

TRUE VERSUS BOGUS FOLLOWERS

In Matthew 8:1-17, we have seen the kingdom authority of Jesus on display, which evoked an emotional response among the masses. But as Lord, Jesus demands that His people be followers who truly recognize and submit to His authority. Matthew now inserts two examples to illustrate this reality.

Matthew 8:18 (NKJV)

18 And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side.

Want to draw huge phenomenal crowds – just perform authentic kingdom miracles. That is what Jesus did and the crowd swelled to the point Jesus moved to depart to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

However, Jesus wasn't just looking for fame or to draw crowds. He was seeking true disciples – true followers. We note from John 6 that even though followed by GREAT masses of people, many of these were not true disciples. They followed Christ for self-serving reasons – for what they could potentially get out of it and not simply because of WHO He was.

This is consistently the issue. WHY is one following Jesus? True disciples follow Jesus because He is Lord to them. Those with another agenda (such as Judas) are not true disciples. And often this is the case.

As Jesus prepared to cross over the Sea of Galilee a scribe stepped forward claiming to be willing to be a follower. Again, we see the issue is one of authority and Christ's right to demand ultimate allegiance. As Lord He sets the terms.

Matthew 8:19 (NKJV)

19 Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go."

The scribes were the scholars of the day – biblical scholars. They were often associated closely with the Pharisees.

The term scribe is used 23 times in Matthew – almost always in a negative way. In that context a certain scribe came to Jesus saying, "**Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.**"

Now if it was you or I responding we would probably have said, "**Praise the Lord, let's get you signed up now.**" But Jesus did not do that. He

pressed further as if to indicate this man had not really counted the cost of true discipleship.

It is noteworthy that he called Jesus “**Teacher**” (Gk. didaskalos) and not “**Lord**” (Gk. kurios).

“Teacher is used in Matthew by people who did not actually believe in Jesus (12:38; 19:16; 22:16, 24, 36).” – ***The Moody Bible Commentary***

Popular movements are exciting and have a draw to them. People want to be a part of it. Apparently, this is where this scribe was coming from. He wanted the prestige of it all but had not considered the cost of being a true disciple.

Matthew 8:20 (NKJV)

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.”

Jesus did not make the terms of following Him easy. Talk is cheap! But real commitment is another thing. Jesus did not even have a place of His own to sleep.

“Strictly speaking it was...a pointed way of saying that true discipleship to the “Son of Man” is not comfortable and should not be undertaken without counting the cost (cf. Luke 14:25-33).” – ***D.A. Carson***

This seems to be the sense of it. Discipleship is not glamorous or comfortable. Unless you are all in on the basis of faith in Christ alone simply because He is the Messiah you are missing it. If you are in it for what you can get out of it, you are not a true disciple and are probably going to be sorely disappointed in short order.

True discipleship is committed to Christ on the basis of WHO He is not for what I can selfishly get out of it.

“Nothing... has done more harm to Christianity than the practice of filling the ranks of Christ’s army with every volunteer who is willing to make a little profession, and to talk fluently of his ‘experience.’”

– ***J.C. Ryle***

The scribe called Jesus “Teacher” but in response Jesus called Himself “the **Son of Man**” which is clearly a Messianic title.

The term “son of man” in the Bible sometimes speaks of humanity in general (cf. Ps. 8:4). It was repeatedly used in reference to the prophet Ezekiel (cf. Ezek. 2:1; 3:1; 4:1, etc.).

But the title “**Son of Man**” was also very definitely used in reference to the coming Messiah as seen in Daniel 7:13-14 which is probably the key point of reference in Christ’s usage of it.

Daniel 7:13–14 (NKJV)

13 “I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him.

14 Then 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 the one Which shall not be destroyed.

This was no normal “son of man”. This “Son of Man” was unique. He is identified with humanity and yet uniquely exalted above all the people and given an everlasting kingdom with everlasting glory – which is something indicative of deity. He was human but no mere human. Son of Man carries with it the idea of being the ultimate human representative and yet carries with it overtures of divine authority (cf. Mt. 9:6; 12:8; 19:28).

“Son of Man [was a] title understood by the Jews of Messiah (Jn. 12:34), and as equivalent to “Son of God” (Lk. 22:69-70).”

– *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*

In short “**Son of Man**” was seen as a Messianic concept in which the Messiah was Man but also God. That fits the God-Man we call Jesus! Son of Man was the title Christ most used of Himself. It is found 81 times in the gospels (30 times in Matt; 14 times in Mark; 25 Times in Luke; and 12 times in John), and only 3 times outside of the gospels (cf. Acts 7:56; Rev. 1:13; 14:14).

Messianic Titles

Son of Man – human name.

Son of David – royal name.

Son of God – divine name.

It is surmised that Jesus had “**Son of Man**” as the favorite title for Himself because He did not want the common idea of a political Messiah to be the emphasis surrounding Him. Instead, He made the emphasis of His identity

as Messiah with that of human experience. That is after all the key reason for the incarnation and His state of humiliation.

Again His right to rule must first be preceded by His role of suffering and death. In Luke 24:26 Jesus showed that as the Christ He first had to suffer and then enter into His glory. 1 Peter 1:11 speaks of “the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.”

Note in the very same context here in Matthew 8 there is an emphasis on the Messiah being the suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 (cf. v. 17); and Him being the ultimate reigning “Son of Man” as seen in Daniel 7 (v. 13-14). They go together. As Son of Man He suffered and died and as mankind’s ultimate representative He will rule in the kingdom forever. It all fits perfectly in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.