



Family Bible Lessons

Biblical Themes Lesson 5: Son of Man

Review and Introduction

In Lesson 1, we looked at Image of God. We are all made in His image but have failed to reflect his image due to our sin. Jesus is the perfect image of God, who transforms our hearts so we can once again bear his image.

In Lesson 2, we looked at the personal commitments God made to different people in the Bible called covenants. All of them lead us to God's new covenant that he has made through Jesus in his life, death, and resurrection to all who would receive it.

In Lesson 3, we learned about God's provision of sacrifice and atonement that would make sure both his justice for sin and his mercy for sinners was carried out. Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice and atonement for our sin.

In Lesson 4, we learned about God's desire to dwell with humans in the Old Testament with a temple and in the New Testament as Jesus.

In this lesson, we are going to look at Jesus' favorite title for himself – the Son of Man. We don't often refer to him this way. So why did he? Let's watch our next video to find out.

Video: Son of Man

Watch Son of Man (5.5 minutes) - <https://youtu.be/z6cWEcqxhll>

How Are Humans Different from Animals?

If you read Genesis 1-2, you will find that both animals and humans were created on the same day of creation (day 6). They were both made from the dust. There are quite a number of animals that share the same kind of make up as humans: bones, heart, lungs, muscles, etc. But clearly humans are different; what makes that so? Genesis 1:27 tells us humans are made in his image. Genesis 1:28 says: *And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."* Humans have this special calling to rule over the earth in a way that resembles the Creator. Humans should rule over the animals. But what happens when that gets flipped?

A Beast Ruling Over Humans

As we saw in the video and learn in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve listen to a beast, a snake that is in obvious rebellion against God. He offers them the opportunity to rule the way they want by taking the fruit. When they rebel against God, they find that they are no longer ruling as he desired. They are now being ruled themselves by sin. They no longer look like God's image. They look and act like animals. God tells the snake in Genesis 3 that there would be war between the children of the woman and the children of the snake. This sets the story line for the rest of the Bible. There will be humans who act like beasts because they are ruled by the beastly urge called sin. But there would be one human, a son of man, who would rule over the beast and defeat it.

The Beastly Stories of the Bible

Turn the next page to Genesis 4, and you will find this to be true. Cain gives into the beastly desire to murder his brother. People become so beastly and violent that God cleanses the earth with a flood. Though God chooses one man named Abraham to be the seed of the woman he would bless, his whole family's history shows beastly act after beastly act. Abraham and Sarah treat their Egyptian slave horribly. Jacob deceives his father and is in turn deceived by his sons as they sell their own brother into slavery. The Egyptians treat the Israelites like beasts for centuries until God delivers them. But the Israelites act like beasts themselves. The book of Judges is a long, sad history of Israel abandoning their God and treating others horribly. And as Israel becomes a kingdom under Saul and David, we find them both ruling in beastly ways that include murder. This continues all through the kingdom of Israel's history until finally they are ruled over and exiled by beastly empires. The snake that ruled over the first humans continues to rule throughout the story.

The Story of Nebuchadnezzar

Many in the kingdom of Judah were taken into exile by the king of Babylon named Nebuchadnezzar. You might be familiar with some of his story from the book of Daniel, particularly the one where he throws Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into a fiery furnace (a very beastly thing to do). But there's another story with this king that highlights the theme we are studying. Daniel 4 tells us the story in full, but here is the summary.

One night, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that disturbed him. He saw a great tree that was filled with good food and provided shade for all the animals. A messenger from heaven comes and says that the tree should be chopped down and all the fruit and animals scattered. The tree would become like a beast. He asks Daniel to interpret the dream. Daniel informs him that the tree was Nebuchadnezzar. He had built a strong empire over the world. He ruled over it and did what he wanted. He thought that nothing could rule over him. But God was about to humble him. He would be removed from the throne and for seven periods of time (perhaps seven years), he would live with the beasts, eat grass like the beasts, and become like a beast in his mind. Daniel pleaded with the king to humble himself and show mercy to those under his rule. In other words, stop acting like a beast or God will let you become one. A year later, Nebuchadnezzar had still not given up his pride, and God did exactly what he said. He became like a beast.

After the seven periods of time ended, Nebuchadnezzar's mind was restored as well as his kingdom. When that happened, he responded appropriately to God in Daniel 4:34-35 (ESV):

At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"

Nebuchadnezzar realized the truth: he had been acting like a beast for all his life, not just the last seven periods of time. He saw God as the true ruler, the one that Adam and Eve should have trusted. He humbled himself and praised God for his kingdom that lasts forever. Nebuchadnezzar, a foreign king, sees the truth that God's own people Israel failed to see.

Daniel's Dream

As we saw in the video, Daniel himself experiences a dream from God that is really strange. Four beasts are shown to him, all of them representing human kingdoms that rise up against God and his rule. They destroy lives in the process. But then Daniel sees a heavenly court room where God, the Ancient of Days, sits enthroned and ruling. The fourth beast, the worst of the bunch, is condemned and destroyed. Lastly, Daniel gives us this detail.

Read Daniel 7:13-14 (ESV):

"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."

What Daniel sees in this dream is the end of all human efforts to rule as they see fit, treating other humans terribly. There will one day be a human that ascends to God who carries his image and treats other humans as image bearers of God. This son of man will be given an eternal kingdom over all peoples and cultures.

Like Adam and Eve, God gives Daniel the promise of a human who would conquer the beast. When we turn to the New Testament, we see this promise fulfilled.

If your family needs a break, this might be a good stopping point.

Jesus, the Son of Man

In John 1, we see Jesus given many titles: the Word, the true light, the Lamb of God, the Son of God, Rabbi, the Messiah, the King of Israel. But Jesus uses a different title speaking of himself in verse 51: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."* From the very beginning of his ministry, he chose and referred to himself most often with this title. All 4 Gospel books quote him using it many times. Why did he choose it?

- He was confirming that he was both fully God and fully human.
- He was fulfilling the ancient promise to Daniel, a son of man who would rule over all the nations.

Indeed, many of his followers believed he would be the king of Israel that would overthrow the Romans (the empire of his day). But Jesus made it clear how he would rule.

Read Mark 8:31 (ESV):

And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.

Peter, one of Jesus' closest disciples, didn't buy this at all. "Wait, Jesus – you're going to rule by dying? You're going to win by losing? That doesn't make any sense." Jesus' kingdom doesn't make any earthly sense. But if Jesus tried to rule like others had before him, we see how that turns out - humans acting like beasts, being

ruled by a beast. Jesus knew the only way to crush the beast's head in Genesis 3 was to allow the beast to strike him. He would lay down his life.

So Jesus is arrested by his own religious rulers and stood trial. They tried to convict him worthy of death, but none of the testimony agreed. Finally, the high priest called him to tell them whether he was the Messiah, the Son of God. This was Jesus' answer.

Read Mark 14:62 (ESV):

"I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."

In this very crucial moment, Jesus answered yes and then quoted Daniel 7 to them. He claimed that he was the one who would come before the Ancient of Days to take up his rule and reign. The priests and religious rulers condemned him to death immediately. They mocked him and beat him. They took him to the Roman governor who condemned him to beating and then to death on a cross. The seed of the serpent, the seed of the beast, struck his heel. They acted like animals toward him.

Jesus exposed this darkness and sin by letting it do its worst to him. He saw the cross as his exaltation to be the ruler of heaven and earth. He rose again and showed that he held all power, power because he gave his life instead of taking others.

Follow the Son of Man

The apostle Paul was someone who once acted like a beast himself. He tried to crush the early church by arresting and condemning to death any followers of Jesus. But then he had an encounter with the risen Jesus that changed his life. He began starting churches all over the Mediterranean Sea, including the one in a city called Philippi. He told people to give their allegiance to Jesus and his kingdom, to give up their beastly urge to sin. He wrote these words to the Philippian church.

Read Philippians 2:3-11 (ESV):

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

What does it look like to follow the Son of Man? It means we give up our beastly urge to look out for ourselves first. We count others as more significant, their interests as more important than ours. This was exactly how Jesus lived and died. As the Son of God, he deserved all the worship and power. But he came as the Son of Man – he set aside what he rightly deserved for the love of those who needed his light and life. In the end,

God has exalted him. In the end, everyone will bow before Jesus, the Son of Man, and declare that he is Lord and King.

Response

2020 was a hard year. Maybe you're excited that it's over and hopeful for what 2021 can bring. But 2020 showed us the same thing we have seen for centuries. We often act like animals; we treat each other terribly. Like Cain, the beastly urge of sin wants to consume us and rule us. We want our own way and think of ourselves first. That way of thinking always ends up in a terrible place.

The kingdom of Jesus is different. Yes, he died and rose again to save you from your sins. But that means destroying that sin in your heart and life day by day. He wants to make you a new kind of human in his image. You gain by giving. You rule by serving. You live by dying. True humans who are remade in God's image by faith in Jesus lay down their lives as Jesus did.

Perhaps you have made some new year's resolutions, things you want to do differently. As a follower of Jesus, the best decision you can make, whether it's January 1st or July 1st, is to count him worthy of your affections and others as more significant than yourself. That's the kingdom the Son of Man is bringing.

Review Questions with Your Family

These are designed to help children ages 8-18 to review before taking their individual Google quizzes.

1. What was Jesus' favorite title for himself in the New Testament? *The Son of Man*
2. What beast deceives Adam and Eve into rebelling against God? *A snake*
3. In the video, which Bible character did God warn that sin was ready to devour him like an animal?
Cain
4. Which ruler in Babylon did God humble by making him like a beast? *Nebuchadnezzar*
5. How many periods of time was he like this? *7*
6. According to the video and lesson, what Israelite received a dream while in exile in Babylon? *Daniel*
7. How many beasts did he see in that dream? *4*
8. What title does Daniel give to God in his dream? *The Ancient of Days*
9. From what book and chapter does Jesus quote when he stood on trial before his death? *Daniel 7*
10. Which apostle persecuted the church before following Jesus? *Paul*
11. According to Philippians 2:3-11, we are to count others as more _____ than ourselves.
Significant

Praying the Scriptures

One of the joys of reading the Bible is praying its words back to its Author. We encourage you to read the Bible passage below and make it your prayer.

Read 1 John 4:7-12 (ESV):

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God

was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

Prayer:

Jesus, thank you for becoming the Son of Man, the God-human who shows us the new way to be human. Help us to not be ruled by the beastly urge of sin but be ruled by your self-giving love. Help us to love others as you have loved us. Help us to count others as more significant than ourselves. Let your love abide in us and be perfected in us. Come soon, Lord Jesus, to rule with your amazing love. Amen.

Google Quiz

- Children in your family who are ages 8-18 can now take their Google quiz for this lesson.
- Parents, you should receive an email when each child completes their quiz, so you know it has been completed.
- Take the Google Quiz: <https://forms.gle/JqdyjBvNwoqX32Zn8>