

• A person like a son of man in the midst of the lampstands

Jesus is the Son of Man of Daniel 7:13

• A humane and kindly king

• Age and purity

• Understanding and infallible knowledge

• Strength and power

• Jesus protects His churches by speaking to them

• His face radiates purity and holiness

• John is overwhelmed

Revelation is not a chronology

The Lord Jesus Christ is the divine Priest-and-King who cares for his churches. We read: ¹²*So I turned to see the voice which spoke with me and having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,* ¹³*and in the midst of the lampstands there was a person like a son of man clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.*

The vision reminds us of the Holy Place in Israel's tabernacle, in which there was a seven-branched lampstand. The priest on duty had to keep the light burning brightly. This is the picture here in Revelation 1. Jesus is the Son of Man of Daniel 7:13, the humane-and-kindly king who is given a kingdom by his Father. He is a king sharing the Father's throne. He is also a priest working in the Father's temple – the church. Like the kings and priests of the ancient world, he has a long robe and a sash around his chest. He wants his churches to be light-bearers to the world.

¹⁴*His head and his hair were white like wool, white as snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire.* ¹⁵*His feet were like bronze refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.* ¹⁶*In his right hand he held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in full strength.* The white hair speaks of Jesus as the everlasting King. The whiteness represents age and purity. These two things belong together since only that which is pure lasts for ever. The eyes which are like a flame of fire speak of his understanding of us and his infallible knowledge. The feet which are like bronze refined in a furnace speak of his purity and strength. His voice is like the sound of rushing waters; it has the strength and power of a mighty waterfall or the rapids of a river.

Jesus' right hand holds the stars. He protects his churches by speaking to them. From his mouth comes a sharp two-edged sword. His word pierces and penetrates us in many different ways.

His face is like the sun shining in full strength. The face tells out what you are like, whether you are angry, whether you are in a sweet mood. Jesus' face (in the symbolism here) is like the sun shining in full strength. It radiates purity and holiness. It speaks of overwhelming brightness and beauty. Like the sun the presence of Jesus radiates light by which everything else is seen.

John is overwhelmed. ¹⁷*When I saw him I fell at his feet as though dead.* But Jesus does not want us to stay overwhelmed by him. *Then he laid his right hand upon me. He said, 'Fear not. I am the first and the last'* ¹⁸*and the living One. I died but behold I am alive for ever and ever. I have the keys of death and of Hades.'* Jesus wants us to see him but then overcome our fears.

Jesus has work for John to do. ¹⁹*Write therefore the things you saw, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.* It is sometimes thought that 1:19 refers to three parts of Revelation ('the things you saw' being chapter 1 'the things which are'

• Chapters 2-3 concern past, present and future

• The entire vision relates to the entire history of the world

• The seven stars

• There is good reason to think that churches have angels watching over them

• Assisting each congregation to get the message that it needs

• Jesus helps His church by giving them a 'revelation' of Himself

Revelation ('the things you saw' being chapter 1, 'the things which are' being chapters 2–3, and the 'things which will take place' being chapters 4–22). But this is a mistake. The wording in 1:19 has nothing to do with the structure of Revelation. Revelation 2–3 is not **only** concerned with present realities. It contains references to the future (such as 3:5, 10) and even to future tribulation¹. And there are plenty of things in chapters 4–22 which have already taken place – such as the birth, resurrection and ascension of Jesus in Revelation 12:1–6). It is a mistake to think Revelation has to be in chronological order. The **entire** vision of John relates to the **entire** history of the world, past, present and future.

¹ 2:10, 22

Jesus is present with his churches. He says to John, ²⁰*The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.*

The seven stars are 'the angels of the seven churches'. Is this the messenger who takes the letter to the church? Or is this the pastor of the church? More likely John really does mean angels! There is good reason to think that churches have angels watching over them. The book of Revelation is a vision speaking of spiritual realities. In this vision John sees angels representing churches. The angels have to see that the churches each get their letter. This is all part of a vision. It simply means that in the spiritual world Jesus and his angels are watching over churches and seeing that each one gets its message. In the actual experience of what happens we are not conscious of the angels, but there is good reason to think they are there behind the scenes. Amongst other things they are assisting each congregation to get the message that it needs.

Jesus is the King who is the first and the last, the One who was present at the beginning and will be superintending his kingdom until the very end. He has conquered death, and will never be defeated by it. He will see to it that his people are conquerors also. Jesus helps his church by giving them a 'revelation' of himself. That is what they need.



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Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)* books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



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