

# The Son of Man

**“Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?”** **WE WILL SOON ENTER THE** season of the year during which the hearts and minds

—**Matthew 16:13** of many devout Christians give special attention to the events leading up to the death and resurrection of Jesus. The Apostle Paul testified that these truths were of the greatest significance in all that he was commissioned to preach and teach. He states, “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.”—I Cor. 15:3,4, *English Standard Version*

In keeping with the vital import of these fundamental teachings of the Scriptures, in this month’s issue of *The Dawn* we will examine three themes associated with Jesus’ life and his example to those striving to walk in his footsteps. One of these is under the title, “Consider Him,” taken from Hebrews 12:3. Another is titled, “Daily His Delight,” based on the words recorded in Proverbs 8:30. The third article associated with this general theme appears in the following pages, under the above heading, “The Son of Man.” We trust that the consideration

of these subjects, centered on our Lord and his example, will provide blessings and encouragement to the reader.

## **MANY TITLES**

Jesus had many titles, all of which were appropriate in that they either described him or his work in various ways. However, Jesus referred to himself most frequently as the “Son of man.” This phrase appears more than eighty times in the Gospels, and in every case it is used by Jesus to refer to himself. The word “man” in this title is translated from the Greek word *anthropos*, which simply means “a human being.”

Peter answered the Lord’s question as quoted in our opening text by stating that Jesus was the Christ. Jesus said that God had revealed this to Peter, and upon this statement of solid truth he would build his church. (Matt. 16:13-18) Thus the title “Son of man” expresses a concept that is vitally connected to the carrying out of God’s plan of the ages. Peter’s answer, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” is much more than a mere statement of words. Christ is the English equivalent of the Greek word *Christos*, which means “anointed,” and corresponds to the Hebrew word translated in English as “Messiah.” Christ, or Messiah, is the one foretold in the Scriptures whom God would anoint with his Spirit for the eventual purpose of leading the people back to him. (Dan. 9:25,26) The term Christ first applied to Jesus when, after his baptism in the Jordan River, he was begotten, or anointed, by God with the Holy Spirit.—Matt. 3:16,17; Isa. 61:1-3

John, in his Gospel, particularly emphasizes Jesus' prehuman existence as the "Word" [Greek: *Logos*], another of his titles. John explains, "In the beginning was the Word, ... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father)." (John 1:1,14) The "beginning" mentioned in John 1:1 cannot refer to the beginning of God, for he is "from everlasting to everlasting." (Ps. 90:2) Instead, it refers to the beginning of God's work, which was the creation of the *Logos*, the Word. It can be said of Jesus in his prehuman existence as the *Logos* that he was God's only begotten Son. That is, he was the only one of God's sons, spirit or human, created solely by the Heavenly Father. All others were created through or by means of God's first begotten Son.—John 1:3; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:15-17

Jesus continued to be God's Son when born as a human, even as he had been in his prehuman existence. His conception in the womb of Mary did not come from a being of Adamic stock, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 1:18-20) God was his father and not Adam. At the age of twelve Jesus recognized his sonship in relation to God when he said to his parents, "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"—Luke 2:49, *ESV*

## **THE SON OF MAN**

Let us now consider how the title "Son of man" relates to this arrangement. Adam was the first human son of God because he was created by God, jointly with the *Logos*. (Gen. 1:26; 2:7; Luke 3:38) Because of his disobedience, Adam was evicted from the Garden of Eden and condemned to death as a

willful sinner. He was, in effect, disowned by God and lost his sonship. Adam at the first was given dominion over the earth, but because of his transgression he lost this also. Those who descended from Adam—all mankind—have been born with inherited Adamic imperfection and therefore could not claim the relationship of being sons of God on the basis of normal human birth. The Apostle John points this out when he states that those who have received Jesus, by means of full consecration, enter into a special arrangement whereby they “become the sons of God.” This is not according to human conception. These, John says, are begotten, “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12,13) The point is that for any of Adam’s race to attain to sonship, intervention by God is required.

Jesus, on the other hand, although flesh, was not of Adam’s seed and therefore did not inherit Adamic condemnation. He was, however, as God’s son, the prospective second Adam, because he was born of a woman. “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman.” (Gal. 4:4; Luke 1:34,35) He did not simply materialize in human flesh like the angels who visited Abraham, as recorded in Genesis chapter 18, but Jesus was actually a human being through Mary. Thus, he was both a perfect Son of God in the flesh, as well as a son of man through his mother. Because he maintained his human perfection, Jesus could claim the inheritance lost by the first man Adam.

It was because of this that the Apostle Paul considered the eighth Psalm as prophetic. He noted that it pointed to Jesus as the “second” Adam—the

Son of man—who was qualified to receive the lost inheritance, and, by the sacrifice of himself, restore it to Adam and his offspring. The apostle’s interpretation of the Psalm is as follows: “One in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him [Adam and his race] a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him [due to man’s fall]. But we see Jesus [a perfect Son of man], who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death [as a ransom for Adam], crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” —Heb. 2:6-9

## **SON OF MAN TO RESTORE**

Jesus spoke of his place in the divine arrangement for man’s salvation as both the “Son of man” and the “Son of God.” “No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man. ... And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”—John 3:13-17

Jesus illustrated how the work of restoration was to be accomplished by citing an experience of the nation of Israel. The people had become discouraged because of the difficulties of their wilderness journey. They began to murmur against God and against Moses, complaining about the material discomforts. As punishment, God sent fiery serpents among them, and many Israelites died. They cried out to Moses, and he interceded with God on their behalf. The Lord instructed Moses to fashion a serpent of brass and set it upon a pole, that everyone who was bitten could look upon the serpent and live. (Num. 21:4-9) Jesus, in recounting this experience, was illustrating that all of Adam's offspring have been "bitten" with Adamic sin and are condemned to die. Jesus, however, as the Son of man, was a corresponding price for Adam, and being "lifted up," he would provide the means whereby mankind could live. Jesus, always giving honor to the Heavenly Father, then shows that the entire arrangement was made possible because of God's great love for mankind and his desire to restore them to life.—see also John 8:28,29; 12:32,33

At the time of Jesus' earthly ministry the Jews generally believed that when Messiah came great changes would take place. They expected that Messiah would be a strong leader much on the order of David, who with God's help would conquer their enemies, release them from servitude, and re-establish Israel's kingdom. Jesus did not fulfill these expectations at that time. He was "meek and lowly in heart," a man acquainted with sorrow and grief. Because of this the Jews rejected him as their deliverer. (Matt. 11:29; Isa. 53:1-4) They overlooked the prophecies

which said that Jesus must first suffer and die and then come into his glory.—Luke 24:25-27

## **RETURN AND INVISIBLE PRESENCE**

Though not understanding many of the details, the disciples came to accept the fact that Jesus must die and be resurrected the third day, and that as a glorified spirit being, he would be invisible. Just days before his death, they asked Jesus what would be the sign of his presence [Greek: *parousia*]. (Matt. 24:3, *Young's Literal Translation*) Upon his resurrection he would be a spirit being, unseen by human eyes, but the disciples expected that he would soon set up his kingdom. It would be to their advantage to know when he was present to accomplish this work. Thus Jesus proceeded to give them some signs that would mark his return and invisible presence.

In giving one of these signs, Jesus alluded to a prophecy about himself in Daniel 7:13,14: “Behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

Clouds are often foreboding, and from them frequently comes distress. This is the symbolic use of clouds in this prophecy. It is saying that when the Son of man would come again it would be a time of trouble and distress, and that this would be associated with the preparation for the establishment of his kingdom. The words of Jesus in alluding

to this prophecy are as follows: “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.”—Matt. 24:30

Jesus, when brought before the high priest, quoted this same prophecy from the book of Daniel. When asked if he was “the Christ, the Son of the Blessed,” Jesus answered, “I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”—Mark 14:61,62

## **THE SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN**

The sign of the Son of man referred to by Jesus is the trouble and distress that comes upon the earth because Jesus, God’s “holy arm,” is breaking down and destroying the old systems of Satan. Then “all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.” (Isa. 52:10) Jesus described the reason for the distress and trouble, saying, “The powers of the heavens shall be shaken.” (Matt. 24:29) Paul later states that both “heaven,” symbolic of religious systems, and “earth,” symbolic of political and social systems, will be shaken. (Heb. 12:26) Jesus spoke of the present controlling power over these systems as Satan, “the prince of this world.” (John 14:30; II Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2) His evil rule must be destroyed before Christ’s Messianic kingdom can be established in the earth.

We believe that we are in the midst of this time of shaking, and that the Son of man is invisibly present directing the issue. Soon the distress and trouble will be brought to an end, and earth’s long weary night of sin and death will be over. Then the



kingdom for which the world has so long prayed will be established. God said, through the Prophet Haggai, that he would “shake all nations,” but that immediately thereafter “the desire of all nations” would come.—Hag. 2:7

We have considered only one of the several evidences Jesus gave his disciples which would mark his return and invisible presence. Additional signs are mentioned throughout the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of Matthew. The concluding act which relates to his presence and the work he is to do as the Son of Man is recorded in Matthew 25:31-46, from which we quote in part: “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”—vss. 31-34

## **JUDGING THE WORLD IN RIGHTEOUSNESS**

This “coming” of the Son of man mentioned in the foregoing verses refers to another phase of the work Jesus is to accomplish during his invisible presence. The time setting is after the destruction of Satan’s evil systems of this present world. It also follows the completion of Jesus’ “body,” the church, because they are to be part of the Christ class which will help in the work of judging the world in righteousness. Earlier in his ministry, Jesus said, “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,” symbolic of the world of mankind.—Matt. 19:28

The word “judging” in the above text is translated from the Greek word *krino*, which conveys the thought of a trial and then a judgment. This meaning seems to be expressed in the following prophetic statements: “When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” “With righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.” (Isa. 26:9; Ps. 98:9) In the prophecy quoted from Matthew, the thought expressed of separating the people one from another, as a “shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats,” is the same. These references describe a process of the “good shepherd” gathering his sheep into “one fold.” (John 10:14-16) This will be accomplished by writing God’s law in the hearts of the people. Those who heed the good shepherd’s voice will “inherit the kingdom” prepared for them by the Father.

In summary, the title “Son of man” serves to identify Jesus as the great kinsman of mankind, the one who had the power to redeem them and release them from the bondage of sin and death. However, the meaning attached to this title does not end there. The concluding work of the Son of man will be that of elevating the world of mankind back to perfection during the time of his Messianic kingdom. It will be only then that dominion and life will be restored to Adam and his “sons,” the entire human race, who, when perfected, will once again be crowned with “glory and honour.”—Heb. 2:7,8 ■