

WHO IS THIS MAN?

A Christological Study in Four Parts

Class 2 — Son of Man

The Heavenly Figure Who Receives an Everlasting Dominion

Week Two — January 3, 2027

PRIMARY TEXTS

Old Testament: Daniel 7:9–14, 15–27; Psalm 8:1–9; Ezekiel 2:1–8

New Testament: Mark 2:1–12, 23–28; 8:31; 10:45; 14:53–65; Matthew 25:31–46; Acts 7:54–60; John 1:51; 3:13–15; 5:25–29; Revelation 1:12–16; 14:14

**Our Saviour Lutheran Church
Baltimore, Maryland**

Questions/Teacher's Edition — scottjones@comcast.net

Opening Prayer

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of Man, who came down from heaven to share our flesh and who shall come again on the clouds of glory to judge the living and the dead: grant us the Spirit of wisdom to know You in Your humility and to confess You in Your majesty. Teach us to hear the title You gave Yourself as the promise it is, that the Judge of all is bone of our bone. Keep us steadfast while the horn still speaks and the saints are still hard pressed. Bring us at last among those who have served You in love, and let us see You as Stephen saw You, standing at the Father's right hand; who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and forever. Amen.

I. Opening and Framing

The Name He Chose for Himself

Every other title in this series was given to Jesus by somebody else. Blind men called Him Son of David, the Baptist called Him the Lamb of God, and the Father called Him the beloved Son. This one He chose. He uses it about eighty times in the Gospels, almost nobody else ever uses it of Him, and He never explains it. He also never uses it to answer a direct question about His identity; He introduces it on His own terms, generally speaking of Himself in the third person. On its face the phrase is the plainest thing imaginable, since in Hebrew and Aramaic a son of man is simply a human being, a mortal. That is exactly how a hearer in Galilee would first have taken it. The claim inside it surfaces slowly, in what the Son of Man turns out to be able to do: forgive sins, dispose of the Sabbath, and arrive on the clouds of heaven.

Discussion Question

Why would Jesus prefer a title that sounds like a description of ordinary humanity, and what is He claiming by the time He finishes using it?

1. Many Christians assume that “Son of God” names the divine nature of Jesus and “Son of Man” names the human one, so that the second title is the humbler half of the confession. Where did you first learn that pairing, and what would follow if the Gospels turned out to use “Son of Man” to make the higher claim rather than the lower one?

Last week established that the Messiah is a king in David’s line. This week asks how far that kingdom extends, and the answer is that it extends to every people, nation, and language, and that it is exercised by a man.

Key Vocabulary

Ben ’adam (בֶּן אָדָם): “son of man,” literally son of Adam. In ordinary Hebrew usage it means a human being, with the accent on mortality and frailty; God uses it to address Ezekiel ninety-three times.

Kebar ’enash (כְּבָר אֱנָשׁ): the Aramaic of Daniel 7:13, “one like a son of man.” The particle “like” affirms a genuinely human appearance and signals that this figure is more than an ordinary man.

‘Attiq yomin (עֲתִיק יוֹמִין): “Ancient of Days,” a title for God found only in Daniel 7. Most of the Church Fathers identified Him as the Father, before whom the Son of Man is presented.

Pelach (פָּלַח): the Aramaic verb for religious service or worship, used in Daniel 7:14 of what all peoples render to the Son of Man, and in Daniel 3 of what the three Judeans refused to render to an image.

Lytron (λύτρον): “ransom,” the price paid to release a slave or prisoner. Paired in Mark 10:45 with the preposition *anti*, which means in the place of another.

II. The Vision Given — Daniel 7:9–14

A throne room, a court in session, and a human figure who arrives by a road only God travels.

Read Daniel 7:9–14 aloud.

Daniel 7:9–10 (ESV)

“As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.”

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.”

Key Aramaic Terms:

‘Attiq yomin (עֲתִיק יוֹמִין): “Ancient of Days.” The title occurs only in Daniel 7, three times, and it names God as the one whose existence has no beginning, seated to judge.

Kebar ‘enash (כְּבָר אֱנָשׁ): “one like a son of man.” Bar is the Aramaic for son and ‘enash for man or humanity; the prefixed ke means “like,” and everything turns on it.

Sholtan ‘alam (שֹׁלְטָן עֲלָם): “everlasting dominion.” Sholtan is sovereign authority, and ‘alam is the Aramaic cognate of the Hebrew ‘olam, the word used of David’s throne.

Pelach (פָּלַח): “to serve.” In Biblical Aramaic the verb denotes religious service rendered to a god; it is the word used of the worship the three Judeans refused to give the golden image.

Daniel 7 is the apocalyptic counterpart to 2 Samuel 7, and the class studied 2 Samuel 7 last week. Where the Davidic covenant promised an earthly throne in Jerusalem, Daniel sees a heavenly throne room. The chapter moves from four beasts churned up out of a stormy sea, through a

court that convenes and opens its books, to the arrival of a figure who is human in form and comes by way of the clouds.

2. Daniel sees thrones placed, an aged figure seated, a river of fire flowing out from Him, and books opened. Everything in the scene says permanence and judgment: the white garments, the wool-white hair, the fiery throne, the numberless attendants. The beasts that precede this vision are all in motion, rising and devouring and trampling. What does the contrast between a court that sits and empires that thrash establish about who is actually in charge of history?

3. The figure who arrives is human in form, which distinguishes Him from the four beasts, and He arrives with the clouds of heaven. Riding the clouds is something the Old Testament says about God and about no one else: He makes the clouds His chariot, He rides on a swift cloud, He rides through the heavens in His majesty. What is Daniel claiming about this figure by giving Him a human appearance and a divine mode of travel in the same sentence?

4. The dominion is given to Him rather than seized by Him, and the verb describing what the nations render Him, *pelach*, is the word for worship rather than for political obedience. The book of Daniel is the book in which three men go into a furnace rather than render that service to an image. Given how carefully Daniel guards the worship of God alone, what does it mean that this figure receives it?

III. The Human Weight of the Title — Psalm 8 and Ezekiel

Before it meant glory, the phrase meant a mortal on his face before God.

Read Psalm 8:3–8; Hebrews 2:5–9; and Ezekiel 2:1–8 aloud.

Psalm 8:4–6 (ESV)

“What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet.”

Hebrews 2:8–9 (ESV)

“Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.”

Ezekiel 2:1–2 (ESV)

“And he said to me, ‘Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak with you.’ And as he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.”

Key Hebrew Terms:

’Enosh (עֲנוֹשׁ) and ben ’adam (בֶּן אָדָם): two words for a human being, set in parallel in Psalm 8:4. The second means literally “son of Adam,” a descendant of the man made from the ground.

Kavod (כָּבוֹד) and hadar (הָדָר): “glory” and “honor,” the crown given to man in Psalm 8:5. Both are royal words, and both are used of God Himself.

Historical Context

Ezekiel was among the exiles deported with Jehoiachin in 597 BC, five years before the destruction of Jerusalem. He was a priest by training who was carried a thousand miles from the only altar at which he was permitted to serve. God addresses him as “son of man” ninety-three times and never once by his name. The address begins at the moment the prophet is lying face down before a vision of the Glory, and it continues through every oracle he delivers, including the ones performed as sign-acts on the ground in front of his neighbors.

Two Old Testament streams feed the phrase before Jesus ever uses it. Psalm 8 marvels that God should crown a creature so small with dominion over the works of His hands. Ezekiel is called son of man in order that he never forget he is dust addressed by the Almighty. The Letter to the Hebrews then reads Psalm 8 as a description not of humanity in general but of one man in particular.

5. Psalm 8 begins by looking up at a sky the psalmist cannot reach and asking why God should be mindful of anything as small as a human being. The answer given is a coronation: crowned with glory and honor, given dominion, all things under his feet. Both crown words are used elsewhere of God. What is the psalm claiming about the dignity of an ordinary human life, and what happens to that claim when we look at the actual record of human dominion?

6. Hebrews quotes Psalm 8 and then makes an admission: we do not yet see everything in subjection to man. What we do see is Jesus, made lower for a little while and crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death. The Greek phrase the author uses can mean either a little lower in rank or lower for a short time, and he takes it the second way. How does reading the psalm about Jesus rescue it rather than replace it, and what does it mean that the crown is given on account of a death?

7. God never calls Ezekiel by his name. He calls him son of man, ninety-three times, beginning while the prophet is lying on his face before the Glory. The Spirit then enters him and sets him on his feet so that he can receive his orders standing. What does the constant reminder of creatureliness accomplish in a man who is being given visions no one else has seen, and why must the Spirit be the one who stands him up?

8. The same two words describe a prophet too frail to stand without help and a figure who rides the clouds into the throne room of God. Jesus takes this one phrase as His favorite name for Himself and uses it for both: the one with nowhere to lay His head, and the one who will come with power and great glory. What does the fusion of weakness and authority in a single title prepare a hearer to accept that no other title could?

IV. The Prophetic Word — Jesus' Own Usage in Three Categories

He never defines the title; He simply uses it, and every use claims something no man may claim.

Read Mark 2:1–12 and 2:23–28; Mark 8:31 and 10:45; and Mark 14:53–65 aloud.

Mark 2:10–11 (ESV)

“‘But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins’ — he said to the paralytic — ‘I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.’”

Mark 10:45 (ESV)

“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Mark 14:61–62 (ESV)

“Again the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?’ And Jesus said, ‘I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.’”

Key Greek Terms:

Ho huios tou anthropou (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου): “the Son of Man.” The double article is not natural Greek; it renders a Semitic phrase and points to a particular figure rather than to humanity in general.

Exousia (ἐξουσία): “authority,” the right to act rather than the raw power to do so. The word in the claim to forgive sins and in the commission at the end of Matthew.

Dei (δεῖ): “it is necessary.” The impersonal verb governing the passion predictions: the Son of Man must suffer. The necessity is the will of God, not the pressure of events.

Lytron anti pollon (λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν): “a ransom in place of many.” Lytron is the price paid to free a slave or a captive, and anti is the preposition of substitution, one standing in the place of another.

Jesus uses this title of Himself about eighty times in the Gospels, and almost no one else ever uses it of Him. He never explains it and never accepts it as an answer to a question about His identity; He introduces it on His own terms, often speaking of Himself in the third person. Interpreters have long sorted the sayings into three groups: authority exercised now, suffering that must come, and glory at the end. The three are inseparable, and the same mouth speaks all three.

9. A. AUTHORITY NOW. A paralytic is lowered through a roof and Jesus tells him his sins are forgiven, which draws the immediate objection that God alone can forgive sins. Jesus does not correct the premise. He performs a healing that can be seen in order to certify a forgiveness that cannot, and He attaches the authority to the title: the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. If the scribes' premise is right, what has Jesus just claimed, and why does He make the claim in that particular sentence?

10. A. AUTHORITY NOW. Challenged about His disciples plucking grain, Jesus defends them by citing David eating the bread of the Presence, and then says that the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath. He answers a question about law with an argument from the life of David, and concludes with a title from Daniel. Given last week's study, why is the appeal to David more than an illustration, and what does lordship over the Sabbath claim about the one making it?

11. B. THE SON OF MAN MUST SUFFER. Three times Jesus announces that the Son of Man must suffer, be rejected, be killed, and rise. The word must is not the language of an unlucky man reading the political weather; it names a necessity that comes from God. Peter hears the first announcement and rebukes Him for it. Why is a necessary suffering harder to accept than a tragic one, and what does Peter's reaction reveal about the expectations the title carried?

12. B. THE SON OF MAN MUST SUFFER. The Son of Man came to give His life as a ransom for many. The noun names the price paid to free a slave, and the preposition means in the place of another. Isaiah had said the Servant would bear the sin of many and pour out his soul to death. What does it cost the disciples' ambition, argued about three verses earlier, that greatness in this kingdom is defined by a purchase price?

13. B. THE SON OF MAN MUST SUFFER. No surviving Jewish source before Jesus combines the glorious figure of Daniel 7 with the suffering figure of Isaiah 53. The heavenly one receives dominion; the Servant is despised and killed. Jesus welds them together and does it consistently. What is the effect of hearing that the one who will judge the living and the dead is the same one who was spat upon, and why could no one have predicted this combination?

14. C. COMING IN GLORY. Under oath the high priest asks whether He is the Christ, and Jesus answers, “I am,” and then quotes two texts at once: seated at the right hand, which is Psalm 110, and coming with the clouds, which is Daniel 7. He had posed Psalm 110 to the Pharisees as a riddle days earlier. What does He do by joining the two passages, and why answer plainly here after so much reticence elsewhere?

15. C. COMING IN GLORY. The high priest tears his robes and calls it blasphemy, and the council agrees. A claim to be the Messiah was not blasphemous; several men made it in that century without being charged. What exactly crossed the line, and what does the reaction tell us about how the sentence was heard by men who knew Daniel 7 by heart?

16. C. COMING IN GLORY. Jesus tells the men condemning Him, “you will see.” Commentators divide over whether that seeing begins with the resurrection and ascension, when the Son of Man comes to the Ancient of Days and is enthroned, or waits for the last day. The Creed confesses both a session at God’s right hand and a return in glory. Why does it matter for a congregation waiting now whether the enthronement has already happened?

17. C. COMING IN GLORY. Matthew’s picture of the last judgment has the Son of Man come in His glory, sit on His throne, gather all nations, and separate them, and the criterion He names is what was done to the hungry, the stranger, the sick, and the prisoner. He calls them His brothers. How does the judge of Daniel 7 turn out to have been present in the people the world ignored?

18. C. COMING IN GLORY. Stephen, about to be stoned, looks into heaven and says he sees the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. It is the only time in the New Testament outside the Gospels that anyone uses the title, and it is the only place where the enthroned Christ is described as standing rather than seated. What does a man about to die need from a Lord who has risen to His feet?

V. History Vindicates the Vision — Beasts Rise, and the Saints Are Given the Kingdom

Four empires came up out of the sea exactly as Daniel saw, and every one of them is gone.

Read Daniel 7:15–18 and 7:21–27 aloud.

Daniel 7:21–22 (ESV)

“As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.”

The interpreting angel tells Daniel that the four beasts are four kings that shall arise out of the earth, and that the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess it forever. Between those two statements sits a small horn that speaks great words, wages war on the saints,

and prevails over them for a season. Daniel wrote in the sixth century BC. The empires he saw rose, oppressed, and fell in the order he was shown, and the church has spent twenty centuries living in the part of the vision where the horn is still speaking.

19. The beasts come up out of a churning sea, and the sea in the prophets is the image of the nations in turmoil and of humanity in rebellion. The other figure comes down with the clouds of heaven. One kingdom rises out of chaos from below and the other arrives from above. What does the direction of travel say about the character of each kingdom, and about the difference between power that is seized and dominion that is given?

20. Daniel is told that the horn will prevail over the saints, and that the prevailing lasts only until the Ancient of Days comes. The vision does not promise that the church will be spared the war; it promises the verdict. How does a congregation live in the part of the vision where the horn is still winning, and what exactly are we told to expect on the other side of the word until?

VI. The Fulfillment — The Ladder, the Lifting Up, and the Face Like the Sun

John shows the Son of Man moving on a vertical axis, and the lowest point on it is the throne.

Read John 1:51; 3:13–15; 5:25–29; Revelation 1:12–16; and Revelation 14:14 aloud.

John 1:51 (ESV)

“And he said to him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.’”

John 3:14–15 (ESV)

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”

Revelation 1:13–14 (ESV)

“...and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire.”

Key Greek Terms:

Hypsoō (ὕψω): “to lift up, to exalt.” John uses the one verb for both the raising of a body onto a cross and the exaltation of the Son to glory, and he means both at once every time.

Homoion huion anthrōpou (ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου): “one like a son of man,” Revelation’s rendering of the Aramaic of Daniel 7:13, article-less in both places.

The Synoptic Son of Man moves along a timeline: authority now, suffering soon, glory at the end. John's Son of Man moves up and down. He has descended from heaven, He will be lifted up, and He returns to the glory He had before the world existed. The Revelation then sets the Danielic figure among the lampstands and gives Him the appearance of the Ancient of Days, and the two figures of the vision are seen to be one Lord.

21. Jesus tells Nathanael he will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man. Jacob saw that traffic on a stairway at Bethel and woke saying that this was the house of God and the gate of heaven. Jesus puts Himself where the stairway stood. What is being claimed about access to God, and what does it mean that the meeting place between heaven and earth is a person rather than a place?

22. John uses one verb for the raising of Jesus on the cross and for His exaltation to glory, and he never separates the two senses. Moses lifted up a bronze serpent on a pole so that the dying could look and live. How does the double meaning of that verb make the crucifixion itself the enthronement, and what does it do to our idea of glory?

23. John 5:27 says the Father has given the Son authority to execute judgment because He is son of man, and the phrase there drops its articles, which happens nowhere else in the New Testament and matches the Greek of Daniel 7:13. The Formula of Concord cites this verse to teach that divine authority has been given to Christ according to His human nature. Why does it matter to us that the judge of all is a man?

24. John sees one like a son of man among the lampstands, and then describes Him with the features Daniel gave to the Ancient of Days: hair white like wool, like snow. In Daniel the two figures are distinct and one presents Himself to the other. In Revelation they look alike. What has John seen, and what does the merging finish that Daniel had left open?

25. In Revelation 14 the Son of Man sits on a white cloud with a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand, waiting for the word to begin the harvest. He had worn a crown once before, plaited from thorns. What has changed between the two crowns, and what has not changed about the one wearing them?

26. The title has traveled from a mortal on his face in Babylon to a man on a Roman cross to a figure whose face shines like the sun. He is the one who forgives sins now, the one who had to suffer, and the one who will come with the clouds, and He is one person. If the Judge who returns on the last day is the same Son of Man who gave His life as a ransom for many, does the prospect of His coming leave us to face a court, or to meet the one who has already answered for us? Explain the difference.

Synthesis and Closing

Text	Contribution to Session Theme	Key Term
Daniel 7:9–14	A human figure arrives on the clouds, receives everlasting dominion from the Ancient of Days, and is given the worship due to God alone.	Kebar 'enash
Psalms 8; Hebrews 2:5–9	Humanity is crowned with glory and honor and has lost the dominion; one man now wears the crown, and He wears it on account of a death.	Ben 'adam
Ezekiel 2:1–8	The phrase in its plainest sense: a mortal addressed by God, unable even to stand until the Spirit raises him.	Ben 'adam
Mark 2:10, 28	The Son of Man exercises on earth the two prerogatives that belong to God alone: forgiving sins and disposing of the Sabbath.	Exousia
Mark 8:31; 10:45	The one who will receive the kingdom must first be rejected and killed, and He gives His life as a ransom in the place of many.	Lytron
Mark 14:61–62	Psalms 110 and Daniel 7 spoken together under oath; the high priest tears his robes.	Ego eimi
John 1:51; 3:14	The Son of Man is the ladder between heaven and earth, and His lifting up on the cross is His exaltation.	Hypsoō
Revelation 1:12–16	The Son of Man wears the appearance of the Ancient of Days; the two figures of Daniel's vision are seen to be one Lord.	Homoion huion anthrōpou

27. Jesus chose this title for Himself more than any other, and He chose one that says both that He is a mortal like us and that He will judge the living and the dead. Which half do you find

easier to believe on an ordinary Tuesday, and what does your answer tell you about the picture of Jesus you actually carry?

28. The Creed has the congregation confess every week that He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. Say honestly whether that clause functions in your life as a comfort or as a threat, and what would have to be true for it to become the first of those two.

Closing Prayer

Almighty God, who has revealed Your Son as the Son of Man, true man and true God, humble and glorious, suffering and sovereign: grant us grace to confess Him in His fullness, neither separating His natures nor confusing them. Give us the eyes of Stephen, who saw the heavens opened in the hour of his death, and the patience of the saints, who are given the kingdom after the horn has done its worst. Keep us in the faith, that when He comes on the clouds of heaven in the glory of the Father, we may lift up our heads with joy and not with fear; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

Appendix: Liturgical, Lectionary, and Hymnic Connections

Liturgical Connections

This session is confessed every Sunday. The Nicene Creed's clause that He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead is Daniel 7:13–14 in the mouth of the congregation, and the Apostles' Creed's statement that He sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty joins Daniel 7 to Psalm 110:1. The two clauses are two moments of one enthronement, which is why the Creed keeps them in a single sentence. The Athanasian Creed then states the doctrine the title carries: perfect God and perfect man, of a rational soul and human flesh subsisting. In the Divine Service the Sanctus places the congregation in the throne room of Isaiah 6 and Daniel 7, singing with the numberless attendants who stand before the Ancient of Days.

Lectionary Connections

Daniel 7:9–14 is the Old Testament reading for the Last Sunday of the Church Year in Series B and appears again in connection with the Ascension, where the coming to the Ancient of Days is read as the enthronement rather than the return. The Olivet Discourse, with its Son of Man coming on the clouds, is appointed for the last Sundays of the church year and for the Second Sunday in Advent, so that the Church begins her year by confessing the end of it. Revelation 1:4–18 is read on the Second Sunday of Easter in Series C, and Matthew 25:31–46 falls on the Last Sunday of the Church Year in Series A.

Hymnic Connections

LSB 336: “Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending” — the Son of Man hymn of Advent, drawn directly from Daniel 7:13 and Revelation 1:7, including the line about those who set at naught and sold Him.

LSB 508: “The Day Is Surely Drawing Near” — Ringwaldt’s hymn of the last judgment, which confesses the Judge as the one who bore the sentence.

LSB 512: “At the Name of Jesus” — the Philippians 2 arc of descent and exaltation, which is the Johannine vertical axis in verse.

LSB 537: “Beautiful Savior” — sung with one caution: the lyric contrast between Son of God and Son of Man does not match the Gospels’ use of the second title, which carries divine authority rather than merely human nature.