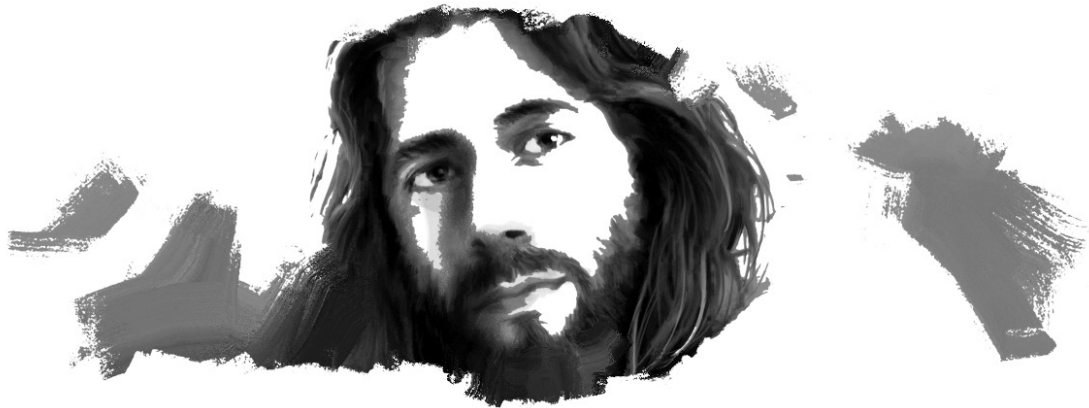


The Son



SABBATH—JULY 5

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 24:30; Daniel 7:13, 14; Matthew 11:27; Luke 5:17–26; John 8:58; Matthew 20:28.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘Even the Son of Man did not come to be served. Instead, he came to serve others. He came to give his life as the price for setting many people free’ ” (Mark 10:45, NlrV).

AFTER MORE THAN TWO YEARS OF HIS WORK ON EARTH, JESUS ASKED HIS DISCIPLES (FOLLOWERS), “ ‘Who do people say the Son of Man is?’ ” (Matthew 16:13, NlrV). It was not hard for the disciples to tell Jesus what they had heard people saying about Him. But Jesus' next question was harder to answer: “ ‘But . . . who do you say I am?’ ” (Matthew 16:15, NlrV). Now it became a personal question. Jesus did not ask their opinions about His looks. Instead, His question dealt with who Jesus really was. It required each disciple to take a stand for what he believed.

Sooner or later, everyone has to answer this same question. Each person has to decide who Jesus is. It does not matter what other people say or believe. Our answers must be what we truly believe. And on that answer hangs the future of every human being.

This week we will study the answer based on what Jesus Himself said and did. Our goal will be to arrive, by faith, at the same answer Peter gave: “ ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’ ” (verse 16, NKJV).

THE SON OF MAN (Matthew 24:30)



Jesus experienced sadness and suffering just like us.

This title, “the Son of Man,” was Jesus’ favorite name for Himself. He spoke of Himself as *Son of Man* more than eighty times. Other people never named Him that way. Jesus chose this special name for Himself with a purpose in mind.

The wording *the Son of Man* was common in the Old Testament. With just one exception, it always pointed to a human being. So, Jesus used it to show that He, too, had human nature.¹

The Bible pictures Jesus as fully human. He was born as a baby, grew up as a child, and had sisters and brothers (Matthew 13:55, 56). He ate (Matthew 9:11), slept (Luke 8:23), was tired (John 4:6), and had hunger and thirst (Matthew 4:2; John 19:28). He also experienced sadness and suffering (Matthew 26:37).

To some people, Jesus seemed to be a common man who walked among the people as one of them. Many of the people during His time did not recognize in Him anything more than a man (John 7:46). People treated Him as one of them. They laughed at Him (Luke 8:53), criticized Him (Matthew 11:19), and even mocked and beat Him (Luke 22:63). To them, He was just another man.

Unfortunately, this group of people failed to see that there is more to be found in this title—the Son of Man. According to Daniel 7:13 and 14, “ ‘One like the Son of Man’ ” came with the clouds of heaven “ ‘to the Ancient of days,’ ” and received eternal authority, glory (praise; honor), and a kingdom. The Jews recognized this Son of Man as the Messiah (the Chosen One; the Christ). So, when Jesus used this title, He was showing that He was also the promised Messiah, the Christ in human flesh.

Read Matthew 24:30; Matthew 25:31; and Matthew 26:64. How do Jesus’ words in these verses remind us of Daniel 7:13, 14?

Why is it so important for us to know that Jesus was fully human? How is Jesus’ full humanity connected with our salvation? What does it mean to us in our daily lives, especially in our battles with temptation and sin?

DEFINITIONS

1. nature—the way a person acts or behaves; who someone is.

THE SON OF GOD (Matthew 11:27)

The title “Son of God” was used by the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:35) and by several people when talking about Jesus (Matthew 14:33; Mark 15:39; John 1:49; John 11:27). Jesus accepted that title but was very careful not to point it directly to Himself because it might cause people to stone Him to death. But the Bible does show in different ways Jesus’ special relationship with the Father.

The Father honored Jesus as His Son at His baptism (Matthew 3:17). The Father did the same thing at the Transfiguration² (Matthew 17:5).

The Father-Son relationship between God the Father and Jesus the Son is very special. Christ is the only Person in the universe who enjoys that kind of relationship. This is because only He is of the very same nature as the Father. As believers, we have been given the honor of becoming children of God. But Jesus always was, is, and will be *the* Son of God.

What do Matthew 11:27; John 3:35; John 5:17; and John 10:30 show about the perfect unity (oneness) of the Father and the Son?

The full unity of Jesus and the Father includes a perfect knowledge of Each Other. This is a unity of desires, purpose, and goals. It includes a unity of Their nature. The Son and the Father are two persons (“‘I and the Father’”) but of the same nature (“‘are one’” [John 10:30, NIV]). Compare³ this with the gender-neutral⁴ word *one* in 1 Corinthians 3:8.

Jesus came to live as a man. For this reason, we have to understand that Christ volunteered to put Himself under the authority of the Father (Philippians 2:6–8). Jesus and the Father were really equal. But Jesus lowered Himself for a special purpose while He was on earth.

With this idea in mind, we can understand why Jesus said, “‘The Son can do nothing of [by] Himself, but what He sees the Father do’” (John 5:19, NKJV); “‘I can do nothing by myself. . . . I do not try to please myself. I try only to please the One who sent Me’” (verse 30, NIV). From this point of view, Jesus could say, “‘My Father is greater than I’” (John 14:28, NKJV).

Jesus was fully God and fully human. What does this amazing truth tell us about the close connection between heaven and earth? What comfort can we learn from this close connection?



The Father honored Jesus as His Son at Jesus’ baptism.

DEFINITIONS

2. Transfiguration—the scene where James, John, and Peter saw Jesus’ body in glorious (receiving honor from God; full of light) form. Read Matthew 17:1–6.

3. compare—to show how two or more things are the same or different.

4. gender-neutral—a word that does not contain any meaning of male or female.

CHRIST'S NATURE AS GOD: PART 1 (Luke 5:17–26)



The same voice that created man from the dust also spoke life to the dying paralytic.

DEFINITIONS

5. paralytic—a person who has paralysis, a disease that makes him or her unable to move parts of his or her body.

Christ being God is the foundation of our faith. No human, no matter how great, could ever be our savior. Throughout the entire New Testament, we have proof that Christ is God. We will focus on what Jesus Himself taught about this subject.

It was easy for Jesus to explain who He was. His mission (special work) required Him to make known that He was the Messiah. He was God in the flesh. But He never said in public, *I am God* or *I am the Messiah*. If Jesus had said this, people would have stoned Him to death quickly. So, He chose to hint at His nature as God.

Little by little Jesus did make known His nature as God. Most of His hearers understood Him. But they refused to accept His claim because it did not fit with their own ideas of the Messiah. Their question makes this clear: “ ‘How long will you keep us waiting? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly’ ” (John 10:24, NIV). Unfortunately, the nature of their question shows that they were not being honest.

As we learned yesterday, Jesus often pointed to His special relationship with His Father. In this way, He showed His nature as God. Many understood clearly that when He said that God was His Father, He was making Himself equal with God (John 5:18).

Read Luke 5:17–26. In what very powerful ways did Jesus show His nature as God without openly saying it?

“It required creative power to restore [bring back] health to that decaying body. The voice of Christ spoke life to man created from the dust of the earth. It was the same voice that spoke life to the dying paralytic.”⁵—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pages 269, 270.

Jesus claimed the authority of God to forgive sins. He also said that He Himself “ ‘will sit on the throne of His glory [power]’ ” (Matthew 25:31, NKJV). He said He would judge all the nations, deciding the eternal future of each one. To do so clearly points to Jesus’ authority as God. How much more could Jesus have done here to show who He really was?

Think about how hard-hearted some of these leaders were toward Jesus. And these men were supposed to be the spiritual guardians of the people? How can we make sure we do not become hard-hearted in our own ways too?

CHRIST'S NATURE AS GOD: PART 2 (John 8:58)

Jesus declared and showed that He had the same power as the Father to overcome death. “ ‘The Father raises the dead and gives them life. In the same way, the Son gives life to anyone he wants to’ ” (John 5:21, NIV). Only God can say, “ ‘I am the resurrection⁶ and the life’ ” (John 11:25, NKJV).

Another clear example of Jesus' nature as God is found in His claim to have had life before His life on earth. He “ ‘came down from heaven’ ” (John 3:13, NKJV) because the Father sent Him (John 5:23). Again, at another time He said, “ ‘And now, O Father, glorify [give honor to] Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was’ ” (John 17:5, NKJV).

Why is John 8:58 one of Jesus' best statements about His nature as God? Read also Exodus 3:13, 14.

Abraham *came into life* (which is the real meaning of the Greek word *gínomai*, translated here as “was”). But Jesus announced Himself as always being there. He was there before Abraham's birth. And He has lived eternally. *I am* suggests continuous life. So, I AM is the title of Yahweh Himself (Exodus 3:14). The leaders in Christ's day understood that He claimed to be the I AM shown at the burning bush. But in their minds, Jesus was guilty of blasphemy⁷ for saying such a thing. So, “they took up stones to throw at Him” (John 8:59, NKJV).

The Gospels show that Jesus fully accepted worship from others. He knew very well that only God deserves man's worship. He said to Satan, “ ‘It is written, “You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve” ’ ” (Matthew 4:10, NKJV). So, by accepting worship from others, He was making known His nature as God. The disciples on the sea (Matthew 14:33), the blind man healed (John 9:38), the women at Jesus' tomb (Matthew 28:9), and the disciples in Galilee (Matthew 28:17) are good examples of people who worshiped Him openly. That is because they recognized His nature as God. Thomas's words to Jesus, “ ‘My Lord and my God!’ ” (John 20:28, NKJV) would not have been spoken by a Jew back then if Thomas had not clearly understood that he was talking *to God*.

Read John 20:29. What are things that you have not experienced, yet believe in? What does your answer mean for the whole question of faith?



**“ ‘I am the resurrection and the life’ ”
(John 11:25, NKJV).**

DEFINITIONS

6. resurrection—the act of returning to life from the dead.
7. blasphemy—the boastful claim of being equal to God.

CHRIST'S MISSION (John 10:11)

We have studied who Jesus was. So, now we are in a better position to understand what He came to do for us.

Satan made charges against God. In order to meet those charges, Jesus came to represent the Father's character. He also came to correct the false idea that many had about the Three-in-One God. Jesus wanted us to know God, because to know Him is important and necessary for eternal life (John 17:3).

But we need more than knowledge to be saved. We need God to provide us a Savior. And Savior is the meaning of the name *Jesus*: Yahweh is salvation (Matthew 1:21). Jesus described His mission very clearly: " 'The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost' " (Luke 19:10, NKJV). In Eden, humans lost their relationship with God, lost their holiness, lost their home, and lost eternal life. Jesus came to bring everything back. He reconnects our relationship with the Father (John 1:51). He forgives us our sins (Matthew 26:28). He gives us an example of how to live (1 Peter 2:21). And He gives us eternal life (John 3:16).

How did Jesus explain the real purpose of His mission? Read John 10:11 and Matthew 20:28.

Why did Jesus have to die? It was because He volunteered to take our place and accepted the punishment of our sins. We are all sinners (Romans 3:10–12). So, we deserve eternal death (Romans 6:23). The price for our salvation was so high that only the life of the Son of God was enough to pay for it.

"The broken law of God required the life of the sinner. In all the universe there was but one who could satisfy its claims for our sake. Since God's law is as holy as God Himself, only one equal with God could pay the price for our sins. None but Christ could save fallen humans from the curse of the law and bring them peace with Heaven."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs [Leaders and Forefathers] and Prophets [Special Messengers]*, page 63.

Think about our world, keeping in mind the future end for us all in this world. If everything ended in the grave, what hope would we have? Without the plan of salvation, we would have none at all. How, then, can we show our thankfulness to God for what He has done for us in Christ?

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Ellen G. White, “Divine [Fully God]-Human [Fully Man] Saviour,” pages 1126–1128, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 5.

“God’s Word [the Bible] speaks of Christ as a human when upon this earth. But it also speaks clearly about His life before He came to earth. The Word [Jesus] lived as God, even as the eternal Son of God, in union and oneness with His Father. . . . The world was made by Him. ‘Nothing that has been made was made without him’ (John 1:3, NIV). If Christ made all things, He had been alive before all things. The words spoken about this are so clear that no one need be left in doubt. Christ was God in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God from heaven, lived from eternity, as a separate and special person, yet one with the Father.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, page 247.

“In Christ is life, special, unborrowed, one of a kind. ‘Those who belong to the Son have life.’ 1 John 5:12, NIV. The nature of Christ as God is the believer’s promise of eternal life.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 530.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Demons knew and confessed that Jesus was “the Holy One of God” (Mark 1:24, NKJV), “the Son of God” (Mark 3:11), “Son of the Most High God” (Mark 5:7, NKJV). Read also James 2:19. Why is this kind of confession not enough for our salvation? How can we avoid the trap of being satisfied with just simply accepting Jesus with our minds?
- ② When the centurion, who was standing right in front of Jesus, saw how He died, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God” (Mark 15:39). The best place to understand Jesus is at the foot of His cross. How often do you go there? When was the last time you were there? Why not take a moment right now to think deeply about the limitless sacrifice He made for your salvation?
- ③ Many people during Jesus’ time refused to accept Him because they had wrong ideas about the Messiah. Unfortunately, many people today refuse to give up their lives to Jesus, because they have wrong ideas about Him. How can we help them to see Jesus as He really is? What do we know as Seventh-day Adventists that could help give them a clearer view of who Jesus really is?