

Revelation - Chapter 1

Revelation 1:12

And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

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John turns to see who is speaking with him. It is Jesus' voice he hears (see on Revelation 1:11).

And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

When John turns in the direction from which the voice of Jesus is coming, he sees seven candelabras—that is, seven lampstands with seven arms or branches. How do we know this is not a reference to seven separate candlesticks of a common sort? Well, because these are “golden” candlesticks in a heavenly setting—and there is only one type of candlestick spoken of in a heavenly context throughout all of Scripture. When God instructed Moses to build a sanctuary so that he “may dwell among” his people, he was shown a heavenly “pattern” delineating every detail of its structure and furnishings (Exodus 25:8, 9). This was not a pattern simply laid out on some sort of heavenly document, but rather, by inference, it seems it was a three-dimensional representation of things as they actually were in the presence of God and the holy angels. Says Paul, when speaking of Jesus' heavenly ministry or priesthood:

“Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.” – Hebrews 8:1, 2

With the above in mind, the heavenly “candlesticks” spoken of in this verse can be none other than seven heavenly candelabras, each a duplicate representation of the great original from which the one in the earthly sanctuary was patterned—which consisted of seven branches—three springing out on either side, and one in the center (Exodus 25:31-40; Zechariah 4:2-11).

That being said, however, there is one point in which this explanation may seem to fail. In the tabernacle of Moses there was only one golden candlestick made after the pattern of one great heavenly original. As pointed out above, John in his vision saw seven. This is not without its significance. Beginning with Moses, Israel's worship centered around one sacred place containing one sacred lampstand. Christianity, on the other hand, does not

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have one central earthly location towards which its adherents kneel. Rather, it has the stamp of universality—that is, believers gather together in a multitude of varied locations and circumstances with their eyes and hearts uplifted to the heavenly tabernacle or temple. More on this will be considered later.

That there are those, including some commentators, who argue that this is a reference to seven common candlesticks, and not to seven representations of the great original shown to Moses, reveals that they are unwittingly missing the point of the most sacred setting being introduced here. As forthcoming verses and chapters will clearly show, the heavenly temple of God, with certain of the sanctuary's items and activities clearly represented within it (which are reminiscent of its earthly counterpart), is thematic throughout the book of Revelation. To deny the existence of this highly meaningful and divinely ordained backdrop unwittingly diminishes or forgets the glorious reality that our Lord and Savior, Jesus, is to be vividly recognized by the body of Christ as “an high priest” and “minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man”, and that “now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.” Hebrews 8:1-5. Further, to debate the tangible vs. symbolic nature of such descriptions and details, as they were revealed to the apostle John, only tends to diminish the valuable purpose behind their inspired representation.

As we read, we must seek to understand their meaning as set forth by Scripture and leave the ultimate reality of such things to God's keeping. Yet, that being said—to say or suggest that there is no heavenly sanctuary in which Jesus, as our heavenly High Priest, ministers is to reject clear and unambiguous declarations of the inspired Word of God.

And finally, it is agreed to by most Bible students that all that had to do with the earthly sanctuary, including its physical details, furnishings, and functions, was meant, by divine purpose, to teach spiritual truths. Of course, no less would the great heavenly originals of such things. Because it is commonly understood among most professed Christians that a candlestick represents an agent of gospel light (Matthew 5:14-16; II Corinthians 4:1-4). Here, it is readily assumed that they represent the gospel witness of the “seven churches” (see on Revelation 1:20 and Revelation 2:1). To better understand the significance of the number seven in this verse, consider verses 4 and 11.