

# Questions About the 24 Elders in Revelation

By Pastor Ed Anderson

Who are the 24 elders mentioned in Revelation 5? Are they higher ranking angels?

## Answer:

This is a deep and fascinating question! The **24 Elders** appear multiple times in the Book of Revelation, seated around God’s throne and playing a key role in the heavenly worship scene. There are three main interpretive options regarding their identity:

### THREE MAJOR VIEWS ON THE 24 ELDERS

View	Summary	Key Support
1. Redeemed Humans	The elders are glorified saints, possibly the first fruits of the resurrection (e.g., those raised with Christ).	They wear white robes and crowns — typical of overcomers (Rev. 4:4, 3:5, 2:10).
2. Angels	The elders are high-ranking angels, possibly a distinct class who advise and serve God.	Their function around the throne may resemble divine council imagery (e.g., 1 Kings 22:19).
3. Rulers of Unfallen Worlds	The elders are representatives of unfallen worlds — rulers or “sons of God” who represent their planets before God.	Job 1–2, Revelation 4, and Ellen White’s insights support this.

Let’s now focus deeply on **Option 3: Rulers of Unfallen Worlds** — and present a compelling biblical and Spirit of Prophecy case.

### OPTION 3: 24 ELDERS AS RULERS OF UNFALLEN WORLDS

## BIBLICAL EVIDENCE

### 1. Job 1:6 & 2:1 – The “Sons of God” Gather Before God

“Now there was a day when the *sons of God* came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.” — *Job 1:6*

- These are **not angels**, as Satan is distinguished from them.
- Ellen White indicates this was a **heavenly council** — representatives of other worlds.
- The gathering parallels the **heavenly throne scene** in Revelation 4–5.

### 2. Revelation 4:4 – 24 Elders Around the Throne

“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.”

- “Thrones” imply **rulership** — they are kings of some kind (Rev. 5:10).
- “Crowns” (Greek: *stephanos*) signify victory or authority.
- “White robes” are granted to the righteous — but also to **holy beings** in heaven (not necessarily resurrected).

### 3. 1 Corinthians 4:9 – “We are made a spectacle...”

“We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.”

- Greek: *theatron* — meaning “theater” to the cosmos.
- There are **intelligent watchers** beyond Earth — likely including these 24 elders.

### 4. Daniel 7:9-10 – Thrones Cast Down, Judgment Set

“I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit...”

- Thrones (plural) appear **before** the judgment.
- Revelation echoes this throne room where **elders are already seated** — implying **they are part of the investigative process**, as **representative witnesses**.

## 5. Revelation 5:8-10 – Elders Have Harps and Bowls

“...the 24 elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.”

- They **interact with prayers**, suggesting mediation or representative function.

### ELLEN WHITE SUPPORT

#### Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 36

“The council in heaven, the assembly of the holy ones, from the representatives of the unfallen worlds, the sons of God, the heavenly intelligences...”

She identifies “**sons of God**” as **representatives of unfallen worlds** — clearly separate from angels.

#### Desire of Ages, p. 834

“As representatives of the worlds unfallen, they had witnessed the controversy from the beginning...”

She speaks of **beings who watched the Plan of Redemption** unfold — these would likely be the same elders.

#### Early Writings, p. 39

“I saw a throne, and on it sat the Father and the Son... and the 24 elders were around them.”

She places the 24 elders in close connection with the Godhead in the **heavenly sanctuary scene**, aligned with **heavenly watchers or governors**.

### LOGICAL CONSISTENCY

- God governs a **vast universe**. Would He not have **appointed rulers** (non-fallen beings) over other worlds?
- Just as Adam was Earth's representative (and forfeited it to Satan), so unfallen worlds likely have representatives — and these may be the **24 elders**.
- The 24 may be **symbolic** of totality (as 12 x 2) — indicating **complete representation** (12 tribes + 12 apostles = fullness of God's people).

## COUNTERPOINTS ADDRESSED

### But... Don't the Elders Sing About Being Redeemed?

"Thou... hast redeemed us to God..." — *Revelation 5:9 (KJV)*

- The earliest manuscripts actually read:  
"You have redeemed **people** from every nation..." — indicating they are **speaking on behalf of** the redeemed, **not of themselves**.
- Thus, the elders act as **representatives**, not necessarily participants in redemption.

## ANY OTHER PARALLELS?

- **Ezekiel's vision** of heavenly beings and wheels within wheels suggests a **cosmic government** with watchers and layers of intelligent authority (Ezekiel 1).
- The **divine council** appears throughout Scripture (e.g., Psalm 82:1; 1 Kings 22) — a heavenly structure for governing moral beings across creation.

## FINAL THOUGHT

The **24 elders as rulers of unfallen worlds** offers the strongest harmony between:

- The **heavenly council** in Job
- The **governing thrones** in Daniel
- The **watchers** of Earth's redemption in Revelation
- Ellen White's language about **representative beings** witnessing the controversy

They remind us that our planet is not alone. Earth is the **battlefield**, but the universe is watching — and heaven's government is invested in the outcome of the great controversy.

“We are made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men.” — *1 Corinthians 4:9*