

A New Vision of the Lord

a sermon by Rev. Michael Gladish
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One of the distinguishing features of the announcement made in the book, *True Christian Religion*, about the events in the spiritual world on the 19th of June, 1770, is a reference to the prophecy of Daniel, chapter 7, verse 14, which reads,

“I was watching in the night visions, and behold One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! And He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom (the one) which shall not be destroyed.”

Although written before His first Coming, this most obviously is a vision of the Lord in His *Second Coming*. The Son of Man or the “One *like* the Son of Man” is the Lord, and of course the Ancient of Days is Jehovah, the Divine Creator as He is in Himself, invisible before His appearance in a Human form. Thus it is the Lord Jesus Christ who will be coming again in the clouds of heaven, and who will be given “dominion and glory and a kingdom, and that all peoples, nations and languages should serve Him.”

Still, it’s true that the same things occurred when the Lord first came into the world, but because they occurred spiritually, and not physically, they were not visible through outward observation. And of course the Lord knew that the work of His life and teaching would be perverted by all sorts of worldly and politically motivated propaganda, so that for many Christians it would again be lost in misunderstanding. That is why He promised He would come *again*, and so again in the Gospels He said His coming would be “in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory” (Matt. 24:30, also Matt. 26:64, Rev. 1:7 & Rev. 14:14). These clouds everywhere in the Word represent the obscurity of a literal reading, but the *power* and *glory* represent the Divine authority of the *spiritual* sense which can guide us with understanding into spiritual life.

So today we have, as we say, a new vision of the Lord – a new way of understanding Him and “seeing” Him in our lives. The *True Christian Religion* even makes the bold statement that since the publication of the heavenly doctrines He is actually visible to the human mind ***for the first time in the history of the world*** (TCR 786-787), the point being that without a proper understanding no one ever really sees Him, and even if He did come again in a physical body we would not *recognize* Him without the instruction that these Writings provide.

But what, exactly, can we learn from this vision of the Lord? What does it reveal about Him?

The first thing that we learn from it is that He is “One like the Son of Man.” And here we should be clear that the description is not of the Son of any ordinary man, as in “a male of the species.” The word for this “Man” in Hebrew, Greek and Latin simply means *Human*. So the vision we are shown in Scripture is not just a son born of a natural father but the ultimate expression of humanity itself, the true image or the true form of the Divine Human, the Word made flesh.

Now the Divine Human itself includes both masculine and feminine qualities. But still, the *SON*

of Man, as described, is a male. Why? The reason is that masculinity or manhood is the natural form of truth, whereas femininity or womanhood is the form of goodness or love. Both men and women, we read, embody truth and love, but in the male love is veiled over and may be obscured by the thought processes relating to truth. With women it is the other way around: there is an inner knowing or perception of truth that is veiled over and may be obscured by more obvious concerns that relate to love. God chose to come into the world as a MAN because He knows that our regeneration, our spiritual growth, depends first of all on a correct perception of the truth – a knowledge of what is right so that we can DO it, and by doing it learn to love and enjoy it.

No doubt you have all experienced the frustration of trying to do something when you didn't know how. As the old expression goes, you get an "A" for effort but you never seem to get the work done right. This is just as true of spiritual work as it is of natural work. You can try and try *and try* to be more loving and kind but if you don't know how to do it you can just end up feeling more and more frustrated, drained and resentful – the very opposite of what you want. What you need is a new vision of the truth, a new way of seeing the truth as it applies to you – a new way of understanding what's going on inside of you as well as outside in the circumstances that affect you. When you finally "get" what's going on then it's usually not too hard to find a solution – sort of like doing a jigsaw puzzle with the picture on the box to work from. Now you know where to look, now you know what's missing, now your efforts can make some sort of sense.

So the Lord presents Himself as Truth, Truth in Human form, the SON of Man giving light to the understanding so that we can come to grips with our problems and deal effectively with them. This truth, of course, is the teaching of and from a right understanding of His Word.

Comparing the vision in Daniel to the one in the opening chapter of the book of Revelation, what can we learn about the Lord that we can USE in our relationship with Him?

The first things that appear in Revelation are the seven lampstands. John himself says that they represent the seven churches discussed later, and churches in turn represent the places or states in which the Lord is received, loved and believed. So when we hear the voice of God, which is the truth of His Word, and turn from our other interests to see it, that is, to understand it, the first thing we notice is how others receive it. We see their light, the very light of the disciples that the Lord said could not be hidden under a basket but should be put "on a lampstand" (Matt. 5:15). And we observe their love, represented by the gold of the lampstands.

Then at the heart, or in the center of these receptive states we see the Lord Himself, "clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girded about the breast with a golden band." Clothing everywhere in the Word corresponds to the truth that clothes and accommodates what is loving to the uses of life. Since the Lord essentially is nothing but love, His clothing or garment represents the truth that flows from that love and covers it so that we can see and appreciate it. Then, again, the golden band or girdle that pulls it all together represents the goodness of His love gathering the teachings together and connecting them in our minds.

We see these garments, including the golden band, whenever we get any sense or understanding of the Lord's truth and goodness. And, we're taught, if we're looking for it we can see it everywhere, since the sphere of the Lord's Divine love and wisdom extends from the greatest to the least things of all creation.

This is also represented by the Lord's head and hair, in that they were white like wool or snow. The head represents the highest or first principles and the hair represents the lowest or least things of the spirit. White represents purity. So these parts of the vision reflect our impressions every time we get a sense of the purity of all His loves and intentions for us.

But let's face it: this may be a fairly rare experience. Instead, we may struggle a lot of the time with a very different sense of things, including doubt, anxiety, fear, loneliness, feelings of abandonment, disappointment, resentment, grief, anger or jealousy, and then maybe guilt and self-criticism on top of everything. What can we do about that, and how can this vision help?

Of course the answer may be different for everyone. But the picture of the Son of Man in the Word offers basic comfort and guidance for all who want it. Remember, it was seen first by Daniel and then by John. The name, Daniel, means *God is judge* and represents an affirmation of that point. John means *Jehovah is gracious* and refers to the goodness of His love, and so the point is made that when we look with an affirmative attitude from a position of doing what is good we will be able to see and appreciate the Lord in His glory.

Then, of course, when we hear Him speaking we will have to *turn around* to see Him. This is the literal meaning of the word, repentance. We have to let go of our personal worries and concerns, especially our self-centered focus, and *turn to Him* in prayer, meditation and reflection on His Word, turning also to see the light in friends or companions who stand by His Word. This is the meaning of John's being "in the Spirit on the Lord's day" when he saw the vision. Only when we are in such a state can we see Him in the garments of wisdom that He puts on for us. But when we do we will see Him in everything from highest principles to the least details of life, in the soft purity of His love and the shining integrity of His truth. All we have to do is turn around.

Then, looking more intently, we will see "His eyes like a flame of fire" – not two flames, one flame, for this is the fire of His love burning from within to "see" that everything that can be done is done for our salvation. The eyes correspond to the understanding, and the understanding of God, because it is infinite, is Divine Providence (AE 68). And Providence is not selective. It is the government of infinite love and wisdom. It includes everything. If we know this and if we are willing to acknowledge it the Lord can lead us through anything, and indeed He will.

So then our vision of the Son of Man will include His feet, which are like fine brass, as if refined, or as the Writings say, glowing in a furnace. You don't have to see brass glowing in a furnace, to know that it's incredibly bright, and awesome as it glows in molten beauty. Feet, like hair, represent the most external aspects of our lives, not AS low or external as hair, which represents the smallest details, but the general activity of our natural life. Feet carry us around, hold us up, give us power; so the natural activity of our lives forms a basis for every spiritual state that rests upon it. In the Lord's case His feet correspond to the natural aspects of His providence, which mainly have to do with laws of order, doctrine, worship, and the literal sense of the Word – which has been written just as it is for our instruction and support. But the fact that His feet are seen as bright, hot, glowing brass calls our attention to the intense, fundamental goodness of all that He provides. For brass corresponds to what is good in our natural lives.

Everything serves a use. Everything has a good purpose. Everything is given – or permitted – for the sake of a Divine end. How can it be otherwise? If there is a God, He's in charge. "And

His voice is as the sound of many waters.” Just imagine for a moment standing at the edge – or at the bottom – of a great, thundering waterfall. Here is power! And the power of the Lord’s truth is such that we can’t resist it. His wisdom flows into every natural occurrence, deed and fact. Everything happens for a reason. Our job is to see why, or at the very least to accept that it is so and try to learn from it, and grow in faith and wisdom from the Lord.

John’s vision concludes with the appearance of seven stars in God’s right hand – stars that are said to represent the angels of the seven churches, and a sharp, two-edged sword coming out of His mouth, and the whole expression of His face shining like the sun. It is, in a sense, completely overwhelming! So John notes that he fell at His feet as dead.

Stars, of course, represent the insights or knowledges of faith that guide us through the dark periods of our lives. The sword represents the truth fighting against the falsities and lies we sometimes tell even ourselves. And the brightness of the sun in God’s face represents the power and the glory of His incredible love – the source of so much energy that the world itself seems like a mere speck in comparison.

What possible response can we have to such an awesome vision? How can we STAND before Him, or let our miserable, worldly worries stand in His way? If we are willing to turn and see the Lord as He appears in HIS glory, OUR concerns will inevitably pale in comparison – not that we should deny our concerns, but we can take them to the Lord as we “fall at His feet” recognizing that in and of ourselves we are as dead as dirt: we don’t get anywhere, we don’t do anything productive of spiritual life, we don’t understand, and we don’t feel very good. But when we fall at His feet a most amazing thing happens: He lays His right hand on us and says, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last. I am He who lives and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. And I have the keys of hell and of death. Write....”

To write is to make a record so that a thing may be remembered, and this is done as in the “book of life” by doing what the Lord teaches us. Just imagine being in jail – in a dark prison behind locked doors and bars and walls you can’t escape, and someone appears to you and says, “I have the keys.... I can let you out of here.” The right hand of the Lord represents His power, specifically the power of goodness from His love. If we will turn and look, acknowledging His power in all things of our lives, He will certainly reassure us, and He will cause us to escape – not from our circumstances but from our self-pity and self-limitation, from the prison of our misunderstanding and self-deception, from our grief and hopelessness.

Then perhaps we will see, even as Daniel and John both saw, that what we cannot do for ourselves the Lord CAN do for us. And though He may appear at first “in the clouds of heaven” He WILL reveal Himself in power and great glory so that “all peoples, nations and languages (within our mental/spiritual world can) serve Him,” and “His dominion (within our lives will be) an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom (the one) which shall not be destroyed.”

- Amen

Lessons: *Revelation 1:9-20*
 Children’s talk on “Seeing the Lord.”
 Daniel 7:1-14 & Apocalypse Explained #44 & 60 - selections