

Study Guide: Who Are the Twenty-Four Elders?

This study guide is designed for families, personal study, and Bible study groups to explore the identity, symbolism, and biblical significance of the twenty-four elders described in the Book of Revelation.

Executive Overview & Core Themes

In Revelation 4:4, the Apostle John describes twenty-four elders seated on thrones around the throne of God, clothed in white garments with golden crowns upon their heads. The source text analyzes key details—clothing, crowns, thrones, mathematical numbers, and divine actions—to uncover who these figures represent.

1. **The Symbolism of Twelve and Governance:** Throughout the Bible and specifically in Revelation, the number twelve represents divine government and authority. The twenty-four elders ($12 + 12$ or 12×2) sit on thrones surrounding the supreme Ruler of creation.
2. **The New Jerusalem as a Structural Model:** The physical framework of the New Jerusalem explicitly highlights the number twelve, utilizing twelve gates named after the twelve tribes of Israel and twelve foundation stones named after the twelve apostles of the Lamb.
3. **Two Distinct Groups of Twelve (Jews and Gentiles):** God focused 2,000 years before the cross on the Jewish people and 2,000 years after the cross on the Gentiles. The twenty-four elders likely represent these two unified groups—12 Jewish patriarchs/believers and 12 Gentile leaders/believers.
4. **The Unification of the Body of Christ:** Through the cross, Christ broke down the dividing wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles, unifying both into one body. The twenty-four elders embody this complete, unified Body of Christ reigning in heavenly authority.

Part I: Group Discussion & Reflection Questions

These open-ended questions are designed to promote deep discussion within families or group study settings using the details provided in the text.

Theme 1: Biblical Symbolism and Governmental Authority

1. How does the description of the elders' attire (white clothing) and accessories (golden crowns) paired with their seating (throned around God's throne) establish their role?
2. The text notes that the number twelve is associated with government throughout Scripture. Where else in Revelation do we see the number twelve used to indicate authority or governance?
3. Elders are mentioned exactly twelve times in the Book of Revelation. Why is the frequency of their mention in the text spiritually and structurally significant?

Theme 2: Examining the Dual Groups of Twelve

1. The text proposes that twenty-four represents two distinct groups of twelve ($12 + 12$). What two major groups highlighted in Revelation chapters 7 and 14 fit this description?
2. How does the mathematical representation of the 144,000 ($12 \times 12 \times 1,000$) reinforce the concept of divine governance across both groups?
3. In what way does the timeline of biblical history—2,000 years focusing on Jews prior to the cross, and 2,000 years focusing on Gentiles after the cross—support the identity of the elders?

Theme 3: Unity in the Body of Christ and the New Jerusalem

1. How does the architectural structure of the New Jerusalem (its gates and foundations) demonstrate God's long-term plan to unite Jewish patriarchs and Gentile church leaders?
2. According to Ephesians 2:14–16, how did Jesus Christ eliminate the hostility between Jews and Gentiles, and how is this unity reflected in the twenty-four elders?
3. Based on Ephesians 4:6 (NLT), what are the shared inheritances and promises enjoyed by both Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ?

Part II: Comprehensive Quiz

Test your knowledge of the source text with the following questions.

Section A: Multiple Choice

1. According to Revelation 4:4, what surrounds the central throne of God? a) Twelve massive pearl gates b) Twenty-four other thrones with twenty-four elders c) 144,000 bond-servants wearing crowns d) Twelve foundation stones made of gold
2. In the Bible and the Book of Revelation, the number twelve is consistently associated with: a) Judgment b) Government c) Tribulation d) Creation
3. How many total times are elders mentioned in the Book of Revelation? a) 7 times b) 12 times c) 24 times d) 144 times
4. What is written on the twelve foundation stones of the New Jerusalem's wall? a) The names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel b) The names of the twelve angels at the gates c) The names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb d) The inscriptions of the Father's name
5. The city measurements of the New Jerusalem are recorded as: a) 144 stadia in length, width, and height b) 2,000 stadia on each of the four sides c) 12,000 stadia in length, width, and height d) 144,000 cubits wide
6. According to Ephesians 2:14–16, what caused the dividing wall of spiritual antagonism/hostility between Jews and Gentiles that Christ abolished? a) The wall of the New Jerusalem b) The Law with its commandments contained in ordinances c) The distance between Mount Zion and Jerusalem d) The historical timeline of 4,000 years

Section B: Matching

Match the detail or measurement in Column A with its corresponding description in Column B based on Revelation 21 and the source text.

Column A	Column B
1. Sun-clothed woman (Rev 12)	A. Made of twelve individual pearls
2. Wall of New Jerusalem	B. Stationed at the twelve large gates

3. Twelve Angels	C. Wears a crown of twelve stars symbolizing authority
4. Twelve City Gates	D. Inscribed on the twelve gates of the city
5. Names of 12 Tribes of Israel	E. Measures 144 cubits (12 \times 12)

Section C: Short Answer & Scripture Fill-In

1. What items are the twenty-four elders wearing on their heads and bodies when John sees them in Revelation 4:4?
2. Complete the mathematical calculation provided in the text for the 144,000 bond-servants sealed in Revelation chapter 7: _____ \times _____ \times _____ = 144,000.
3. Briefly explain why the city of New Jerusalem has three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south, and three on the west.
4. According to the source context, what was God's historical focus during the 2,000 years *before* the cross, and what was His focus during the 2,000 years *after* the cross?

Part III: Quiz Answer Key

Section A: Multiple Choice Answers

1. **b) Twenty-four other thrones with twenty-four elders.** (*Source: Rev 4:4*)
2. **b) Government.** (*Source: "Throughout the Bible, the number twelve is associated with government."*)
3. **b) 12 times.** (*Source: "Elders are mentioned twelve times in the book of Revelation."*)
4. **c) The names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.** (*Source: Rev 21:14*)
5. **c) 12,000 stadia in length, width, and height.** (*Source: Rev 21:12-16 context*)
6. **b) The Law with its commandments contained in ordinances.** (*Source: Eph 2:14-16 AMP*)

Section B: Matching Answers

1. **1 — C:** The sun-clothed woman wears a crown of twelve stars, symbolizing governmental authority.
2. **2 — E:** The wall of the city measures 144 cubits (12×12).
3. **3 — B:** Twelve angels are stationed at the twelve gates.
4. **4 — A:** The twelve gates of the city are made of twelve pearls.
5. **5 — D:** The names of the twelve tribes of Israel are written on the twelve gates.

Section C: Short Answer Keys

1. **Attire of the Elders:** They are dressed in white clothing and wear crowns of gold on their heads.
2. **144,000 Formula:** $12 \times 12 \times 1,000 = 144,000$.
3. **Three Gates on Four Sides:** The city has 12 total gates arranged equally around its perimeter (3 east, 3 north, 3 south, 3 west) providing entry to the city marked by the number twelve.
4. **God's Historical Focus Timeline:**
 - *Before the cross (2,000 years):* God focused on the Jews.
 - *After the cross (2,000 years):* God focused on the Gentiles.

Part IV: Key Glossary

- **Apostles of the Lamb:** The twelve original leaders of the New Testament Church who took the Gospel to the Gentiles; their names are inscribed on the twelve foundation stones of the New Jerusalem.
- **Bond-servants (144,000):** A group of God's servants marked with the seal of God in their foreheads (Rev 7), comprised of $12 \times 12 \times 1,000$ individuals from the tribes of Israel, as well as redeemed believers from every nation, tribe, people, and language standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion (Rev 14).
- **Cubits (144 cubits):** The unit of measurement used for the wall of the New Jerusalem, representing 12×12 .

- **Ephesians 2:14–16 (AMP):** Key passage demonstrating that Christ abolished the hostility caused by the Law, making Jew and Gentile into "one new man" and reconciling both into one body to God through the cross.
- **Ephesians 4:6 (NLT):** Scripture cited in the text highlighting God's plan that both Gentiles and Jews who believe share equally as part of the same body and enjoy the promised blessings in Christ.
- **Government (Symbolism of 12):** The primary symbolic biblical meaning attached to the number twelve, representing perfect divine rule, administration, and order.
- **New Jerusalem:** The heavenly city described in Revelation 21 from which Jesus Christ will reign forever with a perfect government. It is structurally characterized throughout by multiples of twelve.
- **Stadia (12,000 stadia):** The measurement of the length, width, and height of the New Jerusalem.
- **Tribes of the Sons of Israel:** The twelve original Jewish patriarchs whose names are inscribed on the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem.
- **Twenty-Four Elders:** Seated on thrones around God's throne, dressed in white with gold crowns. They represent a combination of twelve Jewish believers and twelve Gentile believers brought together into one unified Body of Christ.