

What is man?

Job 7: 17, 18; Ps. 8: 4-6; Ps. 144: 3, 4; 1 Cor. 15: 27; Eph. 1: 21; Heb. 2: 7-9.

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Two comments were passed in our reading this afternoon which have given rise in my mind to the Scriptures I have read to you. One was, "In the world to come, God will explain Himself in His dealings with man," and the other was, "God will be justified in the display He will give of Himself in that day." So from these deservedly well-known Scriptures we have this question raised as to why God is so interested in man. In Old Testament days this appears to have been a very perplexing problem, as witnessed by these questions, but we are favoured with the light of the New Testament and the solution of the problem.

In the book of Job the question is raised at a very early date in the history of this world. Looking at man with all that marked him as the result of sin, Job was constrained to cry out, "What is man, that Thou shouldest magnify him? and that Thou shouldest set Thine heart upon him? And that Thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?" How wonderful it is that God kept Himself in contact with man, speaking to him, counselling him, warning him; and as we have here, trying him, yet never losing contact with him. It had obviously raised this question in the mind of Job, Why should God be so interested in man? In this first occurrence of this thrice-asked question we read that God put man under **trial**. Think of that coming to light in the book of Job! God Himself had borne witness to Job when He said concerning him, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" Job 1: 8. Yet God allowed Job to be subjected to trial, and under that trial he broke down. The major portion of this book gives us an account of that trial and, like all the sons of Adam, Job broke down under it. The very best man of the race of Adam will inevitably break down when subjected to Divine trial. How often have we noted this in regard to Nicodemus, a New Testament example of the same thing. There was probably in his day, as in the case of Job in his day, not another like him on the earth, yet to him our Lord said, "Marvel not that I said unto **thee**, Ye must be born again," John 3: 7. So with Job, great man though he was, under trial he broke down. He had to learn that if he had done any right thing at all in this world it was God Who was behind it and not he himself. This he did learn eventually. So the first time this question is asked, so far as the record of Scripture is concerned, we learn that man was put under trial.

Moving on to Psalm 144, we learn that as the fruit of that trial and man's failing under it, man is now under **judgment**. "LORD what is man, that Thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him! Man is like to vanity; his days are as a shadow that passeth away," vv. 3, 4. Beloved, the inevitable result of every one of the sons of Adam being under trial is, they have all come under judgment. Whatever that trial, in whatever day they were tried, it brought about the same result and the whole race has come under judgment.

In spite of this, when we turn to Psalm 8, we read that man is in eminence. What a contrast to the other two Scriptures we have read! I have long thought the key to this Psalm is in verse 1, "Who has set Thy glory above the heavens." This as we know is a prophetic utterance where man is seen in eminence and set over the works of God's hands. How has this come about, we may well ask, that man breaking down under trial as in Job, coming under judgment as in Psalm 144, is yet set over the works of God as in Psalm 8? The solution of this enigma of Old Testament days is given to us to-day, for the

answer to it all is found in our Lord Jesus Christ. During all the years when God was trying man under different conditions and different administrations, He had Christ in reserve. Coming into Manhood, born of the virgin, He assumes a link with mankind, yet in His Manhood distinct in His order, for He was the "Second Man . . . from heaven." He came into flesh and blood conditions, into the scene of trial where every other man had broken down. How glad we are to know that while He too was under trial, yet He never broke down under that trial, for He ever maintained what was right in Manhood Godward, and He is the Man Who is crowned with glory at the right hand of God. Yet we may ask, What about man being under judgment? Beloved, Christ has borne that judgment substitutionally, in order that He might give effect to the counsel of God in relation to man. He has borne the judgment, conquered death, and as raised again from among the dead has been crowned with glory and honour at the right hand of God. If the first man broke down under trial and came into judgment, the Second Man sustained the trial, bore the judgment and is now in glory. What great things God has effected in a Man, but such a Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He came into Manhood that He might give effect to the thoughts of God in relation to man, and that effect is seen tonight in the place where He is, "above the heavens."

I have read these three passages in the New Testament, each concerning Him, and where the question "What is man?" is answered. Note where they are quoted from. Not from Job 7, nor from Psalm 144, but in each case from Psalm 8. It is not so much here the question, but its answer. First in Heb. 2. God has connected His glory with a Man and we are here told His name, it is "Jesus." "But we see Jesus, Who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (or every thing). He is in the place that God intended man to fill. He fills that place **now** and God has "put all things in subjection under His feet." Though as yet unseen by natural eyes not one of us has the slightest doubt that He is there, established by God in His supremacy in Lordship. The import of Heb. 2 is, He is there **now**.

In Eph. 1, where the Psalm is again quoted, it looks on to a further point and is connected with the world to come, as we read, "not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Both the Lordship and the Headship of Christ are brought before us in this passage, conveyed in the two prepositions used — "under" and "over." "And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church" v. 22. This looks on to the display in the kingdom in the world to come where it will be seen **manifestly** that all things are under His feet and He is Head over all things. He will order the universe, everything in heaven and everything on earth, for the pleasure of God and will fill the whole scene "with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea," Habakkuk 2: 14.

Yet again we have Psalm 8 quoted in 1 Cor. 15: 26. Here the end of the kingdom with the new heavens and a new earth in view is brought before us. It looks on to the time when, as the result of the exercise of His universal power and control, Christ will bring all into subjection to the will of God. He will then hand back the kingdom to God, and we know from other passages that the present creation will pass away and a new sphere be brought into being in which God will be all in all. Here once more we are told that the Son will abide in subject Manhood throughout that eternal day called in 2 Peter 3: 12, "the day of God." About these "all things" someone has said, "all without exception but not all without distinction," for each and all will be ordered according to the place and condition appointed by "the Father . . . of Whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named," Eph. 3: 14, 15, New Translation. Only God Himself Who put all things under Him will be excepted, as we read.

Here then is the New Testament answer to the question, "What is man?" If the first man broke down under trial, the Second Man sustained the trial, and has carried Manhood to the right hand of

God, above the heavens. He is there now, according to Heb. 2; He will come out in manifestation with all under His feet and Head over all, and He will use this universal power and control to bring all into subjection to God. Having thus recovered all, He will hand the creation back to God as perfect as when He brought it into being on behalf of God. It shall then "pass away with a great noise," 2 Pet. 3: 10, new heavens and a new earth will be brought into being. In that new scene Christ will abide a Man, and we do not doubt will hold all throughout that eternal day for the pleasure of the Godhead when God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — will be "all in all."