

STRAIGHTWAY

And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him [Mark 1:18].

CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

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The Son of Man

Dr. H. T. Spence

The New Testament gives four great titles of “Sonship” that are identified with the Lord Jesus Christ. Each one has its unique meaning and divine appointment for the revelation of our Blessed Savior.

Matthew 1:1 reveals the first two Sonships: “Son of David” and “Son of Abraham.” The Greek word *huios* (son) conveys the meaning of a full-grown son, one who is of age entitled to be the full heir of his father’s estate. With these two titles, therefore, Christ is the heir of both the Davidic and Abrahamic Covenant. A third title “Son of God,” noted with regularity throughout the New Testament, is given in Matthew 4:3. According to Hebrews 1:2, not only is Christ the rightful heir of Abraham and

David, He also is the “appointed heir of all things.”

The fourth title “Son of Man” was the favorite self-designation of Jesus in the Gospels. It is found in the Gospel of Matthew 30 times; in the Gospel of Mark, 15 times; in the Gospel of Luke, 25 times; and in the Gospel of John, 12 times. Apart from John 12:34, only Jesus used this title for Himself. Outside of the Gospels it is used only once in Acts 7:56 by Stephen and twice in the Book of Revelation (1:13; 14:14).

At first sight the title “Son of Man” appears to be an apt term depicting the human element of our Lord’s person, just as the divine element is denoted in the title “Son of God.” For this reason, a number of writers

believe that Christ used the title to present Himself as Head, the type and the ideal of the human race. We see something of this in Mark 2:28, "the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." Yet there is a humbler view seen in such statements as Matthew 8:20: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."

But are these the insights and real meaning of the title "Son of Man"? When one reads the whole of its presentation in Scripture, the title bears out a greater insight and understanding. This greater understanding is to be seen in its Old Testament derivation and in Jesus' later use of it.

The Son of Man in the Old Testament

The phrase "Son of man" has important appearances in the Old Testament. One such appearance is in Psalm 8:4: "What is man that

thou art mindful of Him? And the Son of man that thou visitest him?" Because this psalm presents both the lowliness and the loftiness of human nature, some commentators believe this psalm is the origin of Christ's usage of the title.

A second appearance is in Psalm 80:17: "Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself." This verse seems to be an appeal for the raising up of an individual to redeem Israel amidst a time of national decline. This may have been one among many Scriptures that contributed to a Messianic consciousness in the heart of young Jesus.

The title "Son of man" appears no less than ninety times in the book of Ezekiel. It is applied to Ezekiel himself, designating his prophetic mission. However, its appearance in the book of Ezekiel has a marked peculiarity about it. It is used to express a contrast between what Ezekiel is in himself and what God will make out of him. It is the work of God lifting him up whenever the flesh faints and fails.

In the book of Daniel, the prophet himself is called "the son of man":

So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision (Daniel 8:17).

The title steps forward in order to

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raise the spirit of this trembling servant of God. Because of these two prophets' use of this title, Jesus may have also used it with the consciousness of His belonging to the same prophetic line.

However, a second occurrence in Daniel uses this title in a totally different sense.

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 Daniel 7:13,14.

This declaration is given after four beasts are presented earlier in the chapter. Jesus used this truth in Matthew 26:64 when he stood before the high priest:

Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

The Lord in His Olivet discourse in Matthew 24:27,30,37,39,44 also alludes to this truth; Christ identified Himself with the future coming judgment. From these and other Scriptures, it is evident that Jesus' use of the title "Son of man" was

proclaimed with a Messianic consciousness.

Jesus' Use of the Title "Son of Man"

Jesus did not use the title "Son of man" necessarily to express the qualities of Himself as a man; Jesus used this title to express His position and function as Messiah. It is a wonder to observe that Jesus read the Scriptures: He was the Word of God, the *Logos* of God, yet He read the Old Testament! He read His own history. He read over all the sacred books and found His own person and work prophesied. Each time He went to the Synagogue or to the Temple, He heard or read passages from the Law and the Prophets. Amidst His *kenosis* (Philippians 2:6-8), the anointing of the Holy Spirit witnessed to His heart the fulfilling of these Scriptures, adding and enlarging aspects to His self-consciousness.

Jesus may also have used this title to both half conceal and yet half reveal His secret. Jesus tended to shy away from the bold titles of Messiah (a prophecy of such a spirit is found in Isaiah 42:2), knowing His contemporaries would not take such a bold assertion. But at all the stages of His ministry He called Himself the "Son of man" without hesitation. The phrase expressed much to Himself, and meant more and more to those immediately associated with Him. At the same time it did not convey a Messianic claim to the public ear. In John

12:34 the people responded to Christ:

We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?

The question was asked, “Who is this Son of man?” But we read in Matthew 16:13 that Christ clearly asked, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” The disciples responded with what they had heard among the people:

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:15).

Nevertheless there also seems to be an underlying purpose for Christ to express His sense of connection with all men in sympathy and compassion for their life and future. He felt Himself identified with them as their brother, their fellow-sufferer, their representative, and their Savior. Perhaps the deepest context of this title is found in Mark 10:45:

For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Conclusion

In the Greek language the title, “Son of Man” is presented in the words *ho uiuos tou anthropou*. We have observed that the term *uiuos* declares the individual to be a full-grown son who is immediately

eligible to be the heir of an inheritance. The term *anthropos* is the generic term for humanity just as Adam (*Adhamah*) is the generic term for humanity in the Hebrew. As the Son of Abraham, He is the appointed heir of Abraham; as the Son of David, He is the appointed heir of David; as the Son of God, He is the appointed heir of all things; and, as the Son of Man, He is the appointed heir of all that God had promised to mankind in the Adamic Covenant. What Adam lost or forfeited in his fall, which profoundly affected all of mankind, His son Jesus Christ redeemed and will restore at the appointed time. Perhaps the “book sealed with seven seals” in Revelation 5 is tied into that title deed lost at the fall of Adam. It will be a Son of Adam (the genealogy of Luke 3), Who will bring about the restoration of what the father Adam lost in his failure and fall. What the father of mankind failed in, the Son of mankind restored in His redemptive death. We await and anticipate the fullness of this restoration.

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Two Prophetical Mountains

Dr. O. Talmadge Spence

Excerpt from Straightway, December 1977

There are two prophetical mountains of the comings of Jesus Christ to the earth. For many years these mountains brought a kind of confusion, even to the New Testament Jewish Christian. The mountain of the *first* coming of Christ disclosed a *Cross*. The mountain of the *second* coming of Christ declared a *Crown*. First the suffering Saviour; then the Reigning King! As the Jewish prophets and seers viewed through their prophetical telescopes these two coming mountains, they often thought them to be but one. Even at the time of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus, there were those who thought He would set up the Crown Kingdom then. But, instead, Christ gave the world the Cross-Kingdom.

In these days of the twentieth century, we stand in between the two mountains. We look back to the first with historical clarity; we look forward to the second with prophetical nearness. Personally, I believe we are possibly living in the very generation of the second coming of Christ. And as we do set forth our life, let us be clear about the fact that He will come the second time.

The mountain ranges are marked clearly as we ascend from a present dark valley of the “apostasy” in Christendom into the slopes and heights of the meeting of Christ in the clouds. He will first come back *for* His saints in the clouds; then, He is to return *with* His saints to the earth. The Bible urges us to “wait for his Son from heaven” (I Thess. 1:9-10); and “unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:27-28). Of course, this means He will return the second time without the need of sacrifice for our sins again.

We are presently living in a time of similar significance to that which characterized the first coming of Jesus. As we ascend the second mountain, let us note the comparison.

Note, one. Just as at the first coming of Jesus only a few recognized Him, so it will be at the time of His return. A few shepherds, wise men, Simeon, Anna, and others, but relatively speaking, in the light of the greater population, only a few.

Note, two. Just as at the first coming of Jesus, Herod, “was troubled,” and “all Jerusalem with him,” so we are now in troubled times, although not the great Tribulation Period itself.

Note, three. Just as at the first coming of Jesus there was a call from

heaven to take the young child and “flee into Egypt and be thou there until I bring thee word,” so will it be again, in a similar way, when the saints are caught away by a rapture into heaven for a season, until the indignation be passed.

Note, four. Just as at the first coming of Jesus there followed a manifestation of Herod’s wrath, a personality of sin, in the slaying of the children, so there will be at the second coming of Jesus the manifest wrath of the personal or individual Antichrist, “the man of sin,” in slaying those on earth who do not accept the mark of the beast.

Note, five. Just as at the first coming of Jesus, word came again for the child to return from Egypt to Nazareth, so the word of the Lord will bring the raptured saints back to reign on earth in the Millennium.

Thus, these two prophetical mountains are similar, but they are not the very same. We stand where they stood, prophetically, but we are not, historically, where they were.

We stand in between the two mountains with reverent and humble trusting of His wondrous grace! It may be that this Christmas will be spent in heaven!

It was in the year 1973 that the **STRAIGHTWAY** newsletter became a part of the Christian Purities Fellowship, an outreach arm of Foundations Bible College. We want to thank our many readers for their words of encouragement and their financial contributions to make this newsletter an ongoing witness. The **STRAIGHTWAY** for this month is one signature smaller (8 pages instead of the full three signatures of 12 pages) but will return to its usual format in the January 2005 issue.

In behalf of the entire staff of the **STRAIGHTWAY** and Foundations Press, it is our prayer that the Lord will grant you a good conclusion to this year. May the year 2005 truly be a Christ-centered one.

Dr. H. T. Spence, Editor