

Doctrine of Jesus Christ

Son of Man, Son of God

The Title of the Messiah

The title *Son of Man* was Jesus' favorite way of referring to Himself. He may have done this because this was not a recognized title already known by the people and associated with popular ideas. This title means essentially "*The Man*." But as Jesus used it, it took on new significance. Jesus applied this title to Himself in three distinct ways:

- **First, He used the title in a general way**, almost as a substitute for the pronoun "*I*." A good example of this usage occurred in the saying where Jesus contrasted John the Baptist, who "*came neither eating bread nor drinking wine*," with the Son of Man, who "*has come eating and drinking*" (Luke 7:33-34). Another example is the statement that "*the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head*" (Luke 9:58). In this instance Jesus warned a would-be disciple that those who wanted to follow Him must expect to share His homeless existence.
- **Second, Jesus used the title to emphasize that "*the Son of Man must suffer*"** (Mark 8:31). The word *must* implies that His suffering was foretold by the prophets. It was "*written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt*" (Mark 9:12). So when Jesus announced the presence of the betrayer at the Last Supper, He declared, "*The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him*" (Mark 14:21). Later on the same evening He submitted to His captors with the words, "*The Scriptures must be fulfilled*" (Mark 14:49).
- **Finally, Jesus used the title Son of Man to refer to Himself as the one who exercised exceptional authority**— authority delegated to Him by God. "*The Son of Man has power [authority] on earth to forgive sins*" (Mark 2:10). Jesus declared. He exercised this authority in a way that made some people criticize Him for acting with the authority of God: "*The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath*" (Mark 2:28).

The Son of Man appeared to speak and act in these cases as the representative man. If God had given man dominion over all the works of His hands, then He who was the Son of Man in this special representative sense was in a position to exercise that dominion. Near the end of His ministry, Jesus spoke of His authority as the Son of Man at the end of time. Men and women "*will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory*," He declared (Mark 13:26).

He also stated to the high priest and other members of the supreme court of Israel: "*You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven*" (Mark 14:62). Jesus seemed deserted and humiliated as He stood there awaiting their verdict. But the tables would be turned when they saw Him vindicated by God as Ruler and Judge of the world.

Only once in the Bible was Jesus referred to as the Son of Man by anyone other than Himself. This occurred when Stephen, condemned by the Jewish Sanhedrin, *saw "the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God"* (Acts 7:56). In Stephen's vision the Son of Man stood as his heavenly advocate, in fulfillment of Jesus' words: "*Whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God*" (Luke 12:8). Stephen knew what others did not—Jesus Christ was the Messiah. As the Son of Man Jesus was the Anointed One that was to come. Jesus was the fulfillment of national expectations for a strong religious and political leader sent by God. And the Lord never minimized this facet of His essence. Before the high priest in the Sanhedrian, when asked if He, the Son of Man, was the promised Messiah, Jesus responded to the question by saying simply enough "*I am*" (Mark 14:62), "*It is as you said*" (Matt. 26:64). The Son of Man was the Messiah.

Son of God

Though Jesus was truly the Son of Man of the royal line of David He was also very God of very God reflected in the title "*Son of God.*" Jesus was acclaimed as the Son of God at His baptism as per Mark 1:11. Mark 1:11 "*And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" Here is divine affirmation of the title given to Christ

by the angel Gabriel at the annunciation: *"That Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God"* (Luke 1:35).

Turning to the gospel of the John the holy author especially makes it clear that Jesus is the Son of God and that the Father-Son relationship belongs to eternity not time. Because this is true the Son is supremely qualified to reveal the Father because He is also the Eternal One being *"in the bosom of the Father"* (John 1:18).

If the question is asked how can Jesus be both God and man the honest response is that it is a great mystery. But something being mysterious does not mean it is not true. The dynamics of air travel remain a great mystery to most people—but they believe in the power of flight confident that someone somewhere understands the principles of aero-dynamics. The Christian is confident that the members of the Tri-unity know the mystery of the Godhead head.

Under the Old Testament economy the title Son of God belonged officially to the Messiah, who personified the nation of Israel. *"Israel is My Son, My firstborn,"* said God to Pharaoh (Ex. 4:22). Of the promised prince of the house of David, God declared, *"I will make him My firstborn"* (Ps. 89:27).

But there was nothing *merely* official about Jesus' consciousness of being the Son of God. He taught His disciples to think of God and then to speak to Him as their Father. Isaiah 9:6 *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*

In the mystery of the Godhead the Father is the Son—and the Son is the Father, not only in purpose but also in essence of being. Then, in the manifestation of the Godhead to the world a more clear distinction is drawn between Father and Son. The spiritual truth of the essential unity

of Son of God with the Father comes full circle when it is remembered that Jesus never united His disciples with Himself in the unique relationship He alone possessed with God. There was always a great chasm so that the Lord spoke of *"My Father and your Father"* and *"My God and your God."* (John 20:17).

As the Son of God in a special sense, Jesus made Himself known to the apostle Paul on the Damascus Road. Paul said *"It pleased God... to reveal His Son in me"* (Gal. 1:15-16). The proclamation of Jesus as the Son of God became central to Paul's preaching

- Acts 9:20 *And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.*
- 2 Cor. 1:19 *For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea.*

When Jesus is presented as the Son of God in the New Testament, two aspects of His person are emphasized:

- ❖ His eternal relation to God as His Father and
- ❖ His perfect revelation of the Father to the human race.

He is the Son of God, He is the son of Man.

Word and Wisdom

1. The perfect revelation of Christ to the Father is expressed in part when Jesus is described as the Word (logos) of God (John 1:1-18).
2. The Word is the self-expression of God; that self-expression has personal status, existing eternally with God.
3. The Word by which God created the world (Ps. 33:6) and by which He spoke through the prophets "became flesh" in the fullness of time (John 1:14), living among men and women as Jesus of Nazareth.
4. Much that is said in the Old Testament about the Word of God is paralleled by what is said of the Wisdom of God: "*The Lord by wisdom founded the earth*" (Prov. 3:19).
5. In the New Testament Christ is portrayed as the personal Wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24,30)—the one through whom all things were created (1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2).

The Holy One of God

1. This title was given to Jesus by Peter (John 6:69), (RSV) and remarkably, by a demon-possessed man (Mark 1:24).
2. In their preaching, the apostles called Jesus "the Holy One and the Just" (Acts 3:14). This was a name belonging to Him as the Messiah, indicating He was especially set apart for God.
3. This title also emphasized His positive goodness and His complete dedication to the doing of His Father's will. Mere "*sinlessness*," in the sense of the absence of any fault, is a pale quality in comparison to the unsurpassed power for righteousness that filled His life and teaching.

The Lord

1. "*Jesus is Lord*" is the ultimate Christian creed. "*No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit*" (1 Cor. 12:3). A Christian, therefore, is a person who confesses Jesus as Lord.
2. Several words denoting lordship were used of Jesus in the New Testament.
 - ***kurios***. The most frequent, and the most important in relation to the doctrine of His person, was the Greek word *kurios*. It was frequently given to Him as a polite term of address, meaning "*Sir*." Sometimes the title was used of Him in the third person, when the disciples and others spoke of Him as "*The Lord*" or "*The Master*."
 - **Lord**. After His resurrection and exaltation, however, Jesus was given the title "*Lord*" in its full, christological sense. Peter, concluding his address to the crowd in Jerusalem on the Day

of Pentecost, declared, *"Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ"* (Acts 2:36).

- **Maranath.** The title *"Lord"* in the Christological sense must have been given to Jesus before the church moved out into the Gentile world. The evidence for this is the invocation *"Maranatha"* or *"O Lord, come!"* (1 Cor. 16:22). The apostle Paul, writing to a Gentile church in the Greek-speaking world, assumed that its members were familiar with this Aramaic phrase. It was an early Christian title for Jesus which was taken over untranslated. It bears witness to the fact that from the earliest days of the church, the one who had been exalted as Lord was expected to return as Lord.

Another key New Testament text that shows the sense in which Jesus was acknowledged as Lord is (Philippians 2:5-11). In these verses Paul may be quoting an early confession of faith. If so, he endorsed it and made it his own.

This passage tells how Jesus did not regard equality with God as something which he should exploit to his own advantage. Instead, He humbled himself to become a man, displaying *"the form of God"* in *"the form of a servant."* He became *"obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."*

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,... and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2:8-11).

The *"name, which is above every name,"* is probably the title Lord, in the highest sense that it can bear. The words echo (Isaiah 45:23), where the God of Israel swears, *"To Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath [or, make confession]."*

In the Old Testament passage the God of Israel denies to any other being the right to receive the worship which belongs to Him alone. But in the passage from Philippians He readily shares that worship with the humiliated and exalted Jesus. More than that, He shares His own name with him. When human beings honor Jesus as Lord, God is glorified.

- **God.** If Jesus is called Lord in this supreme sense, it is not surprising that He occasionally is called God in the New Testament. Thomas, convinced that the risen Christ stood before him, abandoned his doubts with the confession, *"My Lord and my God!"* (John 20:28).

But the classic text is (John 1:1). John declared that the Word existed not only *"in the beginning,"* where He was *"with God,"* but also *actually "was God."* This is the Word that became incarnate as real man in Jesus Christ, without ceasing to be what He had been from eternity.

The Word was God in the sense that the Father shared with Him the fullness of His own nature. The Father remained in a technical phrase of traditional theology, *"the fountain of deity."* But from that fountain the Son drew in unlimited measure.

The Bible thus presents Christ as altogether God and altogether man-- the perfect mediator between God and mankind because He partakes fully of the nature of both.

Scriptural Evidence for Christ as the Son of Man

1. *Matt 8:20 And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*
2. *Matt 9:6 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.*
3. *Matt 10:23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.*
4. *Matt 11:19 The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.*
5. *Matt 12:8 For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day.*
6. *Matt 12:32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.*
7. *Matt 12:40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*
8. *Matt 13:37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;*
9. *Matt 13:41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;*
10. *Matt 16:13 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?*
11. *Matt 16:27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.*
12. *Matt 16:28 Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.*
13. *Matt 17:9 And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.*

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15. *Matt 17:12 But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.*
16. *Matt 17:22 And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men:*
17. *Matt 18:11 For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.*
18. *Matt 19:28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*
19. *Matt 20:18 Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death,*
20. *Matt 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*
21. *Matt 24:27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*
22. *Matt 24:30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*

Those who Recognized Jesus as the Son of God

- **The Angel Gabriel.** *Luke 1:35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*
- **The Devil.** *Matt 4:3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. Matt 4:6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Luke 4:3 And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. Luke 4:9 And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence:*

- **The Demons.** *Matt 8:29 And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time? Mark 3:11 And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. Luke 4:41 And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ. Luke 8:28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.*
- **The Twelve Disciples.** *Matt 14:33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.*
- **The Apostle John.** *John 1:34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.*
- **Nathanael.** *John 1:49 Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.*
- **The Centurion.** *Matt 27:54 Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God. Mark 15:39 And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God*
- **John Mark.** *Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;*
- **Jesus.** *Luke 22:70 Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am.*

Those who did not Recognize Jesus as God

- **The High Priest.** *Matt 26:63 But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Matt 26:63 But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.*
- **Many Citizens of Jerusalem.** *Matt 27:40 And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Matt 27:43 He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. Matt 27:43 He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.*

Note. Extracted in part from *Nelson's Bible Dictionary*