

THE 24 ELDERS: IDENTIFICATION AND FUNCTION

(Re.4:4, 10-11;
5:8-10; 19:4)

ABOUT THE ELDERS

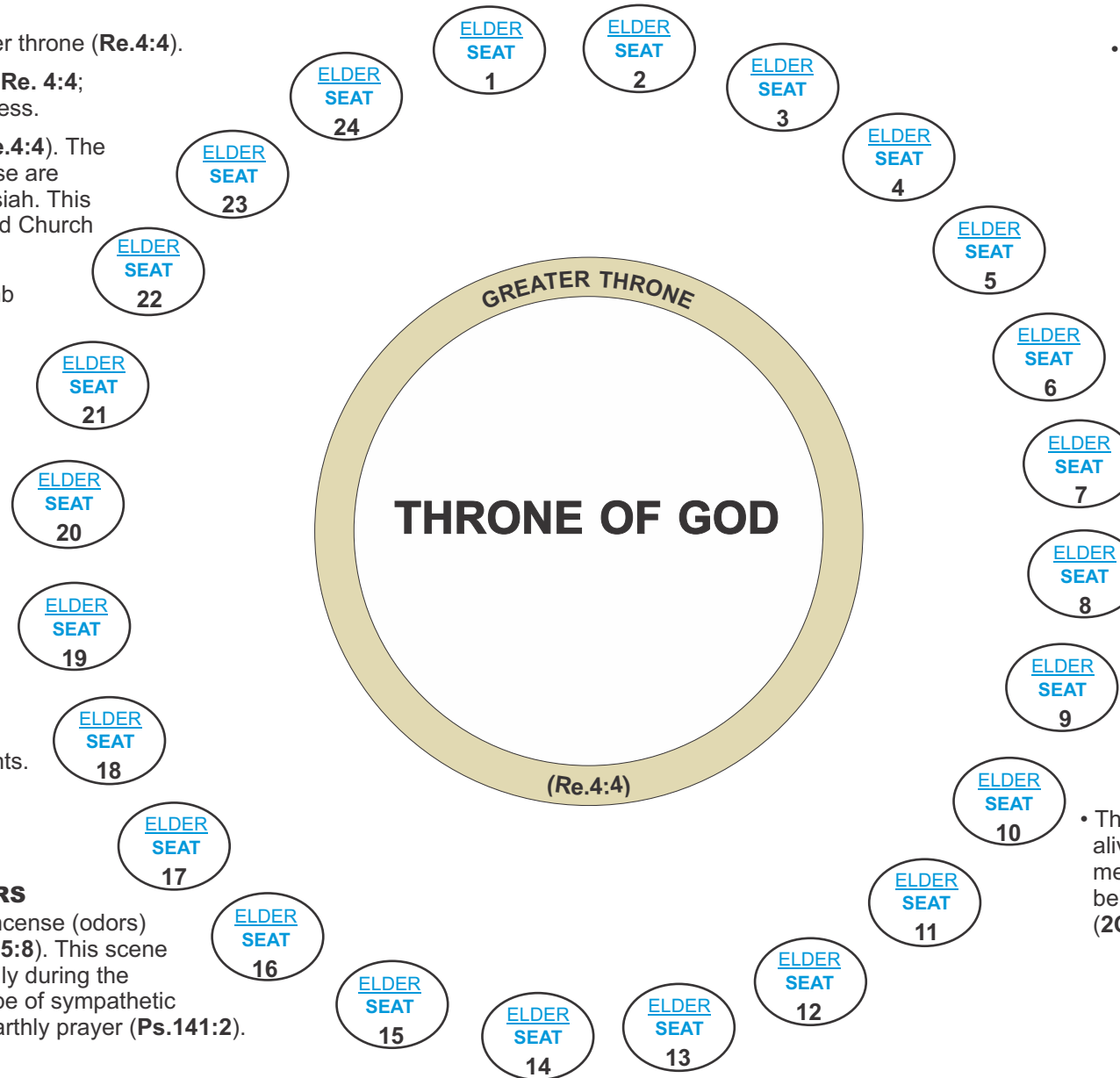
- Seated on seats around a greater throne (Re.4:4).
- They are clothed in white raiment (Re. 4:4; see Re.19:8) indicating righteousness.
- They are wearing crowns of gold (Re.4:4). The crowns may refer to the fact that these are overcomers by their faith in the Messiah. This is true for both the Old Testament and Church age believers.
- They offer their crowns before the Lamb (Re.4:10).
- They have harps and sing a new song worshiping the Lamb (Re.5:8-9).
- They acknowledge that the Lamb has made them kings and priests and that they shall reign on the earth (Re.5:10).

SETTING

- The 24 elders of this heavenly scene represent a group that is in heaven AT THE TIME of the vision. This is not a group that arrives at some time in the future. God uses this scene as a launching pad and teaching aid to relate to John concerning coming events. This is God's end-time program and is the best way to "vision" these events.

FUNCTION OF THE ELDERS

- They have golden vials (bowls) full of incense (odors) which are the prayers of the saints (Re.5:8). This scene shows how important prayer is especially during the Tribulation period. Their role seems to be of sympathetic presentation, not as mediators of the earthly prayer (Ps.141:2).



THE NUMBER 24

- David in 1 Chronicles 24:7-18 names 24 heads of families as divisions of priests to serve in the Temple. In 1 Chronicles 25:9-31 David organizes 24 musicians to match the division of priests. Thus, this number of 24 priests and singers has a representative meaning for the whole nation of Israel. Each division had one priest to represent the order. So, this could be a precedent for the 24 Elders representing a complete body of people.

IDENTIFICATION

- One of the Elders inquire the identity of the great multitude who come out of Daniel's 70th week (Re.7:13) which distinguishes them from that multitude.
- We should view these as old and new covenant believers in Heaven together since they are now both covered by the blood of Jesus, and will share in the New Jerusalem (Hb.12:22).
- When the New Jerusalem is described at Revelation 21:10-14, we see 12 gates for the 12 tribes of Israel, and 12 foundation stones for the 12 apostles of the Lamb.
- The number 24 here is a representative group by combining both old and New Covenant (Church) believers. Both were in Heaven at the time of John's vision.
- There is a multitude of Old Testament believers now alive in Heaven. They are called, "the spirits of just men made perfect" (Hb.12:23). There are church age believers who had died by the time of John's vision (2Co.5:8).
- **The 24 Elders Represent:**
 1. A myriad of believers
 2. From all previous history
 3. Who are in Heaven
 4. At the time of John's vision.