

Who are the 24 elders in the book of Revelation? (Revelation)

the question that we're going to take up is a question that has been asked a number of times i've gotten a number of emails about this i haven't taught on this previously because i don't have a definitive answer and i still don't have a definitive answer but i thought you know let's take up the question and let's take a look at it and maybe this will be of some help here's what the question is the question is who are the 24 elders in the book of revelation who are the 24 elders in the book of revelation now one thing i could do is i could say well you know i don't know and this will be our shortest program and uh we're all done but what i thought would be a better more productive thing to do would be to walk through with you how you might think about that question so get with me acts 17 acts 17 and then get isaiah 28 and then get first corinthians 2. london uk uh so there is also a london ohio and that's close by so we've got that covered but uh there is some folks in london uk that would like to start a grace church so please reach out if you're interested so we're going to look at acts 17 verse 11. now as preface let me say this it doesn't really matter to me that much whether you happen to agree with the conclusions i reach or not because you know you have freedom of conscience and you need to you need to believe what you understand the scriptures to say you don't need to believe things that i say what we're really hoping to do with this program is to give you some tools to give you some skills that you can then apply so you can study the bible for yourself so look with me at acts 17 verse 11. these were more noble than those in thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind so they had a positive frame of mind toward the scriptures they were willing to receive it but notice what they then did they searched the scriptures

daily whether those things were so
so we hope what we're doing is we hope
we're encouraging you to search the
scriptures
daily to take things that you learn on
this program
or things that you hear from other
places and you explore them
you search them out in the scriptures to
validate whether they're true or not
oftentimes people teach things that they
think are true
and they're just innocently mistaken
which is why it's necessary
for the bible believer to personally
validate to search the scriptures
whether those things were so
so hopefully you're convinced of the
need to
personally study the scriptures now get
with me isaiah
and we're going to compare isaiah 28 in
first corinthians 2.
isaiah 28 verse
9 isaiah 28 9 whom shall he teach
knowledge in whom shall he make to
understand
doctrine them that are weaned from the
milk
and drawn from the breast for precept
must be upon precept precept upon
precept
line upon line line upon line
hear a little and there a little
so if you take those verses for what
they say
how does god teach someone doctrine how
does he cause them to understand
knowledge well he does that by precept
upon precept lying upon
line and then it says helpfully here a
little
and there a little here's what happens
in typical bible study
the typical way that people approach
bible study is the the preacher gets up
and he says this is my text
and he reads a number of verses and then
he talks about
that text for a long time he may spend
time looking at the meaning of greek
words
but he takes that text and tries to
pull apart that text focusing on that
text and what isaiah 28 tells you
is that's really not the way to do bible
study the way that you do bible study is
its line upon line line upon line
precept upon precept
but it's here a little and there a
little so what happens is whenever you
come across

a mysterious passage the answer is not
to drill down into that passage and take
apart
each word and look at the meaning in the
greek and then get 20 bible commentaries
and and focus all your in all your
intention on one
verse that's that's not productive what
is
productive is to say let me find
the other verses in scripture wherever
they are
that explain this verse because those
verses are there the scriptures cannot
be broken
god has laid them out here a little and
there a little
and our job as bible students is simply
to find where they are
that's much harder than simply saying
this is my text
and i'm going to read this text again
and again and again
and that'll give me the answer well it
does it doesn't work that way
you're going to have to find other
verses that explain the meaning of the
text
get first corinthians chapter two first
corinthians
chapter two first corinthians
notice with me verse
13 which things also we speak
not in the words which man's wisdom
teacheth but which the holy ghost
teacheth how does the holy ghost teach
comparing spiritual things with
spiritual so the way that the holy ghost
teaches you is by comparing
verse with verse now let's with that as
context get with me revelation 5.
so now we're going to turn to one of the
key passages that talks about the 24
elders
we're going to read it and then once we
read it
we're going to apply the principles we
just
covered revelation chapter five
notice with me verse eight and when he
had taken the book
the four beasts and four and twenty
elders that's who we're looking at
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 has made us
unto our god kings and priests and we
shall reign
on the earth now what people frequently
ask is they ask the question well who
are these 24 elders we can't really
we don't read them about them in a lot
of other places who are they
what are they doing and it's just a
common question people have
now the first thing that we can notice
from this passage
is notice in verse 10 and has
made us unto our god kings and priests
and we shall reign on the earth
now based upon that verse right there
what does it tell us about who these 24
elders
have to be well we're told that god made
them kings and priests
but what does it say about where they
will
reign it says specifically that they
shall reign
on the earth
so what does that tell us is it
something that is certain members of the
body of christ
i don't think it can be look with me at
some folks have expressed the opinion
that
the 24 elders have something to do with
the body of christ
at least that's what i've heard on the
internet but i've learned i actually did
a double check on this
there are some things on the internet
that are not true and i'm sorry to break
that news to everyone but i'm just being
honest with you
so you can't believe everything you read
on the web now look at me at second
corinthians chapter five verse one
for we know that if our earthly house of
this tabernacle were dissolved that's
our body
we have a building of god and house not
made with hands
notice what it says eternal in
the heavens now you
already know from ephesians 1 13 that
the body of christ was
is blessed with all spiritual blessings
in
heavenly places the reason why the body
of christ is caught up
is that we go up to heaven
and that's where we're going to be for
eternity we're blessed with all
spiritual blessings in heavenly places

what second corinthians 5 verse 1 says
about our body is that it is eternal
in the heavens so
how long is eternal well it's pretty
long
so when you think about revelation 5
verse 10 and the 24 elders are said to
reign
on the earth
then that's not the body of christ
because the body of christ does not
reign on the earth now i know that it's
often taught that the body of christ
returns with christ at the second coming
but that's just not so the body of
christ
has a building as the verse says here
that's and house not made with hands
eternal in the heavens well
eternal in the heavens it's not going to
be for a thousand years on the earth
so what we know from revelation 5 is
that the 24 elders
they're not related they're not part of
the body of christ
that's not what they are they have to be
related
to the prophetic program in some
capacity
now what's fascinating about that look
with me at revelation 1 verse 6.
revelation chapter 1.
so one of the the normal things you
would do is if you're trying to
understand the 24 elders
and you know that they're kings and
priests one of the rational things to do
is look for other verses that talk about
kings and priests so look with me at
revelation
chapter 1 verse 6 and hath made us
kings and priests unto god and his
father
to him be glory and dominion forever
and ever amen so that would seem to be a
sound cross reference
that that reads similarly to the
description of the 24 elders
now let's close this out and so let's go
here
so now what we're going to do i'm going
to play the jeopardy music in just a
minute
give you time to think about this but
here's the question i want you to ask
so we've seen the 24 elders in
revelation chapter 5.
we've seen the principle that to
understand what's going on in that
passage we need to find the relevant
cross references
so to do that what we're going to do is

we're going to run some bible searches
we're going to use our friend the blue
letter bible
i'm going to give you 30 seconds here
and i want you to think through
what are the natural searches you should
run
to find the relevant cross references
ready
go
oh
now some of you are going to find this
hard to believe but my
application for dancing with the stars
was rejected and i don't know why that
is but
i was very disappointed to me because i
thought i had real potential
all right so what are the searches we
should run here you go i'm going to walk
you through the ones that i think make
sense
and then we'll look at some of the most
intriguing possibilities so the first
one
i would run is i would run elder
wildcard so elder with the asterisk
also known as the wildcard and i'm going
to hit
search and we'll just see what this
pulls up
so obviously if you're trying to
understand the 24 elders
a word that you would search for
obviously would be elder
so if we run that we get 199 times and
we see things like the brother of
japheth the elder
and so you might look through all of
them what i would be inclined to do
myself is i would go to advanced options
right here
click on advanced options and
what i'm going to do is i'm going to go
down here and i'm going to pick the book
of revelation
and then i'm going to rerun the search
and now what that's going to do is it's
going to give me
12 hits that are in the book of
revelation
and the idea here is you might read all
199 but if you're starting and you're
just trying to think through this
the logical question is well where else
does the book of revelation talk about
elders and if you
run this search you'll you'll see all
those other verses that obviously would
be good to consult
so that's easy step number one now
what's step number two

what i would do is step number two is i
would run a search
for 20 elder and so what i'm going to do
there is
t-w-e-n-t wild card
e-l-d-e-r wild card so that will
pick up 20 elders 20th
elder 23 elders in other words gonna
capture all of those things
so i would i would run that as the next
one and that'll pick up
all the verses that have the word 20 in
any form
and the word elder in any form now
we can see the results there that come
back from that
now i want you to think about this just
for a minute if you run a search
for 20 elders and you want to see those
hits
what's the logical next search you need
to run
based upon the fact that the bible uses
synonyms
so you're aware of this i trust but the
bible uses synonyms so for example
the bible uses the word faith and the
bible uses the word believe and those
two words are used in a way that mean
the same thing
in the scriptures well if you just ran
the word
20 you should also run the word
score right the word score is a word we
may not use a lot today but scripture
uses it and the word means 20.
so you should also run score wild card
elder wild card so we would run that
search
and see what it comes up with and so
i'm not paging through all the results
because i i ran these searches earlier
and what i'm going to do
shortly is i'm going to take you to the
the possibilities that i think are the
most intriguing
so we would run score of elders and we
would see what it
comes up with now the next thing that we
would do
after that okay you can see this one
doesn't return any hits so
nothing there to look at the next thing
i would do
is i would run score 4
in excel let's do it this way let's
run 20 first so if i run 20
and 4 so now this one doesn't have elder
but this will simply show me every time
that the word
24 appears in the scriptures because
maybe

the verses don't use the word elders
maybe it uses the word
bishops or or a different a different
word so i would run
24 and see all of those hits and once i
did that
i would then run the same thing with
score
score and four and that will give me
every time that score and four
appear in the scriptures now those pull
up a number of various different hits
what i want to focus on now with you is
i want to look
at what i think are the three most
likely
possibilities as to what the 24 elders
are
but whether you agree with these or not
you have i hope the techniques
so you can search this out for yourself
so
the first one we're going to look at is
get with me
first chronicles 25.
first chronicles chapter 25.
and from from my searching i came across
what i think are three
interesting possibilities as to what the
24
elders are and i'll just share them with
you and you can evaluate so
the first one is first chronicles 25
and what we're going to see in first
chronicles 25
is that there are 24 leaders of
song in the house of the lord
in first chronicles 25 and so obviously
what makes that an
intriguing possibility is it has the
number 24.
so let's look at this just for a moment
first chronicles 25 verse 1
moreover david and the captains of the
host
separated to the service of the sons of
asaph
and of hemann and of jedethon
who should prophesy with harps with
sultries and with symbols
and the number of the workmen according
to their service
was and it's going to give you there a
list of
the different personnel that were
evolved involved
look with me at first chronicles 25
verse 6. so go down to verse 6.
all these were under the hands of their
father for
song in the house of the lord with
symbols

psalteries and harps
for the service of the house of god
now why is that verse interesting it
specifically says that they were given
harps and when we read revelation 5
if you recall we did this just a few
moments ago what did the 24 elders have
they had harps you can go back to
revelation 5 and double check that
look with me at verse 7. so the number
of them
with their brethren that were instructed
in the songs
of the lord even all that were
cunning was 204 score
and eight so what's 204 score and eight
what is that number
so what's four score well it score is 20
so four score is 80. so the number
invert in
verse 7 is 288
well that's not 24 is it so maybe this
isn't quite what we're looking for i
don't know
look at verse 9. now the first
lot came forth for asaph to joseph
the second to get elia
who with his brethren and sons
were twelve the third to zachar
he his sons and his brethren were twelve
the fourth to israel
he his sons and his brethren were 12.
and as you look at the verses it's
pretty obvious what's going on
there are as you go through the chapter
there are all these folks that are in
groups of 12.
go down to verse 31 the fourth and 20th
to romanticise he his sons and brethren
were
12. now you've probably already figured
this out
288 is 24
times 12. so what happens
is there were 24 leaders of song
if you will and they each had a group of
12
and that is what added up to the 288
so the first possibility for the 24
elders in revelation 5 is maybe
it's these 25 song leaders that are
mentioned here in first corinthians 25.
the interesting thing about that is
there's 24 song leaders here
their responsibility in
first chronicles 25 is to lead in song
when we looked at the 24 elders in
revelation 5 what were they doing
they were singing these these song
leaders have harps the folks
in revelation 5 had harps so
it seems like that's an interesting

possibility now the question i wonder
though
is when you look at first chronicles 25
verse 7 it seems like
the relevant number is more 200 4 score
and 8 rather than 24 because what
happens is it
it's all of them acting together it's
not just the 24 leaders
it's the 24 leaders with their group of
12.
so maybe this isn't quite the right
possibility i don't know it was
intriguing enough
that it's on the list of things that
should be considered
so i wanted to share that so that's
that's option one
as to what the 24 elders could be
option two is first chronicles 24.
if you're in first chronicles 25 you'll
be able to find it fairly easily it's
so in first chronicles 24
there is a 24 priest rotation
of the aaronic priesthood who served in
the house of the lord
in other words the aaronic priesthood
that was given in the old testament
obviously served in the house of the
lord and there was a 24
priest rotation that served
so that seems interesting doesn't it the
number matches
so look with me at first chronicles 24
verse 1. now these are the divisions
of the sons of aaron the sons of aaron
nadab and abihu eleazar and
ithamar verse two but nadab
and abi who died before their father and
had no children
therefore eleazar and ithamar executed
the priest's office
so aaron has some sons but some of them
die prematurely
so it's the other sons that execute the
priest's office
first chronicles 24 verse 4 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 16
chief men of the house of their fathers
and eight among the sons of ithamar
according to the house of their fathers
so eliezer has 16 ithamar has eight
16 plus eight is 24.
now if you go down to verse 7
what they're going to do is they're
going to cast lots as to how the
priests will serve
now the first lot came forth to
jehoiara rib

the second to jedi verse 8
the third to harem the fourth to sayorum
and so on
then if you go down to verse 18 the 3
and 20th
to delia the 4th and 20th to
messiah so you can see there's 24
different chief men of
eleazar and ithamar's house that
serve in the house of the lord
verse 19. these were
the orderings of them in their service
to come
into the house of the lord so obviously
they're serving
in the house of the lord they're acting
as priests
so as you think about this as a
possibility first chronicles 24
these 24 members of the aaronic
priesthood
one reason it might make a lot of sense
is well there were
24 aaronic priests and there's
24 elders so that the numbers match up
pretty well
when we were in revelation 5 it told us
that those 24 elders were made kings and
priests
on the earth well these folks are part
of the aaronic priesthood so
doesn't that fit rather nicely
so this option is sort of intriguing
but i'll tell you there's reasons i
wonder whether this
is the answer look with me at
hebrews chapter 7. hebrews
hebrews chapter 7
and let's look at verse 11.
if therefore perfection
were by the levitical priesthood that's
the aaronic priesthood right there
for under it the people received the law
what further need
was there that another priest should
rise after the order of melchizedek
and not be called after the order of
aaron
in other words what what that verse is
saying is that the aaronic priesthood
wasn't perfect it was not the the
ultimate
answer there was going to need to be
something else
look at verse 12.
for the priesthood being changed so
there's a change
away from the aaronic priesthood there
is made of necessity a change also of
the law
for he of whom these things are spoken
pertaineth to

another tribe of which no man gave
attendance at the altar verse 14
for it is evident that our lord sprang
out of judah
of which tribe mooses spoke nothing
concerning priesthood
so let's make sure we understand what's
going on here so
we know that mooses is given in the old
testament law
and he's given the book of leuiticus and
there is a priesthood
established in leuiticus that pertains
to aaron and his
sons it's called the aaronic priesthood
because all of those priests are
descendants
of aaron but the point that's being made
in hebrews 7
is the aaronic priesthood is not perfect
and it will not continue forever and in
fact what
it says in verse 14 for is evident that
our lord sprang out of judah
of course the lord jesus christ was from
the tribe of judah
and he is said to be the capital h
capital p priest in the book
of hebrews in other words he's not
according to the aaronic priesthood
he is according he's a priest after the
order of melchizedek
is what the verses say now notice
verse 18 for there
is verily a disallowing
of the commandment going before for the
weakness
and unprofitableness thereof
in other words the aaronic priesthood
was done away with it was disannulled
why because it was weak
and it was unprofitable it doesn't seem
like
the ironic well the erotic priesthood is
not the long-term
eternal answer is it so it would seem
sort of odd that the aaronic priesthood
would be what's referenced
in revelation 5 or we should at least
think about whether it is
now look at me at verse 23.
let's start in verse 22 by so much
was jesus made a surety
of a better testament
well when is the old testament done away
with the old testament was put in force
in exodus 24 and it continued in force
and it continues in force during the
70th week
but it is done away with when the new
covenant
is put into place and that new covenant

is put into place
at the second coming so when you think
of revelation 5 and it talks about
kings and priests that shall reign on
the earth
well that is obviously after the second
coming
if it's after the second coming it's
after the new covenant the new testament
is fully put into place
so it would be odd for that to be
the aaronic priesthood it sort of
it doesn't feel right does it look with
me at hebrews
chapter 7 verse 23 and they
truly were many priests
because they were not suffered to
continue by reason of death
so when we were in first corinthians 24
and we were looking at the 24
members of the aaronic priesthood those
were obviously the original members but
what happened
they died and they had to be replaced by
new members
so even though first corinth first
chronicles 24 has some intriguing things
some intriguing similarities to
the 24 elders because both of them refer
to priests
they both have the number 24. it seems
like it's very
similar i'm not sure that the
24 priests of the aaronic
priesthood that we see in first
chronicles 24 i'm not sure that's the
answer
for revelation 5. maybe maybe it is and
and maybe uh
you know maybe it is but i'm just not
i'm not sure that it is
so what does that bring us to next
what's option three
option three is
the 12 sons of jacob plus
the 12 apostles so what we looked at
earlier in option one
option one was the 24 song leaders
of first chronicles 25 and of course the
24 matches
the 24 elders the the next option
was we were looking at first chronicles
24 and we were looking at the 24 members
of the aaronic priesthood
maybe those were the 24 elders there
aren't any other groups of 24 that i
that i'm aware of that really make a lot
of sense
at least i couldn't find them maybe
maybe you can and if you do then
send me an email let me know but the the
other thing that i ponder is this

if you think of the twelve sons of jacob
plus the 12 apostles of course 12 plus
12 equals
24. we all know that and you say okay
fine yeah i get it dave 12 plus 12
equals 24. that that's not a news flash
but
but why would you add those two together
why would you do that
the reason why give with me revelation
21
revelation chapter 21.
now in revelation 21 we're gonna read
about the new jerusalem and when you
read about the new jerusalem it's it's
fascinating
uh how it's described so let's start in
verse 10 revelation 21 verse 10.
and he carried me away in the spirit to
a great and high mountain
and showed me that great city the holy
jerusalem
descending out of heaven from god so
this obviously is the new jerusalem the
holy jerusalem
it descends out of heaven from god and
it sits
upon the new earth
verse 11 having the glory of god in her
light was like unto a stone
most precious even like a jasper stone
clear as crystal and had
a wall great and high
and had 12 gates and at the gates
twelve angels and names written thereon
which are the names of the twelve tribes
of the children of israel
so when you think about the new
jerusalem it descends out of heaven
and there are three gates on each side
there is 12
gates in total and there's names written
on the gates what are the names
well those names are the names of the
12 tribes of the children of israel so
the new jerusalem itself
testifies to the 12 tribes now notice
verse 13
on the east three gates on the north
three gates on the south three gates on
the west
three gates notice verse 14.
and the wall of the city had twelve
foundations and in them the names of the
twelve apostles of the lamb
well that's fascinating so the new
jerusalem has
two 212s that are featured pretty
prominently
the gates have the names of the 12
tribes
and there are 12 foundations with the

names of the 12 apostles
there's no other names i'm aware of that
are
involved in the structure of the new
jerusalem
so that clearly adds to 24
and it makes me wonder if the 24 elders
might be simply the twelve apostles
plus the twelve sons of jacob
representing the twelve
tribes of israel now you can think
through whether or not that makes sense
let me give you a couple reasons why it
might look with me at
so in exodus 19 we see
what moses spoke to israel
as he's as he's giving them the law
and exodus 19 is instructive
because it tells us something about
god's very purpose with israel so look
with me at exodus 19
verse 6 and ye
this is israel shall be unto me
a kingdom of priests and an holy nation
these are the words which thou shalt
speak unto the children of israel
so notice this we know that in the book
of leuiticus
the aaronic priesthood is established
and so the priesthood is
all the descendants of aaron it's not
from the tribe of judah we already saw
that in the book of hebrews
but when we read exodus 19 what does it
describe as the purpose for
the children of israel in other words
all 12 tribes
see exodus 19 6 refers to all of israel
and it says that god's intent is to make
them a kingdom of
priests so god's design for
all of israel was for them to be a
kingdom of priests
so that's interesting so it's it's it's
it's proper it seems
to think about all 12 tribes all the 12
sons of jacob as being priests
because that was god's original intent
that's the purpose that he will
ultimately fulfill with the 12 tribes of
israel
now get with me matthew 19.
matthew chapter 19.
matthew 19 and look with me
at verse 28 matthew 19
and verse 28
and jesus said unto them
this is the twelve 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 so the twelve apostles were
specifically told that they would sit on
twelve thrones judging the 12 tribes of
israel
they're sitting on a throne it sounds a
lot like being a king
doesn't it so when you think of
revelation chapter 5
when it talks about the 24 elders and
says
that they sing a new song and that song
describes them as being
kings and priests
well that seems to fit awfully well with
the 12 apostles because the 12 apostles
are going to sit on 12 thrones and it
seems to fit
pretty well with the 12 tribes of israel
because god's purpose for the nation of
israel was to make them a kingdom
of priests
so what we have there is we have three
different scriptural possibilities
as to who the 24 elders are i
i can't say which one of those is the
definitive answer
perhaps the definitive answer is
something else that that i haven't
found but what i would encourage you to
do is to study these things out
take a look at these verses scrutinize
them run your own
searches come up with what the answer is
and then tell me
and when you tell me i'll record a new
video and we'll give them the definitive
answer and we can delete this one
but my encouragement to you is is this
what you want to have is you want to
have the full assurance of understanding
and you get that by studying
the verses yourself in other words with
your own
investment of time and energy
and your soul interacting with the word
of god
the word of god will be built into your
soul in a powerful way
could i give you this word of
encouragement what's happening right now
during this unusual time in which we
live
is people are panicking they're fearful
they look at the developments in society
around them and they're worried and
they're concerned
and the world's a crazy place but listen
the world's been a crazy place for a
long time i mean you realize at one
point

god flooded it and killed everyone
except eight people
so if you look out you say well things
are pretty crazy listen it's been
crazier
right i mean there have been crazier
times than this but what's happening is
people are concerned because they're
they're they're fearful
and they're not letting the word of god
influence
their thinking they're letting news
media
influence their thinking well how many
times does the news media run
a story that say good great news there
was a new bible study started today
in this town or there was a new church
planted or
these folks got saved there's no stories
about that because the stories always
focus
on basically sin they focus on evil
developments that people somehow find
interesting
well what's happening right now is
people are focusing
on news stories and twitter
and facebook and all sorts of
communication vehicles of the world
rather than the word of god well are you
going to find peace are you going to
find comfort
are you going to find assurance in the
information of this world
it's not there this world itself is
going to perish
so my encouragement to you would be to
get in this book
take the principles that we've showed
you which
you can use yourself and you can blue
letter bible is free and you can study
these things out for yourself
so that you can be fully persuaded in
your own
mind we encourage you to do that
well thank you for spending some time
with us it's a joy um
we wish you were here with us virtually
and uh we look forward to seeing you all
in in physical presence so let's close
in a word of prayer
lord we thank you for for all that
you've done we thank you that jesus
christ died on the cross for our sins we
thank you that eternal life is a free
gift
we thank you that the holy spirit
indwells the believer and that it is
impossible to lose our salvation
we are just blessed beyond description

by
by all that you have done for us help us
to rejoice in that help us to walk in
that truth
and we give you all the glory it's in
the name of the lord jesus christ that
amen