–Save This Page as a PDF–

# I Turned Around and Saw Someone like a Son of Man 1: 12-16

**I turned around and saw someone like a Son of Man DIG: What does each image here suggest about Christ? What did the seven lampstands represent? When John saw Him, what earlier experience in his life did this image remind him of? How is this image different than the previous one? What does the term Son of man come from? What does it mean? What three titles does Jesus hold? What does the term star mean when used symbolically in the Bible? What do the seven stars in this passage represent?**

**REFLECT: Does this description of Yeshua Messiah seem strange to you? How so? When you see this description of Jesus Christ, how does it make you feel? Are you encouraged, or does it make you fearful? Why? What is the difference in your mind between seeing Jesus as the Lamb of God (John 1:29), and seeing Him as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5)?**

The placing of this vision of **Yeshua Messiah** right at the beginning of the book is significant. The believers in Asia Minor were a pitifully small remnant and were persecuted by Domitian. To all out-ward appearances their situation was hopeless. But it is only as **Jesus Christ** is seen for what **He** really is that anything else can be seen in its true perspective. So for those persecuted ones it was important that first of all the glory and the majesty of the risen **Lord** be seen by them. In doing this, **John** constantly makes use of words and concepts associated in the TaNaKh with **God**. **He** does not hesitate to employ divine attributes to describe the glory of **Messiah**. And **He** does not do this and then forget it. The titles used of **Jesus Christ** in this vision are used elsewhere, notably in the letters to **the churches**.[21]

With the booming, majestic voice of **the Savior** still echoing in **his** ears, **John turned around to see** who **was speaking to him**, **he** saw a vision of **Christ** that **he** had never seen before **(1:12a). He** saw **Jesus** as the glorified **Son of man**, an

expression used in **Dani'el 7:13** to refer to **Messiah**. The different descriptions given to **him** here all come from the TaNaKh.

Despite the glory of **His** appearance, squinting, **John**'s eyes settled on the source of the voice and recognized **Him** to be a **man**, indeed the very **Son of man**, the representative **man**, true **man**, **man** as **God** intended **man** to be. The term **Son of man (1:13b)** was **Christ's** favorite term for **Himself**. **He** used it more than eighty times in the four Gospels. The term was first used in **Psalm 8:4**, prophesying **His** First Coming in humility, and last in **14:14**, prophesying **His** Second Coming in power.[22]

**Jesus** holds three different offices: prophet, priest and king. **He** functioned as a prophet in **His** First Coming. **Messiah** is functioning as a priest now, as **He** sits at the right hand of **God the Father**, and when **He** returns, **He** will function as a king. So **Christ** has three offices, prophet, priest and king, but **He** does not function in all three simultaneously at this time. But, when **Messiah** returns **He** will function in all three areas of ministry.

**John's** vision pictures **Messiah** as a king. But a king has many roles, one of which is to serve as a judge, for **He** is about to come and judge the whole world at **His** Second Coming. This is a sub-theme to the entire book.[23]

**Yeshua** is seen to be **among the seven golden** *menorahs*, or **lampstands (1:12b-13a).** Apparently these were individual **lampstands** rather than one lampstand with seven lamps as was true of a similar piece of furniture in the Tabernacle (see my commentary on **Exodus, to see link click Fn – The Lampstand in the Sanctuary: Christ the Light of the World**).[24] As was stated in the introduction, every symbol in **Revelation** will be explained either in another part of the book itself or elsewhere in the Bible. In this case, the meaning is explained in **1:20**, where it states that **the seven golden lampstands** represent **the seven churches**. The picture then, is of **Yeshua** in the midst of **the seven churches** ready to judge.[25]

There was no doubt that this was **Jesus**, but not the kind of **Jesus** that **John** remembered from many years earlier – preaching to the multitudes, healing the sick, suffering on the cross, or even ascending into heaven. No, the message from this **Jesus** sent **John's** thinking racing backward in time more than sixty years to a power experience on Mount Herman (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Gb – Jesus took Peter, James and John up a High Mountain where He was**

**Transfigured**). There, before **his** eyes, **Messiah** briefly unveiled **His** glory. Now, near the end of **his** life, **John** saw a more detailed vision of the risen **Lord** in all of **His** splendor.

No one living today knows what **Yeshua** looked like during **His** days on earth. The New Covenant is silent on the subject of **His** physical appearance. But whatever **He** looked like then, **His** current appearance is far more important because this is the way we will see **Him** throughout all eternity.[26] Therefore, **John** gives us **a seven-fold description** of **Him** as **He** was in heaven at that time and will be when **He** returns. **The ancient apostle** used the best words that **he** could come up with to describe what was basically beyond words. **His** initial image resembled a human form – but **He** was clearly more than a **man**.

**The first** thing **John** noticed was that **He** was **dressed in a** long **robe reaching down to His feet (1:13c)**. The Greek word translated, *a garment down to the feet,* is seen only here in the New Covenant, but is used in all but one of its **seven** occurrences in the Septuagint to describe the robe worn by the high priest. That **He** also wore **a golden sash around His chest (1:13d)** reinforces that interpretation because the high priest in the TaNaKh wore such a **sash** (see my commentary on **Exodus Fv – The Selection of Aaron and His Sons as Priests**).[27]

**Second**, the most striking feature of **His** appearance, however, is **His snow-white hair**. **His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow (1:14a).** The whiteness of **His hair** corresponded to that of **the Ancient of Days**, or **God the Father (Dani'el 7:9)**. **His hair** seems to point to both **His** purity **(Matthew 5:48)**, and **His** age, since **He** was **with God in the beginning (John 1:1).**

**Third**, **His eyes were like blazing fire (1:14b)**, searching, revealing, and penetrating to the very depths of **His** followers. We shall see this in **His** piercing

judgment of sin to the immoral religious community at Thyatira **(2:18)**. **Jesus** said: **There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known (Matthew 10:26b). Dani'el's** vision of **the Messiah**, **he** said **His eyes** were **like flaming torches (Dani'el 10:6).** Yet these were the same **eyes** that would cry over human need **(Luke 19:41; John 11:35)**. Various aspects of **His** deity follow the graphic description of **His** appearance.

**Fourth**, the same feet that had rough spikes driven through them at the cross will return to trample **His** enemies **(Psalm 110:1; Isaiah 63:3).** This concept of judgment is further illustrated by **His feet** that **were like bronze glowing in a furnace (1:15a).** The **bronze** altar in the Tabernacle was a place of sacrifice for sin (see my commentary on **Exodus Fa – Build an Altar of Acacia Wood Overlaid with Bronze**), and here in **Revelation**, **Jesus** has come to judge sin.

**Fifth**, **His voice**, which seemed clear like a trumpet, **was** compared to **the sound of rushing waters (1:15b)**. It sounded to **John** like the familiar sound of the sea crashing on the rocky shore of Patmos on a windy day. **His voice was** similarly described **like the roar of rushing waters** in **Ezekiel 43:2**, and indicates both power and majesty.

**Sixth**, as the head of the **churches (Ephesians 4:15, 5:23; Colossians 1:18)**, **Christ** exercises authority over them. In **John's** vision **Jesus held seven stars in His right hand (1:16a)**. Domitian himself, issued a gold coin picturing his dead son sitting on the earth playing with seven stars, symbolic of Domitian's domain over the world (see **Ac – The Book of Revelation From a Jewish Perspective**).[28] But to comfort the persecuted believers in the first century, **Christ** identifies the **seven stars** as **the seven angels of the seven churches in His right hand (1:20)**. Not as Domitian's sovereignty over the universe. With one exception **(12:1)**, wherever the word **star** is used symbolically in the Bible, it is always a symbol of **an angel**. These, then, were individual **angels** who acted as guards, and assured the arrival of each individual message to each **of the seven churches**.

**Seventh**, **out of His mouth came a sharp double-edged sword (1:16b). Isaiah** said: **He made My mouth like a sharpened sword (Isaiah 49:2;** also see **Revelation 19:11-15).** This expression means that **Christ** will have the ability to pronounce judgment. And the writer to the Hebrews wrote: **For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword. It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12)**. **Messiah** will be

decisive and be able to get down to the very root of the problem and deal with it. This type of sword, the Greek word *rhomphaia*, is also referred to in **2:12** and **16**, **6:8**, **9:15** and **21**. **Jesu**s is no longer pictured as a baby in Bethlehem; **He** is now **the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (5:5).** The very appearance of the glorified **Messiah** and the sound of **His** regal voice flowing from the blinding light of **His face**, gave every word a sword-like brightness and sharpness that **John** could almost feel. **Like** the Transfiguration, **His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance (1:16c)**.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, How Awesome **You** are! This vision of **Your Son** is a picture of Mighty **Yeshua**. It is a true and accurate picture of **Him**. We bow before **You**. **Your** white hair tells us that we should not think of **You** as a baby in a manger – for **You** are from all eternity (**Micah 5:2 and John 1:1).** Nor should we think of **You** as still being on the cross, for though that was a terrific sacrifice on **Your** part that we should be very thankful for – **You** arose and conquered death for all time! **You** are now and forever the ruling **King of kings** coming back to **strike down the nations with the sharp double-edged sword** coming out of **Your mouth (Revelation 19:15-16)**. Whenever we are feeling overwhelmed or discouraged by all the evil in the world – we will think of this picture of you in **Your** Mighty Power and be encouraged! Praise you for being our **Father** and our Mighty Warrior who can conquer all evil powers. You are **Terrific** and we love and worship **You**. In the holy name of **Your Son** and thru the power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

The encouraging point for us is that **John** found **Jesus** in all **His** power and glory – and we can find **Him** as well. In our prayers, when we go to worship, or when we read the Bible, we can go beyond the mental exercise of confirming our faith in **Christ's** victory. When we **seek Him**, **He** will reveal **Himself** to us and fill our hearts as well as our minds. Although originally speaking to the nation of Isra'el, **He** makes the same promise to **you** today: **You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart (Jeremiah 29:13)**.

What will we see when **He** comes? Maybe we will experience the sword of **His** word exposing and cutting away the sin from our lives. Maybe we will feel the piercing gaze of **His** look of love. Perhaps we will hear **His** voice calling us with the strength of the ocean. We might be impressed by **His** purity and **His** desire to make us pure as well. Perhaps we will be over-whelmed by **His** kingly authority over our every fear. **Jesus** knows what you need in each particular moment of your life. **He** is eager to reveal **Himself** to you and care for you. When you pray today, expect **Yeshua** to show **Himself** to you. **He** wants you to know **Him**. **He** wants you to take

strength in the fact that **He** who is all powerful is standing with you no matter what you may be going through.

***Jesus**, I turn toward **You** to gaze on **Your** beauty and **Your** glory. Reveal **Yourself** to me, **Lord**, so that I will come to know you and love you with all my heart.*[29]