

Summer is finishing the last leg of its annual race as the days get shorter, the goldenrod and mallow bloom in the fields, and people scurry to get everything ready for school. I am sure you are looking forward to at least a few of the good things that await you when you return to school. I am praying for you in many ways. Be content with what God has given you and always seek to please him.

I hope you have seen Disney's cartoon movie *Tarzan*. If not, I am sorry that you will not get this reference. In the first half of *Tarzan*, there is montage that shows the boy Tarzan slowly growing up to be a man in the jungle. During this scene, Phil Collins sings *Son of Man*—truly a great song—which emphasizes the fact that young Tarzan is a man, not an ape, and will have to learn to adapt to life in the jungle in order to excel above the rest of the creatures.

Now this title, *Son of Man*, is also a common title of Jesus, especially in the Gospels (it occurs 84 times in the four Gospels). In fact, Jesus most often referred to himself as the Son of Man rather than any other title or name. To call someone as a son of man is to affirm that person's humanity; you are pointing out who they come from and what they are. The Bible quite often refers to humanity as the children of man, which is a way of calling all people descendants of Adam because the word 'man' in Hebrew is the same as 'Adam.'

Take a look at Matthew 16:24-28 to see one of the times Jesus referred to himself as the Son of Man: **“Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”**

So, when Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man, he is at the very least affirming his humanity by calling himself the Son of Adam. Notice, he does not say, “I am a son of Man,” but “I am *the* Son of Man.” By using the definite article (you might need to know that for English class), he is implying that there is something special about himself, something that sets him apart from the rest of mankind. And I think we pick up on that when Jesus calls himself the Son of

Man. Think about it. The title is a little mysterious, especially when it is used to describe Jesus, who clearly is not just like every other son of man. Jesus healed paralytics, walked on water, calmed a storm, turned water to wine, and cast out demons. In this very text, Jesus says that he will come with his angels in the Father's glory—now, who else could say that? When Jesus calls himself the Son of Man, we are prompted to ask, "What kind of man are you, Jesus? What do you mean? Who are you?"

Many times when Jesus calls himself the Son of Man, it is usually in a context similar to what we find here in Matthew 16:24-28: angels, glory, judgment, throne, and so on. This clarifies what Jesus means when calls himself the Son of Man because, by doing so, he is saying that he is the one to fulfill Daniel 7:9-18. I do not have the space to include that passage here, so please read it yourself. In his vision, Daniel sees one like a son of man coming to sit on the throne forever, ruling and judging all of the nations. Daniel's prophecy was nothing new. The LORD had spoken through his prophets for a long time that a man would rule over his people, establish righteousness, and inherit the nations. This man was the promised Messiah (Christ).

This means that as the Son of Man, Jesus is the hero who has come to save his people from their greatest enemies: sin, death, and the devil. He is the firstborn son who has come to claim his inheritance, his kingdom, which includes those who believe in him. God calls us his own treasured possession. That is a high and delightful privilege. Jesus' kingdom is the best kingdom, and it conquers all evil and goes on happily ever after. Astonishingly, he does all of this in meek and meager ways. Jesus saves us by dying a tortuous death in order to take away our sins. He rose from the dead, but he did not go on parades throughout Rome afterwards. Jesus's greatest works are not flashy things because he wants us to believe him, even when the things he tells us to believe seem foolish, weak, or impossible. We are to walk by faith, not by sight.

Do you side with the Son of Man? He is coming to repay us according to what each of us has done. Keep that in mind as you enter school. It is so easy to slip right in with people at school and talk like them, dress like them, act like them, and think like them in order to preserve your reputation, your friendships, and your happiness. I know it is easy because I was a fool for the first part of my freshman year seeking to gain all of the coolest friends I could. But, note that Jesus said whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, but whoever denies himself and gives up his life for Jesus' sake will gain it. Your soul is always at stake. What do you really gain if you get everything you thought you ever wanted, and damage your soul beyond all repair in the process?