

040 - Revelation 1:16 - 2022-03-02 (No meeting the previous week due to icy roads.)

Revelation 1:16 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.

Revelation 1:20 KJV The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand...The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches...

I. "ANGELS" IN THE SENSE OF HUMAN MESSENGERS

Impossibility of these being the heavenly spiritual beings called "angels"

To take down a letter from Jesus by the Holy Spirit to give to an angel
An angel does not need this
John cannot do this
The angel then would have to appear to the church

The letters are "to" the messengers.
No angel's love has grown cold, nor has he need of repentance, etc.

VWS:

But why should the seer be instructed to write to heavenly messengers, with exhortations to repentance and fidelity, and describing them as "rich," "poor," "lukewarm," etc. (Rev_2:4; Rev_3:1, Rev_3:16)?

See MacArthur p. 47

Possibility of them being human messengers

G32 *aggelos* plural here *aggeloi* used to mean “messengers” not “angels”

Luke 7:19-27

24 And when the **messengers** of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

27 This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my **messenger** before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

Luke 9:51-52 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, 52 And sent **messengers** before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

James 2:25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the **messengers**, and had sent them out another way?

Men called messengers

Malachi 2:6-7 The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. 7 For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

Malachi 3:1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

Haggai 1:13 Then spake Haggai the LORD'S messenger in the LORD'S message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the LORD.

These very verses translated “messengers” rather than “angels”

Rev 1:20 Tyndale ...The vii stares are the messengers of the vii congregacions...

II. THESE HUMAN MESSENGERS BEING THE CONGREGATIONS' PASTORS

Geneva: By angels he means the ministers of the Church.

Knollys:

the ministers of the gospel are called...angels, because they are the special messengers of God, whom He sendeth to preach the glad tidings of salvation by Jesus Christ

Gill:

the seven stars which John saw in Christ's right hand, represent the angels, or pastors of the seven churches of Asia, and in them all the pastors and ministers of the churches in all the periods of time until Christ's second coming.

Spurgeon:

we shall take it for granted that these stars represent the pastors of the churches

Carroll: the stars represent the messengers or pastors of the churches

MacArthus: likely leading elders and pastors

JRY:

The process here agrees with the rest of the scriptures:

-Jesus speaks to His apostles

-by the Holy Spirit, the apostle tells what he received from Christ to some man he judges faithful, who will entrust it to other faithful men

The process here agrees with what already has been said in Revelation

-Rev 1:3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy

-pastor receives this letter, and reads it to the congregation, who hear it read

If today someone sent a letter to this congregation, to whom would he send it?

Daniel 12:1-3 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. 2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and **they that turn many to righteousness as the stars** for ever and ever.

III. THE CONGREGATIONS' PASTORS BEING MESSENGERS

IV. THE CONGREGATIONS' PASTORS BEING LIKE STARS IN THE RIGHT HAND OF JESUS CHRIST

JRY:

If today someone sent a letter to this congregation, to whom would he send it?

Geneva:

By angels he means the ministers of the Church.

Trapp:

Ministers are fitly called stars, which affect these inferior things by motion, light, and influence.

Poole:

By angels he means God's messengers and ambassadors to the seven churches, called angels, both in respect of their office, being the ambassadors of Christ, 2Co_5:20, and of that holiness which they should show forth in their doctrine and life. To interpret the term of angels by nature, seems not agreeable to what we shall hereafter meet with said to some of them; Christ would never have ordered John to have charged them with a loss of their first love, or to admonish them to be faithful unto death, or to repent. Whether the term angel denoteth any particular superior minister or bishop in those churches, or is to be taken collectively for all the ministers in those churches, I shall not dispute. Certain it is, *aggelov* signifieth no more than is common to all ministers, viz. to be God's messengers, and move upon his errand.

Knollys:

Why the ministers of the gospel are called "stars" see Re 1:16. The ministry of the law was cloudy and dark, in comparison of the ministry of the gospel

{2Co 3:6,11} This excelled it in glory, therefore the ministers of the gospel are called "stars," and they are also called angels, because they are the special messengers of God, whom He sendeth to preach the glad tidings of salvation by Jesus Christ unto the people. {Mr 16:15; Lu 9:52} And the Churches received the Ministers of Christ as Angels. {Ga 4:14}

Christ puts this name of dignity upon his ministers, that the churches and people to whom they preach, should count them worthy of double honor, {1Ti 5:17} therefore called and diligent labor: The churches and saints should have such ministers in reputation, and esteem them highly in love for their works sake. {Php 2:19; 1Th 5:13} These names of dignity should put the ministers of Christ in mind of their duty, to wit, to let their light shine before men, for they are called stars {Mt 5:16} and to wait on their ministry, {Ro 12:11} not slothful in business, but fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord, for they are called angels (who are God's ministers and his ministering spirits; Heb 1:7,14), such ought Christ's ministers to be, his and his churches ministering servants.

Gill:

that is, the seven stars which John saw in Christ's right hand, represent the angels, or pastors of the seven churches of Asia, and in them all the pastors and ministers of the churches in all the periods of time until Christ's second coming. Here it may be observed, that the ministers of the Gospel are not only compared to "stars", for which see Gill on Rev_1:16; but likewise to "angels", which signifies "messengers", as ministers are sent forth by Christ with the message of the Gospel to publish to the sons of men; and as the angels are Christ's ministering spirits, so are the preachers of the Gospel the ministers of Christ, that wait upon him and serve him in the ministry of the word, and in the administration of ordinances; and there is some agreement between them in holiness, knowledge, zeal, diligence, and watchfulness, in their work; as also they may be so called for the honour and esteem in which they are, both with Christ and his churches; and who like the angels rejoice at the conversion of sinners, and the enlargement of the interest of Christ:

Barnes:

The word "angel" properly means a messenger, and is thus applied to celestial beings as messengers sent forth from God to convey or to do his will. This being the common meaning of the word, it may be employed to denote anyone who is a messenger, and hence, with propriety, anyone who

is employed to communicate the will of another; to transact his business, or, more remotely, to act in his place - to be a representative.

If the word does not mean literally “an angel”; if it does not refer to messengers sent to John in Patmos by the churches; and if it does not refer to a prelatial bishop, then it follows that it must refer to someone who presided over the church as its pastor, and through whom a message might be properly sent to the church. Thus understood, the pastor or “angel” would be regarded as the representative of the church; that is, as delegated by the church to manage its affairs, and as the authorized person to whom communications should be made in matters pertaining to it - as pastors are now.

The conclusion, then, to which we have come is, that the “angel of the church” was the pastor, or the presiding presbyter in the church; the minister who had the pastoral charge of it, and who was therefore a proper representative of it. He was a man who, in some respects, performed the functions which the angels of God do; that is, who was appointed to execute his will, to communicate his message, and to convey important intimations of his purposes to his people. To no one could the communications in this book, intended for the churches, be more properly entrusted than to such an one; for to no one now would a communication be more properly entrusted than to a pastor.

JFB:

The term angel, designating an office, is, in accordance with the enigmatic symbolism of this book, transferred from the heavenly to the earthly superior ministers of Jehovah; reminding them that, like the heavenly angels above, they below should fulfil God’s mission zealously, promptly and efficiently. “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven!”

Ellicott:

The more generally adopted view is that the angel is the chief pastor or bishop of the Church. The description of them as stars favours this view. Similar imagery is applied elsewhere to teachers, true and false (Dan_12:3; Jud_1:13. Comp. Rev_8:10; Rev_12:4).

Spurgeon:

The messengers, the ministers of the seven churches.

These are generally understood to be the ministers of the seven churches of Asia. We are told, in the twentieth verse, that “the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches,” and I do not know who the angels of the

churches can be unless they are the messengers of the churches—those ministers of whom Paul wrote—“they are the messengers of the churches and the glory of Christ.” At any rate, we shall take it for granted that these stars represent the pastors of the churches, the ministers of Christ

Carroll:

the stars represent the messengers or pastors of the churches

RWP:

Each view is encompassed with difficulties, perhaps fewer belonging to the view that the “angel” is the pastor.

VWS:

But why should the seer be instructed to write to heavenly messengers, with exhortations to repentance and fidelity, and describing them as “rich,” “poor,” “lukewarm,” etc. (Rev_2:4; Rev_3:1, Rev_3:16)?

G32 *aggelos* plural here *aggeloi*

Strong: a messenger; especially an “angel,” by implication a pastor

Thayer: a messenger, envoy, one who is sent, and angel, a messenger from God

RWP: The simplest is the etymological meaning of the word as messenger from *aggelio*

Daniel 12:1-3 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. 2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and **they that turn many to righteousness as the stars** for ever and ever.

Charles Spurgeon - Revelation 1:16 - “A Portrait No Artist Can Paint” - Sermon #2498

Note, dear friends, that our Lord Jesus has a hand. He is not, as some fancy, an abstract idea of a personage without life. He has a hand and that hand is a working hand. The hand that was pierced by the nail is not paralyzed—it has strength to hold in itself seven stars. The hands that wrought out our redemption have not ceased to work for us.

Christ holds in His hand that which He bought with the blood of His heart. John saw that His Lord held in his right hand seven stars. Let us always think of our Lord Jesus Christ as full of power and actively using it. Let us think of Him at this moment as having a deft, and skilled, and mighty right hand, which He will lift up on the behalf of all those who put their trust in Him. On the right hand of the Majesty on high there sits a right-handed Christ, still carrying on according to His own good pleasure the work of the Lord, which ever prospers in His hand.

When John looked at Christ's right hand, he tells us that in it he saw seven stars. These are generally understood to be the ministers of the seven churches of Asia. We are told, in the twentieth verse, that "the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches," and I do not know who the angels of the churches can be unless they are the messengers of the churches—those ministers of whom Paul wrote—"they are the messengers of the churches and the glory of Christ." At any rate, we shall take it for granted that these stars represent the pastors of the churches, the ministers of Christ.

These stars are said to be in the Lord's right hand, first, because He made them stars. They are in the hand of Him who made them what they are. Under the old covenant there were to be in the tabernacle, seven lights always burning upon the seven-branched candlestick, or lamp stand. But John saw in Christ's hand seven stars—not ordinary lamps, but stars shining with a greater brilliance and a more heavenly light than could ever be seen in the oil-fed lamps in the ancient tabernacle.

If any man in the church of God shines like a star to guide others to the port of peace, he owes his light entirely to Christ. It must be so, because it is Christ's right hand that has made him what he is—he is a light because Christ has given him light, he owes his spiritual radiance entirely to Him who is the Lord and Giver of light in the midst of His church.

My dear brethren in the ministry, if you want to shine for Jesus, you must be made into stars to be held in his right hand. There is no possibility of your being of spiritual use to your fellow men, or exercising a ministry that shall tend to their eternal salvation, except as you are made into a light to be held in the right hand of the Lord Jesus Christ.

All the education in the world, all the natural talent that any possess, all the acquired practice of oratory, all the powers which are the result of

long-experience can never make a good minister of Jesus Christ. The stars are in the right hand of Christ—ministers are not made by men, but by the Lord Himself, if they are worthy to be called ministers at all. So, the stars are in his right hand, first, because He made them.

They are there, next, dear friends, because He holds them up. Every Christian has to face great perils and every Christian has need to pray to the Lord, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.” But ministers of Christ—ministers whom He makes to be stars—are exposed to sevenfold peril. Against the leaders of the spiritual Israel the sharpest arrows of the enemy are sure to be shot.

The word seems to be still passed round to our adversaries as in the ancient day of battle, when the king of Syria said to his captains, “Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel.” If there be anywhere a captain who leads the way and comes to the very front of the host, the temptations that gather about him will be most fierce and terrible.

Slander, misrepresentation, and every kind of evil shall dog his heels and he above all men who are on the face of the earth must cry to his Lord, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.” The mercy is that the true minister of Christ is held up in Christ’s right hand. He shall be kept faithful even unto death. He shall not fall, and God helping him, he shall be caused to shine on right to the end of his ministry.

Every now and then, we hear a rumor that some of God’s own children have fallen from grace. I do not believe it. It is said that they have fallen away and perished. I do not believe it. Those of you who live till next November and go out late at night may see a great many shooting stars. And some of your little children will cry, “Look, Father, the stars are falling.” And possibly some children will believe that stars have fallen from their places.

Take the telescope and look at the heavens—sweep the sky as far as the range of the instrument will permit. Jupiter is all right, and Saturn, and Mars, and Venus, and Mercury, and all the planets—they are all in their places—and the fixed stars are shining on as they have done ever since the Lord first kindled them to charm away the gloom of night.

I do not know what these shooting stars may be—there have been many guesses with regard to them. Neither do I know what these apostates may be—there have been a great many guesses about those that did flame out so brightly. But I do know this—that Jesus still holds the seven stars in His right hand and He will not drop even one of them—they shall not be reduced to six, or five, or four, or three, or two, or one, or vanish altogether—and neither shall it ever be so with any of the true sons of God.

Our Lord Himself has said, "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hands." If you, my brother, are kept in the right hand of Christ, then you are kept. If you wish and hope to shine for Jesus through all the years that you shall live, then you must be held in his right hand, for He alone, who made you, can hold you up.

Next, are not the stars represented as being in Christ's right hand, because He holds them out as well as holds them up? As a man holds a lamp in his hand and holds it up and out as far as he can, that its light may shine the farther, so does Christ hold His servants up. Sometimes He holds some of them up high aloft above the multitude, so that, on the Sabbath, they rise quite out of themselves.

They say what they could never have thought of saying by themselves and they are enabled to plunge into mysteries which aforetime had not been opened up to them. And there are given unto them burning words that shine as well as burn, for their Lord lifts them up and holds them out.

Dear friends, pray much for us who are called to preach the Gospel, that we may always be lifted up in the right hand of Christ. If we try to shine simply with our own natural brightness, it will be a very poor, miserable exhibition of darkness. And if we try to work ourselves up, as some do, into a state of excitement, we may goad ourselves into a condition of semi-madness and lead others into the same folly, but no good will come out of it.

That elevation of spirit which comes from the right hand which once was pierced for us—that lifting up of holy speech which is given through contact with the right hand of Him who spake as never man spake—that is the kind of uplifting that we want. Pray, beloved, that every star in the right hand of the Lord Jesus Christ may be held up and held out—and so shine yet farther and farther across the wild waste of the waters of sin and sorrow.

Do you not also think that, by the stars being in the right hand of Christ, is meant that He claims them as His own? Every faithful minister is Christ's property. He belongs to his Lord and he recognizes that blessed fact. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price," is true of all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but it is specially true of as many as are called out from among their fellows that they may be the mouth of God—and that God may speak by them to the feeding of His flock—and to the bringing home of His lost sheep. They are peculiarly and especially in the hand of Christ, for they belong entirely to Christ.

Is not this the highest honor any man can have, that he should be in Christ's right hand because he belongs to Christ? You see it is especially mentioned that these stars are not in the left hand of Christ, but in his right hand,

as if the Lord intended to put peculiar and special honor upon His servants who are faithful to Him.

Brethren, it does not become any of us who preach the Gospel to seek honor of men. What is it, after all? What is the value of commendation from the lips of men? Suppose they should praise us and flatter us, and say that we are “thoughtful men,” “abreast of the times,” and I know not what—all such stuff as this is but carrion, fit for the scavengers of the earth—not worthy to be set before the angels of the churches.

The true servants of Christ may well be satisfied to eat of the crumbs that fall from His table, rather than to feast upon the dainties that load the tables of the ungodly. If our hearts are wholly set on shining for Christ, and shining for nothing but Christ, and shining with nothing but Christ’s own light, and the light of Christ’s own truth, then are we as the stars in his right hand, beloved of Him and precious in His sight.

Verily I say unto you, there shall be a glorious reward at the last for those who are made by Christ into stars and who are held up, and held out in the right hand of their Lord, and so claimed by Him as peculiarly and specially His own.

So much, then, concerning the ministers of Christ. Brethren, pray for us, and pray for all the preachers of the Word, that they may be stars in the right hand of Christ.