

Who Are The Twenty-Four Elders? : Part 1

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Twenty-Four Elders In The Book Of Revelation, Twelve Tribes Of Israel, Joseph's Two Sons - Manasseh And Ephraim, 144,000 And Sealed Tribes Of Israel, Dan And Ephraim Backslide And Lose Their Blessing And Inheritance, Biblical Prohibition Of False Gods And Graven Images, God's Anger Against Ephraim And Dan, Possible Dan-Satan Connection And Jacob's Insight, Jesus Selects The Twelve Apostles, What Is Course Of Abia?, Twenty-Four Courses, King David & Old Testament Priesthood

One Biblical mystery which has long intrigued me concerns the identity of the Twenty-Four Elders who are mentioned in the Book of Revelation. In that Book, we find the following verses where these Twenty-Four Elders are discussed:

"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 . . . 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,"
Revelation 4:4, 10, KJV

"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 odours, which are the prayers of saints . . . And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever."
Revelation 5:8, 14, KJV

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

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

Concerning the previous verses, for a number of years now, I have personally embraced two possible theories. The first of these theories is that the Twenty-Four Elders may possibly be comprised of the original heads of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, as well as the Twelve Apostles. In my view, the main reason why this particular theory has some degree of merit, is because it would effectively represent the original leadership of the Old Testament Church, as well as the original leadership of the New Testament Church. In short, in this way, the Twenty-Four Elders would symbolize God's Church across the entire span of Biblical history, and it would represent a balance of power in the Courts of Heaven as well.

As you may already know, the original heads of the Twelve Tribes of Israel were in fact the twelve sons who were born to the Patriarch Jacob, who himself later became known as

Israel. The names of these twelve sons were Asher, Benjamin, Dan, Gad, Issachar, Joseph, Judah, Levi, Naphtali, Reuben, Simeon, and Zebulun. Consider the following verses:

". . . Now the sons of Jacob were twelve: The sons of Leah; Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Zebulun: The sons of Rachel; Joseph, and Benjamin: And the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid; Dan, and Naphtali: And the sons of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid; Gad, and Asher: these are the sons of Jacob, which were born to him in Padanaram."

Genesis 35:22b-26, KJV

"All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them."

Genesis 49:28, KJV

"And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel."

Exodus 24:4, KJV

"And thou shalt make the breastplate of judgment with cunning work; after the work of the ephod thou shalt make it; of gold, of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine twined linen, shalt thou make it. Foursquare it shall be being doubled; a span shall be the length thereof, and a span shall be the breadth thereof. And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, even four rows of stones: the first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: this shall be the first row. And the second row shall be an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. And the third row a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst. And the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be set in gold in their inclosings. And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes."

Exodus 28:15-21, KJV

"These are those that were numbered, which Moses and Aaron numbered, and the princes of Israel, being twelve men: each one was for the house of his fathers."

Numbers 1:44, KJV

"And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs."

Acts 7:8, KJV

"And he [Joseph] dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying."

Genesis 37:9-11, KJV

"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:"

Revelation 12:1, KJV

Also worthy of note for our current discussion are the two sons of Joseph; that is, Manasseh and Ephraim, who were born to Joseph by his Egyptian wife, Asenath, who was the daughter of Potipherah, who was the priest of On. In fact, the Bible informs us that Jacob counted Joseph's two sons -- Manasseh and Ephraim -- as sons of his own flesh. Consider the following verses:

"And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnathpaaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt . . . And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him."

Genesis 41:45, 50, KJV

"And unto Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him."

Genesis 46:20, KJV

"And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine."

Genesis 48:5, KJV

While there are a variety of Biblical reasons why the sons of Joseph are important, one of them is the fact that in chapter seven of the Book of Revelation, when twelve thousand members of each of the Twelve Tribes of Israel are marked with the Seal of God in their foreheads, in order that they can escape from the Wrath of God, the Tribe of Dan is not mentioned, while the Tribe of Manasses -- which is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Manasseh -- is mentioned. Consider these verses:

"And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand."

Revelation 7:2-8, KJV

Not only is the Tribe of Dan not mentioned in the previous verses from the Book of Revelation, but neither is Joseph's younger son, Ephraim, mentioned. As I first pointed out a number of years ago, the reason why neither the descendants of Dan nor Ephraim are sealed in the Book of Revelation, may be due to the fact that both Tribes lost their blessing, as well as their inheritance, because they backslid from the Lord, and fell into very serious idolatry, from which they

apparently never recovered. If you refer to my series "The Fruits Of Disobedience", you will discover that as a result of their sins against the Lord, the people of the northern kingdom of Israel -- which was also known as Ephraim -- were dispersed, and carried away into captivity by the Assyrians, after refusing to heed to the warnings of such Prophets as Isaiah. It is in part based upon this event that a certain sector of Bible teachers and students promote the belief in the "Lost Tribes of Israel".

Concerning the Tribe of Dan, according to an account that is found in the pages of the Book of Judges, the people of the Tribe of Dan fell away from the Lord when they attempted to claim their inheritance, and encountered an individual by the name of Micah. This was not the Prophet Micah, but rather an idol worshipper who had secured the services of a Levite. You can read the full account in Judges 17:1-13 through Judges 18:1-31. Notice in particular as you read the account, that it uses phrases such as "graven image", "molten image", and "Ye have taken away my gods". Obviously, these were practices which were strictly prohibited by the Lord since the giving of the Commandments at Mount Sinai, as we see by these verses:

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;"

Exodus 20:3-5, KJV

That the Lord continued to be very upset with the Tribes of Ephraim and Dan long after the aforementioned events occurred is evident by the following words which were recorded by the Old Testament Prophets, Hosea and Amos. Consider first what the Lord said about Ephraim:

"When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without. And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face. They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies. They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, who ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened. In the day of our king the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorners. For they have made ready their heart like an oven, whiles they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire. They are all hot as an oven, and have devoured their judges; all their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto me. Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not. And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face: and they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him for all this. Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria. When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them; I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven; I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard. Woe unto them! for they have

fled from me: destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me: though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me. And they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me. Though I have bound and strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me. They return, but not to the most High: they are like a deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt." Hosea 7:1-16, KJV

Likewise, the Lord had some very choice words to say about backslidden Dan as well, as we see by the following verses:

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it. In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst. They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beersheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again."

Amos 8:11-14, KJV

Obviously, the phrase "Thy god, O Dan, liveth" isn't referring to the true God of Heaven, but rather, it is referring to the host of false gods that were foolishly embraced by the Danites beginning with the incident that is described in the previous verses from the Book of Judges. It is interesting to point out that prior to his death, when the Patriarch Jacob bestowed his blessings upon his twelve sons, he said something which might indicate that Jacob may have been aware of the fact that Dan would eventually fall away from the Lord, and follow after the Prince of Darkness; that is, that subtle serpent Satan. If we turn to Genesis chapter forty-nine, we find Jacob saying the following concerning the future fate of the Tribe of Dan:

"Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward."

Genesis 49:17, KJV

If the previous verse seems vaguely familiar to you, it may be because the Lord also said something similar to Satan in the very first Book of the Bible, after he had caused Adam and Eve to fall from Grace. Consider this:

"And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Genesis 3:14-15, KJV

There may possibly be an even greater connection between the previous two sets of verses and Endtime prophecy, but being as it is deeply in the realm of Biblical speculation, I will forego discussing it for now, until such time when I can either confirm -- or refute -- what I have heard.

At any rate, based upon the previous Scriptural evidence, it

seems then that because of the ancient sins of the two Tribes of Ephraim and Dan, that the Tribe of Manasseh became sort of a replacement Tribe for both Dan and Ephraim in the Book of Revelation. As we've seen, while a certain percentage of the aforementioned Tribes are promised protection from the Wrath of God through receiving the Seal of God in their foreheads -- that is, twelve thousand members from each Tribe -- the descendants of the Tribes of Dan and Ephraim are not given this same promise of protection. As we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews:

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Hebrews 10:31, KJV

So far, we have established that the original leaders of the Twelve Tribes of Israel -- the twelve sons of Jacob -- might possibly represent half of the Twenty-Four Elders who we find mentioned in the Book of Revelation. We can view these twelve men as the original leaders of the Old Testament Church. The other half of the Twenty-Four Elders, as I noted earlier, may possibly be represented by the Twelve Apostles, who were the leaders of the New Testament Church. Following are various sets of verses which give an account of the selection of the Twelve Apostles by the Lord, as well as some related verses that are found in the Book of Revelation:

"And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him."

Matthew 10:1-4, KJV

"And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils: And Simon he surnamed Peter; And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder: And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite, And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house."

Mark 3:13-19, KJV

"And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor."

Luke 6:12-16, KJV

"Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in

my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Luke 22:28-30, KJV

"And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Matthew 19:28, KJV

"And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb . . . And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass."

Revelation 21:12-14, 21, KJV

As I stated at the beginning of this article, the idea that the original heads of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, as well as the Twelve Apostles, may possibly be represented by the Twenty-Four Elders who are mentioned in Revelation, is just one of two theories which I have personally pondered over the years. Depending on your personal perspective regarding God's plan for the Jews, as well as your understanding of the Book of Revelation, you may or may not find the second theory of equal merit. In fact, you may even find it more convincing than the first theory. The essence of my second theory is that the Twenty-Four Elders may possibly represent the Jewish priesthood which was established during the Old Testament period. In the New Testament, we find one hint concerning the structure of this priesthood in the following verses:

"There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord."

Luke 1:5, KJV

What precisely is this "course of Abia" to which the writer Luke is referring? According to the Greek lexicon, the term "course of" is derived from the Greek word "ephemeria". It's defined as "a service limited to a stated series of days". The lexicon then goes on to say "the class or course itself of priests who for a week at a time performed the duties of the priestly office. David divided the priests into twenty four classes, each of which in its turn discharged the duties of the office for an entire week, from sabbath to sabbath". Concerning the name "Abia" -- which is the Greek form of the Hebrew "Abijah" -- the Greek lexicon also states "A priest, the head of a priestly family from whom when David divided the priests into 24 classes, Abia was the 8th order".

We can confirm what is stated in the Greek lexicon simply by

turning to the Old Testament. In the Book of 1 Chronicles, chapter twenty-four, we discover the precise organization that King David established for the priestly services, which were then carried on by his son, Solomon, after the Temple had been built. In the following verses, the account begins by explaining to us how the priest's office was first carried on by Eleazar and Ithamar -- two of the sons of Aaron -- and then by the descendants of Eleazar and Ithamar, until the time of King David, when David appointed Zadok and Ahimelech, who were likewise direct descendants of Moses and Aaron:

"Now these are the divisions of the sons of Aaron. The sons of Aaron; Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. But Nadab and Abihu died before their father, and had no children: therefore Eleazar and Ithamar executed the priest's office. And David distributed them, both Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, according to their offices in their service. And there were more chief men found of the sons of Eleazar than of the sons of Ithamar; and thus were they divided. Among the sons of Eleazar there were sixteen chief men of the house of their fathers, and eight among the sons of Ithamar according to the house of their fathers. Thus were they divided by lot, one sort with another; for the governors of the sanctuary, and governors of the house of God, were of the sons of Eleazar, and of the sons of Ithamar. And Shemaiah the son of Nethaneel the scribe, one of the Levites, wrote them before the king, and the princes, and Zadok the priest, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, and before the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites: one principal household being taken for Eleazar, and one taken for Ithamar. Now the first lot came forth to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah, The third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim, The fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to Mijamin, The seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah, The ninth to Jeshua, the tenth to Shecaniah, The eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim, The thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab, The fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer, The seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to Aphses, The nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezkel, The one and twentieth to Jachin, the two and twentieth to Gamul, The three and twentieth to Delaiah, the four and twentieth to Maaziah. These were the orderings of them in their service to come into the house of the LORD, according to their manner, under Aaron their father, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded him."

1 Chronicles 24:1-19, KJV

Thus we see the twenty-four priestly courses that King David established in Israel, which was continued by King Solomon, and by later Israelite kings as well. For example, during the reign of King Josiah -- who was one of the good kings of Israel -- we find the following verses which reflect back on the order which was first established by David and Solomon:

"Moreover Josiah kept a passover unto the LORD in Jerusalem: and they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month. And he set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the house of the LORD, And said unto the Levites that taught all Israel, which were holy unto the LORD, Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel did build; it shall not be a burden upon your shoulders: serve now the LORD your God, and his people Israel, And prepare yourselves by the houses of your fathers, after your courses, according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon his son."

2 Chronicles 35:1-4, KJV

One verse that may possibly cause a small degree of confusion in the minds of certain Bible students is the following. If you read the surrounding verses, you will see that it is an account of how King Solomon had the Ark of the Covenant moved into the Holy of Holies within the recently-completed temple:

"And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place: (for all the priests that were present were sanctified, and did not then wait by course:"

2 Chronicles 5:11, KJV

At first glance, the phrase "did not then wait by course" may seem to indicate that the twenty-four priestly courses hadn't been established yet; however, I believe that what the verse is actually saying, is that in this one particular instance, due to the magnitude of the event and the number of offerings that were required, all of the priests had been sanctified as a group in order to meet the needs of the people. In other words, the usual protocol of serving one-by-one for a seven day period was ignored during this particular occasion.

Considering the length of the lunar year -- which is what the people of Israel followed at the time -- one may wonder how twenty-four priests could cover the services that would be required for an entire year, if each one only served one time from sabbath to sabbath. There are two possibilities. The first is that each priest actually served two courses during the year. However, the following verses -- which are actually a continuation of the verses that I shared with you earlier -- suggest that other descendants of Levi -- which was Israel's priestly tribe -- may have partaken in the priestly services as well:

"And the rest of the sons of Levi were these: Of the sons of Amram; Shubael: of the sons of Shubael; Jehdeiah. Concerning Rehabiah: of the sons of Rehabiah, the first was Isshiah. Of the Izharites; Shelomoth: of the sons of Shelomoth; Jahath. And the sons of Hebron; Jeriah the first, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, Jekameam the fourth. Of the sons of Uzziel; Michah: of the sons of Michah; Shamir. The brother of Michah was Isshiah: of the sons of Isshiah; Zechariah. The sons of Merari were Mahli and Mushi: the sons of Jaaziah; Beno. The sons of Merari by Jaaziah; Beno, and Shoham, and Zaccur, and Ibri. Of Mahli came Eleazar, who had no sons. Concerning Kish: the son of Kish was Jerahmeel. The sons also of Mushi; Mahli, and Eder, and Jerimoth. These were the sons of the Levites after the house of their fathers. These likewise cast lots over against their brethren the sons of Aaron in the presence of David the king, and Zadok, and Ahimelech, and the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites, even the principal fathers over against their younger brethren."

1 Chronicles 24:20-31, KJV

Please go to part two for the conclusion of this article.

Who Are The Twenty-Four Elders? : Part 2

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Biblical Practice Of Casting Lots, Matthias Is Chosen As The New "Twelfth Apostle", Two Groups Of Twenty-Four Priests, Physical Events And Things On The Earth Are A Reflection Of Things In Heaven - Tree of Life, Ark Of The Covenant, Temple, Ultra-Orthodox Jews, Temple Mount Faithful, Preparations For A Final Temple, Holy Covenant And Israeli-Palestinian Peace Agreement, Endtime Strong Delusion And Jewish False Messiah

Please notice in particular the very last verse where we are told that these additional Levites cast lots. The purpose of casting lots -- pebbles were commonly used-- in both the Old and the New Testaments, was to make decisions and to assign responsibilities. In other words, it was an ancient form of voting. For example, in the Book of Acts, we find that the remaining Eleven Apostles cast lots in order to determine who would replace Judas as the Twelfth Apostle, as we see here:

"And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,) Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take. Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."

Acts 1:15-26, KJV

Returning to the previous verses from 1 Chronicles 25, if we consider that Beno appears to be mentioned twice, then the second group of names would also consist of twenty-four men. In other words, we have the first group of twenty-four names, which is followed by a second group of twenty-four names. It seems reasonable to assume then, that while only twenty-four priestly courses were established by kings David and Solomon, each course was filled twice a year by two different priests.

We can speculate then, that the Twenty-Four Elders who are mentioned in various chapters of the Book of Revelation, are probably fulfilling a similar priestly service before the Throne of God the Father, just like their human counterparts did on the Earth during the Old Testament and New Testament eras. In fact, going by some of the descriptive verses that are found in the Book of Revelation, it seems highly likely that this is precisely their function. As I have noted on previous occasions, what happens on the Earth is sometimes a reflection of what is likewise occurring in the Realm of the Spirit, and in Heaven. For example, just as the Old Testament mentions different physical objects such as the Tree of Life, the Ark of the Covenant, the temple, etc., these very same things are also described for us in the pages of the Book of Revelation, but they exist in Heaven. Consider these verses:

"Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them."
Revelation 7:15, KJV

"And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe . . . And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.
Revelation 14:15, 17, KJV

"And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled."
Revelation 15:5-8, KJV

"And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth . . . And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.
Revelation 16:1, 17, KJV

"And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail."
Revelation 11:19, KJV

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."
Revelation 2:7, KJV

"In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations . . . Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into

the city."

Revelation 22:2, 14, KJV

What likewise makes this comparison between the twenty-four priestly courses of both the Old and New Testaments and the Twenty-Four Elders of Heaven so interesting, is the fact that -- as some of you will already realize -- for quite some time now, there has been a concerted effort by the Ultra-Orthodox Jews of Israel -- such as the Temple Mount and Eretz Yisrael Faithful Movement, commonly referred to as the Temple Mount Faithful -- to rebuild the temple of Solomon on top of Mount Moriah in East Jerusalem. As you may also know, the Second Temple -- as it is also called -- was destroyed in 70 AD by Roman occupational forces under the leadership of General Titus, who was the son of Emperor Vespasian, and a future emperor himself.

While the Orthodox Jews have not been very successful thus far -- being as such a development would have monumental political and religious implications for Israel, for the Middle East and for the world itself, as I point out in the article "Who Is Hindering The Antichrist?", as well as in other articles which are related to Endtime Prophecy, it is my belief that this development may be facilitated sometime in the not-too-distant by a long-hoped-for peace agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians. In other words, the forthcoming peace agreement -- which may be the "Holy Covenant" that is mentioned in the Book of Daniel -- may have certain stipulations which make the reconstruction of the temple of Solomon possible.

Let me emphasize here that the Ultra-Orthodox Jews are very serious about this; so much so, that for a number of years now, in addition to possessing the actual blueprints for the new temple, they have been designing and constructing the new utensils which will be used for temple services; they have designed and are currently constructing the sacrificial altar; they have designed and fabricated new garments which will be worn by the temple priests; and lastly, they are now training a new priesthood which will fulfill the very same priestly obligations as the Old Testament priesthood.

Of course, I should note here that -- as I point out in the aforementioned article, as well as in the series "The Great Tribulation And The Rapture -- it is currently my personal belief that all of these things, when they finally come to fruition, will be a massive form of strong delusion, because the vast majority of Jews have rejected their one and only true Messiah -- Jesus Christ -- just like generations of Jews before them. Their messiah may indeed come, but he will not be Jesus Christ; he will be a liar, a usurper and a deceiver who will lead the incorrigible Jews to their own destruction. Again, please refer to some of my other articles for more information regarding these topics. Just remember; the Devil loves to imitate on Earth, what God has created in Heaven. So, if one day soon you witness twenty-four priestly courses in Jerusalem, a newly-built temple, a new daily sacrifice, etc., please don't be deceived. It is not what you think. It is the strong delusion that was prophesied so long ago by the Apostle Paul when he wrote:

"And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in

them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:"

2 Thessalonians 2:8-11, KJV

With these sobering words, I will bring another article to a close. I trust that it has been an inspiration and a blessing in your life, and that you have found my personal speculations interesting. In God's time, we will all know the full truth of the matter.