

The Son of Man

F. A. Hughes.

NOV/DEC 1973

The title "*the* Son of Man" belongs uniquely to Christ. Both Ezekiel and Daniel are addressed as "son of man" without the definite article — they were that characteristically. There is no record in the Gospels that the Lord was ever addressed by this title whilst here on earth, but He is so spoken of in the Acts and in the Revelation after His ascension to glory. The words were repeatedly found on His own blessed lips as He moved amongst His own and amongst men.

David's reference to this title in Psalm 8 is of tremendous importance and throws great light upon several of the Lord's words in the Gospels. Psalm 1, without any doubt, has Christ in view, His moral glories are depicted there. But in Psalm 2 God's Anointed, the Christ, the Messiah, is rejected. Acts 4: 25-28) clearly shew the complete rejection of the Lord in which both Jew and Gentile have their part. In the intervening Psalms (Ps. 3 to 7) we have portrayed the condition of God's earthly people consequent upon Christ's rejection, and also the feelings of a godly remnant. Psalm 8 introduces a sphere which is beyond Messianic limitations — "O LORD our Lord, how excellent is Thy Name in *all the earth!*" Thus the rejected Christ is He whose Name shall be universally supreme and whose dominion shall know no bounds. The truly magnificent language of Daniel 7 reflects the future manifested glory of the erstwhile rejected Son of Man — "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." Hebrews 2 leaves us in no doubt whatever that our Lord Jesus Christ, *the* Son of Man, is He who will thus be supreme. Matthew's Gospel speaks of Him manifested as "sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." In His earthly pathway He, as Son of Man, had power to forgive sins (Mark 2: 10); and to Him was given the authority to execute coming judgment (John 5: 23). John 12: 23 speaks of His glorification as the ultimate goal of His pathway as Son of Man.

In Hebrews 2 there are words which are not found in Psalm 8. *All things* must be put under the dominion of the Son of Man, He *must* be supreme — "but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death; crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (lit. *everything*). Matthew 8: 20 reads — "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." These words of the Lord, in reply to one who asserted that he would follow Him whithersoever He went, are repeated in Luke 9: 58. Peter's declaration that He was "the Christ of God" (in marked contrast to the speculations of men), brought forth the Lord's reply — "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day."

Solemn indeed were His words to Judas in the garden — "betrayest thou the *Son of Man* with a kiss?" Rejected, disowned, betrayed and crucified — thus the import of the added words in Hebrews 2 — "the suffering of death," tasting "death for every thing." Blessed Saviour, having said "It is finished" He bowed His head and gave up the ghost." His work finished, He who hitherto as the Son of Man had not where to lay His head, now *lays* that blessed head on the cross — the words are identical — "He *laid* His head." "The kings of the earth;" "the rulers;" "Herod and Pilate with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel," actuated by Satan's malice were united in their rejection of the Christ of God, yet unwittingly carrying out that which, in the counsel of God, should result in the outflowing of His grace and love centred in the glorified Son of Man. Thus Hebrews 2 tells of the crown of glory and honour

resting upon the brow of this once rejected Son of Man with its precious results for those who rejoice in His exaltation — sons brought to glory and in the present enjoyment of salvation; sanctified; the brethren of Christ Himself! The vision of His glory, the testimony to which was prohibited "until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead" (Matthew 17: 9) is now the enjoyed portion of the redeemed, whose hearts are filled with responsive praise and whose tongues delight to speak forth His worth in a world where He is still refused.

Son of Man, His incarnation
Open'd first the tale of grace;
Son of Man, in new creation
Leader of a chosen race!
Well may glory
Crown Him, in the ordered place!

Three times in the Gospel of John the Lord Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of Man "lifted up." It is quite clear that this expression has the crucifixion in view (with all its sorrows and its shame). But it is equally, and most blessedly true that the words "lifted up" in the original language include the thought of *dignity* and *exaltation*. With adoring hearts we contemplate the glory surrounding each reference to this most holy scene.

In John 3: 14 the imperative *necessity* for the "lifting up" of the Son of Man is stressed. In verse 7 the necessity of new birth is equally insisted upon and a reference to the incident in Numbers 21 would most plainly shew the reason for this. The heart of man is exposed to the uttermost — no sin in the history of God's people had equally the enormity of that which is here recorded — "Our soul *loatheth* this light bread." The manna, speaking as it does of Christ Himself as the provision of God for man's need, was despised. In the sight of God that man must go and only in the death of Jesus could he be removed; in that precious "lifting up" that order of man has been completely judged and set aside. Beloved brethren, let us not relegate this truth to a mere elementary place in our hearts; does our walk in this world shew that we are in agreement with the blessed God who is expecting nothing at all from man in the flesh? If in the death of Christ one order of man is brought to an end, then thank God another blessed Man is presented as an Object for faith. If the heart of man in all its sin is exposed, then too the heart of God with its eternity of love is revealed. The Son of Man has been "lifted up" that "*whosoever* (not now limited to the Jew) believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The floodgates of God's love have been opened — "For God SO loved." How vast the importance of that first word in verse 16 — Calvary is witness to the boundless love ever existent in the heart of the blessed God. *The lifting up of the Son of Man in John chapter 3 establishes GOD's right to bless according to the desires of His own heart.*

"When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I AM" (John 8: 28). In this chapter we have from the lips of Christ what is perhaps the strongest assertion of His deity — "Before Abraham was, I AM" (v. 58). The immediate reaction on the part of the Jews was to "take up stones to cast at Him;" the solemn verses of Mark 14 (60-65) indicate the intense unbelief and darkness in the hearts of the religious leaders and their subsequent complete rejection of their Messiah. Doubtless the Lord's words in John 8 have a definite dispensational aspect and in a coming day His earthly people "shall look upon Him whom they have pierced and shall mourn for Him." *Who* He is will then be manifest to them and to the repentant will be opened "a fountain . . . to the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (where He was "Lifted up") for sin and for uncleanness (Zechariah 12, 13). Wondrous grace indeed!

But whilst awaiting that day how the heart of Christ must have been refreshed as Thomas looked upon Him who had been pierced and exclaimed "My Lord and my God"! Beloved brethren, the whole purpose and value to the "lifting up" is dependent upon the *Person* who was there! In a coming day the people of God will know *who* He is, and that He was here as alone competent to reveal the Father's heart of love. These thoughts are surely enshrined in the heart of His own *now*.

The lifting up in John 8 is a testimony to the greatness and glory of CHRIST Himself.

Tremendous issues are involved in the final reference to the "lifting up" in John 12. "Now is the judgment of *this* world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." "This He said, signifying what death He should die" (John 12: 31-33). The world which in its Gentile aspect "knew Him not," and where the Jews "received Him not" judged in its entirety at the cross of Christ; Satan, named here as its "prince," completely defeated and cast out. But, blessed fact, He Himself becoming the attractive Object to unnumbered hearts. Here the glory of the Son of Man, the abiding results of His death, the vast harvest secured for blessing — all constituent parts of "the joy that was set before Him" as He "endured the Cross, despising its shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." How precious the vision upon which the eyes of Stephen, the first recorded Christian martyr, feasted — "the glory of God and Jesus" — His pathway of suffering over and He at home in the glory of God. What comfort to the heart of the suffering Stephen! Let us listen afresh with adoring hearts to the testimony of this dying saint of God — "Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man on the right hand of God." Unique as the Son of Man in this scene of shame and suffering; unique now in the glory of God, for no one else shall ever occupy that place — on the right hand of God. *Thus the HOLY SPIRIT would magnify this blessed exalted Man before our hearts — attracting us away "from the earth" to Himself in the glory of God.*

Beloved brethren, let us ponder afresh those words from the lips of Jesus when here on earth, and allow the wondrous content of them to fill our hearts with ever increasing worship and praise to the exalted Lord and through Him to His God and Father — "For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, *and to give His life a ransom for many*" (Mark 10: 45).

As Son of Man it was,
Jesus the Lord!
Thou gav'st Thy life for us,
Jesus, our Lord!
Great was indeed Thy love,
All other loves above,
Love Thou didst dearly prove
Jesus our Lord.

The heart of God set free to move in love to men; full and complete testimony to Jesus as the I AM; the blessed Spirit of God happily engaged in drawing men to an exalted Christ. What wondrous activities of the Godhead resulting from the "lifting up of the Son of Man."