

Q9) Who are the 24 Elders in Rev. 4:4?

Question: When John foresaw his rapture into heaven in Revelation chapter 4, he saw four beasts (angelic living creatures) and 24 elders on thrones before the throne of God. Who are the 24 elders?.

Answer: The Bible does not say in so many words who the 24 elders were but there is an abundance of evidence to indicate that they were 24 individuals leading the Old Testament saints in worship.

First, these elders were already around the throne when John arrived. Since John foresaw his own arrival at the Rapture, the 24 elders were therefore in heaven **prior** to the Rapture. Only Old Testament saints were resurrected before the Rapture of the Church (Matt.27:51-54). When Christ rose, the Old Testament saints rose, and when He ascended, He "led captivity captive" (Eph.4:8). Paradise, which was in "sheol" prior to the resurrection, was taken into heaven and is now in heaven (2Cor.12:4).

The resurrection of the Just is in several stages. New Testament saints are raised at the Rapture (1Thess.4:13-18), Tribulation Saints are raised when Christ returns (Rev.20:4) and Millennial saints are changed at the end of the 1000-year millennial kingdom (Rev.20:5).

Second, the 24 elders were **redeemed humans**, because they sang a new song, saying, "*Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of...every...nation*" (Rev.5:9). They were therefore not angels.

Third, they were 24 **individuals**, for on two occasions ONE of the elders came and spoke to John (Rev.5:5; 7:13). They were not a symbolic group.

Fourth, when the elder spoke to John his message was **Jewish** and identified Christ as "*the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David*" (Rev.5:5).

Fifth, the elders refer to God by the distinctly **Jewish term**, "**OUR God**". This expression occurs between Exodus and Zechariah 190 times, usually as "**the LORD OUR God**". The expression, "**the LORD YOUR God**", occurs 145 times. Jehovah is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel), and Israel was a priestly nation. The elders say to the Lamb (Christ), "*Thou hast made us unto OUR God kings and priests*"(Rev.5:10). In the millennial kingdom it will be said,

*"But ye shall be named **the Priests of the LORD**: men shall call you the **Ministers of OUR God**: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves"* (Isa.61:6).

Sixth, the elders appear at the same time, and as **a separate group from the 144,000 Jewish "servants of OUR God"**(Rev.7:3) from the Tribulation period in Rev.14:1-5, and therefore are not Tribulation saints.

HERALD OF HOPE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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Seventh, the elders appear at the same time and as a **separate group from the wife of the Lamb** which is the Church, therefore they are not the Church (Rev.19:4-9).

Eighth, the elders are **representative** of a company made up of redeemed souls from every nation (Rev.5:9), and Old Testament saints included people from **all nations** in the 2,000 years BEFORE Abraham and in the 2,000 years of Israel's history.

At the Exodus there was a "*mixed multitude*" who joined them as they left Egypt (Exod.12:38). The Gibeonites joined Israel and were made "*hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the LORD*" (Josh.9:3-27), as were the 153,600 Gentile "*strangers*" in Israel in the days of Solomon (2Chron.2:17; 6:32). Special provision was made for the large company of Gentile "*strangers*" in Israel (Deut.10:18-19; 26:12).

People of EVERY nation made up the number of Israel, but only Jews could be priests. There were **24 priests of the descendants of Aaron** whom David set up to represent them before the LORD in the Temple (1Chron.24:1-19). Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist, was from the "*course of Abia*", the eighth of the 24 courses of priests, and he "*burned incense when he went into the temple of the Lord*" (Luke 1:9).

The 24 descendants of Aaron were assisted by another 24 from the families of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, who were Levites responsible for the songs and music in the Temple worship. Each musician was assisted by 11 from his family, making a total of 288 to lead the praise of the Lord (1Chron.25:1-31). These ministered with "*harps, and with psalteries, and with cymbals*" (1Chron.25:1), and we find that the 24 elders around the throne "*fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours (incense), which are the prayers of saints*" (Rev.5:8).

The worship of the elders stands in contrast to the worship of the four living creatures (seraphim or cherubim) about the throne. The four living creatures lead the angels and worship God who is holy, eternal, and omnipotent, saying, "*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come,*" whereas the elders worship God who "*created all things*" for His own pleasure (Rev.4:8,11).

In Rev.5, however, the 24 elders' **new song** is a testimony to their own redemption through the precious blood of Christ, and while the angels cannot testify that they have been redeemed, they have nevertheless been **witnesses** to redemption. The vast host of angels therefore join with the redeemed in declaring the victory achieved by Christ when He, as the Lamb of God, was slain "*to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing*".

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Seven fruits of the work on the cross indicate the perfection of Christ's accomplishment as the Lamb of God.

Who are the 24 elders? They are **Jewish priests, individuals, representing Old Testament saints in worship at the throne in heaven.** They could even be the first of the 24 descendants of Aaron chosen by David and resurrected when Christ rose. We can check their names after the Rapture!

