

# Building A Case For The Pre-Trib Rapture

Lesson #30

Finding The Church

August 24, 2022

In I Cor. 10:32, Paul divided mankind into 3 groups: Jews, Gentiles & The Church. We know God's purpose for the 7 year Tribulation Period is for the Jews [Dan. 9:24] and the Gentiles [the earth dwellers].

Question: What is God's purpose for the Church during the Tribulation period?

Rev. 1:10-11a I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, <sup>11</sup> Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last:

Rev. 1:12-13a And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; <sup>13</sup> And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man,

Rev. 1:19-20 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks [lampstands] which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Rev. 1 Things John had seen

Rev. 2 & 3 Letters to the 7 churches The things that are Church Age

Rev. 4-22 Things which will be hereafter After Church Age Tribulation Period

The word "church," ekklesia is found 20 times in Revelation.

- It is used 19 times in Revelation 2-3.
- The 20<sup>th</sup> use of ekklesia: Revelation 22:16

Key Point: The absence of the church [ekklesia] from Rev. 4:1- Rev. 22:16 is consistent with the pre-trib view of Rev. 3:10: I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

Consider: There needs to be an interval of time between the rapture of the church and the return of Jesus Christ at the end of the 7 year Tribulation Period for 2 known events.

1. The Judgment Seat of Christ for the Church must occur.

Note: There is no mention of the Judgment Seat of Christ in any passage relating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ to the earth.

Can we find Biblical passages that indicate the Judgment Seat will occur after the rapture but BEFORE the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming?

II Cor. 5:10 For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Context: I Cor. 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

<sup>12</sup> Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

<sup>13</sup> Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

<sup>14</sup> If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

<sup>15</sup> If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

I Cor. 4:2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

I Cor. 4:5 Do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.

## 2. The Marriage of The Lamb takes place in heaven BEFORE Christ's 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming and after Judgment Seat of Christ

Rev. 19:7-8 describes the "marriage of the Lamb" in heaven.

Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. <sup>8</sup> And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

The fine linen, clean and white, represents the righteous acts of the saints, which has now been judged and purified at the Judgment Seat of Christ [I Cor. 3:12-15: II Cor. 5:10]

Rev. 19:11, 14 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war.

And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

Note: The presentation of the Bride does not occur in the clouds or on earth, but in heaven. This event is right before the Lord Jesus descends from heaven to conquer the world and set up His kingdom as King of kings and Lord of lords.

- These believers in heaven are wearing the garments which represent the rewards.
- Because the rewarded bride will accompany Jesus back to the earth at His return [Rev. 19:14], it is necessary for her to have gone up to heaven some time previously.

Note: Rev. 4 is the 1<sup>st</sup> mention of the throne room scene after the Church Age. [Rev. 2 & 3] In Rev. 4-5, John describes a throne room scene with 4 different groups.

- God is seated on the throne
- The 24 elders
- The 4 living creatures
- The Lamb/Lion is introduced.

Rev. 4:1 After this [meta tauta] I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. [After The Church Age]

- Instantly John finds himself in the spirit, standing before the throne of God at the end of the Church age. He's been transported to the time after the Rapture.

Rev. 4:2-4 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. <sup>3</sup> And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

Note: It is not surprising these 24 elders have crowns. This shows they have already been at the Judgment Seat of Christ to receive their rewards for their Christian service from Christ Himself. [II Cor. 5:10; Rom 14:10; I Cor 3:1-15]

Rev. 4:5-6 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

<sup>6</sup> And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

Are there other Bible descriptions of the Throne of God? 4 OT visions

1. Isaiah 6:1-3 We observe an unidentified number of Seraphim. (comparable to "living creature") standing before the throne.
2. Daniel 7:9-10 The Ancient of Days is seated on His throne. There are other thrones and myriads of other angelic beings, but it gives no specific names or designation of any other group "seated" on those throne
3. Ezekiel 1 and 10: He provides much detail about the 4 living creatures.

Observation: There is a group in Revelation who are NOT seen in any of the OT visions.

Who are they? When did they show up in the throne room of God?

Some commentators believe the 24 elders are angels. Is this a viable option?

MacArthur: *Presbuteros* = elders is never used in Scripture to refer to angels. It always refers to men, of older men in general. The rulers of both Israel and the church were called elders.

"Elder" would be an inappropriate term to describe angels, who do not age.

Angels are never seen in Scripture as wearing a crown.

The term elder was used as an official designation in the church

Acts 20:17; I Tim. 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; I Peter 5:1

My Belief: The 24 elders represent the Church who has been raptured in Rev. 4.

The 24 elders are shown in heaven in Rev. 5. God's wrath is loosed on the earth in Rev. 6.

1. If we can identify this group, it should help our grasp of the timing of the rapture.
2. The uniqueness of this group should provide tremendous encouragement and comfort.

In Rev. 4-19 the prominent 24 elders are mentioned 12 times. [12= number of government]

- 4:4, 10; 5:5, 6, 8, 11, 14; 7:11, 13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4
- They were not in the OT descriptions of heaven and the throne room of God.
- They seem to have come out of nowhere.

Biblestudy.org: 12, considered a perfect number, symbolizes God's power and authority.

- It also serves as a perfect governmental foundation.
- It can also symbolize completeness of a group such as the nation of Israel as a whole.

Why are there twenty-four elders?

MacArthur: The number 24 was connected in I Chronicles 24-25 to priesthood and worship.

I Chron. 24:4-5, 7-18 David and Zadok divided the priesthood into 24 different orders.

There were 24 officers of the sanctuary representing the 24 courses of the Levitical priests.

I Chron. 24:19 These had as their appointed duty in their service to come into the house of the LORD.

I Chron. 25: David divided the worship leaders into 24 different groups.

When the 24 chief priests of the 24 different orders stood before David, they represented the entire priesthood. The same would be true for the worship leaders.

Consider: There is a pattern that 24 is representative of the whole group.

Note: Some believe the 24 elders represent Israel.

Remember: This is a completed group in heaven before the Tribulation Period begins.

However, at the time of John's vision, Israel as a whole nation had not yet been redeemed.

The redeemed remnant of Israel will not be complete until Christ's 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. [Dan. 12:1-3]

Note: Some believe the 24 elders represent the tribulation saints.

However, when John wrote this, there were no tribulation saints.

The group of redeemed tribulation saints will not be complete until Christ's 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.

Note: Some believe the 24 elders represent redeemed mankind as a whole.

- The redemption of this group will not be complete until the end of the Millennium.

Consider: Key Point The church will be the only COMPLETE REDEEMED group of people by the time Revelation 4 occurs in history.

Question: Does the role of PRIESTHOOD & WORSHIP fit with the 24 elders [who I believe] who represent the completed group, the Church?

1<sup>st</sup> mention of 24 elders: Rev. 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.

Rev. 4:10-11 The four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, <sup>11</sup> Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Consider: They recognize their crowns and place of privilege are purely an act of God's grace.

John 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abides in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing.

Rev. 11:16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,

Rev. 19:4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

Note: The 24 elders are highlighted as participating and initiating WORSHIP in the presence of the throne and the angelic host.

Rev. 5:8 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.

- The 24 elders are seen as offering up incense which is the prayers of the saints.
- The offering of incense is clearly reminiscent of the priestly duties found in Leviticus.

Rev. 1:4a, 6a John to the seven churches...

And hath made us kings and PRIESTS unto God and His Father;

Rev. 5:10 And hast made us unto our God kings and PRIESTS: and we shall reign on the earth.

- Words from the 24 elders

Key Point: The connection between priesthood [1:5-6] and worship [Rev 5:9; 4:11] and the number 24 in I Chronicles 24 and 25 should not be missed!!

There is a connection if we compare Rev. 4-5 with the theology of Paul concerning the church:

Eph. 2:11-22 The church is made up of Jews and Gentiles put into one new body of believers.

This is not a continuation of OT theocratic Israel limited to Israel & its land. John 4:21-26

Rev. 5:9 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;

- ❖ This is a new unified group of people made up of all nations, tribes, peoples.

This group of unified people, who are called the church, was not revealed in the OT but was revealed as a mystery in its full theological significance to Paul the apostle [Eph 3:1-10].

Therefore, because the church was not born until after Jesus ascended, it would be no surprise that as a group they are not evident in any OT throne room scene.

When John writes his vision of what he saw "after these things" [a.k.a. the church age,]

it makes great sense this new 24-member group of Elders to be the recently raptured church.

Rev. 5:1, 4-5 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. <sup>4</sup> And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

<sup>5</sup> And one of the elders saith unto me, 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.

MacArthur: Why is one of the 24 elders called upon to explain things to John instead of an angel that normally explains things in Revelation? The elders are the only ones within God's throne-room that have personally experienced salvation.

Since John's question relates to salvation, it was appropriate for a redeemed individual to note that the Lamb of God—Jesus—was the one qualified to open the scroll.

John was weeping because he knew his destiny and that of all of humanity depended upon finding one qualified to open the scroll which is the title deed to planet earth. If no one was able to open it, the redemption of earth and mankind could not have been carried out.

Key Point: Note the new song the 24 elders sing

Rev. 5:9-10 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; <sup>10</sup> And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

Another description that helps bring understanding to the identity of the 24 elders has to do with the description of the Lamb's spatial position. John introduces Jesus (one like the Son of Man) as standing in the midst (*mesos*) of the seven lampstands (Rev 1:13).

1. The Greek preposition *mesos* appears 7 times in the whole book.
2. Jesus gives us the interpretation of the 7 lampstands in Rev. 1:20  
"the seven lampstands are the seven churches."

Rev. 2:1 Jesus reveals Himself to the Ephesian church as the "One who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands."

- This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> reference that Jesus is in the midst of the churches.

Rev. 5:6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain,

Consider: Within the book itself, John directs us to understand the connections between Jesus being in the midst of the churches and the 24 elders.

- This connective interpretation is compelling.

Compare the 24 elders in heaven in Rev. 4-5 before the Tribulation Period begins in Rev. 6 with Jesus' promises to the overcomers in the letters to the 7 churches.

1. The 24 elders who represent the church are seated in heaven and exempt from the period of The Tribulation beginning in Rev. 6:1 as Jesus promised in...

Rev. 3:10. I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

2. The 24 elders who represent the entire church body are SITTING on thrones in fulfillment of Jesus' promise:

Rev. 3:21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.

It is fascinating to see the consistency of the Bible. In the OT, there were no chairs either in the tabernacle or the temple. The priests were to serve continually.

This is a major theological point in the book of Hebrews as, after Jesus performed His high priestly duties, He sat down at the right hand of God [Heb 1:3; 10:11-12].

In Revelation, you do not find any angels sitting. They are standing [7:9, 11]. Even one as mighty and majestic as Gabriel declares himself to be standing in the presence of God [Luke 1:19].

The angels are specifically labeled as distinct from the 24 elders [5:11; 7:11].

Rev. 7:11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

The reference to the twenty-four thrones on which the twenty-four elders sat indicates that they reign with Christ. Nowhere in Scripture do angels sit on thrones, nor are they pictured ruling or reigning. Their role is to serve as "ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation" [Heb. 1:14;]

Observation: The tribulation saints, "great multitude", who are martyred are standing before the throne and the Lamb [Rev 7:9]. Another group of martyred individuals who had victory over the beast were standing near the throne [Rev 15:2].

It is amazing: There is only one group (other than God and the Lamb) who are specifically labeled as sitting. The 24 elders are shown to be sitting on thrones.

### 3. The church is to serve as kings.

Rev. 1:5b-6 John writes to the churches, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, <sup>6</sup> And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Rev. 5:10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

Reign = basileuo = Strong's #936 = to be king, to exercise kingly power, to reign  
of the reign of Christians in the millennium

### 4. The 24 elders who represent the church:

➤ Are sitting, clothed in white raiment [Rev. 4:4] as Jesus promised in:

Rev. 3:4-5a Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. <sup>5</sup> He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment;

Note: At the marriage of the Lamb, His bride will "clothe herself in fine linen, clean & white."

Rev. 19:8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

Note: There are other groups in Revelation that are given "white robes," but this is a different designation [Rev 6:11; 7:9, 13] and Greek words.

### 5. The church is repeatedly promised a co-regency with Christ.

Rev. 2:26-27 And he that overcomes, and keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: <sup>27</sup> And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

Rom. 8:17-18 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

II Tim. 2:12a If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him:

6. The 24 elders are wearing crowns of gold as Jesus promised in:  
Rev. 2:10 Christ promised such a crown to the loyal believers at Smyrna:  
Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

The NT teaches: There are 5 different crowns which are symbolic descriptions of the rewards for faithful service. These are *stephanos* or victor's crowns worn by those who have successfully endured the trial, those who competed and won the victory.

I Cor. 9:25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. So they *do it* to obtain a perishable crown [stephanos], but we an imperishable.

I Thess. 2:19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?

James 1:12 Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.

I Pet. 5:4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away. [for those who faithfully teach & preach God's Word]

II Tim. 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.

Conclusion: The church will be the only COMPLETE REDEEMED group of people by the time Revelation 4 occurs in history.

- The 24 elders are seated on thrones, clothed in white raiment, and crowns on their heads.
- By their titles, clothing, crowns, thrones, & activities, it's clear they represent the newly raptured church.
- The 24 elders represent the raptured Church who sing songs of redemption [Rev. 5:8-10]
- Revelation 5 presents the plan for tribulation judgment as contained in the scroll that only the Lamb is worthy to open.
- Jesus has invited the 24 elders to sit in His immediate presence as He opens the seals and fulfills His kingly role as redeeming the earth back to righteousness.
- Revelation 6 portrays the Lamb's opening of each seal as the initiating cause of those judgments on earth.  
This means: all 19 seal, trumpet and bowl judgments are contained in the scroll.
- Therefore, then none of the judgments of the tribulation could have transpired before Rev. 6.
- The 24 elders are in heaven BEFORE the tribulation period starts in Rev. 6.
- This supports the church's BLESSED HOPE of the pretribulation rapture! Maranatha!