

Who Is This Son of Man?

by H.J. Vine

The Son of Man, Jesus Christ, is the one who brings salvation to all nations and has a special relation to Israel, the assembly, and individuals, requiring faith and appropriation for life.

Scripture: Daniel 7:13, Matthew 24:27, Luke 12:8, Hebrews 2:9, Revelation 14:14

Topics: "Christology", "Redemption"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches about the glorious and astonishing things spoken of the Son of Man, emphasizing His wonderful works, ways, and worth as shown in the Scriptures. The Son of Man's exceeding majesty in the Old Testament and surprising humiliation in the New Testament are highlighted. The sermon delves into the Son of Man's grace, glory, relation to the assembly, Israel, nations, individuals, all things, God, and angels, showcasing His pivotal role in redemption, restoration, and universal authority over heaven and earth.

Transcript

Glorious and astonishing things are spoken of the Son of Man; and the Spirit strikingly shows in the Scriptures His wonderful works, ways and worth; foretelling too in the Old Testament His exceeding majesty; and recording also in the New His surprising humiliation.

Set at nought, mocked, scorned, scourged and spit upon, He was crucified by men; but raised again by God He was exalted to the place of universal authority as Head over all things, in accordance with the prophetic utterances concerning Him; and Stephen, to whom His glory was disclosed, said, "Lo, I behold the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." But when Stephen bore this witness to His glory, his doom was sealed. His hearers rushed upon him, and having cast him out of the council chamber, they stoned him to death.

Those who thus hated to hear of the supremacy of the Son of Man were Jews, like those who had previously asked the question, "Who is this Son of Man?" Had Stephen said, "I see the Son of David in the place of power" this malevolence might not have been so manifested. The Jewish leaders seem to have instinctively felt--though they may not have been able to explain it--that what was involved in the "Son of Man" far transcended Judaism, and was evidently greater than that which they connected with the Son of David. This is true; and it is therefore insufficient, in reply to their question--Who is this Son of Man?--to simply say, "The Lord Jesus Christ." That is true, thank God; but the Spirit leads our hearts into the understanding of the truth, as well as gives us the knowledge of it; and He strengthens us, so that our

apprehension of the glory of Christ may be enlarged, and that we might not be dwarfed, or limited as to this, by other influences.

1. The Son of Man's Grace and His Glory

Even the Jews should have had some knowledge concerning the Son of Man; and the ignorance they showed was most culpable; for their own Scriptures, as we have said, largely speak of Him. Such portions as Psalms 8 and 80, and Daniel 7:13-14 should have impressed them; but it is quite evident (like many religionists of today), they read the Bible with themselves in view, and therefore could not brook any truth that surpassed their circle. Israel then, or the assembly now, being made the centre and circumference of the thoughts, ensures serious disaster. The title, Son of Man, involves wider glories than those connected with both of these circles, as we shall see. It is Christ's racial name, and therefore embraces all nations and peoples, as well as the heavenly glories which God has counselled for Christ as Man, and made known in the Epistles. The regal rights of David's line are His; also the splendour of the kingdoms and dominions of this world; the Headship of the assembly also, and He is its glorious Bridegroom; but exaltation over all things in heaven as well as earth is His too--"all things" are put beneath His feet. As we behold the magnificent greatness of this, the universal munificence and grandeur of it, and the kingly and lordly excellence of Christ's gracious majesty how sharp the contrast appears, when we behold Him, lowly and unrecognized, wending His way through sufferings to the glory. THE FIRST thing said of Him as the Son of Man in the New Testament is that He had "not where to lay His head" (Matt. 8:20). THE LAST mention of Him in this character in the Old Testament is in Daniel 7:14 "There was given Him dominion, and glory, and a Kingdom, that all people, nations and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Amidst shame and sorrow, and amidst greatness and gladness, the incomparable perfections of the Son of Man are to be seen.

Man had fallen from the high estate in which God had placed him. He was sold under sin, subject to death, captive to Satan, and another Man, the Son of Man, alone could deliver him. Man set in government, under Noah, again fell; and the only hope of recovery is in another Man, the Son of Abraham. Israel, to whom national supremacy was given, also fell; restoration for them must come through another--the Son of David. But David called his Son his LORD; and this was the enigma which the Pharisees could not find an answer to; for David's Son was no less a person than the Son of God, JESUS, IMMANUEL. In Him, the uncreated, all hope is centred. Herein lies the explanation of the difficulties: not in the first man, the created man, not in Abraham, not in David, but in the Son of Man, the Son of Abraham, the Son of David, the SON OF GOD--GOD THE SON. By man the failure came: by the Son of Man--by Him, who in grace came into that place--the recovery and the counselled glory is secured; and God Himself is glorified in the Son of Man! What a glorious reversal by Man of all the shameful failure of man! The apostles do not appear to have once spoken of the Lord as Son of Man in the Gospels; but the fact that He Himself used the title about eighty times shows how He graciously prized it.

Christ came to bring the reversal about, He came to Israel, under law--"come of a woman." He was the promised Seed of the woman--of the Virgin--Son of Man, but not the son of a man. He came to recover and restore, to redeem and reconcile, to bring about blessing for man and glory to God; He is the Son of Man whom God has made strong for Himself (Ps. 80:17); but Israel rejected Him when He came to them; He therefore began to speak of something new, something unique, something more glorious and exceptional--He would build His assembly--the Son of Man's assembly (see Matt. 16:13-18)--before restoring Israel. Later we find Him judging the assemblies--standing in their midst like unto the Son of Man

(Rev. 1)--before He takes up the nations and the peoples, before He brings about universal order. We will, however, follow out these and other important facts with more detail.

2. The Son of Man's Relation to the Assembly

When introducing this great matter of His assembly, the Lord Jesus began by raising a question which emphasized what was before His mind. He asked His disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?" After hearing their answers, He said He would build His assembly, and the gates of Hades should not prevail against it, because He would build it upon the rock foundation of Himself, the Christ, the Son of the living God, as revealed by the Father. That Peter was not the rock, and that such a thought never entered his mind, is seen by what he himself wrote after, when he explained that the spiritual house was formed of those who came to Christ, the Living Stone, rejected of men, but chosen of God and precious (1 Peter 2:4). It is Christ, not Peter; and this assembly is the outcome of revelation--not of the education of flesh and blood--the Father being the source of that revelation; therefore the idea of heredity or of apostolic succession is outrageous.

What has been overlooked in the multitude of controversies on this matter is the fact that it is the Son of Man's assembly; also that He Himself builds it as the Son of Man, and calls it "My assembly." It is this which accounts for what we read in Ephesians 1:22-23; where, citing Psalm 8 as to the Son of Man, the Spirit tells us that all things are put under His feet; showing the assembly also to be associated with Him in His place as "Head over all things"; adding, The assembly is "His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." Here the Son of Man and His assembly are found intimately together. Indeed, this is in view in both Matthew 16 and Ephesians 1. At the close of the former we read of the Son of Man coming in the glory of His Father with His angels, and of the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom. He builds His assembly first, and this is necessary for the coming glory as Ephesians 1 shows. Since His rejection, since His death, resurrection and ascension to God's right hand, He has been doing this; and when the building is complete, He will associate the assembly with Him actually, in the exalted place which is already His as the Head of it. He is glorified now; but the assembly awaits His coming to be glorified with Him; although faith enters into our present part with Him, in the power of the Spirit, before that day.

It is of the utmost importance, however, to recognize this serious fact, that alongside the building of the Son of Man there has grown up a vast system of so-called Christian religion which is not His building. Therefore in the last book of the Bible, the book of judgments, we find, at the very opening of it, One standing in a judicial character in the midst of the assemblies, scrutinizing them with eyes as a flame of fire. All judgment, we are told, is given to Christ, "because He is the Son of Man" (John 5:22, 27). Christendom therefore comes under His judicial dealing first. It professes His name; but that which is His must be real, a structure that can stand the severest test, which is the result of the revelation of the Father, and the building of the Son of Man; its material being and constitution the result of the divinely imparted knowledge of the Christ, the Son of the living God. When therefore John sees the Lord examining the seven assemblies, which set forth the churches of Christendom--for the book of Revelation is prophetic and symbolic--He sees Him standing in their midst as "One like unto the Son of Man." It is in this character He both judges and builds. He knows His own work. No mere ecclesiasticism can produce this. That which is the outcome of the Father revealing and the Son of Man building, no Satanic onslaught can prevail against.

The counsels, schemes, espionage, and offensives of the gates of Hades all fail. (The reference to the "gates," made in Matthew 16, points to the council places. Such were in the gates in the Old Testament

times.) Hades' gates may effect such a state in Christendom that Satan sets his throne there, and finds a convenient dwelling in it (Rev. 2:13, N.Tr.); they may be the cause of a Thyatira--Romish condition (2:18-29), and of a Sardis--Protestant state of things (3:1-6); they may even be the indirect means of the "little strength" in the Philadelphia--"Love of the brethren" assembly--which, however, remains faithful to the finish (vv. 7-13); and they may produce the lukewarm, self-satisfied condition of the Laodicean--Christian Brotherhood (vv. 14-22); but against the assembly which is the outcome of divine revelation and building they are impotent: they are just as helpless as is death itself against the life of the risen Son of God--who has triumphed over both death and the grave--for it is in that life the Son of Man's assembly has its being and constitution.

There are other aspects of the assembly. It is that which belongs to Christ as the fruit of the purpose of God which centred in Himself; and, again, as the outcome of His own love, for "Christ loved the assembly and gave Himself for it"; also it is that which is formed by the coming of the Holy Spirit, "for by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body." We may not, however, enlarge upon these precious facts here.

3. The Son of Man's Relation to Israel and the Nations

It may be more difficult to see in what way the Lord, as Son of Man: stands in relation to Israel, for it is as Son of David that the Messiah is related specially to this nation; nevertheless, they must yet be freed from bigotry and selfishness, and learn that He is the Son of Man with wider interests than Israel simply; also that their national breakdown necessitated His intervention as such, if ever they were to be put right with God. The, plaintive singer of the beautiful eightieth Psalm understood this. "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel," he pleadingly begins. "Turn us again, O God, and cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved" he continues. After describing the failure and ruin of the nation--of the vine God had brought out of Egypt--the song rises in rich notes of hopefulness, because of another whom God can use to recover Israel for Himself; and, ringing out its music with joyful strains of triumph, it says, "Let Thy hand be upon the Man of Thy right hand, upon the SON OF MAN whom Thou madest strong FOR THYSELF. So will not we go back from Thee." In full view of the failure of Israel, the sweet singer ascends in faith and confidence to God and the Son of Man, in whom he sees one able to bring Israel into salvation and into the shining of God's countenance.

It seems as if the people are to be prepared for this, for Ezekiel and Daniel, who prophesied when they were in captivity in Babylon--away from Israel's national home--are both addressed "son of man." These are the only cases in Scripture, and it is indicative of the One, who, when rejected by Israel, takes this title as being rightly His. No one, except our Lord Jesus Christ, speaks of Himself by that name, and He only is the Son of Man. Jonah went unwillingly to Gentiles, and became a type, in the fish's belly, of the Son of Man three days and three nights in the bowels of the earth.

Israel will learn by experience that there is no hope in "man after the flesh". In this connection another had said, "Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in His sight. How much less man, a worm? and the Son of Man, a worm" (Job 25:5-6)? Quite true; but another beheld "the moon and the stars" also, and he "questioned about man and the Son of Man, but he was given to see Him according to God's purpose set over all (Ps. 8); not like Bildad the Shuhite--a helpless worm after the flesh! Still, that lesson will be taught to the descendants of Jacob; then it will be said, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob . . . I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument"; and they shall thresh the mountains, the great governments of the nations of the world (Isa. 41:14-15). This will come about through the Man--the Son of Man of Psalm 80, of which we have spoken; but He Himself must first come to Israel, and fully

settle the question of their sins, and of their state before God; and He did this at the Cross of Calvary. So completely did He identify Himself with them, we hear Him cry, "I am a worm" (Ps. 22:6). What grace on the part of Him who was altogether perfect! And now, raised from among the dead, He is exalted to God's right hand. When He has builded His assembly, when it is complete, when it is glorified, He will take up Israel, and bring them into blessing with God, through the sacrifice which He made on the Cross. They will then say, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." They will know that the Son of Man, who was rejected by the elders of the nation, who was scorned, scourged and spitefully entreated, is their Saviour and Messiah.

It is true that Nathanael, an Israelite in whom there was no guile, recognized Him, and owned Him to be the King of Israel; but the Lord told him, he should see hereafter "the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." The administration for every circle of blessing must centre in Him. To the disciples He said, "When the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

In Matthew 25:31 we are told, when the Son of Man shall have come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit down upon His throne of glory, and all the nations shall be gathered before Him. In verse 40, the Son of Man--the King, speaks also of another company--"These my brethren." They are of Israel. So we have the Son of Man, Israel and all the nations in this chapter brought together; but the nations are judged by the King according to their treatment of His brethren of Israel. In the previous chapter, Matthew 24, Israel is specially in view; remarkable to say, the Son of Man's coming again is spoken of five times in the latter half of the chapter. He is to come in power and glory we are told; and the Son of Man specially cares for His elect at that time. It is striking that Israel here is called the Son of Man's elect in verses 30 and 31. He sends His angels, and with the sound of a great trumpet, they "gather together His elect from the four winds from one extremity of the heavens to the other." It is to be remarked, that in Matthew, the gospel which shows Israel her King, the Son of Man is mentioned over thirty times. In Mark Christ is so named fourteen times; Luke, twenty-six; John, twelve.

Finally, in Daniel 7, where world-empire is before the mind of the Spirit; where four great beasts--representing the empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome, are seen by the prophet; where the Ancient of days--the everlasting God, comes and judges these empires; the Son of Man is seen coming with the clouds of heaven! He is brought near before the Ancient of days, and the dominion and glory is given to Him. All people--Israel too--as well as all the other nations and languages, serve Him! This kingdom does not crumble and pass away like that of Babylon and the others. Its permanence is secured in the perfection of the One who is King of kings and Lord of lords! Men shall indeed be blessed in Him, and His high praise shall sound abroad upon the earth in that glorious day!

"Kings shall fall down before him

And gold and incense bring;

All nations shall adore Him,

His praise all people sing."

4. The Son of Man's Relation to Individuals

This is a matter of the most intense interest to each one of us. If we are not right in this, the other relations of our Lord Jesus Christ, as Son of Man, cannot have their proper place in our hearts and minds. To be wrong here is to be wrong everywhere: to be right here makes it possible to be right everywhere. The matter is of acute, personal, present and eternal importance. In self-judgment and prayer before God, we need to find out for ourselves, if we are each one individually in right relation with the Son of Man. One verse will bring home to every honest heart the truth of what we say, "Unless ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of Man, and drunk His blood, ye have no life in yourselves" (John 6:33, N.Tr.). Solemn word, "NO LIFE!" Religion there may be; church membership there may be; so-called "good works" there may be; but no life unless the death of the Son of Man has been appropriated. Here we must all begin.

It is entirely an individual matter, and each one must face it for himself. We have either accepted in faith the death of the Son of Man as the way of life or we have not. When He gave His flesh at Calvary, it was in view of the whole world; but we must appropriate individually, as He said, "That a man may eat thereof, and not die" (John 6:50); and again, "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood has eternal life" (v. 54). It is a question of receiving the truth into our hearts by faith. The truth is made known, and the true believer appropriates it. That is the eating and drinking which is spoken of. The Lord said towards the close of this wonderful discourse, which gives the foundation of our vital relations with God--"The spirit quickens, the flesh profits nothing: the words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life. But there are some of you who do not believe" (N.Tr.). There it is! We believe or we do "not believe"! It is a matter of faith.

Those who believe will be raised at "THE RESURRECTION OF LIFE": those who do not believe will be called to "THE RESURRECTION OF JUDGMENT" (John 5:29). The first have done good, and therefore we are told in verse 24, they "shall not come into judgment," for they have already passed out of death into life. Their judgment was borne by the One whose death they have appropriated. The second, however, cannot escape judgment. The One they have refused, spurned, or neglected, has all judgment committed to Him because He is the Son of Man; since, therefore, they did not accept Him as their Saviour, they must meet Him as their Judge. Nor will there be any escape from the sentence which their sins call for. Revelation 20:11-15 shows that all who stand to be judged in that dread day receive an eternal sentence. They did not take the way of life through the death of the Son of Man, now they pass down to exist eternally in a state that is called "the second death," because it is alienated entirely from the life of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ as Son of Man will have to say to each individual, either as a judge or as the giver of life. No wonder He said, to those who followed Him for present benefit in this life only,--"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give you; for Him has God the Father sealed" (John 6:27); and when they enquired how they might "work the works of God," He answered, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He has sent." This makes it all plain. Moreover, that the believer might be delivered and be brought into life consistently with the throne of God's righteousness and holiness, we read, "The Son of Man came . . . to give His life a ransom for many." It was thus the righteous foundation was laid; and we can therefore see how consistently the true believer is exempted from judgment.

The fact is, He came seeking us, that we might be saved from eternal doom. The activity of grace was on His side, blessed be His name. Even if it were a question of the children, who had not arrived at the years of responsibility, who had not deliberately wandered away in the paths of evil; but who by reason of their birth were necessarily in a lost condition, we read, the Saviour said, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones . . . for the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost" (Matt. 18:10-11). What grace

shines in the Son of Man! What multitudes of these dear little ones shall praise Him for their salvation for ever and ever! And when years of responsibility have been reached, and the wanderer has gone far from God, when he needs not only saving but seeking, even then His grace and compassion carry Him after the wayward out, for He said, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Blessed Saviour, hadst Thou not sought us we should have been lost for ever! We should never have known Thy great salvation! We should have been strangers to Thy rich grace and love eternally. We bless Thee for seeking us. We bless Thee for saving us.

It might be said, with a measure of truth, these Scriptures refer to the lost of Israel; but in their application they may be rightly carried further. Even the Gentile woman of Mark 7:25 claimed the crumbs of blessing which came from Israel's table, and the Lord gladly approved her claim. So is it with forgiveness of sins. This is offered freely through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in the gospel today. It is for "all who believe"; yet, when on earth, He brought it specially to Israel. The Son of Man had power on earth to "forgive sins" (Matt. 9:6). This was governmental: now eternal forgiveness is preached. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is indeed exceedingly abundant. Who shall limit it? As Son of Man--His racial title--He cannot be confined to Israel; and as we have seen they must yet learn His wider interests. The very title involves man generally; and that which He came to secure--the rich blessings that are in His bountiful hands, are open to all. We need to know Him better, and we shall rejoice in Him more.

"Son of Man, His incarnation,

Open'd first the tale of grace;

Son of Man, in new creation,

Leader of a chosen race!

Well may glory

Crown Him in the ordered place!"

5. The Son of Man's Relation to "All Things"

It is little to be wondered at that so many questions have been raised from time to time concerning the Son of Man. The first on record is the inquiry of Bildad the Shuhite in Job 25. In view of God's majesty and holiness, he asks how man can be right with Him--"Man, that is a worm? and the Son of man, which is a worm?" David next asks in Psalm 8, "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the Son of Man that Thou visitest him?" (He finds the answer: Bildad did not. Three times is that answer cited in the New Testament, as we shall presently see.) Next, the Lord Himself inquires of His disciples, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" (Matt. 16:13) Then, in John 12:34, we have the Jews asking, "How sayest Thou, the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" The words of Christ, uttered some while before, had evidently rankled in their thoughts. It is in chapter 8:28 they are recorded. Finally, in Hebrews 2:6, it is again questioned, "What is man? or the Son of Man?"

In Hebrews 2 the important matter in view is, Who is to be over all in the coming age of blessing, when the powers of that age shall publicly benefit the inhabitable world which is to come, when all iniquities shall be forgiven and all diseases healed, when Satan shall be cast out and the glory of the Lord shall flow over the earth--who then shall have "all things" put under him? The answer is, Man--the Son of Man! Whatever place angels may have had in the past, we are told, "He has not subjected to angels the habitable world to

come of which we speak" (v. 5, N.Tr.). Great warriors have risen up at various times and sought to get the world at their feet; Alexander and Napoleon tried and failed. One, and One only has God destined for that exalted place; and that One He first made "a little inferior to angels for the suffering of death"; and then--after He had tasted death for everything--He raised Him from among the dead and set Him over "everything," crowning Him at His right hand "with glory and honour."

What a place for man! for the Son of Man! and what grace it is on His part of which we read--He associates us with Him as companions in His glory and gladness, being "anointed with the oil of gladness above His companions" (1:9)! Nevertheless, Ephesians 1 carries us higher still, as we shall see. We do not yet behold all things put under Him publicly; but the place is already His; and, at His coming again, He will appear in His glory; and, "when Christ who is our life is manifested, then shall we also be manifested with Him in glory." Meanwhile, in the language of Hebrews 2:9, faith says, "We see Jesus, who was made some little inferior to angels on account of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour" (N.Tr.). How worthy He is to be glorified thus!

In Ephesians 1:21-23 the Spirit takes us up to the heavenlies, to see Christ set down at the right hand of God; where the supreme place is His over "all things" in heaven as well as in earth; where He is "above every principality, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name named, not only in this age, but also in that to come"; where, citing Psalm 8, with more extensive application, it is said, He has put all things under his feet. This is according to the counsels of God; and, wonderful to relate, we are again seen associated with Christ in this still more glorious supremacy, and in a still more intimate way, for we read, God "gave Him to be Head over all things to the assembly, which is His body." We are thus united to Himself, as His own body, in the Headship which is His over all things in heaven and earth! God has indeed abounded towards us in measureless grace--grace, the sense of which keeps us lowly, whilst we may rejoice with joy unspeakable, and be filled with the glory which is ours along with our adorable Lord and Saviour.

"Thy counsels ere the world began,

All centred in the Son of Man;

Him destined to the highest place,

Head of His church through sovereign grace.

To Him enthroned in majesty,

Let every creature bend the knee!"

What a vast system of heavenly and earthly blessing and splendour is involved in this relation of the Son of Man to all things! The breadth and length and depth and height of which, the Apostle prays (chap. 3:14-21), we may be strengthened to fully apprehend with all the saints, as Christ, who is the exalted Head and Centre of it, dwells in our hearts through faith.

In 1 Corinthians 15:25-28 the most extensive and expansive use possible is made of the words of Psalm 8 by the Spirit. The vastness contained in them seems to be without limit; when, in the widest sense possible, it is said, "He has put all things in subjection under His feet." The first of our Scriptures may speak specially of the earth--"the habitable world which is to come"; the second of that which is still greater--the things in heaven as well as the things on earth; but this last expresses no limitations. Indeed,

we are told in verse 27 that there is no exception in the wide universe save One--that is God Himself; as it says, "Except Him who put all in subjection to Him." There is something supremely glorious and grand here! The Son, as the Son of Man, is entrusted with this universal pre-eminence; and He fills this place so worthily, that it results in an eternity of inexpressible felicity and glory, where God is all in all. The means of bringing this to pass is man, who once cried, "I am a worm." Wonderful! Wonderful! His name is "WONDERFUL."

6. The Son of Man's Relation to God

We feel it impossible to express the excellent grace and beauty of this relationship, or to find words to indicate the marvellous majesty and dignity of it, or to evince the profound blessedness and unfading fullness of its everlasting stability and glory. God and Man--Man and God--in relations that are according to the love of God!--we are so accustomed to the opposite--we hardly know how to approach this divine theme. May the Holy Spirit guide us.

Before the earth's foundations were made, before the great mountains were formed, before the fountains and rivers flowed, the waters of the sea appeared, the divine pleasure centred in man; so we are told in that incomparable eighth of Proverbs. Wisdom, whose counsel, piety, strength, understanding, riches, honour, and enduring righteousness are abundant, is personified there. This is the wisdom of God-- "that hidden wisdom which God had predetermined before the ages for our glory" (1 Cor. 2:7)--our Lord Jesus Christ. He was "daily His delight rejoicing always before Him" (v. 30) in that far-distant time; and it was then, before the world was made, that the divine thoughts travelled forward and found pleasure in man, as the next verse tells us: "rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and My delights were with the sons of men." What if Satan should mar God's handiwork when that fair creature man appeared on the earth? What if he should fall under sin, death and corruption? What of the divine pleasure then? Christ would come to redeem him; come into his place, though Himself be sinless; come to bear his sins, and be made sin to righteously deliver him; came to vanquish His captor through death, and rise again in triumph; securing man's everlasting blessing for the pleasure of God; and, Himself, the Son of Man, becoming the new Head of those He has thus saved and brought into new life; His delights in the sons of men, instead of being for ever lost, are thus infinitely greater, and eternally secure.

It was in Him, the Son of Man, that God found His delight; and the place of supreme dominion over all things was that which He counselled for Him; but, first, He made Him "a little lower than the angels." After the failure of the created man, it must have given great joy to God to see the Son of Man, in all His lowly grace and perfectness, passing through scenes of sin and violence to His praise and honour. Amidst the gloom and darkness of this world, how lovely His path shone, in heavenly light, under the approving eye of God! He walked in Jewry, but the Greeks came, and said, "We would see Jesus." This was a divine indication that God would gather the Gentiles as well as Israel to Him; and He said, "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified." Nevertheless, He must die first, therefore He added, "Except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone." The Son of Man must be lifted up! therefore He goes up to Jerusalem.

In all His ways He was acceptable to God. "I do always those things that please the Father," He said; nevertheless we read, "The Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him." Thus did fallen man, Jews and Gentiles, to the One who was so perfect in God's sight; but He rose from the dead the third day, and God exalted Him

to His throne. Rejected of men, the Son of Man was seen by Stephen standing at the right hand of God. There was the One whom God delighted to honour--Man in the highest place in heaven--the Son of Man glorified! Thence He will be brought forth publicly soon, as Daniel 7:13 foretells, "with the clouds of heaven," and receive dominion and glory over the earth, where He was so shamefully treated before.

Samson's riddle will be explained in Him. Honey and meat abundantly will be brought out of the strong and out of the eater; and God shall be eternally honoured by the Son of Man, though He had been so deeply dishonoured through the created man, Adam. The administration in heaven and earth shall, in the hands of the Son of Man, be to the praise of God's glory. "Hereafter," the Lord Jesus said to Nathaniel, "Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." He will still be the delight of the heart of God. He was so in His humiliation: He will be so in His exaltation. Ruin may come into God's creation, as Psalm 80 says it had done in Israel; but the Man of the right hand, the Son of Man whom God had made strong for Himself, is the divine resource in the presence of any failure. He is the One who brings everything right for God Himself eventually. Moreover, not only is He always well pleasing to God, but He has glorified God. Truly God has already glorified the Son of Man, as we have seen;--He has glorified Him in Himself; but, what is so precious indeed to think of, is, God has been glorified by the Son of Man! For ever Man will be present with God as His glorifier! What an eternal triumph in Man over Satan who led man to dishonour his Creator.

At the last Passover, when Satan had entered into the betrayer, Judas; and when Judas had gone out; Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." It was Satan himself who entered into the son of perdition: not merely a demon. Now he had gone out; and the true relations of God and man are declared by the Lord. MAN GLORIFIED BY GOD and GOD GLORIFIED BY MAN. The former in the glory above, and the latter through the cross.

"By Him Who died

And all God's nature glorified;

His righteousness and grace displayed

When Christ for sin atonement made."

And he shall reign till all things are brought into order according to the mind and counsel of God; then He will give up the kingdom to Him who is God and Father; and, Himself, as Man, to whom God had put all things in subjection, shall be subject; and God shall be all in all--God--the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The deep and infinite blessedness of this is inexpressible. God, in all the glorious perfection of His own nature and being, all in all: Man, in all the beautiful grace that is seen in Christ, eternally subject to God, whom He has glorified and who has glorified Him.

7. The Son of Man and Angels

"As the lightning comes out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. 24:27). "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (v. 30). "The Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory" (25:31). With such stirring and astonishing language does the Spirit speak of the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ;--as the lightning shineth!--on the clouds of

heaven (N.Tr.)!--and all the holy angels with Him!

These three expressions from our three verses all appear to signify the presence of angels at that glorious time. He "maketh His angels spirits; His ministers a flaming fire," we are told. Of one angel we read, "His countenance was like lightning." Again, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels" (Ps. 68:17): "Who maketh the clouds His chariot" (104:3). Psalm 68:18 is quoted of the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ in Ephesians 4:8; and we bring these verses together, to show from Scripture that, both in figure and fact, the attendance of angels is indicated at that glorious time, when the Son of Man comes. The presence of "clouds" has often been remarked by students of the Word, "Behold He comes with clouds!"--The assembly will be caught up "in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air!"--and, "a cloud received Him out of their sight" when He left the earth! There are numerous other scriptures, but we give these as elucidating our subject.

It is very touching to think of the wonderful service of angels in relation to man; and we best learn this as we follow their activities in regard to the One who in grace has made us His for ever. In connection with both His humiliation and His exaltation above them, we see their beautiful and unselfish ministry; and when He comes in majesty and splendour they come with Him. As He lay a babe in the manger of the stable it was an angel who announced to the shepherds that the Saviour was born; and a multitude of the heavenly host joined Him, and voiced their praise to God. "Glory to God in the highest," said they; and, seeing in that child the pledge of what is yet to come, when He returns to reign, they added, "and on earth peace"; and, though angels were passed by, for "He took not on Him the nature of angels," yet they rejoiced as they saw man to be the special object of the divine counsel and delight, and they concluded their wonderful laudation by saying, "GOOD PLEASURE IN MEN!" Then they departed and returned into heaven.

It was true, as Psalm 91:11 foretold, the angels of God were given charge concerning Him. Satan, knowing this, tried to prevail upon Him to tempt God. In this the enemy of Christ failed, as in the other temptations; but, when these sore trials were passed, and the forty days and forty nights in the wilderness without food were over, we are told, "Angels came and ministered to Him." Moreover, when in the garden of Gethsemane, He faced the bitter cup which He was about to drink, and knelt alone before God His Father, and prayed concerning it, "an angel appeared to Him from Heaven strengthening Him." When He had passed from among the dead, an angel rolled away the stone from the sepulchre, and sat upon it; saying to the women, who came there early, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and say to His disciples that He is risen from the dead." Two angels spoke later to some who were in perplexity, when they found the sepulchre empty, and said, "He is not here, but is risen: remember how He spoke to you, being yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of Man must be delivered up into the hands of sinners and be crucified, and rise the third day." Then, when He ascended to heaven, as the disciples stood looking upward, two appeared to them, who also said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

Angels were given charge over Him, they ministered to Him, strengthened Him, spake of His resurrection and of His words, and gave His message to the women; they told the wondering disciples that this same Jesus who had ascended to heaven would return; meanwhile their service continues today for those who belong to Christ, as we read, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out for service on account of those who shall inherit salvation" (Heb. 1:24. N.Tr.). When, however the Son of Man returns in glory, we see them having a very special place with Him.

First of all, when Christ comes for the assembly, the archangel's voice will be heard, and we shall be caught up "in the clouds." Then, when the Son of Man is brought to receive the dominion, glory and kingdom, that all on earth should serve Him, He comes "with the clouds of heaven" (Dan. 7:13). In Revelation 14:14 (the last mention of the Son of Man in Scripture) He is seen with a golden crown on His head, and a sharp sickle in His hand, and He sits on a white cloud--it is His chariot, as He comes to execute judgment. We are told that He will send His angels (for they will then be the Son of Man's), and they shall gather the offensive and the lawless out of His kingdom. The harvestmen are the angels (Matt. 13:39, 42). The Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will render to each according to his doings. In Luke 12:8 we read, "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God; but he that shall have denied Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God" (N.Tr.).

We see then the high and honoured place they have in relation to the Son of Man. If John beholds a Lamb in the midst of the throne in heaven, and the saints and the living creatures immediately surrounding Him, he also sees "many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and their number was ten thousand times ten thousands and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." They delight in His exaltation and glory; they rejoice to ascribe perfect praise to Him; they gladly own the value of His death; and they responsively answer to the divine decree--"LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM."

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