patiently. The writers of Psalms instruct the reader to "...wait in silence" for God's salvation and hope and to be "still before the Lord and wait patiently for him." The writer of Job says that those who listened to God "...waited and kept silence for [God's] counsel." The apostle Paul, in the New Testament, expands the idea of waiting in silence with doing so patiently. He says, "...if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." Richard Foster says that waiting in silence is a way of "practicing the presence of God" and a way of reaching maturity. Silence prepares the petitioner for both the presence of God and the hearing of his instruction and counsel. Once informed by God's instruction, the petitions of God's people can be more in line with God's will; for it is only "...when we listen to God that God will listen to us." John ties all the elements of patience into Rev. 6:9-11. The persecuted and slain souls that John saw under the altar who called out in a loud voice to God [an image of communications

86 Ps. 62:1, 5.

87 Ps. 37:7. See Ps. 40:1 for further reference.

88 Job 29:21.

89 Rom. 8:25. For other references concerning the relationship with silence, waiting and patience see James 5:7, I Peter 3:20 and II Ma. 6:14.

90 Richard J. Foster, Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth, 144. Here Foster refers to Brother Lawrence's use of the phrase "practicing the presence of God." Refer to the following citation for details on Brother Lawrence's quote: Brother Lawrence, The Practice of the Presence of God (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Revell, 1958), 9. Foster states that practicing the presence of God involves inner, outer, and corporate disciplines; disciplines such as prayer, fasting, silence, solitude, scripture study, service, etc.

91 Judg. 9:7.
with God] were cared for by the Lord but given instructions to "... wait a little while longer." These instructions were not just words of counsel from God but these instructions were a display of the very nature and character of a patient God -- even when he sees the pain and persecution of his people. His patience displays his boundless love for even those who violently disobey his decrees -- a love founded in the hope of redemption for all of His creation.

For the ministry of prayer God requires that we silence ourselves in preparation for his leading in our lives. In silent waiting we show honor and respect; a way in which we silently say to God that he is worthy to be listened to. God showed Elijah that the voice of God is likened to a gentle whisper; heard only in the silence and not in the commotion of this world. 92 In prayer we quiet our spirits, sifting out the voices of the world and silencing the continual racing of our own inner voice: a voice too often occupied with self-serving interests, temporal desires and even with injustices done to ourselves for the cause of Christ. These voices need to be silenced if the church is ever to be able to listen to the instructive voice of God and follow his redemptive plan for a lost world that He loves.

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92 1 Kings 19:9-18.
Preparation for Prayer:
Summary

Revelation shows that the ministry of prayer requires preparation. One must first enter into the realm of prayer -- a spiritual event uniting both creature and divine on a spiritual plane. John shows the reader that "in the spirit" is the arena of prayer. Prayer is not simply a ritual practice to be performed by Christians but a relational communication to be experienced between God and his people. It enables us to see truth, the spiritual kingdom of God and the world from God's point of view. John's revelation, a spiritual event, allowed John and allows us today to see into God's world.

Modern society has made many things personal and individualized; a philosophy that has crept into Christian ideology. Revelation defines the ministry of prayer to be not just personal but corporate as well. God hears not only our individual requests but he also is interested in the corporate "prayers of the saints." Because God sees the church as a body and not just as individual members; he wishes the church to act as a corporate body; being seen as fully functional only if each member unites as one with the head of the body; Jesus Christ the Son of God.

John points out that we as individuals and as the church must be prepared for the ministry of prayer. Revelation calls the church to examine the essence of its own spiritual condition before it can hear back from God concerning its involvement in his redemptive plans. Through the letters to the seven churches, God calls for several of the churches to change their ways while instructing all the churches to overcome the influences of this unholy world. Once this is done, God promises blessings for the church; blessings that are both temporal and eternal. With the image of the twenty-four elders John displays the ministry and character of the entire community of the priests of the kingdom;
the redeemed in Christ. John shows that they have been prepared to serve in all aspects of ministry [including prayer]. They have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb [their white robes], they have been crowned as a royal priesthood with victory [their golden crowns] and because of that they occupy themselves with the ministry of worship, praise and prayer [the bowing, casting their crowns before the throne of God and the use of their harps and bowls of incense]. Revelation shows that each of these elements are seen and practiced before the incense was offered upon the altar of incense as recorded in Rev. 8:1-5. This shows to the church today that we need to be prepared before we go to God with our petitions. If not properly prepared we will hear a message much like the five bad churches of Revelation heard; a message of judgment and a call for repentance. Not until we are properly prepared to offer our prayers before God will we be in the position to hear from him concerning our participation in his redemptive plan.

Preparation is also shown to be through personal and corporate patience in the midst of persecution. Rev. 6:9-11 shows the persecuted and slain souls under the altar who were instructed by God to wait. Historically, the people of God have had to endure persecutions of various kinds and various intensities. Although suffering and persecution is handled differently by each individual, John calls the church to trust in God who will see them through each difficult time. This act of faith followed by God's faithfulness will help the faith of the believer to grow -- enabling the believer to confidently and patiently wait upon the fulfillment of the Lord's will in this world.

Through the image of "silence," John instructs the church to slow down long enough to see the church and the world from God's perspective rather than through our own. Revelation shows that God's focus is on hope and redemption; and it is in
silence with God that we can be instructed, counseled, and prepared by him to have the heart of Jesus Christ and to be equipped with his message -- a message the saints are called to proclaim to an unholy world.
CHAPTER 3

THE PETITION OF PRAYER

The Place of Petition

To the Jew, Jerusalem and the temple were the focal points of their religion. The city of Jerusalem was the city of God and the temple was the place where God dwelt amongst his people. Revelation draws upon these two images for much of its symbolism; images this section will examine to gain a clearer understanding of the place for prayerful petition.

The Israelite people, although able to bring sacrifices to the temple, were never permitted to come into the presence of God. Any sacrifice or petition to God had to go through God's appointed mediators. These appointed mediators were those Israelites who were of the Levite tribe; priests whose principle duty was to serve God at the temple. An even greater separation between the presence of God and his people can be found in the duties of the high priest. The only time anyone was permitted into the Holy of Holies, where the presence of God dwelt, was on the day of Atonement. Only on this day, the High Priest alone was permitted to enter into the presence of God through the temple veil that separated the Holy of Holies from the sanctuary, in order to make intercession for the people of Israel before the ark of the covenant. The separation of the people of Israel from the presence of God continued until a new and higher order of communion between God and his people was established through God's Son, Jesus Christ.

Bauckham sees the New Jerusalem found in Revelation 21 as a temple; "the place of God's immediate presence, where his worshipers see his face." ¹ For the New Testament believer,

¹ Richard Bauckham, The Climax of Prophesy, 132.
Caird says that Christ's death on the cross, the heavenly day of atonement, issued in a new era of worship where "no priest needs to enter the sanctuary, for the curtain is drawn aside so that all the congregation may see for themselves the symbol of God's presence in their midst." Not only does Caird see that Christ's death on the cross enabled the believer to enter the presence of God without the assistance of a human mediator but that Christ's death also enabled the believer to go beyond the ritualistic worship in physical temples and enter into a spiritual worship of God.

Both Jews and early Christians believed that there was a heavenly counterpart to the earthly temple. Koester supports this in his examination of Hebrews 9:23-24. The writer of Hebrews says:

It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.

Koester sees the earthly tabernacle and its furnishings as ὑποδείγματα [representative copies] and an ἀντίτυπον [anti type] of the heavenly one...the heavenly sanctuary requiring sacrifices that were better than those offered in the earthly

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4 Heb. 9:23.

5 Heb. 9:24.
Although the Jews saw religion and its rituals as physical acts performed in physical places, God, through Jesus Christ, revealed a deeper meaning of the temple and its rituals. These Old Testament structures and practices were but shadows; physical reflections of spiritual realities.

The Old Testament tells of a temple where God may be found and where prayers and sacrifices may be offered. The New Testament takes this Old Testament shadow and reveals its true form. The apostle John tells of Jesus meeting with a Samaritan woman; a woman who showed her pre-Christ worship ideology when she said to Jesus "Our fathers worshipped on this mountain [Mt. Gerizim], but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus responded to her by saying,

Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem... Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.

When Christ drove the moneychangers from the temple because they had turned the "house of prayer" into a den of thieves, the religious leaders questioned Christ's right to do this. They asked him for a miraculous sign to validate his authority. The scriptures record that Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." Jesus was referring to his own body as the temple which God would raise.

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6 Craig R. Koester, 191-2.


8 John 2:19.
Clearly Jesus is beginning to plant in the minds of the Jews the idea that God's temple was intended to be more than a building built with stone.

Later Christ informs Pilate that his kingdom is not of this world but of another place. In Rev. 1:6 and 5:10, John sees that God has made the believers "to be a kingdom." It would appear that the kingdom of God is anyplace where God is allowed to be Lord; not so much lord over church buildings, monetary offerings, or physical assets of the saints but over and within the hearts of the subjects of his kingdom. To those who give him free reign, their bodies and lives become the temple in and through which God lives.

Through Christ, the church understands that God is spirit and true worship is spiritual in nature. It follows that God's kingdom is spiritual too and is a place where the spirit of the believer comes to unite itself with the Spirit of God. True worship is not performed by outward rituals but by inward [spiritual] sacrifices, thus showing that the temple of God, where the Spirit of God [the Spirit of truth] dwells, can be found within those who embrace God's kingship and kingdom.

The apostle Peter said,

As you come to him, the living Stone -- rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him -- you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

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9 This reference is to the "kingdom of God" or the "kingdom of Heaven." See John 18:36.

10 See Eph. 2:19-22 and 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19-20.

11 1 Pet. 2:4-5.
In the seventh chapter of Revelation, John tells of the great multitude in white robes. He is told by one of the elders that these are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. The elder continues by saying that those dressed in white are before the throne of God and serve God in his temple day and night. The Hebrew word kapporet, commonly translated mercy seat, was a word used to describe the cover of the ark of the covenant found in the temple's Holy of Holies. The LXX translates kapporet by using the Greek word hilasterion -- a word that means a place of propitiation or a place one finds atonement. It was on the kapporet that the presence of God sat when God addressed Moses. Because of this, the cover of the ark of the covenant became known by the Jews as the throne or the footstool of God on earth. John is telling his reader that those dressed in white are his priests who have entered his presence prepared to serve God -- standing before his throne which is located in the temple's Holy of Holies. John carries this further by illustrating that their service goes beyond the physical Jewish temple located in Jerusalem. In Revelation 21 John witnessed the "new Jerusalem" coming down out of heaven. This new Jerusalem is later described as being void of a temple -- because the "Lord Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." These references to the temple appear to show that communion and communication with God transcends a physical

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12 See John's reference to the temple and the great multitude found in Rev. 7:9-17.


14 Exod. 25:22, 30:6, Num. 7:89.

15 Ps. 99:1, 5, 132:7.

16 Rev. 21:22ff.
location and displays itself in the person of God himself. The location is not what is important in prayer; for prayer does not originate from a physical place but from a spiritual locale; both from the Spirit of God and from within the heart and spirit of the presenter. Prayer is the beckoning of the Spirit of God for communion with our spirit and in response to that call -- our spirit, through Christ, can enter into the presence of God.

The Character of the Petition of Prayer

Revelation gives some important keys in understanding prayer and it's petition to God. This next section shall extensively examine the character of the petition of prayer as displayed in John's visionary experience.

A Mediated Petition

We have already examined the twenty-four elders and how they were representatives of the priestly people of God. However, they are not the ones who offer the incense -- instead Revelation 8:3 says that ἄλλος ἄγγελος, holding a golden censer, came and stood ἐπὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου [on the altar]. He was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints ... ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον [at the altar] before the throne." In Jewish thought, angels were seen as presenters of the prayers of the saints to God. 17

17 Tobit 12:15; 3 Baruch 11.
There are two basic interpretations of ἀλλος ἄγγελος. Mounce and Cooper believe that ἀλλος ἄγγελος is not a representation of Christ but simply an angel from heaven. They find it hard to believe that an angel could be an adequate representation of the Son of God. The problem with such an evaluation is that it ignores any Old Testament references of Christ being displayed through angelic beings. Walvoord points out that Christ appeared in the Old Testament frequently as the angel of Jehovah. Longenecker points out that in Rev. 1:1 God sent his ἄγγελος to John and that this messenger was recognized in Rev. 1:12ff as Jesus. Although John did not clearly associate the one like the son of man with Jesus Christ in the first chapter of Revelation -- Christ does reveal himself to John in Rev. 22:16 as the one like the son of man.

Godsey, like Walvoord, believes that this angel is Christ; acting as intercessor and "paraclete" -- as one called to stand beside ... pleading our cause before the face of God. Both Godsey and Constas expand upon this thought by pointing out that "another angel" is representative of the high priestly

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18 Robert Mounce, 181.


office; especially in reference to his duties on the Day of Atonement. This interpretation equates "another angel" with the office of high priest and then broadens it to the person of Jesus Christ. Revelation 1:10ff describes a priestly garment upon the one like the son of man -- one who was wearing the robe and golden sash of the high priest. In Hebrews 8:1-2 Christ is called the high priest and minister in the sanctuary [the heavenly holy of Holies -- τά ἁγία] and in the true tent [σκήνη]. Also, in Hebrews, we find Christ within the inner region of the veil [Holy of Holies] where he is high priest forever. Whether this angel is a symbolic representation of Christ as high priest is what the following section shall explore.

Notice that this angel is a) given incense by a person or persons unnamed, b) is handling a golden censer, and c) is standing on the altar. Each of these elements strongly suggest that this figure is a high priest performing his duty on the Day of Atonement.

Revelation 8:1-5 tells of a presentation of incense on the golden altar before the throne of God; an altar that received from the Levitical priesthood a daily presentation of incense. But on the Day of Atonement the ritual of the priesthood changed. According to Philo [Spec. 2:196] it was already customary in the time of the second temple to spend the whole day -- from morning to evening -- in confessional prayer at the temple on the Day of Atonement. What differed between the

25 See Exodus chapters 28 and 39.
26 Heb. 6:19-20.
27 The temple offering of incense occurred at the third and ninth hour of the day; this would coincide with 9 a.m. and 3 p.m.
daily offering of incense on the golden altar and the offering of incense on the Day of Atonement concerned the offering agent. When daily incense was offered it was offered by a Levitical priest who was selected by lot. 29 On the Day of Atonement, however, only the High Priest could offer the incense before the throne of God after other priests helped ready him for the Day of Atonement rituals. Edersheim points out that one priest would fill with incense a golden censer held in a silver bowl, while another assistant would place in a golden bowl burning coals from the courtyard's brazen altar. One priest would help spread coals and another arranged incense for the high priest to spread. 30 This shows that the high priest was assisted by other priests. The previous reference John makes to the incense offered in Revelation 8:1-5 was when the incense was in the care of the twenty-four elders. 31 It would logically follow that the twenty-four elders, the "entire community of God's kingdom of priests." 32 assisted the ἀλλος ἀγγελος in the offering of incense on the golden altar by handing over the incense that was in their care to the ἂλλος ἀγγελος.

Another element that supports the belief that "another angel" represents the high priest's office on the Day of Atonement is where "another angel" had a "golden censer." Edersheim states that the censer for the Day of Atonement was different in size and appearance from the censers used for ordinary days. 33 It was a vessel in which incense was presented on the golden altar before the Lord in the temple. 34 The daily routine of the priest

30 Alfred Edersheim, 166.
31 This reference refers back to Rev. 5:8.
32 Mulholland, 145.
33 Alfred Edersheim, 163.
34 See Exod. 30:1ff.
would be to fill their censers, carry the censers into the sanctuary, and once there lay the coals upon the golden altar with the incense; allowing the sanctuary to be filled with both smoke and a fragrant aroma. The censers used by the Levite priests were made of brass and were designated by the Hebrew name miktereth, while the censer used by the high priest on the Day of Atonement was made of gold, and was denoted by a different Hebrew word mahtah. In the construction of Solomon's temple, censers of pure gold were crafted to be used only in the presence of God; showing that the golden censer was ultimately connected with the high priest's service in the Holy of Holies.

Finally we see that the αλλος αγγελος offered incense at the golden altar. The first reference in Revelation of an altar is found in Revelation 6:9-11 at the opening of the fifth seal. John records that he saw "under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained." The Jewish ritual for sin and guilt offerings required that a Levitical priest sacrifice an animal before the Lord, put some of the blood on the horns of the altar

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35 Lev. 16:12,13.

36 Num. 16:39.

37 2 Chron. 26:19, Ezek. 8:11.

38 Hebrew term meaning "something to take fire with." The word used in LXX. is πυρσιον which is translated "fire pan."

39 Michael S. Bushell, Bible Works for Windows Computer Software, Version 3.0.01 (Big Fork, Mont.: Hermeneutika, 1995) This background information concerning the golden censer was found in the software's supplemental reference work entitled Easton's Bible Dictionary. Scriptural references to the use of the golden censer can be found in 1 Kings 7:50, 2 Chron. 4:22.
and pour out the remainder of the blood at the base of the altar. The blood represented the cost paid by the innocent because of the sins of the people. Revelation 6: 9-11 picks up on this imagery and shows the death of God's innocent lambs; their lives, symbolized by the blood under the altar, being poured out because of the world's persecution of God's people. From "under the altar" the soul cry of the saints is heard for the avenging of their blood. Because of this, the altar of Rev. 6: 9-11 clearly represents the altar of burnt offering. However, in Revelation 8:1-5 we have the image of the second altar associated with the temple; the golden altar of incense. The ritual of the sin offering recorded in Leviticus 4 required that the anointed priest take the blood from the sacrificial animal and "put some of the blood on the horns of the altar that is before the Lord in the Tent of Meeting." [4:7ff] On the Day of Atonement, the high priest was required to make both a sin offering and guilt offering; offerings that required the high priest to sprinkle the bull's blood on and in front of the atonement cover of the Ark of the covenant. This offering was done to make atonement for the high priest himself, his household and the whole community of Israel. After the offering the priest would:

... come out to the altar that is before the Lord and make atonement for it. He [would] take some of the bull's blood and some of the goat's blood and put it on all the horns of the altar. He [would] sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times to cleanse it and to consecrate it from the uncleanness of the Israelites.  

40 Exod. 29:12; Lev. 4: 7, 18, 25, 30, 34; 5:9; 8:15; 9:9.  
41 Lev. 16:18-19.
Prior to the death of Christ, the Jewish high priest regularly made atonement for the sins of the people. At the time of Christ, Caiaphas was officially the high priest of Israel. When Christ was brought before the Sanhedrin at his trial, Caiaphas said to Jesus, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus responded saying, "Yes, it is as you say... But I say to you: In the future you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." With this, Caiaphas "tore his clothes" claiming Jesus to have spoken blasphemy. By tearing his clothes, Caiaphas broke the law concerning the actions of the Jewish high priest. This law states that "any" Levite priest was forbidden to tear his garments. Lev. 10:6 states that should any Levite priest [especially the high priest] tear his clothes his actions were punishable by death. Since Caiaphas stood so strongly upon the letter of the law and should the letter of the have been followed by the Sanhedrin -- Caiaphas should have been put to death and therefore no longer capable of representing the Israelite nation before God. The law found in Leviticus 21 places a great amount of emphasis on the holiness of the Levite priest. Although Caiaphas still lived to offer the physical offerings and rituals of the high priest, he lost his holiness and his position as high priest before God.

Old Testament historical evidence supports this theory. King Saul did not keep the command that the Lord God had given him when he offered up the burnt offering himself rather than wait for Samuel whose responsibility it was to offer the

42 Matt. 26:64.
sacrifices to God. Because of Saul's disobedience, Samuel said to King Saul:

You acted foolishly. You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart, and appointed him leader of his people ...

Even though King Saul still was the physical King of Israel, he was not God's anointed King of Israel. Soon after this episode, Samuel would anoint David, son of Jesse, as king of Israel and he would become God's appointed leader of the Israelite people.

Samuel, himself, also obtained his appointment through the failings of the priest Eli. Because of Eli's disobedience to God concerning the offerings and sacrifices, God told Eli that his days were numbered and that the Lord would "raise up for [himself] a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in [God's] heart and mind." Likewise, when Caiaphas tore his garment, he lost his anointing because of his disobedience in defiling the holy position of the Jewish priesthood. Jesus Christ. God's perfect high priest, took over the office of providing sacrifice for the atonement of the sins of the people.

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45 See I Samuel chapters 2, 3 and 4 for the complete narrative of Samuel’s relationship with Eli. The specific quotation above is found in I Sam. 2:34-35a.
The writer of Hebrews describes Christ's high priest duty as follows:

When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant... 46

John's description of "another angel" as standing ἐπὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου beautifully illustrates the high priest, Jesus Christ, as the sacrificial and atoning offering before the throne of God. As high priest, Christ's death on the cross enabled him to take his own blood before the throne of God on the final day of Atonement. By his death, the temple veil [representative of Christ's body] was torn in two, symbolically and literally eliminating the need for an earthly high priest; enabling the saints of God, "a royal priesthood," 47 to enter into the presence of God through Jesus Christ. The book of Hebrews says:

46 Heb. 9:11-12, 15a.
47 1 Pet. 2:5.
For Christ did not enter a man made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own... But now he [Jesus] has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself ... so Christ was sacrificed once... 48

The writer continues to emphasize the point that the yearly, repetitive sacrifices of the high priests could not make perfect those who would draw near to God to worship him. Jesus Christ presented himself only once; setting aside the first covenant, along with the duties that Caiaphas held, in order to establish a new covenant. The heavenly high priest, Jesus Christ, with his own blood did "offer for all time one sacrifice for sins, sitting down at the right hand of God ... because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy." 49

Therefore Christ acted in the role of the final high priest only once and now is shown by John as ἀλλὸς ἀγγέλος -- one who now plays the high priest's role of mediator; entering "heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." 50

48 Heb. 9:24-26, 28a.

49 Heb. 10: 12, 14.

taking the prayers of the saints before the throne of God. 51

This study has shown through historical data and Old and New Testament references that it is possible that the ἀλλος ἀγγελος of Rev. 8:3 is a representation of Jesus Christ. The problem with much of this information is that it provides only background insight for the content of John's Revelation. In order for this study to shift the readers' belief from ἀλλος ἀγγελος "possibly" being a representative of Jesus Christ to ἀλλος ἀγγελος "definitely" being a representative of Christ -- we must show a pattern within the vision that displays angelic beings who are Jesus Christ.

John seems to have no problem in equating the term ἀλλος ἀγγελος with Jesus Christ. John begins Revelation by saying that a revelation was given to him by means of an angel sent to him. 52 A few verses later John informs his reader that he turned to see who this angel was that was addressing him and he witnessed someone like "the son of man." 53 John goes on to describe this person as the "First and the Last...the Living One, who was dead and became alive for ever more," a description that aptly fits Jesus Christ. 54 In Rev. 7:2, John tells of ἀλλος ἀγγελος

51 Other references to Jesus Christ as mediator are as follows: "if anyone does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins..." [I Jn. 2:1b-2]. "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, who gave himself a ransom for all men..." [I Tim. 2:5-6a]. "But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs [priestly service within the sanctuary] as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises... " [Heb. 8:6] "Christ Jesus, who died -- more than that, who was raised to life -- is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. [Rom. 8:34b]

52 Rev. 1:1.

53 Rev. 1:12.

54 Later in Rev. 22:12-13, 16, Jesus reveals that he is the image that John sees.
αγγέλος coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. Prior to this we find that only the "... Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne..." \(^55\) was worthy to handle the seals which were located in the right hand of the one who sat upon the throne. \(^56\) The scroll, which is a revelation of God's purpose in a fallen world, is sealed completely and finally, by the one who holds the seal; God himself. John reveals that only one is able to open the seals and reveal the content of the scroll. John describes this person as the "Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David." \(^57\) The image of the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" can be found in Gen. 49:8-10 and Ezek. 19:1-9. The tribe of Judah is described as a lion who rules with a scepter and a staff; images that John uses in referring to Jesus Christ. \(^58\) The second image, the "Root of David," is taken from Isaiah's reference of the coming Messiah; one who shall rise from the lineage of Jesse -- King David's father. \(^59\) Isaiah points out that the sevenfold Spirit of God will be upon him [11:1] and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth [11:4], images that John uses in Revelation. These references show that the images of the Lion of Judah and the Root of David find its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Because of this, Mulholland believes that the "Messiah is the One who discloses the fullness of the purposes of God [as revealed in the sealed scroll], which are being worked out in the midst of history." \(^60\) By reading through the fifth chapter of Revelation it is easy to see that this Lamb is a description of the Lamb of

55 Rev. 5:6.
56 Rev. 5:1.
57 Rev. 5:5.
58 Rev. 2:27, 12:5, 19:15.
59 See Isa. 11:1-5.
60 Mulholland, 160-161.
God who has taken away the sins of the world; Jesus Christ. John then describes the ἀλλὸν ἀγγέλον of Rev. 10:1ff in a similar fashion as the description he gave for someone "like the son of man" of the first chapter. John speaks of "another angel" in Rev. 14:6 and gives a brief description of a particular ministry that Jesus Christ was involved in. 61

With the imagery found in the Old and New Testament compared with the vision of John in Revelation; Jesus Christ is our mediator. He functions as the sacrificial Lamb of God, the high priest who represents us before the throne of God and the ἀλλος ἀγγελος who takes the prayers of the saints and uses them to display his presence and his power in an unholy world. Since the elders of Revelation, who represent the community of God's kingdom of priests, are responsible for presenting the prayers of the saints [symbolized by the golden bowls of incense] to ἀλλος ἀγγελος it would follow that if our prayers are to ascend to God they must go through or be mediated by a higher priest than ourselves. This section has shown that the high priest and mediator for the prayers of God's people is found only in the person of Jesus Christ.

A Sacrificial Petition

Two images, the incense and the altar, symbolically illustrate that genuine prayer is by nature sacrificial. Several scriptural passages describe a close relationship between incense and prayer. Ps. 141:2 says "My prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening

61 Each came out of the temple or out from the presence of God with a specific ministry: a call for both the judgment and the harvest of humanity.
sacrifice." Luke says that at the time of the burning of incense in the temple -- all the assembled worshipers were praying outside the temple.  

Even John shows his audience in Rev. 5:8 that the golden bowls of incense are the prayers of the saints.

Another passage that also details the close relationship between incense and prayer is Rev. 8:3b which reads:

... καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ θυμίαμα πολλά, ἵνα δώσῃ ταῖς προφευχαῖς τῶν ἁγίων πάντων ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον τὸ χρυσοῦν τὸ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου.

and is translated in the NIV and King James English versions as "He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints." Since the phrase ταῖς προφευχαῖς τῶν ἁγίων πάντων is in the dative case, Mounce believes that a more accurate translation would read: "... he was given much incense in order that he would offer the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne.  

During the latter part of the period of the first temple [Solomon's temple], the custom arose of giving a symbolic interpretation to the various objects of the Jewish temple and its religious rituals. Within the temple, a priest would offer incense in the morning and evening on the golden altar that stood before the curtain which separated the sanctuary from the Holy of Holies. It was at the golden altar of incense that the prayers of the Jewish community became the substitute for the incense offering. Bauckham notes the historical relationship between the offering of incense and prayer. He points to the
temple services, which required the burning of incense on the golden altar, as a high point of the temple rituals. While the priests were offering the incense, the worshipping Jewish community assembled at the temple to silently pray. Bauckham believes that the "ascending smoke of the incense was seen as symbolizing and assisting the ascent of the people's prayers to God in heaven. It is entirely natural that it should be the incense offering which required the silence of the angels, so that the prayers of Israel might be heard." 65

How the incense can be seen as an image of sacrificial offering is illustrated by John in the close relationship the incense has with ἀλλος ἁγγελος -- the image of Christ. In Rev. 8:3a. John tells his reader that he sees "another angel" coming and standing ἐπὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου. Because ἐπὶ is followed by the singular genitive τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου -- ἐπὶ speaks of the subject [ἀλλος ἁγγελος] being in contact with or in immediate proximity with the altar. 66 Although there is no other use of this specific prepositional phrase in scripture, the best translation of this phrase, a translation supported by Mulholland who points out "another angel's" sacrificial position and ministry, would be that John saw another angel "on or upon" the sacrificial altar. 67 It is upon this altar that the ἀλλος ἁγγελος is given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints.

The use of ἐπὶ in Rev. 8:3b followed by the singular accusative τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου references the second altar -- the golden altar of incense. Twice we find in the New Testament

65 Richard Bauckham, The Climax of Prophesy, 80.
66 Michael S. Bushell, Bible Works for Windows Computer Software, Version 3.0.01 (Big Fork, Mont.: Hermeneutika, 1995) This information was obtained from the programs morphological parsing analysis tags and lemmatizations derived from Friberg's 1994 morphology of the Greek New Testament.
67 Mulholland, 187.
this phrase ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον. The first is located in Matt. 5:23 when Jesus speaks of bringing one's gift and placing it ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον [at the altar]. The second is found in James 2:21 when the writer makes reference of Abraham offering his son Isaac ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον. We know that Isaac was brought to the altar and was eventually placed by Abraham on the altar for sacrifice. Likewise, the gift Christ speaks of in Matt. 5:23 was brought to the altar with the purpose of being offered on the altar to God. Therefore, John's use of ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον in Rev. 8:3b clearly points to the fact that the incense and the prayers of all the saints -- obtained at the sacrificial altar were intended to be taken by the ἈΛΛΟΣ ἀγγελος to be placed on the golden altar.

This section has shown that the ἈΛΛΟΣ ἀγγελος [representative of Jesus Christ] on the sacrificial altar illustrates the sacrificial offering of Christ; a point supported by Mulholland, Keine, Goodenough and Wilson. The apostle Paul even describes the sacrifice of Christ as an "aroma" and a "...fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." It is not difficult to see the sacrificial image of

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69 See pages 51-52 of this chapter under the section "A Mediated Petition."
70 Mulholland, 187.
73 Walter Wilson, Wilson's Dictionary of Bible Types (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdman's, 1957), 266.
74 II Cor. 2:15.
75 Eph. 5:1-2.
Christ through "another angel." Several Old Testament passages make similar references to the offering of incense at the temple as producing a fragrant aroma before the throne of God. It would follow that if the incense is both mingled with and closely associated with the prayers of all the saints, as John points out in Rev. 5:8 and 8:3 -- the prayers of the saints would also become a pleasing aroma before God. John even says in Rev. 8:4 that the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God. Since Christ's sacrifice is described as a fragrant offering and the imagery John uses in Revelation to show that the prayers of the saints with the incense is also a fragrant offering before God -- it would follow that the prayers of the saints would be sacrificial in nature; a sacrifice that is only acceptable through Jesus Christ.

When we say that our prayers are sacrificial offerings before God, do we not also say that our lives are sacrifices before God as well. Is it possible for us to properly pray to God without laying ourselves on the altar before God? The answer to that is an emphatic No! We cannot separate ourselves from our prayers because our prayers proceed from within -- from our very spirit and soul. Paul says in Romans that we "...groan inwardly" and that the Spirit of God helps our spirit to pray in accordance with the will of God. Prayer from such a spirit as this becomes a powerful element of an effective church. Such a life of prayer, as illustrated by John's reference to the incense offering in Rev. 8:3ff, impacts this ungodly world and the

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77 I Pet. 2:5 addresses the believer as "... a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

78 Rom. 8:23.

79 See Rom. 8:26-27.
forces of evil. Such an association is clearly behind the expression used by Eastern Jews: "...to hate a thing as the devil hates incense." 80 Both the lives and the prayers of the saints must be elements of sacrifice. Before our prayers can be pleasing offerings unto God -- offerings that will petition God to act redemptively in an unholy world -- our lives must be sacrificial offerings both to God and to the world in which his son came to save. Such an offering empowers the prayers of the saints to petition God about his presence in this world's rebellious order. The prayers of the saints then become the "vehicle for the release of the presence of God" in a fallen world. 81

The second image that represents the sacrificial petition is the sacrificial altar. Mulholland states that this altar of God was the place of a "cleansing, renewing, transforming encounter with God." 82 It is a place where we can share in the suffering and sacrifice of Christ which enables God to mold us into the image and likeness of his Son; enabling us to be better examples and messengers for the cause of Christ. Bauckham writes:

The church was not redeemed from all nations merely for its own sake, but to witness to all nations. Martyrdom is not simply the church's deliverance from the world, but the culmination of the church's witness to the world. Where judgments alone have failed to bring nations to repentance, the church's suffering witness, along with judgments, will be effective to this end. 83

80 Erwin R. Goodenough, 199.
81 Mulholland, 94.
82 ibid., 174.
The sacrificial altar found in Revelation 6: 9-11 describes the souls, who were slain for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. They cried out for justice yet were comforted and told to wait "until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was complete." Caird points out that there is a reason for the church's suffering. Not only are the saints promised to become joint heirs with Jesus Christ "if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory;" 84 but Christ develops in and displays through the church the very patient nature of God. Caird says:

... God holds his hand, not willing that any of his creatures should perish and as long as he does so the saints of God must suffer. Martyrdom, like the cross, is the cost of divine patience. 85

Christ himself exhorts the church that if they want to be his disciples they must also deny themselves, pick up their cross and follow him. 86 The cross of Christ, an altar of sacrifice, is the place where humanity and divinity unite in sacrifice. It is where the people of God can be "...crucified with Christ." 87 In his examination of a reference to the altar made in Heb. 13:10 Mulholland sees Christ and the sacrifice of himself, as the Christian's altar; a place where "covenant relationship with God is affirmed, restored, renewed and maintained." 88 It is as the followers of Christ lay themselves and their petitions before God on the altar and by faith in Christ that they unite and identify with God's Son. Mulholland speaks of the slain souls of

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84 Rom. 8:17b.
85 C. B. Caird, 295.
87 Gal. 2:20.
88 Mulholland, 174.
Rev. 6:9-11 as ones who were so treated because they had "incarnated the presence of Jesus." He goes on to say:

So complete was their identification with Jesus that they have experienced at the hands of the rebellious order the same fate as their Lord. They have manifested his death in their martyrdom, fulfilling 'the witness of Jesus.' 89

It is from the believer's sacrifice that prayer becomes a sacrificial petition; a petition that no longer concentrates on selfish, fleshly greeds and desires; but a petition that focuses on the spiritual interests and well-being of others. This enables the saints of God to love as Christ loved; laying down themselves as a living sacrifice for a lost and unholy world.

A Spirited Petition

So far we have seen that prayer is mediated by Jesus Christ, the church's high priest [symbol: another angel]; a high priest who offers a sacrificial and spiritual offering before God [symbol: golden altar and incense]. Although the church has a mediator to present our sacrificial petitions -- no offering, smoke, or fragrant aroma can ever reach the throne of God without πυρὸς. Therefore, the πυρὸς of Rev. 8:5 was the catalyst of the golden altar of incense and the means by which the incense and the prayers of all the saints rose to the throne of God.

The Old Testament Hebrew term for fire was ʾesh and when used in conjunction with the temple it was described as

89 Mulholland, 175.
"consuming," "devouring," and as an agent which displayed the judgment and power of God. By comparing esh with the Greek term for fire, πυρός, similar references are made in the New Testament. In Revelation, John uses the same descriptive labels about fire as are found in the Old and New Testament. John describes the one like the son of man as having eyes like flames of fire. He also describes fire as being a refining agent and an agent used to bring on the final judgment of the world. His use of πυρός in Rev. 4:5 reveals that the 7 πυρός lamps are representative of the 7 spirits [7 fold Spirit] of God. Street sees a close relationship with John's use of the image of fire and the third person of the trinity. He says "...any other than the fire of the Holy Ghost is 'strange fire'... fire kindling true praise and worship must be motivated by the Holy Spirit." Peterson echoes this viewpoint

90 I Kings 18:26.
91 Duet. 4:24, 9:3 and Jer. 5:14.
92 See I Cor. 3:13ff and Heb. 12:28-29.
93 Rev. 1:14, 2:18, 19:12.
94 Rev. 3:18.
95 Fire used in John's revelatory description tells of judgment upon an unholy world. See Revelation chapters 19 through 22 for John's many uses.
96 It is important to note that the image of "eyes" and "fire" also appear to be closely associated with the spirit of God. Rev. 1:14 speaks of the eyes of the one like the son of man to be like blazing πυρός. Later in Rev. 5:6 John uses another image for Jesus Christ; that image being a Lamb. John describes the lamb as having seven horns and seven "eyes" which are the seven spirits.
97 Harold B. Street, The Believer-Priest in the Tabernacle Furniture (Chicago: Moody Press, 1946), 123.
when he states that the fire on the altar is a "symbolic representation of the Holy Spirit." 98 Both Street and Peterson cite John the Baptist's reference of the coming Messiah who was soon to baptize God's people with the "Holy Spirit and fire" 99 and Luke's description of the coming of the promised Holy Spirit at Pentecost with the imagery of tongues of πυρός. 100 The apostle Paul also appears to allude to the fire of the Holy Spirit when he tells the saints at Thessalonica not to σβέννυτε the Holy Spirit; 101 a Greek word used for extinguishing, quenching or putting out a wick, 102 a lamp, 103 or a fire. 104 The problem with the image of fire being solely a symbol of the Holy Spirit can be found in Revelation itself. John uses the image of fire for all members of the Trinity. 105 Therefore fire is an image of the totality of God's holy presence and power in this world. True prayer then proceeds from those who have offered themselves to the sanctifying fire of God's holiness in their lives.

98 Eugene Peterson, 88.

99 Matt. 3:11.

100 Acts 2:3.

101 1 Thess. 5:19.


103 Matt. 25:8.

104 See Mark 9:48 and Heb. 11:34. Definition was obtained from Michael S. Bushell, Bible Works for Windows Computer Software, Version 3.0.01 (Big Fork, Mont.: Hermeneutika, 1995) -- the programs morphological parsing analysis tags and lemmatizations derived from Friberg's 1994 morphology of the Greek New Testament.

105 The image of fire is used for Jesus Christ [Rev. 1:14, 2:18, 10:1, 19:12], possibly God [Rev. 19:20, 20:10] and the Holy Spirit [Rev. 4:5].
Throughout the Old Testament fire is used in conjunction with offerings on the altar of the temple. The temple ritual for the Levites required the priests to gather coals from the altar of burnt offerings and place them on the golden altar of incense. πυρὸς obtained any other way would be considered "strange fire:" a fire "kindled by ordinary human means" 106 and a fire that evoked the wrath of God upon any who offered such fire. 107 Morgenstern states that the fire spoken of in Lev. 9:22-24 came from God and consumed the sacrifice upon the altar and kindled the flame of the altar. 108 It was this fire from God that was taken by the priest and laid on the golden altar of incense; thus validating the acceptability of the offering presented to God. 109 Any offering that was made according to the Lord's specifications and offered on proper fire was called "an aroma pleasing to the Lord." 110 Even an offering of incense, as a memorial portion to represent the bread offering before the Lord, was a satisfactory offering made to the Lord by fire. 111 Therefore, offerings plus proper, holy fire resulted in an aroma pleasing to the Lord.

The New Testament appears to follow this same format. When Jesus Christ, the ultimate offering for the sins of the world, was anointed by the Holy Spirit 112 -- such a union resulted in God's approval. God responded to the union of Christ, the sacrificial lamb, and the Holy Spirit by

107 See Lev. 10:1-3 and Num. 3:4.
108 Julian Morgenstern, The Fire Upon the Altar, 22.
109 Such an sign of offering acceptability was shown by Elijah's confrontation with the priests at Mt. Carmel. See 1 Kings 18:16ff.
110 See Ex. 29:18, Lev. 1:9, 13, 17, 2:2, 9, 3:5, 16.
111 Lev. 24:5-7.
saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Therefore, Christ becomes our example; teaching us to live our lives as sacrifices to God. By our sacrifice we too become the fragrant aroma of Christ; an aroma that not only is pleasing to God but also an instrument God can use to influence this world for Christ.  

In the Old Testament, offerings of animals, grain, oil or incense had to be united with the fire from the altar if its fragrant aroma was to ascend before the throne of God. Likewise, any offering, including our own lives, must be united with the Spirit of God and his holiness, if such an offering is to be pleasing and acceptable to God. Caird says that the character and fruit of the Holy Spirit united with the living sacrifice of the saint's lives results in a powerful and effective ministry in a fallen world. Paul further develops this to the ministry of prayer in Rom. 8:26-27 where he says that in order for prayer to be in accordance with the will of God it must be prayer united with the Spirit of God. Prayer such as this becomes a spirited petition; a union of the spirit of the petitioner with the Spirit of God -- enabling God's will to be accomplished in the lives of the believer towards an unholy world for the purpose of redemption and reconciliation.

A Powerful Petition

So far we have examined the details surrounding the symbolism of the sacrificial altar of incense; the place where

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113 Matt. 3:17.

114 See Eph. 5:2 and II Cor. 2:15.

115 C. B. Caird, 197. Caird examines I Cor. 13:1ff -- showing that without the fruit of the Spirit of God, the gifts of the Spirit and the ministries of the believers become worthless and void of meaning.
the high priest ["another angel"] offers up the prayers of the saints on God's holy fire. Another element of this altar illustrates how prayer becomes a powerful petition; made powerful only by the sacrifice and authority of Jesus Christ. The images that reveal the power of prayer are very closely associated with the Spirit of God; these images are the fire and horns of the golden altar of incense.

Not only is fire a symbol of the Holy Spirit but it is also an image that displays the power of God through His holiness. In the Old Testament, fire send from God, was clearly a display of God's power. The prophet Elijah and the people of Israel surely witnessed the power of God when the sacrifice was consumed by fire on Mt. Carmel. 116 The people of God again witnessed the power of God when fire came from "the presence of the Lord" and consumed Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu after they offered unholy fire before a Holy God. 117 Even in the Old Testament when the Spirit of the Lord was mentioned -- power was closely associated with it. God's power through Samson was manifest when the "Spirit of the Lord" came upon him. 118 Even the prophet Zechariah recognized that power came from the Spirit of God and not from human abilities when he said, "...Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty." 119

The New Testament echoes this same Old Testament reality. Acts 2:1ff shows clearly that with the coming of the Holy Spirit [symbolized by the tongues of fire that fell on the believers] God's power was clearly seen in the disciples speaking in many languages and the conversion of many Jews who believed the gospel message delivered by Peter. Luke records in several

116 I Kings 18:16ff.
117 Lev. 10:1-3.
118 Judges 14: 6, 19, 15:14.
119 Zech. 4:6.
other places that the holiness of God, displayed through God's Holy Spirit, manifests itself in power.  

The apostle Paul tells his Roman audience that "...through the Spirit of holiness [Jesus] was declared with power to be the Son of God, by his resurrection from the dead."  

John's vision of the mixture of the incense and the prayers of all the saints with the fire in Rev. 8:3ff, once offered up on the golden altar of incense, enabled "another angel" to cast the fire into the earth. Such beautiful imagery shows that the combination of the prayers of the saints with the Holy Spirit unleashes God's power into an ungodly world.

Still, John's revelation of the power of prayer is not found only in the image of the fire. The second image John uses to show the power of petition is the horns of the altar.

In the Jewish temple the altars were constructed with horns. Exodus records the construction of the golden altar of incense as follows:

Make an altar of acacia wood for burning incense. It is to be square, a cubit long, and a cubit wide, and two cubits high -- it's horns of one piece with it. Overlay the top and all the sides and the horns with pure gold.

It was on the horns of the altar that the high priest was required to make atonement for the sins of the people on the Day of Atonement. Throughout the Old Testament qeren was

\[121\] Rom. 1:4.
\[122\] Exod. 30:1-3a.
\[123\] Deut. 33:17.
\[124\] Qeren is the Hebrew term for the horn of an animal which they used as a weapon of power and strength to overcome their enemies.
used both to describe the horns of the altar and as a metaphorical symbol of strength, honor and power. Therefore it is easy to see why God required horns to be put on the altars; so as to exhibit His symbolic presence and power. The qeren of the altar was not only symbolic of God's power but was especially understood as an instrument of deliverance. In the Old Testament, a criminal, having committed an unintentional crime, was found to have obtained deliverance from death by laying hold of the horns of the altar. In his gospel, Luke records Zechariah's prophesy which speaks of a κέρας [Greek word for horn] of salvation. Although scholars are divided on whether this image is in reference to John the Baptist or the coming Messiah, the image still addresses one who has the strength and power to deliver the people from the hands of the enemy. The New Testament's only other use of κέρας can be found in Revelation. John uses this image as symbolic of good and bad leader/ruler figures who possess great power and might. Therefore, the scriptures speak of the

\[ 125 \] Deut. 33:17.
\[ 126 \] Job 16:15.
\[ 127 \] Dan. 8:5,9, 1 Samuel 2:1; 16:1, 13; 1 Kings 1:39; 22:11.
\[ 129 \] I Kings 1:50; 2:28.
\[ 130 \] See Zechariah's prophesy found in Luke 1:67-79. Michael S. Bushell, Bible Works for Windows Computer Software, Version 3.0.01 (Big Fork, Mont.: Hermeneutika, 1995) -- the Easton Bible Dictionary with this software speaks of the horn of Salvation as a reference to Jesus Christ while noting that this same biblical reference has also been used as a general term of God's raising up any leader for his people [See Ps. 132:17].
\[ 131 \] Rev. 5:6, 12:3, 13:1, 11, 17:3, 7, 12, 16.
image of the horn as symbolic of a ruler or authority with great power who possessed an ability to deliver people from their enemies.

In Rev. 9:13, John describes the altar of incense and its horns: horns from which a voice is heard. It is a voice of authority telling the sixth angel to release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates. Through our examination of the horn, it would be easy to equate the horn of the altar to Jesus Christ because Christ is truly a ruler or authority with great power, possessing an ability to deliver people from their trials. Since a "voice" came from these horns and these horns represent Jesus Christ -- could not the voice be a representation of the Word of Christ [Word of God]? Scripture makes it clear that the Word of God is authoritative, powerful, and able to deliver people from their troubles provided that they put their faith in Jesus Christ, the living Word of God.  

With the imagery of Rev. 8:1-5 describing "another angel's" offering of incense and the prayers of all the saints with the fire upon the golden altar -- we see a detailing of Jesus Christ. Christ is seen in "another angel", the golden altar and the horns of the altar. Prayer offered through Christ, upon him [in accordance with the Word of God], and anointed by the Holy Spirit [image of πνεῦμα] -- become empowered. Through this imagery, prayer is made powerful only though the sacrifice and person of Jesus Christ.  

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132 See John 1:1, 14 which makes reference of Christ as the Word of God.

133 Heb. 4:12 speaks of the Word of God as alive and sharp; able to uncover the very thoughts and intents of humanity. The apostle Paul says in Rom. 10:17 that "...faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."

The Petition of Prayer: 
Summary

Revelation instructs the reader as to the place and method of the saint's petitions to God. The reader is given a vision into the Holy of Holies, the presence of God, to see that one's petition of God goes beyond a physical place. John shows us that the new temple of God is in the midst of his people; within the hearts and souls of individuals who make up the corporate body of Christ. Prayer then is seen as a spiritual event in a spiritual arena; uniting the body of Christ with Christ himself for the purpose of proclaiming God's redemptive message to an unholy world. In order for the saint's petition to accomplish this purpose, the church's ministry of prayer, as shown in this chapter, must be channeled through Jesus Christ, made passionate through the laying down of the believer's life for the cause of Christ, and made powerful by the Word of God and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. This section has shown that Revelation's temple imagery, especially imagery used during Israel's celebration of the day of Atonement, aids in such a description.

In Rev. 8:1-5, "another angel" has been shown to be a heavenly representation of the Jewish high priest; a role now occupied by the chief high priest, Jesus Christ himself. On the heavenly Day of Atonement, Christ offered his own blood on the cross, once and for all, for the redemption of all who would believe upon his name. Through his death, the veil that separated an unholy world from a holy God was opened, allowing a fallen order full access to God forever by faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is now our high priest; fully anointed to intercede and mediate the petitions of the saints.

John also shows prayer to be sacrificial and spiritual. Our prayers, as spiritual petitions, must be laid on the altar before God; petitions that must rise beyond the sphere of our own
human focus into the realm of God's passion. The image of "another angel" on the golden altar of incense illustrates for the church the sacrificial nature and character of Jesus Christ. Since John also reveals in Rev. 8:1-5 that the incense and the prayers of all the saints, as was "another angel," was laid on the altar -- showing that our prayers also are sacrificial. Our prayers cannot be separated from ourselves for our prayers come from within; from our spirit and soul. Just as Christ laid his life on the altar for humanity we too must lay ourselves united with our petitions on that same altar; laying them down in order that we might reflect Christ's great love for a fallen world. Once laid upon the altar the incense with the prayers of the saints becomes subject to the consuming fire on the altar. This fire, symbolic of the Holy Spirit, becomes the catalyst which enables the prayers of the saints to be acceptable and pleasing before God.

Finally, prayer can be a powerful weapon of the church. With the union of the incense and the prayers of all the saints with the Holy Spirit [image of "fire"] God's power and presence is displayed within his creation. Rev. 8:1-5 shows that after the offering on the altar, the fire from the altar is thrown to the earth. John then describes to his reader that all of creation is shaken with its presence. He also uses the image of the horns of the altar to show that the power of our petition is found in one who is a ruler with power and authority -- able to deliver the oppressed from the oppressor. The horn, which is a part of the altar, is a further image of Jesus Christ who is such a ruler. Rev. 9:13, which speaks of a voice coming from the altar, illustrates that not only is the person of Jesus Christ a horn of humanity but that his voice or his Word also is full of authority and power -- able to deliver and set the captive free. For the church it is important that we embrace Christ and his holy Word which will empower us and our prayers against the forces of evil. It is in Christ's name, by his sacrifice, through the power of his Holy Spirit and with his Word that our petitions
move God; who in turn transforms us into a redemptive "aroma" in a fallen world.
CHAPTER 4

THE PROCLAMATION FROM PRAYER

Introduction

In the earlier pages of this study Revelation has been shown to instruct the church as to (1) how it ought to prepare for the ministry of prayer and (2) what the nature and character of its petition to God ought to be. This chapter will examine how Revelation instructs the church to proceed from prayer. Prayer is more than a religious ritual, practiced in the sanctity of our quiet places. It is a communion with the essence of God and a relationship in which God sends the members of his body to accomplish the tasks assigned. It is in this communion where the saints petition and receive instruction from God that the church is sent by God to be messengers of proclamation.

Rev. 8:1-5 shows clearly that no outward activity was displayed until duty was taken care of inwardly. No trumpets were allowed to sound, no movement from God was seen, no fire was cast upon the earth until the offering on the altar was complete. All the angels waited, God waited, "another angel" waited, and John waited until the offering of prayer [the sacrifice of incense] was finished. E. M. Bounds said that the ministry of God's word "has always waited more on prayer than on anything else for its success." ¹ The movement of God in and through his church seems to be prompted by petitions and followed by the anointed proclamation of his church.

¹ E. M. Bounds, The Reality of Prayer (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1924), 149.
The Movement of God

Notice the actions taken after the incense had been offered on the golden altar as is recorded in Rev. 8:1-5. These actions were a) the angel filling the golden censer with fire from the altar, b) the angel throwing the fire into the earth and c) noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. This section shall show how these three actions reveal the movement of the triune God in response to the prayers of the saints.

The Response of the Spirit of God

We have already seen that πυρῷς is a representation of the Holy Spirit. Rev. 8:4 reveals that the fire, taken from the altar of burnt offering and placed on the altar of incense, was the catalyst for enabling the fragrant smoke of the burning incense to rise to God. Rev. 8:5 states that after this offering, ἀλλος ἀγγελος took тον λιβανωτον, filled it with this fire, and threw it into the earth. Two interpretations concerning the image of the censer have emerged. One interpretation sees the censer as having no symbolic meaning or message. It simply is understood as a physical temple implement being used by

God for the purpose of unleashing πυρὸς into the world. This interpretation is inconsistent with its surrounding text since the incense, an element closely related to the golden censer, is clearly described as being intimately associated with the prayers of all the saints. To say that the censer has no symbolic meaning would be inconsistent with the general genre of Revelation and inconsistent with the pattern of symbolic meaning surrounding the furnishings and servants of the temple.

Another interpretation, one which this study supports, says that the censer is a symbolic representation of the people of God. The chain of events of Rev. 8:1-5 are as follows:

1. "another angel" mingles the prayers of all the saints with the incense and offer it upon the altar.

2. smoke from the altar rises before God.

3. "another angel" takes the golden censer and fills it with the fire from the altar.

4. "another angel" casts the fire from the golden censer into the earth.

We have already shown that "another angel" is a representation of the high priest on the Day of Atonement; and that representation is fully realized in the person of Jesus Christ. We have seen that the incense and the prayers of all the saints, once combined with the fire of the Holy Spirit, become a pleasing offering to God. We now will examine the symbolic significance of the golden censer.

Historically, the golden censer, was a temple implement only to be used by the high priest; especially when used on the day of Atonement. Edersheim notes that the censer for the day of Atonement differed in size and appearance from those censers
used on ordinary days when incense was offered. It was a temple implement that was to be used only by the high priest before the presence of God on the Day of Atonement. We have already seen that the high priest ["another angel"] of John's vision is a representation of Jesus Christ and the fire, that was used to burn the incense and be placed into the golden censer to be cast into the earth, was a representation of the God's Spirit of holiness. Therefore, the symbolism states that Jesus Christ ["another angel"] filled something ["golden censer"] with fire ["Holy Spirit"] in order to send the power and presence of God's holiness into the earth. John does not make clear the meaning of the golden censer but it could be possible that this imagery illustrates the filling of the church with the Holy Spirit; thus displaying the power and presence of God into the world through the church. It is important to note that with John's imagery found in Rev. 8:1-5, the prayers of all the saints had to first be offered on the fire by "another angel" before that same fire could be sent into the earth. It would appear that this imagery indicates that prayer preceded the sending of the presence and power of God into the world. On the day of Pentecost the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and dispersed into the world with the message and power of God; paralleling the imagery of the censer filled with fire and sent to the earth. Such an event did not happen until those filled with the Holy Spirit had spent 10 days in continual prayer; awaiting the promise of God's presence within them -- in the person of the Holy Spirit.

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3 Alfred Edersheim, 163-166. Edersheim illustrates this by referring to Korah's rebellion of the Old Testament. He notes that Korah and his Levite followers came before the Lord with bronze censers while Aaron brought a golden censer. See Numbers 16:1ff and Lev. 16:1ff.

4 Acts 1:14.
Pratney says of the events on the day of Pentecost when the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit: "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost [fire] thus becoming anointed [holy] ..." 5 Like Revelation's image of the 7 stars [representative of the messengers of the churches] in the hands of the one "like the son of man" [a representation of Christ], so too in the hand of "another angel" [another representation of Christ] is held another image of the church of God [represented by the golden censer]. The prayers of the saints, anointed with God's Spirit of holiness, are sent by Christ into the world with power and authority in order to display God's presence in a fallen world. Therefore the Holy Spirit of God becomes the "enabling agent" of the church's prayers and gospel message; for neither can be powerfully executed but by the Holy Ghost. No amount of intellect, learning, eloquence, truth, ritual, even the precious blood of Christ can empower the message of redemption to an unholy world like the Holy Spirit can. 6 The evidence of the effectiveness of the church's prayers is "measured by the Spirit's power working in us." 7 The "church full of live coals - - the Spirit dwelling in man, in the heart of man," 8 is the vehicle through which God has chosen to accomplish his redemptive purpose.

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5 Winkie Pratney, Revival (Springdale, Pa.: Whitaker House, 1983), 276.
6 E. M. Bounds, 123.
7 E. M. Bounds, 128.
8 Constantine J. Constas, 198.
The Response of the Son of God

"Another angel" of Rev. 8:1-5 [a representation of the heavenly high priest] not only is mediator of the prayers of the saints but also is the caretaker of the temple elements. After the incense had been offered, the angel perform an action that is said to effect the earth. Revelation 8:5a describes "another angel" taking the golden censer and filling it with fire from the altar, and hurling the fire into the earth. Earlier sections of this paper have shown that the fire is symbolic of the presence of God's holiness in the midst of the fallen world and it would follow that Jesus Christ, seen in John's image of "another angel", would be the sender of the presence of God into the earth. The gospel of John records that Christ is instrumental in sending, in his name, the "Counselor...the Spirit of truth." 9 Christ told his disciples "...it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you." [Jn. 16:7] Later, Luke recorded Christ's command to his disciples:

Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses... 10

After ten days of prayerful anticipation, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the believers on the day of Pentecost; a fulfillment of the prophecy given by the prophet Joel. This prophecy contains two parts: the first is found in Ac. 2:17-18

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9 John 14:15-17, 26.

10 Acts 1:4. 8a.
which speaks of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last days. The second part is Acts 2:19-21, which speaks of the trembling of the heavens and earth associated with such an outpouring of the Spirit of God:

I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. 11

Both passages [Rev. 8:1ff and Acts 2:17-24] indicate that after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit an intense shaking of this world's order takes place. The prayers of all the saints mingled with the fire from the altar shows that the prayers of the believers release the presence of God εἰς τὴν γῆν; into the midst of the rebellious order. 12 In these two passages we catch a glimpse of the purpose of the presence of God into the earth. Acts 2:17-21 concludes by saying that from such a cosmic disturbance: "... everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." 13 This passage clearly indicates that redemption is the goal of the outpouring of the presence of God through the Holy Spirit. Likewise, Rev. 8:1-5, which reveals a sending of the fire into the earth, also speaks of a shaking of this world's order. John reveals that the purpose of this shaking can be seen in the seven trumpets which follow the sending of the fire from the hand of "another angel." After the sixth


12 John's use of the phrase εἰς τὴν γῆν is found in Rev. 6:13, 8:7, 9:1, 12:9, 13, 13:13 and 16:1-2. John appears to show, through the imagery of stars, hail, fire, blood, locusts, dragon, etc. into the earth, that the purpose of each is to shake this world's order [a rebellious order] in order to issue in a new world order of repentance, redemption, and righteousness.

trumpet. John records that the purpose of his presence was to bring this rebellious order to repentance so that they might be redeemed. 14

Bauckham sees the purpose of casting the fire into the earth as God bringing his judgment into an ungodly world. 15 Mounce sees the prayers of the saints as playing an "essential role in bringing judgment to the earth," 16 and Ladd believes that the prayers of the saints play a major role in "bringing upon the world the final expression of God's justice and wrath." 17 They see ἐβαλεν εἰς τὴν γῆν of Rev. 8:5 as ἔλλος ἁγγελος throwing the fire from the censer as a display of his anger and wrath. To say that God's motivation for casting the fire within the censer to the earth was from base anger alone -- not only shows an inconsistency with John's other uses of βάλλω but it displays only one side of God. 18 Christ himself, in his message to the church at Laodicia, says: "... those who I love, I rebuke and discipline..." 19 John shows that even though the souls of the fifth seal, who were under the altar and had been killed because of their faith, cried out for vengeance -- God acted not in wrath and judgment. Instead he instructed them to wait till their fellow martyrs joined them. John also points out to his readers that the bowls of wrath found in Rev. 16:1ff,

14 Rev. 9:20-21.
15 Richard Bauckham, The Climax of Prophesy, 82.
16 Robert Mounce, 182.
17 George Eldon Ladd, 207.
18 John uses the term βάλλω in a positive sense as follows: a) the twenty-four elders casting their crowns before the throne [Rev. 4:10], b) God casting burdens [responsibilities] onto the saints [Rev. 2:24] and c) the casting of the sickle for the reaping of the harvest [Rev. 14:16,19]. Negatively, the term is used in the casting down of Jezebel [Rev. 2:22].
19 Rev. 3:19.
which are also golden 20 and, perhaps, associated with incense and the prayers of all the saints, 21 are also aimed at the repentance of the rebellious order of this world. 22 In each instance it would appear that God's mercy is the ultimate purpose for the presence of His holiness in this unholy world. The intent of Ἀλλάς Ἁγγέλος casting the fire of the Holy Spirit was truly an intent of judgment -- yet an intent wrapped in his purpose of redemption; for the Spirit comes to testify of Christ -- the savior and redeemer of the world.

The Response of God the Father

Several times John uses phrases similar to the one found in Rev. 8:5b: "...there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake." These are: (1) "from the throne [of God] came flashes of lightnings, rumblings and peals of thunder," 23 (2) the heavenly temple of God was opened and upon seeing the ark of the covenant "there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm," 24 and (3) when the seventh angel poured out his bowl of wrath -- out of the temple from the throne of God came a voice saying "It is done!" followed by "flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake." 25 In each of John's uses of these cosmic

20 Rev. 15:7.
21 Rev. 5:8.
22 Rev. 16:9, 11.
23 Rev. 4:5.
24 Rev. 11:19.
disturbances the reader witnesses the reality of God's presence into this earth; a presence that shakes the foundation of our unholy world. 26 John strongly emphasizes this through his imagery of the earthquake. Mulholland points out John's first and last use of the earthquake imagery: saying that these two are the only ones that speak of an earthquake which disturbs mountains and islands. Of this he says:

Since islands and mountains were important points of reference for a culture whose topographical center was the Mediterranean and much of whose trade and commerce moved across the Mediterranean, the disruption of these navigational points of reference would result in total disorientation. 27

In each instance John associates such cosmic shakings with God's presence; a presence that disorients and disrupts this world's fallen order.

The Old Testament writers used similar terminology when referencing Moses on Mt. Sinai with God. 28 Richard Bauckham says that:

...in very many Old Testament and later Jewish texts [such physical manifestations] accompanies a theophany...the whole universe, firmament, heavenly bodies, earth, sea and the foundations of the world tremble at the coming of God. 29

26 Rev. 6:12-14, 8:5, 11:15-19, 16:18.
27 Mulholland, 178.
29 Richard Bauckham, The Climax of Prophecy, 199.
Bauckham believes that the purpose of this coming is God's judgment upon a wicked world and such cosmic manifestations are a symbolic proclamation of God "heralding the end." 30 It is true that many times the Old Testament writers record such a phenomena as representative of God's wrath; 31 however this is not exclusively the case. God's wrath was not being displayed when Moses visited with God on Mt. Sinai, nor was God's wrath evident when John saw thunder, lightning, and rumblings coming from the throne as is recorded in Rev. 4:5. At the death of Jesus, Matthew records that:

...when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people. 32

Again, God does not appear to be displaying his wrath and judgment upon the world. Three days later, at the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Matt. 28:2 records that "a violent earthquake" rocked the earth; yet there is no hint that God's wrath was being displayed at this event.

Where Bauckham sees God's wrath, Caird sees God's mercy. Caird says that God's destructive wrath is limited by his own character of mercy. God "limits its operation to give men every possible opportunity of repentance." 33 The physical


32 Matt. 27:50-53.

33 C. B. Caird, 295.
manifestations of thunder, rumblings, and lightning are both a) symbolizing the reality of God's presence in an unholy world and b) a symbolic reference to God's presence designed to get the attention of a rebellious order. When Christ addressed his disciples concerning the sign of his coming and the end of the age, Jesus responded by saying that "nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains." 34 It is true that such physical manifestations can be seen as the judgment hand of God's wrath but it could also be God's announcement of a new beginning. On the day of Pentecost, the believers were together in continual prayer for the promised power from on high. The sound of a violent wind blew from heaven and the promised Holy Spirit filled each believer. After that, the early church was said to have shaken their world with it's message. 35 George Herbert best unites the affects of prayer with the movement of God in a fallen world when he speaks of "reversed thunder." He says that the prayers of the saints "re-enters history with incalculable effects. Our earth is shaken by it daily." 36

The Movement of the Church

Prior to the offering of incense by "another angel" in Revelation 8:3ff., there was silence in heaven; after which John records "And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets." [8:2] Most scholars have interpreted the seven angels as a reference to the seven archangels or the seven "angels of the presence." 37 While both Ladd 38 and Mounce subscribe to the seven angels as being the seven ministering angels of the presence -- Morgenstern does not. 39 He points to John's use of the definite article when referencing the seven angels τοὺς ἀγγέλους. This usage seems to imply that John recognizes these seven angels from earlier in the vision. The only reference to seven angels [who are associated as a unit] would be the angels of the seven churches. To believe that John was referring to a Jewish belief of "angels in the presence" would ignore the possibility that the vision was referring to a specific contextual antecedent within Revelation. In the books of holy scripture, little reference is made to a specific group of angels who minister in the presence

37 Robert Mounce, 180. For the list of all seven archangels -- see 1 Enoch 9:1; 20:2-8; 40:2-10. Michael is considered the supreme archangel. Other references from the apocrypha and Old and New Testament are as follows: Tobit 12:15, 1 Enoch 20:2-8, Isa. 63:9 and Luke 1:19

38 George Eldon Ladd, 124-125.

of God, while many references are made of priests who minister in the presence of God. Because many interpretations say that "the seven angels" are only the 7 archangels, this study wishes to show that these seven angels are both representatives of the spirit of the seven churches and the messengers of the seven churches who represent the congregation — representatives who ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστικασιν.  

An examination of the Mosaic law and priestly practices will help to give understanding to the meaning of "the seven angels," who were given "seven trumpets." The book of Numbers records that the Israelites would often camp for extended periods of time as they were wandering in the wilderness. They would set up camp in a specific way; locating the tribes of Israel around the tabernacle of God. The information given in Numbers 10 gives Israel's relocation procedures. Two silver trumpets were used to signal the marching of the camp to a new location. The Lord instructed Moses concerning who he wanted blowing the trumpets. Numbers 10:8 records that "the sons of Aaron, the priests, are to blow the trumpets. This is to be a lasting ordinance for you and the generations to come." Through out Israel's history, especially in association with the temple, the priests were the only ones who sounded the trumpets.

In the book of Joshua the Israelites were about to enter the promised land and the first city they were to encounter was Jericho. God gave them specific instructions as to how this city was to be overcome. Joshua records:

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40 The exception being found in Isa. 63:9.
41 Rev. 8:2.
42 Rev. 8:2.
43 See Num. 1-9 for the details of setting up camp.
44 David L. Cooper, 108.
Then the Lord said to Joshua, 'See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams horns before the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have all the people give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the people will go up, every man straight in. 45

In Joshua 6:8 the seven priests were described as "carrying the seven trumpets before the Lord." John uses similar imagery [although not exact] in Revelation 8:2 when he says "... and I saw seven angels who stand before God and to them were given seven trumpets." Arthur Lewis believes that such terminology and symbolism, especially around the repeated use of the number 7 in this event, appears to show that the purpose of the 7 priests using the seven trumpets signals in the start of a new order; God's new order which impacts the old order in disruptive ways. Lewis says:

45 Josh. 6:2-5.
... to arrive at the goal of a long march in the seventh day is a motif found also in other ancient Near Eastern literature. In any event, the remarkable constellation of sevens (seven priests with seven trumpets, seven days, seven encirclements on the seventh day) underscores the sacred significance of the event and is, perhaps, a deliberate evoking of the seven days of creation to signal the beginning of God's new order in the world. 46

The Hebrew term for the trumpets of the priests is *shophar*; a Jewish musical instrument made from the horns of a ram. 47 *Shophar* was used in various ways, but for the purpose of this study its relationship to the temple will be examined. The *shophar* was used to inform the Israelite nation that Yahweh's presence was among them so that Yahweh may join in covenant with his people. 48 It was also used both to announce the procession of the Ark of the Covenant 49 and as an instrument of praise to Yahweh. 50 The *shophar's* use in relationship to the Ark of the Covenant was simply to proclaim to all people the coming of the presence of God.


47 *shophar* was a Hebrew term usually translated trumpet, cornet or ram's horn. Once the temple went from being moveable to stationary, the *shophar* was forged from silver.

48 Exod. 19-20.

49 1 Chron. 15:25ff.

During the reign of King David we again see this same relationship. In 2 Samuel 6:12b we have recorded the return of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. "David went down and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing." David said that "no one but the Levites may carry the ark of God, because the Lord chose them to carry the ark of the Lord and to minister before him forever." King David then summoned the Levites to consecrate themselves and "bring up the ark of the Lord, the God of Israel." Leading the procession was to be seven Levitical priests, Shebaniah, Joshaphat, Nethanel, Amasai, Zechariah, Benaiah and Eliezer. These men were to "blow trumpets before the ark of God."

It appears quite evident that the symbolism in Revelation 8:1ff of the seven angels, who were given the seven trumpets in the presence of God, strongly refers back to the 7 Levite priests -- representatives of the saints of God and men who went before the ark of God blowing their trumpets as a proclamation to the world that the presence of God was approaching. Because they were the first to be seen and heard by the world, they became the representatives of both the image of God [marching before the ark of the Covenant] and the image of God's people [those who followed behind the Ark]. John echo's this view when he shows in Rev. 1:6, 5:10, and 20:6 that the Christian community are priests. Godsey points out that the manner in which the seven angels stood emphasized their divine mission. The majority of the times a form of the word ἐστῶτας [stand] was used in Revelation, it referred to ones who were readying themselves to perform a specific task; one assigned to them. Even though there are different interpretations about these

51 See the parallel reference to this story found in 1 Chron. 15:1ff.

52 William A. Godsey, 79.

53 See Rev. 7:1, 10:5ff, 15:2ff, 19:17, and 20:12.
seven angels, each seem to agree that these seven angels are representatives of the earthly anointed priesthood who are called by God and moved by the Spirit to accomplish His will and His purpose.

The presence of God in our rebellious and unholy world is illustrated in John's seventh seal by the images he describes. John displays the Godhead through the images of the cosmic disturbances, "another angel" and "fire;" images that impact this world order in a redemptive way. The fire from the incense altar that "another angel" casts into the earth shows that, through Jesus Christ, the holiness of God comes in contact with an unholy world; a contact that shakes the old order allowing a new world order to emerge. After the cosmic disturbances the seven angels become messengers of God; signaling the beginning of God's new world order. This proclamation is illustrated through John's image of the trumpets. The next section shall examine the trumpets and how they signal in the creation of God's new order.

Proclamation is of the Word of God

If these seven angels are representative of each church's spiritual essence, then the trumpets must symbolize the purpose God has called them to. The Levite priests of the Old Testament, spiritual representatives of the people of God, used the shophar to announce the coming of God. During the day of Atonement the trumpets could not be blown until the assigned priest had offered incense on the golden altar in the Holy of Holies. Termination of the Day of Atonement was by the
customary blowing of the shophar. 54 Since the final act of the Day of Atonement was the priests blowing the trumpet, it is not surprising to see that the final act of the scene in Rev. 8:1-5 is the blowing of the seven trumpets by the seven angels. McGee says of the 2 silver trumpets of Numbers 10, which were blown by the priests to assemble the tribes of Israel, were representative of "two witnesses" of the Israelite community; messengers sounding forth the "voice of God." 55 Mulholland also states that the trumpets were a commonly accepted biblical image for the "presence and voice of God." 56

John's imagery and subsequent message to the church shows that the saints are commissioned to be God's ambassadors and a reflection of his presence as they carry his redemptive message to the world. For the New Testament church, the trumpets are appropriate symbols for the ministry of proclamation.

Fred Craddock sees the ministry of proclamation as shouting the message from the mountain top; much like the trumpets were sounded from the top of the temple walls. 57 Craddock says that "the word of God to the ear is a whisper; but from the mouth it is a shout." 58 The saints are commissioned to be God's voice, God's messengers of his word, and trumpet blowers of his gospel -- to sound a wake-up call to a sleeping world and an apathetic church. 59

54 Jacob Milgrom, 1382.
55 Vernon McGee, 87-89.
56 Mulholland, 190. See Rev. 1:10; 4:1.
57 See Matt. 10:27 for Craddock's reference to the ministry of proclamation as "shouting from the mountain tops."
59 Eugene H. Peterson, 97.
Throughout scripture we find the proclamation of the Word of God for the purpose of change. God told the prophet Jeremiah to say to a rebellious Israel: "Announce this to the house of Jacob and proclaim it in Judah. Hear this, you foolish people and senseless people, who have eyes but do not see, who have ears but do not hear... but they did not listen to me or pay attention... they were stiff-necked..." 60 The gospels echo this same proclamation: "He who has ears, let him hear." 61 Revelation records 8 times the message: "He who has an ear, let him hear [what the Spirit says]." 62 It is clear that the purpose of the trumpets and the purpose of the gospel message is the same; to get the attention of the people -- calling the hearer to repentance. To the angels of the seven churches a call of repentance is heard. In Rev. 9:20ff, John says that after six trumpet blasts Ο οἱ λοιποὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων "still did not repent." God's voice to his creation is not now of eternal judgment but of eternal life; a life obtained by faith; a faith that comes by hearing the proclamation of the word of God." 63 The apostle Paul says:

Every one who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then can they call on the one they have not believed in? How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ... For Isaiah says: 'Lord, who has believed our message?' Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. 64

60 See Jer. 5:20-21; 7:24. 26; 17:23.
63 Rom. 10:17.
64 Rom. 10:13-17.
He then goes on to quote Isaiah:

But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did:

'Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.'  

Where interpretations of the trumpets of Revelation focus on God's voice of judgment and His imminent return, this section has shown that the trumpet blast of the church is heralded for the purpose of proclaiming the good news of redemption and salvation to an unholy world. Christ makes his intention clear when he addresses his disciple's concerns about the end of the age:

Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world, as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.  

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65 Rom. 10:18.
66 Matt. 24:12-14. Mark. 13:10 records that the gospel "must" be preached before the end is to come.
Chapters 2 and 3 have shown that spiritual preparation and an understanding of the elements of petition are important if the church's ministry of prayer is to impact this fallen world. In this chapter, Revelation informs the church that prayer is not just a petition but a commission. From prayer the church of God is called to proclaim God's message of redemption. The chapter focused on the movement of God and the movement of the church in response to prayer. Revelation shows that the movement of God is three-fold; three-fold because the entire Godhead -- the Trinity -- is involved in proclamation.

Through the symbol of fire, John shows the movement of God -- casting his presence in the midst of the rebellious order [εἰς τὴν γῆν] in order to accomplish his redemptive purpose. God is seen responding to prayer through "another angel" who fills the golden censer with fire and casts it to the earth. The actions of "another angel" is a representation of the response to the prayers of the saints by Jesus Christ, the Son of God -- our heavenly high priest. John reveals to the church that the power of the Holy Spirit is only available to the believer and unleashed to the world by the authority of Jesus Christ. Only through him is the church empowered and the world influenced. His redemption message is handed over to the church. Although the word of God "judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" and nothing is hidden from him, 67 the purpose of God's word is the redemption of his creation; a message which impacts this world order by introducing a new order. It is God's desire to expose and destroy the carnal order of an ungodly world in

67 Heb. 4:12.
order that he may fill it with his essence; creating a new world order -- formed in the very image of his Son.

The final movement of God is seen in the rumblings, thunder, and earthquakes that are evident in Revelation when John sees some aspect of the temple proper. God is shown as a shaker of his created order. It is a way which God reveals his divine presence in an ungodly world.

Revelation clearly shows that Christ's message to the church is both inward [evaluative through the message to the 7 churches] and outward [the proclamation of Christ's redemptive message to the world; as is symbolized by the seven angels blowing the seven trumpets]. It is just as clear that the church is not to sit back, count it's blessings, and rejoice over it's salvation: for if the church does so, the church itself will experience the judgment of God. Rather we are called to be prepare for our called mission, make a spiritual and sacrificial petition of God for his movement in this world, and boldly and fearlessly proclaim his redemptive "good news". Revelation records:

The Spirit and the bride [the church] say, "Come!"
And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.  

68 Rev. 22:17.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The central theme throughout the Bible is God's redemptive work for a fallen world. From God's sacrifice of an innocent animal to provide a covering for Adam and Eve to the sacrifice of his innocent Son for the atonement for the sin of humanity -- God has been continually redeeming his estranged love. His redemptive handy work winds through the pages of the scriptures: seen in his deliverance of Noah in the flood, Lot from Sodom, Rahab at Jericho and the Israelite nation from Egypt and the Babylonians. Intermingled with such narratives is the hand of God's judgment and wrath; but always displayed for the purpose of redemption.

The book of Revelation speaks this same message. Within it's pages, the judgment and wrath of God is surely seen; but only as an aid in revealing his redemption. God is not willing that any should perish but that all come to repentance. ¹ This message permeates John's visionary revelation. When Revelation speaks of God's final act of judgment upon the elements of evil it is for the express purpose of ultimate and eternal redemption of those who have chosen to repent and follow him. Where many studies about the book of Revelation have chosen to focus on God's wrath towards an unholy world, this study has not. This paper has shown that it is God's plan of redemption that has overshadowed his plan of judgment;

¹ 2 Pet. 3:9.
showing again that with God -- mercy does triumph over judgment. In the beginning of Revelation, John spoke of a blessing to be received by those who heard and acted upon the book's instructions. The church is then asked to repent if indeed they are to receive their eternal redemption. Revelation's conclusion again shouts out it's redemptive plea -- calling for any who would desire eternal life to come. In between these two examples, the redemptive narrative of God's plan is played over and over. Without a doubt John's Revelation is a symbolic display of the redeemer, savior and deliverer of this unholy world -- Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ has been shown in this study to be the people's high priest; making atonement in the heavenly tabernacle for the sins of anyone who would receive it and, for those who do, interceding on their behalf before the throne of God. The heavenly golden altar of incense was the place where Christ laid his life on the line for his first love [his creation] and became a "horn of salvation" for this fallen world when he placed his own blood on the altar's horns. The temple veil that separated a holy God from a rebellious people was rent in two at Christ's sacrifice on the cross; making available a pathway between God and his fallen love. It is this pathway that this paper addresses; the pathway of prayer. Scripture tells us that:

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2 James 2:13.
3 Rev. 1:3.
4 Rev. 22:17.
...since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who was tempted in every way, just as we are -- yet without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.  

Revelation calls the church to participate in God's redemptive purpose through the ministry of prayer. Prayer is where the church, corporately as well as individually, begins its part in the redemption of our present world.

This study has shown that the ministry of prayer requires preparation. The body of Christ first must put its own affairs in order. The central message of Christ to the church universal in Revelation was and is: Repent! By doing so, the church again becomes Christ's pure and spotless bride; God's royal priesthood and committed servants of the redemption plan. The church's journey through the trials, temptations, and persecutions of this world produces, by God's grace, a refined and purified body of believers. Once made pure; we are then allowed to step into the spiritual silence of God's peace and presence and out of the noise and confusion of this chaotic world. Once in his presence the saints of God understand that their prayers are helped by the heavenly high priest, Jesus Christ. They begin to realize that the battle is not theirs alone; but helped by the intercession of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. It is through the union of the Spirit of God with the prayers of all the saints that we, the church, understand and unite with the redemptive will of God for this

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5 Heb. 4:14-16.
world. The saints of God realize that prayer requires a sacrificial lifestyle; much like the lifestyle displayed by Christ as he sacrificed his flesh and his will for the sake of the fallen world.

The saints also learn that prayer is powerful; made powerful by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Moses, as he petitioned God for mercy towards a wayward Israel, Abraham, as he petitioned God for mercy towards Sodom and Gomorrah, and Christ, as he wept and cried out for mercy for a rebellious Jerusalem -- gives the church role models; modeling to the church their responsibility of calling upon the mercy of God for this fallen world.

Finally, this study has shown that the church is not only called to pray for the redemption of the world but the church is commission from prayer to blow the trumpets and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ; good news that can deliver the ungodly from their chosen path of destruction. From the silence of prayer the church is sent to proclaim. Henri Nouwen, speaks of a group of monks, from the Egyptian desert, who participated in this divine silence. He says that they were moved to leave this silence in order to speak from this silence. By doing so, Nouwen says that when they spoke to the needs of their people, they "sought to participate in the creative and recreative power of the divine Word," a word that brought "...new life." 6 From prayer the church becomes anointed by the Holy Spirit, sent by Jesus Christ and empowered as God's agents to shake this world for him.

Revelation's call is clear: God is calling the church to participate in his redemptive purpose -- not to sit and observe God's wrath being unleashed upon the unholy. The church is called to prepare themselves for the task ahead, pray for the anointing of God and, once received, proclaim the message of

redemption until our lives are spent for him. The church is to give the Revelation of Jesus Christ to a world who does not confess Jesus Christ. Like the Holy Spirit, who leads people into all truth and testifies of Jesus Christ, the church must say:

Come! And let him who hears say, Come! Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.  

And this too is the church's revelation of Jesus Christ!

7 Rev. 22:17.
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