Harps In Heaven

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The thinking of so many people today is that because David used harps in the Old Testament and harps are mentioned as being present in Heaven, that God approves musical instruments within the Church.

However, the fact that instruments were used in the Old Testament and harps are mentioned as being in Heaven, does not give consent to the use of instruments in the New Testament. If they were approved instruments would be mentioned in the New Testament. Such is not the case. So for us to be New Testament Christians we are to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent.

Revelation 1:1-2; “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and **signified** it by his angel unto his servant John. (2) Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.”

The word signified in this verse carries with it the idea of a figurative language. The meaning of this is simply to make known a message by some sort of sign.

This was not a literal interpretation, but a symbolic portrayal of that which shall shortly take place.

This scripture is written as Apocalyptic Literature, which is by its nature symbolic and figurative

Rick Atchley who we have mentioned as one who supports instrumental music in the church says that he does not believe that God who is enjoying music in Heaven would despise us as Christians on earth the pleasure of music.

What God commands the saints in Heaven to do has nothing to do with what we are to do on earth.

The Jews used Apocalyptic codes during times of war. These were signs and symbols that they only knew. This way their persecutors and enemies could not understand what they were communicating to each other.

An example would be: When speaking of the fall of Rome, the Jews would say the fall of Babylon.

To truly understand the harps in Heaven, there are some context clues we must

FIRST: In each passage John is describing the heavenly beings surrounding the throne of God and offering up their praise.

SECOND: These passages contain apocalyptic symbolism and should not be interpreted as literal.

THIRD: Apocalyptic Literature draws its imagery from Old Testament and Jewish worship.

None of the following passages say anything about worship in the Church.

REVELATION:

1:12—“And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks.”

1:20—“The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.”

3:12—“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out and, I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and I will write upon him my new name.”

Also 7:15; 11:1; 15:5,8;

Jerusalem 3:12—Jerusalem

5:8—“And when he had taken the book, the four beast and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints.”

6:9—“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.”

Also 8:3; 9-13: 11:1;

8:3-5—“And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given unto him much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. (4) And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel hand. (5) And the angel took the censer and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth; and there were voices and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.”

11:2—“But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles; and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.”

11:19—“And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.”

If we truly believe that harps must be brought into our worship today, and then we must bring back all of the temple emblems and use them in our services today.

Look back at Revelation 5:8. Here it is obvious that the Lamb is talking about Jesus Christ. If we take this verse where it mentions harps as an argument that musical instruments are to be used in the New Testament Church, then we must also use the fact that incense is used in this same verse and we would be required to use incense as well. We can’t take one without the other.

We must understand that the incense is symbolic of the prayers of the saints and not literal.

Revelation 14: 1-3—John tells us that he heard a voice from heaven like the sound of thunder; like the sound of harpist playing on their harps, like the roar of many waters. We must understand that these examples are examples of simile to help the readers of the text relate to earthly things what he heard. It does not mean that he literally heard harps, etc.,

Revelation 15:2-3—The singers are those in heaven who have overcome the beast and are reminiscent of the victory Israel and Moses enjoyed over the Pharoah in the crossing of the Red Sea. In this vision John looks back to worship in the wilderness, but not to worship in the Church.

Heaven and Earth are two separate entities.

Angels and babies are in heaven but there is no commandment to baptize babies and angels.

We observe the Lord’s Supper until the Lord returns, but not scripture to indicate the observance in Heaven.

Marriage takes place on earth, but it is not recognized in Heaven.

The will of God in Heaven is not the same as the will of God for earth.