

THE HEAVENLY CALLING

consider . . . Jesus

Heb. 3:1

VOLUME XXXIV

NORMAN, OKLAHOMA

MAY, JUNE 2008

NUMBER 3

The Time of the End

Part V

In the Lord's Day (II)

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

And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death (Rev. 1:12-18).

Everything about the revealed identity and description of Christ in Rev. 1:12-18 is both *Messianic* and *judgmental* in nature. God's dispensational work relative to the Church is presented as *complete at this time*. The Spirit will have completed His 2,000-year search for a bride for God's Son; and *the complete Church*

(shown by *the seven candlesticks*) — all Christians, both the resurrected and the ones living at that time — will have been removed from Man's Day on earth and placed in the Lord's Day in heaven.

Everything, from this point forward, not only moves beyond the Spirit's work of procuring a bride for the Son but it also moves beyond Christ's work as High Priest on behalf of Christians — a work being performed *solely for Christians during the present dispensation alone*. And since Christ's high priestly work on behalf of Christians *cannot exist beyond the present dispensation* — beyond the time Christians are removed into the heavens (as seen in Revelation chapter one), bringing the dispensation to a close — the popular view which depicts Christ as High Priest in Rev. 1:12-18, rather than Judge, *cannot possibly be correct*. Rather, matters at this point can only have to do with Christ's future work as *Judge*, which will occur after the dispensation has been completed but preceding the Messianic Era.

And this is *exactly* how matters are clearly presented in the latter part of this first chapter — *the complete Church in Christ's presence, awaiting judgment, with a view to the Messianic Era*.

The Son of Man

With the Church in Christ's presence in the Lord's Day, Christ is introduced in Rev. 1:13a by the title, "Son of man." That which follows this introductory title in verses 13b-16 is *a description* of the "Son of man" as He will appear in that coming day after the Church has been removed from Man's Day on earth

and placed in Christ's presence in the Lord's Day in heaven.

"Son of man" is a *Messianic* title, first seen in Scripture in Psa. 8:4, then in Dan. 7:13. Both of these Old Testament verses are set within Messianic passages and establish, in *an unchangeable fashion*, exactly how the title *must* be understood throughout the eighty-eight times it appears in the New Testament.

The title *must* be understood in the New Testament *after the exact manner in which it was previously introduced in the Old Testament*. That is to say, *after being introduced as a Messianic title in the Old Testament, "Son of man" must be understood as a Messianic title throughout its usage in the New Testament*. This is simply one of the many ways in which God has structured His Word, allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture.

The title appears eighty-four times throughout the gospel accounts, where Christ used the title numerous times referring to Himself. Then, outside the gospel accounts in the New Testament, the title is only used four times — Acts 7:56; Heb. 2:6 (a quotation from Psa. 8:4); Rev. 1:13; 14:14.

Christ used the title in Luke 19:10 to describe *His mission* at the time of His first coming — "to seek and to save that which was lost" (a Messianic title associated, contextually, with salvation for the Jewish people in relation to the proffered kingdom). The title is used in connection with *Christ's betrayal, death, and resurrection* in Matt. 12:40; 20:18; 26:2 (note that salvation provided through Christ's finished work at Calvary is for a purpose; salvation has to do with man ultimately being placed back in the position for which he was created, which will be realized in the Messianic Era). It is used pertaining to events surrounding

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Christ's second advent in Matt. 24:27-44; Luke 12:40 (events surrounding Christ's return, with a view to the Messianic Era). And it is used relative to the Father having committed *all judgment* to the Son in John 5:22-27 (judgment such as that of Christians at Christ's judgment seat, with a view to the Messianic Era).

The broad use of the title, "Son of man," throughout Christ's earthly ministry at the time of His first coming would serve to illustrate a little-appreciated fact. *Everything* surrounding His first coming — His birth, His ministry to Israel, His death, burial, resurrection, and His ascension — had *Messianic ramifications*.

John 1:11 would serve to illustrate the point in one fashion:

"He came unto his own [neuter in Gk. text, *His Own things*], and his own [masculine in Gk. text, *His Own people, the Jewish people*] received him not."

His Own things had to do with those things associated with the title, "Son of man." It had to do with His being born "King of the Jews" (Matt. 2:2); it had to do with the message proclaimed throughout His earthly ministry, a message to the Jewish people pertaining to the kingdom (Matt. 4:17-25; 10:5-8; Luke 10:1ff); it had to do with the throne of David (Luke 1:31-33; cf. II Sam. 7:12-16; Zech. 6:12, 13); it had to do with the title placed over His head at the time of His crucifixion (Matt. 27:37; Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; John 19:19); and it had to do with the message which He proclaimed following His resurrection, preceding His ascension (Luke 24:25-27, 44; Acts 1:3).

Then note Christ's question and the disciples' response in this same respect in Matt. 16:13-16:

"When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?"

And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?"

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

The reference to "Christ" in Peter's response had to do with acknowledging Jesus as *the Messiah*, the One Who would rule and reign; and the reference to "Son" had to do with *His firstborn status*. He was God's firstborn Son, the One Who would exercise the rights of primogeniture (kingly, priestly, and double portion rights), all carrying *Messianic ramifications* in complete keeping with the titles "Messiah" and "Son of man."

Peter had acknowledged the Son of Man's true identity — the One Who would rule and reign as the great King-Priest over the double portion of the Father's goods, in both heavenly and earthly spheres of the kingdom. And Peter's statement prompted Christ to respond by saying,

"...Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven (v. 17b).

In Revelation chapter one, the Spirit moved John to introduce Christ as *Judge* through calling attention to His Messianic title. Then the Spirit moved John to describe the "Son of man" as He will appear in that coming day. And this is the person which all Christians will one day see, to be introduced by this same Messianic title, Who will be seen exactly as described in the account.

(Events of that coming day cannot possibly occur after any other fashion than seen in Revelation chapter one, for John, moved forward into that future day and time, has already seen these things occur. And *no change* can take place in that which has already occurred.)

And the "Son of man," as well, is the person Who will subsequently return to the earth at the complete end of Man's Day in order to bring all things portended by this title to pass, concluded by the ushering in of the Messianic Era (cf. Rev. 19b-20a).

1) Manner in Which Clothed

Christ, as "Son of man," is seen "clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps ['breasts'] with a golden girdle" (v. 13b).

This garment could describe the type clothing worn by either a *priest* or a *judge*. And the introductory title, "Son

THE HEAVENLY CALLING

Published bimonthly

The Lamp Broadcast, Inc.

2629 Wyandotte Way
Norman, Oklahoma 73071

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www.lampbroadcast.org

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All unsigned articles are
written by the editor.

of man," could easily relate to either, for there is really no realm of Christ's ministry at any point in time that does not, after some fashion, have for its goal *the Messianic Era*.

It matters not whether events during past, present, or future time are being dealt with (future time preceding the Messianic Era), *all of God's work* from the very beginning in Genesis chapter one has *one goal in view*. *All work* (restorative work) throughout the six days in this chapter — which foreshadows all work (restorative work) throughout the six days, the 6,000 years of Man's Day — has *one goal in view*. And that is clearly set forth in this opening section of Scripture, establishing a foundation upon which all subsequent Scripture rests.

The seventh day, the Sabbath, a day of rest, followed six days of restorative work in the opening thirty-four verses of Scripture. And, in that which this opening section of Scripture foreshadows, a seventh day, a seventh 1,000-year period — the Sabbath rest awaiting the people of God (Heb. 4:4-9), the Messianic Era — will follow six days of restorative work, 6,000 years of restorative work.

Thus, the title "Son of man" could be used of Christ relative to His ministry either as *High Priest* or as *Judge*, allowing this title to be used of Christ relative to work both present and future.

As *High Priest*, performing a work solely for Christians, Christ is providing a present cleansing for the "many sons" whom He is about to bring "unto glory" (Heb. 2:10). He is providing a cleansing for all Christians who avail themselves of that being provided, which would be seen particularly in matters surrounding His bride, for whom the Spirit is presently searching

(cf. Gen. 24:1ff; John 13:8-11; I John 1:5-10). And this is a work which, as all His works preceding the Messianic Era, has *the Messianic Era in view*.

As *Judge* in a future day, all Christians will stand in His presence to render an account. And the Spirit's work during the present dispensation will, exactly as seen in the type in Gen. 24, be shown to have been successful.

The works of Christians will be tried "by [in'] fire." And through decisions and determinations at the judgment seat, numerous Christians will be shown qualified to be among those comprising that part of Christ's body which will not only be revealed as His bride but complete the Son, allowing Him to reign (cf. I Cor. 3:11-15; II Cor. 5:10, 11; Heb. 2:10).

(Exactly as in the type, the second Man, the last Adam will have a bride taken from His body which, when presented back to Him will provide a *completeness* not heretofore existing, allowing Him to ascend the throne — the man and the woman together — as one complete being.)

Though both the title "Son of man" and the description of Christ in "a garment down to the foot" could relate to or describe Christ as either *High Priest* or *Judge*, two things in the text show that *only the latter* can possibly be in view.

First, note the timing of the scene. Events depicted, contextually, can only occur *beyond* the present dispensation. And as previously shown, Christ's ministry as High Priest is for Christians at a particular time, during time covered by the present dispensation, not beyond. Thus, the scene *cannot possibly* have to do with Christ's high priestly work.

Second, the girdle is seen about Christ's breasts, which is the position of the girdle on the dress of a *judge*, not a priest. A priest wore the girdle about his waist, and would often use the girdle to tuck things into (e.g., a towel, parts of his priestly robe) as he went about his work. This is the apparent scene when Christ girded himself with a towel and washed His disciples' feet in John chapter thirteen, foreshadowing His future priestly work on behalf of Christians.

(Note in Rev. 15:6 that the seven angels having the seven last plagues [the con-

cluding judgments during the Tribulation] are each clothed in "pure and white linen" and are girded with "golden girdles" about their breasts. The scene is one of judgment, and the girdles are seen in their proper place for this type activity.)

2) Descriptive Characteristics

The description of the One seen in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, following His identifying title ("Son of man") and the description of His dress, begins with a statement which can only refer to both *His longevity and holiness* — "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow" (v. 14a). The One Who has always existed and always will exist, the One without beginning or ending (John 1:1, 2, 14), the One without sin Who judged sin at Calvary (II Cor. 5:21), is about to judge Christians relative to works (I Cor. 3:11-15; II Cor. 5:10, 11).

It is common in Scripture to introduce a member of the Godhead through the means seen here, through stating something characteristic of the person.

Note, for example, how the prayer often referred to as "the Lord's prayer" in Matt. 6:9-13 begins: "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name" (v. 9b). The Father is addressed, and a characterizing statement about the Father follows. Then the subject of the prayer begins: "Thy kingdom come..." (v. 10a). Or, note how each of the seven letters to the Churches begins in Revelation chapters two and three. Each begins with a descriptive statement concerning Christ, taken either directly from chapter one or from that portended by the things stated in this chapter. Only then does the subject matter of each epistle begin.

And, as in Matt. 6:9-13, after one statement concerning a member of the Godhead in Rev. 1:14 ("His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow"), the text then goes immediately into the subject matter at hand — *judgment*. The One in the midst of the seven candlesticks is seen having *eyes* "as a flame of fire," *feet* "like unto fine brass," *a voice* "as the sound of many waters," *a sharp twoedged sword* coming from "his mouth," and *a countenance* described "as the sun shining in his strength."

"Fire," "brass," and "a sword" all speak of *different aspects of judgment*.

"Fire" and "brass" are seen relative to a *judgment for sin in the tabernacle ministry in Israel*. Fire burned on the altar in the courtyard in connection with sacrifices, and both the altar and the laver (also in the courtyard) were constructed of brass. This is where sin was judged through sacrifices and washings. Then note the use of "a sword" in a *judgmental scene at the time of Christ's return* in Rev. 19:15.

During Christ's earthly ministry, on one occasion the Pharisees and chief priests sent men to take Him and bring Him into their presence. But the men returned empty-handed, saying, "Never man spake like this man" (John 7:32, 45, 46). On a subsequent occasion, when Judas led a band of men to take Christ, the men were caused to *fall backward to the ground* at the sound of His voice when He identified Himself by saying, "I am he [*lit.*, 'I Am']" (John 18:3-8).

(The correct translation of Jesus' response in John 18:5, 6, 8 is "I Am," not "I am he," identifying Himself with the God of the O.T. in Ex. 3:14. And there is a repeated emphasis on the pronoun, "I." Brought over into English, the response would be similar to saying, "I Myself, I Am.")

And Peter experienced Christ's piercing eyes after he had, three times, denied the One Whom, only a short time earlier, he had emphatically declared that *he would never deny* (Matt. 26:35; Luke 22:33).

It is recorded in Luke 22:61, following this triad of denials, "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter..." And it is evident from the text that Peter fully observed and experienced the Lord's actions.

The word for "look" in the Greek text is not just the regular word for "look" (*blepo*). Rather, it is an intensified form of this word (*emblepo*). Christ didn't just look at Peter. He looked into Peter's eyes in a manner which *penetrated his very being*. And Peter knew it, *he experienced it*, which caused him to *go out and weep bitterly*.

Every Christian in that coming day will stand before Christ as *Judge*, with His piercing eyes, "as a flame of fire," and His voice, "as the sound of many waters." And Peter's reaction to Christ's piercing and penetrating look in a past day will be the experience of numerous disobedient

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Christians in a future day, causing them to do *exactly* the same thing which Peter did — *go out and weep bitterly*.

Then, as if that will not be enough, His countenance, with a body enswathed in a covering of glory, will be “as the sun shineth in his strength” (v. 16); and judgment meted out will consist of completely righteous decisions and determinations by the One Who has existed from eternity, identified with the God of the Old Testament.

Seven Stars, Seven Candlesticks

Christ is seen holding *seven stars* in His right hand as He stands in the midst of *seven candlesticks*. He holds one and walks in the midst of the other. And that which the metaphors are used to represent is clearly stated in the closing words of chapter one, immediately prior to the seven short epistles to the seven Churches in chapters two and three:

“The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are *the angels of the seven Churches*: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are *the seven Churches*” (v. 20).

The Book of Revelation is filled with angelic activity, and there is no reason to think that these seven angels represent anything other than angels. They are specifically stated to be angels of Churches, and in chapters two and three, each epistle is addressed to the angel of a particular Church.

This would be in perfect keeping with the reference to angels in Heb. 1:14:

“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation [lit., ... ‘to minister for the sake of the ones about to inherit salvation’].”

And note something about the seven epistles in chapters two and three. The things in these two chapters form a continuation from chapter one. And though *a history of Christendom* is shown through activity in seven Churches existing in the first century at the time John wrote, the epistles, in their contextual setting, show more particularly *things future — things about the judgment seat, continuing from chapter one*.

Each epistle is structured *exactly the same way*:

- 1) *I know thy works.*
- 2) *A call to repentance, or to heed the Lord’s command.*
- 3) *Then, an overcomer’s promise.*

That dealt with at the judgment seat will be 1) *works*, which will show whether those being judged 2) *did or did not repent or obey the Lord’s command*. And this will be with 3) *a view to realizing or not realizing an overcomer’s promise*, which has to do with realizing or not realizing an inheritance with Christ during the coming age.

Angelic activity seen in Heb. 1:14 is with a view to exactly the same thing seen in Revelation chapters one through three relative to Christians. And an angel occupying an appointed position in relation to each of the seven Churches would be in perfect keeping with this thought. In that respect, there would be an angel placed over each Church, and there would be other angels ministering to Christians within each Church, with the ministry of all the angels having *one goal in view* — Christians overcoming during Man’s Day in order that they might realize an inheritance during the Lord’s Day (cf. Heb. 2:5).

(A popular interpretation of the seven angels seeks to identify them as *the pastors of the seven Churches*. This would be somewhat based on the fact that the Greek word translated “angel” [*aggelos*] means “messenger” and is used of men

in that respect a few times in Scripture [Matt. 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:24, 27; 9:52; James 2:25]. However, this is only a scattering of the numerous times that the word appears in the N.T., referring mainly to “angels,” not men.

In the Book of Revelation, the word *aggelos* appears sixty-six times beyond chapters one through three, and the word is not used a single time throughout this remaining part of the book referring to men. Also, to say that the word *aggelos* in chapters one through three refers to the pastors of the seven Churches would be out of line with the manner in which the N.T. presents pastors in the Churches. In the N.T., when pastors are spoken of in connection with Churches, there is no such thing as a Church with one pastor. Churches in the N.T. are always seen having more than one pastor, or elder [cf. Acts 20:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14].)

Thus, that depicted in Revelation chapters one through three evidently has to do with angelic activity in the Churches, angelic activity among Christians during the present dispensation. And this activity has to do with a ministry among Christians, with a view to Christians overcoming and realizing an inheritance with Christ during the coming age.

A history of the Church throughout the dispensation is presented through the manner in which chapters two and three are structured; but, more particularly and contextually, the two chapters simply present *a continuation from chapter one* and have to do with details surrounding the coming judgment of Christians, with material in the chapters dropping back and including the necessity of present preparation.

(For Exegetical information concerning each of the seven Churches in chapters two and three, refer to the editor’s book, JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST [Revised Edition], Chs. V-XI.)

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