

Son of Man

Matt. 8:20

Introduction:

1. This is the first use in Matthew of the phrase “Son of Man.” It is a phrase used 81 times in the Greek text of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
2. It is always used by Jesus of himself and NOT by others about Him.
3. Most generally it means “a human being,” and so we could be described as “sons of men,” but when Jesus uses it of Himself it takes on a fuller meaning.
4. In the next few minutes I want to give attention to this fuller meaning and think with you about the implications that it has for you and your relationship with Jesus Christ.

Discussion:

- I. The more general use of the phrase has a diminishing element to it.
 - A. In the Book of Ezekiel God refers to Ezekiel repeatedly as “son of man.”
 1. It almost becomes a title for Ezekiel. It is used of him 93 times.
 2. As God gives instruction to Ezekiel to prophesy to the people he calls him “son of man.”
 3. In God’s call to Ezekiel, Ezekiel’s association with the people is part of his prophetic call (2:1-3:11). Yet, he is to be different. He is not to be rebellious like them, but to be God’s voice communicating God’s words to them.
 - B. The diminishing element of the phrase may be seen from its use in Psa. 8:3-6 (Cf. Heb. 2:6-8).
 1. This diminishing element is not meant to be derogatory, but a comparison between man and God. The great chasm of difference between God and man is the emphasis.
 2. While lower than deity man is crowned with glory and honor and things have been subjected to him.
 - C. For Jesus to identify Himself as “son of man” then denotes a lowering of Himself to our status. Heb. 2:9-18 gives us insight into the theological reasons for this.
 1. He lowered Himself that He might “taste death for everyone.”
 2. He is our brother.
 3. Who suffers for us that we might have salvation.
 4. By sharing in flesh and blood He rendered powerless the one who had the power of death and set us free from death.
 5. He is our help, this descendent of Abraham.
 6. Thus, he makes satisfaction for our sin.
 7. Joining with us in our humanity He is able to come to our aid as a merciful and faithful High Priest.
 - D. It is interesting that Jesus should use this phrase of Himself and for it to never be used by others about Him.
 1. He “diminishes” Himself.
 2. But no one else diminishes Him.

E. Thus, in this use His earthly status is denoted. But the phrase also denotes His earthly authority.

1. Matt. 9:2-8.

2. Matt. 12:1-8.

3. It is interesting that humanness and authority are combined. He becomes like us, but uses His unique authority for our benefit. He sows the good seed, but also authoritatively judges those who do not respond appropriately (Matt. 13:37-43; cf. also Matt. 16:27-28 and parallels).

4. There are three ways the phrase is used by Jesus.

a. To denote his current human status and authority.

b. To refer the earthly suffering which must precede his future glory.

c. To refer to his future heavenly glory.

II. Jesus shares in our human condition as the Son of Man by suffering for us.

A. This is made clear by Heb. 2:9-10.

B. Also made clear in Mk. 8:31.

C. The Son of Man came to serve and to give His life a ransom (Matt. 20:28). The Son of Man actually provides life through His death (Jn. 6:26). Jesus said, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life," (Jn. 6:53).

D. Jesus reasons that we should be like Him in serving (Matt. 20:26).

E. His earthly suffering as the Son of Man precedes His heavenly glory.

III. The Son of Man receives glory and a kingdom.

A. Although the Son of Man suffers, is rejected and killed, he is raised from the dead (Mk. 8:38; Matt. 12:38-40).

B. Jesus had predicted to Caiaphas that he would see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming in the clouds of heaven (Matt. 26:64).

C. Peter preached on Pentecost that Jesus was seated at the right hand of God (Acts 2:34) and Stephen saw the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56). Stephen's reference is powerful. Note that this is not Jesus "diminishing" Himself as associated with man, but is used in a way which exalts Jesus in His glory. It is Stephen's statement of seeing the Son of Man at the right hand of God that led to their stoning him.

D. There is one O.T. reference in which the "Son of Man" phrase is used in this exalted way (Dan. 7:13-14). Peter and Stephen see Jesus as the exalted "Son of Man" in His kingdom.

E. In Revelation He is presented in radiant glory as the author of the letters to the seven churches (1:12-13) and the one who reaps the harvest of the earth (14:14).

IV. What are we to make of all this?

A. The Son of Man came and identified with us in our humanity.

1. In so doing He suffered and died for us.

2. He understands our infirmities.

3. And aids us, serves us, giving His life a ransom for us.
- B. He can do this not just because He is human, but also because He has authority. But before He rules over all He has first shared in the humanity of our condition. We ought to be thankful.
- C. One point not to be overlooked is that He has power to judge men.
 1. Jn. 5:27 says, "God gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man."
 2. He sows good seed, but sends out His angels to gather tares and throws them into the furnace (Matt. 13:37, 41-42).
- D. He now rules at the right hand of God, exalted, though He humbled Himself. Phil. 2:3-11, while not using the phrase "Son of Man," summarizes well what it means and it calls on us to humble ourselves to look out for the interests of others, as He did.

Conclusion:

1. In many ways the phrase "Son of Man" summarizes everything Jesus is.
2. While a unique authority He **identifies with us**.
3. He suffers **for us**.
4. He sows His good seed of life and gathers His harvest while destroying the tares.
5. Exalted, He is **our** King.