

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Who is this Jesus?: The Son of man

During the past two weeks, we have thought about Jesus as “The Son” in all His glory and as “The Son of God” as to the uniqueness of His Person and work. This week, we will consider Jesus as the “Son of man”. We can immediately see that He, the Son of the living God, was truly a man here upon earth. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit of God (Matthew 1:18); born of a virgin (Matthew 1:23, Luke 1:27); increased in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:52); shared grief and sorrow (John 11:35); knew fatigue (John 4:6); was baptised by John (Matthew 3:13-17) and died upon a cross (Matthew 27:32-56). He was a complete man with spirit, soul and body. A body had been prepared for Him (Hebrews 10:5); He could speak of His soul being sorrowful unto death (Matthew 26:38, Mark 14:34); and He could commend His spirit to His Father (Luke 23:46). The difference between Him and the first man, Adam, was that He knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21), did no sin (1 Peter 2:22) and there was no sin in Him (1 John 3:5). He was not just a son of man, but **the** Son of man. He was the devoted Man in whom God could delight.

While upon this earth, His perfect life glorified God. He went on to glorify God in His death and, furthermore, He will glorify God in His future reign.

In Psalm 8 we find David making reference to the son of man in a general sense. Psalm 8:3-5 states: “*When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.*” Here David refers to mankind and how insignificant he seems in relation to the vastness of creation; yet, he notes that God is mindful of him and visits him. In other words, God cares for mankind and, although made a little lower than angels in the order of creation, He crowned him with glory and honour. That is to say, He gave him the first place on earth and the dominion that went with it.

The Spirit of God takes this Scripture and applies it specifically to Jesus in Hebrews 2. In Hebrews 2:9-10 we read: “*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. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*”

So here, in Hebrews, an epistle that describes the wonder of the Son of God in the first chapter, He is also spoken of as a man - a man who was tested in all points as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). The Son who is the brightness of God’s glory (see Hebrews 1:3) was found in fashion as a man (see Philippians 2:8). The Person who is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, had a body prepared for Him (Hebrews 10:5). The Son who is the express image of God (Hebrews 1:3) was made in the likeness of a man (Philippians 2:7). As both the Son and man, He was united in nature, He was sacrificed in order to cleanse us from our sins. Now as Son and as man He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. We hear His own words in anticipation of this in John 17:4-5: “*I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*”

In his poem, “There’s a Man in the Glory”, George Cutting wrote:

*There’s a Man in the glory I know very well.
I have known Him for years, and His goodness can tell:
One day, in His mercy, He knock’d at my door,
And seeking admission, knock’d many times o’er.*

*But when I went to Him, and stood face to face,
And listen’d awhile to His story of grace,
How He suffer’d for sinners, and put away sin,
I heartily, thankfully welcomed Him in.*

We at *Truth for Today*, hope that you have also come face to face with the Man in the glory and given to Him complete control of your life.

We read the following in Daniel 7:13-14: *"I saw in the night visions, and, 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."* This looks on to the day of Christ's kingdom here upon earth when He will reign for a thousand years (Revelation 20:6). In Hebrews 1 we find a brief description of His rule. Hebrews 1:8-9 states: *"But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."* His rule will be righteous. There will be perfect judgment and perfect justice.

The righteousness of His rule is also revealed in the early verses of Psalm 72. The psalm is written for Solomon; but also relates to the Lord Jesus who is described as greater than Solomon in Matthew 12:42. It shows how He, the King:

- intervenes on behalf of the poor,
- saves the children of the needy, and
- breaks in pieces the oppressor.

Peace will accompany the uprightness of His rule. The psalm goes on to tell us that the extent of His dominion will be worldwide. He will indeed be the King of kings! It also speaks of the appreciation of His name - a name that endures for ever! It finishes with, *"Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen"* (Psalm 72:18-19). Hence, in the case of Jesus, His deity, the fact that He is God, is also emphasised.

In Mark's Gospel, He, as Son of man, had the power to forgive sins (Mark 2:10). John 5:27 shows He was given the authority to execute coming judgment; while John 12:23 speaks of His exaltation as the ultimate goal of His pathway. However, in contrast, Matthew 8:20 reads: *"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head."* He had come to His own but they had refused Him. The result was that He had no fixed abode during the years of His ministry here on earth. Then, when Peter declared Him to be the "Christ of God" (Luke 9:20), the Lord Jesus said, *"The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day"* (Luke 9:22). The Lord Jesus was predicting His own death and resurrection.

We read of Him as Son of man in Luke 22:48. He had just agonised in prayer with His Father in the garden of Gethsemane. His earnest pleas were made in the shadow of the cross. The cup the Father offered Him was full of the wrath of God against sin! There was no other way for people to be saved. Jesus had to go to the cross. It was shortly after this, that Judas appeared with a band of soldiers and others and identified Him with a kiss. It's then we read, *"But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"* (Luke 22:48). In the Spirit of Christ, we read in Psalm 41:9, *"Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me."* The scripture was fulfilled adding to the deep sorrow of the Saviour. Have you ever been betrayed by someone close to you? It's an extremely painful and emotional experience. There is an expression founded in German legend that describes betrayal by friends well. It compares it to "a stab in the back"!

Of course, the governors of the day, Pilate and Herod, were both goaded by the malice of Satan to reject the Lord Jesus Christ. Little did they realise that they were, in His rejection, carrying out the counsels of God which concerned His Son from before the foundation of the world. Although Christ was to die, He was also to rise again and be glorified. It was then that God could come out in grace to mankind because the question of sin had been dealt with righteously and completely. Hence, Hebrews 2:6-8 tells us that a crown of glory and honour rests upon the head of the Son of man in heaven. Now those who believe in Him rejoice in the fact that they are saved and sanctified. They know that God classes them as "sons" whom He is bringing to glory. Furthermore, the Lord Jesus Himself is not ashamed to call them brethren (Hebrews 2:11). The Lord Jesus is now the Head of a new creation, namely, the children that God has given Him. Each and every one of them having been born again.

In Matthew 17:1-13, we read of the transfiguration of Christ where three chosen disciples saw His glory on the mountain. As they came down from the mountain, the Lord said to them, *"Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead."* Christ being raised from among the dead allowed their tongues to be loosed in witness. Peter, one of the three, later wrote, *"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount"* (2 Peter 1:16-18).

Hannah Burlingham expressed these truths well when she wrote:

*On His Father's throne is seated
Christ the Lord, the living One,
All His toil on earth completed,
All His work for sinners done:
In the glory
See Him, God's eternal Son.*

*Every knee shall bow before Him,
Every tongue confess His name;
Ransomed myriads shall adore Him,
Who endured the sinner's shame:
From the glory
God doth now His worth proclaim.*

*Man the cross to Him awarded;
Man the Saviour crucified;
This world's judgment stands recorded,
God's own justice satisfied!
By the glory
Christ was claimed on earth who died.*

*Son of God, His incarnation
Opened first the tale of grace;
Son of man, in new creation
Leader of a chosen race!
Well may glory
Crown Him, in the ordered place!*

In the Gospel according to John, we read, several times, of the Son of man being "lifted up" (John 3:14, 8:28 and 12:32-34). The first of the three occasions is found in John 3:13-16: "*And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. 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.*"

We can immediately relate this "lifting up" to the cross because of the scene in the Old Testament (Numbers 21:4-9) to which John 3:14 refers, namely, the "lifting up" of the serpent in the wilderness. Poisonous snakes had been sent from God to judge a disobedient people (Numbers 21:4-6). However, when there were signs of repentance, the LORD told Moses to have a brazen serpent made and to lift it up on a pole (Numbers 21:7-8). Moses was then to instruct the people to look at the serpent on the pole if they had been bitten by a serpent. If they did so, they would live! (Numbers 21:9) The serpent was a symbol of God's judgment. When the Lord Jesus Christ was lifted up, He bore the judgment of God against sin. It's described in this way in Romans 8:3-4: "*For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*" So God, in love, sent His own Son in order to be a sinless man who would die as a sacrifice for sin. God is now able to save all those who put their trust in Him, not only save, but give them eternal life!

This is confirmed by a further reference in John 12:32-33 where Jesus says: "*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.*" He was indicating the kind of death He would die - a death on a cross! This was the place of God's curse, for every one that hangs on a tree is accursed of God (see Galatians 3:13). John 12:31 also indicates that He, by His death, has conquered the devil (the prince of this world): "*Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out.*"

Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians 15:47 we read: "*The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.*" The Lord Jesus was a totally different man. He was the heavenly man!

We may then turn to John 8:28 where we read: "*Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.*" The clause, "I am he" is used quite often in the book of Isaiah. For example, in Isaiah 43:10-11 we read: "*Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD;*

and beside me there is no saviour." When Jesus uses the term here, He is actually claiming to be God. This is supported in John 8:58 where He uses the name of God - "I AM" when speaking of both His pre-existence and deity: *"Before Abraham was, I AM"* (John 8:58). The Jews thought this the worst kind of blasphemy and took up stones to cast at Him.

We can then move to Acts 7:54-57 where we find Stephen before the council. He had rehearsed a potted history of man's relationship with God to the detriment of Israel as a nation. When those of the Jewish council heard these things, we read: *"They were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord..."* Stephen was then stoned to death, even as he prayed for the forgiveness of those who committed the act.

What a wonderful sight for this faithful saint of God! To see the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. The Lord Jesus had been exalted to the highest place of privilege, authority and favour. In Philippians 2:8-9 we read: *"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name..."* Jesus, the man, is in the highest position of glory. In Hebrews 1:3 we see a parallel to this but referring to the Son of God: *"Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."* Again we see the glory of the Son of man and the Son of God in the person who is at the right hand of God. However, Stephen saw Him standing, not sitting. What a precious thought - to see the Son of man standing up to receive the soul of His servant!

So the Spirit of God draws our attention to a man magnified in the glory. In John 17 we find a prayer of Jesus in anticipation of His death and resurrection. He says to His Father: *"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."* He was laying claim to His glory as the Son before the foundation of the world; but He was claiming it as a man.

In John 13:31-32, the Lord Jesus states: *"Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall glorify him immediately."* Here Jesus speaks of Himself going into death to secure the glory of God. Every other man who has ever died received the wages of sin (see Romans 6:23); but Jesus, in obedience to the will of God, entered into death to glorify God in relation to the whole question of sin. In so doing, He enabled God to implement all the counsels of His love.

In an article on the glory of the Son of man, WC Reid wrote: *"Having glorified God in His death upon the cross, the Son of man is glorified by God 'in Himself'"* (*"The Son of Man Glorified"* in *An Outline of Sound Words Magazine*, Volume 48). So that the Son of man has not to wait until the day of His kingdom glory to be glorified; He is glorified "immediately" in being set down by God at His own right hand. Being glorified "in Himself" at once brings out the glory of the Person of the Son of man, for only a divine Person could be so glorified."

We draw to a close with the words of the Lord Jesus: *"For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many"* (Mark 10:45). May we ever be found faithful in the service of the Lord who shed His blood for our ransom until that day when He will come for us. Then, we too shall be glorified.

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