

Revelation 1:12-20 - When did God Die?

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COURSE  COMMENTARY 

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1:12 - seven golden lampstands

- **represent the Seven Churches**
"the seven lampstands... are the seven churches" ([Rev. 1:20](#)). Lamps are powered by *oil*, a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The church is not the source of light, but the bearer of the light ([John 1:4-8](#)). Believers are to actively *expose* darkness ([Eph. 5:11-14](#)). Similar to the *menorah* in the tabernacle ([Ex. 25:31](#)), but *individual* lamps.

1:13 - in the midst, one like the Son of Man

- **in the midst of the seven lampstands**
Christ is in the midst of *His* churches and grants them His authority ([Mat. 18:20](#)). Believers occupy a similar position as Old Testament Levites who encamped around the glory of the Lord ([Num. 1:50](#); [1Chr. 9:27](#)).
- **a permanent position**
In the Old Testament, the glory of the Lord departed from Israel due to sin ([1S. 16:14](#); [Ps. 51:11](#); [Eze. 8:6](#)). New Testament believers are baptised, indwelt, and **sealed** with the Holy Spirit "for the day of redemption" ([Eph. 4:30](#)). See also: [John 6:27](#); [John 14:16](#); [2Cor. 1:22](#); [Eph. 1:13](#).

1:13 - like the Son of Man, clothed, girded

- **like the Son of Man**
The Son of Man who is presented to the Ancient of Days in Daniel's vision ([Dan. 7:13](#)). Ezekiel also saw "a likeness with the appearance of a man" high above the throne ([Eze. 1:26](#)). The high priest understood the significance of Jesus' claim to be the Son of Man ([Mat. 26:64](#)). Jesus describes Himself at His Second Coming using this phrase: [Mat. 24:30](#); [Mark 13:26](#); [Luke 21:27](#). Stephen saw Him just before his death ([Acts 7:56](#)).
- **a garment down to the feet**
The garment and golden band appear to refer to priestly garments ([Gen. 37:3](#); [Ex. 28:4](#); [Lev. 8:7](#)), although the priestly sash is not made of gold. Christ has an unchangeable priesthood because He continues forever ([Heb. 7:14](#)). "Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." ([Heb. 7:25](#)). Very similar to the vision of Daniel by the Tigris ([Dan. 10:5](#)).

1:14 - head and hair white, eyes like a flame

- **white head and hair**
Just like the Father, the Ancient of Days ([Dan. 7:9](#)), Jesus shares the same glory as the Father

(John 17:5) ! May refer to purity (Isa. 1:18), but more likely His radiant glory as at the transfiguration.

- **eyes like a flame**
Symbolic of His omniscience (John 1:48), omnipresence (Ps. 139:7), and role as judge (John 5:22-27).

1:15 - feet, voice

- **feet as 'fine brass'**
The brass is "as refined in a furnace." "Fine brass" is an unknown Greek word (*chalkoli'banos*) which may refer to "glowing brass" indicating His glory, or it may refer to the *hardness and purity* of the resulting refined metal. God treads His enemies underfoot (Isa. 63:3; Rev. 19:15).
- **voice as the sound of many waters**
Describes the sound of a multitude (Isa. 17:12-13) or noise like the tumult of an army (Eze. 1:24). Daniel heard a similar extremely powerful voice (Dan. 10:6) as did Ezekiel (Eze. 43:2).

1:16 - seven stars, sword

- **seven stars**
These are explained: "the angels of the seven churches" (Rev. 1:20). They are "in His right hand," the place of *protection* and *favor*.
- **out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword**
God's creative acts are *spoken forth* (Gen. 1; 2Pe. 3:5). Messiah's mouth is like a sharp sword (Isa. 49:2) and with His lips He will "slay the wicked" (Isa. 11:4). With this sword, He will "strike the nations" (Rev. 19:15). This is the sole offensive weapon of the Christian (Eph. 6:17). God's judgment will be in accordance with His Word (Rev. 20:12).

1:16 - countenance like the sun

- **like the sun**
The *second time* John has seen His glory shine from His face (Mat. 17:2). Just like the Father, the glorified Christ "dwells in unapproachable light" (1Ti. 6:13-16).

1:17 - fell as dead, right hand on me, First and Last

- **Overwhelmed by God's Presence**
All those who were privileged to see the glory of God recognized their inadequacy and sin in His presence:
Isaiah (Isa. 6:4), Ezekiel (Eze. 1:28), Daniel (Dan. 10:8, 16-17), Peter, James, and John (Mat. 17:6), Paul (Acts 9:4). "The beloved disciple, who had handled the Word of life, lain in his Lord's bosom in the days of his flesh, can as little as any other endure the revelation of his majesty."
- **God's Messengers Restored**
Daniel and Ezekiel were similarly restored (Dan. 10:8; Eze. 2:1-2). Isaiah's unclean lips were

purged by a seraph ([Isa. 6:5-7](#)). John was similarly restored at the Transfiguration of Jesus ([Mat. 17:6-7](#)).

- **the First and the Last**

God is said to be "everlasting" ([Gen. 21:33](#)). He "inhabits eternity" ([Isa. 57:15](#)). Jesus is applying to Himself the **divine title!** " Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: **I am the First and I am the Last**; Besides Me *there is no God.* " ([Isa 44:6](#)).

1:18 - He who lives, and was dead

- **He who lives**

Present active participle: "the living one." An essential attribute of God. He is the source and *active sustainer* of all life.

- **and was dead**

When did God die?! At the crucifixion of Jesus! This verse is the cure to all cults and false religions which deny the deity of Christ. Even the *New World Translation* (Jehovah's Witness Bible) contains this verse. It is an absolutely clear statement of the deity of Jesus Christ, the God-man who died for the sins of the world.

1:18 - behold I am alive, keys of Hades and Death

- **behold I am alive**

Take note! I **was dead** but now **living I am forever!**

" I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. **Do you believe this?** " ([John 11:25-26](#)) DO YOU??

- **keys of Hades and Death**

It is by death that people enter Hades. Whereas death holds men's *bodies*, Hades holds their *souls*. The entrance of Hades is described as being controlled by gates ([Job 38:17](#); [Ps. 9:13](#); [Mat. 16:18](#)). Those held therein are "prisoners." ([Isa. 24:22](#); [1Pe. 3:19](#)). Jesus unlocks those gates setting men free from death itself and *the bondage of the fear of death* ([Gen. 3:19](#); [1Cor. 15:55](#); [Heb. 2:15](#))!

1:19 - write the things

- **write!**

John is commanded to write 14 times in this book! John is an *observer and scribe*, not an author crafting a literary work! What is John to write? **God's outline is given in this verse.**

- **the things which you have seen**

The visions of Chapter 1, especially the coming (v. 7) and deity of Christ.

- **the things which are**

The current state of the churches at the time of John's writing (chapters 2 and 3).

- **the things which will take place after this**

The events of the distant future, from Chapter 4 onward.

1:20 - mystery, seven stars, lampstands, angels

- **mystery of the seven stars and lampstands**
Mystery -- something unknown, but revealed by God. The stars are "in my right hand." They are **protected** and **avored** .
- **stars are the angels of the churches**
Stars are often used as symbols of angels ([Job 38:7](#); [Isa. 14:13](#); [Rev. 9:1](#)). Human beings are said to shine "like stars" ([Dan. 12:3](#)). The twelve sons of Israel are represented as stars ([Gen. 37:9](#); [Rev. 12:1](#)). But *who* is the angel (singular) of each church?
 - 1) A heavenly guardian angel?
 - 2) A human messenger from the church?
 - 3) A human leader of the church?
 - 4) An abstract personification of the church?
- **lampstands are the churches**
See slide 1. Jesus threatens to "remove your lampstand" from the Ephesian church ([Rev. 2:5](#)).

For additional information on this topic, see the [commentary](#).