

Fulfilled Prophecies

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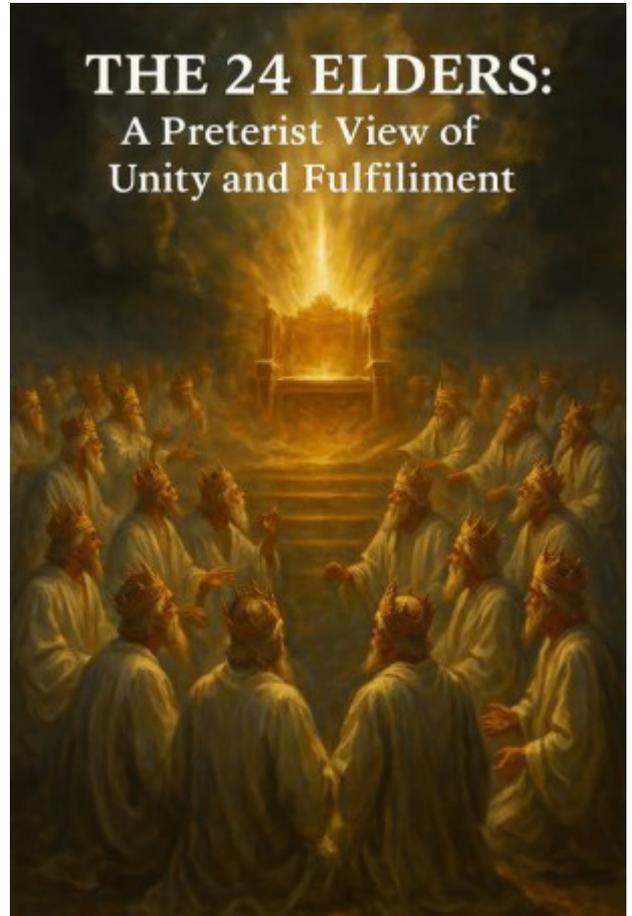
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24 Elders: A Preterist View of Unity and Fulfillment



By Dan Maines

The 24 Elders: A Preterist View of Unity and Fulfillment

Revelation gives us a powerful picture of worship, dominion, and fulfillment. One of the most intriguing symbols in the heavenly scene is the 24 elders seated around the throne. Many speculate about who they are, but from a fulfilled perspective, we can clearly see what they represent, and why that matters to us now.

The Identity of the 24 Elders

As a Preterist, I understand the book of Revelation as symbolic prophecy written to first-century believers, pointing to events soon to come upon them (Revelation 1:1, 3). So the elders must have had meaning to the original audience, not just some future generation thousands of years later. I believe these 24 elders represent the complete covenant people of God, those under the Old Covenant and those under the New.

Twelve elders signify the twelve patriarchs of Israel, representing the tribes of the Old Covenant. The other twelve represent the twelve apostles, who are the foundation of the New Covenant church. Together, they form one unified people in Christ. This is supported directly in Revelation:

Revelation 21:12 "It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on the gates, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel."

Revelation 21:14 "And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

This is the final picture of the covenant fulfilled and unified. No longer is there a division between Jew and Gentile, between old and new. Christ has made them one. The 24 elders show this complete unity and covenantal fulfillment.

The Elders' Appearance and Role

The elders are shown clothed in white garments and wearing golden crowns:

Revelation 4:4 "Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads."

White garments represent the righteousness of the saints, God's people who have been made clean. Compare that to:

Revelation 19:8 "It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."

This shows us that the elders are righteous and purified, redeemed, not angelic beings. They are seated on thrones because they reign with Christ. They wear crowns because they have overcome.

Crowns are only promised to believers:

Crown of rejoicing, 1 Thessalonians 2:19

Crown of righteousness, 2 Timothy 4:8

Crown of life, James 1:12, Revelation 2:10, 3:11

Crown of glory, 1 Peter 5:4

These are not given to angels but to those in Christ. In Revelation 4:10, these elders cast their crowns before the throne:

Revelation 4:10 "The twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and they will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying..."

This shows their humility and full submission. Even after receiving their reward, they acknowledge that it is all from God.

They Represent the Redeemed

The 24 elders are not silent. They sing and speak as representatives of those redeemed by the blood of the Lamb:

Revelation 5:8-9 "When He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb... and they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are You to take the scroll and to break its seals; for You were slaughtered, and You purchased people for God with Your blood from every tribe, language, people, and nation.'"

This confirms they speak on behalf of the redeemed, those who have been purchased by Christ.

A Picture of Covenant Fulfillment

Scripture says the old covenant was passing away, and the new was being established:

Hebrews 8:13 "When He said, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is about to disappear."

The elders represent that fulfilled picture, those of the old and new now united. Paul also affirms this union:

Ephesians 2:14-16 "For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall... so that in Himself He might make the two one new person, in this way establishing peace."

The Preterist Context Matters

The timing statements in Revelation must not be ignored:

Revelation 1:1 "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must

soon take place..."

Revelation 1:3 "Blessed is the one who reads, and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written in it, for the time is near."

This tells us that the vision of the elders is not for some distant future, but for the early church. These elders pictured the reality already forming in the first century as the kingdom was being fully revealed.

Conclusion

The 24 elders in Revelation are not future rulers or mysterious angelic beings. They represent the totality of God's covenant people, now united in Christ. Their robes and crowns show they have overcome. Their worship reveals humility. Their presence in the heavenly throne room proves the covenant has been fulfilled.

We are not waiting for this reality. We are living in the fulfillment.

Let us walk as those who have overcome. Let us wear the crown of righteousness, not with pride, but in worship. Let us be the New Jerusalem, holy, unified, and shining with His glory.

Amen.

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