Early Christology: The Eschatological Son of Man in Daniel, Jewish Apocalyptic, and the Synoptics

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Introduction

If the NT is the result of the Jesus-event, and the Jesus event is the root cause of the NT, then S. Neill may be right in saying that every theology of the NT must be a theology of Jesus, "or it is nothing at all."¹ In the Jesus event is the most intriguing designation, "son of man," which Jesus used solely and most frequently in the Gospels, but the NT writers disregarded almost entirely (Acts 7:56; Heb. 2:6; Rev. 1:13; 14:14). We grapple then with the son of man of the Gospels. How was Jesus like or unlike the son of man of Jewish expectation? How does Jesus’ use of “son of man” define his self-understanding and future role in the end times? The aim of this essay is two-fold—to show the characteristics of the eschatological son of man in Daniel and Jewish apocalypse tradition, and compare similarities and dissimilarities with the trajectory of early apocalypse son of man sayings² in the Synoptics. The analysis will cover Jewish apocalyptic at Qumran (200 B.C.E.-70 C.E.),³ 1 (Ethiopic) Enoch 37:71 (105-64 B.C.E.),⁴ Testament of Abraham (C.E. 100),⁵ and 4 Ezra 3-14 (2 Esdras 1-16) (C.E. 100).⁶ The choice of the Synoptics is logical, given our purposes, in that Matthew, Mark, and Luke link “primitive” son of man sayings with each other.⁷ The Synoptic pericope includes only those parallel accounts, which imply authorial emphasis of Jesus’ future coming and function in the final judgment. In what follows, I will explore features of the son of man in Daniel, in that it is the starting point of both Jewish apocalyptic and many eschatological son of man sayings in the Synoptics⁸—as a background for establishing Jesus’ conception of himself.

Son of Man in Daniel

The singular Aramaic noun, ܢܗܪܐ, means collectively, “man, mankind.”⁹ Thus, the phrase, ܢܗܪܐ ܢܢܐ, “one like a son of man” (Dan. 7:13),¹⁰ may be simply translated literally in gender-

⁷ John (CE 90-100) is excluded, since the purpose of our essay covers only early son of man Synoptic references. J. A. T. Robinson’s arguments for John’s dating at CE 65 may carry weight. Marianne M. Thompson, “John, Gospel of,” DJG, 370-371. Yet due to a clear link with each other, the Synoptics provide a historical reconstruction of the teaching of Jesus. Its earlier dating and ample early manuscript evidence make it a logical ground for studying early Christologies. If John excluded the Synoptics as his source, it should be treated on its own witness, either along with or apart from the Synoptics.
neutral fashion, “one like a son of humankind,” or dynamically, “one like a human life form” (cf. Job 25:6). B. Lindars well explains that “like a son of man,” with the preposition, 2, indicating the means of seeing the vision—signifies, “a human figure seen in a vision.” There is no symbolism involved here, as J. J. Collins argues, since the figure of the son of man is connected with the Ancient of Days, whereas the beasts are allegories of the kings (Dan. 7:17). In the single other occurrence of “son of man” in Daniel, it refers to a human figure. In the Psalms, it indicates a royal “human being” (Ps. 8:4; 146:3), a “corporate representative figure” of humankind (Ps. 8:4), or Israel, the people of God (Ps. 80:17-19). In Ezekiel, Yahweh used the phrase to refer to the prophet himself (Ezek. 2:1, 3, 6, 8). In any case, the referent is to literal or symbolic human figures, but not angelic beings. J. A. Montgomery admits that the earliest interpretation of son of man in Daniel is “Messianic.” 1 Enoch and 4 Ezra attest it also (1 En. 46:1; 48:3, 10; 52:4; 2 Esd. 13:3, 25). Yet, if the son of man refers to a messianic ruling figure (Dan. 7:17; Ps. 8:4), the only identified ruler in Daniel is the archangel, Michael (Dan. 10:21; 12:1). It appears that Daniel nowhere refers to a messianic, Davidic ruler.

The angelic ruler motif in Daniel would indicate a probable human-like angelic figure representing the son of man, as D. Rowley, A. J. Ferch, and Collins argue. It would then correspond to the saints of the Most High who, Collins contends, refer to the angelic hosts. It would seem to correlate to the expression of the son of man coming with his angels (Matt. 16:27). However, as R. A. Anderson notes, to connect Michael or Gabriel to the son of man would go against the evidence of the text, as contended below. It is hard to imagine that Daniel may recognize which being is angelic or not, given that they all appeared to him like men. G. Vermes notes that there is no hint or presumption in the Daniel narrative of any knowledge of angelic pre-history and mythological background.

Nonetheless, the phrase, “clouds of heaven” (Dan. 7:13), recalls the glory-cloud of Yahweh (Ex. 16:10; 19:9). The cloud figure is connected frequently with the presence of Yahweh at Sinai or the Temple (1 Ki. 8:10-11; 2 Chr. 5:13-14; Ezek. 1:4; 10:3-4), both in the

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10 All quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).
12 Barnabas Lindars, Jesus, Son of Man: A Fresh Examination of the Son of Man Sayings in the Gospels in the Light of Recent Research (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 10.
13 Collins, Daniel, 305.
15 In Ezekiel, the appearance of a man refers to the likeness of “the glory of the LORD” (Ezek. 1:26, 28).
17 Collins, Daniel, 309; also, Anderson, Signs, 87.
19 Collins, Daniel, 310.
20 Anderson, Signs, 87.
Pentateuch and prophetic literature. It is “an exclusively divine attribute,” L. Sabourin affirms. This attribute is more about presence than about judgment. That judgment is “implicit” in the son of man’s dominion, as J. G. Baldwin thinks, is but inferred. There is nothing in the text that suggests a judicial role for the son of man, Anderson notes. Yet G. L. Archer Jr. asserts that in the OT, Yahweh is frequently portrayed as coming in the clouds to effect judgment (Ps. 18:10-14; 97:1-5; 104:3; Isa. 19:1; Nah. 1:3). In Daniel 7, the scene is clearly judicial. Nevertheless, the function of judgment is explicitly given to “the saints of the Most High” (Dan. 7:22). Thus, while the son of man is given “dominion, glory,” and “a kingdom” and hence, ruling authority (Dan. 7:14), the saints of the Most High are also given the authority to judge, receive, and possess the kingdom. Clearly, the son of man in Daniel is associated first with the kingdom.

Baldwin argues that judgment in Dan. 7:22 is given “in their favour, and not ‘to the saints’ (AV, RV), an idea which does not belong to the sense here (though see 1 Cor. 6:2).” However, the prefixed preposition, ב, in this context, denotes “to” or “for.” With the peal participle verb, הָשְׁלַמֶּה, “given,” the idea of “direction towards” the “saints” predominates here. Hence, judgment is given “to” the saints, and in this case also, “for” the saints to receive the kingdom and possess it forever (Dan. 7:18). Likewise, F. F. Bruce, following C. F. D. Moule, sees here the judgment authority as given both to the saints and in favor of them.

Collins shows that the predominant use of “holy ones” refers to “angels” in Dan. 8:13 and 12:7, as well as in the Hebrew Bible, Qumran, Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and Aramaic Jewish sources down to the second century B.C.E., except the Similitudes of 1 Enoch. However, V. Poythress points out that the OT predominantly refers to Israel as the holy ones or the holy people. Perhaps the decisive blow against the angelic notion is that the “saints” are identified as the “people” of the Most High (Dan. 7:27). The preposition, ב, is prefixed to the noun, יָד, “people.” Hence, the kingdom shall be given “to the people.” The adjective construct, יָדִידָי, is in apposition to the noun, יָד, thus, “to the people, the saints.” The “people” are described as “the saints of the Most High.” Thus, both the son of man and the saints of the Most High receive the kingdom and exercise dominion over all the nations. The son of man who receives the kingdom in effect becomes king of it, while the saints of the Most High become the subjects of the kingdom, who rule together with their king.

24 Baldwin, Daniel, 142.
26 Baldwin, Daniel, 150.
27 Anderson, Signs, 82.
28 Gleason L. Archer Jr., Daniel (EBC 7; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 90.
29 Baldwin, Daniel, 145.
30 Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “ב,” BDB, 12:3.
32 Collins, Daniel, 313-318.
34 Stephen R. Miller, Daniel (NAC 18; Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 208.
35 The NKJV reading, “to the people, the saints,” and the NIV, “to the saints, the people,” translate it correctly; rather than the KJV, RSV and ESV, “to the people of the saints of the Most High.”
36 Miller, Daniel, 208.
If E. P. Sanders is correct, the “saints” refer collectively to Israel.\(^{37}\) Yet as S. R. Miller points out, the “saints” are the “people” of the Most High, who are “followers” of the son of man (Dan. 7:13-14).\(^{38}\) In Ex. 19:6, Deut. 7:6, and Dan. 7:14, the saints are neither Israelites nor the repentant Israel of the millennium, as C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch argue.\(^{39}\) In that their kingdom is “an everlasting kingdom” (Dan. 7:27), the saints of the Most High must refer to the people who shall serve the son of man beyond the millennial kingdom. The saints then are most likely, “the true members of the covenant nation, the New Testament Israel of God, i.e., the congregation of the New Covenant, consisting of Israel and the faithful of all nations.” The kingdom which the Ancient of Days gives to the son of man shall compose of all the redeemed from all nations of the earth (Dan. 7:14).\(^{40}\)

The question arises as to whether the son of man is distinct from the saints; or whether the son of man refers to the saints collectively. In the angel’s explanation, the son of man motif disappears entirely, while the saints imagery reappears five times (Dan. 7:18, 21, 22, 25, 27). Clearly, the emphasis is on the role of the saints in the end-times. There is a correlation between v. 14 and v. 27; and the key to vv. 13-14 is in v. 27, as Anderson points out. The same “dominion” and “glory” given to the son of man is also given to the saints (Dan. 7:14, 27). The language of v. 14 then applies to the people of God in v. 27. The son of man in vv. 13-14 is therefore a “personification” that refers collectively to the people of God, Israel,\(^{41}\) those tormented by Antiochus Epiphanes as per Vermes,\(^{42}\) or the saints of the Most High.\(^{43}\) Archer avers, however, that Daniel portrays distinctly the figures of the son of man and the saints. The saints engage in battle against the world ruler. The son on the other hand comes with the heavenly clouds before the Ancient of Days “without any prior warfare,” and receives his crown of dominion (Dan. 7:14).\(^{44}\) The saints are defeated in battle; the son of man rules victorious.

Baldwin observes that the phrase is not “son of Israel/Jacob,” but “son of man,” which embraces a wider meaning than just Israel. If the son of man is symbolic, then it follows that the Ancient of Days who received the son of man, may also be symbolic, but no one argues that.\(^{45}\) It is difficult to imagine how a symbolic son of man can approach a literal person called, Ancient of Days. It is fair to say then that both the son of man and the Ancient of Days are individual figures. The collective view is all the more difficult to sustain, in that all peoples of the earth (which include the saints) are said to serve and revere the son of man (Dan. 7:27). If the son of man is Israel or an angelic being, then Israel or the angel now receives worship. Yet worship is reserved to God alone (Rev. 19:10).\(^{46}\) That said, two variant views arise at this point. The first is that the son of man is an individual figure, but in a representative role for the saints, whose kingship, though without messianic overtones in Daniel, includes all those saints who acknowledge him (Ps.

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\(^{37}\) Sanders, “Abraham,” 890n13c.

\(^{38}\) Miller, Daniel, 216.


\(^{41}\) Anderson, Signs, 84-87; so, Montgomery, Critical, 319; Rowley, Darius, 63.

\(^{42}\) Vermes, Jesus, 169.


\(^{44}\) Archer, Daniel, 90.


\(^{46}\) Miller, Daniel, 208.
The second more plausible view is that there are simply two players in this scene—the son of man as an individual figure, who receives the kingdom as king; and the saints, who are the people of the Most High.

Son of Man in Jewish Apocalyptic

Servant, Judge, and Redeemer

The motifs of servant, avenger, and judge interplay at Qumran. In the Thanksgiving Hymns, the teacher applies the language of the servant songs to himself. Alluding to Isa. 42:1, he says, “You have spread [Your] holy spirit over Your servant” (1QH IV, 26). Prominent sources of the hymns are Isa. 40-55, among others. The Synoptic son of man also draws on the servant motif of Isaianic passages.

In the Commentary on Habakkuk, it is also said of the righteous community “to recompense the wicked their due” (1QS VIII, 6-7, 10). Quoting Hab. 1:12-13, the commentator explains that God “will give the power to pass judgment on the Gentiles to his chosen, and it is at their rebuke that all the wicked of His people shall be condemned” (1QpHab IV, 3-5). The chosen are those who have obeyed God’s commandments in time of distress. They have not allowed their eyes to lead them into fornication in the time of wickedness (1QpHab IV, 5-7). Thus, the righteous will execute final judgment on the wicked. Apparently, they identify themselves with “the saints of the Most High” (Dan. 7:18, 22), to whom the Ancient of Days will give authority to judge the earth. Together with the son of man, the saints of the Most High shall receive and possess the kingdom forever (Dan. 7:14, 18).

Our Qumranic survey would be incomplete if we leave out Melchizedek as the coming exalted heavenly judge of Ps. 7:7-8 and Ps. 82:1 (1IQMel II, 10-11). Quoting Lev. 25:13, Deut. 15:2, and Isa. 61:1, the writer applies to Melchizedek the redemption image of Jubilee. He will release “th[em from the debt of a]ll their sins . . . he shall atone for all the Sons of [Light]” (1IQMel II, 6, 8). If release from the debt of sin refers to forgiveness, then the function of Melchizedek is akin to the authority of the son of man to forgive sins (Matt. 9:6). The identity-markers are fascinating, in that in his allusion to Isa. 61:1, the author substitutes “Yahweh” in “the year of Yahweh’s favor,” with “Melchizedek” (1IQMel II, 9). Melchizedek becomes the speaker of the Isaianic prophecy, who sets the prisoners free (Isa. 61:1). The messianic motif of Isa. 61 is now applied to Melchizedek. Interestingly, Jesus applied to himself the speaker’s task of releasing prisoners from captivity, during his sermon at Nazareth (Luke 4:18-19).

Before Time, Chosen One, and Messiah

In the Book of Similitudes of 1 (Ethiopian) Enoch, Enoch saw a transcendent heavenly figure called, “the Son of Man,” who appears with the One “whose head was white like wool”—a clear allusion to Dan. 7:9. His face is “like that of a human being” (1 En. 46:1). Evidently, like the figure of Dan. 7:9, this man is anything but symbolic. The noun, “man” (1 En. 62:6), is from the Ethiopic expression, walda ‘egwula- ‘emmaheyyaw, which literally means, “offspring of the mother of the living.” E. Isaac explains that Eve is the first to be called, “the mother of the living,” in the Bible (Gen. 3:20). Thus, Ethiopic grammarians sometimes translate, “Son of

49 Wise, Abegg Jr., and Cook, Scrolls, 85.
50 Bruce, “Background,” in Christ, 65.
51 All quotations of 1 (Ethiopic) Enoch are taken from Isaac, “Enoch,” 14-89.
Man,” as “Son of the Offspring of the Mother of the Living,” or “son of Eve’s Offspring.” In this sense, “Son of Man” does not appear to be a title, but a description. However, against B. Witherington III, who posits that the “Son of Man” in 1 Enoch “refers to an individual, not to a group,” the Ethiopic word for “Man,” sab’e, connotes a collective, general, and conceptual meaning, as Isaac points out. It should be translated, “people,” “humanity,” or “man,” in its general meaning. The context of 1 En. 46, also makes “Man” refer to “people” or “human beings.” Yet Witherington is on the dot in noting the pre-existence of the “Son of Man” in 1 Enoch and 4 Ezra.

This Son of Man is hailed with three names or titles—“Before-Time” (“before the beginning of days”; “the Antecedent of Time”), “Chosen One,” and “Messiah” (1 En. 48:2, 6, 10). The author thus assumes his pre-existence. As “Before-Time,” he is “before the creation of the sun and the moon.” As the “Elect One of righteousness,” righteousness belongs and dwells with him (1 En. 46:3; cf. 71:14). As “Chosen One,” he is “a staff for the righteous ones” (1 En. 39:6; 48:3; cf. 38:2-3). His messiahship is not limited to Jews however, for “He is the light of the gentiles” (1 En. 48:5). People shall fall down and worship him. He will reveal “the wisdom of the Lord” (1 En. 48:7). In language alluding to the messianic figure of Psalm 2 and 110, he shall cause the humiliation of “the kings of the earth and the mighty landowners.” This messiah “shall depose the kings from their thrones,” for they do not glorify and obey him (1 En. 46:5-6). The “Elect One” shall appear and bring judgment upon the face of the earth, while inaugurating the kingdom of God (1 En. 48:5-6; 61:8-62:11). Thus, the picture here is that of a heavenly figure functioning as the son of man (Dan. 7:13), servant of Yahweh ( Isa. 49, 52:13-53:12), and the anointed one, coming in dreadful judgment against the sinners (economic exploiters, powerful political tyrants, and socially unjust oppressors) of the earth. Evidently, the writer identifies the son of man with the messiah coming in judgment. This messiah will preserve the righteous who have “despised this world of oppression” (1 En. 48:7). The author reflects a resentful mood against both Hellenistic hegemony and the corrupt Jewish ruling classes of the day (1 En. 91-105). Thus, the messianic figure of the son of man is set against the context of social oppression and religious apostasy. He brings socio-political and economic justice for the righteous. He will usher in the victory of God by punishing the wicked socio-political oppressors, while rewarding the faithful righteous who have suffered under them. Then echoing Ps. 110:1 and Dan. 7:13, the son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory (1 En. 62:6; cf. Matt. 19:28; Mk. 14:62).

52 Isaac, “Enoch,” 43.
54 Isaac, “Enoch,” 43.
55 Isaac, “Enoch,” 34.
56 Witherington III, Many Faces, 17.
57 This paragraph is a précis of the “Son of Man” section of my research paper, “Mighty Messiah: the Hope of a Militant Messiah as the Goal of History in Intertestamental Apocalyptic Literature,” submitted for the course, Second Temple Judaism, in Jan. 27, 2010.
The Man from the Sea

In the seer’s dream, he saw “the figure of a man come up out of the heart of the sea” (2 Esd. 13:3). Then the seer saw a multitude of people gather together to make war against the man. However, in an act of fiery judgment, the man from the sea burned all of them by his flaming breath (2 Esd. 13:5-11). The man from the sea is “he whom the Most High has been keeping for many ages who will himself deliver his creation” (2 Esd. 13:25). This passage appears to echo the Similitudes (1 En. 48:6), in that, the son is a pre-existent, eschatological, superhuman figure (2 Esd. 13:26). Having been “concealed from the creation of the world” (1 En. 48:6-7), he shall be revealed at the end of it (2 Esd. 7:28-29; 12:32). The idea of hiddenness and revelation of this eschatological son builds on Dan. 7:13-14. The once hidden “one like the son of man” now comes in the clouds to join the Ancient of Days in the eschaton. Like the son of man of 1 Enoch, the man from the sea of 2 Esdras is also identical with the messiah.

The Wondrous Man

The Jewish work, Testament of Abraham, contains an interesting son of man tradition. In his vision of the two gates, Abraham “saw a man seated on a golden throne” outside the gates (TAb A11:4). When more souls would enter the broad gate leading to eternal punishment, this “wondrous man” would tear his head and beard, throw himself to the ground, and cry. But if some souls would enter the straight gate leading to paradise, he would rise up, sit on his throne, and rejoice. The man was “the first-formed Adam” (TAb A11:9; cf. WisSol 7:1). That “everyone has come from him” (TAb A11:9), indicates his pre-existence in creation. This wondrous man looks “bright as the sun, like unto a son of God” (TAb A12:4-7). He sits on a terrifying throne of crystal and fire located between the two gates. His throne is a throne of judgment, adjudicating the entire creation, both righteous and sinners (TAb A 12:12; 13:3). When Abraham asked the archangel Michael, who the man was, Michael replied that this was “the son of Adam,” called, “Abel” (TAb A13:2-3). Abel plays the part of judge, being “the son of the first man,” Adam. Since people have come from the first-formed, Adam, the son of the first-formed, Abel, will judge them (TAb A13:5-6). Abel will judge until the coming of God in his glorious first “Parousia” (TAb A13:4). That this image is important is seen in how both the OT and NT prominently note the link between the coming of God and judgment (Ps. 96:13; Zech. 14:5; Joel 3:12; Jas. 5:7; 2 Pet. 3:12). Then, at the “second Parousia,” the twelve tribes of Israel will judge all creation (TAb A13:6-7). This clearly echoes Dan. 7:22, 27. Sanders suggests, in that God gives the saints of the Most High, authority to judge the nations. There is then the Jewish element of judgment in the end of days (WisSol 3:8; IQpHab IV, 4; 1QS V, 6; 1QH IV, 26; 1QM VI, 6; XI, 13; Apoc. Ab. 22:29). Significantly, Jesus connects this motif of Jewish judgment with the picture of the Son of Man sitting on his glorious throne, with the twelve disciples also sitting on twelve thrones, “judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28).

61 All quotations of 2 Esdras are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).
64 All quotations of Testament of Abraham are taken from Sanders, “Abraham,” Pseudepigrapha, 882-902.
Son of Man in the Synoptics

Coming in the Glory of His Father

In the eschatological return of the “son of man,” he will come “in the glory of his father, with the holy angels” (Mk. 8:38)—key phrases repeated by both Matthew and Luke (Matt. 16:27; Lk. 9:26). Clearly, Jesus here identifies the son of man as an individual figure. The third person, “son of man,” may refer to somebody other than Jesus himself. Yet it is difficult to take the coming judge as being ashamed of people who had been ashamed of somebody else (Jesus). The “son of man” therefore must be Jesus. In the first coming of the son of man, he will suffer persecution, rejection, and death (Mk. 8:31, 34). In his second coming, he will return exalted in his father’s glory and with his holy angels—a 360-degree role reversal. Though his return may be a vindication, as L. W. Hurtado deduces, the text highlights the shame and judgment motifs for the disciples who were ashamed of him. Still unconvincing is the perceived allusion to Dan. 7:13-14. The son of man there comes with the clouds, not with the holy ones (angels) as C. A. Evans notes, and to join the Ancient of Days, not to come to the earth to face his shameful disciples.

Matthew expands Mark’s version by adding an OT concept—“and then he will repay each person according to what he has done” (Matt. 16:27), quoting Ps. 62:12 (cf. Prov. 24:12). Ps. 62:12 ascribes to Yahweh the divine function of rewarding his people. Judgment is solely God’s right in the OT, as R. T. France points out. Remarkably, Matthew applies it to the son of man. Matthew also replaces Mark’s, “until they see the kingdom of God” (Mk. 9:1), with, “until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom” (Matt. 16:27). This Matthean picture of the son of man coming with his kingdom and playing the part of judge, assumes a glorified role for Jesus in the end-time. The genitive, τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ, “of his father,” may be a genitive of source—“glory coming from his father,” or possessive genitive—“glory belonging to the father” or “his father’s glory.” In any case, the son of man participates in the same glory and authority. Elsewhere, Matthew mentions about the son of man coming “in his glory” (Matt. 25:31). Luke juxtaposes these two elements in genitive succession, ἐν τῇ δόξῃ αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τῶν ἁγίων ἁγγέλων. “in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels” (Lk. 9:26). Thus, the son of man possesses his own glory, while also sharing in the glory and authority of the father. In Jewish apocalyptic fashion, he will return as divine judge of all people, with his angels. Matthew and Luke project the angels as the eschatological agents of the son of man, who gather his elect and the unrighteous of the nations for judgment (Matt. 13:41; 24:31; 25:31-32; Lk. 9:26). They are “his angels,” in that the son of man owns and commands them.

Coming in Clouds with Great Power and Glory

Alluding to Dan. 7:13, Jesus portrays the son of man as “coming in clouds, with great power and glory”—significant phrases in the son of man sayings in the Synoptics (Mk. 13:26; cf. Matt. 24:30; Lk. 21:27). The celestial disturbances following “the tribulation” shall precede the coming of the son of man—darkened sun and moon, falling stars, and shaken heavens (Mk. 13:24-25), evoking imagery of the Day of the Lord (Isa. 13:10; 24:23; Ezek. 32:7-8; Joel 2:10; Amos 8:9). The falling stars and the fig tree (Mk. 13:28) also allude to Isa. 34:4. With the

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69 Evans, Mark, 27.
71 D. A. Carson, Matthew (EBC 8; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 379.
72 Walter W. Wessel, Mark (EBC 8; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 750.
judgment of God at the end of history, the son of man shall come in clouds. At his coming, the son of man shall reveal fully and publicly his seeming hiddenness, in that people shall “see” him. He shall reverse the ostensible powerless humanity of the son of man, in that they shall behold his divine authority, “with great power and glory”—a phrase drawn from Ps. 63:2, which speaks of Yahweh’s power and glory. The appearance of Yahweh in the OT is also usually accompanied with images of clouds of power and glory (Ex. 16:10; Ps. 104:3; Isa. 19:1). Matthew and Luke rearranges Mark’s phrase, into μετὰ δυνάμεως κοινῆς καὶ δόξης, “with great power and glory,” into μετὰ δυνάμεως καὶ δόξης πολλῆς, “with power and great glory.” Yet underscoring his divine power is the son of man’s authority to send his angels as if they were his (Mk. 13:27), for only Yahweh commands the angels in the OT. If the son of man shares this authority reserved for Yahweh alone, then he must be a divine heavenly figure. The gathering of the elect from “the four winds,” alludes to Zech. 2:6. Zech. 2:6 is an oracle fragment that predicts the return of scattered people of Israel (Jer. 16:15). If the re-gathering of the exiles is a messianic task (Pss. Sol. 8:28; 11:1-4), and if the appointment of the Twelve presages their expected re-gathering, as Evans posits, then the son of man is the messiah of Israel who calls her to final restoration.

Matthew includes two elements not found in Mark and Luke—the sign of the son of man and the resultant mourning of the tribes of the earth (Matt. 24:30). The apocalyptic symbolism of this text precludes a literal interpretation of “the sign of the son of man.” Although, R. H. Mounce makes the valid point that whatever the meaning of the sign, the son of man’s coming will be as visible worldwide, and with R. V. G. Tasker and D. A. Hagner, as instantaneous, sudden, and clear as lightning (Matt. 24:27; Lk. 17:24). Hagner’s view that the mourning of the tribes—echoing Zech. 12:9-14—refers to all nations, given the universal outlook of Matthew (Matt. 24:32), is unconvincing. D. A. Carson intimates that “all nations” (Zech. 12:9) hated Jesus’ disciples and shall mourn at the parousia. Yet the focus of Zechariah is more on the tribes of Israel mourning over “him whom they have pierced” (Zech. 12:10). Both Zech. 12:9 and Matt. 25:32 are silent about any mourning by the nations. The mourning of Israel is more in view in Matt. 24:30, strongly suggesting then, a future repentance of Israel with the coming of the son of man. France avers that the coming of the son of man in Dan. 7:13-14 is not a coming to earth, “but of coming to God to receive vindication and authority.” The son of man’s coming in the clouds thus speaks of reversal of fortunes within history and the nation of Israel. This apocalyptic imagery fits well Matt. 24:29, as referring to the destruction of the temple (Matt.

74 Wessel, *Mark*, 750.
75 Hurtado, *Mark*, 221.
77 Hurtado, *Mark*, 221.
84 Also, Mounce, *Matthew*, 226.
23:29-39), whereby Jesus’ authority is vindicated. Carson draws from NT eschatology, in replying that the son of man’s coming to the Father to receive the kingdom may be “combined with his returning to earth to set up the consummated kingdom.” Yet it lacks support from the context of Dan. 7:13. Hagner’s explanation is more convincing instead, in that the use of Zech. 12:10-14 and Dan. 7:13-14 in Rev. 1:7 reflect the parousia in Matt. 24:30. The theophanic, eschatological, and perfective nature of the event marks the return of the son of man.

Seated at the Right Hand of Power

In Mark’s account of Jesus’ answer to the high priest’s question, Jesus affirms his messianic identity with the statement, “I am” (Mk. 14:26). Mark, Matthew, and Luke record the allusion to the messianic psalm, Ps. 110:1, “the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power.” Both Mark and Matthew allude to Dan. 7:13, “coming with the clouds of heaven” (Mk. 14:26; Matt. 26:64). This synoptic stress is important. Ps. 110:1 speaks of the υἱὸς (LXX, κυρίῳ), “lord,” who sits at Yahweh’s right hand with all power and authority, making his enemies his footstool, ruling over them, and judging the nations with his wrath (Ps. 110:1-7). His task is related to the task of the son of man in Jewish apocalyptic, which is that of eschatological ruler and judge (1 En. 69:27, 29; 70:1). Interestingly, the very lord whom Jesus linked with the son of man is identified also as an eternal priest in the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4). If he is the eschatological priest who sits “on his throne” (Zech. 6:13), then the son of man assumes the lord’s dual role of eternal priest (“priest forever”) and king (“rule”).

The expression, δεξιῶν τῆς δυνάμεως, “right of the power” (Mk. 14:62), connotes power, honor, and glory in the OT (Ex. 15:6; Job 40:14; Ps. 17:7, 18:35; 20:6; 21:8; 44:3; 60:5; 98:1). The son of man shall sit at the right hand of “the power,” which also alludes to the LXX Ps. 109:2 (MT Ps. 110:2), βασιλεύας δυνάμεως, “the rod of your power.” In Ps. 110, the divine figure is invested all power and authority to judge his enemies and all nations. In Dan. 7:13, the son of man receives the kingdom and glory. In combining these two texts, Jesus identifies the son of man with the divine ruler and eternal priest of Ps. 110, and the glorious, eternal king of all peoples of Dan. 7:13. In doing so, he classifies himself as possessing both divinity and dominion. The Synoptic picture here then is that when the son of man returns, he shall come, sitting in the place of highest honor and glory with the Father, and shall execute judgment over his enemies with all power and authority. The two ideas of Ps. 110 and Dan. 7:13 are the enthronement of the son of man (ascension) and his eschatological coming (parousia), as W. W. Wessel and Evans assert. Yet Ps. 110 strictly speak only of the son of man’s power and authority over all his nations; while Dan. 7:13, of his investiture of the kingdom. In any case, whereas in the OT, Yahweh comes and executes judgment without theophany, in the NT, judgment comes through the appearance of the son of man, in his power and glory.

Sitting on the Throne of His Glory

In Jesus’ reply to Peter’s question of reward, only Matthew portrays the son of man sitting “on his glorious throne” (Matt. 19:28). Yet he joins Luke in depicting the twelve as sitting “on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28; 25:31; Lk. 22:30). Luke

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86 France, Matthew, 344.
87 Carson, Matthew, 506.
88 Hagner, Matthew 14-28, 714.
89 Pokorny, Genesis, 81.
90 Evans, Mark 8:27-16:20, 451.
91 Wessel, Mark, 769; Evans, Mark 8:27-16:20, 451.
mentions only the “thrones,” without specifying the number (Lk. 22:30). Matthew stresses the dative, ἐν τῇ πολιγγενεσίᾳ, “in the rebirth (regeneration)” (Matt. 19:28)—a phrase conveying the Jewish end-time expectation of a new universe in the messianic era (Isa. 65:17; 66:12), which includes “the renewal of Israel,” accompanying “the consummation of the kingdom.” After the son of man’s enthronement as king, the twelve shall then sit on twelve thrones. Although the language may echo the rule of the Danielic son of man with a “transfer of imagery” from Israel to the twelve, as France suggests, Dan. 7 specifies the rule of “the saints of the Most High,” and not the rule of the twelve however. Hagner avers that the reason for the reversal of roles is to vindicate the twelve before unbelieving Israel. This is highly probable, in that Jesus cited the disciples endurance with him in his trial (Lk. 22:28). Carson thinks it is for Israel’s rejection of Jesus. This is possible, but disconnected with the immediate context. The answer may lie in the sovereignty of the Danielic son of man when he receives his kingdom, which Jesus exercises here. In the next breath, Jesus declares the reward for “everyone,” which may refer to the twelve, as Luke seems to limit it (Lk. 22:28-30). It may also refer to all those who have left family to follow Jesus, in keeping perhaps with Matthew’s universal perspective. Jesus’ non-vindicative terms here is significant. Everyone who has left family and property for his name’s sake shall “receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life” (Matt. 19:29). Simply, everyone who left everything for his name shall receive everything in him. At any rate, the son of man has the divine prerogative to appoint judges over Israel, a role reserved only to Yahweh in the OT (Jud. 2:16, 18).

Conclusion

The Danielic son of man is an individual, human-like figure. If he is a ruler, there is no hint that this human-like figure comes from the messianic Davidic house. If he is an angel, there is no indication of any awareness of angelic pre-history in the Daniel narrative. The clouds-of-heaven motif strongly indicates a divine character for the son of man, though not necessarily connoting judgment. While the son of man joins the Ancient of Days and receives the kingdom, the dominion, and the glory, the saints of the Most High also receive the kingdom and judge the nations. Yet the son of man is distinct from the saints of the Most High, in that the saints shall worship the son in his eternal kingdom.

The son of man of Jewish expectation is similar to the Danielic son of man, in that he is presented as a heavenly figure, sitting on his glorious throne, and playing the character of end-time judge. Yet he is dissimilar, in that he is also the eschatological redeemer of his people. At Qumran, the righteous’ role in judging the nations parallel that of the saints in Daniel. The Enochic “son of man” is equally a pre-existent and messianic heavenly figure with a human-like face, who executes judgment of all peoples. This tradition ties the son of man with the kingdom. The son of man inaugurates the kingdom at his coming and vindicates the righteous. Akin to the superhuman figure in 1 Enoch, the man from the sea of 2 Esdras likewise existed before time. Long hidden in ages past, he is now revealed in the eschaton, in imagery reminiscent of the appearance of the son of man in Daniel. Congruent with the ruling function of the saints of the

94 Mounce, Matthew, 185.
95 Carson, Matthew, 425.
96 France, Matthew, 288.
97 Hagner, Matthew 14-28, 565.
98 Carson, Matthew, 426.
Most High, a son of man tradition also envisions the twelve tribes of Israel as judging all creation, indicating a Jewish flavor in the end-times.

In drawing from Dan. 7:13-14, Jesus identifies the son of man as an individual figure—himself. He explicitly asserts the return of the son of man in his father’s glory and with his angels. He ascribes to the son of man the judgment-reward role of Yahweh in the OT. Thus, Jesus sees himself as possessing divine authority. The son of man comes in his own glory, while sharing his father’s glory. That he commands his angels further underscores his divine power. That unbelievers will see the son of man in full revelation of his divinity and dominion in the eschaton is in sharp contrast to his seeming hiddenness and powerless humanity. In that the coming of the son of man with the clouds signifies his vindication and investiture of kingdom authority before the Ancient of Days, people shall thus see his divine pre-eminence at the end of days. Jesus therefore conceives his future coming as the revelation of his divine glory.

Jesus links his messianic identity with the image of the son of man coming with the clouds and sitting at the right hand of power. It is not surprising that Jesus’ allusion to the Danielic son of man and the kingdom connects with his preaching on the kingdom. In that a son of man tradition connects the son of man with the kingdom, Jesus was thus inevitably associated with the apocalyptic son of man. In his allusion to Ps. 110:1, Jesus claims for the son of man, all power and glory reserved only to the “lord,” whom Yahweh has invested with all power and authority to rule the nations. Part of this invested authority is the divine sanction of the son of man to appoint the twelve to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. In that the lord is also identified as the eternal priest in the order of Melchizedek, the son of man then assumes the lord’s twin role of messianic king and priest. Hence, Jesus used the figure of the son of man as more of a messianic description of his eschatological role, than a designation of himself. When the son of man comes, he shall gather his elect, signifying the final restoration of the dispersed people of Israel to himself and the redemption of all the saints. Thus, the ultimate mission of the son of man is both redemptive and consummative of the kingdom.

The Synoptics may provide a setting of Jewish expectation based on the Daniel passage and perhaps typified in the Qumran, 1 Enoch, and 4 Ezra traditions. Yet the Synoptics nowhere clearly define Jewish expectations. The Synoptic witness to Jesus’ self-understanding seems to stand by itself. It seems fair to state then that Jesus’ constant use of the Danielic son of man imagery as well as other OT texts define his self-awareness of his messianic role in the final days of history. In doing so, he redefines the role of the son of man to fit his earthly ministry and eschatological task in the eschaton, until his disciples would conclude that this Son of Man is really the Son of God.


