

Who Are the Twenty-Four Elders?

A Deeper Dive into the Book of Revelation – Part 88

John saw twenty-four elders sitting near the throne of God. But who are these elders?

“Twenty-four [other] thrones surrounded the throne; and seated on these thrones were twenty-four elders dressed in white clothing, with crowns of gold on their heads.”—Revelation 4:4 (AMP)

As it is with other characters in the book of Revelation, God gives us clues to who these elders are in the details of their description. The number twenty-four is significant. The details of being seated on thrones, dressed in white, and wearing crowns of gold are all significant clues. Their actions also tell us a lot about who they are.

Twenty-Four

The number twenty-four is the first significant detail used in describing these elders.

Twenty-four is $12 + 12$ or 12×2 . The number twelve is significant throughout the Bible, but it is especially meaningful in the book of Revelation. Throughout the Bible, the number twelve is associated with government. That holds true here since these elders are seated on thrones in the presence of the One who rules over all of creation.

We see this number again in chapter 12 when the sun-clothed woman appears with a crown of twelve stars on her head—again symbolizing governmental authority.

In chapter 21, we see the New Jerusalem coming down out of Heaven. It is from this city that Jesus Christ will reign forever with a perfect government. This city is marked by the number twelve.

“It had a massive and high wall, with **twelve [large] gates**, and at the gates [were stationed] **twelve angels**; and on the gates the names of the **twelve tribes of the sons of Israel** were written. On the east side [there were] three gates, on

the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had **twelve foundation stones**, and on them the **twelve names of the twelve apostles** of the Lamb (Christ).”—Revelation 21:12-14 (AMP)

In addition to this, the city measures twelve thousand stadia in length, width, and height. The wall of the city measures 144 cubits (12 x 12), and the twelve gates of the city are made of twelve pearls.

Two Groups of Twelve?

Elders are mentioned twelve times in the book of Revelation.

Since the number twelve figures so prominently in the perfect government of God, could these twenty-four elders actually be two groups of twelve? But who would make up these two groups?

There are two major groups of people highlighted in the book of Revelation who are marked with the number twelve. One of these groups is marked in Revelation chapter 7 and the other appears in chapter 14.

In chapter 7, there are 144,000 bond-servants of God who receive the seal of God in their foreheads. 144,000 is 12 x 12 x 1,000.

This particular group is made up of people from the tribes of Israel.

The other group, in Revelation chapter 14, are 144,000 believers who have the name of the Lamb and the Father's name inscribed on their foreheads. These appear with the Lamb of God on Mount Zion. This group has been redeemed from earth. If this is the same group of people highlighted in chapter 7, verses 9-17, this group comes from every nation, tribe, people, and language on earth.

What we see are two groups of believers—one group of Jews and the other of Gentiles—who are both marked with the number twelve.

Could the twenty-four elders be made up of twelve Jewish believers and twelve Gentile believers?

It would make sense since God spent 2,000 years *before* the cross focusing on the Jews; and then another 2,000 years *after* the cross focusing on the Gentiles.

We also see evidence of this in the New Jerusalem. There are twelve gates in the wall of New Jerusalem named after the twelve tribes of Israel; and the wall has twelve foundations named after the twelve apostles of the Lamb of God. So, the

city is marked with names of twelve Jewish patriarchs and twelve original leaders of the New Testament Church who took the Gospel to the Gentiles.

It has always been God's goal to bring both Jews and Gentiles together in the Body of Christ.

“And this is God's plan: Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God's children. **Both are part of the same body**, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus.”—Ephesians 4:6 (NLT)

“For He Himself is our peace and our bond of unity. **He who made both groups—[Jews and Gentiles]—into one body** and broke down the barrier, the dividing wall [of spiritual antagonism between us], by abolishing in His [own crucified] flesh the hostility caused by the Law with its commandments contained in ordinances [which He satisfied]; **so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man**, thereby establishing peace. And **[that He] might reconcile them both [Jew and Gentile, united] in one body** to God through the cross, thereby putting to death the hostility.”—Ephesians 2:14-16 (AMP)

This group of twenty-four elders may be made up of twelve Jewish believers and twelve Gentile believers who are all members of the Body of Christ. And we will see that they also seem to be fulfilling the roles that have been entrusted to elders throughout the history of the people of God.