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The 24 Elders of Apocalypse

ΠΙΧΟΥΤ ἔτοϋ ὑπρεσβυτερος ἡτὰποκαλϋψις

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In Chapter four of the Holy Book of Revelation, St. John started describing his vision in the throne room of Heaven. Once St John the Apostle entered through the opened door in Heaven he saw the throne of God surrounded by 24 thrones upon which 24 elders [priests] were seated. The 24 elders were dressed in white robes and they had crowns of gold on their heads (Revelation 4:1-4). Many scholars debate over who these elders are and what their duty in Heaven is. Some agree with the opinion that says that the 24 elders are a leader from each of the Twelve Tribes of Israel plus each of the Twelve Apostles. Another opinion says that they are 24 godly men through out the Biblical history. The third group of scholars identifies the 24 elders as a special group of spiritual beings who praise God continually.

The first two opinions agree on describing the 24 elders as redeemed human beings. The scholars backing this opinion base their argument on the song that the elders say in chapter five of the Holy Book of Revelation: *"You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on*



the earth."
(Revelation 5:9-10).

In this song the 24 elders include themselves among the redeemed humans who will reign on the earth on the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Although this argument seems to be convincing, a closer review of the text in its original

Greek translation would lead to a better understanding of the true identity of these elders. The Greek translation uses the word [them] instead of [us] and the word [they] instead of [we]. Re-reading the text once more in its new format would emphasize that the 24 elders are excluding themselves from the redeemed humans. Based on the Greek translation, the 24 elders, then, are a part of the created Heavenly Host, that is, angels of high rank and honor. They are created spirit beings and have been given positions of responsibility in the government of God, through which He rules the universe.

This brings up an important question concerning the duty of these highly ranked spiritual beings in Heaven. St. John's description in (Revelation 5:8) might give us an idea of the responsibility of these elders in Heaven. St. John says that each elder has a harp and golden bowels full of incense. A harp is a musical

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were to receive the Lord Jesus Christ's salvation. See how our Lord did not send the Samaritan back to the priest to fulfill the law's requirement but said to him, *"Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."* (Luke 17:19) This man had already offered his

sacrifice of praise to the Lord in coming back to Him with gratitude to worship Him. Is this not what our Lord desires with all His heart – that we rejoice in Him, that we accept His promises of salvation and eternal life with joy and live our days here in His care, trusting Him, our loving Father?

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instrument that was associated Biblically with praising God (II Samuel 6:5, Psalm 33:2). This implies that the main duty of the 24 elders was praising the Lord. A second responsibility is understood from the fact that each of them is carrying golden bowls of incense, which represents the prayers of God's people, thus a second responsibility of these spirit beings is carrying out God's answers to prayers as St. Paul said in (Hebrews 1:14): *"Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation"*.

The 24 elders play an important role in our Coptic theology, Divine Liturgy, and iconography. This is due to the fact that they are close to God's throne, praising Him day and night, interceding on behalf of all of us and carrying our prayers that we offer through the holy incense. The role of the 24 elders in the Coptic Church is clearly noticed through the icons that were located in the ancient Coptic Churches and Monasteries. The oldest iconographic representation of the 24 elders is in the apse of the Church of the Monastery of St. Simeon, Aswan (9th/10th century). Among the better-known icons of the 24 elders are those in the Chapel of St. Benjamin in the Monastery of St. Macarius (11th century) and in the Chapel of the 24 in the Monastery of St. Paul the Theban (1710). Our Coptic Church commemorates the 24 elders in the 24th day of the blessed month of Hatour. May their intercession be with us all. Amen. ✙

As He healed the 10 lepers of their illness when they came to Him seeking His mercy, He will also heal us of our sins and every spiritual and physical ailment, when we ask Him in faith. Only let us never forget His mercy and kindness. Let us come to Him always with joyful praise and thanksgiving (Psalm 100) and worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:24).✙

Can You Translate These Coptic Titles Within This Mighty Arrows?

1. Ⲭⲉⲣⲉ ⲛⲱⲟⲩ ⲙⲙⲁⲣⲧⲩⲧⲟⲥ
2. Ⲡⲓⲡⲁⲣⲁⲗⲓⲟⲥ ⲛⲧⲉ ⲛⲉⲛⲓⲟⲩ ⲉⲑⲟⲩⲁⲃ
3. Ⲡⲓⲗⲱⲓⲁ ⲙⲙⲁⲣⲧⲩⲣⲓⲁ ⲛⲭⲣⲓⲥⲧⲓⲁⲛⲟⲥ
4. Ⲉⲑⲃⲉ ⲡⲭⲓⲛⲃⲓⲥⲁⲣⲉ
5. Ⲡⲉⲛⲓⲱⲧ ⲉⲧⲧⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩⲧ ⲛⲉⲡⲓⲥⲕⲟⲡⲟⲥ
ⲁⲃⲃⲁ ⲓⲱⲥⲏⲫ
6. Ⲡⲓⲙⲏⲧ ⲉⲛⲁⲩ ⲛⲁⲡⲟⲥⲧⲟⲗⲟⲥ
7. Ⲡⲓⲙⲏⲧ ⲛⲕⲁⲕⲥⲉⲣⲧ
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10. Ⲡⲓⲙⲏⲧ ⲉⲛⲁⲩ ⲙⲫⲣⲁⲛ ⲙⲡⲓⲥⲣⲁⲛⲗ
11. Ⲡⲓⲣⲁⲛ ⲛⲧⲉ ⲡⲓⲱⲃⲉ ⲛⲁⲡⲟⲥⲧⲟⲗⲟⲥ
12. Ⲡⲓⲫⲓⲣⲓ ⲛⲧⲉ ⲁⲙⲙⲱⲛⲓⲟⲥ ⲧⲉⲙⲁⲣⲱⲟⲩⲧ
13. Ⲡⲓⲉⲙⲉ ⲓⲧ ⲛⲉⲗⲗⲟⲓ ⲛⲧⲉ ⲱⲓⲉⲛⲧ
14. Ⲡⲓⲙⲏⲧ ⲛⲕⲁⲕⲥⲉⲣⲧ