



## ***HEARING THE VOICE OF THE JESUS OF GLORY***

***SPEAKING TO HIS CHURCH ... AT EPHESUS AND SMYRNA AND PERGAMUM AND THYATIRA AND  
SARDIS AND PHILADELPHIA AND LAODICEA ... AND TO US THIS MORNING ...***



The church is to God the most beautiful and  
valuable entity on earth—so valuable that Jesus was  
willing to purchase it with His own blood.

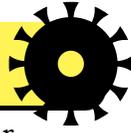
(John MacArthur)

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Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the  
Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God,  
which he obtained with his own blood.

(Acts 20:28 ESV)

## I) HEARING THE VOICE, 1:9-11.



- (Revelation 1:9–11 ESV) I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet 11 saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

The loud voice like a trumpet broke into John's Sunday worship on the prison island of Patmos. John was on Patmos because he was being punished for his love for Christ and his Church.

### A) John was not a detached messenger but one who was fully invested in Christ's Church.

He was their brother and partner in the suffering of this life, in the promise of the kingdom and in the ultimate victory they would share through their patient endurance as true believers in Jesus Christ.

### B) John was called on to write and send the letters because he was faithful to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus.

- (Revelation 1:1b–2 ESV) ... his servant John, 2 who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

John received his commissioning from our glorified Lord to write down and send letters to seven actual churches in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) and to every church in every age to come until his return.

## II) SEEING THE VOICE, 1:12-16.



- (Revelation 1:12–16 ESV) 12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 The

hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, 15 his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

### A) John turned to see the voice but first saw seven golden lampstands.

Christ first brought John's attention to his Church. He identifies the seven golden lampstands as the seven churches and as lampstands they represent the high, privileged position of the Church in the plan and purpose of God.

- (Revelation 1:20 ESV) As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

### i) As a lampstand, we, as a local church fellowship, have the opportunity and the privilege to be the light of God in this dark, sinful world.

- (Matthew 5:14–15 ESV) You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

### ii) We will be the light of God in this dark, sinful world, when we, like John stay true to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ.

- (Revelation 1:2 ESV) [John] who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.
- (Revelation 1:9b ESV) ... on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.
- (Philippians 2:14–16 ESV) Do all things without grumbling or disputing, 15 that you may be blameless and

innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

**B) John then saw "one like a son of man" in the midst of the lampstands.**

This is our Lord Jesus in all his glory and majesty and might and splendor and holiness standing in the midst of these churches—his Church.

**WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND ...**

- i) This portrayal of Jesus is very intentional as it is the exact image of Jesus that God wants to burn into our consciousness.
- ii) This portrayal of Jesus is beyond our human categories precisely because the glory of God is beyond our human categories.

**C) John saw our glorified Lord holding seven stars in his right hand, a sharp sword coming from his mouth and his face shining like the sun.**

- (Revelation 1:16 ESV) In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

**THREE VERY IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ...**

**1) Who or what are the seven stars? 2) Why is he shown holding them in his right hand? And 3) what do we learn from these three things being linked together in this verse—stars, sword and face?**

**i) First, who or what are the seven stars?**

The seven stars he is holding in his right hand are the angels of the seven churches.

- (Revelation 1:20 ESV) As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

**ii) Second, why is he holding these seven angels of the seven churches in his right hand?**

This picture of Christ (1:16) with **1)** the seven stars in his right hand, **2)** a sharp, two-edged sword coming from his mouth and **3)** his face shining like the sun seems to represent at least four things: power, provision, protection and accountability.

**POWER ...**

- (Exodus 15:6–7 ESV) Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power, your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy. 7 In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries; you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble.
- (Exodus 15:11–12 ESV) Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders? 12 You stretched out your right hand; the earth swallowed them.

**PROVISION AND PROTECTION ...**

- (Psalm 16:11 ESV) You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.
- (Psalm 18:35 ESV) You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your right hand supported me, and your gentleness made me great.
- (Psalm 20:6 ESV) Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand.
- (Psalm 63:8 ESV) My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.
- (Psalm 138:7 ESV) Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and your right hand delivers me.

**ACCOUNTABILITY ...**

With our great privilege comes great accountability. Everything will one day be revealed. God clearly held the church at Pergamum accountable for tolerating false teaching even in the midst of faithfulness in other areas of their church life.

- (Revelation 2:12 ESV) And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: **“The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.”**
- (Revelation 2:16 ESV) Therefore repent. If not, **I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.**

And Christ to this day holds those accountable to his word and his witness who profess to be his church. Every individual and every church will fall under his scrutiny.

- (1 Peter 4:16–17 ESV) Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. 17 **For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God;** and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

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### **ACCOUNTABILITY CONTINUED ...**

#### **AS WE INVESTIGATE THE IDENTITY OF THE “ANGELS” ...**

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- (Revelation 1:20 ESV) As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand ... **the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches** ...
- (Revelation 1:16 ESV) **In his right hand he held seven stars,** from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

#### **Here are the various theories as to the identity of the angels:**

1. The angels are angels, possibly guardian angels. **Objection:** The “angels” seem to be held accountable for the sins of the churches which would be impossible for the holy angels.
2. The angels are pastors or other leaders in the churches. **Objection:** Although this word is used for a human messenger this use is very limited.
3. The angels are a personification of the prevailing spirit of the church.

**Mounce** ... The most satisfactory answer, however, is that the angel of the church was a way of personifying the prevailing spirit of the church. [Mounce, R. H. (1997). *The Book of Revelation* (p. 63).

*Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.]*

I believe we might find the best answer by combining 2 and 3. I have observed a prevailing spirit in every church I have attended and/or pastored—good and bad. Often this prevailing spirit is seen very clearly in what I would call the true leader or leaders of the church, which often is not the pastor and sometimes not even the men in leadership.

I also believe we will discover as we continue our study a prevailing spirit in each of the churches in chapters 2-3, and in five of the seven churches we will find the prevailing spirit of unfaithfulness to Christ which prompted him to call them to repent of their sins.

We need to understand that Christ notes every time his word is compromised, every bit of unchecked anger and resentment, every time the teaching of a false gospel is ignored to keep someone in the church, every juicy bit of gossip that undermines the godly leadership and every secret phone call filled with grumbling and disputing ... **everything will be brought to light before Jesus, the King of glory.**

- (Hebrews 4:12-13 ESV) **For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword,** piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. **And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.**
- (1 Corinthians 4:5a ESV) Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, **who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart.**
- (Matthew 12:36 ESV) I tell you, on the day of judgment **people will give account for every careless word they speak.**
- (Luke 12:2–3 ESV) **Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.** 3 Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.