

LESSON 4 Jesus, the Son of Man

In all the universe, Jesus is unique. There is no other person like Him, for He is both God and man. This is what the Bible teaches.

But why would Jesus want to become a man? What He did would be like a rich man leaving his beautiful mansion and everything he had to become miserably poor. It would be like a powerful king leaving everyone who respected and obeyed him to become hated and despised.

Yet Jesus did this and more. He left His divine place with God the Father willingly. He took the form of man willingly. In fact, the title, “Son of Man,” seems to be the one He used most often to refer to himself. It appears seventy-nine times in the Gospels.

What happened when Jesus joined the human race? Did He become less divine when He became a man? Could He really become a man if He continued to be God?

In this lesson we will look at what the Bible says about these subjects. The truths we will study are very important. We will discover that our salvation depends not only on the fact that Jesus was fully God, but also that He was completely man.

The Plan

- A. How the Son of God Became a Man
- B. Why the Son of God Became a Man

The Goals

1. Explain what the title “Son of Man” says about who Jesus is.
2. Give four reasons why Jesus became a man.

A. HOW THE SON OF GOD BECAME A MAN

Goal 1. Explain what the title “Son of Man” says about who Jesus is.

His Incarnation

Incarnation comes from two words that mean “in flesh.” God came to the world in human flesh. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God incarnate—deity clothed in humanity.

The title “Son of Man” speaks to us especially of the incarnation of Jesus and His mission as the representative of humankind.

Son of Man is a messianic title from the Old Testament prophecies. In Hebrew it is Ben Adham. This can be translated Son of Adam, Son of Man, or Son of Mankind. It emphasizes four things about Jesus:

1. Jesus was a real man. His body was not just a disguise in which God appeared. He had a real human nature.
2. Jesus, the Son of Adam, is the seed of the woman promised to Adam and Eve—their descendent who would defeat Satan.
3. Jesus, the Son of Adam, belongs to the whole human race. He is the Messiah for all humanity, not for just one nation, time, or place.
4. Jesus came to earth on a mission that He could carry out only as a true representative of the human race.

He Was Born of a Virgin

By what act or miracle did the Son of God become the Son of Man? He had to be born as all human beings are born, and He was. Yet there was one very important difference. Though Jesus had a human mother, God himself was His Father. By the miracle of the virgin birth that Isaiah had prophesied, God came to live among humankind and be one of them.

Luke the physician investigated the facts and wrote about Jesus' birth:

God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God . . . For nothing is impossible with God."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her. (Luke 1:26–35, 37–38)

Matthew, one of Jesus' disciples, tells us what happened when Mary's future husband, Joseph, learned that she was pregnant.

Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us."

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union [sexual relations] with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus. (Matthew 1:19–25)

Saying that Jesus became a man does not mean that God has turned into a man, or that He ceased to be God when He became man. God the Son was still God. But when He became the Son of Man, He did something that had never been done before: as God, He took on the human nature. Human nature and divine nature were then perfectly united in one being and person—Jesus Christ, true God and true man. This event is called the incarnation.

Application

- 1 The title “Son of Man” points to the fact that Jesus was
 - a) a full member of the human race.
 - b) born of both a human father and mother.
 - c) the son of Adam, the first man.
 - 2 How did the Son of God become a man?
 - a) He ceased to be God completely so that He could become a man instead.
 - b) He came down to earth and lived for a while in the shape of a man.
 - c) He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.
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He Accepted Human Limitations

To become a real man and our representative, Jesus limited himself to:

1. A human body and human nature
2. Conditions of life among people
3. Spiritual resources available to all

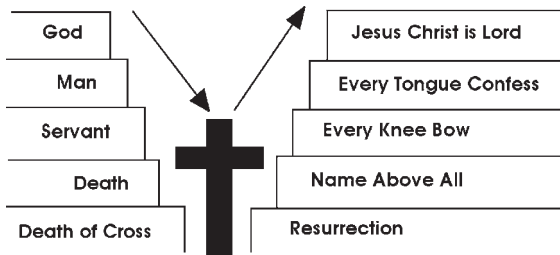
Human body and nature. Jesus laid aside His immortality and took a human body with its weakness. He became subject to sickness, suffering, and death. He was often hungry, thirsty, and weary. He knew sorrow, disappointment, frustration, and heartbreak. He experienced human joys and fears.

Conditions of life among people. The Creator of the universe stripped himself of His power and became a helpless infant. The source of all wisdom and knowledge went to school and learned to read, write, and study God’s Word. He worked as a carpenter. He left His throne in glory where the angels all worshipped Him, and took the place of a servant—scoffed at, ridiculed, persecuted—giving His life in service and sacrifice for others.

Spiritual resources available to all. Jesus showed us God’s pattern for us by limiting himself to the spiritual power and methods available to us all. He prayed, and God answered His prayers. He depended on God for strength and power. He went to God’s house and studied His Word. When Satan tempted Him to sin, Jesus quoted the Bible and applied it to the situation. He told everyone that His miracles were done by God’s Spirit working through Him, and His teaching was simply what God told Him to say.

Paul, writing to the Philippians, describes how Jesus voluntarily humbled himself to become our Savior, and how God has honored him and will honor Him for it. We will quote his description as it appears in the Amplified Version of the Bible.

Who, although being essentially one with God and in the form of God [possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God God], did not think this equality with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped or retained; but stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity], so as to assume the guise of a servant (slave), in that He became like men and was born a human being.



And after He had appeared in human form He abased and humbled Himself [still further] and carried His obedience to the extreme of death, even the death of the cross!

Therefore [because He stooped so low], God has highly exalted Him and has freely bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, that in

(at) the name of Jesus every knee should (must) bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue [frankly and openly] confess and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:6–11)

Application

3 Following are four things Jesus did. Circle the letter in front of the two in which He gave us God’s pattern for our spiritual lives.

- a)** He depended on God for strength and power.
- b)** He gave His life as a sacrifice for our sins.
- c)** He studied God’s Word.
- d)** He was born of the virgin, Mary.

4 According to Philippians 2:6–11, God highly exalted Jesus because Jesus

- a)** did many miracles and showed His power over nature.
 - b)** humbled himself to die on the cross to save us.
 - c)** taught the people rules about praying and fasting.
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He Lived a Perfect Life

Jesus lived a perfect life. There was no fault or weakness in Him. When Jesus was growing up, He faced all the temptations that other boys and young men face, but He remained pure, honest, sincere—full of love for God and others.

Jesus hated sin and spoke against it, but He loved the sinner. He was known as a friend of sinners. Yet He never sinned. He changed sinners. They did not change Him.

Jesus’ perfect life was part of His mission as the Son of Man. As Representative of the human race, He kept every law of God. He earned the right to all the blessings promised to those who keep God’s laws—eternal life and happiness in God’s home. He qualified as our perfect substitute to (1) take our guilt and die for

our sins, and (2) give us His righteousness (right standing with God) and all the blessings promised to those who keep God's laws.

Satan tempted Jesus to sin and turn aside from His mission. But Jesus rejected all temptation and carried out His mission to save us. Jesus' goodness was not just negative (the absence of evil). It was a positive commitment to God's will. He not only refused to do wrong—He was dedicated to doing right. He was love incarnate and He expressed His love in action.

Jesus began His public ministry at thirty years of age. He taught people about God and how they could have a part in His kingdom. He was the greatest Prophet and Teacher that the world has ever known. With only a touch or a command or simple direction, He healed hundreds of sick people. Sinners came to Him and received pardon, peace, cleansing from sin, and wonderful new lives filled with His love.

Peter testified of how ““God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him”” (Acts 10:38).

But the religious leaders of Jesus' day were jealous of Him and refused to accept Him as the Messiah. They accused Him falsely and had Him crucified (just as Isaiah had prophesied). He was nailed to a cross like a common criminal, between two criminals. And the people He had come to save mocked Him while He died. In spite of this, Jesus loved them still and prayed: ““Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”” (Luke 23:34).

Jesus' perfect life did not end in the grave. God the Father raised Him up on the third day. After forty days more on earth, He went back to heaven, where He is now our Representative. And from there He will come back to earth someday to rule the world in perfect justice and lasting peace.

Application

5 Jesus faced temptation by

- a)** living an isolated life away from people.
- b)** rejecting it and doing good instead.
- c)** yielding to it to show He was human.

6 Something to think about. Why is the perfect life Jesus lived important to you personally?

B. WHY THE SON OF GOD BECAME A MAN

Goal 2. Give four reasons why Jesus became a man.

Why did God become man? Why did He take on himself human nature and limitations? Why was the incarnation necessary? We can sum up the answer in four words (1) Revelation, (2) Preparation, (3) Substitution, and (4) Mediation.

Revelation

Jesus lived as a man to show us what God is like. We can see the character of God demonstrated in Him. By knowing Jesus we can know God.

The Son of God became a man to show us what perfect humanity can be. We see in Jesus' perfect life and character the pattern for humanity, the potential, God's plan for us. He is our example. He is the standard by which our words, thoughts, and actions are measured. He shows us the kind of life that we can have when He lives in us and makes us children of God.

Jesus' life demonstrated also His qualifications for His mission. His sinlessness showed that He was worthy to be our Substitute. His power, wisdom, and love prove that He is qualified to be our King.

Preparation

Jesus' life as a man was necessary preparation for His mission. His experience gave Him an understanding of human nature that prepared Him to be our Representative and our Judge.

Jesus had to become a man in order to become our Priest. He has shared our weakness. He understands our problems. He learned the cost of obedience through His own suffering. Jesus prayed for His followers while He was on earth. And now—with a deep understanding of our needs—He prays for us in heaven.

For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (Hebrews 2:17–18)

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:14–16)

Jesus' experience as a man prepared Him to rule over men. The Son of Man—the perfect Representative of Adam's race—will be its Ruler. He will be a perfect King because He knows just what we need. And because He died for us, He has the right to govern our lives. Now He is King in the lives of those who accept Him. Someday He will rule the world for which He died.

“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”
(Daniel 7:13–14)

Substitution

Jesus was born so that He could die. The whole human race had sinned and was condemned to die eternally—every one of us. The only way to save us was for God himself to take our punishment. But as God, He could not die. So He became a man to die in our place and save us from our sins.

Jesus did more than take our place on the cross. He rose from the dead and offers to all who accept Him a place in His eternal kingdom. He unites us with himself so we can share all His rights as Sons of God.

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.

And again he says, “Here am I, and the children God has given me.” Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity

so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. (Hebrews 2:9–11; 13–15)

Mediation

Jesus became a human to bring God and people together. Sin had opened an impassable chasm between the holy God and corrupt, rebellious humans. But God’s love found a way to bridge the gulf and bring humanity back to himself. Jesus came to be the Mediator of a new covenant or agreement between God and the human race.

Paul writes, “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time” (1 Timothy 2:5–6).

In New Testament times, a mediator was appointed by the court to represent a bankrupt person and take charge of all his affairs. The mediator was responsible to see that all the creditors were paid in full. If what the bankrupt person owned was not enough to pay his debts, the mediator himself paid them.

What a beautiful picture of Jesus! He is our Mediator before God. His death covers all our debt of sin, and in Him we are free from the sin and guilt that separated us from God. His cross bridges the chasm. He gives us a new nature—His nature—and makes us sons of God. By taking our human nature, Jesus reaches us and lifts us to a better world. The Son of God became the Son of Man, so that we would become the sons of God.

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. (Galatians 4:4–5)

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit. (1 Peter 3:18)

Application

7 Some people do not pray about certain problems they have because they think God would not understand or be sympathetic. Are they right or wrong? Why?

8 Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and humanity because He is the only one who

- a)** died for our sins so God would accept us.
- b)** taught many things about God to His followers.
- c)** showed us that we should work for peace and harmony.

9 The Son of God became a man for four reasons. Write the number of each reason (right) beside its meaning (left).

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|--|-----------------|
| ... a To bridge God and people | 1) Revelation |
| ... b To die in our place | 2) Preparation |
| ... c To help those who are tempted | 3) Substitution |
| ... d To rule over humanity | 4) Mediation |
| ... e To show what God is like | |



All through the New Testament are passages that tell us about God’s purpose for us and help us understand why Jesus became the Son of Man. Jesus sums it up: “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10).

Check Your Answers

- 5 b)** rejecting it and doing good instead.
- 1 a)** a full member of the human race.
- 6** Your answer. The perfect life of Jesus is important because it makes Him your perfect representative and substitute.
- 2 c)** He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.
- 7** Your answer. They are wrong because God the Son, Jesus Christ, has lived on earth. He faced the same kinds of problems all people do. Today in heaven, He is understanding, sympathetic, and able to help. You can pray to God now, through Jesus Christ, about any problem you have. He will help you!
- 3 a** He depended on God for strength and power.
c He studied God's Word.
- 8 a)** died for our sins so God could accept us.
- 4 b)** humbled Himself to die on the cross to save us.
- 9 a** 4) Mediation
b 3) Substitution
c 2) Preparation
d 2) Preparation
e 1) Revelation