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Introduction

“The Son of Man” serves as an important designation in the Gospel of John’s mosaic of the remembered Jesus.² Throughout John 1, Jesus is called λόγος (1:1–2, 14), Christ (1:17, 41), Lamb of God (1:29, 35), rabbi (1:38, 49), Messiah (1:41; cf. 1:45), King of Israel (1:49), and Son of God (1:49), but, at the climax of the chapter, Jesus himself speaks the phrase ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (“the Son of Man”), indicating what the disciples are yet to see. The phrase ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου also appears twice at the end of Jesus’ public ministry (12:23, 34), and Jesus speaks the final Son of Man saying to his disciples during his farewell discourse (13:31). Given that Jesus uses the designation of himself and that the Gospel of John frames Jesus’ public ministry with it, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου is an invaluable contribution to Johannine Christology.

The focus of this essay is on the Son of Man in the Gospel of John as an “apocalyptic Son of Man.” I will argue that the Johannine Son of Man has much in common, both in description and action, with the interpretations of the “one like a son of man” from Daniel 7

¹ Published as Benjamin E. Reynolds, “Jesus the Son of Man: Apocalyptic Interpretations and Johannine Christology,” in *Portraits of Jesus in the Gospel of John: A Christological Spectrum*, ed. Craig R. Koester, LNTS 589 (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 125–39.

² George W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1-36; 81-108*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 84: “John’s use of ‘Son of Man’ is integral to his multifaceted portrait of Jesus.”

that are found in the Jewish apocalypses, namely the Parables of Enoch, *4 Ezra*, and *2 Baruch*. I will consider how the portrayal of Jesus as the apocalyptic Son of Man in the Fourth Gospel highlights distinct aspects of Johannine Christology, and I will offer some reflections on the relevance of an apocalyptic Son of Man for John's Gospel and the historical Jesus.

However, before discussing the details of the Johannine Son of Man sayings and the apocalyptic characteristics, there are two preliminary issues to be addressed. First, I will explain what I mean by the adjective "apocalyptic," and second, I will comment on methodological issues that arise in attempting to describe the use of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου in John and in the four Gospels more generally.

Preliminaries: "Apocalyptic" and Brief Methodological Comments

The Gospel of John and "Apocalyptic"

The general assumption in New Testament studies is that the Gospel of John is not apocalyptic.³ This assessment is based primarily on the popular understanding that equates "apocalyptic" with future eschatology. On this understanding, the more realized John's eschatology is—such as Rudolf Bultmann has argued—the less "apocalyptic" the Gospel can be considered.⁴ Yet "apocalyptic" cannot and should not be equated with eschatology or end-

³ Frederick J. Murphy, *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 275.

⁴ Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971).

of-the-world catastrophes. Jewish apocalypses are primarily concerned with the revelation of hidden things. Not uncommonly, these heavenly mysteries contain an eschatological outlook and descriptions of the end-of-the-world, but numerous Jewish apocalypses reveal heavenly mysteries that have little to do with eschatology.⁵ Examples include the Astronomical Book (1 Enoch 72–82) and even the Book of the Watchers (1 Enoch 1–36). The focus of the apocalypses is ultimately on the disclosure of heavenly things that were previously hidden.⁶

Thus, it is with this revelatory understanding of apocalypticism that I understand the term “apocalyptic.” I will be using the word as an adjective to refer to imagery, ideas, and concepts associated with the Jewish apocalypses. As John Collins states, “To use the word in any other way is to invite terminological confusion.”⁷ I use the phrase “apocalyptic Son of Man” to articulate my view that the Gospel of John’s Son of Man shares numerous functions and characteristics with the interpretations of the Danielic “one like a son of man” in the Parables of Enoch, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch.⁸

⁵ Michael E. Stone, “Lists of Revealed Things in the Apocalyptic Literature,” in *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright*, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Werner E. Lemke, and Patrick D. Miller (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 414–52; Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982; repr. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002). Cf. Lorenzo DiTommaso, “Apocalypses and Apocalypticism in Antiquity. (Part I),” *CurrBR* 5 (2007): 235–86; “Apocalypses and Apocalypticism in Antiquity. (Part II),” *CurrBR* 5 (2007): 367–432.

⁶ Benjamin E. Reynolds and Loren Stuckenbruck, eds., *Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition and the Shaping of New Testament Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), forthcoming.

⁷ John J. Collins, “Genre, Ideology and Social Movements in Jewish Apocalypticism,” in *Seers, Sibyls and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 27.

⁸ There are quite a number of “intimations of apocalyptic” in the Gospel of John as John Ashton has argued. See John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

Apocalyptic Interpretations of the Danielic Son of Man

Scholars now generally agree that a widespread “son of man concept” did not exist in Second Temple Judaism; however, the Parables of Enoch (1 Enoch 37–71), 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch interpret “the one like a son of man” in Daniel 7 with certain common features. John Collins and others have noted similar characteristics in these apocalyptic interpretations of the Danielic son of man.⁹ Collins lists five similar features of this figure in the Parables of Enoch and 4 Ezra: (1) the son of man is an individual figure, (2) the figure is the Messiah, (3) the figure is preexistent, (4) the figure is involved in the destruction or judgment of the wicked, and (5) the figure is described as the Servant of the Lord.¹⁰ To these five “common assumptions about the interpretation of Daniel 7 in first-century Judaism”¹¹ may be added the following characteristics: the figure is similar to God, recognized on earth at the time of his revelation, gathers the righteous, and plays some part in the salvation of the righteous.

2007); idem, *The Gospel of John and Christian Origins* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014); see also, Catrin H. Williams and Christopher Rowland, *John’s Gospel and Intimations of Apocalyptic* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013).

⁹ John J. Collins, “The Son of Man in First-Century Judaism,” *New Testament Studies* 38, no. 3 (1992): 448–66; revised in *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 191–214. See also Lester L. Grabbe, “‘Son of Man’: Its Origin and Meaning in Second Temple Judaism,” in *Enoch and the Synoptic Gospels: Reminiscences, Allusions, and Intertextuality*, ed. Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Gabriele Boccaccini, EJL 44 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 169–97; Daniel Boyarin, “How Enoch Can Teach Us about Jesus,” *Early Christianity* 2, no. 1 (2011): 51–76; also *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: The New Press, 2012), 71–101.

¹⁰ Collins, *Scepter and the Star*, 210–12.

¹¹ Collins, 212.

These similarities do not indicate that the son of man figures in the Parables, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch are portrayed in the same way, but the overlapping similarities between them are striking. Each of these texts has its own unique depiction of this figure, most notably that the Parables names the son of man as Enoch (71:14), but they all describe the Danielic son of man as the Messiah, from heaven, as preexistent, as responsible for judgment and salvation, as the Isaianic servant of the Lord, as similar to God, and the gatherer of the righteous. It is this similar apocalyptic interpretation and depiction of the Danielic son of man, which I contend is recognizable in the Gospel of John's portrayal of Jesus.

The Gospel of John's Apocalyptic Son of Man

In arguments for an apocalyptic Son of Man in John, John 3:13 and 5:27 are the easiest to align with the apocalyptic portrayals of the Danielic son of man.¹² The Johannine Son of Man's ascent and descent from heaven and his authority to judge are notable similarities with the son of man figures in the Parables of Enoch, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch. While these are excellent examples, the rest of the Johannine Son of Man sayings are just as important. Thus, the following section will discuss each Johannine Son of Man saying in turn, noting the apocalyptic characteristics within the context of each saying. This examination will note the

¹² See Ashton, *Understanding*, 240–76; Robert Maddox, “The Function of the Son of Man in the Gospel of John,” in *Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology Presented to L. L. Morris on This 60th Birthday*, ed. Robert J. Banks (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 186–204; John Painter, “The Enigmatic Johannine Son of Man,” in *Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck*, ed. Gilbert Van Belle et al., vol. 3, 3 vols., BETL 100 (Louvain: Peeters, 1992), 1869–87.

literary context of the sayings while also considering the background meaning of the designation.

John 1:51 and the Opening of Heaven

The first Son of Man saying in John comes as part of the climactic conclusion of the Johannine introduction of Jesus as he calls his first disciples (1:51). The saying presents “the Son of Man” as the last title of Jesus in a series of designations beginning with the *logos*, and also including light (1:3, 9), life (1:3, 4), only begotten of the Father (1:14, 18), Jesus Messiah (1:17), the Lamb of God (1:29, 36), Messiah (1:41), the one whom Moses and the prophets wrote (1:45), rabbi (1:38, 49), Son of God (1:49), and king of Israel (1:49), not to mention John the Baptist’s denial of being the Messiah, Elijah, and the prophet (1:20–21). The first Son of Man saying is also the first “Amen, amen” saying in John’s Gospel and it includes an allusion to Gen. 28:12 concerning Jacob’s vision of the ladder extending to heaven. In 1:51, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου replaces the word for ladder in Gen. 28:12, indicating the Son of Man’s role connecting heaven and earth, God and humanity. Although the Son of Man will later be described as one who ascends and descends, here it is the angels who take part in this motion.

Since 1:51 concludes the introduction to Jesus, it also forms a connection with Jesus’ words and signs. Jesus tells Nathanael that what he will see is heaven opening and then the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man. The opening of heaven is a common motif indicating the beginning of apocalyptic revelation (2 Bar. 22:1; Apoc Ab. 19:1–3; Rev 4:1; 19:1). When heaven opens, the dividing wall between natural and

supernatural is broken and the otherworldly is revealed to the this-worldly. The Son of Man makes up part of this revelatory vision announced through the opening of heaven.

In the context of this saying, we also see that the Son of Man is the Messiah. Jesus has been declared by his new disciples to be Messiah (1:42), the one written about by Moses and the prophets (1:45), and the king of Israel (1:49).¹³ Following these declarations, Jesus responds by implying that along with being the Messiah he is also the Son of Man. Within the Jewish apocalypses, the Messiah and the Son of Man are understood to be the same individual (1 En. 48:10; 52:4; 62:2 with Isa 1:2, 4; 4 Ezra 11–13; 2 Bar. 29:3; 30:1; 39–40; 53:1; 70:9; 72–74). In addition, the Johannine Son of Man is recognized by others, although in the apocalyptic interpretations this takes place at a glorified future revealing of the figure. Here in John, we already have an indication that the Johannine Son of Man is revealed now in the present since the disciples are already able to see him and apparently begin to do so in his signs (2:1–11).

John 3:13, 14 and the Ascent-Descent and Lifting up of the Son of Man

The second Son of Man saying in the Gospel (3:13) provides some of the strongest evidence for the apocalyptic background of the Johannine Son of Man, especially as there is widespread agreement that ascent and descent language appears to function as a polemic against heavenly ascent speculation.¹⁴ The Gospel seems to assume that readers are familiar

¹³ See Craig R. Koester, “Messianic Exegesis and the Call of Nathanael (John 1:45-51),” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, no. 39 (June 1, 1990): 23–34.

¹⁴ James H. Charlesworth, “Did the Fourth Evangelist Know the Enoch Tradition?,” in *Testimony and Interpretation: Early Christology in Its Judeo-Hellenistic Milieu. Studies in Honour of Peter Pokorný*, ed.

with stories about ascents to heaven by Moses, Abraham, Enoch, Isaiah, and others, in which these figures see and experience heavenly mysteries. Unlike the figures in these ascent narratives typical of early Jewish apocalypses, the Johannine Son of Man is from heaven, has descended from heaven, and is therefore able to reveal heavenly things. He has not had to ascend to heaven like an apocalyptic seer in order to receive esoteric mysteries and then return to earth so that the heavenly things might be revealed.¹⁵ While descent from heaven does not explicitly indicate the preexistence of the Son of Man, his preexistence is at least implied, which indicates an overlap with the preexistence of the Logos in John 1.¹⁶

A close link clearly exists between 3:13 and the Son of Man saying in the next verse (3:14): “Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, in this way must the Son of Man be lifted up.” The apocalyptic characteristics noticeable in this saying and in the following verses are the Son of Man’s exaltation and his role in salvation and judgment. Those who believe in the Son of Man will receive eternal life and those who do not believe are judged (3:15–18). Thus, part of the Johannine Son of Man’s role as revealer of heavenly things made possible by his descent from heaven involves salvation and judgment. He will be exalted and again recognized, yet this time in the way that the bronze serpent was looked upon as a symbol of healing for the Israelites bitten by the serpents in the wilderness (Num

J. Mrazek and J. Roskovec (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 223–39; J. Harold Ellens, *The Son of Man in the Gospel of John*, New Testament Monographs 28 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010).

¹⁵ Contra John Ashton, “The Johannine Son of Man: A New Proposal,” *New Testament Studies* 57, no. 4 (2011): 508–29.

¹⁶ Cf. Francis J. Moloney, “The Parables of Enoch and the Johannine Son of Man,” in *Parables of Enoch: A Paradigm Shift*, ed. Darrell L. Bock and James H. Charlesworth, Jewish and Christian Texts 11 (London; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 281–82.

21:8–9). The purpose of his lifting up is so that those who believe might have eternal life; those who fail to look upon him or believe in him will be judged.¹⁷

The Johannine Son of Man as Apocalyptic Judge in 5:27

The Son of Man saying in 5:27 is almost universally recognized as having the closest affinity with Daniel’s “one like a son of man” and the various apocalyptic interpretations of this figure.¹⁸ The verbal overlap between John 5:27 and Dan 7:13–14 is the closest direct connection to Daniel in the Gospel. In John, the Son is said to have the authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.¹⁹ Consider the similar saying in 1 En. 69:27, “And he sat on the throne of his glory, and the whole judgment was given to the Son of Man.”²⁰ The eschatological aspect becomes more apparent in that the act of judgment takes place in the double resurrection of the wicked and the righteous in 5:28–29, a theme noticeable in 1 En. 46–48; 4 Ezra 7:32–36; 2 Bar. 50:2–51:3. The Son of Man’s ability to judge is also further indication of the figure’s similarity with God. God is the one who works on the Sabbath

¹⁷ Bruce Chilton, “The Gospel according to John’s Rabbi Jesus,” *BBR* 25 (2015): 39–54. He sees in these verses the beginning of a generic “one like me” son of man and an angelic “son of man” being fused together.

¹⁸ J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 3rd ed., NTL (Westminster John Knox, 2003), 133; Francis J. Moloney, *The Johannine Son of Man*, 2nd ed, Biblioteca Di Scienze Religiose 14 (Rome: LAS, 1978), 81; Markus Sasse, *Der Menschensohn im Evangelium nach Johannes*, TANZ 35 (Tübingen: Francke, 2000), 175.

¹⁹ On the question of the definiteness of *υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου*, see further detail in Benjamin E. Reynolds, *The Apocalyptic Son of Man in the Gospel of John*, WUNT II/249 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 132–37.

²⁰ George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012). All translations of 1 Enoch are from this translation.

(5:16–18) and he is the one who gives life and judges, but Jesus the Son of God and Son of Man has the authority to act like the Father (5:19–29).

Life-giving and Ascending Son of Man in John 6:27, 53, 62

Within John 6 there are three Son of Man sayings: 6:27, 53, and 62. These sayings are part of the larger context of the Bread of Life discourse.²¹ Although these sayings may not indicate overt characteristics of the apocalyptic interpretations of the Danielic son of man, I do believe that we find some examples in the context of John 6. In 6:27, Jesus responds to those seeking a sign by saying, “Do not work for the food that perishes but for the food that remains to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.” The Son of Man’s giving of the food that remains to eternal life implies that he has a role in the salvation of the righteous. This giving of the food that is himself is also addressed in the saying in 6:53. Depending on how the Son of Man’s sealing by the Father is understood (6:27), the sealing may be similar to the giving of authority to the Enochic son of man (1 En. 62:2; cf. Dan 7:14). The association with the Son of Man and the bread of life which descends from heaven indicates the heavenly origin of the Son of Man. As the giver of life, the Son of Man shares similarities with God the Father, who also gives life (5:21, 24; 6:57; 17:2).

The saying in 6:62 often is discussed in relation to a heavenly or apocalyptic background. The grammar of the saying is difficult because the sentence lacks an apodosis: “What if you see the Son of Man ascending where he was before?” It is unclear whether there will be a

²¹ On John 6, see Paul N. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6*, WUNT II/78 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1996).

positive response. What is worth noting is the reference to the Son of Man ascending to where he was *before* (cf. 2 Bar. 30:1; 1 En. 48:3, 6; 4 Ezra 13:26). A return to heaven indicates the heavenly origin and implied preexistence of the Son of Man which has been noted previously in the Son of Man's descent from heaven in 3:13 and throughout John 6 with regard to the bread of life coming down from heaven.²²

John 8:28 and the Son of Man's Origin and Similarity with God

John 8:28 is the second of the sayings about Jesus being lifted up, yet we again see contextual indicators that the Johannine Son of Man is being presented similarly to other apocalyptic interpretations. In the preceding discussion with "the Jews," Jesus speaks of his going where they cannot go (8:21; cf. 7:33–34). Jesus responds to their confusion by saying that he is from above and they are from below. They are from this world, and he is not from this world. Such statements fit very well not only with the Johannine Jesus who was in the bosom of the Father, but also with an apocalyptic Son of Man who is recognized to be from heaven. Jesus says in 8:28, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am and I do nothing on my own" The statement indicates the Son of Man's close affinity with God, since the absolute "I Am" is generally understood to refer in this instance to the divine name.²³ Within the context there are also references to Jesus' act of judging

²² Painter, "Enigmatic Son of Man," 1883.

²³ C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 95–96; Catrin H. Williams, *I Am He: The Interpretation of *Ānî Hû* in Jewish and Early Christian Literature*, WUNT II/113 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 266–75.

(8:26; cf. 8:15, 16). All of these are common descriptions of the Son of Man in the Jewish apocalypses.

John 9:35 and the Worship of and Belief in the Son of Man

The saying in 9:35 is one of the most distinctive Son of Man sayings in all four Gospels: “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” In the context of this saying, a number of apocalyptic characteristics are noticeable. First, the Son of Man is worshipped by the man born blind (9:38). Worship is also part of the depiction of the son of man figures in Daniel and the Parables of Enoch (Dan 7:14; 1 En. 62:6). The Johannine Son of Man is recognized by the man born blind through sight and belief. The Son of Man is again found in the context of judgment, and Jesus’ statement “for judgment I have come into this world” implies his previous existence outside of the world (9:39). The Johannine Son of Man’s heavenly origin is also indicated by the man born blind’s description of Jesus as being “from God” (9:33). Although this Son of Man saying is distinctive, multiple apocalyptic themes often associated with the Son of Man figures are found here as well.

John 12:23, 34 and the Glorification of the Messiah, Son of Man

In John 12:23 when the Greeks come to see Jesus, he says, “Now, the hour has come in order that the Son of Man might be glorified.” Glory is a common aspect of the apocalyptic Son of Man figures. Within the Parables of Enoch, the Enochic Son of Man is glorified (48:5; 51:3; cf. 2 Bar. 30:1) and he is seated on the throne of glory by the Lord of Spirits (62:2–5;

69:27–29; cf. Matt 25:31). Thus, the glorification of the Son of Man in John is another instance of an apocalyptic characteristic.

It may be argued that in John 12 we again find a judgment role for the Johannine Son of Man implied in the statement in 12:31: “Now is the judgment of this world, now the ruler of this world is cast out.” The lifting up of the Son of Man and his glorification are the moment of the judgment.²⁴ Considering previous references to judgment in connection with the Son of Man in 5:27; 9:39; and 3:13–18 and association of judgment with the apocalyptic son of man figures, this statement is unsurprising.

The drawing of all people to himself when he is lifted up (12:32) suggests a correlative role in salvation. Further, by mentioning the crowd’s association of the Son of Man with the Messiah, the narrative implies what has been implied earlier, particularly in 1:47–51, that the figure who is the Messiah is also the Son of Man. In the various interpretations of the Danielic son of man in the Jewish apocalypses, the Son of Man is the Messiah (and vice versa).

John 13:31–32 and the Glorification of the Son of Man

The final Son of Man saying returns to the theme of the Son of Man’s glorification that first appeared in 12:23. Again, the son of man figures within the Jewish apocalypses are commonly associated with glory. Here in John, the Son of Man receives glorification that God receives, highlighting the similarity between the Son of Man and God. The glorification

²⁴ Judith L. Kovacs, “‘Now Shall the Ruler of This World Be Driven Out’: Jesus’ Death as Cosmic Battle in John 12:20-36,” *JBL* 114 (1995): 227–47.

of the Son of Man has been described as inseparable from the glorification of God²⁵ and indicates their close relationship and association.

Summary

This brief discussion of the Johannine Son of Man sayings has drawn attention to the numerous features and functions that the Johannine Son of Man shares with the *interpretations* of the Danielic son of man in the Jewish apocalypses. The Johannine Son of Man is a heavenly figure, is preexistent, is the Messiah, is similar to God, is glorified, is worshipped, is recognized for his true identity, serves as judge, takes part in salvation, and gathers the elect.²⁶ The extent to which these similar descriptions and features can be found in the Jewish apocalyptic interpretations and in the Gospel of John suggests that the Son of Man in the Gospel of John may be referred to as an apocalyptic Son of Man. The Johannine Son of Man, albeit with a distinctive Johannine portrayal, is portrayed similarly to the son of man figures in the Jewish apocalypses of 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch.

The Significance of the Apocalyptic Son of Man for John's Christology

What then is the significance of the apocalyptic Son of Man in the Gospel of John for Johannine Christology? I argue that there are six ways that an apocalyptic Son of Man contributes to Johannine christology. First, the apocalyptic background of the Johannine Son

²⁵ H. Dieckmann, “‘Der Sohn des Menschen’ im Johannesevangelium,” *Scholastik* 2 (1927) 229–47.

²⁶ For a succinct summary see Reynolds, *Apocalyptic Son of Man*, 215–16.

of Man indicates the figure's heavenly origin and preexistence in heaven. These features of the Johannine Jesus are recognizable in the Gospel without the use of the phrase "the Son of Man," particularly in the *logos* (1:1–2, 18), the sending of the Son (3:16; 3:34), and in the glory that the Son had with the Father before the world began (17:1–5). However, it is the Son of Man who descends and ascends, who comes down from heaven. The apocalyptic background expands the portrait of the Jesus as a heavenly figure.

Second, 3:12–13 highlight the Johannine Son of Man's ability to reveal the heavenly mysteries because he is a heavenly figure, "whose true home is in heaven."²⁷ He is an apocalyptic revealer who has not had to ascend to heaven and receive the mysteries before bringing them back to earth. Instead, Jesus as the Son of Man descended from heaven to make them known. The content of the heavenly mysteries that the Johannine Son of Man reveals is the Father, and this revelation is made possible by the revelation of himself because believers see the Father by seeing Jesus (14:9–11).

Third, the Gospel explicitly states that the Son is able to judge because he is the Son of Man (5:27). Judgment elsewhere in John is connected to the Son of Man (9:35–39; cf. 3:14–18). This judgment role makes complete sense when viewed in comparison with Jewish apocalyptic interpretations of the Danielic son of man (1 En. 49:4; 62:2–3; 69:27; 4 Ezra 13:10, 37–38; 2 Bar. 40:1–2; 72:2), which also present this figure as judge.

Fourth, the Gospel's association of the Messiah with the Son of Man is also typical of the Jewish apocalyptic interpretations. The apocalyptic background indicates the Johannine and Christian traditions were not alone in viewing the same individual as both Messiah and Son of Man. The association of Messiah and the Son of Man creates difficulty for the view that

²⁷ Martyn, *History and Theology*, 131–32; Ashton, *Understanding*, 240.

John's Son of Man Christology is a corrective to an "incorrect" view of Jesus as Messiah.²⁸ Rather, the intertwining of the titles in 1:47–51 and 12:32–34 suggests that in a manner similar to the Jewish apocalypses the Gospel of John connects the roles of Messiah and the Son of Man, since the same individual is both.²⁹

Fifth, the apocalyptic Son of Man background indicates the close association between Jesus and God. The title does so in a different way from the filial relationship indicated by "Son" or "Son of God." "The Son of Man" designation adds to the Johannine portrayal of the Jesus as one who is described like and acts like God. Similar to the Father, the Son of Man is "I am," judges, gives life, receives glory, and is worshipped.

Sixth, the title brings into the Johannine portrait the Son of Man's connection to the righteous and his role in gathering them. Statements referring to Jesus' drawing all people to himself (12:32) make greater sense when viewed against the backdrop of the Jewish apocalyptic interpretations of the Danielic "one like a son of man." One example of this function is noticeable in the dwelling of the righteous with the Enochic Son of Man following the judgment of the wicked (1 En. 62:14).³⁰

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²⁸ Cf. Martyn, *History and Theology*, 128–30; Sasse, *Menschensohn*, 77, 247.

²⁹ Between 1:49–51 and 12:34, "Messiah/Christ" is found in passages where there are no Son of Man sayings (John 4, 7, and 10).

³⁰ Ellens, *Son of Man in the Gospel of John*, 118, also 239, lists three key features of the Johannine Son of Man: "The three dominant designations of the Son of Man in the Fourth Gospel are the heavenly figure, the revealer of God, and the savior" (emphasis original).

Although the apocalyptic background plays a significant role in helping understand the Johannine Son of Man, there are aspects of this figure distinct to John. These include, first, the timing of the Son of Man's glory and judgment. Both take place on earth in the present, even though the glorification and judgment also seem to have a future conclusion (5:27–29; 13:31–32).³¹ Second, the greater emphasis on Jesus' role in salvation compared with his role in judgment is particularly Johannine, and third, the Gospel of John presents the Son of Man's glorification as beginning with the crucifixion. Even the Synoptic Gospels, which speak of the Son of Man's suffering, portray the Son of Man's glorification as taking place at Jesus' future return to earth, i.e., the *parousia*. For John, the glorification of the Son of Man begins “now” (12:23; 13:31).

Thus, the Johannine Son of Man is distinctly Johannine, or in other words, the Son of Man in John is “Johannized.” While Francis Moloney seems to agree that apocalyptic characteristics of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου are recognizable in the Gospel of John,³² he contends that I underestimate the extent of the Johannization.³³ However, I do not think that the interpretation of the Son of Man in the Gospel of John is so fully Johannized that the apocalyptic background loses relevance for understanding the figure in John. The Johannine Son of Man remains a heavenly, preexistent figure who reveals heavenly things and is the Messiah. He judges, takes part in salvation, gathers the righteous, and is similar to God. The present time reference for some of these events does not mean that the apocalyptic

³¹ Jörg Frey, *Die johanneische Eschatologie 3. Die eschatologische Verkündigung in den johanneischen Texten*, WUNT 117 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 381–91.

³² Moloney, “Parables of Enoch,” 290; also, Ellens, *Son of Man in the Gospel of John*, 4 n. 13.

³³ Moloney, “Parables of Enoch,” 287.

background is non-existent, especially since “apocalyptic” refers primarily to revelation and not to eschatology.³⁴

Moloney suggests that our differences may be determined by the “weight given to the diachronic and synchronic.”³⁵ As I see it, the primary difference between Moloney’s view and mine is not so much synchronic versus diachronic but rather whether the Son of Man’s “lifting up” and glorification refer primarily to the crucifixion or whether they also include Jesus’ resurrection and return to the Father. For Moloney, the Johannine Son of Man is located in the human Jesus rather than a heavenly figure because only a human being can be crucified.³⁶ He has been at pains to argue that he has been misunderstood and that he does not argue that “the Son of Man” refers to Jesus’ humanity:

Contrary to widespread interpretation of my earlier work on the Johannine Son of Man . . . , I do not claim that the expression in the Fourth Gospel “refers to his humanity.” I argued that John uses the expression “the Son of Man” to speak of the revelation of the divine (i.e., God) in the events of the life of Jesus, especially on the cross. “The Johannine Son of Man is the human Jesus, the incarnate *Logos*; he has come to reveal God with a unique and ultimate authority and in the acceptance or refusal of his revelation the world judges itself.”³⁷

³⁴ Matthias Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism in Late First Century Israel Reading Second Baruch in Context*, TSAJ 142 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 292; Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 71. Moloney appears to equate “apocalyptic” and “eschatological,” stating: “However, in my opinion the Johannine rereading of apocalyptic (Enochic?) traditions thoroughly realizes them, rendering the Johannine Son of Man a ‘present’ figure” (Moloney, “Parables of Enoch,” 292 n. 86).

³⁵ Moloney, “Parables of Enoch,” 292 n. 86.

³⁶ Moloney, 287.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 275, citing himself in *Johannine Son of Man*, 220.

Considering that he repeats the phrase “The Johannine Son of Man is the human Jesus,” the waters remain muddied, but as I understand it, Moloney’s position ultimately derives from his understanding of the “lifting up” and “glorification” sayings. A heavenly figure cannot be crucified, but a human figure can be. Note his comment that the revelation of God “in the events of the life of Jesus” takes place “especially on the cross.”³⁸

I, however, remain unconvinced that ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου in 1:51; 3:13; 5:27; 6:27, 53, 62; 9:35; 12:23; 13:31–32 has much, if anything, to do with the Son of Man as the revelation of God in the human figure of Jesus on the cross.³⁹ Moloney’s understanding places greater emphasis on the lifting up and glorification sayings and requires that they refer primarily to the crucifixion (3:14; 8:28; 12:34 and 12:23; 13:31–32). By contrast, I would argue that the lifting up and glorification of the Son of Man, while beginning in the crucifixion, also include Jesus’ resurrection and return to the Father. This is not to view the lifting up as Jesus’ ascension,⁴⁰ but with Raymond Brown and others, I understand the lifting up and glorification as the process of Jesus’ death, resurrection, and return to the Father.⁴¹ Jesus is the locus of the revelation of God. He reveals God by revealing himself. But the term “the Son of Man” does not merely locate that revelation of God in the human figure of Jesus on

³⁸ Note Moloney, *Johannine Son of Man*, 219: “This is a human event, as only a human being can be nailed to a cross....”

³⁹ For a non-crucifixion understanding of 6:53, see Reynolds, *Apocalyptic Son of Man*, 155–58.

⁴⁰ Cf. Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 152 n. 4; Siegfried Schulz, *Untersuchungen zur Menschensohn-Christologie im Johannesevangelium. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Methodengeschichte der Auslegung des 4. Evangeliums*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957), 107–8.

⁴¹ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (I–XII): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB 29 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), 146; Josef Blank, *Krisis: Untersuchungen zur johanneischen Christologie und Eschatologie* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Lambertus, 1964), 84; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1967), 1.396.

the cross. The phrase ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου in the Gospel of John connotes a heavenly figure as evident within the context of the Gospel, and even more so when considered in light of the apocalyptic background of “the Son of Man.”

I am using both synchronic and diachronic approaches to reach my conclusions about the Johannine Son of Man. Moloney and I may place different weight on the synchronic and diachronic, but Moloney also has his own diachronic view lurking in the background of his interpretation, namely that the “one like a son of man” in Daniel 7 is the symbol of the holy ones of the Most High, following his doctoral supervisor Morna Hooker.⁴² In other words, Moloney’s view that the Danielic “one like a son of man” is a referent for suffering humanity may color his synchronic focus on the Johannine Son of Man. In reality, both of us are using synchronic and diachronic aspects to understand John’s Son of Man, but we differ on the interpretation Daniel 7 and on some interpretation of John.

In my view, the Johannine inclusion of the crucifixion as part of the glorification and lifting up may derive from reflection on Daniel 7 and the servant songs of Isaiah, especially Isaiah 52–53. Since the Parables of Enoch and *4 Ezra* also contain interpretive speculation on the Isaiah servant traditions and the Danielic son of man,⁴³ and further that early Christian tradition associated Jesus’ suffering with Isaiah 52–53 (Acts 8:27–35; 1 Pet 2:21–25),⁴⁴ the

⁴² Francis J. Moloney, “The Johannine Son of Man Revisited,” in *Theology and Christology in the Fourth Gospel: Essays by Members of the SNTS Johannine Writings Seminar*, ed. Gilbert Van Belle, J. G Van der Watt, and P. J. Maritz, BETL 184 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), 181–82; “Parables of Enoch,” 275; see Morna D. Hooker, *The Son of Man in Mark: A Study of the Background of the Term “Son of Man” and Its Use in St. Mark’s Gospel* (London: SPCK, 1967), 24–30.

⁴³ Collins, *Scepter and the Star*, 211–12; also Grabbe, “Son of Man.”

⁴⁴ See C. F. D. Moule, “Neglected Features in the Problem of ‘the Son of Man,’” in *Neues Testament Und Kirche: Für Rudolf Schnackenburg* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1974), 413–28.

Johannine Son of Man's exaltation and glorification through suffering is not overly "Johannized" because there are thematic parallels with Second Temple Jewish interpretations of the Messiah and Son of Man that are evident in the portrayal of Jesus as Son of Man in John.

Reflections on the Apocalyptic Son of Man and the Historical Jesus

Even though "the Son of Man" is found in all four Gospels, the Son of Man sayings are rarely considered in discussions of the historical Jesus. I would argue that the Johannine Son of Man sayings should be considered as part of the evidence in these historical assessments of the sayings of Jesus. The thematic coherence of the Johannine sayings with the depictions of the Son of Man in Second Temple Judaism and earliest Christianity is striking. That the Danielic son of man was interpreted with similar characteristics suggests the possibility of at least some general expectations or understandings of Daniel's "one like a son of man" in the first century.⁴⁵

The consistency in the depiction of Jesus as the Son of Man across the four Gospels compellingly suggests a coherent early Christian Son of Man tradition or a multiplicity of traditions drawing on a common historical set of sayings. Apart from Stephen's use of "the Son of Man" in Acts 7:56, the angels' repetition of Jesus' words in Luke 24:7, and the crowd's use of Jesus' words in John 12:34, only Jesus speaks the phrase. The phrase is always used as a reference to Jesus. It is absent from the rest of the New Testament apart the

⁴⁵ Collins, *Scepter and the Star*; see also the compelling case made by Boyarin, "How Enoch Can Teach Us about Jesus."

anarthrous uses in Heb 2:6 and Rev 1:13; 14:14, which are direct references to Psalm 8:5 and Dan 7:13, respectively.⁴⁶ These similarities between John and the Synoptic Gospels in their uses of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου to portray Jesus suggest greater scrutiny should be given to the Johannine Son of Man sayings with regard to the Son of Man debate.

I have previously argued for the plausible authenticity of the Johannine Son of Man saying in John 9:35: “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”⁴⁷ My argument is primarily dependent upon a positive use of the criterion of dissimilarity. We have no evidence of a confession of belief in the Son of Man in extant Jewish literature from the Second Temple period. There is likewise no such confessional statement in early Christianity. Even in John, the confessions of belief are primarily in the Son, as the scribal tradition of 9:35 well attests. As such, it seems plausible that this confessional question may have come from Jesus’ lips.

Such findings raise questions about other sayings that have no clear parallel with the Synoptic Son of Man sayings, particularly if they also indicate possible thematic coherence. John 6:27 is one such possible saying: “Do not work for the food that perishes but for the food that remains to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.” Thematic parallels with the Synoptic Son of Man traditions are noticeable in the connection of the Son of Man with salvation. The food language reflects coherence with the Son of Man figure’s link to the messianic banquet in some apocalyptic interpretations.

⁴⁶ For most of the above, see Maurice Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God: The Origins and Development of New Testament Christology* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 46–47.

⁴⁷ Benjamin E. Reynolds, “The Johannine Son of Man and the Historical Jesus: Shall Ever the Twain Meet? John 9:35 as a Test Case,” *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 9 (2011): 230–42.

1 En. 62:14: “And the Lord of Spirits will abide over them, and with that Son of Man they will eat, and they will lie down and rise up forever and ever.”

2 Bar. 29:8: “At that time, those reservoir of manna will again descend from on high, and they will eat of it in those years, because these are the ones who have reached the consummation of time.”⁴⁸

The Johannine distinctiveness exists in the Son of Man’s giving of the food. The similarity with the traditions yet the saying’s distinctiveness makes it worth our while to ask whether Jesus may have spoken this statement or something like it, or whether this is merely Johannine “theologizing.”

In the remaining space, I will briefly mention some further questions that could be pursued regarding the Johannine Son of Man and the historical Jesus. What of the ascent and descent of the Son of Man in 3:13 and 6:62? Could the historical Jesus have said these statements? Could Jesus have been the one to associate his hour with the Son of Man’s glorification rather than the author or a redactor of John (12:23; 13:31)? Whether we are inclined to answer “yes” or “no,” we should be willing to ask these questions.

I recognize that I am pushing farther than most are willing to go, but I think an apocalyptic Son of Man in John challenges us to at least ask these questions rather than automatically to assume that these Son of Man sayings are the work of the Evangelist or his community. Just because the Gospel of John has some unique sayings should not mean that they are inevitably

⁴⁸ Translation from Michael E. Stone and Matthias Henze, *4 Ezra and 2 Baruch: Translations, Introductions, and Notes* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014).

inauthentic. The consistency of the portrayal of Jesus as Son of Man across the four Gospels and the characteristics of the Johannine Son of Man shared with early Jewish apocalypses suggests that John's depiction of the Son of Man cannot be brushed aside from historical conversations too easily.

Conclusion

The Johannine Son of Man is an apocalyptic Son of Man. This description of Jesus does not mean that the figure is eschatological. Rather, the Johannine Son of Man shares a number of features with the interpretations of Daniel's "one like a son of man" in the Jewish apocalypses – the Parables of Enoch, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch. Since these characteristics are perceptible in these Jewish apocalypses, the adjective "apocalyptic" may be appropriately applied to John's Son of Man.

Although John 3:13 and 5:27 are the sayings usually cited as examples of an apocalyptic understanding of the Son of Man in John, each of the Johannine Son of Man sayings reveals characteristics found in the Jewish apocalyptic interpretations of the Danielic son of man. The Johannine Son of Man is portrayed as preexistent, a heavenly figure, the Messiah, judge and bringer of salvation, revealer of heavenly things, gatherer of the righteous, recognized by the righteous, similar to God, and glorified.

This understanding of the Johannine Son of Man expands our understanding of Johannine Christology by providing a reason for Jesus' authority to judge, by highlighting a different perspective on his preexistence and heavenly origin, and offering reasons why he is able to reveal heavenly mysteries. As Son of Man, he is also Messiah and similar to God in ways

that would not be discernible without the use of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. The apocalyptic Son of Man tradition has clearly experienced “Johannization,” but the apocalyptic aspects of the Son of Man in the Gospel of John are still noticeable and have not been overwhelmed by a Johannine distinctiveness. These features enhance the Christological portrait of the Johannine Jesus.