

# Revelation 8:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

## Analysis

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**And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand....** This verse from Revelation's vision of seventh seal and first four trumpets - escalating judgments, angelic ministry employs apocalyptic imagery rich with Old Testament allusions and symbolic meaning. The Greek text uses vivid apocalyptic language characteristic of Jewish prophetic literature, drawing heavily from Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Zechariah.

The symbolism must be interpreted within its first-century context while recognizing timeless spiritual realities. The imagery would resonate powerfully with persecuted believers facing Roman imperial cult worship, providing hope that despite present suffering, Christ reigns sovereign and will consummate His kingdom. The apocalyptic genre uses symbolic numbers (seven, twelve, 144,000), colors, beasts, and cosmic imagery to convey theological truth rather than photographic descriptions.

Christologically, Revelation consistently exalts Jesus as the victorious Lamb, the faithful witness, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Every vision ultimately points to Christ's supremacy, His finished redemptive work, and His certain return to judge the living and dead and establish the new creation.

## Historical Context

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John received this revelation circa AD 95 during Domitian's persecution, exiled on Patmos for his testimony. The seven churches of Asia Minor faced increasing pressure to participate in emperor worship and pagan religious practices. Refusal meant economic hardship, social ostracism, and potential martyrdom. Understanding this context illuminates Revelation's encouragement to faithful endurance.

The apocalyptic genre was familiar to first-century Jewish and Christian readers. Rather than newspaper-style predictions, apocalyptic literature uses symbolic imagery to reveal spiritual realities behind earthly events, encourage the faithful, warn the unfaithful, and assert God's ultimate sovereignty over history. Parallels with Daniel, Ezekiel, and intertestamental apocalyptic writings would help original readers decode the symbols.

Rome's imperial cult demanded worship of Caesar as divine, placing Christians in impossible situations—compromise their faith or face persecution. Revelation identifies Rome as "Babylon" and assures believers that despite appearances, the Lamb conquered through His death and resurrection, and all earthly kingdoms will submit to His reign.

## Related Passages

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**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

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1. How does Revelation 8:4 reveal God's character, particularly His sovereignty, holiness, and justice?

2. What specific encouragement or warning does this verse offer for maintaining faithful Christian witness amid cultural pressure?
3. How does this passage point to Christ's victory and the hope of new creation, and how should that shape your present priorities?

## Interlinear Text

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καὶ	ἀνέβη	ὁ	καπνὸς	τῶν	θυμιαμάτων	ταῖς
<b>And</b>	<b>ascended up</b>	G3588	<b>the smoke</b>	G3588	<b>of the incense</b>	G3588
G2532	G305		G2586		G2368	
προσευχαῖς			τῶν	ἀγίων	ἐκ	χειρὸς τοῦ
<b>which came with the prayers</b>			G3588	<b>of the saints</b>	<b>out of</b>	<b>hand</b>
G4335				G40	G1537	G5495
ἀγγέλου	ἐνώπιον	τοῦ	θεοῦ			
<b>the angel's</b>	<b>before</b>	G3588	<b>God</b>			
G32	G1799		G2316			

## Additional Cross-References

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**Psalms 141:2** (Prayer): Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

**Luke 1:10** (Prayer): And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

**Revelation 8:3** (Holy): 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.

**Revelation 15:8** (References God): And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.