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Studies in the Revelation, BIB 755
Assignment #2
February 24, 2005

The Twenty Four Elders

In verses 4 and 5 of chapter 4, the Scripture mentions twenty-four elders who are “*sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.*” Who are these elders sitting upon these thrones?

There are a couple of views on whom these twenty-four elders are. Some say they are literally the twelve sons of Jacob and the twelve apostles of the New Testament combined. While others say that they represent all of the redeemed from both the Old and the New Testament.

However, in essence they are both right. The twenty-four elders represent all of the redeemed from both the Old and the New Testaments; the twelve patriarchs represent those from the Old Testament and the twelve apostles represent those from the New Testament. They are all of the followers of Jehovah God beginning from Adam in the Garden to the last saint who gives their lives to Christ at the end of the Tribulation Period just before the Second Coming of Christ.

The first glimpse we get of something like this in the Bible is found in 1 Chronicles 24:3-4 when it says, “*Then David with Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, divided them according to the schedule of their service. There were more leaders found of the sons of Eleazar than of the sons of Ithamar, and thus they were divided. Among the sons of Eleazar were sixteen heads of their fathers' houses, and eight heads of their fathers' houses among the sons of Ithamar.*”

In these verses we see that David had appointed 24 elders to represent the entire Levitical priesthood which numbered around 38,000 at that time according to 1 Chronicles 23:3. Each of these elders was to represent a group of Levites who were to serve throughout the year for two weeks at a time in the Temple. This division also made it easier to meet with the Levites as that they were representative of the entire group. This is probably why the number 24 represents governmental authority in the Bible.

We also know that just as there were priests in the Old Testament, so there are priests in the New Testament. The Bible tells us in Rev. 5:10 that God has made all of us who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ "*kings and priests to our God;*" Also, another verse in Revelation 20:6 says, "*Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*"

Paul also said in 1 Corinthians 6:2-3, "*Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?*"

Also, Jesus said in Luke 22:29-30, "*And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*"

Another way that we know these represent the Old Testament and New Testament saints is the way in which they are dressed. Verse 4 says that they "*are clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.*" We know that the white robes speak

of the righteous because it says in Revelation 7:9, *“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,”* Another verse that speaks to this is found in Rev 7:13 where it says, *“Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, ‘Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?’”*

Second, we know that the crowns speak of the rewards that all Christians will receive at the Bema Seat. In actuality the Bible speaks of five crowns that can be received by all Christians based upon their faithfulness in this life.

The first crown is the Imperishable Crown spoken of in 1 Corinthians 9:25 which says, *“And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.”* The second crown is the Crown of Rejoicing spoken of in 1 Thessalonians 2:19 which says, *“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?”* The third crown is the Crown of Righteousness spoken of in 2 Timothy 4:8 which says, *“Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”* The fourth crown is the Crown of Life spoken of in James 1:12, *“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”* And finally, the fifth crown is the Crown of Glory that is given to shepherds spoken of in 1 Peter 5:4 which says, *“and when the Chief Shepherd appears,*

you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”