

Titles of Jesus Christ (#4)
The Son of Man
Sermon by Pastor Sylvia Chan

Today we are going to study another title of the Lord Jesus Christ; it is a very familiar one: the son of man.

The Son of Man: The Lord's favorite title for himself

This is the Lord's favorite title for himself; he refers to himself almost exclusively as the son of man.

1. Son of man simply means man.

"Son of man" simply means man. In Israel today, people still use this term "son of man" to refer to a man. Prophets Ezekiel and Daniel were referred to as "son of man" in the Hebrew Bible.

^{NASB} **Ezekiel 1:28-2:1** As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so *was* the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such *was* the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD (Yahweh). And when I saw *it*, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking.
2:1 Then He said to me, "Son of man, stand on your feet that I may speak with you!" (Eze 1:28-2:1 NASB)

This passage says that Ezekiel saw the glory of Yahweh God, which was like the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day. When Ezekiel saw it, he fell on his face, then he heard a voice speaking, and the voice of Yahweh God said to him, "Son of man, stand on your feet that I may speak with you!" Here Yahweh God called Ezekiel "son of man."

^{NASB} **Daniel 8:16-17** And I heard the voice of a man between *the banks of* Ulai (עֻלַּי), and he called out and said, "Gabriel, give this *man* an understanding of the vision." ¹⁷ So he came near to where I was standing, and when he came I was frightened and fell on my face; but he said to me, "Son of man, understand that the vision pertains to the time of the end." (Dan 8:16-17 NASB)

Here in Daniel 8:16, the archangel Gabriel was called, presumably by Yahweh because who would have the authority to give a command to archangel Gabriel except Yahweh God himself; Gabriel was called to explain to Daniel the meaning of the vision; then in v.17 Gabriel called Daniel, "Son of man..."

These two passages show that the term “son of man” simply means man.

2. Son of man refers to the Messiah (the Christ)

But the term “son of man” can refer to the Messiah, the coming Anointed One (the coming King) of Israel.

^{NASB} **Daniel 7:13 – 14** I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a son of man was coming, and he came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. ¹⁴ And to him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language might serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and his kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.

This passage says that Daniel saw the vision of someone like a son of man being led to the Ancient of Days (that is Yahweh God, since He is the Creator of the universe, and the most ancient one). We just saw in the earlier passage, Daniel 8:16-17, that the term “son of man” could mean just a man; but here this passage, Daniel 7:13–14, says that this son of man was given dominion, glory and a kingdom (in verse 7:14). He will reign over all the peoples, nations and men of every language, not just over Israel but all the peoples, nations and men of every language, and his dominion will not be destroyed but will be everlasting. Some people, including the Jews, see this as a prophecy of the coming Messiah (the Christ: the Anointed One, please refer to my previous sermon “The Messiah” for its meaning). In this passage the term “son of man” refers to the Messiah, the Anointed One.

Why does the Lord Jesus like to refer to himself as Son of Man?

We see that the term “son of man” can mean either just a man or the Messiah, the coming King of Israel. But what is the reason the Lord Jesus likes to refer to himself as Son of Man? Does he want to remind people that he is the coming Messiah? Or does he want to tell people that he is a man like us? Between these two meanings, which does the Lord want to remind us of?

^{NASB} **Hebrews 2:16 – 17** ¹⁶ For assuredly he does not give help to angels, but he gives help to the descendant of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore, he had to be made like his brethren in all things, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

This passage says that the Lord Jesus wants to help the descendants of Abraham, and wants to be like his brethren in all things, which is why he refers to himself as son of man. But who are the descendants of Abraham?

Jews are certainly descendants of Abraham, and even Muslims are also descendants of Abraham. That means the Lord Jesus could help the Jews as well as the Muslims if they believe in him. Please notice that the Koran talks very highly of Jesus and considers Jesus as one of the prophets, though they don't believe he is the Son of God. But most Christians are neither Jews nor Muslims, that is, not literal descendants of Abraham; so does it mean that the Lord Jesus will not help us, that we have no share in this blessing?

^{NASB} **Romans 4:11** and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them (Rom 4:11 NASB)

The word "he" in this passage refers to Abraham; it says here that "he (Abraham) might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised". Who are the people who believe without being circumcised? They are non-Jewish and non-Muslim believers of Jesus Christ, in other words they are Gentile Christians. Therefore Abraham is the father of the circumcised Jews, the circumcised Muslims, and also the Gentile Christians, we all can call Abraham as our father!

Let's come back to the passage Hebrews 2:16-17, in which we see that the Lord Jesus Christ has to be made like his brethren in all things. His brethren are the Jews the Muslims who believe in him, and also the Gentiles so that he can identify with our problems. Only then can he become a merciful and faithful high priest to represent us before God, that's why he likes to call himself son of man. If he had been a powerful Son of God all the time, he wouldn't be able to identify with our problems, and he wouldn't have been able to represent us before God. We can see the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ!

The Lord Jesus suffers with us when we suffer

When I say that he identifies with us, it is more than just understanding our problems. When we suffer, he suffers with us.

^{NASB} **Acts 9:4 – 5** ⁴ and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" ⁵ And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he *said*, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,

This passage describes Saul's first encounter with the Lord Jesus, and it changed his life completely. Saul at that time was persecuting the Christians; then on the road to Damascus he heard the voice of the resurrected Lord Jesus, and he was struck blind by the light of the Lord.

Here the Lord Jesus said to Saul, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." That means when Saul persecuted the church, the Lord Jesus was suffering together with his brethren.

The heart of the Lord Jesus

We see that the heart of the Lord Jesus is very different from our hearts. We human beings always want to be exalted above other people, but the Lord wants to go down to identify with the lowly.

If you want to be highly exalted among men, you won't find the Lord Jesus in the high places. If you want to experience the Lord, you have to humble yourself by going down to the lowly places. Which will you choose?

I am talking about the heart attitude, not simply one's position in society. Some people might not be high up in society, yet their heart attitude can be very proud, and they despise the lowly ones. Conversely, some people have high positions, yet they have a very humble heart attitude. If you always want to exalt yourself above other people, your heart attitude will be very different from the Lord's heart; you wouldn't have a deep relationship with the Lord Jesus, and you may even eventually turn away from him and regard the Lord merely as a moral person in history rather than as the Son of God to you. I have seen some Christians who started their Christian lives well, but eventually turned away from the Lord because they want to be high above the others; their heart attitude is proud, and they are drifting farther and farther away from the Lord, and eventually deny the Lord.

Let's learn from our Lord Jesus

If you love the Lord Jesus, you would want to spend time with him, study his word diligently, and serve him. These are very good, but not sufficient. If you truly love the Lord Jesus, you need to imitate him. True love for the Lord would transform your heart to love all people, even the unlovely.