

THE 24 ELDERS

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THE 24 ELDERS

LESSON #1 - THE BATTLE IN THE GARDEN

Jesus Creator and Responsible for our Existence

John 1:1-3:

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ **All things were made through Him**, and without Him nothing was made that was made."*

The Original King and Territory

Psalm 8:3-5: Adam was **crowned the king** of the earth and its representative

*"When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, ⁴ What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? ⁵ For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have **crowned him** with glory and honor. ⁶ You have made him to have **dominion** over the works of Your hands; you have put all things **under his feet**. ⁷ All sheep and oxen —Even the beasts of the field , ⁸ The birds of the air, and the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas."*

The law demands absolute **sinless perfection** if we fail it sentences us to **death**

Luke 4:5-7: Satan **usurped** Adam's throne and territory

*"Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the **kingdoms [territory]** of the world in a moment of time. ⁶ And the devil said to Him, "All this **authority [position]** I will give You, and their glory; for this **has been delivered to me**, and I give it to whomever I wish. ⁷ Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours."*

Next of Kin to Pay Redemption Price

Leviticus 25:25 [possession], 47-49 [himself]: The redeemer had to come from a **next of kin**.

*'If one of your brethren becomes poor, and has sold some of **his possession**, and if his **redeeming relative** comes to **redeem** it, then he may **redeem** what his **brother** sold. . . 'Now if a sojourner or stranger close to you becomes rich, and one of your brethren who dwells by him becomes poor, and **sells himself** to the stranger or sojourner close to you, or to a member of the stranger's family, ⁴⁸ after he is sold he may be **redeemed again**. One of his **brothers** may redeem him; ⁴⁹ or his uncle or his uncle's son may **redeem** him; or anyone who is **near of kin** to him in his family may **redeem him**; or if he is able he may redeem himself.'*

No One within the Human Race Could Redeem

Romans 3:10, 23: No **one within** the human race to recover the lost **possession** and lost **freedom**. A slave is in **bondage** and **owns nothing**.

"There is none righteous, no, not one. . . all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Jesus had to become our Brother

John 1:14: Jesus **bids farewell** to heaven but **promises** "In **33 years** I will be back victorious"

*"And the Word **became flesh** and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."*

Revelation 22:16: Is it possible to be your **son's father** and your **son's son**?

Jesus is the Root and offspring of **David**. He is also the **Father** and the **Son** of **Abraham**

"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."

John 8:58: "Before Abraham was, I AM"

Two Fold Mission of Jesus

The **sanctuary** begins **in the camp** where sinners live

Exodus 12:5, 6: Lamb **without blemish** must be **killed**

*"Your lamb shall be **without blemish**, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. ⁶ Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel **shall kill it** at twilight."*

Jesus had to **live the life** that the law requires us to live and **die the death** that the law demands from us. He felt **responsible** because He made us

I Peter 1:18-20: Jesus was that **unblemished lamb who died**

*“... knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the **precious blood** of Christ, as of a lamb **without blemish and without spot**. ²⁰ He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.”*

Demons who He was and why He came

Mark 1:23, 24: The demons **knew who he was and why** he had come

*“Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, ²⁴ saying, “Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to **destroy us? I know who You are** — the Holy One of God!”*

Satan’s Mission

Satan must **prevent him** from living a **perfect life** and from **offering His life** as a sacrifice for sin. Jesus had to **give His life**. Satan used **four methods** to accomplish his purpose. Satan was after him **24/7/365**.

Method #1: Kill him before He could offer His life:

*“Again and again He [Jesus] would have been killed had it not been for the **heavenly angels** who attended Him and guarded His life **until the time** when the case of the Jews as a nation should be decided.” RH, October 12, 1897*

Revelation 12:3, 4: When He was **born**

“And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. ⁴ His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as He was born.”

Matthew 8:24: A **storm** on the lake

“And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep.”

Luke 4:28-30: Preaching in the synagogue in **Nazareth**

“So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, ²⁹ and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their

city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. ³⁰ Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way."

John 8:58, 59: Attempting to **stone Him**

"Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." ⁵⁹ Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by."

Method #2: Infect Jesus with the **sin virus**:

Matthew 4:3, 6, 9

Three times Jesus answered the devil: "**it is written.**"

Hebrews 4:15

"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was **in all points tempted as we are**, yet **without sin.**"

Hebrews 7:26

"For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, **separate from sinners**, and has become higher than the heavens."

John 8:46

"Which of you **convicts Me of sin?**"

I John 3:5

"And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and **in Him there is no sin.**"

I Peter 2:21, 22

"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ²² "Who **committed no sin**, nor was deceit found in His mouth."

Method #3: Distract Him from **going to the cross** by offering an **easier way** to get the **kingdom back**:

Matthew 4:8, 9

"Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the **kingdoms of the world** and their glory. ⁹ And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."

John 6:15

*"Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to **make Him king**, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone."*

Matthew 16:22, 23

*"Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" ²³ But He turned and said to Peter, "**Get behind Me, Satan!** You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."*

Matthew 17:4

*"Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us **to be here**; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."*

John 12:20-24 with 12:31-33

*"Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. ²¹ Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." ²² Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus. ²³ But Jesus answered them, saying, "**The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.** ²⁴ Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."*

"Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³² And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." ³³ This He said, signifying by what death He would die."

John 13:1, 2: Judas's betrayal

*"Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. ² And supper being ended, **the devil** having already **put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot**, Simon's son, to betray Him."*

Method #4: Discourage Him so that **He would leave**. Get His own people to **reject** him and his own disciples to **forsake** Him so that He would go **back to heaven** where He was loved

Matthew 26:38: Sorrowful unto death

"Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me."

Matthew 26:39, 42, 44: Disciples sleep, must **drink the cup** (Revelation 16: They are the cups of God wrath)

*"He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let **this cup** pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." ⁴² Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if **this cup** cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done." ⁴⁴ So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the **same words**."*

John 18:11: Who gave Him the cup? His own Father. You will never see your Father again. Goodbye to life forever

*"So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which **My Father has given Me?**"*

Hebrews 5:7: His **agony**

*". . . who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up **prayers** and **supplications**, with vehement **cries** and **tears** to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear."*

Luke 22:44: Sweat blood

*"And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like **great drops of blood** falling down to the ground."*

*"Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Savior could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their **separation was to be eternal**. Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God." *DA*, p. 753*

Matthew 26:56: Disciples **forsake Him**

*"Then all the **disciples forsook** Him and fled."*

Matthew 26:73, 74: Peter denies him

*"And a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, "Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you." ⁷⁴ Then he began to **curse and swear**, saying, "I do not know the Man!"*

Mark 14:65; 15:16-20: He was **beaten** so that he would **retaliate** or **choose to leave** the human race to perish

*"Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to **beat Him**, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!" And the officers **struck Him** with the palms of their hands."*

*"Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison. ¹⁷ And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head, ¹⁸ and began to salute Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ¹⁹ Then they **struck Him** on the head with a reed and **spat on Him**; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him. ²⁰ And when they had **mocked Him**, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him."*

Matthew 27:41-43: Encouraged him **to come down** from the cross

*"Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, ⁴² "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, **let Him now come down** from the cross, and we will believe Him. ⁴³ He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'"*

John 8:29: My Father is **always with me**

*"And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not **left Me alone**, for I always do those things that please Him." ³⁰ As He spoke these words, many believed in Him."*

Matthew 27:46:

*"My God, My God, why have you **forsaken** Me?"*

John 19:30: It is finished. He had lived a perfect life and now was dying for sin

*"So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "**It is finished!**" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit."*

Luke 23:46: **Commends His spirit.** Explain what this means

*"And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I **commit My spirit**.'" Having said this, He breathed His last."*

Matthew 18:1-6: The **resurrection**

Matthew 27:51-53: **Captives** rescued from the grave

"Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, ⁵² and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; ⁵³ and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many."

Revelation 12:10: Joy in heaven. **He won**

"Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven: "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night."



THE 24 ELDERS

LESSON #2 - THE RETURN OF THE WAR HERO

Two Points of Time in the Seals and the Two Thrones of Revelation 3:21

In Revelation 3:21 we find a clear distinction between two thrones. The first is the Father's throne (Revelation 4:1, 2). Revelation 5:5 then describes the moment when Jesus ascended to heaven and joined His Father at this throne (cf. Revelation 12:5; Hebrews 4:16; Hebrews 8:1; 12:2; 4:2; Acts 7:56; Romans 8:34). The second throne will belong to Jesus alone when He comes in His glorious kingdom (Revelation 11:18; 8:3-5; Matthew 19:28; 25:31; 19:4, 5; 20:11; 21:5).

The reason why Jesus is sometimes depicted as sitting and other times as standing after His ascension is because he **stands** as High Priest but He **sits** as king of the kingdom of grace. In Hebrews the emphasis falls upon His role as priest. In Revelation the emphasis is upon Jesus as king. This two-fold role of Jesus was clearly predicted in Genesis 14:18 where Melchizedek is described as the king of Salem and the priest of the Most High God. Picking up on Genesis 14:18, Psalm 110:1-4 describes Jesus as sitting at the Father's right hand and also as a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Later Zechariah 6:12, 13 provides a description of this dual role of Jesus as king and priest. Finally, in I Corinthians 15:24-28 the apostle Paul portrays the co-regency of Jesus with the Father until all His enemies are made His footstool.

The tense of the verbs in Revelation 3:21 is important:

*"To him who **overcomes** (present, active, participle) I **will grant** (future, active, indicative) to sit with me on my throne, even as I **overcame** (past, active, indicative), and **sat down** (past, active, indicative) with my Father on his throne."*

Clearly, Jesus overcame and sat with His father on His throne. If we overcome, we will sit with Jesus on His throne. Jesus spends 40 days on earth and then prepares to return to

where He promised. Heaven prepares for the party and celebration for the return of the war hero.

Comments on Chapter 4

The throne room is prepared for the arrival of the war hero. The focus on this chapter is upon God the Father as Creator.

Verse 1:

“After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.’”

John sees a door in heaven which **stands open**. There is no evidence that the one who is sitting on the **throne has moved** there from another place. He is simply there. The location of this door in heaven remains to be seen. The door obviously leads into **a building**—the heavenly sanctuary. But the heavenly sanctuary/temple has **two doors**—the one that leads to the holy place and the one that leads to the

Verse 2:

*“Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a **throne** set in heaven, and **One** sat on the throne.”*

Verses 3 and 4:

“And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.”

A throne is set in heaven inside the door and **one is sitting** on it. The one who is sitting on the throne is never identified by name but the context clearly indicates that it is God the Father.

The **glory of God** appears like a **jasper** (a redish stone with black veins) and **sardius** (also redish but with white veins) stone. What John is beholding is not actually God but rather the glory which surrounds God. **Ellen White** had a similar experience:

Verse 4:

*“Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw **twenty-four elders** sitting, clothed in **white robes**; and they had **crowns of gold** on their heads.”*

Verse 5: The Location of the Throne in heaven

“And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.”

This throne (Revelation 4:2) is in the **holy place** for the following reasons:

- The **seven lamps** of fire were burning **before** the throne. The word for lamps here is *lampades* which is the very word that is used for the seven branched candlestick in the Septuagint. This strongly hints that this scene is taking place in the holy place. The seven lamps that are before the throne are interpreted as the seven Spirits of God.
- But notice that in chapter 4 the seven spirits have **not yet been sent out into the earth**. They are not sent until Jesus arrives and is installed as the high priest and sends the Holy Spirit on the **Day of Pentecost (5:6)**. The number seven would indicate that the Holy Spirit **spoke to the seven churches** because each church ends by saying “he who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

“The holy places of the sanctuary in heaven are represented by the two apartments in the sanctuary on earth. As in vision the apostle John was granted a view of the temple of God in heaven, he beheld there “seven lamps of fire burning before the throne.” Rev. 4:5. He saw an angel “having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.” Rev. 8:3. Here the prophet was permitted to behold the first apartment of the sanctuary in heaven; and he saw there the “seven lamps of fire” and the “golden altar,” represented by the golden candlestick and the altar of incense in the sanctuary on earth.” The Faith I Live By, p. 202

- What is right **in front of** the candlestick? It is the **Table of Showbread**. The table of showbread was at the north of the holy place and God’s throne is in the sides of the north (Isaiah 14:12-14).
- There were **two stacks** of six cakes of bread on the table. This would hint at the idea that there were two people sitting on the throne because the Father and the Son share the throne (Revelation 3:21). The Manna was a symbol of the provision made by the Father and the Son to their people (see John 6:32, 33).
- The name ***lahem panim*** (showbread; I Samuel 21:6) is important. The word *panim* literally means “face” or “countenance”. In Lamentations 4:16 and Proverbs 7:15 *panim* is translated “the face of the Lord.” The same word is translated “person” in 2 Samuel 17:11. Thus the Showbread is “the bread of the presence.”
- The table of showbread was the only article of furniture in the sanctuary which had **two crowns** surrounding the top side (Exodus 25:23-25; 37:11, 12). Its height was identical to the Ark of the Covenant and it is described immediately after the Ark is described. The Ark of the Covenant had one crown (Exodus 25:11) and the Golden Altar also had one (Exodus 37:26).

- Revelation 5:8 refers to the **altar of incense** being **before** the throne. The altar of incense was in the holy place (Revelation 8:3-5).
- **Revelation 6:6** speaks of a **scarcity of bread** because the wheat and barley are extremely expensive. A denarius was the daily wage of a common laborer. Thus he made only enough for one quart of wheat. According to Cicero the price that John mentioned would have been 8 to 16 times higher than normal. It is clear that there was famine for bread in the land during the period of the Third horse. Barley was used to feed the very poor and the animals. Interestingly, the next horse is the yellow one: After famine comes death.

The **lightning** (Revelation 4:5; Ezekiel 1:13, 14) represents **the speed** with which the **angels** perform God's work:

"As God's messengers they go forth, like "the appearance of a flash of lightning," (Ezekiel 1:14), so dazzling their glory, and so swift their flight." GC, p. 512

*"The bright light going among the **living creatures** with the swiftness of lightning represents the speed with which this work will finally go forward to completion." 5T, p. 754*

The **thundering and voices** are those of the 4 living creatures who surround the throne of God. They are preparing the banquet room for the reception of the war hero and are praising the one who is on the throne (Ezekiel 1:13, 14, 24; 3:12, 13; Psalm 104:7; Revelation 14:2; John 12:28, 29; Revelation 19:6).

Verses 6 and 7: The Sea of Glass and the Four Living Creatures

"Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle."

The four living creatures are in the **midst of the throne** and around the throne. A comparison with **Isaiah 6:1-3** indicates that they are **Seraphim**. This passage in Isaiah is the **only place** in the Bible where Seraphim are mentioned by name. However both in Isaiah 6:1-3 and in **Revelation 4** the living beings have **six wings** and sing "**holy, holy, holy.**"

Verses 8-11:

The heavenly being are praising the One who is on the throne because by His will all things exist

Summary of Chapter 4

In chapter 4 there are four living creatures, twenty four elders, God the Father and the Holy Spirit (the seven Spirits). The seven lamps of fire and the altar of incense are there. But orders of being are missing: **Jesus Christ and the angelic hosts**. Where is the Son in chapter 4? And where is the angelic host? Ellen White provides the clear answer. My own comments are in brackets:

*"All heaven was **waiting to welcome** the Savior to the celestial courts. As He ascended, He led the way, and the multitude of captives set free at His resurrection followed. The **heavenly host**, with shouts and acclamations of praise and celestial song, **attended the joyous train**.*

*As they drew near to the city of God, the challenge is given by the **escorting angels**:*

*"Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors;
And the King of glory shall come in."*

*Joyfully the **waiting sentinels** respond:*

"Who is this King of glory?"

This they say, not because they know not who He is, but because they would hear the answer of exalted praise:

*"The Lord strong and mighty,
The Lord **mighty in battle!**
Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
Even lift them up, ye everlasting doors;
And the King of glory shall come in."*

Again is heard the challenge, "Who is this King of glory?" for the angels never weary of hearing His name exalted. The escorting angels make reply:

*"The Lord of hosts;
He is the King of glory." Ps. 24:7-10.*

*Then the portals of the city of God are opened wide, and the **angelic throng sweep through the gates** amid a burst of rapturous music.*

There is the throne [with God the Father on it], and around it the rainbow of promise. There are cherubim and seraphim [the four living creatures]. The commanders of the angel hosts,

*the sons of God, the representatives of the unfallen worlds [the twenty-four elders], are assembled. The heavenly council before which Lucifer had accused God and His Son, the representatives of those sinless realms over which Satan had thought to establish his dominion,--all are there to **welcome the Redeemer**. They are **eager to celebrate His triumph** and to glorify their King.*

But He waves them back. Not yet; He cannot now receive the coronet of glory and the royal robe. He enters into the presence of His Father [now we know who was seated on the throne]. He points to His wounded head, the pierced side, the marred feet; He lifts His hands, bearing the print of nails [He presents Himself as the Lamb as though He had been slain]. He points to the tokens of His triumph; He presents to God the wave sheaf, those raised with Him as representatives [the down payment] of that great multitude who shall come forth from the grave at His second coming. He approaches the Father [Revelation 5:7], with whom there is joy over one sinner that repents; who rejoices over one with singing. Before the foundations of the earth were laid, the Father and the Son had united in a covenant to redeem man if he should be overcome by Satan. They had clasped Their hands in a solemn pledge that Christ should become the surety [He would redeem the lost possession] for the human race. This pledge Christ has fulfilled. When upon the cross He cried out, "It is finished," He addressed the Father. The compact had been fully carried out. Now He declares: Father, it is finished. I have done Thy will, O My God. I have completed the work of redemption. If Thy justice is satisfied, "I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am." John 19:30; 17:24

The voice of God is heard proclaiming that justice is satisfied. Satan is vanquished. Christ's toiling, struggling ones on earth are "accepted in the Beloved." Eph. 1:6. Before the heavenly angels and the representatives of unfallen worlds, they are declared justified. Where He is, there His church shall be [this is what the scroll reveals, who will inherit with Jesus]. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Ps. 85:10. The Father's arms encircle His Son, and the word is given, "Let all the angels of God worship Him." Heb. 1:6.

With joy unutterable, rulers and principalities and powers acknowledge the supremacy of the Prince of life. The angel host prostrate themselves before Him, while the glad shout fills all the courts of heaven, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Rev. 5:12.

Songs of triumph mingle with the music from angel harps, till heaven seems to overflow with joy and praise. Love has conquered. The lost is found. Heaven [notice that she does not say that heaven, earth and under the earth at this point in time] rings with voices in lofty strains proclaiming, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." Rev. 5:13." DA, pp. 833-835

Revelation 5

The War Hero arrives from the Battlefield (The focus in this chapter is upon Jesus Christ as Redeemer).

No Judgment Language in Revelation 5

As we have seen, Revelation 4-5 bears a close resemblance with Daniel 7. But there are also **significant differences**. In Daniel 7:9 thrones are set in place while in Revelation 4:2 the thrones are simply there. In Daniel 7:10 **books** (plural) are opened while in Revelation 5:1 a **book** is sealed. In Daniel 7 Jesus is presented as the **Son of Man** (7:13) while in Revelation 5:6 he is presented as the **Lamb** as though He had been slain. He is not portrayed as the Lion until he has finished breaking the seals and opens the scroll.

Some have thought that Revelation 4 and 5 are describing the beginning of the investigative judgment in 1844. The problem with this idea is that there is no judgment language in chapters 4 and 5. The language in Revelation 4 deals with God as Creator and in Revelation 5 with Jesus as Redeemer. The final judgment song will only be sung in Revelation 19:1, 2 after the harlot has been judged.

Never in judgment scenes do you find jubilatory singing such as we find in these chapters. During judgment scenes there is generally silence in heaven. For example, in Daniel 7 there is no singing when the judgment is set and the books are opened. Also in Revelation 20:11-15 the judgment scene is witnessed in silence. Furthermore there is only a mention of one book in Revelation 5 and not books and this book is not opened until all of the seven seals have been broken. The opening of the books does not take place until Revelation 20:11-15.

Under the fifth seal the judgment has not yet taken place. We know this because the souls under the altar are crying out for their blood to be judged and avenged. This means that the judgment must transpire after the fifth seal. We will see that the judgment process does not begin until the after the signs in the sun, moon and stars in Revelation 6:12, 13. And the judgment execution will not take place until we get to chapter 19:1, 2.

In Revelation 5 Jesus is portrayed as a lamb as though he had been slain. He comes fresh from the battlefield. The tense of the verb “had been slain” is an action which began in the past but whose results remain in the present.

“Christ is our mediator and officiating high priest in the presence of the Father. He was shown to John as a lamb that had been slain, as in the very act of pouring out his blood in the sinner's behalf.” Gospel Workers, p. 13

But in Revelation 6:16, 17 and 14:14-20 and Daniel 7:13, 14 Jesus is portrayed as the Lion or Son of Man who comes to claim His kingdom. Thus Daniel 7 and Revelation 4, 5 describe different historical contexts but the same beings are present.

Verses 1, 2

"And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll [biblion] written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?"

Comments: The word "worthy" means "qualified." Certain **conditions must be met** in order for a person to be qualified to break the seals and open the scroll. Notice the use of the word 'worthy' elsewhere in the New Testament:

Matthew 10:10: The worker is worthy of his salary.

Luke 12:48: Did not commit things worthy of stripes.

Luke 15:19: The prodigal son acted in an unworthy manner.

Revelation 16:6: The wicked who drink blood have earned the right to do so.

Acts 26:31: Paul committed nothing worthy of death.

Verse 3

"And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it."

Comments: The book cannot be opened until all the seals have been broken. This crisis of universal proportions is the most decisive moment in human history. John is not so much concerned with the seals but rather with the contents of the scroll. His are not tears of curiosity; they are tears of desperation and supreme agony. Obviously the book contains something of life and death importance yet no one is worthy to open the book. Not Moses, not Elijah, not Enoch, not beings from other worlds, not the cherubim and seraphim, nor can the angels break the seals and open the scroll. Not even God the Father meets the specifications.

Verses 4, 5:

"So I wept [klaio; Luke 8:52; Mark 5:38] much, because no one [not even God the Father] was found worthy [qualified] to open and read the scroll, or to look at it." ⁵ But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed [past, "overcome" John 16:33 speaks about the overcoming of Jesus] to open [future] the scroll and to loose [future] its seven seals."

Comments: Kings came from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:9, 10) and Jesus is the root and offspring of David (Revelation 22:16). Jesus, the Lamb, will open the scroll when he **becomes the lion**. In this context Revelation 6:16, 17 is significant. Here the Lamb is spoken of as being filled with wrath. That is to say, the Lamb has taken over the characteristics of the lion. The Lamb now comes on the clouds as the Son of Man.

Notice that Jesus will open the scroll when He takes over the kingship. The following statements from Ellen White are significant:

“The Savior is presented before John under the symbols of “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” and of “a Lamb as it had been slain.” (Revelation 5:5, 6) These symbols represent the union of omnipotent power and self-sacrificing love. The Lion of Judah, so terrible to the rejectors of His grace, will be the Lamb of God to the obedient and faithful. The pillar of fire that speaks terror and wrath to the transgressor of God’s law is a token of light and mercy and deliverance to those who have kept His commandments. The arm strong to smite the rebellious will be strong to deliver the loyal. Everyone who is faithful will be saved.” AA, p. 589

“As the Lion of Judah, Christ will defend his chosen ones and bring them off victorious, because they accepted him as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” The Home Missionary, November 1, 1893

Hebrews emphasizes the priestly role of Jesus while Revelation emphasizes His kingly role.

Revelation 5:5 needs to be connected to 3:21. This verse amplifies the last part of verse 21. Jesus is there in the midst (*en mesoo*) of the throne after he overcame and now he has the right to open the scroll because of this fact.

Verse 6

*“And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood [“standing”: Kings and priests were standing when they were anointed] a Lamb as though it had been slain [perfect: “having been slain”. **When John sees him, the Lamb’s wounds are till fresh**], having seven horns [Habakkuk 3:4, rays of the sun on the crown] and seven eyes which are the seven Spirits of God; [II Chronicles 16:9; Proverbs 15:3; Zachariah 4:10: The seven angels are the eyes of the Lord sent [perfect: “having been sent”] out into all the earth [The Holy Spirit is called the seven spirits of God in 4:5 but is only sent out to the earth in 5:6. Connect with Acts 2 where the Holy Spirit is sent—John 14:26; 15:26; also Zechariah 4:2-6].*

Comments: The key question is: **Who** is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll and **why**? The answer is that the Lamb can do it because he overcame and shed his blood to redeem or buy back the inheritance. The word “redeem” in 5:9 means to buy something by paying a price. It translates the Greek word *jagorazoo* (Matthew 13:46; I Corinthians 6:20; II Peter 2:1). Another word, *lutroo* (I Peter 1:19), has a similar meaning and is the precise equivalent of *go’el* in the Old Testament (Leviticus 25:48). It is like buying an item back from a pawn shop.

*“When Christ passed within the heavenly gates, He was **enthroned amidst the adoration of the angels**. As soon as this ceremony was completed, the **Holy Spirit descended** upon the disciples in rich currents, and Christ was indeed glorified, even with the glory which He had with the Father from all eternity. The Pentecostal outpouring was Heaven’s communication*

that the Redeemer's inauguration was accomplished. According to His promise **He had sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to His followers**, as a token that He had, as Priest and King, received all authority in heaven and on earth, and was the Anointed One over His people." AA, p. 38.

"Christ's ascension to heaven was the signal that His followers were to receive the promised blessing. For this they were to wait before they entered upon their work. When Christ passed within the heavenly gates, He was enthroned amidst the adoration of the angels. As soon as this ceremony was completed, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in rich currents, and Christ was indeed glorified, even with the glory which He had with the Father from all eternity. The Pentecostal outpouring was Heaven's communication that the Redeemer's inauguration was accomplished. According to His promise He had sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to His followers as a token that He had, as priest and king, received all authority in heaven and on earth, and was the Anointed One over His people. AA, pp. 38, 39

Verse 7

*"Then He **came** and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne."*

Comments: Notice that Jesus "came" to God the Father so He must not have been there before. Up to this point there have been no songs in chapter 5. All the beings that are present are in suspense to see if anyone is found who is worthy or qualified to break the seals and open the scroll.

Verse 8

"Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures [the cherubim and seraphim] and the twenty-four elders [the representatives of the sinless worlds of the universe] fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."

Comments: Notice that the seraphim and the 24 elders play an intercessory role.

"Angels offer the smoke of the fragrant incense for the praying saints." Counsels to Teachers, p. 110

Verses 9-14

"And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy [qualified] to take the scroll and to open its seals; for You were [past] slain, and have redeemed [past] us [people] to God by Your blood [I Peter 1:18-20] out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have [past] made us [them] kings and priests [see the comments on Revelation 1:4, 5] to our God; and we [they] shall [future] reign on the earth." Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders [they stand on the outer circle of the throne, the creatures and the elders]; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who

was [past] slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!" And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!" Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

Comments: This passage explains the reason why Jesus, and only Jesus, was qualified to break the seals and open the scroll: He shed his blood. The book of Hebrews, instead of using the word "worthy" to explain why Jesus is qualified, employs the expression "and having been made perfect." (Hebrews 2:10; 5:8, 9).

Up to this point the angelic host has been absent from the scene but now John sees ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of them. The question is: Where were they before and where did they come from? The answer is that they arrived with Jesus at His ascension. You will also notice that the central theme of the hymn is not creation but redemption.

The Sealed Book

The question begs to be asked: What is contained in the sealed book? Why would it be so catastrophic for the book to remain sealed?

It bears noting that while the book is sealed, it cannot be opened and read. An analogous case is the sealed book of Daniel 12:4 where the little book is sealed until the time of the end. In other words, its contents cannot be understood until the book is unsealed.

Some valuable background information can be obtained from Jeremiah where a title deed is described. The picture is thus: Adam forfeited the title deed to the world, Satan claimed it, and only the Redeemer (*go'el*) could redeem it (buy it back). The scroll contains the history of salvation. When the book is finally opened, the universe will see that only Jesus and His followers have the right to the lost possession.

Several scholars have weighed in on the contents of the scroll:

"In order to protect the contents of legal documents (such as deeds of sale, contracts, wills, and letters), a seal impression was normally made with a signet or ring at the end of the written document. The sealing thus functioned in place of a signature, indicating authenticity, validity, authority, ratification, or protection of the document. In order to protect the contents against an inappropriate disclosure, the document would be tied with threads, and then the seal was impressed at the knots on bullae (a blob of clay, wax, or some other soft material) which kept the papyrus scroll folded (Job 38:14). An unbroken impression would indicate that the sealed document had not been opened. Only the owner could break the seals and disclose the contents." Ranko Stefanovic, Revelation of Jesus Christ, p. 197

“Archeologists have brought to light many documents sealed with two to seven or more seals. For instance, Roman law dictated that a will or testament had to be sealed with a minimum of seven seals of witnesses in order to render its contents valid, although some evidence shows that more than seven seals were used on occasion. . . Like any sealed scroll of the time, the scroll of Revelation 5 appears rolled up, tied with a cord, and sealed along the outside edge with seals of wax affixed at the knots. As such, it could not be opened and its contents disclosed until all of the seven seals were broken. The breaking of all seven seals is preliminary and preparatory to the actual opening of the scroll and the disclosure of its contents.” Ranko Stefanovic, Revelation of Jesus Christ, p. 197, 198

“A will, according to the Praetorian Testament, in Roman Law bore the seven seals of the seven witnesses on the threads that secured the tablets or parchment (see Smith, Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities, p. 1117). Such a Testament could not be carried into execution till all the seven seals were loosed.” R. H. Charles, International Critical Commentary, volume 1, p. 137

“The central item, the seven-sealed scroll, portrays a will or testament, for that is precisely what such a seven-sealed document was in Roman law in John’s day. We find, then, that the picture we have in the subdivision of Revelation from 4:1 to 8:1 is a court scene in which a will or testament is to be opened. In the context of Revelation, this will or testament would be a title-deed, as it were, to man’s lost inheritance—an inheritance which has been repurchased by Christ, the Lamb. Thus the scroll is a book of destiny. The opening of it means inheritance in God’s kingdom; its remaining closed means forfeiture. No wonder John wept when he thought no one could open the scroll.” Kenneth Strand, Interpreting the Book of Revelation, p. 55

Ellen White concurs with these scholars but she adds some very telling information:

“There in His open hand lay the book, the roll of the history of God’s providences, the prophetic history of nations and the church. Herein was contained the divine utterances, His authority, His commandments, His laws, the whole symbolic counsel of the Eternal, and the history of all ruling powers in the nations. In symbolic language was contained in that roll the influence of every nation, tongue, and people from the beginning of earth’s history to its close.” Manuscript Releases, volume 9, p. 7

“Thus the Jewish leaders made their choice. Their decision was registered in the book which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the book which no man could open. In all its vindictiveness this decision will appear before them in the day when this book is unsealed by the Lion of the tribe of Judah.” Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 294

Several things emerge from this last statement: Ellen White is writing this around the year 1900. It is very clear that the scroll had **not yet been opened** at that time. Furthermore, in order for those who cried out: “release unto us Barabbas” to see the consequences of the decision they made in the past, they must resurrect. This means that the scroll will not be opened before them until they resurrect in the second resurrection after the millennium.

On the opening of the scroll after the millennium, Ellen White gives this vivid description:

*“Above the throne is revealed the cross; and like a **panoramic view [in high definition]** appear the scenes of Adam's temptation and fall, and the **successive steps in the great plan of redemption**. The Savior's lowly birth; His early life of simplicity and obedience; His baptism in Jordan; the fast and temptation in the wilderness; His public ministry, unfolding to men heaven's most precious blessings; the days crowded with deeds of love and mercy, the nights of prayer and watching in the solitude of the mountains; the plottings of envy, hate, and malice which repaid His benefits; the awful, mysterious agony in Gethsemane beneath the crushing weight of the sins of the whole world; His betrayal into the hands of the murderous mob; the fearful events of that night of horror--the unresisting prisoner, forsaken by His best-loved disciples, rudely hurried through the streets of Jerusalem; the Son of God exultingly displayed before **Annas**, arraigned in the high priest's palace, in the judgment hall of **Pilate**, before the cowardly and cruel **Herod**, mocked, insulted, tortured, and condemned to die--all are vividly portrayed.*

And now before the swaying multitude are revealed the final scenes--the patient Sufferer treading the path to Calvary; the Prince of heaven hanging upon the cross; the haughty priests and the jeering rabble deriding His expiring agony; the supernatural darkness; the heaving earth, the rent rocks, the open graves, marking the moment when the world's Redeemer yielded up His life.

*The awful spectacle appears just as it was. Satan, his angels, and his subjects have no power to turn from the picture of their own work. **Each actor** recalls the part which he performed. **Herod**, who slew the innocent children of Bethlehem that he might destroy the King of Israel; the base **Herodias**, upon whose guilty soul rests the blood of John the Baptist; the weak, timeserving **Pilate**; the **mocking soldiers**; the **priests and rulers** and the maddened throng who cried, "His blood be on us, and on our children!"--all behold the enormity of their guilt. They vainly seek to hide from the divine majesty of His countenance, outshining the glory of the sun, while the redeemed cast their crowns at the Savior's feet, exclaiming: "He died for me!"*

*Amid the ransomed throng are the apostles of Christ, the heroic Paul, the ardent Peter, the loved and loving John, and their truehearted brethren, and with them the vast host of martyrs; while outside the walls, with every vile and abominable thing, are those by whom they were persecuted, imprisoned, and slain. There is **Nero**, that monster of cruelty and vice, beholding the joy and exaltation of those whom he once tortured, and in whose extremist anguish he found satanic delight. His mother is there to witness the result of her own work; to see how the evil stamp of character transmitted to her son, the passions encouraged and developed by her influence and example, have borne fruit in crimes that caused the world to shudder.*

*There are **papist priests and prelates**, who claimed to be Christ's ambassadors, yet employed the rack, the dungeon, and the stake to control the consciences of His people. There are the **proud pontiffs** who exalted themselves above God and presumed to change the law of*

*the Most High. Those **pretended fathers** of the church have an account to render to God from which they would fain be excused. Too late they are made to see that the Omniscient One is jealous of His law and that He will in no wise clear the guilty. They learn now that Christ identifies His interest with that of His suffering people; and they feel the force of His own words: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Matthew 25:40.*

The whole wicked world stand arraigned at the bar of God on the charge of high treason against the government of heaven. They have none to plead their cause; they are without excuse; and the sentence of eternal death is pronounced against them." GC, pp. 666-669

THE 24 ELDERS

LECTURE #3 - WHO ARE THE 24 ELDERS?

In recent years there has been much discussion on the identity of the twenty-four elders of the book of Revelation. The traditional view is that this group is composed of the saints who resurrected with Jesus (see Matthew 27:51-53). Those who hold this view believe that when Jesus went to heaven forty days after His resurrection he took these saints to heaven and presented them as the first-fruits to His Father. In this study we will examine this view to see if it squares with the sure word of prophecy.

The Morning Stars and the Sons of God

Job 38:4-7

"Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

Conclusions:

- Job 38:1-7 provides a description of creation week.
- The morning stars/sons of God were present to witness this event when it took place.
- It bears noting that the expressions 'morning stars' and 'sons of God' are placed in synonymous parallelism. That is to say, the morning stars and the sons of God are the same group.
- It is absolutely clear that this group of beings already existed when God created this world.

Who are the Morning Stars/sons of God?

Revelation 12:3, 9 clearly identifies the stars as angels

Ellen White identifies the sons of God as angels:

The Great Controversy, p. 519:

"The Scriptures declare that upon one occasion, when the angels of God came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan came also among them (Job 1:6), not to bow before the Eternal King, but to further his own malicious designs against the righteous. With the same object he is in attendance when men assemble for the worship of God"

As we compare Job 1:6, 7; 2:1 with Ellen White's comment in The Great Controversy the conclusion is inevitable that the stars and the sons of God Job are angelic beings.

Genesis 6

Some might wonder about the 'sons of God' in **Genesis 6**. If the expression 'sons of God' refers to angels in **Job 1**, does it not refer to angels in **Genesis 6**? The answer is, not necessarily.

- The expression 'son of God' must be understood within the specific context in which it is used.
- In the Bible a lion can represent Christ, the devil, Babylon, Judah. Leaven can represent sin or the Holy Spirit who makes the church grow from within.
- In the context of Genesis 6, the 'sons of God' were clearly the righteous descendants of Seth (Genesis 5) while the 'daughters of men' were the wicked descendants of Cain (Genesis 4).
- We are told that Adam was created 'the son of God' (Luke 3:38) and he was not at that time an angel.
- The apostle Paul also refers to Christ's converted brethren as 'sons of God' (Galatians 4:5; 2 Corinthians 6:18).

Romans 8:14-15:

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."

Meeting of the Heavenly Council

Job 1:6, 7: God held a heavenly council meeting to examine the case of Job.

"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. And the Lord said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

Some very interesting details emerge from these verses:

- The sons of God do not always dwell in the presence of God. They came to present themselves on a certain day. This contrasts with the previous verse where we are told that Job offered sacrifices always (Job 1:7).
- Satan came among the sons of God. Notice that the text does not say that he came with them. Evidently Satan claimed the right to belong to this select group. What made him feel like he had the right to appear among this select group?
- Satan came representing a planet, the earth. Where, then, must the other sons of God have come from? Is it just possible that they also came from other planets?

A Second Meeting of the Heavenly Council

Job 2:1, 2: A second meeting was held in heaven to examine the case of Job.

"Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord. ² And the Lord said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

- The same remarks we shared on Job 1:6, 7 apply to Job 2:1, 2.
- The word 'again' in verse one is important. If the sons of God came again, then they must have left the presence of God and gone back to where they came from for the first meeting.

Ahab and Jehoshaphat

2 Chronicles 18:18-22: Whenever decisions are made that affect the worlds of the universe God gathers the heavenly governing council to deliberate about what to do in particular situations:

"Then Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing on His right hand and His left. ¹⁹ And the Lord said, 'Who will persuade Ahab king of Israel to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. ²⁰ Then a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord, and said, 'I will persuade him.' The Lord said to him, 'In what way?' ²¹ So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And the Lord said, 'You shall persuade him and also prevail; go out and do so.' ²² Therefore look! The Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these prophets of yours, and the Lord has declared disaster against you."

When Lucifer was filled with jealousy against Jesus notice what happened:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 36 “In heavenly council the angels pleaded with Lucifer.”

When Satan gathered with his council to prepare a strategy to deceive Adam and Eve:

The Story of Redemption, p. 29: “God assembled the angelic host to take measures to avert the threatened evil. It was decided in heaven's council for angels to visit Eden and warn Adam that he was in danger from the foe. Two angels sped on their way to visit our first parents.”

Conclusion:

God has a heavenly council with representatives from the entire universe where meetings are held to make decisions with regard to the administration of the universe.

Ellen White on the Identity of the 24 Elders

According to the Spirit of Prophecy, the sons of God are the commanders of the angel hosts and the representatives of the worlds that never sinned. Writing about those who were present to welcome Christ upon His ascension, Ellen White remarks:

*“The commanders of the angel hosts, the sons of God, the representatives of the unfallen worlds [Revelation 4:4], are assembled. The heavenly council before which Lucifer had accused God and His Son, the representatives of those sinless realms over which Satan had thought to establish his dominion,—all are there to **welcome** the Redeemer.”*

Some have wondered whether Ellen White is referring to three separate groups when she wrote about the [1] ‘the commanders of the angel hosts, [2] the sons of God and [3] the representatives of the unfallen worlds’. In fact at a recent GYC event when I stated that these three phrases are three different ways of referring to the same group, someone who believes in the traditional view that the 24 elders are those who resurrected with Jesus, less than kindly challenged me on it.

At the moment I did not have an example handy to prove my point but upon further research I found that Ellen White used this type of sentence construction in other places to describe the same thing in three different ways. Notice the following two examples:

“Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickenning of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from the spiritual death.” Christian Service, p. 42

It is obvious that in this quotation Ellen White expresses the same idea three times with the words renewal, quickening and resurrection being synonymous.

Here is another example:

*“There will be a universal **bond of union**, one great **harmony**, a **confederacy** of Satan's forces.”
3SM, p. 392*

Here Ellen White employs three synonymous expressions to describe the final union of the world against the remnant. ‘Bond of union,’ ‘harmony’ and ‘confederacy’ describe the same reality in three different ways.

Are there really other populated planets that have never sinned and does each of them have a representative in the heavenly council?

Notice **Revelation 12:12** which refers to the reaction of the universe at the victory of Jesus on the cross:

*“Therefore rejoice O **heavens**, and you who dwell in **them!** Woe to the inhabitants of **the earth** and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.”*

Billy Graham:

“I believe there is life on other planets. We have this galaxy, the Milky Way, and they now speculate that there are millions and millions of galaxies. And in each galaxy, a trillion stars, planets and all that. I can't imagine that we're the only one that has life; that would be a terribly egotistical thing for us to say as a planet. I believe that God is the God of all of it, and that's why He's so awesome and so tremendous and why, when I come into His presence, I feel that I'm not worthy.”

According to **Revelation 5:5**, John wept because no one was worthy to open the book that was in the right hand of God the Father. As John was sobbing, **one of the twenty four elders** encouraged him with the following words:

“But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.”

Remarkably, when **Ellen White** describes this event she affirms that it was **one of the strong angels** who spoke the words of encouragement to John:

Manuscript Releases, volume 12, pp. 296, 297: *“This roll was written within and without. John says: “I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon” [verse 4]. The vision as presented to John made its impression upon his mind. The destiny of every nation was contained in that book. John was distressed at the utter inability of any human being or angelic intelligence to read the words, or even to look thereon. His soul was wrought up to such a point of agony and suspense that **one of the strong angels** had compassion on him, and laying his hand on him assuringly, said, “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" [verse 5]."

The **conclusion** is inevitable. In its original Biblical context the words of verse 5 were spoken to John by **one of the twenty-four elders** but Ellen White identifies the elder as '**one of the strong angels.**' This clearly indicates that the twenty-four elders are not human but rather angelic.

Something similar occurs in Ellen White's comments on **Revelation 7**. In the **Biblical context** John was shown a **great multitude** that no one could number from all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues who were standing before the throne of God and of the Lamb (verse 9). **One of the elders** then asked John a question:

*"Then **one of the elders** answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" (Verse 13).*

John replied to **the elder's** question: *"And I said to him, 'Sir, you know.'" (Verse 14).*

The elder then says to John:

"So he said to me: "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Verse 15).

Ellen White's remarks on this episode are enlightening. Whereas the book of Revelation affirms that the **elder was conversing with John**, Ellen White states that an **angel spoke with John**:

Signs of the Times, December 22, 1887: *"John beholds an innumerable company, precious, refined, purified, around the throne of the Majesty of Heaven. **The angel inquires** of John, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they?" and John answers, "Sir, thou knowest." Then **the angel declares**: "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."*

It is impossible to miss the conclusion. In its original Biblical context **one of the elders** asked John the questions but Ellen White identifies the asker as **the angel**. The inevitable conclusion is that the elder which is speaking is **one of the strong angels**.

But there is another vital conclusion: The elder is **not a member of the great multitude** from all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues. This is important because the **King James** translation of **Revelation 5:9, 10** gives us the impression that the elders were redeemed from every 'tribe and tongue and people and nation'

Two more quotations from the pen of Ellen White will suffice:

Sermons and Talks, volume 1, p. 20: *"John saw a company standing around the throne of God and **the angel asked him**: Who are these in white robes? He answered, thou knowest. And **the angel** said, "These are they who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of*

the Lamb." (See Revelation 7:13, 14). There is a fountain in which we may wash from every stain of impurity. And says **the angel**, "He shall lead them to fountains of living waters, and shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." (See v. 17.) This will be the happy privilege of those that have kept the commandments of God in the earth."

Signs of the Times, November 22, 1905: "As John saw the multitude standing around the throne of God, the question was asked, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they?"--"These are they which came out of great tribulation," **the angel** answered, "and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

In **Revelation 5:8** we are told that the four living creatures and the twenty four elders play harps and present the prayers of the saints before the throne of God in bowls of incense. Commenting on this verse, Ellen White identifies the elders as the **very highest angels**:

Lift Him Up, p. 370: "Heavenly beings are appointed to answer the prayers of those who are working unselfishly for the interests of the cause of God. The **very highest angels** in the heavenly courts are appointed to work out the prayers which ascend to God for the advancement of the cause of God. Each angel has his particular post of duty, which he is not permitted to leave for any other place. If he should leave, the powers of darkness would gain an advantage. . ."

It is absolutely clear that if the elders are the **very highest angels** they cannot be the first-fruits who resurrected with Jesus. Once again the conclusion is inevitable: The elders are **not human beings** but rather **angelic beings**.

Why Was Satan Among the Sons of God?

In the book of Job we are told that Satan came among the group of the sons of God. Why did Satan claim the right to belong to this select group? The answer is found in **Luke 4:5, 6** where Jesus was tempted of the devil:

*"Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the **kingdoms** of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, "All this authority **I will give You**, and their glory; for this **has been delivered to me**, and I give it to **whomever I wish**. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be **Yours**."*

Conclusion: Satan stole the position which rightfully belonged to Adam who was the **legitimate representative** of the planet. He usurped **Adam's rightful throne**. This is the reason why Jesus called Satan "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31). When Adam **chose to obey Satan**, he became **Satan's subject** for we are subjects of the master whom we choose to obey (**Romans 6:16**).

But the question must be asked: Why was Adam originally placed on the throne of this world to represent it in the heavenly council? **Why** wasn't a **strong angel** or elder placed to rule over and represent this world like happened with the **other worlds** in God's universe?

God's Plan for the Human Race

God's plan for the human race **was different** than that of any other world in His universe. Whereas the rest of the worlds had strong angels representing them in the heavenly council, God placed Adam to rule over and represent this world. Ellen White explained that human beings were in a special category:

Sons and Daughters of God, p. 7: "All heaven took a deep and joyful interest in the creation of the world and of man. Human beings were a **new and distinct order**. They were made "in the image of God," and it was the Creator's design that they should populate the earth. They were to live in close communion with heaven, receiving power from the Source of all power. Upheld by God, they were to live sinless lives."

Adam and Eve were created a little lower than the angels (Psalm 8:3-5) and if they passed the test and trial they would fill the vacancies left by Lucifer and his angels. Let's look at the evidence.

Ellen White clearly indicates that the vacancies left in heaven by the rebellion of Lucifer were to be filled by the human race:

The Truth about Angels, pp. 48, 49: "God created man for His own glory that **after test and trial [after an individual passes the test, he is promoted]** the human family might become one with the heavenly family. It was God's purpose to **repopulate heaven** with the human family."

Was it still God's plan to repopulate heaven after Adam and Eve and their descendants sinned? Ellen White indicates as much in the following two quotations:

Prophet and Kings, pp. 588, 589: "Satan has an accurate knowledge of the sins that he has tempted God's people to commit and he urges his accusations against them, declaring, that by their sins they have forfeited divine protection and claiming that he has the right to destroy them. He pronounces them just as deserving as himself of exclusion from the favor of God. "Are these," he says, "the people who are to **take my place in heaven, and the place of the angels** who united with me? They profess to obey the law of God; but have they kept its precepts? Have they not been lovers of self more than lovers of God? Have they not placed their own interests above His service? Have they not loved the things of the world? Look at the sins that have marked their lives. Behold their selfishness, their malice, their hatred of one another. Will God banish me and my angels from His presence, and yet reward those who have been guilty of the same sins? Thou canst not do this, O Lord, in justice. Justice demands that sentence be pronounced against them."

Story of Redemption, p. 19 "The Father consulted His Son in regard to at once carrying out their purpose to make man to inhabit the earth. He would place man upon probation to test his loyalty before he could be rendered eternally secure. If he endured the test wherewith God saw

fit to prove him, he should eventually be **equal with the angels**. He was to have the favor of God, and he was to **converse with angels**, and they with him.”

The Truth about Angels, p. 49: “The **vacancies made in heaven** by the fall of Satan and his angels will be **filled by the redeemed** of the Lord.” RH, May 29, 1900.

Where is the evidence that God establish **procreation** for this very purpose? Where is the Biblical evidence for the idea that the human race was created a **little lower than the angels** and if they passed the test they would **be as the angels**?

Jesus once entertained a conversation with a **group of Sadducees** who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Let’s pick up the conversation in **Luke 20:34-36**:

“Jesus answered and said to them, “The sons **of this age** marry and are given in marriage. But those who are counted worthy to attain **that age**, and the resurrection from the dead, **neither marry nor are given in marriage**; nor can they die anymore, for they are **equal to the angels** and are **sons of God**, being sons of the resurrection.”

We can reach **four certain conclusions** from this text:

- Marriage is something that God established for **this age** and for a **specific purpose**.
- There will be **no marriage** in the world to come because the purpose of marriage **will have been fulfilled**.
- In the world to come the redeemed will be **equal to the angels**.
- The redeemed will be called the **sons of God**.

Medical Ministry, p. 99: “There are men today who express their belief that there will be **marriages** and **births** in the **new earth**, but those who believe the Scriptures **cannot accept such doctrines**. The doctrine that children will be **born in the new earth** is not a part of the “sure word of prophecy.” The **words of Christ** are too plain to be misunderstood. They should forever settle the question of **marriages and births** in the new earth. Neither those who shall be raised from the dead, nor those who shall be translated without seeing death, will marry or be given in marriage. They will be **as the angels of God**, members of the royal family.”

THE 24 ELDERS

LECTURE #4 - EARTH'S TWO REPRESENTATIVES

Review of Previous Presentation:

- At creation the morning stars or the sons of God rejoiced and shouted for joy.
- Job 1, 2: Two meetings of the sons of God or representatives of the worlds.
- There is life on other planets and each planet has its ambassador.
- God has a heavenly council that participates in decision making.
- The ambassadors are referred to by Ellen White as 'strong angels' and the 'highest angels'.
- Why was Satan in the meeting in Job? He was representing planet earth because he had usurped Adam's position.

God's plan for the human race:

- A new and distinct order for a specific purpose.
- The capacity to reproduce.
- After test and trial.
- Be equal to the angels.
- Fill the places that were left vacant in heaven by Satan and his angels.

The Original Representative of Planet Earth

God created Adam

"Then God said: "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

Adam was the Son of God

Luke 3:38: Like the strong angels, Adam was called the 'son of God' upon his creation.

At the conclusion of the **genealogy of Christ** we are told that Enosh was ‘*the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.*’

Regarding Adam’s status as the son of God we have this from **Ellen White**:

*Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 45: “The genealogy of our race, as given by inspiration, traces back its origin, not to a line of developing germs, mollusks, and quadrupeds, but to the great Creator. Though formed from the dust, Adam was **“the son of God.”** He was placed, as God’s representative, over the lower orders of being.”*

Conclusion:

The original “son of God” on **planet earth was Adam**. But he was the **son of God** in a **special** and different sense than we are—he was the son of God by creation, not **procreation**. We are **sons** of the **son** of the **Son** of God.

Adam Crowned at Creation

Psalm 8:3-8 informs us that at creation Adam was **crowned** and given his **realm of dominion**—the earth (see also Genesis 1:26-28):

*“When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have **crowned him** with glory and honor. You have made him to have **dominion** over the works of Your hands; you have put **all things under his feet**, all sheep and oxen—even the **beasts** of the field, the **birds** of the air, and the **fish** of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas.”*

Note: When the Bible uses the expression ‘beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas’ it is referring to the **entire planet—heaven, earth and waters**. Thus the Psalmist is saying that the **entire planet** was under the dominion of Adam who was the king.

Ellen White amplifies this thought:

*Review and Herald, February 24, 1874: “Adam was **crowned as king** in Eden. To him was given **dominion** over **every** living thing that God had created. The Lord blessed Adam and Eve with intelligence such as he had not given to the animal creation. He made Adam the **rightful sovereign** over **all** the works of his hands.”*

Conclusion: Adam was **crowned as king** and the **realm** of **his kingdom** was planet earth.

Adam and Eve's Garments

Genesis 2:25 explains that Adam and Eve were naked and were not ashamed. However, a closer look reveals that they were covered with glorious garments of light such as the angels wear.

Notice the following incisive comment by Ellen G. White:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 45: "The sinless pair wore no artificial garments; they were clothed with a covering of light and glory, such as the angels wear. So long as they lived in obedience to God, this robe of light continued to enshroud them."

Psalms 104:1-2: God is covered with a glorious robe of light and He created man to reflect His glory. As we shall see, the angels are also covered with glorious white garments of light.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, You are very great: You are clothed with honor and majesty, who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, who stretch out the heavens like a curtain."

In **Daniel 7:9** we are told that the garments of the Ancient of Days were as white as snow. God dwells in light unapproachable.

In **Revelation 12: 1** the glorious victorious church is garbed with the glorious light of the sun.

Adam was the Father and Representative of Planet Earth

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 48: "In Eden, God set up the memorial of His work of creation, in placing His blessing upon the seventh day. The Sabbath was committed to Adam, the father and representative of the whole human family."

This point is also made clear in the Bible. Even though Eve sinned first, Adam was held accountable by God. Jesus came to redeem the position that Adam lost, thus, Jesus is spoken of as the last Adam, not the second Eve! As the 'sons of God' were the representatives of the worlds, so Adam represented planet earth.

Beings Present in Revelation Four

Revelation 4 describes four orders of beings:

- One who is seated on the throne, God the Father (4:2).
- The seven spirits before the throne (4:5).
- The four living creatures or seraphim (4:6-8; Isaiah 6:1-3).
- The 24 elders (4:4).

Missing in chapter four are:

- The **angelic hosts**
- **Christ**

It is important to realize that the **twenty-four elders** were around the throne **before the arrival** of Jesus in chapter 5. This means that the 24 elders **cannot be** those who resurrected with Jesus because when Jesus arrived in heaven they **were already there!**

Beings Present in Revelation 5

All the beings in Revelation 4 are **present in Revelation 5** except the **Holy Spirit** who is sent to the earth.

But **Revelation 5** depicts **two additional** orders of being: The **the angelic hosts** and the **Lamb** who had just been slain and resurrected.

The Twenty Four Elders are Angelic

As we have seen, Ellen White in the book **The Great Controversy** indicates that the **sons of God** that are mentioned in the book of Job were **angels**. This harmonizes with Ellen White's view **elsewhere** that the representatives of the worlds are **powerful angels** or the **highest angels** to whom God has delegated the responsibility of **ruling over those worlds** and representing them in the **heavenly council**:

*The Great Controversy p. 518: "The Scriptures declare that upon one occasion, when the **angels of God** came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan came also among them (Job 1:6), not to bow before the Eternal King, but to further his own malicious designs against the righteous. With the same object he is in attendance when men assemble for the worship of God"*

We need to understand that in Revelation 5 the **regular angelic** host **is distinguished** from the 24 Elders. The 24 elders are not part of the regular angelic hosts:

Revelation 5:11-12

*"Then I looked, and I heard the voice of **many angels** around the **throne**, the **living creatures**, and **the elders**; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,¹² saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!"*

Characteristics of the 24 Elders

Revelation 4:4

“And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders.

Some have assumed that the characteristics of the twenty-four elders disqualify the possibility that they are angels. After all, the elders are described as rulers who:

- Are created beings (Revelation 4:10, 11).
- Sit on thrones, an indication that they are rulers.
- Have crowns on their heads, another indication that they are kings or rulers. And the word ‘crown’ is *stephanos*—the victor’s crown.
- Are robed in white garments of light.

But hasty conclusions are risky. Is it just possible that these characteristics fit the angels just as well as human beings?

Ellen White uses three expressions to describe the group of the 24 elders:

“The [1] commanders of the angel hosts, [2] the sons of God, the [3] representatives of the unfallen worlds [Revelation 4:4], are assembled. The heavenly council before which Lucifer had accused God and His Son, the representatives of those sinless realms over which Satan had thought to establish his dominion,—all are there to welcome the Redeemer.”

Angels are Created Beings

Colossians 1:16

“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.”

“Before men or angels were created, the Word was with God, and was God.” Review and Herald, April 5, 1906

Angels Wear Crowns

Much has been made of the use of the word stephanos to describe the crowns on the heads of the 24 elders. It is claimed that the word *stephanos* always refers to a victor’s crown and *diadema* describes the kingly crown. It is argued that since the angels have not gained the victory over sin, the twenty-four elders cannot be angels.

However, although the word *stephanos* is generally used to describe the crown of one who has gained a victory, there are exceptions.

Matthew 27:29 (see also, Mark 15:17; John 19:2):

“When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!”

Revelation 14:14

*“Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden **crown [stephanos]**, and in His hand a sharp sickle.”*

Also, **Ellen White** repeatedly emphasizes that the angels **wear crowns**. Here are some examples:

*Early Writings, p. 148: **When man sinned in the Garden:***

*“The news of man's fall spread through heaven. Every harp was hushed. The **angels cast their crowns** from their heads in sorrow.”*

*Early Writings, p. 167: **When Jesus suffered in Gethsemane we are told that:***

*“There was no joy in heaven. The **angels cast their crowns** and harps from them and with the deepest interest silently watched Jesus.”*

*Early Writings, p. 191: When Jesus **ascended to heaven:***

*“Then all the heavenly host surrounded their majestic Commander, and with the deepest adoration bowed before Him and **cast their glittering crowns** at His feet.”*

*Early Writings pp. 279, 280: At the **close of human probation:***

*“And all the angelic host **laid off their crowns** as Jesus made the solemn declaration, “He 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.”*

*Early Writings, p. 286: At the **second coming** of Jesus:*

*“A retinue of holy angels, with bright, **glittering crowns upon their heads**, escorted Him on His way. No language can describe the glory of the scene.”*

Angels Wear White Garments

In **Matthew 28:3** we are told that the garments of the angel that resurrected Jesus were as **white as snow**.

In **Acts 1:10** we are told that two angels clothed in **white garments** spoke to the disciples as Jesus **ascended to heaven**.

Early Writings, p. 181: The angel who came to resurrect Jesus: *“His face was like the lightning, and his **garments white as snow.**”*

Spirit of Prophecy, volume 3, pp. 200, 201: Angels at the tomb of Jesus: *“As she stood weeping, she stooped down to once more look into the sepulcher; and lo, there were two angels, clothed in **garments of white.**”*

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 45: Adam and Eve were robed as the angels: *“The sinless pair wore no artificial garments; they were clothed with a **covering of light and glory,** such as the **angels wear.**”*

Conclusion: In their state of innocence Adam and Eve were clothed with **white garments of light** and the angels, the **sons of God** wear white garments of light as well.

Ellen White Identifies the 24 Elders

In the last three pages of **The Desire of Ages 833-835**, Ellen White describes the **expectancy** of the heavenly beings as they **anticipate** the ascension of Jesus and the **exuberant joy** they experience as He **enters the gates** of the New Jerusalem. I have added some of my own comments in **brackets** to help identify the various beings that are present:

*“All heaven was waiting to welcome the Savior to the celestial courts. As **He ascended,** He led the way, and the **multitude of captives [notice that when Jesus arrives in heaven with the captives, the 24 elders are already there]** set free at His resurrection followed. The **heavenly host,** with shouts and acclamations of praise and celestial song, attended the joyous train.*

As they drew near to the city of God, the challenge is given by the escorting angels:

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates;

And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors;

And the King of glory shall come in.”

Joyfully the waiting sentinels respond:

“Who is this King of glory?”

This they say, not because they know not who He is, but because they would hear the answer of exalted praise:

“The Lord strong and mighty,

The Lord mighty in battle!

Lift up your heads, O ye gates;

Even lift them up, ye everlasting doors;

And the King of glory shall come in."

Again is heard the challenge, "Who is this King of glory?" for the angels never weary of hearing His name exalted. The escorting angels make reply:

"The Lord of hosts;

He is the King of glory." Ps. 24:7-10.

*Then the portals of the city of God are opened wide, and the **angelic throng** sweep through the gates amid a burst of rapturous music.*

*There is the **throne [Revelation 4:2]**, and around it the **rainbow** of promise **[Revelation 4:3]**. There are **cherubim and seraphim [Revelation 4:6-8]**. The **commanders** of the angel hosts, **the sons of God**, the **representatives of the unfallen worlds [Revelation 4:4]** are assembled. The **heavenly council** before which Lucifer had accused God and His Son, the **representatives** of those sinless realms over which Satan had thought to establish his dominion,--all are there to **welcome** the Redeemer. They are eager to celebrate His triumph and to glorify their King.*

*But He waves them back. Not yet; He cannot now receive the coronet of glory and the royal robe. He enters into the presence of His **Father [the one seated on the throne]**. He points to His wounded head, the pierced side, the marred feet; He lifts His hands, bearing the print of nails **[the lamb as though it had been slain]**. He points to the tokens of His triumph; He presents to God the wave sheaf, those raised with Him as representatives of that great multitude who shall come forth from the grave at His second coming **[the representatives of the worlds were already there when He presented the wave sheaf]**. He approaches the **Father [the one seated on the throne]**, with whom there is joy over one sinner that repents; who rejoices over one with singing. Before the foundations of the earth were laid, the Father and the Son had united in a covenant to redeem man if he should be overcome by Satan. They had clasped Their hands in a solemn pledge that Christ should become the surety for the human race. This pledge Christ has fulfilled. When upon the cross He cried out, "It is finished," He addressed the Father. The compact had been fully carried out. Now He declares: Father, it is finished. I have done Thy will, O My God. I have completed the work of redemption. If Thy justice is satisfied, "I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am." [The sealed book will reveal who will inherit with Jesus] John 19:30; 17:24*

*The voice of God is heard proclaiming that justice is satisfied. Satan is vanquished. Christ's toiling, struggling ones on earth are "accepted in the Beloved." Eph. 1:6. Before the **heavenly angels** and the **representatives of unfallen worlds [notice how the two groups are distinguished]**, they are declared justified. Where He is, there His church shall be. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Ps. 85:10. The*

*Father's arms encircle His Son, and the word is given, "Let all the angels of God worship Him."
Heb. 1:6.*

*With joy unutterable, rulers and principalities and powers acknowledge the supremacy of the Prince of life. The **angel host** prostrate themselves before Him, while the glad shout fills all the courts of heaven, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." **Rev. 5:12.***

*Songs of triumph mingle with the music from angel harps, till heaven seems to overflow with joy and praise. Love has conquered. The lost is found. Heaven rings with voices in lofty strains proclaiming: "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." **Rev. 5:13.***

Satan Missing in Heaven

In the heavenly celebration of Christ's return to heaven there was one **notable being absent: Satan**. As we have seen, Satan **represented planet earth** whenever a meeting of the heavenly council took place. **Why wasn't** Satan present on this glorious occasion? The reason is simple: At **the cross** Jesus **defeated Satan** and he **was cast out** from the heavenly council as the representative of this world.

In **John 12:31-33** Jesus predicted that the ruler of this world **would be cast out** when he was lifted up on the cross:

*"Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world **will be cast out**. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." This He said, signifying by **what death** He would die."*

And the inhabitants of heaven, **many years later** described the victory celebration that took place in heaven when Jesus died on the cross:

Revelation 12:10-12: *"Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, 'Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been **cast down**.'"*

Note: Satan **was cast out of heaven** at the cross as the representative of this world. **His place was taken** by the second Adam who defeated him on the battlefield where Adam lost.

Jesus, the New Representative

So Jesus is the new representative of the human race in the heavenly courts

Jesus is the Last Adam

Jesus is referred to in Scripture as **Adam** because He came to recover what Adam lost.

1 Corinthians 15:22: Jesus took the place of the first Adam.

*“For as in **Adam** all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”*

1 Corinthians 15:45

*“And so it is written: The **first man Adam** was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.”*

Romans 5:18

“Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”

Jesus is the Son of God

Luke 1:35: Jesus is the Son of God in a new sense at His incarnation. He was born into the human race. As man, God is His Father! In fact, the Father prepared a body for him (Hebrews 10:5). As man He was created like Adam was.

“And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

Selected Messages, volume 1, p. 226:

“He became the Son of God in a new sense. Thus He stood in our world--the Son of God, yet allied by birth to the human race.”

Jesus is King of the Kingdom of Grace

Hebrews 4:16

“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

God's Amazing Grace, p. 68: “The throne of grace represents the kingdom of grace; for the existence of a throne implies the existence of a kingdom.”

Acts of the Apostles, p. 38

“Christ's ascension to heaven was the signal that His followers were to receive the promised blessing. For this they were to wait before they entered upon their work. When Christ passed within the heavenly gates, He was enthroned amidst the adoration of the angels. As soon as this ceremony was completed, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in rich currents, and Christ was indeed glorified, even with the glory which He had with the Father from all eternity. The Pentecostal outpouring was Heaven's communication that the Redeemer's

inauguration was accomplished. According to His promise He had sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to His followers as a token that He had, as priest **and king**, received **all authority in heaven and on earth**, and was the Anointed One over His people.”

Jesus is the Head and Representative of Planet Earth

Psalm 8:3-5 in its **original context** is referring to the first Adam. But **Hebrews 2:5-9** applies this Psalm **to Jesus** who **took the place** of the original Adam

“For He has not put the world to come of which we speak, in subjection to angels. 6 But one testified in a certain place, saying: “What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? 7 You have made him a little lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. 8 You have put all things in subjection under his feet.” For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But **now we do not yet see** all things put under him. 9 But we see **Jesus**, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste **death for everyone**. “

Signs of the Times, June 11, 1894 “The human race does not stand in the righteousness of character which Adam possessed at his creation. Although neglect to keep the requirements of God is sin, and the wages of sin is death, yet there is no claim made that man may have eternal life except through the obedience and righteousness of Jesus Christ, who is the **representative and head** of all humanity.”

Signs of the Times, January 16, 1896: “Jesus humbled himself, clothing his divinity with humanity, in order that he might stand as the **head and representative** of the human family, and by both precept and example condemn sin in the flesh, and give the lie to Satan's charges.”

Manuscript 126, 1901: “As representative of the fallen race, Christ passed over the **same ground on which Adam stumbled** and fell. By a life of perfect obedience to God's law, Christ redeemed man from the penalty of Adam's disgraceful fall.” Ellen G. White,

The Gospel Herald, March 1, 1901. “Christ was to suffer in our behalf, standing at the head of humanity as **representative** of the race. He was to work out the character which every follower of His is to work out, through the provision He has made,--His infinite sacrifice, His life and death on earth.”

Will Adam Ever be placed on the Throne Again?

The Great Controversy, p. 647: “As the ransomed ones are welcomed to the City of God, there rings out upon the air an exultant cry of adoration. The two Adams are about to meet. The Son of God is standing with outstretched arms to receive the father of our race--the being whom He created, who sinned against his Maker, and for whose sin the marks of the crucifixion are borne upon the Savior's form. As Adam discerns the prints of the cruel nails, he does not fall upon the

bosom of his Lord, but in humiliation casts himself at His feet, crying: "Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain!" Tenderly the Savior lifts him up and bids him look once more upon the Eden home from which he has so long been exiled.

*After his expulsion from Eden, Adam's life on earth was filled with sorrow. Every dying leaf, every victim of sacrifice, every blight upon the fair face of nature, every stain upon man's purity, was a fresh reminder of his sin. Terrible was the agony of remorse as he beheld iniquity abounding, and, in answer to his warnings, met the reproaches cast upon himself as the cause of sin. With patient humility he bore, for nearly a thousand years, the penalty of transgression. Faithfully did he repent of his sin and trust in the merits of the promised Savior, and he died in the hope of a resurrection. The Son of God redeemed man's failure and fall; and now, through the work of the atonement, **Adam is reinstated in his first dominion.**"*

THE 24 ELDERS

LECTURE #5 - REDEEMED FROM THE EARTH?

A Process of Elimination (who the 24 elders are not)

- The 24 elders are not cherubim nor seraphim because these two groups are distinguished from the 24 elders (Revelation 4:4, 10).

Verse 4: *“Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.”*

- They are not part of the regular angelic hosts because the angelic hosts are clearly distinguished from them (**Revelation 5:11, 12**). As we have seen, the 24 elders were present in heaven (Revelation 4:4) before the angelic hosts arrived with Jesus.

“Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,¹² saying with a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

- They are not members of the unnumbered host of the redeemed. This is made evident by the fact that one of the elders asked John about the identity of the great multitude that no man could number ‘from every nation, kindred, people and tongue’ (Revelation 7:13, 14). It is rather obvious that the elder would not ask about the identity of the great multitude if he belonged to it.

“Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?” 14 And I said to him, “Sir, you know.”

Revelation 5:9, 10 seems to indicate that the elders sing the song of their redemption *“from every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”* But Revelation 7:13 distinguishes one of the elders from the great multitude that was redeemed from *“all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues.”* (Revelation 7:9). This clearly proves that the translation of Revelation 5:9, 10 in the King James Version is incorrect.

- The 24 elders are not part of the **144,000** because the 144,000 are distinguished from them (Revelation 14:3).

“They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.”

- The 24 elders are not those who will resurrect in the **special resurrection** (Daniel 12:2) just before the second coming because the 24 elders were already in heaven when Jesus ascended (Revelation 4:4)

“At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. ² And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

- The 24 elders are not those who will resurrect in the **general resurrection** nor those who will be **alive when Jesus comes** because they were in heaven when Jesus ascended (I Thessalonians 4:15-17).

“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

- The 24 elders are not those who **resurrected with Jesus** because the 24 elders were already there before Jesus arrived (Revelation 4:4).
- **Conclusion:** They are not members of the **regular angelic hosts** or of the **human family**. They must be **some other order** of being.

A Problem in Translation

How, then, do we explain **Revelation 5:8-10** where the 24 elders (only in the **KJV** and **NKJV**) appear to be singing the song of their **redemption** from “every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation?” Let’s take a look at the passage as it appears in the **King James Version**:

Revelation 5:8-10

*“And 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. And 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; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

Doesn't this passage explicitly state that the elders were redeemed from the earth, that they were made kings and priests and that they shall rule upon the earth? How then could they be strong or the highest of angels that represent other worlds in the heavenly council?

Before I answer this question I would like to share a word about the King James Version. I personally believe that the KJV is a very good translation. I believe that the manuscript trail that it comes from (the *Textus Receptus*) is also very good. But neither the manuscript trail nor the translation is perfect. The KJV is a reverent version which is written in beautiful Victorian English.

Having said this however, some people revere the KJV so much that they practically give the impression that it was verbally dictated by God! Anyone attempting to amend or change anything in the King James Version is accused of being an agent of the Jesuits. But the KJV translation is by no means perfect. For example, the much maligned NIV is much more accurate than the KJV when it translates texts that deal with the state of the dead.

Acts 2:25-27, KJV

“For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: ²⁶ Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: ²⁷ Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

Acts 2:25-27, NIV

“I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. ²⁶ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, ²⁷ because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.”

The simple fact is that the King James Version as well as the New King James Version has mistranslated Revelation 5:9, 10 and every modern translation has corrected the error. Notice the following translations:

This mistranslation is corrected in all reputable modern versions:

Revelation 5:9-10 (*New International Version*)

“And they sang a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.””

Revelation 5:9-10 (**New American Standard**)

“And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.’ ‘You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”

Revelation 5:9-10 (**Revised Standard Version**)

“. . . and they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth.""

Revelation 5:9-10 (**New English Bible**)

“. . . and they were singing a new song: ‘Thou art worthy to take the scroll and to break its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst purchase for God men of every tribe and language, people and nation; thou hast made of them a royal house, to serve our God as priests; and they shall reign upon earth.”

Revelation 5:9, 10 (**Weymouth Bible**)

“And now they sing a new song, saying, ‘Worthy art Thou to take the book and break its seals; because Thou hast been slain, and hast purchased for God with Thine own blood men out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and hast formed them into a kingdom to be priests to our God, and they shall reign over the earth.”

Revelation 5:9, 10 (**Phillips translation**)

“They sang a new song and these are the words they sang: ‘Worthy art thou to take the book and break its seals, for thou hast been slain and by thy blood hast purchased for God men from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation! Thou hast made them a kingdom of priests for our God, and they shall reign as kings upon the earth.”

Revelation 5:9, 10 (**Jerusalem Bible, Catholic**)

“They sang a new hymn: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and break the seals of it, because you were sacrificed, and with your blood you bought men for God of every race, language, people and nation and made them a line of kings and priests, to serve our God and to rule the world.”

Revelation 5:9, 10 (**The New American Bible, Catholic**)

“This is the new hymn they sang: ‘Worthy are you to receive the scroll and break open its seals, for you were slain. With your blood you purchased for God men of every race and tongue, of

every people and nation, you made of **them** a kingdom, and priests to serve our God, and **they** shall reign upon the earth.”

Revelation 5:9, 10 (*The Jewish New Testament*)

“. . . and they sang a new song, ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals; because you were slaughtered; at the cost of blood you ransomed for God **persons** from every tribe, language, people and nation. You made **them** into a kingdom for God to rule, cohanim [priests] to serve him; and **they** will rule over the earth.”

Why the elders cannot be human

- **First**, the elders were **already present** in the Father’s heavenly throne room before **Jesus arrived** so they cannot be those who resurrected with Him.
- **Second**, both the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders sang this song (Revelation 4:8). It is absolutely clear that the four living creatures (which we will shortly identify as seraphim) **were not redeemed** from among men and **will not reign** upon the earth.
- **Third**, the same group who were redeemed by the Lamb from every nation, tribe, tongue and people is **distinguished** from the elder who asked about their identity (Revelation 7:13-17)

“And **one of the elders** answered, saying unto me, what are **these** which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came **they**?¹⁴ And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, these are **they [not ‘we’]** that came out of great tribulation, and have washed **their [not ‘our’]** robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.¹⁵ Therefore are **they [not ‘are we’]** 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 [not ‘us’]**.¹⁶ **They [not ‘we’]** shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on **them, [not ‘us’]** nor any heat.¹⁷ For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed **them, [not ‘us’]** and shall lead **them [not ‘us’]** unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from **their [not ‘our’]** eyes.”

- **Finally**, Ellen White explicitly states that the 24 elders **are strong angels or the highest of angels**, not human beings

The Elders in the Rest of Revelation

Revelation 5:12, 13 points to a **future celebration** in heaven when the redeemed will be present because every creature on earth was not present there when the **song was first sung**.

The 24 elders are mentioned in **four other** passages in the book of Revelation. In each of these, with the **exception of 11:16** (which is describing the **close of probation**), the redeemed are present.

- **Revelation 7:13:** The elders in the context of **future victory** (throne [7:9], Lamb [7:9], four living creatures [7:11], 24 elders [7:11], angels [7:11] the redeemed [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,¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, saying: “Salvation belongs to our **God** who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”¹¹ **All the angels** stood around the throne and the **elders** and the **four living creatures**, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,¹² saying: “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”*

- **Revelation 11:15, 16:** The elders in the context of **the close of probation so the multitude is not yet there** (Lord [11:15], Christ [11:15], elders [11:16], angelic hosts [11:15]).

“Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying: “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!”

- **Revelation 14:1-4:** The elders in the context of **future victory** (throne [14:3], Lamb [14:1], four living creatures [14:3], 24 elders [14:3], 144, 000 redeemed from the earth [14:1]).

*“Then I looked, and behold, a **Lamb** standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His **Father's** name written on their foreheads.² And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of **many waters**, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps.³ They sang as it were a new song before the **throne**, before the **four living creatures**, and the **elders**; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.”*

- **Revelation 19:9:** The elders in the context of **future victory** (throne [19:4], Christ [Lamb [19:9], four living creatures [19:4], 24 elders [19:4], angels [19:1], multitude of the redeemed [19:6]).

Notice the following chart that describes the beings that are present in Revelation 4, 5, 7 and 19:

Parallels between Revelation 4, 5, 7, 19

Revelation 4

Father (4:2)
24 Elders (4:4)
4 Living Creatures (4:6-7)
Seven Spirits before the throne (4:5)

Revelation 5

Father (5:1)
24 Elders (5:6)
4 Living Creatures (5:6)
Seven Spirits sent to earth (5:6)
Lamb (5:6)
Angelic Hosts (5:11)

Revelation 7

Father (7:10)
24 Elders (7:11)
4 Living Creatures (7:11)
Work finished
Lamb (7:10, 17)
Angels (7:11)
Great multitude (7:9)

Revelation 19

God (19:4)
24 Elders (19:4)
4 Living Creatures (19:4)
Work finished
Lamb (19:7, 9)
Angels (19:6)
Great Multitude (19:1, 6)

Words of Explanation:

- It will be noticed that in **Revelation 4** the Father, the elders, the four living creatures and the seven Spirits are present but **Jesus, the angelic hosts** and the **great multitude** are **absent**.
- In **Revelation 5** the **angelic hosts** and the **Lamb** are added and the **seven Spirits** are **sent** to the earth. The **great multitude is missing** in chapter 5.
- In **Revelation 11:16** the **great multitude is missing** because this verse is describing the **close of probation** and the great multitude is not yet in heaven.
- Finally, in **Revelation 7 and 19** the great multitude of the redeemed **join the scene**.

A careful analysis of the hymns reveals that in:

- **Chapter 4** the motivation for singing is **creation**.
- **Chapter 5** the motivation is **redemption**.
- **Chapters 7 and 19** the motivation is **deliverance** in the final crisis. This can be seen in **Revelation 7:10** where salvation from annihilation in the great tribulation is the motivation and in **Revelation 19:1, 2** where God's people have been delivered from the great harlot and are rejoicing because the marriage of the Lamb has come. The songs by the elders, the four living creatures have faded from view and now the **redeemed are the singers**.

The Final Celebration

Luke 15:4-7: The final celebration spoken of in Revelation 5:12, 13 is described in the parable of the lost sheep:

*“What man of you, having a **hundred sheep**, if he loses **one of them [this sinful world]**, does not **leave the ninety-nine** in the wilderness **[the sinless worlds]**, and go after **[Jesus coming down to this earth]** the one which is lost until he finds it? ⁵ And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, **rejoicing**. ⁶ And when he **comes home [the return of Jesus to heaven]** he calls together his friends and neighbors **[the angels and the representatives of the sinless worlds]**, saying to them, **'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!'** ⁷ I say to you that*

likewise there **will be** more **joy** in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”

Ellen White has made it crystal clear that this parable has a broader meaning than is generally understood:

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 190, 191: “By the lost sheep Christ represents not only the **individual sinner** but the **one world** that has apostatized and has been ruined by sin. **This world** is but an atom in the vast dominions over which God presides, yet **this little fallen world--the one lost sheep**--is more precious in His sight than are the ninety and nine that went not astray from the fold. **Christ, the loved Commander** in the heavenly courts, **stooped** from His high estate, laid aside the glory that He had with the Father, in order to save the **one lost world**. For this He left the sinless worlds on high, the ninety and nine that loved Him, and came to this earth, to be “wounded for our transgressions” and “bruised for our iniquities.” (Isa. 53:5.) God gave Himself in His Son that He **might have the joy of receiving back the sheep that was lost.**”

At the second coming

The **Father** (Acts 3:20), the **cherubim and seraphim**, the **representatives of the worlds** that never sinned, the **Holy Spirit** will all be in heaven with the **throne room prepared** for the arrival of Jesus with all of the **redeemed from all ages**.

Jesus will **leave heaven** with **all of the holy angels** on route to planet earth to pick up His people from all ages. The **sampling** of the first-fruits that Jesus presented **before His Father** upon His ascension will now translate into the **abundant harvest** of all of the redeemed from **all ages**. When Jesus nears the city with His people, once again the hymn of **Psalm 24** will be sung. Jesus will then enter through the gates with His people in the midst of an **explosion of praise**.

The Father will remain in heaven when Jesus comes to get us:

“The sacrifice of our Savior has made ample provision for every repenting, believing soul. We are saved because God loves the purchase of the blood of Christ; and not only will He pardon the repentant sinner, not only will He permit him to enter heaven, but He, the Father of mercies, **will wait at the very gates of heaven to welcome us**, to give us an abundant entrance to the mansions of the blest. Oh, what love, what wondrous love the Father has shown in the gift of His beloved Son for this fallen race! And this Sacrifice is a channel for the outflow of His infinite love, that all who believe on Jesus Christ may, like the prodigal son, receive full and free restoration to the favor of Heaven (RH Sept. 21, 1886). {7BC 950.7}

THE 24 ELDERS

LECTURE #6 - FUTURE HISTORY AND FUNCTIONS

The Little Apocalypse

Isaiah 24-27 has been called by theologians 'the little apocalypse because it has many elements in common with the book of Revelation, particularly the last three chapters.

A Global Cataclysmic Catastrophe

Isaiah 24:1-4: The prophet Isaiah described the cataclysmic events that will occur at the second coming of Jesus.

"Behold, the LORD makes the earth empty and makes it waste, distorts its surface and scatters abroad its inhabitants. And it shall be: as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the creditor, so with the debtor. The land shall be entirely emptied and utterly plundered, for the LORD has spoken this word. The earth mourns and fades away, the world languishes and fades away; the haughty people of the earth languish."

Frederick Moriarty comments regarding this passage:

Frederick Moriarty, The Jerome Biblical Commentary, volume 1, p. 277:

"God's word had once established order in the world (Genesis 1); the picture is that of a return to primeval chaos."

Isaiah 24:18-20

"And it shall be that he who flees from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit, and he who comes up from the midst of the pit shall be caught in the snare; for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth are shaken.¹⁹ The earth is violently broken, the earth is split open; the earth is shaken exceedingly.²⁰ The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall totter like a hut; its transgression shall be heavy upon it, and it will fall, and not rise again."

Note: One is reminded of **Revelation 6:15-17** where the wicked are depicted as **hiding in the caves** and crying for the **rocks to fall** on them. Another passage which comes to mind is **Revelation 16:17-21** where a global earthquake is described in conjunction with Christ's second coming

How Many are Left?

Isaiah 24:6:

*"Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and **few men** are **left**."*

Genesis 7:22, 23:

*"So He destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground: Both man and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air. They were destroyed from the earth. Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark **remained** alive."*

Genesis 7:23: ESV: "Only Noah was **left**, and those who were with him in the ark."

1 Peter 3:20

*"... in which **a few**, that is, **eight persons**, were brought safely through water."*

Heavenly Hosts and Kings of the Earth Punished

Isaiah 24:21: **Two groups** punished at the second coming.

*"It shall come to pass in that day that the LORD **will punish** on high the host of **exalted ones**, and on the earth **the kings of the earth**."*

Isaiah 24:21, RSV

*"In that day the Lord will punish the **powers in the heavens** above and the kings on the **earth below**."*

Note: Two groups are punished when Jesus comes. The first is a **heavenly group** and the second is an **earthly group**. We know who the kings of the earth are but who are the hosts of heaven?

Ephesians 6:12:

*"For we do not wrestle against **flesh and blood** but against **principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness** of this age, against **spiritual hosts** of wickedness in the **heavenly places**."*

Note: In Scripture the **heavenly hosts are angels** (see II Chronicles 18:18; Luke 2:13, 14). The expression "**flesh and blood**" refers to human beings (Hebrews 2:14). The apostle

Paul makes it clear that we are not warring against human **beings** but against **heavenly powers**. Elsewhere the apostle Paul calls Satan “*the prince of the power of the air.*” (Ephesians 2:2). The host of heaven here refers to **Satan and his angels**.

Revelation 19:19: The **kings of the earth** are also punished.

*“And I saw the beast, the **kings of the earth**, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.”*

What will be the punishment of the heavenly host and the kings of the earth?

Isaiah 24:22, first part:

*“They will be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in **the pit**, and will be shut up in **the prison**”*

Where was **Joseph cast** by his brothers when he arrived in **Dothan**?

Genesis 37:24:

*“Then they took him and cast him **into a pit** and the pit was empty; there was no water in it.”*

Where did Jeremiah’s **enemies** cast him?

Jeremiah 38:6

*“So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the **dungeon** of Malchiah the king's son, which was in the **court of the prison**, and they let Jeremiah down with ropes. And in the **dungeon** there was no water, but mire. So Jeremiah sank in the mire.”*

Note: Both Joseph and Jeremiah were cast into **cisterns in a living state**. The word “pit” in Genesis and “dungeon” in Jeremiah, translates the **identical Hebrew word**. It is noteworthy that the pit was a place of **temporary confinement** until a **final decision** could be made on what to do with them.

But is the pit **only a place** of confinement for the living?

Isaiah 38:18:

*“For **Sheol** cannot thank You, **death** cannot praise You; those who go down to **the pit** cannot hope for Your truth.”*

Note: The pit is not only a place of confinement for the living. The word is also used **synonymously with death** and **the grave**. We shall see in a moment that **Satan and his angels** will be confined to the abyss in a **living state** while the **kings of the earth** will be confined there while they **are dead**.

Where will Satan be cast for a thousand years immediately after the second coming of Jesus?

Revelation 20:2, 3:

*“He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and **bound** him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless **pit [abussos]**, and **shut him up**, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.”*

What condition will the **wicked followers** of Satan be in during the Millennium?

Revelation 20:5:

*“But the **rest of the dead** did not live again until the thousand years were finished.”*

How long will Satan, his angels and the kings of the earth be imprisoned in the pit?

Isaiah 24:22, last part:

*“**After many days** they will be **punished**.”*

Note: A careful reading of Isaiah 24:21, 22 clearly reveals that the punishment of Satan and the wicked kings of the earth will be meted out in **two distinct stages**. The first stage will **imprison them for many days** (Revelation’s Millennium) after which they will be **finally and definitively punished**.

New Jerusalem Descends

The New Jerusalem will come down from heaven after the “many days”.

Revelation 21:2:

“Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

The Sun and the Moon

Isaiah 24:23: Notice what will happen with the moon and the sun after the city descends:

*“Then the **moon** will be disgraced and the **sun** ashamed; for the LORD of hosts **will reign** on Mount Zion and in **Jerusalem** and **before His elders**, gloriously.”*

Revelation 21:23:

*“The **city** had **no need** of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the **glory of God** illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.”*

Note: The text does not say that there will **not be** any sun or moon in the new heavens and the new earth. After all, there will be **monthly** and **weekly cycles** there (see Isaiah 66:22, 23; Revelation 22:2). What we are told is that the **city** has no **need** of sun or moon. The light of the sun and moon will be like the light of a **flashlight at high noon**.

Satan, his Angels and the Wicked Finally Punished

Revelation 20:7-9:

“Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. ⁹ They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.”

Note: The rest of the dead **now live** (Revelation 20:5) and Satan has his power base back. Notice that the identical word “**prison**” is explicitly used here as it was **in Isaiah 24:22**. Satan and the wicked now suffer the **second and final stage** of their punishment.

Life Ever After

Revelation 21:1:

“Now I saw a new heavens and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.”

What will God do when He has eradicated sin from the universe?

Revelation 21:4:

“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more pain, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more death, for the former things have passed away.”

Isaiah 25:8:

“He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken.”

Isaiah 24:23: The Lord will reign **before His elders** gloriously.

*“Then the **moon** will be disgraced and the **sun** ashamed; for the LORD of hosts **will reign** on Mount Zion and in **Jerusalem** and **before His elders**, gloriously.”*

Number 24 is Symbolic

*“God has **worlds upon worlds** that are obedient to his law. These worlds are conducted with reference to the glory of the Creator. As the inhabitants of these worlds see the great price*

that has been paid to ransom man, they are filled with amazement. With intense interest they watch the controversy between Christ and Satan; and as this controversy progresses, and the glory of God shines brighter and brighter, they give praise to God.” RH, September 25, 1900

Church in Heaven and Earth

“The church of God below is **one** with the church of God above. Believers on the earth and the beings in heaven who have never fallen constitute **one church**. Every heavenly intelligence is interested in the assemblies of the saints who on earth meet to worship God. In the **inner court of heaven** they listen to the testimony of the witnesses for Christ in the **outer court on earth**, and the praise and thanksgiving from the worshipers below is taken up in the heavenly anthem, and praise and rejoicing sound through the heavenly courts because Christ has not died in vain for the fallen sons of Adam. While angels drink from the fountainhead, the saints on earth drink of the pure streams flowing from the throne, the streams that make glad the city of our God.” Counsels to the Church, pp. 240, 241

The heavenly hosts **have ranks**. There are Michael the archangel, cherubim, seraphim, tall commanding angels, strong angels and the highest of angels. Colossians 1 speaks of these orders of being in the heavenly universe:

Colossians 1:16

“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether **thrones** or **dominions** or **principalities** or **powers**.”

“With joy unutterable, **rulers** and **principalities** and **powers** acknowledge the supremacy of the Prince of life.” DA, p. 834

Satan’s Organizational System

Satan has copied God’s organizational system and also has his council of angels that he gathers together to strategize:

Ephesians 6:12

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against **principalities**, against **powers**, against the **rulers** of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places”

Colossians 2:15

“Having disarmed **principalities** and **powers**, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.”

Command to Appoint Elders

Titus 1:5: Paul commanded Titus to appoint elders in every city

*“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should **set in order** the things that are lacking, and **appoint elders** in **every city** as I commanded you.”*

Elders are Rulers and Overseers

Numbers 11:16, 17

“So the Lord said to Moses: “Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you. ¹⁷ Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone.”

*“Later, when choosing seventy **elders** to share with him the responsibilities of **leadership**, Moses was careful to select, as his helpers, **men** possessing dignity, sound judgment, and experience. In his charge to these **elders** at the time of their **ordination**, he outlined some of the qualifications that fit a **man** to be a **wise ruler** in the church.” AA, p. 94*

1 Timothy 5:17

*“Let the **elders** [**the previous verse is speaking of the church**] who **rule** [**be at the head of or manage**] well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.”*

1 Timothy 3:4, 5

*The bishop or overseer must be “one who **rules** his own house well, having his children in **submission** with all reverence ⁵ (for if a man does not know how to **rule** his own house, how will he **take care** of the church of God?)”.*

Elders Gather in Council

Acts 15:6

*“Now the **apostles and elders** came together to consider this matter.”*

Acts 16:4-5

*“And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the **decrees** to keep, which were determined by the **apostles and elders** at Jerusalem. ⁵ So the **churches** were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.”*

*“The **order** that was maintained in the early Christian church made it possible for them to move forward solidly as a **well-disciplined** army clad with the armor of God. The companies of believers, though scattered over a large territory, were all members of one body; all moved in concert and in harmony with one another. When dissension arose in a local church, as later it did arise in Antioch and elsewhere, and the believers were unable to come to an agreement among themselves, such matters were not permitted to create a division in the church, but were referred to **a general council** of the **entire body of believers**, made up of **appointed delegates** from the **various local churches**, with the **apostles and elders** in positions of leading responsibility. Thus the efforts of Satan to attack the church in isolated places were met by concerted action on the part of all, and the plans of the enemy to disrupt and destroy were thwarted.” AA, p. 95*

- They are **rulers and overseers**.
- They are **representatives**.
- They attend to deliberate **in council**.
- They are **administrators** of a section of the church.

Don't forget to add here that the angels offer the prayers of the saints. They ascend and descend on the ladder and are the angels embroidered on the veil.



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