

# Son of God, Son of Man, King of Israel

by John Piper

---

*This sermon delves into the significance of the names and titles attributed to Jesus in the Gospel of John, highlighting how they reveal his identity and purpose, ultimately leading to his sacrificial death for humanity. The focus is on the titles 'Son of God,' 'King of Israel,' and 'Son of Man,' exploring their deep meanings and how they were understood by different individuals. The sermon emphasizes Jesus as the ultimate connection between heaven and earth, the meeting place with God, and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, culminating in his sacrificial death on the cross for eternal life.*

**Duration:** 39:09

**Scripture:** John 1:1, John 1:14, John 1:51, Daniel 7:13, John 3:14, Isaiah 9:6

**Topics:** "Identity of Christ", "Sacrificial Love"

---

## Description

This sermon delves into the significance of the names and titles attributed to Jesus in the Gospel of John, highlighting how they reveal his identity and purpose, ultimately leading to his sacrificial death for humanity. The focus is on the titles 'Son of God,' 'King of Israel,' and 'Son of Man,' exploring their deep meanings and how they were understood by different individuals. The sermon emphasizes Jesus as the ultimate connection between heaven and earth, the meeting place with God, and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, culminating in his sacrificial death on the cross for eternal life.

---

## Transcript

As we come to the end of chapter 1 in the Gospel of John, we have now seen 10 names or titles of the Lord Jesus. Now this is important to see because not only do names or titles tell you something about a person and about their job, but in the case of Jesus, they also give an amazing insight into why so many people would want him dead. And they point us, therefore, to the most glorious thing about the grace of God, namely the death of his Son on our behalf.

So we're going to look at three and I would like to pray before we do. So would you pray with me? O Son of God, King of Israel, and Son of Man, help me speak true things about who you are. May we come away in a few minutes from this moment in your word with not only a knowledge of what Son of God, King of Israel, Son of Man mean in the mouth of Nathanael and in the mouth of Jesus and in the Gospel of John, but moved to the depths of our being by what they signify concerning you, our Lord, and how they were turned so against you to the point where your exact will for us and for yourself happened, namely your slaughter.

So come and make these names plain, I pray, through Christ. Amen. Let me give you the ten that we have seen.

I'll give you the verse if you want to look at it with me. They're all here in chapter one and so it might be that your eyes could fall upon them quickly enough. Verse one, number one, the Word.

In the beginning was the Word. Number two, verse one, God and the Word was God. Number three, verse nine, light.

The true light was coming into the world. Number four, verse seventeen, Jesus Christ. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Five, verse twenty-nine, Lamb of God. Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. Verse thirty-eight, number six, Rabbi.

And they said to him, Rabbi, which means teacher, where are you staying? Number seven, verse forty-one, Messiah. We have found the Messiah, which means Christ. Number eight, Son of God, verse forty-nine, verse forty-nine, you are the Son of God.

Number nine, verse forty-nine, you are the King of Israel. King of Israel. And finally number ten, Son of Man, verse fifty-one, you will see heaven open and angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.

So those last three, Son of God, King of Israel, Son of Man, are worth our special focus. These are doubly precious because they both tell us something about his greatness and they tell us something about his death because of how they were used and indeed how he designed them to be used. First, let's consider Son of God and King of Israel together.

Nathanael spoke them together, they belong together as you will see. So Jesus tells Nathanael that before he was even there he saw him under a fig tree and he told him what was in his heart. And Nathanael is so blown away by Jesus' knowledge of what is not in his presence that he bursts out in verse forty-nine, Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel.

Now Nathanael obviously meant something very great by that, but probably not as great as they would come to mean in Jesus' thinking and in this gospel and in Jesus' mouth. So we want to see both. We want to see what Nathanael meant as a Jew who would rise to that level of insight and what this gospel makes of these names.

Nathanael was an Israelite in whom there was no guile. He said it like he saw it and probably knew his Old Testament because there were prominent verses in the Old Testament about the coming one, the Messiah, and the one that puts together King and Son, and there are many, three that I can think of right off the bat. Probably the most prominent one was 2 Samuel chapter 7. I'm going to look at Old Testament texts that you may not have time to look up, so jot them down and check it out later.

2 Samuel 7, 12 to 14 go like this. This is God speaking to David. I will raise up from your offspring after you who will come from your body and I will establish his kingdom.

He shall build a house for my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he shall be to me a son. Now at the first level the meaning is Solomon.

We know that because the next phrase says, and when he sins, you say, okay that's not Jesus, but Solomon's kingdom didn't last forever. You got layers here. Yes there will be Solomon and yes he will build an earthly house, but his kingdom won't be forever.

And all Israel knew this promise meant more. It became a rock solid basis for the hope. There's another king coming.

He would be the son of David. He would be the king of Israel. And Nathaniel no doubt had in mind, that's who's here.

And then you see that phrase at the end of verse 14, and I will be a father to him and he will be a son to me. And you can see why Nathaniel might have put together, you are the son of God and you are the king of Israel, because in the foundational promise he was king and his kingdom would last forever and he was son. And so Nathaniel is giving expression to both of these.

When Jesus was predicted to marry by the angel, the angel said in Luke 132, the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. These are the very words of 2nd Samuel. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever and his kingdom of his kingdom there will be no end.

In other words, Jesus fulfills 2nd Samuel chapter 7 verses 13 and 14. He is a king, his kingdom will have no end and he is a son of God. I will be a father to him and he shall be to me a son.

This child to be born, the angel said to Mary, will be holy, the son of God. So the angel puts together all the pieces of 2nd Samuel. He will be the son of David, his kingdom will have no end, he will be holy, the son of God.

King of Israel, son of God. In the words to Mary, in Nathaniel's mouth and in 2nd Samuel chapter 7. Let me give you another place in the Old Testament where Nathaniel probably had been schooled and where the ideas that formed the expectation of the Messiah in those days would have been formed. This is Psalm chapter 2. Both Messiahship, anointing, kingship and sonship are all right here.

So I'll read it to you. This is Psalm 2 verses 2 through 7. The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed. Now that's the word for Messiah, Messiah, anointed one.

Verse 5. Then he will speak to them in his wrath and terrify them in his fury saying, as for me I have set my king. This is God speaking of his king. My king on Zion, my holy hill.

Now the anointed one is king. Verse 7. I will tell of the decree the Lord said to me, you are my son, today I have begotten you. So there you have all three clustered together, anointed, that is Messiah, king, son.

Nathaniel knew this. There would come one, Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel. That is, the time of fulfillment is here.

There was a frenzy ready to happen in Israel when just the right person would come along and there had been pretenders along the way and expectations ran very high and the Roman overlords were so oppressing and they knew this could not last and God meant to break the bonds of those who oppressed his people if just the right person would come. And so he knew, you're the one, kingdom is here, Messiah

has come, he will rule the nations with a rod of iron, just says, like it says in Psalm 2 verses 8 and 9, and he was so right and so wrong. He believed too much and he believed too little about Jesus.

Too much and too little. Too much because this son and this king would be executed as a criminal. Unfathomable, probably, to Nathaniel.

Too little because these terms, son and king, were to mean probably more than Nathaniel dreamed. What did they mean for Jesus? What did they mean for John? Let me take you on a little pilgrimage in the gospel to make it crystal clear what they meant for Jesus and John writing about him. We'll start, and you might want to look at these, these are absolutely crucial texts in the gospel of John.

John 5 18 says, this was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own father, making himself equal with God. Where did they get that idea? Because I doubt that Nathaniel thought that. There were enough clues in the Old Testament to get that, I will try to show you in a minute, but most of the Jews wouldn't have gone there.

How did they get there? Jesus took them there. Chapter 8 verse 57, derisively, they scoff and ask him, have you seen Abraham? 8 57, have you seen Abraham? The one who lived 2,000 years ago? Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am. Now that's more than you may think it is.

Not only did it claim, yeah I saw him, and I was before him, but to use the word I am is absolute blasphemy, unless it's true. Because God had identified himself in Exodus 3 14, I am who I am. Tell them I am sent you.

This is God. This is as radical as you can possibly get if you want to get crucified. That's how they got there.

That's how Sonship language began to fill up with its Old Testament fullness, not its reinterpreted fullness. Chapter 10 verse 33, I'm telling you these are absolutely crucial texts in the Gospel of John. Put a star by them in the margin.

Chapter 10 verse 33, they had, by the way, picked up stones to stone him back in chapter 8 when he said that. Now they say, it's not for a good work that we are about to stone you, but for blasphemy, because you being a man, make yourself God. So when the accusers take him before Pilate in chapter 19 verse 7, they made the connections clear.

Sonship and blasphemous claims to deity. John 19 7, we have a law, and according to that law, he ought to die, because he has made himself the Son of God. That's not a capital crime if it just means prophet.

But if it means what they came to see that he meant by it, it is. So Son of God had come to mean much more than merely a human Messiah. You make yourself God.

That was the meaning in the mouth of Jesus and in the Gospel of John. The greater the title became, the more foolish it became, the more deadly it became. And that's the way Jesus meant it to be.

I leaned over to Kenny after the communion table meditation and said, thank you. That was really good. Because the reason he took us from Nathaniel's understanding to the fullness of his own is so that he would be killed.

That's why he did it. He could have left ambiguity abounding. He could have postured himself as just another human pretender, and he would have been blown off, but he wouldn't let it go.

He would be killed. That's why he came, because as Kenny said, he loves you so much. Now I said, this is not a reinterpretation of the Old Testament.

This is not, well, they didn't get it right, Jesus got it right. Let me just read you one Old Testament text where the whole package is there, okay? And you know this text. This is your favorite Christmas text, mine.

This is Isaiah 9, 6, and 7. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called Wonderful Counselor. Tell me the next one. Mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, and of the increase of his government, and of peace that we know in, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and uphold it with justice and righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.

Son, God, King. This is not reinterpretation, this is application. I'm that.

You don't have to believe it. And in this room right now, some do and some don't, but now it has been presented to you, Jesus came as the Jewish Messiah, and then he just filled up for their full understanding what was really there. Mighty God.

The term King of Israel and not just the term Son of God was turned against him, as you know. The more it got big, the more it got treasonous. And in the end, it is his kingship that would be his death sentence.

John 19, 12, Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, if you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar. The more the names became clear, the more they became deadly.

And Jesus made them as clear as he meant them to be, because he loves you. Sometimes we look, I look for places in the Bible that exalt Jesus and show love to me, because it's one of my favorite things to say, that the way he loves me is by exalting himself. Well, there it is.

You want to get yourself killed for me? Make this much of yourself. If you don't want to die for me, don't let much be made of you. But if you mean to die for me, go ahead and make much of yourself like you do with Son of God and King of Israel, so that you will be surely slaughtered on the cross, unmistakably executed for me.

I am so thankful that you made much of yourself in this way for me. Let's turn to Son of Man. We're at verse 50 in chapter 1 of John.

Jesus answered Nathanael, because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these. Verse 51. He said to him, truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened and angels, the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.

That's a strange verse, right? Like he's a ladder? Yes, yes. Now, some of you know where this is coming from, right? You have a picture. You're like the Israelite in whom there's no God.

You know your Old Testament, you know Genesis 28, you remember that story. You know where Bethel, that name comes from. Not many of you are nodding your head, so I'm not assuming you do know.

Jacob lays down, puts a rock under his head. No wonder you have dreams, you've got a rock under your head. And he has a dream.

What a dream. Let me read it to you. This is the picture of where Jesus in verse 51 is getting this image.

And we're going to try to figure out, what are you doing here? So let me read it to you. This is Genesis 28, verses 12 to 16. Jacob dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven.

Behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it, on it. There's the language of verse 51. And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, I am the Lord, the God of Abraham, your father, and the God of Isaac, the land on which you lie, I will give to you and your offspring.

Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, for I will not leave you until I have done what I promised you. In other words, this is a big, strong reaffirmation of the covenant made with Abraham, now made with Jacob. Verse 16, then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.

And then he named the place Beth-el, house of God. Now, what do we make of Jesus' statement? You're going to see more than this, Nathaniel. You're going to see heaven opened and angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man, period, no explanation.

Here is what helps me. There's no explanation in Genesis 28 either. In other words, angels going up and angels coming down on a ladder in a dream, zero explanation.

Just God talking. Covenant, new, you. I'm here, you're mine, I keep my word, and the angels are going up and down.

Nothing, no explanation, which says to me, you don't need to know that. I mean, the very thing I want to know, you don't need to know. It's not there in the Old Testament, it's not there in the New Testament.

So step back, you know, step back, open the lens a little bit. Don't go in the angel, angel, what are you doing? What are you for? Get the picture here, so that's what I'm going to do, because as I read the commentaries, nobody knows what's going on here. Don't think, oh, if I knew Greek, wouldn't help.

I think, and you step back and open your lens, what Jesus is doing here is saying two things, or John in capturing this is saying two things. One is that Jesus is the final decisive connection between heaven and earth. It's the final decisive connection on the Son of Man.

You want to go up, go on Jesus. You want to come down, you go on Jesus. No up without Jesus, no down without Jesus.

Son of Man is there, he's the link. The decisive final link. Nobody going up without going on Jesus.

And Jesus came down on Jesus. Second, I think it's the place where decisively now we meet God. Jesus is where we meet God.

This is the house of God. Some commentators say, Jesus is the new Bethel. I think that's probably right.

New Bethel. If you want to say, we're on the planet today, the holy place that I can do a pilgrimage and be in the house of God. Answer, Jesus.

You want to go to a holy place on the planet? Stand still and come to Jesus. That's the way things changed in the New Testament. There aren't any holy sites in the Christian religion, zero.

I've never gone to Israel, mainly for that reason. Please, when I'm here 30 years, don't give me a free trip to Israel. Fix my car.

I've got no problem with you going to Israel. I don't want any emails. There's just no more Jesus in Israel than there is in your pew right now.

I think that's what's going on in general. There's probably more. I really feel like a surface scratcher as I read the gospel.

Feel free to go deeper. That's what I think he meant. Nathaniel, I am the link between heaven and earth.

I am the meeting place with God. And as I move through the rest of my earthly ministry, there are going to be manifestations of my connection with heaven and manifestations of God's presence with me that are going to blow you away if you have eyes to see. Something like that.

Now here's the last question. Why did he use the term son of man? Could have just said me or son of God or king of Israel or Messiah. What does son of man do here? And what does it mean? This is in Jesus' language.

In fact, some of you know this, but I'll tell you the others. Son of man is Jesus' favorite self-designation. Eighty times in the gospels and nobody uses it but Jesus.

Did you know that? He's never called the son of man by anybody but himself, with one exception outside of the gospel. Stephen, chapter 7 of the book of Acts, saw the son of man. Now that's amazing.

That's amazing. That calls for some reflection. Why did you choose this name for your favorite? I think the common conception of son of God signifies divine and son of man signifies human is not entirely wrong.

But it is overly simplified. And the reason we know that it's oversimplified is because in all likelihood, Jesus took the term son of man from Daniel chapter 7 verses 13 and 14. I'm going to read it to you and you make your judgment as to whether or not you think that because when you look at what he does with it, this is Daniel chapter 7 verses 13 and 14.

I saw in the night visions and behold with the clouds of heaven. This is a heavenly scene. He's seeing something going on in heaven.

With the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man. That's the phrase. And he came to the ancient of days, that's God the father, and was presented before him.

And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom that all the peoples and nations and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away. This is all the language of Messiah and all the language of 2 Samuel, and all the language of Isaiah, 9, 6. 9, 6. And his kingdom is one that will not be destroyed.

So, this picture of one like a son of man coming to the presence of God, receiving a kingdom, that kingdom will never end. His dominion will never cease. Kingship, glory, sovereignty.

So, when Jesus uses the term son of man, two things are going on, not just one thing. It has a lowly ring. It does.

Son of man, the prophets used it for themselves. It can mean just human. That's what it means.

Son of man, in its most ordinary sense, it has a lowly ring to it. Son of God, King of Israel, they can get you killed. Son of man, that's just lowly, it's just humble, unless you have eyes to see.

And then it's both humble, it makes you wonder, you're talking Daniel 7? And I think Jesus would say, he who has ears, let him hear. Yeah, Daniel 7, that's what he means. We close like this.

Son of God and King of Israel are magnificent titles of the Messiah, filled to overflowing by Jesus to the point where they got him killed. Son of man did not get him killed, but he took the name son of man and made it the designation of the picture of himself killed for us. Nobody did this, he did this.

And I'll read you the key verse, and we will be done. John chapter 3, this is just before your great favorite verse John 3.16. John chapter 3 verses 14 and 15. 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.

So you could say that the greatest glory you will ever see, or that Nathanael would ever see, is son of God, King of Israel, son of man lifted up on a cross so that whoever would look to him in Advent season for the healing of the poison of sin coursing through our lives, they would have eternal life. We have a great Savior. Oh, how I pray that in this season your love for him will rise, your trust in him will deepen, your understanding of him will grow, and your life will become radiant with his glory.

Glory as of the only son from the Father, full of grace and truth from which you receive grace upon grace, because it was the plan. I will be the son of God, I will be the King of Israel, I will be the son of man, and I will be lifted up. Nobody takes my life from me.

I lay it down of my own accord for you. The worship folder that you received has a tear-off part called the sermon response form, and if you would like anyone to call you about this and deal with you about spiritual things, you tear that off, fill it out, drop it in the response box on every campus. There are response boxes at the door.

We would get in touch with you. Now Lord, do your saving work, your strengthening work, and your Christ-exalting work. Thank you for revealing to us the beauty of your sonship, your kingship, and your divine humanity.

Through Christ we pray. Amen.

---

Video: [https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/hl3qLRqN\\_Po.mp4](https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/hl3qLRqN_Po.mp4)

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-piper/son-of-god-son-of-man-king-of-israel/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**