

The Elders And The Bride Of Christ

Compiled and Formatted By Tom Stephens

(Unless otherwise stated, all scriptures are from the King James Version of the Bible.)

Introduction: The book of Revelation is actually "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.*" (Revelation 1:1-3).

Each day our understanding of end-time events and prophecies depicted not only in the book of Revelation but in other prophetic books as well becomes clearer as the Bible said it would. But in this article my primary focus will be the Elders and the Bride of Christ.

Much has been written and more surmised about who the Elders as spoken of in the book of Revelation really are. I have spent a great deal of time researching the opinions of various Bible scholars and I have spent even more time studying on my own. I firmly believe Scripture is most accurately interpreted through other Scripture and that it is the primary method I have used in writing this article

I deeply desire to show mankind that there are many written promises in His Word that—in one way or another—guarantee you and I—who continue in Him, will be included in the Bride of Christ.

⁶Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. (Luke 21:36).

Part One—Chapter One

¹The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: ²Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. ³Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand. ⁴John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; ⁵And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, ⁶And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. ⁷Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. ⁸I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. ⁹I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. ¹⁰I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, ¹¹Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. ¹²And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; ¹³And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. ¹⁴His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; ¹⁵And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. ¹⁶And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as

the sun shineth in his strength. ¹⁷And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: ¹⁸I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. ¹⁹*Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;* ²⁰The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches. (Revelation 1:1-20).

The Seven Churches Of Asia

Revelation, Chapters 2 and 3

Early church	Christ speaking as:	acknowledgement	rebuke	goal for those who overcome themselves
in Ephesus Rev. 2:1-7	He, "who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands"	hard work, perseverance, cannot tolerate evil men; "disgusts Nicolaites as he disgusts****", and discerned false apostles; patience and bearing up for his name's sake; and has not grown weary.	"...you abandoned the love you had at first." ... "repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent."	"To him who overcomes I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God."
in Smyrna Rev. 2:8-11	"he who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life"	"I know your afflictions and your poverty - yet you are rich - and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan."	"Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. "	"Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who conquers shall not be hurt by the second death."
In Pergamum ¹ Rev. 2:12-17	he "who has the sharp two-edged sword".	"you remain true to my name and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was put to death among you, where Satan dwells."	Some who hold the teaching of Balaam: Balak- cult with eating food sacrificed to idols and practices of sexual immorality; some Nicolaitans. " <i>Repent then. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.</i> "	"To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it."
in Thyatira ²	"the Son of God, who	"I know your deeds, your love and faith	They tolerate the false prophetess Jezebel	"To him who overcomes and does my

¹ **Pergamum**—Note that Christ told this church to "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." The *sword of the Spirit* is the Word of God. This does not necessarily mean the church will be destroyed by His judgment, but it does encourage her to reconsider the direction they go in.

Rev. 2:18-29	has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze"	and service and perseverance, and that your latter works exceed the first".	practicing temple prostitution and eating food sacrificed to idols. Because thou allow the woman to seduce My servants to commit fornication; eat things sacrificed to idols. She could have repented, but did not. <i>I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great Tribulation unless they repent of their deeds.</i>	works to the end, I will give authority over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received power from my Father; I will also give him the morning star." Repent, or else Great Tribulation follows.
in Sardis³ Rev. 3:1-6	He, "who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars"	"I know your works". "You have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy."	"you have the reputation of being alive, and you are dead. Awake, and strengthen what is about to die, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God." Remember what you received and heard; keep that, and repent. <i>If you will not awake, I will come on you like a thief, and you will be in shock!</i> ".	"He who overcomes, like them, shall be dressed in white, and I will not remove his name out of the book of life; I will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels."
in Philadelphia Rev. 3:7-13	"the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens "	"I know your works. I know that you have a little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that	"I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie - I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and learn that I have loved you." "Hold fast what you have, so that no one may take your crown.	Vs. 10: <i>Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.</i> Him who overcomes, I will make a pillar in the temple of my God; never shall he leave it, and I will write on him the name of my God,

² **Thyatira**—"And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds (Rev 2:21,22).

³ **Sardis**—"Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." Surprise, surprise!"

		 dwell upon the earth.. " (Rev 3:10)		and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.
in Laodicea Rev. 3:14-22	"the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation"	("I know your deeds"; but here is no clear positive acknowledgement.) Continued from column 3: "...rebuke and chasten."	I will spew you out of my mouth". "...You don't know, you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. So I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire..", "and white clothes..", "and salve to anoint your eyes...". "Those whom I love, I	".. I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. Him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with me on my throne, as I myself overcame and sat down with my Father on his "Seat".

Parallels between Revelation Chapter 4 and Chapter 1

Revelation 4	Revelation One
4:1 - The first voice as of a trumpet.	1:10 - Heard a great voice as of a trumpet.
4:2 - John was in the Spirit.	1:10 - John was in the Spirit.
4:2-3 - Description of Christ.	1:12-17 - Description of Christ.
4:5 - Seven lamps of fire.	1:12 - Seven golden candlesticks.
4:5 - Before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.	1:4 - From the seven Spirits which are before His throne.
4:4; 5:9-10 - Hast made us to our God, kings and priests.	1:6 - Hath made us kings and priests unto God.
4:1 – Come up Hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.	1:19 - Write the things which shall be here-after.
5:1-5 - An introduction to the seven seals.	1:20 - An introduction to the seven churches.

God's Directive to John in Revelation 1:19—The three-fold division of Revelation:

- "Write the things which thou hast seen"—the 1st division of Revelation, Chapter One.
- "The things which are"—the second division of Revelation, Chapters Two and Three.
- "The things which shall be after these things"—the 3rd Division, Chapters 4-22.⁴

"The things which are" are Revelation 2 & 3, and are covered in the 7 Churches Of Asia Chart, and is the 2nd division of Revelation. It has to do with the present dispensation. The 7 churches give us a picture of the professing church's history from the apostolic period to the coming of the Lord Jesus (Chap. 2-3), the seven distinct periods of church history on earth. "The things which shall be after these things" include chapter 4 through chapter 22. This includes 1) Rapture of the church; Song of Saints; casting crowns at Jesus' feet included in ch.4-5. Then chapters 6-22

⁴ Chapter 4-5 is the rapture of the church; the Judgment Seat Of Christ; Jesus accepting the Title deed to earth; Worship; Song of Saints; and casting crowns at the feet of Jesus. **NOTE: The 7-year Tribulation Period begins with the 1st 7-seal judgments in Chapter six, (6).**

begins the 1st 7-seal judgments, where about 2 billion die; then Trumpet Judgments, including 3 woe judgments; the finally the seven bowl judgments.

Revelation 4: The Rapture of elders, The Judgment Seat Of Christ, and worship.

¹*After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.* (Revelation 4:1—King James Version).

In John's vision, he saw a door opened in heaven, and heard a voice like a trumpet, saying, "*Come up hither, and I will show you the things which must be hereafter.*" In other words, when John heard the words, "Come up hither", he found himself *escorted* by the Holy Spirit, high above all the evils of this world and into what appeared to be a "throne room".

There is only *one other* place in the New Testament did the Lord hasten mankind up into His heavenly kingdom. This call was for the two Israelite witnesses (Revelation 11:3-14). At the call, "Come up hither", the two martyred witnesses, who's bodies lay in the streets of Jerusalem for 3 1/2 days, awoke; and ascended up into heaven in a cloud as their enemies watched (See Rev. 11).

John stood breathlessly before the throne of the Lord, with awestruck eyes on a scene of glory indescribable, and to hear things kept secret from the foundation of the world.

This opening verse begins the third great division of the Revelation—"Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter." The panorama of wonders, both heavenly and earthly which must take place after the church's history is ended—when the church no longer exists—the full end of the Church age, forever! There's no church to be seen on earth, nor in heaven, for she who was engaged to the Savior has become His wife and will ride back to reign with Him for a thousand years! During the 7 Years of Great Tribulation, Jesus will bring into His Kingdom multitudes of Gentiles. They will mostly be martyred during the Tribulation and will also reign with Christ (Revelation 7:9-17); but at the end of the Great Tribulation, all Israel will be saved. The body of Christ becomes the elders in heaven; for they are no longer members of the earthly church—but hold positions of authority, much more than elders do now in the church; for Christ, at the Judgment Seat, appoints the elder a field to reign over—with Him.

John's attention is no longer on earth, for he is deeply in the Spirit of God. He is, by the Spirit, caught up and far above earth's atmosphere, as he beheld the "throne set in heaven." The likeness of the One sitting on His throne is beyond description. John only tells us he beheld a Presence whose glory was like a jasper and a sardius.

The jasper of the Revelation isn't the opaque stone we know by that name. It is later described as clear as crystal. (21:11). It's probably the diamond, the most brilliant of all the precious jewels. The other stone is blood-red, and may be the ruby. The two together give the idea of glory and sacrifice. Remembering that many of the first readers of the Revelation were converted Jews, I might ask, What would these stones suggest to them? Surely every instructed Hebrew would instantly recall they were the first and last stones in the breastplate of the high priest (Exo. 28:17-20). As these stones bore the times of the tribes of Israel, arranged according to the births of the twelve patriarchs, the one would suggest at once the name Reuben, "Behold a Son," and the other Benjamin, "Son of my right hand." It is Christ enthroned; the Son about to reign in power who is

before the Seer's vision. Round about the throne a rainbow, like an emerald, the stone of Judah ("Praise") is seen, suggesting the longevity of the Noahic covenant, and God's goodness.⁵

The 24 elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, Who was seated on the throne. And they cried: "Amen, Hallelujah!" (Revelation 19:4).

Five times in the book of Revelation the 24 elders *express themselves in praise and worship* (but *are mentioned* more often). They often cry out in united choruses of praise for the Lamb and His conquests. The elders, along with the "living creatures" also described in chapter 4 will join the redeemed in heaven to sing praises to God, Who sits on the throne.

INSERT: ONE—The First Mention Of The 24 Elders: Revelation 4:4

The elders represent His church. "Elder" has church significance (1Tim. 5:17; Titus1:5). Crowns throughout the NT are exclusively presented as rewards for the faithful in the Church. These elders sit on thrones which are associated with the central Judgment Throne Of Christ. (Revelation 4:2-4; compare 1 Corinthians 6:2-3; and 2 Tim. 2:12):

²And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. ³And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. ⁴And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

¹⁷Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. (1 Tim. 5:17).

⁵For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: (Titus 1:5).

²Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? ³Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? (1 Cor.6:2-3).

¹²If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: (2 Tim. 2:12).

But now we see a sight never before seen in heaven: Twenty-four thrones (not merely *seats*) surrounding the central throne, and upon them twenty-four elders (from here on, "24") **seated, with victors' crowns** (not diadems) **upon their heads**, and **clothed in priestly robes of purest white**. I believe we all have the correct identity of these elders, if we compare scripture with scripture. They are the elders—the former church—who retain their authority for the future. But first, they will be wed to the Saviour, Master, King of kings and Lord of lords—a mighty husband for His bride!

⁵**Lectures of The Revelation.** H.A. Ironside, Litt.D.; Loizeaux Brothers; Neptune, N.J.; 1st Edition September, 1920; 30th Printing, September, 1973; ppg.79-87.

Regardless of any other teaching, we must understand that the elders *are* the bride of Christ, according to Ephesians 5:25-32:

²⁵*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;* ²⁶*That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,* ²⁷*That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.* ²⁸*So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.* ²⁹*For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:* ³⁰*For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.* ³¹*For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.* ³²*This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

God's Word said it outright; and that settles it for eternity. "The elders are the bride of Christ". Now I must proclaim the bride of Christ (elders) is in heaven for the duration of the Great Tribulation.

1st Chronicles 24: I will mention that most Hebrews were familiar with the Old Testament. They would likely remember the 24 elders appointed by King David to represent the entire Levitical priesthood. He divided the priests into 24 courses, each course to serve for two weeks at a time in the temple which Solomon was to build. The same arrangement was in force when our Lord's forerunner was announced. Zacharias was "of the course of Abiah", the eighth in order (Luke 1:5).

The priests were many thousands in number; they could not all come together at the same time, but *when the 24 elders met* in the temple precincts in Jerusalem, *the whole priestly house* was represented! The elders in heaven represent the whole heavenly priesthood—that is, all the redeemed who have lived in the past, or who shall be living at the Lord's return. In vision they were seen—not as a multitudinous host of millions of saved worshipers, but just 24 elders, symbolizing the entire company. The church of the present age and Old Testament saints are alike included. There were 12 patriarchs in Israel, and 12 apostles introducing the new dispensation of Grace. The two together would give the complete four and twenty decked out in *their thrones, wearing white raiment (clean, white linen), had on their heads crowns of gold.* The thrones, robes of purity, and crowns of gold were included with other rewards—as the 24 elders have already stood before the "Judgment Seat of Christ".

The elders are not angels or any other created being of a divine order. Elders, in scripture are always men. In every passage of scripture, the description of the elder in the Old Testament is always linked to the Tabernacle or Temple. In the New Testament, he is linked to the Israelite leadership/Sanhedrin until the Church was formed; then, the elder was also a part of *church* leadership. Apostle Paul commanded that every church, by laying on of hands, were to ordain elders (Acts 14:23; 16:14; and Titus 1:5). Angels were not to wear crowns (saints will reign over angels); and angels cannot *know* redemption.

There are two types of crowns mentioned: The victor's crown, and the ruler's diadem. The former is the wreath or laurel, or of pine, bound about the brow of the victor in Greek games; and is often used in the New Testament when reward for service is due. But note this: No saint will ever be crowned until the apostle Paul receives that crown of righteousness which the Lord

revealed to him as his reward. In 2 Tim. 4:8, he says, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me *at that day*; and not to me only, *but to all them also that love His appearing.*"

Lightning and thunderings in verse 5 indicate that the Tribulation Period will soon be on the earth; a dreadful storm of judgment over all who dwell on the earth—those who do not have the mark of God on their hand or forehead—every man, woman or child who has not been washed in His blood during the Tribulation Period; for there can be no other Christians on earth, and the church elders are all around the throne of God, in heaven.

The sea of glass of verse 6 brings to memory the sea of brass in Solomon's temple. That sea symbolized, like the laver, the Word of God, for it contained the water used for priestly cleansing, and we are sanctified and cleansed by "the washing of water by the Word." But *this* sea is *not for cleansing*, so it is as crystal, and later, we find the martyred tribulation saints *standing on it*. It is the Word of God, but no longer needed for cleansing, because desert experiences are viewed here as forever passed. The Word abides, stable and sure forevermore—a glassy sea filled with crystal—firm and glorious, on which the people of God can stand eternally!

The four beasts, verses 6-9: Not beasts, but creatures, or "living ones". They aren't beasts! They are in the midst of the throne, where only Deity can dwell, and they are linked with it round about. Ezekiel's vision in his first chapter indicates they are structured as every attribute of God. They cry "Holy, holy, holy continually; and make up His royal chariot when He, Jehovah, circles the earth. They had eyes in front and in back; the first beast was like a lion, the second beast like a calf, the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. The lion is the symbol of divine majesty. The young ox, the divine strength graciously serving man. The face of a man indicates intelligence and purpose; it tells us that Deity is no mere blind force. The eagle suggests swiftness in detecting evil and executing judgment. Six-winged and full of eyes, they speak of incessant activity. "The eyes of the lord are everywhere, beholding the evil and the good." These continue around the throne crying out "*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.*" These creatures, or "Living Ones" belong near the throne.

One more thing should be mentioned about the Living Ones: In chapter 4, they seem to be aligned with God's throne; but in chapter 5 they are specifically aligned with the elders. During the present age, and before the Lamb of God takes the book of judgment, these are mostly seen in angelic ministry. However, in the future, as at the end of the church age when the elders are in heaven, angelic beings will be subject to men, for we are appointed to reign over angels. The Living Ones of Ezekiel's vision and the cherubim on the mercy-seat tell the same story.⁶

⁹And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth forever and ever, ¹⁰The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth forever and ever, *and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.* (Revelation 4:9-11—KJV).

⁶ **The Full Life Study Bible (KJV)**—Book of Revelation; Zondervan Publ.; G.R. Mich.; ©1992

The Lamb of God is Qualified To Open The Book:

Considering the 24 elders, seen by John in vision sitting around the throne, representing the heavenly saints of this and past dispensations, I repeat my feelings that the representation is *also taken from the 24 elders of the priesthood of Israel*. We can see how easily the entire heavenly company would be represented by these heads of Levitical priesthood. In heaven, all God's people are priests—a royal priesthood.

The first thing that gets my attention in this chapter 5 is this: The seven-sealed book in the right hand of Him who sits on the throne. We already saw in chapter 4 the Son is on the throne; but we must not forget that it is also the throne of God the Father. And here in the Father's right hand a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals—not a volume as we know it—but rolled parchment.

But what is this sealed book? *Every symbol is explained, or alluded to, somewhere else in the Bible*. Look at Jeremiah 32. The prophet Jeremiah Lived in a day previous to the fall of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar. He had been telling the people of Israel they were going to be carried captive to Babylon. For seventy years they would be in captivity; but, at the end of that time, they would be restored, and would build again the waste places (29:10). Hanameel, Jeremiah's cousin, who had a piece of ground, knew that it was to be absolutely worthless, and he was anxious to get it off his hands and get what he could from it. He decided to sell to his prophet-cousin who was in prison at the time for giving forth judgments. The Lord told Jeremiah to purchase the field. Knowing it was worthless during the time Israel would be held captive by Nebuchadnezzar, Jeremiah realized the land would be worth fortunes in 70 years.⁷

In Jeremiah 32:8, Hanameel presented the land to Jeremiah. Title deeds were completed, sealed and hidden away. Jeremiah now owned the land but would not possess it. The land would remain in Jeremiah's family. The sealed book was the title-deed to Jeremiah's inheritance, and when the Israelites returned from Babylon, there would be a man who could go into court and say, "This deed belongs to me. I am Jeremiah's heir. I have the right to break the seals and take the property." This is exactly what the seven-sealed book in Revelation means.⁸

The book John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne is the title-deed to this earth; and when God says, "Who is worthy to take the book and to loose the seals thereof?" It is just another way of saying, "Who is the rightful heir?" "Who is worthy to take the book?"

Adam was not worthy, for he forfeited ownership because of his sin. He said, "*It was mine, but I lost it to sin.*" Is there anyone who can claim this title-deed? Must all men forfeit because of the sin pattern? Not even an angel can take the book. No man or beast is able to take the book. No man or creature could even "look on" the book! No one.

John wept because no one was worthy to look on the book or take the book.

⁷ **The Holy Bible**—(KJV). The Book of Revelation; Thomas Nelson Publishers; Nashville, Tn. © Copyright 1976 by Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, Tn.

⁸ **Lectures of The Revelation**. H.A. Ironside, Litt.D.; Loizeaux Brothers; Neptune, N.J.; 1st Edition September, 1920; 30th Printing, September, 1973; ppg.79-87.

Another elder, standing near John spoke up. He said to John, "*Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof*", but then he looked and spied The Lamb. But the Lion is the Lamb of God! He is the One full of innocence, of meekness, gentleness and sacrifice, the One Who goes forth to conquer and claim this world as His own, and drive all His enemies from before His face.

He is worthy to open the book!

The Elders Casting Their Crowns At Jesus' Feet; More worship (Rev 5:8-10):

The moment the Lamb takes the book, in verse 8, the 4 living Ones and the 24 elders fall down before Him, having every one of them harps, and golden bowls full of odors, which are the prayers of saints. . .

⁸And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints. ⁹And they sung a new song, saying, *Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;* ¹⁰*And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth*.⁹ (See Footnote #9)

- **INSERT TWO—The Second Mention Of The 24 elders:** Revelation 4:10-11.

¹⁰The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth forever and ever, and *cast their crowns before the throne, saying,* ¹¹Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Amazing, that the elders are in constant worship with the Living Creatures, or Ones. In case you haven't realized who these "Living Ones" are, then you should turn to Ezekiel one and take in the awesome vision Ezekiel sees; then you should keep your Bible opened and continue with Daniel all the way through. You will find several chapters following the first that gives more data about these creatures—not human—but always around the throne of God in worship, crying out "Holy, holy, holy". They have given control of themselves over to the Father, who, believe it or not, takes these creatures everywhere He goes! Imagine God and this grand chariot hovering over the east gate of the Temple as He has finally left His home—in the Most Holy Place, and proclaimed in Matthew 23:37-39,

³⁷O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! ³⁸Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. ³⁹For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

⁹ **Note** In verse 9 how that the "24 elders sang a new song", and in worship for their salvation, used "us" two times, and "we" another time in verse 10, in maintaining their humanity, and that *they were not any other creature!* This strongly proves the elders are the Church during the Church Age. After the rapture, there is no more need in the existence of the church; The body of Christ become "elders" because they have stood before "The Judgment Seat of Christ", and have received their rewards—and their future positions of authority with Christ Jesus!

. . .Or, when He releases King Nebuchadnezzar to destroy Jerusalem, and her residents—men women, and children—all who do not have His mark in their foreheads, in Chapter 9. These Creatures—Living Ones are the wheels to Ezekiel's vision, the wheels to God's awesome Chariot!

Remember this, saint. When you are raptured into glory, you must not withhold your crown—cast that Crown of righteousness at the feet of the Lord! (Revelation 4:10).¹⁰

- **INSERT THREE—The Third Mention Of The 24 Elders:** Revelation 5:8-9:

⁹And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and **hast redeemed us to God** by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; ¹⁰**And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.** ¹¹And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: *and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;*

The 24 elders are indeed the body of Christ, the saints raptured—the bride of Christ. But, please continue. There's more coming.

- **INSERT FOUR—The Fourth Mention Of The 24 Elders:** Revelation 7:9-12:

⁹*After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;* ¹⁰And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. ¹¹And all the angels stood round about the throne, *and about the elders and the four beasts*, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, ¹²Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever. Amen. (Vs. 9 are those who were slain for the cause of Christ, during the Great Tribulation).

This is a celebration of the arrival of the slain (martyred) gentiles from out of the Tribulation period on earth. For they were the only followers of Christ *after* the rapture—however many will begin to respond to the Savior—being washed in His precious blood! When the Church Age is completed, the Lord takes us into the dispensation of the Reign of Christ. There's no more church at all. As explained previously, the saints become the 24 elders¹¹; the elders become His bride. We are espoused (engaged) to Christ when we are saved; we are—by His Spirit—sitting in heavenly places with Christ Jesus (Eph.1:3; 2:6), betrothed, or engaged to Him, and we are sealed with promise (Ephesians 1:13); we are the bride of Christ clad in clean, white linen.

- **INSERT FIVE—The Fifth Mention Of The 24 Elders:** Revelation 7:12-14

¹²Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever. Amen. ¹³*And one of the elders* answered, saying unto

¹⁰ **Revelation Unveiled.** Tim Lahaye; Zondervan Publ. House; Grand Rapids, Mich.; copyright © 1999 By T.

¹¹ **Learn more about the elders.** Go to <www.christsbondservants.org> Go to "Tom's Page". Seek out the article , "The Rapture As Taught In Revelation", Part 1: "Come Up Hither", and "The Elders".

me (John), What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? ¹⁴And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

Note that John is an elder. He is a part of the huge number that makes up the "bride of Christ". In this passage, we see John conversing with another elder—both being in heaven. The other elder asked John, "*Who are these who are dressed in white robes; and where did they come from?*" (verse 13).

John answered, "*You already know, don't you?*"

"*Yes, I do*", answered the other elder, "*These are they who have come out of the tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (vs. 14). Therefore, are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.*" (Vs. 15).

This group will be wearing clean white robes like the elders; for they have been washed in His blood, and are now worthy—not to be His bride, because they failed to come to Christ during the Church Age. However, they will be guests at the marriage Supper of the Lamb. Other guests at the Marriage Supper will be the Old Testament saints who believed in Christ when He entered into the bowels of the earth and preached to those who were worthy of salvation. We know this because John the Baptist was "the friend of Jesus;" His friends, the O.T. saints will attend.

This passage is extremely important in proving the martyrs are the only Christians in the Tribulation Period—after the rapture, everyone else is unsaved—until multitudes begin coming to Christ when they measure the quality of Christ against the antichrist system! That's the reason the Word uses a number of times in the book of Revelation, the phrase, "...those who dwell on the whole earth:"¹² The earth dwellers will be judged according to their evils. The scripture tells me about this group:

¹⁹*For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.* ²⁰*And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:* ²¹*Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts* (Revelation 9:19-21).

That statement should convince many that the time of the 7-year Great Tribulation is not an easy road—even for the mature Christian. Those who "dwell on the earth" during the Tribulation, for the most part—are sold out to satanic pleasures. The works of demons will dwell among men till

¹² **Earth dwellers:** These are the evil to whom all judgment comes. The only Christians are those who are saved during the Tribulation period. They are coming to Christ in multitudes from all over the earth. Though they are martyred Christians by those who dwell on earth, all judgments will be of concern to those who dwell on the earth.

the time Jesus returns with His army. Of course, Jesus will bring forth His wrath on all who have continued to resist Him.

- **INSERT SIX—The Sixth Mention Of The 24 Elders:** Revelation 11:16-18:

¹⁶And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, ¹⁷Saying, We give thee thanks, O LORD God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. ¹⁸And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth. (Revelation 11:16-18).

These elders worship God when He announces the world has become the kingdom of Christ and He will reign forever; now in our present text we find them adding their "Amen, Hallelujah!" to His judgment and destruction of Babylon.

- **INSERT SEVEN—The Seventh Mention Of The 24 Elders:** Revelation 19:3-6.

³And again they said, Alleluia And her smoke rose up forever and ever. ⁴And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. ⁵And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. ⁶And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. (Rev. 19:3-6).

The redeemed of every age on earth, knowing something about the awful power of iniquity, will then rejoice, that it is completely overturned by our Lord. The symbol changes the next section, and the Bride, the Lamb's wife, takes her place in the preparation of the Marriage ceremony. The elders represent the heavenly saints as a worshiping company of holy, royal priests. But when the harlot church is out of its place, the true bride appears and the elders will never be mentioned again, for they are now the bride of Christ. The elders, as are the Living Ones, are forever in a spirit of worship and praise. They adore the Lamb as Creator and as Redeemer in Chapter 4; but now they adore the Lord as moral Governor of the universe, for the display of His righteous judgment.

The Elders And The Bride Of Christ Are One

- **INSERT EIGHT—The Eighth Mention Of The 24 Elders:** Revelation 19:4; 7-10

- **The Bride Of Christ:**

⁴And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. ⁷Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. ⁸And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. ⁹And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. ¹⁰And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. (My italics, bold, and underscore).

All the redeemed of all ages, who, when on earth knew something of this awful power of iniquity, will then rejoice that it is forever overthrown. This is the last mention of the elders in this book—ending at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. We find here, in verse 4, the elders fell down and worshipped God Who sat on the throne, and praising God with their whole hearts—magnifying Him who gives eternal life to those who diligently follow after Himself. These are they who have made themselves ready for the Marriage Supper—for they are the bride. The elders are found to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the linen is "The Righteousness of the saints". Unless we are totally dumbfounded, we will now understand just who this bride is—and where she has been during the entire 7-year Great Tribulation.

At the end of the Age Of Grace, just prior to the rapture of the church, she was the body of Christ; then, in heaven, she became "elders". But the most marvelous thing about this entire study is knowing the elders were sitting on thrones, wearing raiment of clean, white linen, and with eternal crowns on their heads. This powerful picture is the result of a magnificent meeting with the Lord Jesus—Him being the moderator, or Judge, and the elders, one by one, standing before that righteous Judge to receive their rewards—or lack thereof. Here they all are on their Seats before the glorious throne of our God. Who can imagine the most glorious time in all history up to that point time is soon to be no more.

That was seven years ago. *But now*, The elders/bride is attending the greatest celebration ever!

Before we get involved too much in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, let me add here that there will be not one, but two suppers coming close together. The first is the Marriage Supper of The Lamb. The second is the Great Supper of God, which will be a little later—*on earth*. The first is complete joy and gladness. The second is a scene of deep gloom and anguish. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb ushers in the fulness of peace and glory, not only for the bride but for all saints gathered for this Supper of The Lamb—including the Friends of the Groom. The Great Supper of God, however, will be a series of judgments that are to fall on the earth, and opens the way for the establishment of the long awaited Kingdom of God (you, reader should seek out more information concerning *The Great Supper of God*). With the harlot Babylon now gone forever, John's attention is drawn to heaven. He is speaking:

⁴And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. ⁵And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. ⁶And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. ⁷*Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.* (Rev. 19:4-7).

The hour for heavenly nuptials will then have come. So who is the bride, or the wife of the Lamb, mentioned for the first time in Revelation? We need not go further than Ephesians, fifth chapter, verses 30- 32:

³⁰For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. ³¹For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. ³²*This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.* (My italics).

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb takes place in heaven just before the Lamb descends with all His saints to take His great power—and to reign forever—the first 1,000 years with His saints.

The saints *are* the elders, I might add; and this huge body of Church Age believers are now the bride of Christ—lined up to reign with their Lord, Jesus Christ! There are other saints who are *not* a part of the bride, including the Tribulation saints—who do not qualify as the bride because they, for whatever reason, did not come to the Savior Jesus Christ, until after the 7-year Great Tribulation began. The church which is His body is distinctly identified with His wife, in Ephesians 5:30-32.

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb is the time of displayed glory, when the results of the judgment Seat of Christ will be fully manifest in the saints. The event takes place immediately after the rapture of the church, for the Lord's word is clear as to this, "*Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*" But once the false church is exposed and judged; then the Lamb's marriage day will come. Concerning the bride, we read this: "*To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the right is the righteousness of saints*" (verse 8). Righteousness of the saints is that which is accumulated while saints are on earth during the Church Age. We should all be sure to occupy while there is still time—completing good works for the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus.

"And he said unto me, Write, Blessed are they that are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb And He saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." (Revelation 19:9).

These are not the bride, but they are called unto, as friends of the Bridegroom, who share in His gladness. These friends of the Bridegroom are the O.T. saints and the tribulation saints, who, though they are not part of the church, are sharers in the heavenly glory; and these are pictured as the guests at the wedding who participate in the joys of the marriage, and add to the joy of the Bride and Groom.

What happens now? I introduce to you the second supper, which is the Supper of God. It's not a pretty picture: We find it in verses 11 to 16:

¹¹And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. ¹²His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. ¹³And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. (Rev. 19:11-16).¹³

Demomic angels being released from the pit, killing 1/3 of mankind: (Revelation 9:18-21):

¹⁸By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. ¹⁹For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt. ²⁰And the rest of the men which were not

¹³ Lectures On The Book Of Revelation. Pgs.318-324; HA Ironside, Littl. Loizeaux Bros., Neptune, N.J.; ibid

*killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: ²¹Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts. (No matter how extreme the judgment on evil men, **THEY STILL REFUSE TO REPENT!**)*

Earth Gets A Leadership Change: (Revelation 11:15-17)

¹⁵*And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever. ¹⁶And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, ¹⁷Saying, We give thee thanks, O LORD God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.*

A Harsh Judgment On "All Who Dwell On the Whole Earth: (Revelation 21:7,8)

⁷*He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. ⁸But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

A quiet Resolve: (Revelation 22:10-11).

¹⁰*And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. ¹¹He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.*

A Blessing and A Curse: (Revelation 22:14,15).

¹⁴*Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. ¹⁵For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murders, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.*

The Resurrection of the Tribulation Saints& The Millenial Reign Of Christ:

⁴*And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ⁵But the rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. (Revelation 20:4,5).*

But, for we who will be faithful to the end, Jesus said this:

¹²**And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. ¹³I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. ¹⁴Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. ¹⁵For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. ¹⁶I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.**

AMEN, AND HALLELUJAH!
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