

NOON BIBLE STUDY: MATTHEW 16 (PART 3)

Matthew 16:13, 16 - The Messiah: Son of Man, Son of God

It is interesting that in this section two of Jesus' most significant titles are referenced. Biblically speaking, both of these titles are deeply rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures and the promises of God relating to his future eternal kingdom.

1 - Son of Man (v. 13) - this is the title Jesus most commonly uses for himself. The language "son of man" is used throughout the Old Testament to by a synonym of "human" (lit: *ben adam* or son of adam or *bar enash*, son of mankind), and yet Jesus will often use this at times when he is pointing to his power and authority. For example, this is the title he uses when healing lame man and forgiving his sins (Matthew 9:6). For the audience of Jesus in the first century, the title "son of man" is more than *just* the title for a human being. And the reason for that is found in Daniel 7. It is in Daniel 7 where a significant vision is described relating to the age to come:

Daniel 7:13-14 - "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. 14 "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

Notice that the one who receives the kingdom from the ancient of days is "one like a son of man" and this person receives the kingdom dominion from the Ancient of Days. This crucial passage defines "son of man" as a messianic figure and Jesus' use of this phrase is pointing to that. Jesus even quotes Daniel as he talks about his return and as he stands before the High Priest at his trial:

Matthew 24:30 - "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.

Matthew 26:63-64 - ...And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." 64 Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN."

To be the "Son of Man" means you are the Messiah, the one destined to rule over God's kingdom.

2 - Son of God (v. 16) - the second title for Jesus used in this section is "son of God." Of course this has a biological/origin element to it due to the fact that God is *literally* the father of Jesus as it relates to his birth. But this phrase "son of God" is another title rooted in the promises of the

Bible that would have been packed with meaning and implications for Jesus' audience. The understanding is found in an important moment in Israel's history during the reign of king David. The following verses outline the Davidic covenant:

1 Chronicles 17:9-14 - "I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and not be moved again; and the wicked will not waste them anymore as formerly, 10 even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel. And I will subdue all your enemies. Moreover, I tell you that the LORD will build a house for you. 11 "When your days are fulfilled that you must go to be with your fathers, that I will set up one of your descendants after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. 12 "He shall build for Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. 13 **"I will be his father and he shall be My son;** and I will not take My lovingkindness away from him, as I took it from him who was before you. 14 "But I will settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever.""

The concept of the "son of God" from Scripture is rooted in this promise - David would have a descendant who would rule forever who would have God as his father - aka be the "son of God." Look at the words of Gabriel to Mary announcing Jesus' birth:

Luke 1:30-33 - The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. 31 "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 "He will be great and will be called the **Son of the Most High**; and the Lord God will give Him **the throne of His father David**; 33 and He will **reign** over the house of Jacob **forever**, and **His kingdom will have no end.**"

And a couple other instances where these concepts are all brought together:

John 1:49 - Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, You are **the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.**"

John 20:30-31 - Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these have been written so that you may believe that **Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God**; and that believing you may have life in His name.

To be the "son of God" means you are the Messiah, the one destined to rule over God's kingdom.

The reason why I want to take the time and look at these two titles is because I think that Christians should define terms based *firstly* on how the Bible itself defines these terms, and *secondly* how the people interacting with Jesus in real time define these terms. The disciples of Jesus and the writers of the New Testament are basing both their understanding and expectation for the Messiah based on the promises and declarations of the spirit-inspired Old Testament.

Also, I would like you to take some time to consider how you answer this important question from Jesus. Jesus asks Peter two questions - “who does everyone else say I am?” and then “who do *you* say that I am?” In this chapter those two answers are different and the first answer, the one that may have been most popular at the time, was actually wrong.

I like to look at the Bible itself to answer this question. Who does Jesus say that he is? In critical moments of the New Testament, what are the words, phrases and titles used of Jesus? When Peter answers that Jesus is the “Christ, the son of the Living God”, Jesus gives him high commendation of that answer. This truth is the foundation stone of the church and a good place for us to start.

Matthew 16:21-23 - A Messiah That Is Shaking Expectations

Jesus begins to tell his disciples that he is going to suffer, die and be raised up again on the third day. This the first of four times he predicts his arrest and death (16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19; 26:2). This conversation inspires quite the reaction from Jesus’ lead disciple Peter. Remember, just a few verses above this, Peter is the one who correctly confesses who Jesus is!

Q - What do you think of Peter’s response to Jesus?

Q - What do you think of Jesus’ response to Peter? In what way was Peter a stumbling block and setting his mind of human interest?

A side note, the fact that Jesus is only now speaking of his death and resurrection has a few implications:

1 - Jesus and his disciples had already spent time preaching the “gospel” and the fact that the disciples were unaware of the cross/resurrection indicates that the gospel of Jesus is not *just* the information about his death/resurrection. The book of Acts, which occurs post resurrection shows the church speaking of the kingdom of God *and* the things concerning Jesus Christ - the complete gospel summary.

2 - It speaks to the fact that there was little to no expectation of a suffering messiah in 1st century Jewish thinking. Their longing for political and physical salvation minimized their need for personal and spiritual salvation. Jesus’ ministry ultimately accomplishes it all.

Matthew 16:24-27

This is a timely word to all those who will follow Jesus. It’s timely in light of the previous interaction between Peter and Jesus. Following Jesus is filled with excitement and miracles and discovery. But it’s not just a leisurely stroll near the shore on a sunny summer day. It is more like a forceful current pushing against us as we swim against the rush of what everyone else is doing. It is moments like these where disciples who have enjoyed the “benefit” or “blessing” of following Jesus are challenged as to whether or not they want to keep following him.

To “deny oneself” means more than giving up pleasures - it’s saying no to the very self-centeredness that rules human nature. To “take up your cross” was not metaphorical in Jesus’ day - it meant walking to your death in full public humiliation. Anyone who was carrying a cross was clearly under the authority of Rome. To take up our cross isn’t to physically die, but to live under the authority of Jesus as our Lord. Jesus is inviting His followers not just to admire Him, but to join Him in a life of surrender, suffering, and obedience, even unto death. It’s the path of the kingdom: losing your life in order to truly find it.

In verses 25–27, Jesus expands on the paradox: trying to “save” your life, clinging to safety, comfort, success - actually leads to loss. But giving your life to Christ’s purposes results in eternal gain. He reminds his hearers that there is a coming day when the Son of Man will return “in glory” to judge every person. This reinforces the earlier teaching: Jesus is the exalted Son of Man from Daniel 7, and following Him now, through the cross, leads to sharing in his glory later. Discipleship, then, is not just about sacrifice; it’s about aligning your entire life with the eternal kingdom that is coming.

But here’s the thing - the focus can’t be on the hardship, it has to be on the hope. That’s really what Jesus is getting us to look at. Gaining the whole world but losing your soul is a wasted life. Losing in this life to gain eternal life is worth it all.

Jesus’ rebuke of Peter is relevant to us today. In what ways are we setting our mind on human/selfish interests rather than God’s? In what areas of our life are we missing what God might be doing or what God might want because we are only seeing what we want?

This isn’t a section to just read over and move on from. It demands consideration and meditation. Where does the world have a pull on our soul? Where is the world dominating our thoughts and decisions? What do we value the most? What are we unwilling to lose?

Jesus is the Messiah, the son of the living God. His words serve as the directions to paradise and he knows the way through this wild wilderness. Often it will be difficult, but wherever he leads, he is present. May we hear his voice and see his hand as we follow the lamb wherever he leads.