

“Count The Cost & Pay The Price”

Matthew 8:18-22

November 30, 2025

INTRO: What would you like to hear & learn today?
In other words... “What do you want?”
...and how much do you want it?

“Consequences of Non-Expositional Preaching”

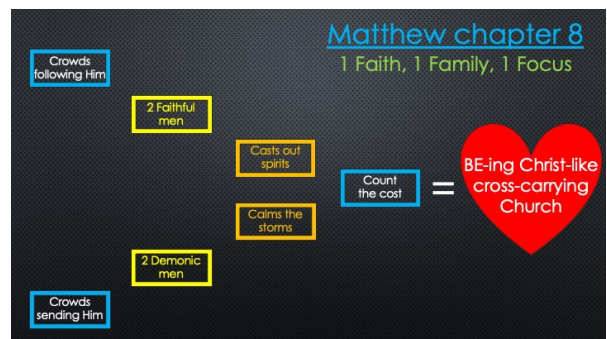
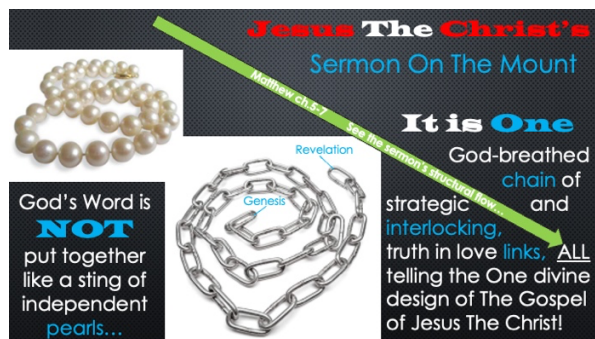
- MacArthur

<https://youtu.be/ITYtzEDuhvA?si=WBP3YrycbM4G1aBF>

PRAYER

CONTEXT:

- Matthew's Gospel on Jesus Christ's Gospel
- Post Sermon on the Mount to Matthew's Great 8



BIG IDEA: Christ continues to contrast the crowds with His Church by who is willing to count the cost AND pay the price!

PREVIEW:

1. Crowds, Claims, & Costs
2. Christ & His Cross
3. Costly Christian Commission

TEXT:

Matthew 8

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

1When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. 2And behold, a leper^a came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." 3And Jesus^b stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "**I will; be clean.**" And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. 4And Jesus said to him, "**See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to them.**"

The Faith of a Centurion

5When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, 6"Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly." 7And he said to him, "**I will come and heal him.**" 8But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. 9For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant,^c 'Do this,' and he does it." 10When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "**Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel^d have I found such faith. 11I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, 12while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of**

teeth.” [13](#)And to the centurion Jesus said, “Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.” And the servant was healed at that very moment.

Jesus Heals Many

[14](#)And when Jesus entered Peter’s house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. [15](#)He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him. [16](#)That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. [17](#)This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: “He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.”

[Matthew 8:18-22](#)

The Cost of Following Jesus

[18](#)Now when Jesus saw a crowd around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. [19](#)And a scribe came up and said to him, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.” [20](#)And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but [the Son of Man](#) has nowhere to lay his head.”

VIDEO: [Why Is Jesus Called The Son Of Man](#)
([GotQuestions.org](#))

[21](#)Another of the disciples said to him, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” [22](#)And Jesus said to him, “Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead.”

I. Crowds, Claims, & Costs

A. Christ on crowds

a. Fickle crowds (kingdom criminals / church)

- i. Goats
- ii. Vipers
- iii. Wolves

b. Faithful crowds (kingdom citizens / Church)

- i. Sheep
- ii. Sheep-dogs
- iii. Shepherds (true, biblical shepherds)

B. Christ on claims

a. Romans 10:9

- i. *Confess with your mouth...*
- ii. *Jesus is LORD...*
- iii. *BELIEVE in your heart...*

b. Luke 6:46 *"Why do you call me Lord but do not do as I command?"*

c. John 14:15, 14:21, & 20:21

The person who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who [really] loves Me; and whoever [really] loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and reveal Myself to him [I will make Myself real to him]."

C. Christ on costs

a. His

- i. His Engaging: John 3:16
- ii. His Explaining: John 3:3, 16, 30, 36
- iii. His Equipping:
 - 1. His Word, will, & way

- 2. Head, Heart, & Hands
 - 3. Locally, Regionally, & Globally
- iv. His Empowering
 - 1. Model
 - 2. Make
 - 3. Mission
- v. His Exemplification
 - 1. Christ models Christ-like Church
 - 2. Christ miraculously makes Church
 - 3. Christ biblically co-missions Church
- b. Ours (closing pillar #3)

II. Christ & His Cross

A. Promised

- a. Genesis 3:15
- b. The promised Son of Abraham & David...
- c. John the Baptist...
 - i. *Jesus is the Passover Lamb...*
 - ii. *Jesus takes away the sin of the world...*

B. Prophesied

- a. Genesis 3:15
- b. Well over 300 Old Testament prophecies...
- c. ALL of the Law and the Prophets...
 - i. Isaiah 52-53
 - ii. Son of Man
 - 1. Daniel = "THE" Son of Man
 - 2. Ezekiel = "a" son of man...

C. Proven

a. ***Jesus fulfilled the Law and the Prophets...***

- i. *"Come and see!"*
- ii. *"Jesus is LORD!"*
- iii. *"It is finished!"*
- iv. *"He is risen!"*
- v. *"Go make disciples!"*

b. ***Jesus fulfilled all righteousness***

- i. Ephesians 1 & 2
- ii. 2 Corinthians 5:7-21

c. ***Jesus fulfilled many Messianic prophecies***

- i. **Creator/Creation** (Gen. 1 & John 1)
- ii. **Corruption** (Gen. 3 & John 3)
- iii. **Coming-Christ** (John 3:16)
 - 1. His Grace miracle
 - 2. His Gospel MESSIAH
 - 3. His Glory mission
- iv. **Church** (John 3 & 14 & 20)
 - 1. *BE His fruit-producing followers*
 - 2. *BE His disciple-makers*
 - a. Going, teaching, & baptizing...
 - b. Declaring, exhorting, & rebuking
 - c. Equipping the saints to do & BE...
 - d. Making multiplying missionaries
 - e. Letting no one disregard you...
 - 3. *BE His witnesses: Local, Regional, Global*
- v. **Coming-back** (Revelation 22:20)

VIDEO: *Why Jesus Called Himself The Son of Man*
(Bible Project)

III. Costly, Christian CO-mission

(Luke 9:60b-62)

...But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” 61 Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” 62 Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

A. **Preach The Word** (Living & Written)

- a. *Jesus is LORD!*
- b. *All have sinned...*
- c. *No one is righteous...*
- d. *You must be born again!*
- e. *Cry out to Jesus for His miraculous Gospel.*
- f. *Confess, repent, & believe!*
- g. *Receive His grace & walk by faith!*
- h. *Love God, Love People, Serve the world.*
- i. *Go make disciples who make disciples...*
- j. *BE Christ's witnesses... locally, regionally, & globally*

B. **Press His Principles**

- a. *Love the LORD!*
- b. *Love one another!*
- c. *Abide & Obey!*

THERE IS NO LORD-LESS SAVIOR!

99% devotion to Him is 100% rebellion against Him.

Lukewarmness is worse than freezing cold.

FICKLE FOLLOWING IS DELUSIONAL DEVOTION.

Part-time sheep are full-time goats!

Situational Christians are scriptural hypocrites.

Superficial “church” is a deceptive, oxy-moron.

Respond to grace & Repent of sin...

Trust the Bible & Obey God’s Word...

Love one another & Go make disciples...

C. Pay The Price

Our Creator, King, & Christ is crystal clear: TALK IS CHEAP!

Count the cost & pay the price!

- With purposes & priorities...
- With **passions & promises...**
- With power & privileges...
- With **people & places...**
- With popularity & poisons...
- With **persecution & perseverance!**

PUT UP OR SHUT UP...

Prove it!

Amen.

REVIEW:

Christ continues to contrast the crowds with His Church by who is willing to count the cost & pay the price...

CLOSE:

- *Have you been listening to the shocking LORD?*
- **What do you want?** What do you REALLY want?
- Have you personally/biblically counted the cost?
- ...personally/missionally willing to pay the price?

Don't just count the cost...

PAY THE PRICE!



PRAYER

Study Notes:

Matthew 8 (ESV)

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

¹When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. ²And behold, a leper^a came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." ³And Jesus^b stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "**I will; be clean.**" And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. ⁴And Jesus said to him, "**See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to them.**"

The Faith of a Centurion

⁵When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, ⁶"Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly." ⁷And he said to him, "**I will come and heal him.**" ⁸But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant,^c 'Do this,' and he does it." ¹⁰When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "**Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel^d have I found such faith. ¹¹I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, ¹²while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**" ¹³And to the centurion Jesus said, "**Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.**" And the servant was healed at that very moment.

Jesus Heals Many

¹⁴And when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. ¹⁵He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him. ¹⁶That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. ¹⁷This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases."

The Cost of Following Jesus

¹⁸Now when Jesus saw a crowd around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. ¹⁹And a scribe came up and said to him, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." ²⁰And Jesus said to him, "**Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.**" ²¹Another of the disciples said to him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." ²²And Jesus said to him, "**Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead.**"

Jesus Calms a Storm

[23](#)And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. [24](#)And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. [25](#)And they went and woke him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing." [26](#)And he said to them, "**Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?**" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. [27](#)And the men marveled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?"

Jesus Heals Two Men with Demons

[28](#)And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes,^e two demon-possessed^f men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. [29](#)And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?" [30](#)Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them. [31](#)And the demons begged him, saying, "If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs." [32](#)And he said to them, "**Go.**" So they came out and went into the pigs, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters. [33](#)The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, especially what had happened to the demon-possessed men. [34](#)And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region.

Footnotes:

a 2 *Leprosy* was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

b 3 Greek *he*

c 9 Or *bondservant*

d 10 Some manuscripts *not even in Israel*

e 28 Some manuscripts *Gergesenes*; some *Gerasenes*

f 28 Greek *daimonizomai* (demonized); also verse 33; elsewhere rendered *oppressed by demons*

Luke 9:57-92

The Cost of Following Jesus

[57](#)As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." [58](#)And Jesus said to him, "**Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.**" [59](#)To another he said, "**Follow me.**" But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." [60](#)And Jesus said to him, "**Leave**

the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” [61](#) Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” [62](#) Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

MacArthur Commentary:

What Keeps Men from Christ?

(8:16–22)

And when evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, “He Himself took our infirmities, and carried away our diseases.”

Now when Jesus saw a crowd around Him, He gave orders to depart to the other side. And a certain scribe came and said to Him, “Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.” And Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.” And another of the disciples said to Him, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.” But Jesus said to him, “Follow Me; and allow the dead to bury their own dead.” (8:16–22)

After Jesus had healed the leper, the centurion’s slave boy, and Peter’s mother-in-law, Matthew reports that the crowd brought Him countless other people to be healed. Because these were brought to Him **when evening had come**, it is possible that the first three healings had been done on the Sabbath. Because of their religious leaders, many Jews were afraid to ask Jesus to heal on the Sabbath, and since it ended at sundown, they now felt free to bring **many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill**.

As He had done before (see 4:23–24) and many times afterward (see 14:14; Luke 5:17; 9:6; etc.), Jesus here performed mass healings, without regard to individual faith or circumstances. Whether the problem was spiritual, as with the **demon-possessed**, or physical, as with those **who were ill**, He **healed all**. He was giving evidence of His deity and messiahship, and everyone who came for healing was healed. As mentioned in the previous chapter, for all practical purposes Jesus banished sickness and disease from Palestine during the course of His earthly ministry.

Through His healing miracles Jesus participated in human pain and sorrow in that **He Himself took our infirmities, and carried away our diseases**. He participated first of all by sympathizing with man's pain and sickness. Jesus knew men's hearts and all of their inner feelings. He knew the agony, the bewilderment, the confusion, the despair, and the frustration that disease and sickness bring in addition to physical pain. Repeatedly the gospel writers tell of Jesus' having compassion on those who came to hear Him teach and to experience His healing touch (Matt. 9:36; 15:32; Mark 1:41; Luke 10:33). Just as surely as then, He now knows the agonies of His children, "for we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses" (Heb. 4:15). It was not that Jesus **carried away our diseases** by contracting them, but by experiencing vicariously the pain they bring.

Second, Jesus **took our infirmities, and carried away our diseases** in the sense that He saw and felt the destructive power of their root cause, which is sin. Jesus did not weep over Lazarus' tomb in remorse over the death of a dear friend, because He knew His friend would soon be raised from the dead. He wept because of the evil, sinful power that brought suffering and death to every man. He could not see the pain of sickness and death without feeling the pain of sin. Sin, sickness, and death are all inextricably tied to the curse. That is why Jesus asked rhetorically, "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, and walk?'" (Matt. 9:5). Neither is easier or harder. The same cause is behind both sin and sickness, and only divine power can remove either.

Third, and most supremely, Jesus **took our infirmities, and carried away our diseases** in that His victorious redeeming work dealt with sin in such a devastating way that ultimately all sickness and disease will be **carried away**. The King was offering His kingdom and was previewing its marvelous and glorious elements, one of the most wonderful of which will be the removal of all illness and sorrow for all eternity.

Jesus healed because of His divine and loving compassion for those who were suffering and for their loved ones who suffered with them. He healed because He hated sickness and disease, which were never part of God's plan for mankind and which came about because of sin. But He also healed in order to give a preview of His coming kingdom, in which there will be no more sin, no more death, no more sorrow, no more pain. Just as on the mount of transfiguration He pulled back the veil of His flesh and gave His three disciples a glimpse of His divine glory, through His vast healing miracles Jesus gave a vision of His glorious kingdom—when all disease and sickness would be banished, not in a small corner of the world or for a few brief years, but throughout the whole world and forever (see Rev. 21:1–4).

But before He established His earthly kingdom that would be free of suffering and death, the Messiah Himself would have to suffer and die to redeem men from sin. He would be "pierced through for our transgressions, ... crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being [would fall] upon Him, and by His scourging we [would be] healed" (Isa. 53:5). And before He suffered and died He would give evidence of His divine power by bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows (v. 4). It is that verse to which Matthew refers when he says that Jesus **healed all who were ill in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "He Himself took our infirmities, and carried away our diseases."**

Disease and death cannot be permanently removed until sin is permanently removed, and Jesus' supreme work, therefore, was to conquer sin. In the atonement He dealt with sin, death, and sickness; and yet all three of those are still with us. When He died on the cross, Jesus bruised

the head of Satan and broke the power of sin, and the person who trusts in the atoning work of Christ is immediately delivered from the penalty of sin and one day will be delivered from the very presence of sin and its consequences. The ultimate fulfillment of Christ's redeeming work is yet future for believers (cf. Rom. 8:22–25; 13:11). Christ died for men's sins, but Christians still fall into sin; He conquered death, but His followers still die; and He overcame pain and sickness, but His people still suffer and become ill. There is physical healing in the atonement, just as there is total deliverance from sin and death in the atonement; but we still await the fulfillment of that deliverance in the day when the Lord brings the end of suffering, sin, and death.

Those who claim that Christians should never be sick because there is healing in the atonement should also claim that Christians should never die, because Jesus also conquered death in the atonement. The central message of the gospel is deliverance from sin. It is the good news about forgiveness, not health. Christ was made sin, not disease, and He died on the cross for our sin, not our sickness. As Peter makes clear, Christ's wounds heal us from sin, not from disease. "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness" (1 Pet. 2:24).

In some ways it is hard to understand why any person would fail to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior after even once hearing Him speak or after seeing even one miracle of healing. It is still harder to understand why people continued to reject the incomparable, gracious, loving Son of God after hearing Him preach many times and seeing Him heal dozens, or perhaps hundreds, of people of every sort of affliction. It seems totally incredible, however, that God's own chosen people—who were given His covenant, His law, His prophets, and His many special blessings—would reject the Son of their own God, the Messiah their own Scriptures prophesied, the very Deliverer whom they claimed to look and long for.

Yet as one studies the gospel accounts, that was exactly the response of most of the Jews. Their unbelief and rejection flew in the face of everything Christ said and did in their very midst. The proofs of His divinity, His power, and His goodness were obvious and beyond contradiction. Yet, as the evidence increased, so did resistance and rejection. At the beginning of his gospel, John prepares us for that response, telling us that "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11). From the beginning Jesus knew that rejection would exceed acceptance, and He said to those who sought to kill Him, "You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life" (John 5:38–40). Like the rebellious citizens in one of Jesus' parables about the kingdom, those who rejected Christ said, in effect, "We do not want this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14).

Those who rejected Jesus Christ even after witnessing His miracles were like a judge or jury who, after hearing an open and shut court case, makes a decision that is the exact opposite of what the evidence calls for. Jesus' authority was evident, as the people recognized from the beginning of His ministry (Matt. 7:29). His teaching was unique, as the officers reported to the chief priests and Pharisees who had sent them to arrest Jesus. "Never did a man speak the way this man speaks," they said (John 7:46). To the unbelieving Jewish leaders who questioned him about his healing by Jesus, the former blind man said, "Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes.... Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from

God, He could do nothing” (John 9:30, 32–33). When representatives from the Pharisees and the Herodians tried to entrap Jesus with a question about paying taxes to Caesar, He answered, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God the things that are God’s.” His answer was so astute that His questioners “marveled, and leaving Him, they went away” (Matt. 22:21–22). The Jews were amazed at His teaching in the Temple, saying, “How has this man become learned, having never been educated?” (John 7:15). Although many accusations were leveled against Jesus, no one could convict Him of falsehood or any other sin (John 8:46). When Jesus healed the paralytic, the multitude was “filled with awe” (Matt. 9:8), and after He cast out a demon they said, “Nothing like this was ever seen in Israel” (v. 33). When Jesus wept over the grave of Lazarus, the Jews said, “Behold how He loved him!” (John 11:36). Jesus’ composure was also beyond the human. When He stood before Pilate, who had the power to release Him or order Him crucified, Jesus would not give a single word in His own defense, “so that the governor was amazed” (Matt. 27:14).

Everything about Jesus was astounding, marvelous, and humanly unexplainable. It is no wonder that, when the people marveled at Him but would not accept Him, Jesus would Himself marvel at their unbelief (Mark 6:6). How can people witness God’s power over and over again, admit that it is marvelous and even divine, and yet refuse to accept and follow the One who does such wonderful things?

Jesus Himself explained that some people run from the truth because it exposes their sin, which they do not want to give up. “The light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed” (John 3:19–20). Others are attracted to Jesus’ charisma and power. They marvel at the wonderful things He says and does, but they take nothing to heart. They follow Jesus from a distance, wanting to be thrilled but not changed, entertained but not saved. Often they are willing to be identified as a follower of Jesus Christ, but their commitment is superficial and they have no staying power.

In 9:18–22 Matthew shows us two of the things that often keep such people from genuine conversion: personal comfort and personal riches.

THE BARRIER OF PERSONAL COMFORT

Now when Jesus saw a crowd around Him, He gave orders to depart to the other side. And a certain scribe came and said to Him, “Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.” And Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.” (8:18–22)

Jesus and His disciples were on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, and the **crowd** became so massive that He **gave orders to depart to the other side**. Though He was completely God, Jesus was also completely human. He needed occasional rest and respite from the never-ending demands of those who came to Him for help.

When Jesus decided to cross the lake, the issue of commitment was pressed for several men who apparently were reevaluating their relationship to Him. From Mark we learn that

some of the crowd got into other boats in order to go across the lake with Jesus (4:36), but three men (a third is mentioned in Luke 9) obviously did not want to leave and they approached Jesus just before He departed.

The first man was a **certain scribe**, who said to Him, “Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.” Since he did not ask Jesus a question or a favor, we can only guess at the man’s motive for making that statement to Jesus. As a scribe he would have broken with the majority of his fellow scribes had he become a dedicated disciple of Jesus. He knew such a decision would be costly, and perhaps he wanted to see how Jesus reacted to his declaration of allegiance.

The scribes were authorities in Jewish law, and were closely associated with the Pharisees. They were highly educated and were the scholarly class of Jewish society. They were fiercely loyal to the system of religious traditions that many of their forerunners had been instrumental in devising. Typically the scribes were teachers, not followers of teachers, and they were especially reluctant to follow a teacher such as Christ, who not only was not educated in a rabbinic school but actually denounced the traditions they held sacrosanct.

For a scribe to address Jesus as *didaskalos* (Teacher) was therefore a considerable concession in itself, and no doubt the crowd, as well as the inner circle of the twelve disciples, were impressed that the Lord was spoken to so favorably by one of the Jewish leaders. **IN HIS OWN MIND THE MAN NO DOUBT BELIEVED WHAT HE SAID TO JESUS WAS TRUE, JUST AS PETER WAS LATER CONVINCED IN HIS OWN MIND THAT HE WOULD NEVER FORSAKE JESUS (MATT. 26:33, 35). BUT NEITHER MAN KNEW HIMSELF AS WELL AS HE THOUGHT.**

The scribe may have sincerely thought that Jesus was the greatest Teacher he had ever heard and the greatest miracle worker the world had ever seen. He probably sincerely recognized that Jesus’ teaching and power were from God and that He was in some uniquely special way God’s man for the hour. He found Jesus appealing and wanted to be associated with Him. **I will follow You wherever You go**, he said to Jesus.

Unlike many Christian churches and organizations today, who are eager to embrace any famous personality who makes a profession of Christ, **Jesus knew that a strong profession does not necessarily reflect strong commitment.** Even without knowing men's hearts as He did, Christians today can benefit from taking that truth into account.

Jesus responded to the scribe's statement by making a statement of His own. He did not verbally question the man's sincerity but simply mentioned some demands of true discipleship the man had never considered.

Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

At first glance Jesus' words seem unrelated to the scribe's affirmation. He was saying, in proverbial form, that in spite of His divine authority and miracle-working power, self-indulgence was not in His plan, and He had fewer physical comforts than many animals. **Foxes have holes** they can call their own, and **birds of the air have nests** to which they can return and rest.

The Messiah is first referred to as **the Son of Man** in **Dan. 7:13**.

Jesus is called by that title over eighty times in the gospels and it was the most common name that He used for Himself.

It was a term of His humiliation, and was especially appropriate in the figure of His having **nowhere to lay His head**. In His humiliation He did not even have the basic comforts of life. Jesus had no place of His own—no house or property, not even a tent. After the dispute about Jesus' healing of the blind man, "everyone went to his home," John tells us: "But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives" (John 7:53–8:1). Whereas others went home to spend the night, Jesus spent it alone under the stars, in prayer with His Father. We are told of His often spending time in the home of Peter in Capernaum and of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in Bethany, but **we are**

never told of His spending even an hour in His own house, because He had none.

Jesus' purpose in making such a statement was obviously to make the **scribe** take stock of the genuineness of his commitment.

Impressive words of affirmation are easy to make, especially when one does not know the cost of commitment involved. The Lord knew that the initial declared faith of many of His followers was shallow and superficial.

When Jesus was in Jerusalem during the first Passover after He began His ministry, “many believed in His name, beholding His signs which He was doing.” Yet, John goes on to say, “Jesus on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to bear witness concerning man for He Himself knew what was in man” (John 2:23–25).

The Lord had no faith in their faith because He knew it was not genuine.

THOSE PEOPLE WERE ONLY COMMITTED TO THE WONDER AND EXCITEMENT THAT ACCOMPANIED

**HIS WORK, NOT TO HIM AS LORD OR
TO THE WORK OF THE GOSPEL
ITSELF. JESUS REPEATEDLY
REFUSED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF
TEMPORARY POPULARITY, WHICH
HE KNEW WOULD SOON TURN TO
PERMANENT REJECTION.**

In the parable of the sower, Jesus gives a vivid illustration of such people. They are the rocky places that do not have much soil. The seed immediately springs up and gives the appearance of a strong and healthy plant. But because it has no root it is soon scorched by the sun and withers. “This is the man,” Jesus says, “who hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away” (Matt. 13:5–6, 20–21).

Jesus knew human nature is fickle,
unstable, and self-centered, and that
many people are attracted to Him by
excitement, glamor, or the hope of
personal benefit, such as being healed
or fed. They are quick to jump on the
bandwagon when things are going

well, but as soon as the cause becomes unpopular or demands sacrifice they want to jump off. At first they look as if they are alive for Christ and often give glowing testimonies, but when their association with Him begins to cost more than they bargained for they lose interest and are never seen again in the church or in Christian work. As the Bible commentator R. C. H. Lenski observes, such a person “sees the soldiers on parade, the fine uniforms, and the glittering arms and is eager to join, forgetting the exhausting marches, the bloody battles, the graves, perhaps unmarked” (*The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961], pp. 338–39).

Jesus knew the scribe was too eager to declare his allegiance. He did not count the cost of discipleship, which involves self-denial, sacrifice, and quite possibly

suffering. Jesus' proverb about the **foxes** and **birds** represented the relatively minimal sacrifice of being homeless—yet even that cost was obviously too high, because the **scribe** simply disappears without another word said by or about him. The Lord's words hit him where he was weak and unwilling, and his true loyalty only to his own comfort was quick to show itself.

SUGARCOATING THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL, TRYING TO MAKE IT APPEAR TO BE LESS DEMANDING THAN IT IS—OR EVEN NOT DEMANDING AT ALL—NOT ONLY COMPROMISES GOD'S WORD AND DOES DISSERVICE TO THE LORD BUT ALSO DOES DISSERVICE TO THOSE TO WHOM WE WITNESS. JESUS DID NO SUCH THING. HE WARNED HIS DISCIPLES WITH SOBERING CANDIDNESS, *“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves” (Matt. 10:16). He then continued to tell them, “And brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents, and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.... A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become as his teacher, and the slave as his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!” (vv. 21–22, 24–25).*

Toward the end of His ministry the Lord said to His disciples, “They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God” (John 16:2). **Paul assures us that “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim. 3:12).** After presenting the long list of faithful Old Testament saints, the writer of Hebrews says of them that ***some “were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also***

chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground” (11:35–38).

The **scribe** who came to Jesus on the shore of the Sea of Galilee was not willing to pay any such price for his faith. He merely wanted to add excitement to his life, have the prestige of being identified with a popular leader, or some other equally self-centered objective.

An explorer may have many volunteers to go with him on an expedition—until he explains that the team will be working in scorching heat, sub-zero cold, or sweltering swamps, with only subsistence rations, few chances to take a bath, and little contact with the outside world for months at a time. A young athlete may dream of winning a gold medal in the Olympics—until he learns about the rigorous training, strict diet, limited social life, and fierce competition he would have to face for many years.

There is no thrill like the joy of knowing and following Christ, but it is not a thrill that the world can understand or appreciate.

Jesus Christ gives great peace to those who belong to Him, but His peace is not the kind the world gives or seeks (John 14:27). His joy and peace come by the way of ridicule, suffering, and the cross, which His disciples must take up when they follow Him. **“IF ANYONE WISHES TO COME AFTER ME,” HE SAID, “LET HIM DENY HIMSELF, AND TAKE UP HIS CROSS, AND FOLLOW ME”** (Matt. 16:24).

The Christian life is not adding Jesus to one's own way of life but renouncing that personal way of life for His and being willing to pay whatever cost that may require.

THE BARRIER OF PERSONAL RICHES

And another of the disciples said to Him, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.” (8:21)

This man, like the scribe of verse 19, was one of Jesus' disciples in the sense of being a follower who was unofficially identified with Him. He was not one of the twelve, but a hanger-on who had perhaps followed Jesus about the countryside for a few weeks or months.

LIKE THE SCRIBE, HE ASSUMED THAT HIS RELATIONSHIP TO JESUS WAS ALL IT SHOULD BE, AND HE MADE WHAT SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN A REASONABLE REQUEST: *Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.*

Since the Jews did not practice embalming, a dead body had to be quickly prepared and buried. Not only that, but Jewish tradition required that a person mourn for his deceased father or mother for a period of thirty days. The final act of devotion to parents was seeing that they were properly buried. Since Jesus was about to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, a burial obviously could not wait until His return.

*The man's asking for permission to **bury** [his] **father**, however, did not mean that his father was already dead. The phrase was a common Near Eastern figure of speech that referred to a son's responsibility to help his father in the family business until the father died and the inheritance was distributed.*

Obviously such a commitment could involve a long period of time, thirty or forty years or more if the father was relatively young.

The expression is still used in parts of the Middle East today. A few years ago a missionary asked a rich young Turkish man to go with him on a trip to Europe, during which time the missionary hoped to disciple the man. When the young man replied that he must bury his father, the missionary offered his sympathy and expressed surprise that the father had died. The man explained, however, that his father was alive and healthy and that the expression "bury my father" simply meant staying at home and fulfilling his family responsibilities until his father died and he received his share of the inheritance.

Since a man's inheritance was customarily lost or reduced if he did not fulfill his expected responsibilities to the family, the phrase "I must bury my father" was frequently equivalent to "I want to wait until I receive my inheritance."

This second superficial disciple did not want to risk losing his inheritance by committing himself fully to Jesus. He wanted to be associated with Jesus in name, but the focus of his life was on his personal prosperity and well-being, not on serving the Lord.

Jesus therefore **said to him, “Follow Me; and allow the dead to bury their own dead.”** Like “foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests” (v. 20), the seemingly nonsensical expression **allow the dead to bury their own dead** was a proverbial figure of speech.

It meant,

“Let the world take care of the things of the world.”

**THE SPIRITUALLY DEAD
CAN TAKE CARE OF THEIR OWN THINGS.**

In his parallel account of this story, Luke adds

Jesus’ further instruction, “As for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God” (9:60).

**The man’s primary
responsibility as a disciple of
Jesus Christ would be to**

proclaim the gospel, to bring the good news of eternal life to the spiritually dead. The Christian's responsibility is not to follow and mimic the world but to be a witness to the world in Christ's name and power. His citizenship is in the living, eternal kingdom of God, not in the dead and decaying realm of this world.

AGAIN LIKE THE SCRIBE, THIS SECOND OF THE DISCIPLES WHO APPROACHED JESUS ON

THIS OCCASION ALSO DISAPPEARS WITHOUT FURTHER MENTION.

Apparently neither man wanted to discuss the matter further. Jesus' demands were too high, and the appeal of discipleship vanished.

Like the rich young man who asked Jesus what good thing he must do to inherit eternal life (Matt. 19:16–22), when this professing disciple heard Christ's answer, he lost his enthusiasm for the things of the Lord.

For **Jesus** to say, **Follow Me**, is for Him to say, "Deny yourself and take up your cross" (Matt. 16:24). **IT IS NOT THAT ANY AMOUNT OF SELF-DENIAL OR SACRIFICE CAN EARN SALVATION, BUT ANYTHING THAT IS HELD MORE DEARLY THAN CHRIST IS A BARRIER TO CHRIST AND WILL STAND BETWEEN THE UNSAVED PERSON AND SALVATION.**

Luke tells us of a third man who came to Jesus on this occasion and made a profession of discipleship. ***"I will follow You, Lord," he said; "but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home"*** (9:61).

As with the other two men, this man's statement seems perfectly reasonable. It would take but a few days, or a few weeks at the most, for him to pay his parents the simple courtesy of saying good-bye.

But Jesus knew the man's heart and that his motivation was weak and his loyalty divided.

He was not yet ready to give himself wholeheartedly to Jesus as Lord. He was still tied to his parent's apron strings and was under their dominance and control.

The decision to follow Jesus Christ is the most uniquely personal decision that can be made.

It is wonderful when friends and relatives encourage someone to decide for Christ, and it is tragic when they advise against Christ. But whatever the outside influences may be, the commitment is the individual's alone to make. Jesus therefore replied, ***"No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God"*** (v. 62). These words were perhaps adapted from a proverb attributed to the famous Greek poet Hesiod, who lived around 800 B.C.—"You can't plow a straight furrow when looking backward." **A PERSON CANNOT SATISFACTORILY DO THE JOB AT HAND IF HE IS CONTINUALLY LOOKING BACK TO HIS PAST WORK AND LOYALTIES. A PERSON CANNOT FOLLOW JESUS CHRIST IF HE STILL LONGS FOR THE WAYS OF THE OLD LIFE.**

Of these three men who came to Jesus and then disappeared, William MacDonald aptly says, **"THEY LEFT CHRIST TO MAKE A COMFORTABLE PLACE FOR THEMSELVES IN THE WORLD AND TO SPEND THE REST OF THEIR LIVES HUGGING THE SUBORDINATE."**

Jesus made it clear that commitment to Him is total and unreserved or it is not commitment at all.
"Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth," He said. "I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and

a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:34–38).

If a person allows anything to hold him back from full allegiance to Christ, he is not worthy of the kingdom of God.

Jesus is not here talking about Christian service but about salvation.

God will save no one who comes to Him with strings attached.

Throughout the centuries many people have marveled at Jesus, acclaiming His authority, His love, His wisdom, His purity, His power, His provision, His healing, and even His deity—but have failed to give themselves to Him. They praise and profess Jesus, and then walk away.

Bishop **J. C. Ryle** wrote,

"The saddest road to hell is the one that runs under the pulpit, past the

Bible, and through the middle of warnings and invitations.”

Jesus’ response to the three men who came to Him on the shore of Galilee seems to contradict His promise that *“all that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out”* (John 6:37).

Those men personally came to Christ, and they seemed to come positively, speaking well of Him and proclaiming their desire to follow Him. But Jesus’ further words in John 6 explain why so many people who profess to come to Christ do not really come to Him at all.

He said, “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day” (v. 54). In other words, **BELIEF IN JESUS CHRIST IS TOTAL IDENTITY WITH HIM. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS PARTIAL BELIEF OR PARTIAL SALVATION. A PERSON WHO DOES NOT TOTALLY COMMIT HIMSELF TO CHRIST DISBELIEVES IN HIM, NO MATTER HOW MANY POSITIVE THINGS HE MAY HAVE TO SAY ABOUT HIM.**

Jesus therefore went on to say, “There are some of you who do not believe,” and shortly after that we are told that “as a result of this [that is, of all of the hard sayings Jesus had just given], many of His disciples

withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore” (vv. 64, 66).

Coming to Jesus Christ is coming on His terms, not our own.

The person who comes to Christ comes in humility, meekness, a needy beggar in spirit who hungers and thirsts for God’s righteousness, who cries for mercy, and is willing to be hated, reviled, and persecuted for the sake of his Lord (Matt. 5:3–12). The Lord may not take away comforts, money, or relationships with others, but all of those things—and everything else besides—must be given over to Him, to do with as He pleases. Otherwise He is not Lord, no matter how much allegiance to Him is professed.¹

GotQuestions.org

Why is Ezekiel called son of man if it is a title for Jesus?

The term *son of man* is used variously in Scripture. Jesus is indeed referred to as the [Son of](#)

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., [Matthew](#), vol. 2, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985–1989), 17–27.

[Man](#) in the New Testament—88 times, to be exact. The term *son of man* is also found in the Old Testament. The [prophet Ezekiel](#) is called “son of man” over 90 times. Thus, both Jesus and Ezekiel can rightly be called “son of man”; but there is something unique about the way the title is applied to Christ.

In the gospels, Jesus often refers to Himself as the Son of Man (e.g., [Matthew 16:27](#); [Mark 14:21](#); [Luke 7:34](#); [John 3:13](#)). Jesus’ use of this title links Him to [Daniel 7:13–14](#), a passage describing the coming Messiah: “There before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. . . . He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.” The teachers of the Law during Jesus’ time on earth would have readily understood Jesus’ meaning when He applied the title *Son of Man* to Himself. Jesus’ use of the phrase points to His exalted state as a person of the Godhead and the fact that He will fulfill Daniel’s prophecy.

Further, only in the gospels do we find the term *son of man* associated with the definite article, *the*. Jesus always called Himself “*the* Son of Man,” as in the only one there is. In using the definite article, Jesus contrasts Himself with other personalities in the Bible associated with the same term. Ezekiel is never called “*the* son of man”; he is always just a “son of man,” as in one among many.

Son of man is a rather common term in the Bible, and it simply means “man.” It emphasizes the humanity of a person. In the case of Ezekiel, who was often referred to as “son of man” (e.g., [Ezekiel 2:1](#); [3:1](#); [4:1](#); [5:1](#)), God probably chose this manner of direct address to point up the contrast between the human condition of Ezekiel and the transcendent majesty of God. In the first chapter of his book, Ezekiel relates a vision he had of God’s glory—a scene full of [wheels](#) and eyes and storms and fire and strange angelic creatures. In the first verse of the next chapter, God addresses Ezekiel as “son of man.” The prophet could not help but realize his own human frailty and limitations in the face of God’s unsurpassable glory. God is God, and Ezekiel is but a “son of man.”

In Jesus’ case, the application of the title *Son of Man* also highlights the humanity of Christ. The difference is that He is *the* Son of Man; that is, He is the epitome of humanity. Jesus is the Sinless One, humanity perfected, the one to finally reconcile God and man.

Ligonier Ministries:

DECEMBER 30, 2021

Why Is Ezekiel Repeatedly Called the “Son of Man”?

Nathan W. Bingham & Derek Thomas

In the Gospels, Jesus often calls Himself the “Son of Man.” Why does God use this title to address the prophet Ezekiel? Today, Derek Thomas helps us understand what “son of man” means in both instances.

Transcript

NATHAN W. BINGHAM: We’re joined on the Ligonier campus this week by the Senior Minister of the First Presbyterian Church in Columbia, South Carolina, Dr. Derek Thomas. Dr. Thomas, what is the significance of Ezekiel’s being repeatedly called “son of man”?

DR. DEREK THOMAS: This is a great question. My memory tells me that Ezekiel is referred to as the “son of man” some ninety times. This is not something in the dark. This is a biggie. I think it means something different than what it means in the Gospels in reference to Jesus.

Now, Jesus is called the “Son of Man” and the “Son of God.” Up until the late-nineteenth century, even in orthodox Reformed circles, that was interpreted as the “Son of Man” was a reference to His humanity, and the “Son of God” was a reference to His divinity.

These days, nobody believes that, because the “son of man” image is taken from Daniel chapter 7, and the “son of man” idea in Daniel chapter 7 is a divine figure, not a human figure, so that the “son of man” is a reference, a name, ascribing lordship and divinity to Christ.

However, I think in Ezekiel, the reference is to his humanity. He’s a prophet, but he’s also a man. It’s a reminder of his lowliness. In the same way that

in [Psalm 8](#), for example, you have, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him?” I can only quote this from the King James from memory. That’s obviously a reference to man’s frailty, man being created out of the dust of the earth. Why was Ezekiel called the “son of man” and not Jeremiah or Isaiah? I don’t have an answer to that.

Why did God call Ezekiel “Son of man”?

By [BibleAsk](#)

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Ezekiel – Son of Man

The phrase [Son of man](#) was [God](#)’s habitual form of address to the prophet Ezekiel in the Old Testament. This phrase occurs 93 times throughout his book. The Hebrew language has several words for man:

1. ‘ish, which refers to man as a male or husband.

2. 'enosh, which is a more general term, rarely used in the singular, more usually communal for the whole human family. It seems to see man in his [weakness](#), ailment, and mortality.
3. 'adam, designates man in a broad sense. [God](#) said, "Let us make 'adam in our image" ([Genesis 1:26](#)). Our English word "mankind" in many examples properly translates 'adam.
4. geber, which designates man in his youthful strength.

The Lord called Ezekiel the "[son of man](#)" (ben-'adam), to remind him of the [truth](#) that he is a member of the human family. It was through human networks that [God](#) planned to carry His message of salvation to lost human beings. He could have used other means. For example, angels might have been used to evangelize the world. Or the Lord could have used a voice from [heaven](#) to tell of His [truth](#) to the world.

But the Lord wanted to give man the great honor of being a coworker with Him in the mission of reaching out for the lost. Thus, the Lord ordained that man would unite with Him in sharing the "word of reconciliation" ([2 Corinthians 5:19](#)). This task no true "son of man" may refuse. The destiny of humans depends on man's responsibility and his work on behalf of others. Thus, when the Lord called Ezekiel as a "son of man," He presented him with a mission for public ministry.

Jesus – Son of Man

Our Savior referred to Himself as the "son of man" over 85 times in the New Testament. This was a direct quotation to the prophecy of Daniel that says, "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of [heaven](#). He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed" ([Daniel 7:13-14](#)).

By referring to Himself with this title, [Jesus](#) wanted the Jews to see Him as the One who was given dominion and glory and the kingdom, thus, fulfilling the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament.

Also, this phrase means that [Jesus](#) was truly a human being. At the incarnation, the [Son of God](#) took upon Himself the form of humanity ([John 1:1–4](#), [12](#), [14](#); [Philippians 2:7](#); [Hebrews 2:14](#)). And He became the Son of man ([Mark 2:10](#)). Thus, He united divinity with humanity by a tie which will never be broken. John the beloved wrote, “By this you know the [Spirit of God](#): Every spirit that confesses that Jesus [Christ](#) has come in the flesh is of God” ([1 John 4:2](#)). It is a most comforting thought to repentant sinners to know that their representative before the Father is “One like” themselves but without [sin](#) ([Hebrews 4:15](#)).

In His service,
[BibleAsk](#) Team