

Revelation 1:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Analysis

The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest...

This verse from Revelation's vision of the glorified Christ - his majesty, authority, and presence among the churches employs apocalyptic imagery rich with Old Testament allusions and symbolic meaning. The Greek text uses vivid apocalyptic language characteristic of Jewish prophetic literature, drawing heavily from Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Zechariah.

The symbolism must be interpreted within its first-century context while recognizing timeless spiritual realities. The imagery would resonate powerfully with persecuted believers facing Roman imperial cult worship, providing hope that despite present suffering, Christ reigns sovereign and will consummate His kingdom. The apocalyptic genre uses symbolic numbers (seven, twelve, 144,000), colors, beasts, and cosmic imagery to convey theological truth rather than photographic descriptions.

Christologically, Revelation consistently exalts Jesus as the victorious Lamb, the faithful witness, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Every vision ultimately points to Christ's supremacy, His finished redemptive work, and His certain return to judge the living and dead and establish the new creation.

Historical Context

John received this revelation circa AD 95 during Domitian's persecution, exiled on Patmos for his testimony. The seven churches of Asia Minor faced increasing pressure to participate in emperor worship and pagan religious practices. Refusal meant economic hardship, social ostracism, and potential martyrdom. Understanding this context illuminates Revelation's encouragement to faithful endurance.

The apocalyptic genre was familiar to first-century Jewish and Christian readers. Rather than newspaper-style predictions, apocalyptic literature uses symbolic imagery to reveal spiritual realities behind earthly events, encourage the faithful, warn the unfaithful, and assert God's ultimate sovereignty over history. Parallels with Daniel, Ezekiel, and intertestamental apocalyptic writings would help original readers decode the symbols.

Rome's imperial cult demanded worship of Caesar as divine, placing Christians in impossible situations—compromise their faith or face persecution. Revelation identifies Rome as "Babylon" and assures believers that despite appearances, the Lamb conquered through His death and resurrection, and all earthly kingdoms will submit to His reign.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 1:20 reveal God's character, particularly His sovereignty, holiness, and justice?

2. What specific encouragement or warning does this verse offer for maintaining faithful Christian witness amid cultural pressure?
3. How does this passage point to Christ's victory and the hope of new creation, and how should that shape your present priorities?

Interlinear Text

τὸ	μυστήριον	τῶν	έπτὰ	ἀστέρες	ἄς	εῖδες	έπὶ
G3588	The mystery	G3588	The seven	stars	which	thou sawest	in
	G3466		G2033	G792	G3739	G1492	G1909

τῆς	δεξιᾶς	μου	καὶ	τὰς	έπτὰ	λυχνίαι	τὰς	χρυσᾶς
G3588	right hand	my	and	G3588	The seven	candlesticks	G3588	golden
	G1188	G3450	G2532		G2033	G3087		G5552

οἱ	έπτὰ	ἀστέρες	ἄγγελοι	τῶν	έπτὰ	ἐκκλησίαι
G3588	The seven	stars	the angels	G3588	The seven	churches
	G2033	G792	G32		G2033	G1577

εἰσίν	καὶ	αἱ	έπτὰ	λυχνίαι	ἄς	εῖδες	έπτὰ
are	and	G3588	The seven	candlesticks	which	thou sawest	The seven
G1526	G2532		G2033	G3087	G3739	G1492	G2033

ἐκκλησίαι	εἰσίν						
churches	are						
G1577	G1526						

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 2:1 (Parallel theme): Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

Revelation 3:1 (Parallel theme): And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

Revelation 1:16 (Parallel theme): And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

Zechariah 4:2 (Parallel theme): And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof:

Revelation 3:7 (Parallel theme): And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

Revelation 3:14 (Parallel theme): And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

Revelation 2:12 (Parallel theme): And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

Revelation 2:8 (Parallel theme): And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

Revelation 2:18 (Parallel theme): And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;