

REVELATION 1:12-16

Imagine for a moment that you are in the same situation as the Apostle John. You are on a prison island and, for the most part, you are all alone. One day as you are going through your typical day, you hear a loud, authoritative, booming voice that is as commanding as a military trumpet blast. The Apostle John did what any of us would do; **he immediately turned around to see who or what was speaking with him. What he saw was so unnerving that he fell down like he was dead.**

When John turned around he ended up seeing an unusual symbolic picture comprised of two major prophetic sights, most of which are carefully explained to us:

(Prophetic Visual Sight #1) - John saw seven golden lampstands. **1:12b**

(Prophetic Visual Sight #2) - John saw a glorious Person. **1:13-16**

PROPHETIC VISUAL SIGHT #1 – John saw seven golden lampstands. **1:12b, 20**

Now according to Revelation 1:20, the seven golden lampstands represent seven churches.

The problem here is not what the seven golden lampstands represent; the problem is what does this representation mean ?

When we think of seven golden lampstands, we immediately think of the Old Testament and specifically we think of the tabernacle which featured the golden lampstands. If we are to truly understand what this means, we must go back to the O.T. and look at the tabernacle lampstand:

(Passage #1) - Exodus 25:31, 32, 37 .

There were to be seven lamps and three of the lamps were to branch out from one side and three from the opposite side and one in the middle. The purpose of the lamps was to give out light to its front location.

(Passage #2) - Exodus 25:31; 37:17 .

The lampstand was to be made of pure gold. Pure gold was gold that had purity to it which had come from a refining process. **Pure gold, in all actuality, was refined gold.**

(Passage #3) - Leviticus 24:1-4 .

The lamps were to be continually lit before the LORD. God demanded that the lamps were to be continually lit before Him. The olive oil was to be maintained so that the fire could continually burn for Him.

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(Passage #4) - Numbers 8:1-4 .

These lamps were to be a continual reflection of the front area. The lit lamps were to throw continual light on the front area.

(Passage #5) - Zechariah 4:2 .

There was to be a bowl or reservoir on top of the lampstand that fed all of the lamps.

According to **Revelation 1:20**, the seven golden lampstands are the seven churches. Based on an analysis of the O.T. passages that give us data on the lampstands, we may make the following observations about the church:

Observation #1 - There is a sacred connection in the mind of God between the O.T. tabernacle and the N.T. church. Those who minimize the local church are making a fatal, eternal mistake. The church is to be a place of reverence and worship just as the O.T. tabernacle was. It is to be a place where people come to meet God and hear the Word of God. It is not to be a place of a bunch of seminars, political causes, or entertainment. It is a sacred place where we are to do serious business with God.

Observation #2 - God will refine His church with trouble and turmoil to make it pure before Him. God wants His church pure which means He wants His people pure.

Observation #3 - The church is to continually maintain its shining testimony before God. Just as the O.T. lamps were to continually burn before the presence of God, so also is the church to continually burn. The primary focus of the church should not be to do things, so great numbers of people will see, but to do things because God sees.

Observation #4 - The purpose of the church is to continually reflect God's Word and Jesus Christ for God to see. The candlestick is not "the" light; it is to be a reflection of "the" light.

Observation #5 - The church is to carefully draw its source of power from one reservoir which is Jesus Christ. Every church needs to realize that Jesus Christ is its head.

Observation #6 - There is a sacred difference between the O.T. tabernacle and the N.T. church. In the O.T. tabernacle, there was one lampstand with seven lamps. In the N.T., there are seven distinct lampstands. Each church is an individual church and each church is continually monitored by Jesus Christ and is independently accountable to the Lord. Jesus Christ has a direct connection to each church and each church is directly accountable to Him.

PROPHETIC VISUAL SIGHT #2 – John saw a majestic and glorious Person. **1:13-16**

The next thing John saw when he turned around was a majestic human form standing “in the middle of the lampstands.”

What this tells us is that Jesus Christ is closely connected to each church. He is carefully looking into each church to see what kind of light it is reflecting. The church is to burn bright for God and He is right in the middle of everything taking place in His church. Make no mistake about this point; this church is on full display before Jesus Christ.

The specific description of Jesus Christ given in these verses indicates that He is connected to His church as both priest and judge.

Dr. Charles Ryrie said, “His clothing is that of a priest and judge, which are the relationships of authority which He sustains to the local churches” (*Revelation*, p. 8). Dr. Robert L. Thomas made an interesting observation when he said, “The titles of Jesus Christ found in the introductions to six of the seven messages in chapters 2 and 3 are drawn largely from this vision ... and its descriptive phrases. Only the message of Laodicea (3:14-22) is devoid of one of these” (*Revelation, An Exegetical Commentary*, Vol. 1, p. 97).

Now the first thing John observes about this glorious Person in **verse 13** is that He was “like the son of man” (ομοιον υιον ανθρωπου). There are two grammatical observations we want to make about this:

Grammatical Observation #1 - The words “son of man” is an anarthrous (without article) construction. What this means is that everything John saw concerning this person had the character and quality of being the son of man. **This phrase “son of man” refers to Deity having humanity, and coming to this world to judge and reign.** Daniel used this very phrase to refer to the God/man who would come out of heaven to take control of the world (Daniel 7:13-14). In fact, the Apostle John uses the term also in the exact same way (John 5:22, 27).

Grammatical Observation #2 - The comparative adverb “like” (ομοιον) is one that means the same as, in both form and appearance (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 317). The reason why John uses this adverb “like” in regard to Jesus Christ is because John had never seen Jesus Christ look like this.

John turned around and he saw this Person, Jesus Christ, who looked like the son of man, but there was a unique look to Him in what he saw because he had never seen Jesus Christ look quite like this.

John gives us a careful description of what he saw and he presents nine descriptions of Jesus Christ:

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Description #1 - He saw that Jesus Christ was clothed with a robe reaching to His feet. **1:13b**

This is not an ordinary robe that the average person in the Middle East would be wearing when they were out doing the chores. This was a very rich royal robe. The imagery is taken from the book of Exodus. Aaron's garments were critical to him having a priestly ministry before God and he needed to be clothed with a special robe (Exodus 28:1-4). In fact, six of the seven O.T. occurrences of this clothed to the feet imagery refer to the garment of the high priest (*Ibid.*, p. 99).

This robe specifically had to do with the priestly clothing that was required by God in order to be an ordained priest who could enter the Holy Place to offer sacrifices for the people (Exodus 29:5, 29; 31:10; 39:1-31). **This garment immediately says that Jesus Christ is the final . high priestly link between God and man, the One fully and authorized and capable of offering a sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 2:17).** By virtue of the fact that the garment reaches to His feet, we may see that every part of Jesus Christ's ministry is a priestly ministry unto God.

Description #2 - He saw that Jesus Christ was "girded across His breast with a golden girdle ." **1:13c**

The word "girdle" (ζωνην) is the same word translated in the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) in Exodus 28:40 by the English word "sashes." It is clear that these "girdles" or "sashes" were to be worn because they were beautiful in the sight of God and they brought glory to God. Everything about Jesus Christ was beautiful in the sight of God and brought glory to God. There was nothing lacking in any way concerning the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

Description #3 - He saw that Jesus Christ had a head and hair that were white like wool and like snow. **1:14a**

John changes his description slightly, moving from Christ's clothing to Christ's Person. When Daniel received His vision of God on His throne, he saw exactly the same thing (Daniel 7:9). **By virtue of this we may assume that the Ancient of Days is Jesus Christ who is God from Genesis to Revelation.** We need to know this and defend this. False religions demean Jesus Christ, refusing to acknowledge this very point He is the Ancient of Days.

There are five inferences we may make concerning this white hair: 1) Majestic Deity; 2) Divine Eternality; 3) Ultimate Maturity; 4) Complete Purity; 5) Absolute Wisdom. Jesus Christ is Deity, Eternality, Maturity, Purity and Wisdom.

In order for any to go to heaven, they must have a righteousness that washes away sin to the point where God views us as being as white as the snow (i.e. Isaiah 1:18). The only Person capable of giving us this pure righteousness is Jesus Christ, through His shed blood (**Rev. 7:14**). **Jesus Christ will one day be honored as the Ancient of Days and John saw Him in this state right here.**

Description #4 - He saw that Jesus Christ had eyes that were “like a flame of fire.” **1:14b**

In Daniel’s vision, he said the eyes were like “flaming torches” (Daniel 10:6). This point of Christ’s eyes is stressed two other times in Revelation 2:18 and Revelation 19:12.

In both of the contexts it has to do with the fact that He is the all seeing judge. In Revelation 2:18 He is making a judgment concerning the Church and in Revelation 19:12, He is coming back to earth in all of His glory to judge the world.

This simile (“like”) is being used to convey to us that John saw Jesus Christ with His penetrating eyes that were able to see and judge everything and every one. Nothing escapes His eyesight; as Dr. Charles Ryrie said, His eyes are “piercing and penetrating in holiness” (*Ryrie Study Bible*, NASV, p. 2014).

This image speaks of Christ’s ability to accurately evaluate and judge everything (Rev. 2:18, 23; 19:11-12). The writer of Hebrews said, “**There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him ...**” (**Hebrews 4:13**). Jesus Christ sees everything as it truly is and His eyes literally do have the power to kill.

William R. Newell made an interesting observation when he said that Jesus Christ is not yet judging in this dispensation of grace, but He is searching (*Revelation Chapter by Chapter*, p. 27). In other words, Jesus Christ is using His eyes now to monitor everything and He carefully is watching all that is taking place and He will soon come as a judge and His eyes will show it.

Bruce Barton said, “Revelation will challenge and change your mental picture of Jesus Christ. That is its purpose to reveal Jesus Christ” (*Revelation*, p. 12). Most who have tried to depict some picture of Jesus Christ typically try to make certain they make His eyes loving. But the truth is, the next time Jesus Christ is actually seen, His eyes will be like fire.

H. A. Ironside made a very interesting observation that I would like to borrow and develop: The first time any one meets God, he does so with God seeing all of the person’s sin, and if the first time a person meets Jesus Christ is on the Day of Judgment, it will be too late. All people need to meet Jesus Christ right now by faith before they see Him in Person. Don’t try to improve or make yourself better, just go to Christ by faith just as you are without one plea. If you will do that then you have nothing to fear when you see those eyes which are a “flame of fire” (*Revelation*, p. 29).

Description #5 - He saw that Jesus Christ had “ feet like burnished bronze.” **1:15a**

Daniel said that he saw feet that were like “gleaming or polished bronze” (Daniel 10:6). This imagery is used again in Revelation in regard to the church of Thyatira in Revelation 2:18, and in Revelation 19:15 it is stated that Jesus Christ will come in all of His glory and “tread the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.”

The picture here is of very hot metal that has come out of the furnace and has a glow to it that is radiant and magnificent. There is no other way to view the furnace imagery. **In Scripture, the theme of fire is often used in connection with judgment, specifically judging that which is impure and sinful.**

It cannot be a mere coincidence that in the church of Thyatira, where this very image is used (2:18), it is used in the context of a church that did nothing about idolatry and immorality (2:20).

The image here is that Jesus Christ is the One who will judge and stamp out all evil and sin. He does not intend to fool around with sin; He will crush it and He will stamp it out.

Description #6 - He heard that Jesus Christ had a “ voice like the sound of many waters.” **1:15b**

John could well relate to this because the roar and pounding on the shore of the Aegean Sea was constantly within his hearing as he lived on Patmos.

Both Ezekiel and Daniel used this same metaphor in reference to God (Ezekiel 1:24; 43:2; Daniel 10:6). Biblically speaking we may understand this as a powerful force (Psalm 93:4; Isaiah 17:13). **We may understand Christ’s voice as a sound which demonstrates God’s power, God’s glory, and God’s majesty.**

If you have ever visited Niagara Falls and heard the sound that millions of gallons of water produce as it plunges 164 feet at 18 million cubic feet per minute, you can relate to a sound that is awesome. It is interesting that the word “Niagara” means “thunder of waters.” It does sound like roaring thunder and you stand in awe of its power.

This is exactly the authority behind Christ’s voice. It made John stand in total awe of His Power and Glory and Majesty. The true voice of God has authority and power and majesty.

This should also be the same way the church views Jesus Christ and the way the church should be viewed. It ought to be a place that promotes and reflects the awesome power and majesty of God. It ought to be a place that thunders forth the Word of God in a way that has an authoritative ring to it. The true voice of God is not wimpy; it rings with authority.

The tragedy of many churches is that they do not want to make any waves; however, a true church that thunders forth God’s Word will make plenty of waves for the glory of Almighty God.

Description #7 - He saw that Jesus Christ held seven stars in His right hand. **1:16a**

John saw Jesus Christ's right hand with seven stars in it. The Greek text is very emphatic to point out that these stars are in His right hand.

Seven times in this book of Revelation the "right hand" is emphasized (**1:16**, 17, 20; 2:1; 5:1, 7; 13:16). The right hand is pointed out well over ninety times in Scripture in both the Old and New Testament.

This particular concept of the right hand was used in a variety of ways. For example, it was used as a reference to choosing a direction - moving to the right or left (Genesis 24:49); it was used of a mental intelligence test - to have the ability to distinguish between the right hand and the left hand (Jonah 4:11). **The book in the Bible that refers most often to the right hand is the book of Psalms** (Psalms 16:8, 11; 17:7; 18:35; 20:6; 21:8; 26:10; 44:3; 45:4, 9; 48:10; 60:5; 63:8; 73:23; 74:11; 77:10; 78:54; 80:15, 17; 89:13, 25, 42; 91:7; 98:1; 108:6; 109:6, 31; 110:1, 5; 118:15, 16; 121:5; 137:5; 138:7; 139:10; 142:4; 144:8).

If we collectively examine all of the passages, we may conclude that **God's right hand represents a very special position that features God's special sovereign presence, work and care.** This work includes Divine blessings, deliverance from enemies, and an exalted privileged position both on earth and in heaven. This would be a position of great protection.

When someone or something is in God's right hand, it is in a very special position of having God's sovereign protection, position, deliverance, and blessings while on this earth. Being in God's right hand means one is watched over and cared for.

To be in a local church that is so intimately connected to Jesus Christ's right hand is a wonderful privilege. Being in Christ's right hand means it is His church, it is safe, it is protected, it is monitored, and it is used. It sits in a very high and heavenly location.

It is specifically stated that Jesus Christ held the "seven stars" in His right hand. The seven stars are specifically identified and interpreted in **Revelation 1:20** as being "the seven angels (οι αγγελου) of the seven churches."

The major question of interpretation is what is meant by the noun angels? Who or what are the angels of these seven churches? In the history of interpretation there have been at least seven views of what or who these angels are:

1. Some say it refers to men sent to Patmos to check on the condition of the Apostle John.
2. Some say it refers to the pastors of the seven local churches in Asia.
3. Some say it refers to the general life of the church, its history and success.
4. Some say it refers to the spiritual condition of the church.
5. Some say it refers symbolically to the activity within the church.
6. Some say it is a representation of individuals in the church.
7. Some say it is a key angel who is responsible for oversight of the church.

We may begin by rejecting all interpretations that are symbolic, which means we reject views 3-6. It is evident from the text that John saw something real and literal in the right hand of Jesus Christ, and that Jesus Christ said what he saw was seven angels. He did not say he saw a representation of some spiritual condition, or activity, or general life of the church.

The specific word “angel” is the Greek word angelos (αγγελος). The basic meaning of this word “angel” is a sent messenger (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 4). **This word is used in the New Testament in reference to human men and in reference to heavenly angels.**

For example, in Luke 7:24 it is translated “the messengers” (των αγγελων). In Luke 9:52 it is translated “messengers” (αγγελους) and in James 2:25 it is also translated “the messengers” (τους αγγελους). **In each of these passages the word is used to describe the activity of real human men.** Based on this fact, some interpreters say that when we read that Revelation was to be written to the angel of one of the seven churches (Rev. 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14), it must be a reference to a human being who was the pastor of the church (**views 1 and 2**).

Now to actually determine what is meant by the noun “angel,” we really don’t need to know how Luke or James used the word; we need to know how the Apostle John used the word in all of his writings and even more importantly how did he use it in Revelation.

In all of John’s writings the word “angel” is used to refer to literal angels, literal angelic heavenly beings. John uses the word “angel” in his writings 72 times. He uses it four times in his Gospel and 68 times in the book of Revelation. **If we were to say that the seven angels of the seven churches are really seven men, then this would be the only place in all John’s writings where he is not referring to an angelic being.** In fact, in Revelation 1:1, we are introduced to an angel, and I know of no interpreter who views it any other way than a reference to a special heavenly angel. **We believe these angels are literal heavenly angels. This is the only interpretation that sticks with a literal interpretation of the words John wrote.**

We know from the book of Daniel that there are territorial angels (Dan. 10:20-21). Satan has them and so does God. We also know from the Apostle Paul that heavenly angels are connected to the local church because he charged Timothy in the angel’s presence in the church of Ephesus (I Timothy 5:21). It is very probable that God assigns a key territorial heavenly angel to each local church, and that angel, in harmony with the work of God, is responsible for the church’s protection, impact, and blessings. It could very well be that a territorial church angel must appear before God at various times to give his own account of church matters (Job 1:6; 2:1). He specifically would report on how seriously that church took God’s written Word. He would be very aware of the interpretation, instruction, and application of every church.

The point of Christ holding these angels in His right hand is that Jesus Christ controls all heavenly activity within each local church. They are accountable to Him and He authorizes everything they do. These angels would monitor everything in the church and everyone in the church. People who come to church ought to realize this is not a light, fluffy atmosphere. It is to be a very sacred place and there are some very sacred heavenly witnesses.

Description #8 - John saw that Jesus Christ had a mouth with a sharp two-edged sword.
1:16b

This image of Jesus Christ shows up also in Revelation 2:12, 16; 19:15, 21. In some of the O.T. prophecies of Isaiah it is predicted that Jesus Christ would “strike the earth with the rod of His mouth” (Isaiah 11:4) and that His mouth would be “like a sharp sword” (Isaiah 49:2). Other N.T. references refer to the Word of God as being like a sharp sword (Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12).

This particular word “sword” (ρομφαία) is only used in the book of Revelation and in Luke 2:35. This sword was a large-bladed broad Thracian sword, which was a devastating weapon that could and would instantly destroy any enemy. This sword was used by a warrior and that is precisely the image pertaining to Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ will come and He will destroy all enemies by what He says and what He says is the Word of God. He will come and bring devastating judgment against His enemies and He will have total victory by what He says.

We may also know that what Jesus Christ says is always the Word of God because He is the Word of God (John 1:1, 14). Everything Jesus Christ says is the Word of God and when He comes to judge, all things will be brought into subjection to God by His words.

The Word of God is sacred and serious. It is obviously not designed to tickle us but to cut into our hearts and souls and minds and perform spiritual surgery (Hebrews 4:12).

Description #9 - John saw that Jesus Christ had a face that shined like the sun. **1:16c**

Christ’s appearance was as bright and glorious as the sun when it shines in all of its strength. Approximately 61-62 years before John wrote Revelation, he and Peter and James had been taken by Jesus Christ into a mountain and they got a visible glimpse of Jesus Christ in all of His glory (Matthew 17:1-2). Here John is seeing the full glory of God on full display in the Person and even in the face of Jesus Christ.

These nine descriptions clearly show us who and what John saw. He saw Jesus Christ in all of His Divine glory and majesty. He saw Him in all of His splendor and honor. No longer was Jesus some babe lying in a manger or some unattractive Jew who had no form or majesty. He was no longer a man of sorrows; He is the God/man of Divine glory. Jesus Christ was seen in all of His glory, and the apostle who had once leaned on Jesus’ breast (John 13:23), now fell down before him like a dead man (Revelation 1:17). This is the right response to Deity.

It seems to me that there is today a dangerous absence of reverence concerning Jesus Christ. But the next time Jesus Christ is seen, there will be such a reverence and respect for Him that every knee shall bow. All will see Him in His spectacular glory just as John saw Him in Revelation.

REVELATION 1:17-20

In the Gospel of John it was clearly stated by Jesus Christ Himself that “all” are to honor God the Son in the same way and at the same level as they honor God the Father. It is also specifically stated that if one does not honor the Son at this level, he cannot and does not honor the Father (John 5:23).

Dr. Warren Wiersbe said back in 1985 that there was a “dangerous absence of awe and worship” in most churches (*Be Victorious*, p. 21). Many movements such as the “Jesus Movement,” de-elevate and demean the Person of Jesus Christ. These kinds of movements talk about Jesus and they promote love and forgiveness, but they disregard the truth of who He actually is. Because of this, many churches have lowered their standard of worship. As a result, loud electric guitars and drums have replaced reverent pianos and organs. Entertainment has replaced the pulpit. Surface level has replaced depth level. What is called “worship” is really not worship.

Whenever any person in Scripture has actually been faced with the real presence of Almighty God, the response has always been similar. When the prophet Isaiah saw the Lord sitting on the throne, he said, “Woe is me, for I am ruined” (Isaiah 6:5). When the prophet Daniel saw a vision of heaven, he was “greatly alarmed” and his “face grew pale” (Daniel 7:28).

When John saw Jesus Christ in all of His glory in Revelation, he “fell at His feet as a dead man.” At the time this happened, John was the most honored and most spiritual Christian on the earth. He was the last living apostle and he was the “beloved” disciple. He had specifically been kept alive by God in order to write Revelation. But when he saw Jesus Christ in all of His glory it affected him the way it should affect us. William R. Newell wrote, “Let all who deny the Deity of Christ behold His beloved disciple at His feet ‘as one dead,’ at one sight of Him glorified” (*Revelation Chapter By Chapter*, p. 28).

Now in these final four verses of the first chapter of Revelation there are two main responses: one by the Apostle John and one by Jesus Christ:

RESPONSE #1 – The response of John to seeing the glorious Jesus. **1:17a**

When John saw Jesus Christ in all of His glory he “**fell at His feet as a dead man.**” Contextually, the action was motivated by John’s recognition of his own sinfulness and also by the fear of judgment coming from Almighty God in the Person of the Glorified Christ. If this were the response of the most spiritual man on the face of the earth, then it surely will be ours.

The active voice of the verb “I fell” indicates that John, himself, produced this action. He was not forced to fall down, but this was his own response to seeing Jesus Christ as Glorious God. John fell to the feet of Jesus Christ as one who had just been struck dead would fall. Someone who literally drops dead while standing instantly falls and drops to the ground. That is precisely what John did. Why did John fall? Because he is looking at God. He has just seen Deity and no one sees the face of God and typically lives to tell about it.

A very frequent response and reaction that often accompanies one who is overwhelmed because he has seen the glory of God, is a falling prostrate down on the ground. This certainly was the response of the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:28), of the prophet Daniel (Daniel 8:17, 27), of the Apostles Peter, James and John (Matthew 17:6), of the Apostle Peter (Luke 5:8), and of the Apostle Paul (Acts 9:3-4; 26:14). **These were all powerful men of God and they were all on the ground with their faces and heads bowed because they are in the presence of God and Jesus Christ.**

It truly does honor God the Father when people bow before Jesus Christ in recognition of His majestic deity. In fact, Paul said every person will one day bow to Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:10-11).

Dr. J. Vernon McGee really captured the essence of this when he wrote: “But when he saw the glorified Christ on the Isle of Patmos, he did not go up to Him and pat Him on the back or shake hands with Him. He didn’t even begin a conversation. He fell at His feet as dead! The effect of the vision upon John was nothing short of paralyzing. ... My friend, since John reacted like that, we can be sure that when you and I get into the presence of the Lord Jesus, we are not going to approach Him in a familiar way. We will fall at His feet as dead. He is the glorified Christ today. And let me say that I do not like the irreverence of the ‘Jesus culture’ that we see today, speaking of Him or to Him as if He were a buddy. Nor do I like to hear someone sing or say that Jesus is a friend of theirs. Now, you may think I am hard to please. You are right; I am. But Jesus said, ‘You are my friends if you do whatever I command you’ (John 15:14). If you say that Jesus is a friend of yours, you must be implying that you are obeying Him. Oh, my friend, if we could see Him in all of His glory and His beauty, we would not get familiar with Him” (*Revelation, Thru The Bible*, Vol. 5, p. 896).

Wise are God’s people who have a high and holy view of Jesus Christ.

RESPONSE #2 – The response of the glorious Jesus to the reaction of John. **1:17b-20**

The response of Jesus Christ to John may be broken down into two main actions:

Action #1 - What Jesus Christ physically did to John. **1:17b**

Now we may observe that the first thing that Jesus Christ did when John fell to His feet like a dead man, was to take His right hand and lay it on John. **The first thing we observe is that Jesus touches John, John does not dare touch Jesus.** Jesus is seen as glorious God and you do not touch Him.

The right hand is significant because the right hand is the place of God’s favor. This action is very reminiscent of what had previously happened to John some sixty years prior to this. This was the same hand that John saw holding the seven angels of the seven churches (Rev. 1:16, **20**). One must wonder what happened to the seven angels that were in His right hand. The text does not say, but it is certainly possible that they had departed to their respective church assignments.

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This action is extremely significant because it shows John and us that the sinless hand which holds and favors the churches is the same hand that touches and favors sinful individuals . Here is Jesus Christ, in all of His glory and majesty, putting His right hand on John. John knew by this action that he was favored by God and this is pure grace.

If you could have asked John, “Do you deserve this?” By his actions John answers, “I deserve to be dead.” But in marvelous grace Jesus touched John. This was Christ’s touch of grace.

This concept of the right hand or right side is significant concerning God’s judgment. At the judgment of the nations, those who are selected to go to the right side of Jesus Christ will enter the Kingdom and those who are selected to go to the left side will be condemned to eternal fire (Matt. 25:31-33, 41).

Action #2 - What Jesus Christ verbally said to John. **1:17c-20**

There are six statements that Jesus Christ makes to John:

(Statement #1) - Do not be afraid . **1:17c**

The Greek (μη φοβου) is written in such a way that John is being told to stop the action of being afraid. In other words, John was afraid and Jesus Christ is telling him to stop it.

John recognized that he was a sinner and he is in the presence of the sinless Savior and he was very afraid. The same hand of grace that touched John some sixty plus years prior to this scene is now the same hand of grace that sustained him at this very intimidating moment. Christ had called John to Himself when he was a sinner and He still cared for John even though he still was a sinner.

Keep in mind that John was seeing Christ in all of His glory as Divine Judge. The vision he was about to see would show John that Jesus Christ was a ferocious judge who would bring terrible judgments of God to this world. God’s vengeance was about to be poured out on this sinful, God-mocking world. The sun would be darkened, the moon would be turned to blood, the stars would fall and mountains would be moved out of their places and islands would disappear. Jesus Christ would authorize an unprecedented series of worldwide plagues and ultimately bring all the nations to a final ferocious battle called Armageddon and then cast all unbelievers into everlasting fire.

The words “fear not” mean that John has nothing to fear in view of the wrath of God. Any who have believed on Jesus Christ have nothing to fear concerning God’s wrath because we are not appointed to wrath (I Thessalonians 5:9).

(Statement #2) - “I Am the first and the last.” 1:17d

What Jesus Christ says right here absolutely proves He is Almighty God. The names and titles used here are majestic. They are High, Holy and Heavenly.

The verb “I Am” (ἐγώ εἰμι) is a clear and powerful statement of Deity. The “I Am” title comes from the Old Testament and literally means the Jesus of the New Testament is the self-existing Jehovah of the Old Testament (Exodus 3:14). Jesus Christ identified Himself with the “I Am” formula and the religious leaders of Israel knew exactly who He was claiming to be and wanted to kill Him (John 8:58-59). Think for a moment what this would do to John as he realized that the One touching him and talking to him is the great I Am.

If that isn't enough, Jesus includes this with another title “the first and the last.” The title “the first and the last” is used three times in Revelation in reference to Jesus Christ - 1:17; 2:8; 22:13. This title was also used in the O.T. in regard to Jehovah, the great I Am - Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12-13. **This title means that God is the only Being who is the first of all things and the last of all things.** There was no Being before God and there will be no Being after God (Isaiah 43:10). God begins all things and God ends all things. As David Levy said God is the creator of all things and the consummator of all things. He is the absolute God of all of history (*Revelation*, p. 29).

By Christ using this name concerning Himself, He clearly establishes that He is Almighty God. There are at least three reasons why Christ begins by using this name:

Reason #1 - To establish the fact that Jesus Christ is the eternal God over everything and everyone.

Reason #2 - To establish the fact that He has all authority to bring the final program of God to an end.

Reason #3 - To show John that He was in a face-to-face encounter with Almighty God and because of His faith in Jesus Christ, He had nothing to fear.

(Statement #3) - “I am the Living One.” 1:18a

This is a title “Living One” is a title used of God in both the O.T. and the N.T. (Joshua 3:10; Psalm 42:2; 84:2; Jeremiah 10:10; Hosea 1:10; Matthew 16:16; 26:63; Acts 14:15; Romans 9:26; II Corinthians 3:3; 6:16; I Thessalonians 1:9; I Timothy 3:15; 4:10; Hebrews 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; I Peter 1:23). **This title was used to reveal that there is only one true Living God. The only Living God is the God of the Bible.** As Robert Thomas said, “This contrasts Him to the dead and inanimate gods of heathenism” (*Revelation An Exegetical Commentary*, Vol. 1, p. 111).

The participle “living” (ζων) is present tense which means Jesus Christ is the only living God and He is always and continually alive. When Jesus Christ is identified as the living One, He is being identified as the God of the Bible who has been and is continually alive (i.e. Matt. 16:16).

Jesus Christ has continually existed as the living God throughout all eternity.

(Statement #4) - “I was dead and behold I am alive forevermore.” 1:18b

What we have here is a contrasting statement or title that contrasts His point of death (aorist tense) “I was dead” with His continual and perpetual life, “continually alive forever.” **There was a specific moment in time when the living Son of God was momentarily really dead; however, that is contrasted with His state of being continually alive forever and ever.** By Jesus interjecting the word “behold” He is basically saying - you take a good look at this right here. You look at this, you see this, and you understand this.

Now Daniel describes God the Father as a Being who lives forever (Daniel 4:34; 12:7), and this same title is used of God in this book of Revelation (Rev. 4:9, 10; 10:6). Since Jesus Christ is identified as God, how is it possible that He could have a moment of death?

The answer is found in the verb “was” (εγενομην). This word means to become something or to be made something that typically you were not previously (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 92). The verb is the middle voice which means that Jesus Christ made Himself to become subject to death. This was not His normal or previous state as God. He selected one moment in time (aorist tense) in which He would leave His continual alive state for a death state.

The question that must be asked is why? Why would God the Son do this? The answer is because His insurmountable and incalculable sacrifice is the only possible way that sinners may have their sins forgiven.

God the Son chose a specific moment to die on the cross for sinners. He was really and truly momentarily dead. He was so dead that the Roman soldiers did not even need to break His legs (John 19:31-33). He was God’s sacrificial Lamb. However, He was only dead momentarily and He came back to life and is alive forevermore. This proves He is the only true God and Savior.

(Statement #5) - “I have the keys of death and Hades.” 1:18

When you think of keys, you immediately think of a key which is able to open a door and permit entrance into what is beyond the door. The Death/Hades combination occurs again (Rev. 6:8; 20:14).

When it comes to death, there are three kinds - spiritual death (born separated from God because of sin); physical death (immaterial part of a person is separated from material part of a person); eternal death (an unbeliever is separated from God forever in a place of burning torment). The noun Hades refers to a temporary hell where an unbeliever goes when he dies until ultimately he will be cast into everlasting fire (Luke 16:23; Revelation 20:14). What Jesus Christ is saying is I am the One who is in charge of all judgment. I determine when a person dies and I determine where a person goes after he dies. **The keys of everything pertaining to life, death and eternity are in the hands of Jesus Christ.** It is not the Devil who determines who goes to hell, it is Jesus Christ.

John was well aware of the fact that we all deserve hell. John certainly realized his own sinful condition; however, if the One who died for him touched him and said do not be afraid because He is the One who holds the keys of death and Hades in his hands, then John has absolutely nothing to fear.

The Apostle Paul had exactly the same perspective of this when he said concerning a believer who had been justified, “Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who intercedes for us” (Romans 8:34). Paul was convinced that nothing could separate us from the love of God which is found in Christ Jesus.

If a person trusts totally and only in Jesus Christ to save from sin, he has nothing to fear for His blood washes all sin away and He is the One who holds the keys to life and death and eternity in His hands.

(Statement #6) - Jesus commands John to “write.” 1:19-20

The verb “write” is an imperative, meaning it is a command. Jesus Christ, who is Almighty God, commands John to write. Believers and churches that do not place a high priority on accurately expounding and interpreting the written Scriptures are making a serious mistake.

Jesus Christ places a high priority on the written Word of God and He is showing His churches how important His written Word truly is.

In **verse 19**, Christ commands John to write down three main time episodes:

Time Episode #1 - Write “the things which you have seen” - things past - **Revelation 1**
What John actually saw in chapter 1 was the glorified Christ.

Time Episode #2 - Write “the things which are” - things present - **Revelation 2-3**
This refers to the present existing state of the churches which Christ will describe.

Time Episode #3 - Write “the things which shall take place after these things” - things future - **Revelation 4-22**

- 1) Future things that will take place in heaven. Rev. 4-5
- 2) Future things that will take place in the Great Tribulation. Rev. 6-19
- 3) Future things that will take place in the Millennium. Rev. 20:1-10
- 4) Future things that will take place at the Great White Throne Judgment.
Rev. 20:11-15
- 5) Future things that will take place in the New Jerusalem, New Heaven and New Earth. Rev. 21-22

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Keep in mind that this “Revelation” is singular, not plural (Revelation 1:1). What this means is that God wants John to write this and He wants His people to understand this as a singular unit. There is a three part phase to this book - things past, things present and things future. However, God wants every church to understand this as a unit.

In **verse 20**, Jesus reveals some of the church symbolism that John saw in connection to Himself. We have already thoroughly discussed this, but **the thing that obviously becomes clear from verse 20 is that this book of Revelation reveals the truth that local churches are carefully monitored by High, Heavenly and Holy powers.**

The church had better be very dedicated to carefully understanding God’s written Word, especially a book like Revelation, because Jesus Christ Himself along with key angels are paying very close attention.