

S T U D Y G U I D E



The Majesty of Christ

by R.C. Sproul



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LIGONIER MINISTRIES

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The Son of Man

(Part One)

LESSON OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVE

The cultural climate in which Jesus preached and ministered was, in a word, unsafe. Faced with mounting pressures, Jesus withdrew with His disciples and asked the question, “Who do men say the Son of Man is?” The question itself provides insight into Jesus’ own understanding of Himself, since He used the title *Son of Man* to identify Himself. The Old Testament background of the title yields the understanding of Jesus as the divine Messiah from heaven. In this lesson, we will discover the biblical foundation for Jesus’ title, *the Son of Man*.

QUOTATIONS

[In Daniel 7:13] both Christ’s humanity and divinity are signified: His humanity, in that it is said, “One like the Son of Man ”; and His divinity, in that He came with the clouds of heaven. Appearing with bright clouds, or with the Shekinah, is a token of divinity, for this is often in Scripture called the glory of the Lord, and sometimes the cloud of glory.

—Jonathan Edwards

The term Son of Man points us to Christ’s conception of Himself as of heavenly origin and as the possessor of heavenly glory. At one and the same time it points us to His lowliness and His sufferings for men. The two are the same.

—Leon Morris

LECTURE OUTLINE

- I. The cultural context of Jesus' day produced an unsafe climate in which to preach the coming of the kingdom of God.
 - A. The general public's response to Jesus was always changing.
 - B. The response of the powerful elite in Jerusalem was a growing, consolidated opposition.
 - C. Jesus reacted to the power structures with neither cowardice nor complacency; His response was always unswerving attention to His mission.

- II. The central question of this study is, Who do men say that the Son of Man is?
 - A. The question Jesus asked was not merely, "What are people saying about Me?"
 - B. Jesus, in asking the question, used the title *Son of Man* to identify Himself, indicating that He knew who He was.
 1. In order of frequency the titles used in the New Testament to identify Jesus are: *Christ*, *Lord*, and *Son of Man*.
 2. The title used by Jesus most frequently to identify Himself is *Son of Man*.

- III. Why did Jesus identify Himself primarily as *Son of Man*?
 - A. The title *Son of Man* is typically understood as a humble designation calling attention to Jesus' humanity.
 1. The historic parallel to *Son of Man* is the title *Son of God*.
 2. It is an enticing interpretation to see a balance between the two titles—*Son of Man* referring to Jesus' humanity and *Son of God* referring to His divinity.
 - B. Understanding *Son of Man* as referring to Jesus' humanity, while not entirely incorrect, is not basically sound from the standpoint of its use in Scripture.

- IV. The roots of the title *Son of Man* are primarily found in the Old Testament.
 - A. Daniel 7:9ff. is the account of Daniel's "night vision," in which he sees the inner court of heaven.
 - B. Daniel witnessed the divine exaltation of the Son of Man who was given everlasting dominion and glory and the kingdom.
 1. Clearly the title was used of a divine being, not a human one.
 2. The Son of Man was portrayed as a descending-ascending figure returning to His divine origin.
 - C. It is no accident that Christ's ascension occurred in a cloud of glory (cf. Acts 1:9-11).
 - D. Jesus made frequent reference to His heavenly origin; two such occasions are particularly important.

1. First, Jesus declared that “the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” (Matt. 9:1–8).
 2. Second, Jesus declared that “the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath” (Matt. 12:1–14; cf. John 5:1–18).
- E. The understanding of *Son of Man* which emerges from Scripture, then, is that the Son of Man is God. Such a claim makes Jesus’ original question to the disciples all the more provocative.

CHECK YOURSELF

1. Jesus’ favorite self-designation was _____
2. Every time the Synoptic Gospels use the title *Son of Man*, _____ is speaking.
3. Which title focuses on Jesus’ transcendent majesty?
 - a. Lord
 - b. Son of God
 - c. Son of Man
 - d. Christ
4. The term _____ may also refer to humans particularly related to God by obedience.
5. By healing on the Sabbath, Jesus equates His _____ with that of God.

Answers are found at the end of this lesson.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between a politician’s desire to know public opinion and Jesus’ desire to know His public image?
2. Dr. Sproul compares the general public’s response to Jesus with the fluctuations of the stock market. How are their reactions to Jesus similar to the reactions of people in our own day? How are they different?
3. What would the title *Son of Man* have meant to someone living at the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry? What does it mean to our generation?
4. From Dr. Sproul’s discussion of Daniel’s vision, what are the ways we know that Daniel’s *Son of Man* is actually the divine Messiah?
5. Dr. Sproul uses the phrase “transcendent majesty of Christ.” What does *transcendent mean*? How does transcendence relate to Christ’s majesty? What does it mean for Christ to be majestic?

6. If Jesus' favorite title for Himself was *Son of Man*, why did the apostles use other titles for Him? Why did He choose *Son of Man* for Himself more often than *Christ* or *Lord*?
7. Reflecting on Matthew 16:13, how do you address Jesus in your own life? How do you relate to Jesus as divine? As human?
8. Why do you think Jesus so often called attention to His humanity? His majesty?
9. As your life changes, does your perception of Christ change? How?
10. What did Jesus do so others would know Him better? What do you do so others can know you better?
11. How did Jesus exercise His authority over others? What authority do you have over other people? How do you exercise it?
12. Reflect on the criticism you have received for being a Christian.

'CHECK YOURSELF' ANSWERS

1. *Son of Man*
2. Jesus
3. c
4. *sons of God*
5. authority

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