

Series: The Glory of God in the Person of Christ #1252

**Title: Jesus Holds Seven Stars
Revelation 1.16**

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. Let's return to the Word of God in Revelation chapter 1.

One of the many remarkable aspects to the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ is that the opening chapter kicks off an insightful look into who Jesus is and what He now looks like. Remember, the Apostle John is given this vision via the angel into heaven. He writes in a book what he sees and God has perfectly preserved this thrilling vision for you and I today.

In chapter 1 we've learned a lot, including Ten Facts about the Lord Jesus Christ (in verses 5-7) and then we come face to face with Lord of the church in verses 12-20. And thus far we have learned that Jesus (the Son of Man), is standing amidst all of His churches down through the centuries since He founded the church, and He is, quoting now Revelation 1, at verse 13, **"clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. ¹⁴ His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. ¹⁵ His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters."**

And I have attempted to explain to you truthfully and in detail what all of this means. What does the Bible mean by what it says? Understanding, properly interpreting the Biblical text, and explaining this (teaching this) to you is my task daily here on *God Is!* I hope, before Jesus the Master Teacher, that I am serving you well in this regard. And today we come down into verse 16 of this first chapter in Revelation and we learn what the Lord is holding in His right hand. Look with me, if you can, at Revelation 1, verse 16. The text reads, **"In His right hand He held seven stars..."** And what does that mean? Seven stars? In His right hand? Huh?

Let's take a little time here, as I have quite a bit of explaining to do. And let's just start with these **"seven stars."** What do these represent? They are not literally seven stars, such as you will find by peering through a telescope on an open landscape somewhere in the dark of the night. But we know exactly who these seven stars are. The Apostle John tells us over in this same chapter (chapter 1) and verse 20. Listen now with clarity to Revelation 1, verse 20 as the voice of Jesus speaks, **"As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand...the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches..."** So, according to the voice, which sounds like many waters, the seven stars are identified as the angels of the seven churches.

Follow me here now, Jesus has in His right hand seven stars, which He then identifies as the angels of the seven churches. And we have to understand what this word **"angels"** means. Now, when you read angels you think of – well – angels! And most people, even Christian people, do *not* understand the Biblical identification of an angel. If you want to understand angels as the Bible describes them, then let me know. We'll talk about this sometime.

But I do not need to go into that now, because these (here) are not literally angels as we think of angels, but rather messengers to the seven churches. Not angels like Michael is an angel or Gabriel is an angel (two angels *named* in the Bible), but rather Christ is referring to His messengers to each one of the seven churches. We should think of these messengers as elders in the church or pastors in the church. These are the spiritual leaders of the churches.

And how do I know that the word **"angels"** here is descriptive of the spiritual leaders and not real angels? I know because of searching the Bible to find what is descriptive of the context in which this word is used (here I go again on context, right?). And messengers fits this context better.

What is found here in Revelation 1 is very similar to the messengers written about in texts like Luke's Gospel chapter 7 and verse 24. I'll read that to you. Luke 7.24, **"When the messengers of John had left, [Jesus] began to speak to the crowds about John..."** In chapter 7 of Luke John the Baptist sends two of his disciples to speak with Jesus to find out if Jesus was the Expected One (the Messiah) – these are John the Baptist's messengers. And then, still in Luke's Gospel, and this time chapter 9 and verse 52 Jesus

(quote), **“Sent messengers on ahead of Him and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for [Jesus]...”** John sent messengers and Jesus sent messengers. So, the context of Revelation 1 – these being the angels of the seven churches - tells us these are the messengers of the seven churches.

I hope that you are with me. Furthermore, nowhere in the Bible are angels (like Michael or Gabriel, or like the myriads of angels in Revelation chapter 5) – nowhere in the Bible are they involved in church leadership. No. The **“angels”** here are messengers. And of course Jesus holds His messengers tightly in His right hand. His right hand indicates that Jesus is in charge of those messengers, as Jesus is of elders, pastors, and spiritual leaders to this very day. Christ continues to exercise total authority in His church, and He holds the human leaders of the church accountable to Him. This is very biblical, and I want to show you this now in the Bible as we move to a conclusion to our time together today in Revelation 1, verse 16, part A.

I cannot overemphasize enough to you how seriously we have to take spiritual leadership in our churches (in Christ’s church). And my prayer for you, sincerely, is that you belong to a church – a local body of believers in the Lord – where you have strong leaders, as the Bible defines leaders in the church, according to the commands of God. This is my prayer for you and your church, because I am personally aware of many churches (the world over) that suffer tragically from weak, sinful, unaccountable, quote/unquote “leaders” – who, by character and conduct – are nothing like what the Lord commands the church to have. And this includes pastors, ministers as well as lay leaders, such as elders, deacons, and the like.

Are you a leader in your church? If so, pay careful attention to what God says about you and to you in His Word. Are you a pastor? Be very alert to the following! And all of you, be attentive to this as you pray for your church leaders, and as you select them. These texts will tell you who is qualified to be a messenger, a leader, in your church and who is not. These texts tell you *with great clarity*, who should remain as your leaders going forward and who should be removed, or step aside, as soon as possible.

1 Timothy 3, verses 1-7 says, **“It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. ² An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.**

⁴ He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity ⁵ (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), ⁶ and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. ⁷ And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” That was 1 Timothy 3, verses 1-7 describing spiritual leaders in the church.

And Titus 1, verses 5-9 says, **“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, ⁶ namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. ⁷ For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, ⁸ but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, ⁹ holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”** And this is Titus 1, verses 5-9 which reiterates what Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3, verses 1-7.

This is who a spiritual leader in the church of God is to be. And this describes the angels (the messengers) of the seven churches that Jesus is holding in His right hand in Revelation 1. These messengers are men like these men described in 1 Timothy and Titus. Do read these important texts for yourself. And we’ll pick up here again tomorrow, so join me then for God Is!

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