



Healing of the Paralytic Man

In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

In this morning's Gospel the Lord goes by boat to his own city, Capernaum, which, during His public ministry served as His headquarters. It was in this town that the Lord actually spent most of His time, and it was here that Christ worked His great miracle of feeding the five thousand. Capernaum does not exist today, but it was on a fertile plain right next to the Sea of Galilee and was mentioned in the writings of Josephus, the historian of the late first century. The best scholars today believe that Capernaum was at the archeological site called *Tell Hum*, where there are abundant ruins; here also the likely spot of the feeding of the five thousand has been identified.



In Capernaum a paralyzed man was brought to Jesus, lying on a pallet. The Lord healed him, saying, "Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you." But Christ was challenged by the scribes who were standing nearby. Now the scribes make up a particular group of individuals who enjoyed the authority of leadership in Israel. Like the Pharisees and the High Priests, they were opponents of the

Savior. The scribes have an important and interesting history, and not just in Israel. All ancient peoples had large numbers of scribes for the transmission of religious texts and other legal and historical documents. In the Old Testament the best-known scribe was Ezra and because he was both a scribe and a priest, he was a very powerful religious leader. In his Gospel, St. Matthew presented the scribes as the learned of Judaism, leaders of the community. St. Luke portrayed them as an extension of the Pharisees, and also advisors to the priests in the Temple. They were intellectuals who were constantly defending and protecting Judaism, and since they saw the Lord as a distinct challenge and a threat to the Temple Judaism of their time, they constantly sought Him out, criticizing, sneering, and trying to trap Him by their questions.

On this particular occasion these scribes drew near and exclaimed of Christ, "This Man blasphemes!" They said this because they knew, as observant Jews, that only God can forgive sins—and yet, before their very eyes and in their own hearing, the man, Jesus of Nazareth, had just forgiven this sick man's sins! Therefore the Lord responded, "[So that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins](#)'—then He said to the paralytic, '[Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.](#)' And he arose and departed to his house."



HERE, IN THIS SHORT ACCOUNT, WE SEE THREE SIGNS OF CHRIST'S DIVINITY.

First, He knew the secrets of the human heart and soul, for He saw that this man's sickness came as a result of his sins. (This sometimes happens—we have only to look at people who smoke or otherwise abuse their bodies, to see how sin brings about illness and even death. This also happens, according to St. Paul, It is only God who can know such things.

Second, the Lord granted forgiveness of sins, to those who receive Holy Communion unworthily—that is, without repentance and proper preparation).

And thirdly, the healing of the paralytic is accomplished merely by the power of the Lord's word, and not through any kind of medical or medicinal help. No mere man can do this. Again, such power can only reside in and come from God.

Notice that the Savior in His response to the Scribes calls Himself—as He does 87 other times in the New Testament—the "Son of Man." This has been used as an argument by the Jews, Muslims, and other non-believers to show that Jesus is not God, but only man.

SO WE MUST ASK: WHAT DID THE LORD MEAN BY CALLING HIMSELF THE "SON OF MAN" AND WHY DOES HE DO THIS?

This term or title actually refers back to the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament, where the prophet wrote: ([Daniel 7:13-14](#)) "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."

So, it turns out that the term "Son of Man" is one of the titles of the Messiah, the Anointed One of Israel, *The Christ*, and whenever the Lord used this phrase, He was asserting that the prophecy of Daniel had been fulfilled in Himself. Naturally, the Jews of that time would have been intimately familiar with the phrase and to whom it referred. He calling Himself by this title would have further underscored their hatred and rejection of Jesus of Nazareth.

But there is also a second meaning here that we need to take note of. This phrase tells us that the Lord was not only Messiah, but *also* a human being. So, the second meaning of the phrase "Son of Man" is that Jesus was truly a human being. You may not know that, in the Old Testament, God also called the prophet Ezekiel "son of man" 93 times. God was simply calling

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Sunday Sermon

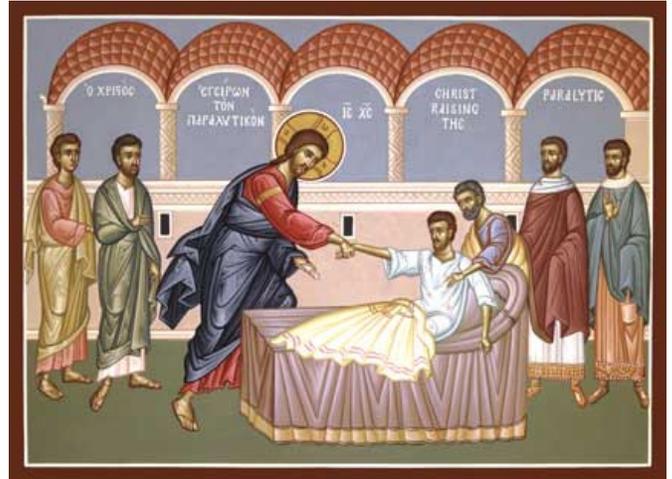
Fr Ambrose Young
Entrance of the Theotokos Skete



Ezekiel a human being, certainly not a divine being. So, in this sense, a son of a man is a man. Christ was fully God but He was *also* fully a human being.

Therefore today's account of the healing of the paralytic is about much more than just a healing. It is a clear demonstration of Christ's divinity, both in his word and action.

Those, today, who say that Jesus was just a Good Man, have not properly read, studied, and understood the New Testament. If they had they would have come to the same conclusion that others have come to: Either Christ was a liar; in which case we *should not* pay Him any attention; or He was mad, crazy—in which case we shouldn't give Him any credence whatsoever. *Or* He was speaking the truth—in which case we *must* listen to Him, give Him complete attention, and not only follow but obey Him in all that He taught and commanded.



In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.