

Son of Man and Son of God

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By Benjamin Wilson

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In what sense was Christ the son of man?

There is no doubt whatever as to Christ being "the Son of Man" -- but in what sense it is asked. Did this phrase mean that he was simply a man -- one of human kind; or did it imply something more than this? I think more is comprehended in the phrase. Jesus very frequently spoke of himself as the Son of Man, and must have meant something beyond the idea that some have advanced, that he was the son of the man Joseph, the husband of his mother Mary. I will give a few references for the reader to examine, where Jesus calls himself the Son of Man. (Matthew 20:18; 18:11; 16:13-16; 12:8; 20:18,19; 25:31; 26:64) These are all from Matthew's testimony. They prove that the Son of Man was the anointed one, and are to be so understood. The Jews also understood the term as synonymous with Messiah. What other conclusion could they or we arrive at after reading Daniel 7:13,14? Let the reader turn to this reference, and see if it does not refer to the Messiah. But why is he called the Son of Man? Surely not in the same sense that I am the son of a man, because begotten by him; nor as the term is so frequently applied to Ezekiel the prophet; nor as used by David in the eighth Psalm, and as quoted by Paul in Hebrews 2:6. The phrase as used by Jesus is always in the emphatic form, though our English versions do not show it. The Greek is--*ho whyos tou anthropou*, "the Son of the Man." This definite form of expression implies that Christ was the son of some particular man. Shall we say the son of Joseph, the carpenter? Did Jesus mean this every time, when he used this emphatic form of expression? I trow not. Then whose son was he? I answer, "the son of David." The Messiah was to be the seed of David, according to the Prophets, and the genealogical records as given by Matthew and Luke, prove that Jesus was the Son of David, with whom Jehovah made an everlasting covenant, saying, "His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before me," (Psalm 89:36). The genealogical records prove him to be the Son of David. The prophets foretold that the Messiah who should sit on David's throne, and order his kingdom, was to be the Son of Jesse and David. (Isaiah 9:6,7; 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15; Psalm 132:11) The apostles believed that Jesus was the Messiah and the son of David. Peter, in his discourse on the day of Pentecost, tells the Jews that Jesus, according to the flesh, was from the loins of David; and Paul says that he was "made of the seed of David according to the flesh," (Acts 2:30; Romans 1:3; 2 Timothy 2:8). And the glorified Jesus himself declares: "I am the root and offspring of David," (Revelation 22:16). From these testimonies I conclude that Jesus the Christ was the Son of Man, not in the sense of simply being a man, but because he was the son of the man David, with whom Jehovah made an everlasting covenant, that the throne and kingdom of Israel should belong to him and his seed forever.

In what sense was Christ the son of God?

He was called the son of God while in the flesh. But it is asked in what sense? I answer, because he was God's son, in the sense of being begotten by him. Christ called God his Father, and God acknowledged him as his son. (See Matthew 3:17; 17:5) If Christ was the Son of God only as we are sons of God, then he was not the son of God, but a son; nor would there be any more reason in confessing him to be the Son of the living God, as Peter and all the apostles did, than in confessing some other believer to be God's son. But Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, and consequently the Messiah. He also required his disciples to believe this truth. (See John 9:35-37; 10:36) The belief that Jesus, the Son of Man, was also the Christ, the Son of the living God, lies at the very foundation of Christianity -- on it the Church was to be built. (Matthew 16:16-18) Jesus was more than an adopted son by faith--was more than a begotten son by the word of truth; he was "the only begotten of the Father," (John 1:14; 3:16; 1 John 4:9). The Father with audible voice, proclaimed him as his beloved Son, (Matthew 3:17; 17:5). Paul calls him God's own Son, and his dear son, (Galatians 4:4-5; Colossians 1:13).

Objections:

The following material was not written by Benjamin Wilson, but rather by R. Day. Unless otherwise noted, the World English Bible is used for Bible quotes.

Son of Man = Human

One objects that the term "son of man" was a common title used by Jews that meant that the person was a simply a human. According to this reasoning, Jesus was both "son of man" -- a human being, and "Son of God" -- alleged to mean that he was also the Supreme Being. The argument is usually vaguely put forth, yet sometimes declared to "clearly" show that Jesus was both man and the Supreme Being. We have never seen any attempt to explain how Jesus was and is supposedly still two "beings" at once: the Supreme Being as well as a human being.

Of course, the expression "son of man" does in a general way refer to an offspring of a human being. Nevertheless, there is scriptural proof that the expression "son of man" was referring to a certain offspring of a certain man, that is, the long waited for Messiah, who was to a son of a man in a special way, that is, the son of the man, David. In the Messianic sense as related to the promises, "son of man", "Son of God", as well as "Son of David", are expressions that are used almost interchangeable.

Once Jesus asked his disciples: "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" (Matthew 16:13, New American Standard -- NAS) Notice how the title is used. It is not used as though it were speaking of any son of any man, but it is used as though it was being understood as referring to a specific son of man. Thus, we can see that this title was indeed being used by the Jews in a specific way, that is, as referring to promises related to one who was to come as the son of a specific man, that is, the Son of David.

The disciples responded: "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." (Matthew 16:14, NAS) From this we can see that the Jews did have a specific application of the term "the Son of Man" in mind, that is, the promised Messiah. They were not expecting the Messiah to be the Supreme Being and also a human being.

Jesus then asked them: "But who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15) Peter answered: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16) From his answer we determine that the expression "Son of Man" was being considered as related to the promises concerning the Messiah and "Son of the Living God." In other words, "the Son of Man" is made equal to "Son of the Living God". It was evidently an expression being used by the Jews in general as denoting the promised one, the promised Messiah, the Son of David.

Brother Wilson in the article above gave a list of scriptures that show that the title was a messianic title. An examination of some of the references above prove that the expression "Son of Man" was indeed synonymous with Messiah (Christ), the one promised to come as the son of the man, David, the Anointed of Yahweh. -- Matthew 20:18; 18:11; 16:13-16; 12:8; 20:18,19; 25:31; 26:64.

Another objection is that Wilson stated: "The phrase as used by Jesus is always in the emphatic form, though our English versions do not show it." Yet John 5:27 are the words of Jesus, but in this place the expression is anarthrous, and could be rendered "son of a man". Doesn't this show that Jesus was being given the judgment because, not only was he the Supreme Being, but he was also a son of a man, that is, human?

John 5:27 states: "He also gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is a son of man." (World English Bible translation) We answer that yes, Wilson evidently did overlook this one time that Jesus did not use the definite article. Jesus several times refers to himself as "Son" and to the only true Supreme Being (John 17:1,3) as his Father in the context of John 5:27. Our trinitarian neighbors wish to read into the two expressions that somehow this makes Jesus a hypostatic union -- both the Supreme Being and human being. In reality, there is no need to read such into what Jesus said. The statement is that God, the only true Supreme Being, the God and Father of Jesus, gave to the Son the authority to execute judgment "because" he is a son of man. We are left wondering why there would be any merit of Jesus' simply being the son of any man that would be the "cause" that he would receive authority to execute judgment. The point seems to be that as pointed out in Hebrews 2:17; 5:8, he was made like his brothers, and, his sufferings while in full to his obedience qualified him to be given the authority to judge. Nevertheless, this was not simply "because" Jesus was the son of any man, such as Joseph, his "foster" father, for if he had been, he would have been a sinner just as Joseph; rather Jesus was counted as the promised the Son of David, to whom the promises belong, having been given a special body untainted by the sin of Adam. (Romans 5:12-19; Hebrews 10:5) Thus, we have no reason to believe that Jesus intended the expression "Son of Man" in John 5:27 to mean that he was simply of a son of any man, for such a generalization would additionally make him a sinner as all men. It is to the Son of David the promises are made concerning authority and judgment. -- Psalm 2:6-9; 132:11; Isaiah 9:6,7; 11:1; Jeremiah 22:30; 23:5; Matthew 9:6; 12:8; 25:31; Matthew 26:64; 28:18; Mark 2:10,28; 13:26; 14:52; Luke 1:32; 5:24; 6:5; 21:27; 22:69; John 5:27; 3:13; Acts 13:34; Ephesians 1:15-23; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 1:2.

Some say that the expression "Son of Man" simply means that Jesus was the Son of Adam, basing this on the idea that the Hebrew word for "Adam" means "man", as used in Daniel 8:17. Others claim that Jesus spoke in Hebrew and used the exact term as recorded in Daniel 8:17. While we might consider that Jesus was indeed counted, or reckoned, as a son of Adam, due to the lineage of his foster father, and his mother, from the usage of the phrase in the New Testament, we highly doubt that this is what Jesus had in mind by the expression, "Son of Man", as he applied this to himself. There are some who go off into even greater extremes, and claim that this title means that Jesus was actually an reincarnation of Adam. How this phrase should show that Jesus is an reincarnation of Adam is vaguely argued, to say the least, for how can stating that one is the son of a person mean that the son is the one of whom he is the son? At any rate, we believe it best to simply stay by the scriptures, rather than add all this extra-Biblical philosophy to the scriptures.

Nevertheless, we need to bear out that if Jesus had been the son of Adam in the sense that all mankind is, this would have made him also a sinner as all of us. Jesus actually had no father on earth, and thus was not contaminated with Adamic sin that pervades mankind. (Romans 5:12-19) Adam lost the dominion for man because of his sin, so that now we do not yet see all things in subjection to man. (Hebrews 2:8) Jesus did come as human, a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory, and provided the redemption price to restore this glory and dominion to man (not to angels). -- Hebrews 2:9.

Although Jesus was not actually under the condemnation through Adam (in him was life -- John 1:4), he did willingly submit to undergoing the penalty of the condemnation in order to take the condemnation off Adam and the race in Adam's loins. (Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:21,22; 1 Timothy 2:5,6; Hebrews 2:9) It is in this manner that he who knew no sin was sin for us. -- 1 Corinthians 5:21.

Thus the term, the Son of the Man, is not being used to represent one in condemnation, which would be the case had Jesus actually been born simply as a "son of Adam" as the rest of the human race, for the human race are children of Adam, and through Adam are sinful flesh, dying (1 Corinthians 15:22; Romans 5:12-19 - See New American Standard), since through Adam the many -- the whole human race -- are made sinners. Had Jesus been of such sinful stock, he could not have had life (John 1:4), nor could he have died for our sins. As the son of the man, having received a specially prepared body from God (Hebrews 10:5), Jesus in the days of his flesh was indeed, the Son of God, as was Adam before Adam sinned, the sinless Adam being a type of the Messiah. (Luke 3:38; Romans 5:14) Nevertheless, the title, the Son of the Man, refers more especially to the inheritance of the higher dominion that is to restore man's glory and dominion over the animal kingdom. -- Daniel 2:35,44; Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:6-9; Matthew 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 16:13,27; 20:30,31; 21:29,15; 22:42; Mark 10:47,48; 12:35; Luke 1:32; 18:38,39; Romans 1:3; 2 Timothy 2:8; Revelation 5:5; 20:1-5.

Jesus was counted, or reckoned, as the seed of David because of his parents, even though Jesus' actual father was God in heaven. As a result of having God as his Father, was did Adam before Adam sinned, Jesus' human soul, including his body and his blood, was not tainted by the sin of Adam, as are the rest of mankind. How did Jesus' body come down from heaven? Does this mean that Jesus was a human with a body of flesh before coming to into the world? We know that Jesus' body was formed in the womb of Mary, but the conception of the flesh was from the God of Jesus by means of the holy spirit. (Matthew 1:20) This does not mean that the flesh that was conceived -- begotten -- was God Almighty, but rather, the scripture says that Jesus' body was prepared for him by his God (Hebrews 10:5), for the purpose of its being an offering for sin. (Hebrews 10:10; John 6:51) Jesus spoke of his body, his flesh, in John 6:32 as symbolically the "bread of life" that was from the only true God, his Father, who sent Jesus. "My Father gives you the true bread out of heaven." (John 17:1,3) Thus, while his body was formed in the womb of Mary, the God of Jesus was the one who prepared his body. His body was not tainted by the sinful flesh of mankind. (Romans 8:3) Jesus was without sin, he never fell short of the glory of God, as those who are dying "in Adam". (Romans 3:23; 1 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5) He was not 'by nature a child of wrath' as mankind in general, due to the sin of Adam. (Ephesians 2:3) Having no sin, the was the "bread of life". In him was life, a sinless life, equal ot that of Adam's before Adam sinned, which he could offer in sacrifice for the world of mankind dying in Adam -- the just for the unjust. (John 1:4; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Peter 3:18) He could offer his flesh -- his humanity -- as a sacrifice for sin, and thus by our symbolically eating and partaking of his flesh, through faith in him, we can have life.

Matthew 16:13-16

Matthew 16:13 Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"

Matthew 16:14 They said, "Some say John the Baptizer, some, Elijah, and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."

Matthew 16:15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

Matthew 16:16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

The thought is presented that these scriptures present Jesus' alleged dual natures above, one "nature" being that of a human being, "the Son of Man", and another nature being that of the God being, represented in the expression "the Son of the living God." What is being imagined is that "Son of Man" means his humanity, while "Son of God" means that he is the Most High.

Actually, there is nothing at all in the verses given that give us any reason to think Jesus possesses two levels of sentience at once, one alleged to be that of the only Most High, while the other would be that of a human being, confined to a body of flesh.

The expression "Son of Man", as already shown, should actually be "the son of the man"; the expression represents Jesus as the promised son of the man, David, who was to be the one Anointed by the only true God.

Peter stated to Jesus: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." "The Christ" -- the Anointed One -- obviously refers to an event that is performed by "the [unipersonal] living God", and Peter's later statement agrees with this:

Acts 2:36 -- "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

Was Jesus "made ... Christ" in his humanity, or was he made Christ in his alleged being as the Most High? The trinitarian, if he agrees that it was in his humanity that Jesus was "made Christ", logically, would have further bring human imagination so as to separate Peter's expression "You are the Christ" from "the Son of the Living God" as to apply "You are the Christ" to his humanity and then apply "the Son of the Living God" to his alleged Supreme God being. If he claims that it was the alleged Supreme Being Jesus who was anointed, then he has to add to the scriptures his imagination that it was one person of the Supreme Being who anointed another person of the Supreme Being as "the Christ".

Actually, Peter does not say that Jesus is "God", but rather that Jesus is "the Son of the Living God". The word "God" here refers to only person, and "the Son" is excluded from being "the Living God" who is referred to. Jesus is not "the Living God" of whom he is the Son.

Daniel 7:13,14

Some claim that in Daniel 7:13,14, the anarthrous "son of a man" is applied to Jesus' return in the "clouds". We have given attention of this in our study ["Ancient of Days"](#), which please see. Suffice it to say that the most scriptural conclusion is that 'a son of a man' in Daniel 7:13 simply refers symbolically of Jesus' being the likeness of a son of a man, having obtained from his past human experience characteristics of man which enable him to sympathize with humans, not that he actually would be a son of a man. We know that Jesus gave his human existence in sacrifice for our sins (Hebrews 10:10; 1 Peter 3:18); Jesus is no longer a son of a man, for he is, then he would still be a little lower than the angels, rather than exalted high above the angels. -- Psalm 8:4,5; Acts 2:33; 5:31; Ephesians 1:3,17-23; Philippians 2:9; Hebrews 1:6; 2:6,7,9; 1 Peter 3:22.

The idea that Jesus has two "natures", or levels of being, at once, has to be imagined, assumed, added to, and read into, what is stated in Daniel 7:13 or any other scripture.

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