

# Secrets Unsealed



## THE TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS

By Stephen Bohr

### 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?*

NKJV

**Conclusions:** There were **two groups** that sang at creation: The **morning stars** and the **sons of God**. Thus it is clear that the two groups of beings **already existed** before God created this world.

### Identity of the Morning Stars

Revelation 12:3, 9 identifies the stars as **angels**. But who are the sons of God?

### The Sons of God

#### Job 1:6, 7:

*"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?

## **Job 2:1, 2:**

*"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."*

**Note:** The same remarks about Job 1:6, 7 apply to Job 2:1, 2. The word "again" 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.

According to the Spirit of Prophecy, the 24 elders are **powerful angels** to whom God has delegated the responsibility of being **representatives of the worlds** that never sinned. Notice the following statements:

*"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]." Manuscript Releases, volume 12, pp. 296, 297*

In its original Biblical context the words of verse 5 are spoken by one of the twenty-four elders but Ellen White identifies the elder as 'one of the strong angels.'

*"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." Signs of the Times, December 22, 1887*

In its original Biblical context it is one of the elders who asks these questions but Ellen White identifies the asker as **the angel**. The inevitable conclusion is that the elder who is speaking is a powerful angel.

*"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." Sermons and Talks, volume 1, p. 20*

*"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." Signs of the Times, November 22, 1905*

On **Revelation 5:8** Ellen White remarks:

*“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. . .”* LHU 370

## **Why Was Satan Among 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 by 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**)

For additional evidence that the universe is governed by a heavenly council see **2 Chronicles 18:18-22**.

## **Adam: The Original Son of God**

### **God’s original plan for the human race:**

*“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.”* Sons and Daughters of God, p. 7

*“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.”* Prophet and Kings, pp. 588, 589

*“God created man for His own glory that after test and trial the human family might become one with the heavenly family. It was God’s purpose to **repopulate heaven** with the human family.” The Truth about Angels, pp. 48, 49*

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

### **Luke 3:38: The Son of God**

*“. . . the son of Enosh, 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**:

*“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.” Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 45.*

**Conclusion:** The original “son of God” 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**.

### **Adam Crowned at Creation**

**Psalm 8:3-8:** At creation Adam was **crowned** and given his **realm of dominion** (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. Thus the Psalmist is saying that the entire planet was under the dominion of Adam who was the king.

Ellen White amplifies this thought:

*“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.” Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, February 24, 1874.*

**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. A closer look reveals that they were covered with glorious **garments of light**.

## **Psalms 104:1-2:**

*“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 **Revelation 12: 1** the true church is garbed with the glorious light of the sun. In **Matthew 17** the raiment of Jesus is spoken of as being **white as the light**.

Notice the following incisive comment by Ellen G. White:

*“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.”* Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 45.

**Conclusion:** Adam and Eve were clothed with white garments of light.

## **Adam was the Father and Representative of Planet Earth**

*“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**.”* Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 48.

This point is also made clear in the Bible. Even though Eve sinned first, Adam was held accountable by God. Thus, Jesus is the second Adam, not the second Eve!

## **The Context of Revelation Four and Five**

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); and the **24 elders** (4:4). **Missing** in chapter four are the angelic hosts and 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!

Revelation 5 depicts two other additional orders of being: The **angels** who arrived with the **Lamb** who had just been slain and resurrected.

## **Who are the Twenty-four Elders?**

Ellen White in the book *The Great Controversy* indicates that the sons of God in Job were angels. This harmonizes with Ellen White’s view elsewhere that the representatives of the worlds are powerful angels to whom God has delegated the responsibility of representing these worlds. We need to understand that in Revelation 5 the angelic host is distinguished from the 24 Elders:

*“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”* p. 518

## **Revelation 4:4**

*“And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders **sitting**, clothed in **white raiment**; and they had on their heads **crowns** of gold.”*

- They are seated on **thrones**, therefore they are **rulers**. But where are they rulers?
- They have **crowns** on their heads, they are **kings** (Though generally the word *stefanos* is used to describe the crown one who has gained a victory, there are exceptions. See for example Matthew 27:29; Mark 15:17; John 19:2; Revelation 14:14)
- They are **robed** in **white** garments of **light**
- They are **creatures** (Revelation 4:10, 11)

## **Ellen White Identifies the 24 Elders**

*“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 these arrive in heaven with Jesus while the 24 elders were 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. 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, 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.** The Desire of Ages, pp. 833-835

## **Satan Missing in Heaven**

But there is one who is **missing** in this heavenly celebration: Satan. Normally Satan would have been there representing planet earth. Why wasn't Satan present on this occasion? In **John 12:31-33** Jesus predicted that the ruler of this world would be cast out at 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 latter described the victory celebration that took place in heaven when Jesus died on the cross:

*“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**. 11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. 12 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.’”*

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 recovered what the first Adam lost.

## **Jesus is the Son of God**

**Luke 1:35:** Jesus is the Son of God in a new sense at His incarnation

*“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.”*

## **Jesus is the Last Adam**

**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 King 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.** “

“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.” Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, June 11, 1894.

“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.” Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, January 16, 1896.

“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, Manuscript 126, 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.” Ellen G. White, The Gospel Herald, March 1, 1901.

## **Will Adam Ever be placed on the Throne Again?**

“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 Great Controversy, p. 647.

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

- 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). It is rather obvious that the elder would not ask about the identity of the great multitude if he belonged to it.

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)
- 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)
- The 24 elders are not those who will resurrect in the **general resurrection** because they were in heaven when Jesus ascended (I Thessalonians 4:15-17)
- 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 neither **angelic** nor **human**. 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 (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 representatives from other worlds?

Before I answer this question I would like to share a word about the King James Version. I personally believe that the KJV is an excellent translation. It 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.

The simple fact is that the 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, this song was sung by **both** the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders (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.
- Finally, 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 7:9, 11, 12)

## **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, 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])
- **Revelation 11:16:** The elders in the context of future victory (Lord [11:15], Christ [11:15], elders [11:16], angelic hosts [11:15]).
- **Revelation 14:3:** 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])
- **Revelation 19:1, 2:** 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	Revelation 5	Revelation 7	Revelation 19
Father (4:2)	Father (5:1)	Father (7:10)	God (19:4)
24 Elders (4:4)	24 Elders (5:6)	24 Elders (7:11)	Elders (19:4)
4 Living Creatures (4:6-7)	4 Living Creatures (5:6)	4 Living Creatures (7:11)	4 Living Creatures (19:4)
Seven Spirits (4:5)	Seven Spirits Sent (5:6)	Work finished	Work finished
	Lamb (5:6)	Lamb (7:10, 17)	Lamb (19:7, 9)
	Angelic Hosts (5:11)	Angels (7:11)	Angels (19:6)
		Great multitude (7:9)	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 angels 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. 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**. In chapter 5 the motivation is **redemption**. But in 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 final celebration in 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:**

*"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.** Christ's Object Lessons, p. 190, 191*