

## The Light of Remnant

### Introduction

Revelation 1:7 (ESV) — 7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

Wow. John is telling us that Jesus is returning. Just as He promised us He would do. This book is going to tell us and reveal to us more of when this return will happen.

Everyone, the apostles, the early believers expected Christ to return at any moment. It is what fueled their passion for holy living and evangelism. They expected His return at any moment. It was imminent. They thought He would be back in their lifetime. Clearly we see this with Paul and Peter. They are both surprised as they get to the end of their lives in AD 68 that Christ has not returned yet.

So what does it mean that He will return soon? With the Lord Peter said a day is like 1000 years. His return is near. Closer than it has ever been. It is approaching.

We just experienced the Feast of Trumpets. We longed for the rapture and return of Jesus. We believe that this feast foreshadows a day in the future of a time when the actual event occurs. It is a strong annual reminder for us to be ready and to long to go home. That is the exact purpose of these feasts. To draw closer to God, to prepare ourselves for the things of God, and to commit once again to the trust we have in His promises.

His second coming. His physical return to earth at the Mount of Olives to lead the battle of Armageddon, will not be a secret. Everyone will see Him. Particularly the Jewish People.

By that time, the Jewish nation will have turned to Jesus, trusting in Him as their Messiah (Matthew 23:39, Romans 11:25–26). When they see Jesus and His pierced hands and feet, it will be a painful reminder of their previous rejection of Him.

Zechariah 12:10 (ESV) — 10 “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

All the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him: When Jesus comes, it won't be only the Jewish people who mourn because of their previous rejection of Jesus. Since there will be people saved

from all the tribes of the earth (Revelation 7:9), everyone will have a part in this mourning. We will all look at His scars and say “We did this to Him.”

Revelation 1:8 (ESV) — 8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

A quote from Jesus. Who is....who was in the past and who will be in the future.

If Jesus is both the Beginning and the End, then He also has authority over everything in-between. This means that Jesus has a plan for history, and He directs the path of human events toward His designed fulfillment. Our lives are not given over to blind fate, to random meaninglessness, or to endless cycles with no resolution.

This word Almighty translates the ancient Greek word pantokrater, which literally means “the one who has his hand on everything.” It speaks of the great sovereign control of Jesus over everything—past, present, and future.

Revelation 1:9 (ESV) — 9 I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

After Jesus' crucifixion, death and resurrection, John became the leader of the church at Ephesus. John will become the last living apostle and to my knowledge all other apostles were martyred. Jesus spoke of this when Peter asked what would happen to John.

John 21:21–23 (ESV) — 21 When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, “Lord, what about this man?” 22 Jesus said to him, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!” 23 So the saying spread abroad among the brothers that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?”

It seemed to many that John would outlive them all. You get the clear sense in the gospels that John was the youngest and was like a little brother to Jesus and probably to all of them.

You get the impression that the apostles are the same age as Jesus about 30-35. Matthew seems a bit older, a bit more established as a tax collector, but the rest probably about Jesus' age.

You get the impression that James and John were younger. Perhaps in their late teens or early twenties. We know John is the youngest because of where he sat at the Passover Supper. The youngest always sat to the right of the leader.

Plus at one point James and John sent their mother to ask Jesus for a favor for them. You get the impression that Jesus treated John like a little brother.

Their interaction is different from Jesus' interactions with Peter. At the last supper John falls asleep with his head on Jesus' shoulder. Not too unusual for a teenager, very unusual for a grown man.

So if John was a late teenager at the time of Jesus' death. Then when this book was written in AD 95 or so, John is pushing early 80's. A very old age at that time.

He is the last living Apostle and he is the leader of the church of Ephesus. There were two major persecutions of believers at this time. Nero from 64-68 (Rome is burning) and the next one is under Domitian 95-96. This book as Revelation is written in the early to mid 90's

Rather than executing John it appears that Domitian decided to just exile him to a deserted island. John is exiled to the island of Patmos- another real place that you can visit. It is off the coast of Asia Minor in the Aegean Sea (MAP) However, it is also possible that John was on Patmos as a missionary to the prisoners there.

The island of Patmos was a lot like an Alcatraz Island in the Roman Empire. It was used as a prison island and functioned as a jail without bars. The island was rich in marble, and most of the prisoners were forced laborers in marble quarries. Patmos was a rocky, desolate island about 10 miles long and 6 miles wide.

John says that he was on Patmos because of his faith.

Revelation 1:10 (ESV) — 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet

On Sunday I was praying and I was deeply in prayer communing with the Holy Spirit. While I was praying I heard behind me a loud voice- like a trumpet. It startled me like a sudden trumpet blast.

Revelation 1:11 (ESV) — 11 saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

Why those particular seven churches? Notice that the first one is Ephesus- that is John's home church. Paul founded it but John is now their leader and he has been exiled to Patmos.

Ephesus is the major port and it is the central hub of the Roman Road system to get those products throughout the empire. Each of these seven churches are on one of the spokes of roads going out from Ephesus. They were literal churches who were operating at this time. Likely they were church plants from Ephesus and likely John had visited and preached at each of them.

They were all under his spiritual influence and known to them.

Revelation 1:12-15 (ESV) — 12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 The hairs of his head were white, like white

wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, 15 his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters.

Wow who could this be? Well we have met this person before- back in Daniel.

Daniel 10:4 (ESV) — 4 On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river (that is, the Tigris)

Thus he has been exiled to Babylon and is on the Tigris River that flows through what is today Iraq.

Daniel 10:5–6 (ESV) — 5 I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. 6 His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude.

This is exactly the figure that John sees in the book of Revelation. Two independent accounts of the same person, described as Daniel and John see Him. Who is this person? In Daniel it is the pre-incarnate Christ and in Revelation it is the risen and glorified Christ.

His eyes like a flame of fire: Fire is often associated with judgment in the Scriptures (Matthew 5:22, 2 Peter 3:7). Jesus' eyes displayed the fire of searching, penetrating judgment.

His feet were like fine brass: Since fire is connected with judgment, these feet like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace speak of someone who has been through the fires of judgment and has come forth with a refined purity. Jesus has been through the "Refiner's Fire."

Brass is a metal connected with judgment and sacrifice. Israel's altar of sacrifice was made of brass (Exodus 27:1–6), and it was called the "brazen altar." ii. Brass is also a strong metal, the strongest known in the ancient world

So John sees the risen and glorified Christ.

Think about how incredible this is...John is looking into the Holiest of Holies. He is looking to the original....the one that the holy of holies in the tabernacle foreshadowed.

John has a glimpse into heaven. He turns and sees Jesus walking or in the midst of 7 lampstands. These are not random lampstands and we have seen these lampstands before. The lampstands illuminated the Holy of Holies....In the Bible the lampstands were designed by God for the original Tabernacle and the Holy of Holies. Let me show you.

Exodus 25:31–33 (ESV) 31 "You shall make a lampstand of pure gold. The lampstand shall be made of hammered work: its base, its stem, its cups, its calyxes, and its flowers shall be of one piece with it. 32 And there shall be six branches going out of its sides, three branches of the lampstand out of one side of it and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side of it; 33 three cups made like almond blossoms, each with calyx and flower, on one branch, and three cups made like almond blossoms, each with calyx and flower, on the other branch—so for the six branches going out of the lampstand.

Exodus 25:34–40 (ESV) 34 And on the lampstand itself there shall be four cups made like almond blossoms, with their calyxes and flowers, 35 and a calyx of one piece with it under each pair of the six branches going out from the lampstand. 36 Their calyxes and their branches shall be of one piece with it, the whole of it a single piece of hammered work of pure gold. 37 You shall make seven lamps for it. And the lamps shall be set up so as to give light on the space in front of it. 38 Its tongs and their trays shall be of pure gold. 39 It shall be made, with all these utensils, out of a talent of pure gold. 40 And see that you make them after the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain.

God gives detailed instructions about the golden lampstand to be placed in the tabernacle the Israelites were building. It's interesting to note just how precise God is in explaining how He wanted the lampstand to look. Since we can be assured there are no "wasted words" in the Bible, we know each detail and specification are important for some reason.

The lampstand was to be made of pure gold, hammered out to the perfect accuracy of God's decree. Gold was the most valuable of all metals. Gold is often spoken of in terms of being "tested by fire"; God compares the testing of gold with the testing of the church. A single block of Gold was hammered into each lampstand. Gold represented purity...refined by fire....and it represents God's holiness in us.

1 Peter 1:6–7 (ESV) 6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Out of testing, or refining, will come the true people of God.

Zechariah 13:8–9 (ESV) 8 In the whole land, declares the Lord, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left alive. 9 And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'They are my people'; and they will say, 'The Lord is my God.' "

The lampstand as a whole was to be fashioned as a tree with the base and center shaft representing the trunk and with three "branches" on each side. The top of the shaft and of each branch was to be made like an open almond flower; each flower held an oil lamp

There are several passages in the Bible that speak about the almond tree, which was always the first tree to blossom and bear fruit in the spring, as early as February. If you wanted to see evidence of new life....you looked to the almond tree first. While others were dormant...the almond tree springs to life.

God used Aaron's rod as a sign to the Israelites of his unique priesthood. At one time, when Aaron's priesthood was being challenged, God caused Aaron's rod to bud and grow ripe almonds overnight; this miracle reaffirmed that the privilege of being chosen as High Priest only came through God's appointment. This was a "shadow of things to come" experience that pointed to Jesus, our God-ordained, life-giving High Priest forever.

Hebrews 7:26–28 (ESV) 26 For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. 27 He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. 28 For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

What the Hebrew author was foreshadowing is Jesus as our High Priest attending to his believers the church. That is exactly what John is seeing in Revelation. Jesus among the seven lampstands representing the complete church. But also remember where this lampstand is to be located in the Temple. Remember from our series on the Tabernacle of God last year, that the entire tabernacle/temple is an earthly image of the real temple the real tabernacle the real Holy of Holies that is in heaven. In Revelation, John is not looking into the holy place of the temple of Jerusalem....He is looking into the very holiest of holies in Heaven.

In the tabernacle, the lampstand was to be placed in the first section, called the Holy Place. The lamp was to be tended by Aaron and his sons so that its light never went out. The lampstand was to give forth light day and night. The lampstand in the Holy of Holies is the only source of light behind the curtain. The lampstand as the only source of light points directly to Christ as being the light of the world. As John said, Jesus is the “true light that gives light to everyone” and the only way anyone can come to the Father.

Jesus also calls His church the “light of the world”,

Matthew 5:14–16 (ESV) 14 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

The light of God does not come from us...it comes from Christ abiding in the church. We don't own it or produce it we display it. Just as lampstand doesn't produce light it just holds light up to be seen. That is why the seven churches are lampstands and not lamps.

John 1:4–5 (ESV) 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

A Christian who is shining with the light of Christ will live a godly life.

1 Peter 2:9–10 (ESV) 9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Scripture is overflowing with references that compare and contrast light and darkness, believer and unbeliever, right up through the book of Revelation.

In temple worship, this object of beauty was symbolic of the light of God-the presence of the shekinah glory among the chosen people, house in the tabernacle. As long as the lamps kept burning, the Jews were aware of God's presence and leadership among them. The act of trimming the lamps each day was a tactile reminder of God's promises. Additionally, the seven branches of the lamp stand represented the seven days of creation and the many other instances in Scripture of seven being the number of completeness.

This symbolism is apparent in the prophecies of Christ found in Kings:

1 Kings 11:36 (ESV) 36 Yet to his son I will give one tribe, that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen to put my name.

The menorah also represented the nation of Israel, which was to be a "light to the nations" (Isa 42:6). As such, they were to be led by the Lord's power and be the means through which he would bring salvation to the world-a point made in Zechariah's vision of the lamp stand (Zech 4:2,6). Even today the menorah is an important Jewish emblem, appearing on Israel's coat of arms to symbolize their role as a light to the world.

The New Testament sheds further light on this symbolism. Jesus said, "You are light for the world. A city cannot be hidden when it is located on a hill. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket. Instead, everyone who lights a lamp put it on a lamp stand. Then its light shine on everyone in the house. In the same way let your light shine in front of people. Then they will see the good that you do and praise your Father in heaven" (Matt 5:14-16). Since the coming of Christ, the church is now God's menorah to the world-the bringer of the light of Christ into a dark world.

The lamp stand is a symbol for the way the church is to represent God's presence in the world, just as in the Old Testament the menorah represented God's presence in Israel. The light that once was only for the chosen nation of Israel is now for all people. The literal lamp stand in Old Testament is a symbolic one in the New, showing the God's light is for all nations, and his work is done through the church .

Today, most Christians identify with the Cross as the symbol of the Christian Church....and there is nothing wrong with that....but God chose a Menorah. A perfect Lampstand to represent His church. Six branches and lamps representing man and the seventh lamp in the middle making it complete in Christ.

Solomon's temple had ten of these candles (1 Kings 7:49). Each lamp burned olive oil and was kept burning through the night as a symbol that God was with his chosen people at all times (Exod 27:21; 1 Sam 3:3). Extrabiblical sources suggest that in later times the middle lamp, which represented God himself, was kept burning around the clock.

So the Tabernacle was a temporary representation of the Holiest Place in Heaven. The priests tended to the light daily to make sure that it was always burning....always overcoming darkness. The light is Christ shining through us into the darkness of the world. What the temple foreshadowed....or copied....John is

now describing to us the original. The place of God in Heaven. John sees Jesus, our High Priest, in the holiest of places tending to the light.

So take a moment and try to visualize what John is seeing. He is looking into the actual holiest of holies. The very throne of heaven. Picture the seven menoras or lampstands. All lit with oil burning brightly. Picture Jesus. Take a moment and really picture this. Revelation is a book of images. Do you see it? Jesus moving from lamp to lamp....telling John what to write to each church.....The disciple Jesus loved...John...reunited with Jesus for a moment.....Wait....You may have the wrong image.

How do you picture Jesus? Do you see Him as a gentle priest tending to his lamps? Let me remind all of us what John really saw.

Remember most of what is in the book of Revelation has been seen before. John sees the same Son of Man that Daniel saw. He sees the rise and glorified Christ...but he also sees what Jesus is doing and where He is doing it. Foreshadowed in Daniel...now revealed....unveiled in Revelation.

Revelation 1:13–16 (ESV) 13 and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, 15 his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

His eyes were like a flame of fire....There were 7 menoras but their light was nothing like the fire in Jesus' eyes. His voice was like the sound of many waters.....When he talks to each church....John is seeing fire in His eyes and the voice roars. Ok now we understand the image....one more thing...

Revelation 1:17 (ESV) 17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.

Place yourself on your face shaking....see Jesus with fire in His eyes....Hear the roaring voice....and see the 7 lampstands, seven stars or angels.

Now we have the image John wants us to see.

So let's try to see what John sees. Imagine 7 of these lampstands....Each shining brightly with 7 lamps. Jesus is in their midst, fully glorified, and tending to the light....Making sure each church, each follower, shines brightly. What is Jesus doing in Heaven right now...Tending to the light.

Jesus spoke to John in the vision and explained what the seven candlesticks were: "The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches"

The seven churches, represented by the seven candlesticks, were actual churches that existed at the time John experienced the vision. The churches were located in seven cities of western Asia Minor. Most scholars agree that the seven candlesticks carry a meaning beyond those seven Asiatic churches in John's day, representing the entire



church of Jesus Christ. Because the number seven often represents wholeness or completion in Scripture, most conclude that the seven churches represent all churches, or the church universal.

Very soon we will see Jesus address the church in Ephesus....

In Jesus' letter to the church of Ephesus, a church that had left its first love, the Lord warns that they must repent or He will come to them and "remove your lampstand from its place". In other words, the church was in danger of losing its opportunity to testify of Christ in their community.

In John's vision, Jesus Christ stands in the center of the seven candlesticks, in the midst of His people. Christ is always present with His church. A candlestick is not the light itself but the bearer of the light. Jesus is the light of the world, and, as candlesticks, the church's mission is to hold that light up for the world to see:

Philippians 2:15–16 (ESV) 15 that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast to the word of life,

To describe what the church is in its spiritual significance would take a thousand books. But just one sign, one picture, is better than a thousand words. What is the church? What should the church be? Probably not the Cross.....God said to look at the lampstand.

Golden lampstands are something the recipients of John's letter would have readily identified. This is part of the sacred furniture of the tabernacle and the temple. The tabernacle had one lampstand (Exodus 25:31f) and the temple had ten of them (1 Kings 7:49).

The perpetually burning light meant that there was always a glow coming from within the tent of meeting. In essence, the message was that the lights were on and the Occupant was home at all times. God was the Original....I will leave the light on for you....It was meant to comfort the people and to remind them that the God of the universe had made His home with them. It was also meant to point them ahead to the day when God would send His Son into the world as the light of the world (John 8:12) and the One who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matthew 3:11).

God dwelt with His people symbolically through the tabernacle and temple but then dwelt with them in the flesh in the person of His Son. God dwells with His people today through the abiding power of the Holy Spirit (John 14:18). When the Spirit was poured out on the first disciples at Pentecost (Acts 2:3), it was pictured as fire. Fire is a symbol of the abiding presence of the Spirit of God with His people (Exodus 13:21).

The church must be golden. Gold signifies God's essence, God's nature. This means that the church must have God's essence as its substance. This gold must be in the shape of a lampstand, a lampstand shining with a sevenfold intensity. The lampstand has a sevenfold shining. The golden nature signifies God's essence, the shape signifies Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God, and the seven lamps are the seven Spirits (4:5).

The Trinity is here: the Spirit is shining forth, Christ is the embodiment, and God is the very essence. What is the church? The church is a composition, a constitution, of the Triune God, shining forth God's virtues and attributes in the dark night so that all can see the light. We need message upon message to describe what the church is, but God's wisdom is to show us a lampstand. Saints, this is the church. Look at the church. The lampstand is the church! The church is not muddy, but golden. It is of the divine nature of God. It is not without form, but shaped. It is not dark, but shining. This is the church!

The light doesn't come from the lampstands. The light comes from the oil lamps themselves. The stands merely make the light more visible. Therefore, the lampstands are a good picture of the church. We don't produce the light, we simply display it.

In Revelation 2:5, the Lord says to the church of Ephesus, "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place— unless you repent." This is not a threat to remove individual believers from the family of God; it is a warning to a congregation.

A congregation may lose the privilege of being a carrier of the eternal fire of the Holy Spirit. Sadly, this has happened to many, many churches in our land. Jesus promises that His church generally will never be overcome on the earth but He never promises individual congregations that they will last forever. When a church stops loving Jesus, harbors sin in its midst, or stops teaching the truth of God's word, it is in danger of losing its status as a keeper of the eternal flame of God's presence.

The church is a lampstand. Let us embrace the breathtaking privilege of being part of churches, which are the receptacles of God's Spirit, designed to display His divine light to the world. Let us thank God for the congregations

With this background we can begin to understand the message of Revelation 1. The church is a lampstand because it is the dwelling place of the Spirit of God on the earth. Churches are the keepers of the light of God's truth and salvation in a lost world. Jesus, the Lord of the church, walks in the midst of her...tends to her. The individual congregations are keepers of the light of God's presence.

The world is not impressed by the church. There are times when we are not impressed by the church. The church can look weak and ineffective and completely without relevance in the world. And yet, God says the church is like sacred, golden lampstands carrying the perpetual fire of God's presence with His people through His Spirit. We need to be reminded of this truth.

Where do people encounter the presence of God on the earth? Where do people find the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in our world? It is in the people of God. But the emphasis here is not on individual Christians spread out in isolation; the emphasis is on the congregation of God's people. It is when we are together that the world sees the brightest light. It is when we are in unity that the light is unhindered in a dark world.

There are several implications of this truth. One is that we need to act like we are the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. In other words, as congregations we need to pursue holiness in all of life. Another implication is that we need to learn to see the visible church as God does and to respect and honor the global church appropriately.

A third implication is that we need to value the corporate worship of the church as the meeting place of God. A fourth implication is that we must insist that the church faithfully proclaim the light of gospel truth. Finally, we should affirm the truth that every Christian should be attached to a local congregation and serving God as part of a local body of believers. No candle burns on its own. No where are we instructed to light only one branch of the menorah.

Every year on Christmas Eve I get to see the Menorah that is Remnant. We always close that service by burning candles...each person adding their light to the darkness until faces are illuminated and the collective light of our church is joined in unison. It is the highlight of my year....I have the best view of what the light of our church can look like.

We are about to spend several weeks on the warnings that Jesus gives the 7 churches in the first century and to the church today. I pray that Remnant will always be a place where the light is always on because truth is not only preached but practiced. The fire of the Spirit burns in every heart of every person in our church family...and each of us pursues holiness so that the light that God put in us is not hindered as we share it with each other and others. Join us as we bring our light together once again.