

# Revelation 1:17b-20

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/rev/rev-1/revelation-117b-20/>

*Jesus comforts John, instructing him to record in writing the things that he has and will be shown. Jesus also explains the meaning of the seven stars and seven lampstands, which represent the seven angels of the seven churches and the seven churches themselves.*

Now Jesus *placed His right hand on* John and begins to speak to him. John does not specify the exact nature of this laying on of Jesus' *hand*. But since just prior to Jesus speaking John is laying at Jesus' feet as one who is dead, it seems likely that Jesus' *hand* is being used in some way to revive John, when combined with the comforting admonition to *not be afraid*. It is clear from this statement that the main reason John fell down before Jesus' feet was due to fear.

We might expect Jesus to say "Hello John, it is I, Jesus" since John appears to be His most intimate friend when He walked the earth. Jesus assigned John to take care of His mother after His death (John 19:27). John is referred to as the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 13:23). But this is not a reunion, it is a revelation. And John is still living on earth, while Jesus' work on earth is done. And John now has a job to do. Jesus identifies Himself clearly, but in terms that make it clear He is God. He says *I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades*. It is clear from His description that He was *dead*, but is *alive forevermore* now that He is the risen Christ. But He is also God. He is the *first and the last*. Jesus was in the beginning with God, and Jesus was God, as John stated in his gospel (John 1:1-4).

Jesus also defeated death when He died and rose from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:56). Accordingly, He was given authority over death, and now has *the keys of death and of Hades*. The key is a symbol of authority. The one who possesses a key to unlock the door has authority over the house. Now Jesus has the *keys of death*. He also has authority over *Hades*, since he has the *keys of Hades*. *Hades* is the place of the dead. Acts 2:27 records Peter quoting Psalm 16:10, which says:

"For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol;  
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay."

But Peter translates the Hebrew "Sheol" into Greek, substituting "Hades" in place of "Sheol." This would indicate that the Greek concept of Hades as a place of the dead is sufficiently accurate to substitute as a picture of Sheol, which is an Old Testament word for the place of the dead (sometimes including the grave, depending on context).

Hades is described in Jesus' story of the rich man and Lazarus, recorded in Luke 16:19-31. This place of the dead has two compartments with an impassible chasm between, with one for the wicked and one that is paradise. The compartment for the wicked is described as bringing the rich man torment. But now Jesus has the key to all of Hades. And soon we shall see a time when

Hades is thrown into the lake of fire, which is the permanent source of torment for the devil and his followers, and those whose names are not written in the Book of Life (Revelation 20:14).

Jesus then states: *Therefore write the things which you have seen...*

Jesus' inclusion of *Therefore* indicates a progression of thought. It might be something along the lines of "Since you are My disciple John, and I am Jesus in my glorified state, and I have a job for you to do, now therefore stop lying at My feet like a dead man, and get up and get busy writing down what I am going to show you."

Jesus tells John he is to not only write *the things which he has seen* already. He is also to write *the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things*. John is to write the past, present, and future experiences and events that will be revealed to him. Jesus pauses to explain some of what John has seen already, for John to record for the readers of the Revelation. Jesus explains that *the mystery of the seven stars which 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*. It seems clear that John had no idea what any of this meant, and it was a *mystery* to him. So now Jesus will disclose the *mystery* for his understanding, and to pass along to those who read the testimony he will pen.

Jesus states that the *seven stars* that John saw *in Jesus' right hand* were the *angels of the seven churches*. *Angels* is a translation of the Greek "angelios," and means "messengers." This could refer to heavenly messengers, or human messengers. Since Jesus used His *right hand* to comfort John, perhaps at this point Jesus is explaining something John saw, but no longer sees. This indicates that this is likely symbolic, showing that the *angels* or messengers are in the care and protection of Jesus, as they are in His *right hand*.

John also saw Jesus standing in the midst of *seven golden lampstands*. These *lampstands are the seven churches*. The passage does not say the *lampstands* represent the *seven churches*, it says they *are the seven churches*. The *seven churches* are clearly assemblies of human believers living in the seven cities noted in verse 11, which are physical cities on earth. The *seven lampstands* could be connected with Jesus' statement:

"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."  
(Matthew 18:20)

Perhaps in addition to Jesus being present at any assembly of believers on earth, the church is also present in spirit with Jesus in heaven. It could also represent Jesus' intimate presence, watch, and care over the *churches*.

## **Biblical Text**

**17 b And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, 18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. 19 Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things. 20 As for the**

**mystery of the seven stars which 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.**