

# One Like a Son of Man

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I'm so thrilled you are joining me on this study of the Letter to the Seven Churches. The studying I have already done has inspired me and clarified so much! Aren't you glad to know that the Book of Revelation should be primarily viewed from a symbolic standpoint! I know we aren't going beyond the letter to the Seven Churches, but I also know how my mind works, jumping ahead and turning over all the images to be found in the rest of the book! As I explained in the Introduction, the Book of Revelation is apocalyptic, and even though we are focusing on this letter, or epistle, we must keep in mind that certain aspects of the letter carry apocalyptic imagery. As we pursue our homework, we must consider a figurative meaning as well as a literal interpretation of what John is telling the seven churches. We will be picking up in our homework where we left on in our class, Chapter 1: 9. I look forward to hearing what you all have learned and discovered this week in this amazing passage. The image of Jesus that we will be presented with differs so vastly from the image with which we are all familiar. What a difference there is in our earthly perspective compared with heavenly, glorified reality! I'm getting the feeling that each one of us will have our very own revelation as to the reality of our Savior. I pray that this study will transform your perspective and deepen your understanding of who Jesus is.

## A Heavenly Vision



Our Scripture passage today is Revelation 1:9-11. It is brief, but packed tightly in those few verses are some very interesting concepts and images. Let's take a few minutes to pray before we start pulling apart these verses. *Lord Jesus, I pray that this dear one will receive such a blessing today of understanding and insight into what your Word has to reveal and who you are. Help her to understand a time and place that is so different from her own, yet still relevant to her faith and knowledge of you. Amen.*

We know that the churches throughout the Roman Empire were facing intense persecution and even death for those who insisted on spreading the Gospel. The end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century was a very difficult and dangerous time to be a Christian. Despite the persecution, the Church continued to grow and spread. John himself is a testimony to

perseverance and endurance under extreme persecution. As the head of the church in Ephesus and its surrounding region, he is responsible for the expansion of the Christianity in that area of the world and the founding of many churches.

To what is John brother and companion in?

What do you think is the significance of the statement, "*On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit*" (v.10)? What does it mean to be "*in the Spirit*"?

The voice John heard was like a \_\_\_\_\_. What did the voice instruct him to do specifically?

As John is hearing these instructions, let's consider what he is *seeing*. Read Rev. 4:1-6. While John was receiving the message that he was to pass on to the seven churches, he was seeing into God's heavenly throne room. Chapter 4 happens simultaneously with what John was hearing Jesus speak in Chapters 1-3.

Draw a simple diagram of what is described in Rev. 4:1-6.

Read the following passages and answer the questions. Revelation 4:1-6; Isaiah 6:1; Daniel 7:9; Ezekiel 1:1-21, especially verses 20 and 21.

Describe the throne.

What unique and mobile feature does the throne possess?

Who is on the throne?

Why is it important that the throne moves?

According to Daniel's vision in Daniel 7:9, briefly describe who and what is going on.

These visions of Isaiah, Daniel and Ezekiel, along with John's description reveal that God Almighty sees all things, goes all places, never leaves his throne unoccupied and is always ruling over his creation. There is never a time or place where his sovereignty is lacking. God is on the throne overseeing everything. Nothing happens in his creation that he doesn't know about or permit. He is still in control of all events despite what may be happening in our world. The fact that the Ancient of Days has the books open and court is in session must have brought comfort to the hearts of those suffering under the immense tyranny of earthly powers. God has not and will not ever leave his throne and walk away from his creation. No matter what evil we hear on the news, Almighty God is present and actively ruling his creation.

Going back to your diagram and Revelation 4:5, what was before the throne?

Exodus 25:31-40 gives a description of the lampstand God instructed Moses to have built. God gave Moses very specific instructions on not only how they were to be built, but also

even the details of what they should look like. Read Exodus 25:1-40 and complete verse 40:

*See that you make them according to the \_\_\_\_\_ you on the mountain.*

Briefly describe what the lampstand look like.

What does this tell you about the earthly temple and God's Heavenly Throne Room?

According to Rev 4:5 what do the 7 lampstands represent? What do you think the 1 lampstand represents in the earthly temple?

We see the Holy Spirit, or Seven-fold Spirit, burning brightly on the lampstands, both the single lampstand in the earthly temple as well as the 7 lampstands in the Heavenly Throne Room. Just as God manifested himself in the burning bush (Ex 3:2) and as the pillar of fire leading the Israelites to the Promise Land (Ex 13:21), God's Holy Spirit manifests itself in the blazing fire of the lampstands. What we see dimly in the earthly temple burning with one lampstand represents the one nation sanctified by God to be his light to the world – Israel. The Heavenly Throne room blazes brightly seven-fold before the throne of God. Again the number seven is symbolic of wholeness, completeness and perfection. The Seven lampstands represent the Church in its entirety on earth, all believers, of all times, everywhere. While not taking seven to be an exact number of churches (Protestant, Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Messianic Jew, and more) to be definitive, the symbolic meaning of the number seven tells us that the Holy Spirit is unifying and illuminating the Church world-wide across seven continents with God's glory and presence.

The images we have studied today of Almighty God's Heavenly Throne room are awe inspiring and almost beyond our comprehension. The colors and occupants of the Throne Room seem surreal, but they are more real than anything we have ever experienced. God designed the earthly temple to be a dim reflection of his Heavenly abode. The elements of that earthly temple foreshadow a grand and glorious spiritual reality. Today we have learned that God is still installed on his throne and actively ruling over

creation. We also studied the image of the golden lampstands burning brightly with God's Holy Spirit. We can have no doubt that God is present upon his throne ministering and overseeing the affairs of his creation. His Spirit is present and moving among the Church and illuminating the world. We will end our lesson today with the glorious image of the heavenly throne room. In our next lesson we will return to it once again to meet the one *like a Son of Man*.

### Like a Son of Man

Before you begin your homework, before even reading our scripture passage, describe how you image Jesus. Write both a physical description as well as what you imagine his character traits to be. What do you imagine his personality to be like? If you have specific pictures or images that you've come across bring them to class to share.

Today we will see an image of Jesus unfamiliar to most of us. We know that upon his assumption he was returning to the father, but nothing in the Gospels except a brief glimpse of his transfiguration, prepares us for the spiritual reality of his glorification. The familiar image of the Jesus in the Gospels stands in stark contrast to what we will study today. *Lord Jesus, prepare our hearts and our minds for what we will read and study today. Help this dear one recognize you in the description contained in your Word. Let our study today be a blessing to her, and allow it deepen her relationship with you. Amen.*



Read Revelation 1:9-18 and 4: 1-6 answer the following questions.

Describe the one walking among the lampstands. (Rev. 1:13-16)

Write what you think the following elements represent:

Robe with a golden sash across the chest:

Hair white like wool or snow (Daniel 7:9):

Eyes blazing like fire:

Voice the sound of rushing waters:

Double edge sword coming from his mouth (Isaiah 49:2; Hebrews 4:12):

Face shining in brilliance like the sun (Matt 17:2):

Read Daniel 7:13-14 and 10:5. Who was Daniel likely seeing in his vision?

Read Ezekiel 1:25-29 “*This was the appearance of the \_\_\_\_\_ of the glory of the LORD.*” (V.28) What does this mean?

The word “likeness” is translated from the Hebrew word *demût*.<sup>1</sup> This word carries three interesting meanings. First, it means “pattern” as in a pattern after which an item is made according to specific specifications. An example would be the pattern God provided to Moses as how to construct the temple. Second, it means the particular “shape” or “form” after a specific pattern. Again drawing on yesterday’s lesson, the lampstand, its specific form, is drawn from the pattern of the heavenly lampstands. Third, *it* signifies the “original” after which a something is patterned. The original temple being the Heavenly Temple after which the earthly temple is designed or patterned. Jesus is the *form* or *shape* of God, based on the *pattern* or *specifications* of the character or nature of Almighty God. Jesus is the human likeness or form of God Almighty.

How does this description compare with his earthly likeness? Why do you think they differ so greatly? See Jn1:1-2 and Matt 17:2.

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<sup>1</sup> Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words

If Jesus had initially appeared on earth in his heavenly form, what would be mankind's reaction?

Read John 15:9-17. What kind of relationship does Jesus desire with those who believe and obey him?

What are attributes of friendship?

Jesus, in his first advent came to earth to draw mankind closer to God. He came in the form of a human child, weak and dependent upon humans to establish a bond of trust. In his human form he could teach and reveal the love of God in a way that was not threatening or frightening allowing mankind to choose to build a relationship with God. God desires a close relationship with man, one resembling the intimacy of father and child. Had Jesus come in power and glory man would have been denied the free will to choose to come to God based on love. The relationship would be one built on fear. It would be a relationship of master and servant or slave, not a loving familial relationship. Jesus came to establish a friendship between himself and mankind. In having Jesus as our friend, his love, strength, encouragement, counsel, and support are available to us. God is approachable in Jesus. Through Jesus we learn to approach our God without fear and trembling. John knew *this* Jesus well. He had a fleeting glimpse of the glorified Jesus at the transfiguration (a visible and searing reminder of Jesus' divinity), but the Jesus he knew well was his friend. This is the relationship Jesus desires with us all. Part of who Jesus is is the glorified sovereign reigning with God in heaven, but first and foremost he desires us to know him as friend.

John, Ezekiel and Daniel have a similar responses to seeing the glorified Jesus. How are there responses similar?

Jesus tells both John and Daniel, "*Do not be \_\_\_\_\_*". Aside from reassurance, why should they not be afraid?

Jesus, in all his heavenly glory and sovereignty has commissioned Ezekiel, Daniel and John to take messages to the people of Israel (and in John's case, to *all* believers, Jew and Gentile). These are no small errands, they are errands issued from the throne of Almighty God. If these men are consumed with fear at the prospect of their errands, they will not be able to fulfill their commission. Fear can be a great stumbling block preventing us from doing what God calls us to do. Each of these prophets faced uncertainty in the reactions of those with whom their messages were intended and a violent and dangerous

earthly authority working against God's kingdom plan. Only by God's strength could they fulfill God's commission, and only by God's strength can we fulfill his calling in our own lives.

How does the one "*like a son of man*" identify himself to John? (See Rev. 1:17,18.)

God reveals himself and his nature through statements beginning "I am", "*I Am who I Am*" being the first. Jesus himself used the "I am" phrase numerous times identifying himself not only with God's self-identifying proclamation to Moses, but also in proclaiming divine characteristics as part of his own identity. "*I am the Good Shepherd*", "*I am the bread of life*", "*I am the light of the world*", "*I am the way the truth and the life*" are just a sample of such statements. (48 such statements can be found in the gospels. An entire study could be done on these "*I am*" statements!) Mark 14:61-62 is a divinely emphatic "*I am*" statement and is the turning point from which there is no return in the Gospel story. Caiaphas questions Jesus during the interrogation following his arrest, "*Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?*" "*I am,*" said Jesus. "*And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.*" Caiaphas recognizes Jesus' statement as a divine self-proclamation and it sends him into a self-righteous apoplexy condemning Jesus for claiming to be exactly who he is, the Son of God, the Messiah. Revelation 1: 17 and 18 has three such proclamations. Under each one, write what each of these statements reveal about Jesus.

I am the First and the Last

I am the Living One

I am alive for ever and ever!

Jesus raises John up to his feet and tells him not to fear. Jesus, his friend and companion of old stands before him in His eternal glory and splendor at the right hand of the Father, just as Jesus said he would. Jesus *is* eternal, is the originator of life, is alive, and holds the keys to death and Hades. Jesus is sovereign, and his commission for John bears the authority of God almighty. John has nothing to fear. Should death come to John in the fulfillment of this commission, then it is by God's sovereign will and Jesus bears the key to eternal life for the faithful. He has nothing to fear.

I hope you found this week's homework enlightening and thought provoking. I sure did! Our study of Revelation will be something completely different than anything we've encountered before. We serve the same Lord and Savior that John did. We should take to heart the same command, "*Do not be afraid*". Jesus longs to reveal something new to each one of us through this study. We do not need to approach this revelation with fear. Despite his lofty and glorious appearance, Jesus is still our friend reaching out to us. I look forward to hearing your impressions of what we have studied in our next meeting!