The Son of Man in Second Temple Judaism

Few topics have put scholars in a state of disarray as the subject of the Son of Man has. In the introduction to his masterful history-of-interpretation, Delbert Burkett remarked that “research in this area has been described as ‘a veritable mine field’.” Indeed, pessimism and despondency are a recurring refrain among many scholars who despair of settling the question of the meaning of the expression. It is with due caution, then, that one more voice is added to the present cacophony. It would, of course, be impossible to address all the issues and baggage with which this subject has been freighted in such a small study. It is hoped, however, that this essay will provide a good introduction into this “minefield,” shedding light on an urgent within New Testament studies, namely, why Jesus chose to use this expression repeatedly.

To do so, it is necessary to begin with a survey of how the expression is used in the biblical texts. After that, a close look at Daniel 7 will provide the requisite background to examine two important Second Temple texts that discuss the Son of Man figure at length: the Parables of Enoch (1 Enoch 37–71) and 4 Ezra. By better understanding how the Son of Man figure is represented in these two texts, a clearer picture emerges regarding the variations within Jewish apocalyptic during this era, and helps inform how Jesus and the early Christian movement were shaped by this facet of Second Temple Judaism.

Biblical Background of the Expression

Typically in the Hebrew Bible, the expression “son of man” (ben adam) means “mortal” or “human being.” It is frequently used when characteristic statements are being made about humankind, such as in Numbers 23.19, when Balaam remarks that “God is not a man, that he would lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind.” In Psalm 14.2, the author laments the wickedness of humanity, stating that “the LORD looked down from heaven on the sons of man to see if there is anyone wise who seeks God.” Psalm 146.3 declares, “Do not trust…in a son of man in whom there is no salvation.” In this manner, the “son of man” epitomizes insufficiency and corruption.

In Psalm 80.17, however, “son of man” is used positively: “Let your hand be upon the man at your right hand, upon the son of man whom you strengthened for yourself.” The Psalm celebrates the restoration of Israel, and in this way the “son of man” is a representative figure, embodying the whole people. In Psalm 8, the “son of man” is simultaneously unworthy and exalted:

2. All Hebrew Bible citations will be my own translations, following the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (5th ed.; Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1977), unless otherwise mentioned. Enumeration of the Psalms will follow English Bibles.
What is man that you should remember him, or the *son of man* that you pay attention to him? Yet you have made him slightly lower than God…and have caused him to rule over the works of your hands and you have put all things under his feet. (8.4–6)

Here the “son of man” is a representative agent who has been endowed with authority to rule over the earth just as Adam had been, and is ranked just below God (*elohim*). Thus, the phrase, typically used generically, can be used to refer to a corporate group or a representative individual.

*Bar enosh* is the Aramaic expression which appears in the theophany of Daniel 7.9–14. It is used with the comparative preposition כ, so that the figure in view is said to be “like a son of man.” Caragounis suggests that, in context, the phrase “does not signify a human individual but a heavenly entity.” This occurrence will be dealt with in detail below.

*Ho uios tou anthropou* is the Greek form of the expression as it appears predominantly in the Gospels. It is not a typical Greek expression, as it apparently would have been “entirely without meaning to a Greek,” and so it clearly reproduces some form of the Semitic phrases above. Unlike its typical use in the Hebrew Bible, the expression in the Gospels is clearly a title. Thus, although rooted in the Hebrew Bible, the phrase in the Gospels goes beyond it, exhibiting affinities with non-canonical sources. This, too, shall be dealt with further below.

With this background in place, we now turn to three key texts that contribute to an understanding of what might be deemed “Son of Man expectations” in the Second Temple period.

**The Son of Man in the Second Temple Period**

**Daniel 7**

*Introduction.* Without a doubt, “few books have been more influential in western history” than Daniel. From the popular tales of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, to the eschatological visions which still capture imaginations today, the book has had an enduring influ-
ence. In its own day as well, Daniel was a popular and influential book, so much so that it is necessary to understand its use of “son of man” first before evaluating later occurrences of it. This is not a simple task, however; the meaning of this expression in Daniel has been the subject of intense debate. To situate the vision of Daniel 7 better, it will be helpful to look at some preliminary issues concerning this text.

Date, composition, and authorship of Daniel. The date of the composition of Daniel has been debated since Porphyry (c. 234–305 CE) argued that the book was written around the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, a view against which Jerome, Eusebius, and others argued. Traditionally, the date of the composition of Daniel was believed to be around the time of the historical events it narrates, and so the book was thought to date from around the late exilic to early post-exilic period. Certainly a number of historical accuracies, such as the mention of Belshazzar (5.1), whose existence and function as a co-regent is only known from two texts outside the book of Daniel, support this suggestion, since one characteristic of pseudepigraphal literature is the widespread appearance of glaring historical errors that would not have occurred if the text in question did in fact date to the historical period alleged for its composition.

These arguments are not to be lightly dismissed. Nevertheless, modern scholarly consensus on the date of the writing of Daniel places it sometime in the middle of the second century BCE. Although space here will not permit a full defense of this view, it is sufficient to note that the evident concern of the book with the atrocities of Antiochus Epiphanes, especially the vision section from chapters 7–12, implies that it was put into its present form around this time. It remains ambiguous, however, whether the contents of Daniel in some form pre-date this period, especially given the widespread influence and acceptance of the book. It would not be surprising to think

10. Ferch refers to the current interpretive options as a “bewildering array of opinions” (Son of Man, 2).
15. In Christian interpretation, the view that chapter 7 refers to Antiochus Epiphanes goes back at least to the Syriac father Aphrathat (c. 290–350 CE) and Ephraem Syrus (c. 306–73 CE). Cf. Ferch, Son of Man, 5–6,13.
16. E.g., its extensive influence on the many pseudepigraphic apocalypses of this period both in style and content, particularly the Parables of Enoch, as well as its appearance (albeit only fragmentary, along with non-canonical Danielic fragments) at Qumran (cf. Geza Vermes, trans., The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English [4th ed.; London: Penguin Books, 2004], 614–16). John Collins points out a few other examples of its influence, including the existence of the deuterocanonical Greek additions that demonstrate an influential but somewhat fluid textual tradition, the citation of Daniel in certain Dead Sea Scrolls, and the likelihood
that older traditions recounting the story of faithful Jews under foreign oppression would grow in importance during the Seleucid period.\textsuperscript{17} The fame of the iconic Jewish hero Daniel (possibly related to the “Daniel” of Ezekiel 14.14,20; 28.3) and traditions depicting him as a seer may explain why a compilation of his life and visions was put together during the Maccabean period.

If this is so, then what explanation can be given as to the nature of its arrangement, particularly certain oddities such as its bilingual composition?\textsuperscript{18} Jan-Wim Wesselius has argued that the author of Daniel intentionally composed the document so as to make it look like a “dossier” of traditions about an allegedly historical figure, rather than a deliberate pseudepigraphon.\textsuperscript{19} While he seems to leave it open as to whether or not the work is intended to be history or historical fiction,\textsuperscript{20} the evidence of the so-called “additions to Daniel” as well as the existence of what appear to be “proto-Danielic” writings found at Qumran,\textsuperscript{21} hint that there was a wide variety of traditions known at the time, and that the composer of the present text selected the content of the book from a larger number of preexisting traditions. Since a number of elements within the text demonstrate historically accurate knowledge as noted above, it is reasonable to suppose that the text was probably composed in order to bring together and unify circulating accounts about a presumably historical figure. The implication of this is that the book of Daniel is not a haphazard accretion of mythological and biblical elements over time, but rather is a well-constructed literary unit. The vision of Daniel 7, then, is to be understood as a unified vision, rooted in history, and redirected for the composers’s contemporaries.\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{Origin of the apocalyptic figure.} If the typical Hebrew meaning of the expression “son of man” is “human being,” from whence does the exalted apocalyptic figure in Daniel 7 derive?

\begin{itemize}
\item[17.] Cf. Flusser, \textit{Jewish Sages}, 5.
\item[18.] The Aramaic portion of Daniel is 2.4–7.28.
\item[19.] Cf. Jan-Wim Wesselius, “The Writing of Daniel,” in \textit{The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception}, vol. 2 (ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint; assisted by Cameron VanEpps; Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 83.2; Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 296. A number of narrative intrusions, such as 10.1–2, illustrate why this point. Wesselius suggests that Daniel was dependent on Ezra for structure and style of composition (300).
\item[20.] “Thus we see that the book of Daniel, instead of resulting from a gradual process of collecting and redacting of various texts, is a well-composed literary unity that was most likely written as a whole in the period often supposed for its final redaction: just before the Maccabean revolt….The book was to appear to its readers as a collection of separate documents dealing with the life, career, and visions of Daniel” (Wesselius, “Writing,” 309).
\item[21.] E.g., the Prayer of Nabonidus (4Q242), the Four Kingdoms fragment (4Q552–53), and possibly the Book of Giants (4Q530). Cf. Esther Eshel, “Possible Sources of the Book of Daniel,” in \textit{The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception}, vol. 2 (ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint; assisted by Cameron VanEpps; Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 83.2; Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 391–93.
\item[22.] Cf. Ferch, \textit{Son of Man}, 143.
\end{itemize}
Scholarship is divided between whether the primary influences of the vision are to be found in pagan mythology or the Hebrew Bible. Especially since the emergence of the Religionsgeschichtliche Schule in the nineteenth century, scholars have posited various mythological backgrounds for Daniel’s Son of Man figure, ranging from entities in the myths of Canaan/Ugarit, Babylon, Egypt, and Persia. Some have even maintained that an ancient Israelite enthronement festival indebted to early Canaanite rituals underlies Daniel 7. The main problem with these suggestions is that, for an author writing about the triumph of Israel over the empires of the ancient near east, it would be counter-intuitive to rely upon their myths to construct a theological polemic against them. Sandmel’s well-known exhortation against “parallelomania” should caution against attempting to fuse disparate data that allegedly “parallel” Daniel 7 in order to support these hypotheses.

Instead of trying to find parallels in ancient near eastern mythology, it is more reasonable to first probe the Hebrew Bible and Jewish tradition for possible backgrounds. Ziony Zevit rightly argues for this approach:

Perhaps the source of the images in Dan 7 should be sought within those books upon which we are fairly certain that the author’s faith was nurtured. He was a religious Jew writing for religious Jews in a language and in an idiom with which they must have been familiar.

Various points of contact between Daniel 7 and the rest of the Hebrew Bible support this.

One parallel is with Ezekiel 1.26–28, where God appears to the prophet in the famous wheels vision. The prophet describes God as seated on a throne and “having the appearance of a man.” Similar language in Daniel 7 prompts Balz to state that the apocalyptic Son of Man figure “developed in the context of hypostasis formations of late Judaism through a splitting off of formerly divine functions from the epiphany of God’s glory.” The fact that “son of man” figures so prominently in Ezekiel may have suggested itself to the author of Daniel, who considered the vision of

29. Quoted in Ferch, Son of Man, 32.
the “Ancient of Days” to be much like Ezekiel’s vision of the enthroned God. Daniel’s “son of man” became a part of the vision itself, rather than the recipient of it.

A few Psalms may have served as background material for Daniel 7. In Psalm 89, as the nation of Israel suffers, the author cries out for God to remember his faithfulness to David (89.49), who is “your anointed” (51) and “chosen one” (19), and who has been exalted and given an eternal kingdom (19–37). There is a clear affinity between the Psalm and Daniel in that the fate of one figure corresponds to the fate of the entire people.31 Psalm 80, referred to above, also contains a number of interesting parallels with Daniel 7.32 While Israel is being trampled upon by wild animals (13), the Psalmist hopes that God will restore her by strengthening a particular individual referred to as the ben adam (17). The exalted state of the son of man in Psalm 8 may have given further legitimacy for the author’s use of the expression in Daniel 7.33 The Psalm celebrates the “dominion” of the son of man, particularly over animals (8.7–8), whom God has subjected to the “son of man” (8.6). Psalm 110 also lauds an exalted figure before whom God defeats the nations.

Hosea 13.7–8 also appears to have been reworked by the author of Daniel 7.34 Although in context, the prophet speaks of God’s own judgment against Israel, the animal imagery which the prophet uses strongly implies some sort of adaptation in the vision of Daniel 7: “So I will become like a lion to them, like a leopard I will lurk beside the way. I will fall upon them like a bear robbed of her cubs, and will tear open the covering of their heart; there I will devour them like a lion, as a wild animal would mangle them” (NRSV).

The author of Daniel would have been aware of these texts and probably utilized them as “sources” in some way for the vision of chapter 7.35 Jewish traditions and scriptures provide us with a more coherent and readily verifiable background than any other suggested sources. The vision of Daniel 7 ties together messianic and theophanic imagery to describe the Son of Man figure. Even if John Walton—who thinks that Daniel 7 is a “conflated and eclectic” vision indebted

31. Two other particularly salient points of contact are that both David and the Son of Man apparently have their enemies defeated by God (cf. Psalm 89.23 and Daniel 7.11–12), and both are appointed to reign over the whole earth (cf. Psalm 89.27 and Daniel 7.14).
32. Cf. Ferch, Son of Man, 85–88. Hooker suggests that “Daniel is once again following the tradition of prophets and psalmists” when he depicts Israel’s enemies as wild beasts, taking cues from a Psalm such as this one (cf. The Son of Man in Mark [London: SPCK, 1967], 19).
33. About this Psalm, Lacocque states: “The Psalm sheds bright light on the reason why Daniel 7 chose to emphasize humanity as the referent for its eschatological figure. Kingship is here exercised by the human qua son of Adam, not qua son of David” (“Allusions to Creation in Daniel 7,” in The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception, vol. 1 (ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint; assisted by Cameron VanEpps; Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 83.1; Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 125). Perhaps this is why the figure in Daniel, though depicted messianically, is not explicitly identified as such.
to many sources, including ancient near eastern myths—were right, John Collins is ultimately right to conclude that “the meaning of any given work is constituted not by the sources from which it draws but by the way in which they are combined.” Whatever is concluded about the source material for the vision, the meaning of the images is to be found within it.

**Role of the Son of Man.** Not surprisingly, “no passage in Daniel has been more controversial than the vision of ‘one like a son of man’…in Daniel 7.” Many of the conjectures regarding the mythological background of the passage have only muddied the waters further. From Daniel 7 itself, however, a few features pertaining to the Son of Man are evident. It has been repeatedly recognized that the scene in 7.13–14 is an enthronement scene, wherein the divine kingdom is bestowed upon the Son of Man. The sea which is the source of the beasts (7.3) represents their earthly origin, while the Son of Man is said to come “on the clouds of heaven,” indicating his divine origin. The “clouds of heaven” are in some manner the vehicle by which the Son of Man arrives before the Ancient of Days, hinting at his identity. The clear affinity between the Son of Man and the “saints of the Most High” (cf. 7.14,27) demonstrates that he is a representative figure of the people as a whole.

**Identity of the Son of Man.** The Son of Man has been identified variously as a symbol for the righteous Jews, as the Messiah, as an angel such as Michael, or as some other ambiguous entity. The most common interpretation today maintains that, just as the beasts represent kingdoms, so too the Son of Man is a symbol for a kingdom, not an individual. Since the saints of the Most

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37. Cited in Walton, “Daniel,” 88. Walton goes on to correctly comment that Daniel 7 “ought to be recognized as an informed and articulate literary mosaic whose author has assimilated and mastered a wide spectrum of literary traditions in order to transform them to his own theological will and purpose” (88).


40. Cf. Revelation 17.15; 21.1 where the sea represents hostile Gentile nations.


42. This expression is typical of divine manifestations (cf. Ezekiel 1.4; Isaiah 19.1), although here the Son of Man is not explicitly said to ride on the clouds, and the Greek translations of the preposition (µετα ΄ in Theodotion but ἐνι in the LXX) indicate the ambiguity of the Aramaic (cf. Ferch, *Son of Man*, 163). Manson argues that the clouds are the transport for a human being ascending up to heaven, not a divine being already in heaven (cf. “Son of Man,” 174). The use of clouds in correlation with the introduction of the Son of Man, however, is best explained in light of the theophanic imagery occurring throughout the Hebrew Bible.


45. “During the twentieth century the symbolic view has established itself…as the ‘traditional’ exegesis of the apocalyptic figure of Dan. 7” (Ferch, *Son of Man*, 26–27).
High are given in 7.27 what the Son of Man is given in 7.14, and since the Son of Man does not appear in the interpretation of the vision, this interpretation commends itself on the surface.\textsuperscript{46} Undoubtedly, because the “one like a son of man” is a description and not a title, this interpretation is plausible.

This does not rule out, however, an individual interpretation. Both the Servant figure of Isaiah 40–55 and the messianic figure in the Psalms mentioned above are representative symbols and individuals.\textsuperscript{47} The “beasts” which symbolize kingdoms can also symbolize individuals; the lion of 7.4 is at the same time Babylon and its king, Nebuchadnezzar (cf. Daniel 4.28–37). The “one like a son of man” could also describe an individual who represents the “saints of the Most High” as well. The absence of a specific interpretation pertaining to the Son of Man figure does not necessarily imply that the saints are its interpretation, and there are a number of clear differences between them.\textsuperscript{48} First, the saints are clearly human,\textsuperscript{49} while the Son of Man is only “like” a human being.\textsuperscript{50} Second, the Son of Man receives the kingdom in heaven before the Ancient of Days, while the saints receive it on earth. Third, the saints are persecuted (7.21), while the Son of Man only appears after God has vindicated them (7.11–13).\textsuperscript{51} And fourth, God is said to adjudicate on behalf of the saints (7.22), something which the Son of Man evidently does not need.\textsuperscript{52} The duality of the Son of Man figure is not to be explained away: he appears to be both a divine and human-like figure who receives a kingdom in heaven and then shares it with the saints on earth.\textsuperscript{53} Furthermore, the earliest interpretations of this vision identify the figure as an individual.\textsuperscript{54} These interpretations, though not to be imposed upon Daniel as the original meaning of the text, at least suggest that the vision does in fact differentiate between the Son of Man and the saints.


\textsuperscript{47} Cf. Carter, “Son of Man,” 580.

\textsuperscript{48} Cf. Young, Daniel’s Vision, 8–9.


\textsuperscript{50} Young argues that “the clouds of heaven are represented as a vehicle for the accompaniment of a divine Person, and the saints of the most High cannot be regarded as of ‘heavenly origin’” (Daniel’s Vision, 15).

\textsuperscript{51} “Since they are the object of tyranny before the judgment, it would be incongruous that they be the [Son of Man] who comes in the judgment” (Ferch, Son of Man, 182). Pace Hooker, Son of Man, 27–28, who suggests that Daniel 7 is the first occurrence of a corporate “suffering Son of Man.”

\textsuperscript{52} Cf. Ferch, Son of Man, 176–82; and Young, Daniel’s Vision, 17.

\textsuperscript{53} Cf. Ferch, Son of Man, 179.

If the Son of Man is an individual, who might he be? Some have taken the Hebrew expression *bene adam*, describing an angel as “like the sons of men” in Daniel 10.16, as an indication that the Son of Man is an angel as well. The most likely candidate, then, would be Michael, the “great prince” who “stands up for the descendants of your people” (12.1) and has a role similar to the Son of Man. The role of Michael in Revelation 12.7 may suggest that his place as representative and defender of the nation had become a widespread belief. Ferch summarizes this view:

Michael is a celestial being who has defended and led Israel and will do so in a final judgment context. He thereby displays some messianic characteristics. He enjoys an intimate relationship with his people and takes a vital interest in their welfare, particularly during the eschaton when Israel’s lot is more hazardous. Michael’s intervention, whether militarily or judicial or both, results in the destruction of Israel’s enemy and its rescue followed by a resurrection.

He goes on, however, to point out two key differences: “Michael…does not enter the court-scene setting to receive dominion, glory, the kingdom and service of all peoples…. [and] the resurrection mentioned in Dan 12 is not referred to in chap. 7.” Although the two figures are similar, the differences between them suggest that the Son of Man is not Michael. It is noteworthy, as well, that the author of the Parables of Enoch, while conflating the Son of Man with a number of other known figures and titles, maintains a distinct role for Michael (1 Enoch 60.4–5), indicating that the author of that text did not read Daniel 7 in this way.

By and large, typical Jewish interpretation has identified the Son of Man as the Messiah. Rashi aptly summarizes this “traditional” view when he tersely states, “He is King Messiah.” Ibn Ezra (c. 1092–1167 CE) is one of the clearest and earliest Jewish proponents of a collective interpretation. Of course, the traditional Christian interpretation identified the Son of Man with a messianic figure, namely, Jesus.

Based on the evidence from the text, from later interpretations of the text as in the Parables of Enoch, and from longstanding traditions in both Judaism and Christianity, the Son of Man appears

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57. *Son of Man*, 102.
58. *Son of Man*, 104.
59. Quoted in Ferch, *Son of Man*, 10. In b. Sanhedrin 98a, Zechariah 9.9 (“Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” [NRSV]) and Daniel 7.13 are compared, both taken to refer to the coming of the Messiah.
60. Though even he allows for a measure of polyvalence regarding the identity of the figure (cf. Ferch, *Son of Man*, 21).
61. Ephraem Syrus (c. 306–373 CE) is one early Christian exegete who suggested both a historical referent (“the saints,” i.e. the Jews) as well as a “mystical” one (Christ), for the Son of Man. Cf. Ferch, *Son of Man*, 18.
to be a unique figure in Daniel 7, who most closely resembles the Messiah even though is never explicitly identified as named as such. Ferch here once again aptly summarizes:

The parallels noted above seem to argue in favor of viewing the [Son of Man] as an individual, heavenly, eschatological being with messianic traits, distinct from the saints of the Most High. Though separate from the saints, the context of Dan 7 depicts the [Son of Man] in such an intimate relationship with the saints and their destiny that this intimacy could and has led commentators to a blurring of distinctions between them.\(^6^2\)

*Influence of Daniel 7.* The depiction of the Son of Man in Daniel 7 had a major influence on messianic expectations, especially in the Second Temple period. Later descriptions of the Son of Man figure flesh him out far more extensively, making his identity much clearer. They also fit well with the interpretation of the figure presented here, which thus helps explain how the Son of Man became an individual in later texts.\(^6^3\) A number of parallels with later texts, including the mention of books of judgment (7.10; cf. 1 Enoch 47.3 and Revelation 3.5), the description of God as the “Ancient of Days” (7.9; cf. 1 Enoch 46.1), and the “coming with the clouds” (7.13; cf. 1 Enoch 14.8, 4 Ezra 13.2–3, and Mark 14.63) make this even clearer. Although not yet a judge, the proximity which the Son of Man has to the divine judgment in Daniel 7 likely led to his judicial role in later literature.\(^6^4\) This is the direction which the Parables of Enoch would take.

**The Parables of Enoch.**

*Introduction.* Without a doubt, 1 Enoch was one of the most prominent texts of the Second Temple period: “Few other apocryphal books so indelibly marked the religious history and thought of the time of Jesus.”\(^6^5\) It influenced Jubilees, Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, Jude (1.14–15), and in the Epistle of Barnabas it is even cited as “scripture” (16.5). Isaac comments,

there is little doubt that 1 Enoch was influential in molding New Testament doctrines concerning the nature of the Messiah, the Son of Man, the messianic kingdom, demonology, the future, resurrection, final judgment, the whole eschatological theater, and symbolism. No wonder, therefore, that the book was highly regarded by many of the early apostolic and Church Fathers.\(^6^6\)

*Composition and authorship.* The portion of 1 Enoch known as the Parables (chs. 37–71) was composed after most of the other sections of the book,\(^6^7\) focusing specifically on a series of visions which Enoch has, in which the Son of Man is introduced as a divine agent who brings about the final judgment (46.3–4). The Parables are obviously indebted to Daniel 7, and also were

\(^{62}\) Son of Man, 105.

\(^{63}\) Cf. Ferch, Son of Man, 192.

\(^{64}\) Cf. Ferch, Son of Man, 149.


influenced by other parts of 1 Enoch, particularly the initial vision of Enoch as described in chs. 12–16. Isaiah 40–55 also provided material for this author, as the Son of Man is described much like the Servant figure. The biblical and deuterocanonical sapiential literature were also sources for various images in the Parables. The writer of the Parables did not just sloppily borrow from various sources, however, but has creatively constructed them into a well-composed pastiche in which the Son of Man is identified and described.

Since the Parables are distinct from other parts of 1 Enoch, the question arises as to its authorship and provenance. One clue is found in the condemnation against the mighty in 46.8, who are said to “congregate in [God’s] houses and (with) the faithful ones who cling to the Lord of the spirits.” The authorship is apparently oppressed by a group that identifies in some manner with them, hinting that the community of the Parables is sectarian in a similar way as the Qumranites. The authorship is Jewish and they “identified themselves…in some important sense with Israel as a whole.” Social tension between rich and poor is also apparent in this text. Boyarin even suggests that this group’s strong beliefs about the Son of Man may have been a source of tension with and possibly persecution from the more legally-oriented sects of Judaism. While it is not entirely clear what form of Judaism stands behind the Parables, it can at least be theorized that they were some Second Temple sect with a high view of an eschatological figure.


69. Points of contact include being called “righteous one” (Is. 53.11, cf. 1 Enoch 38.3), “chosen” (Is. 41.8, cf. “Elect One” of 1 Enoch 49.2), and “light to the nations” (Is. 42.6, cf. 1 Enoch 48.4), as well as the emphasis on judgment (Is. 40.23, cf. 1 Enoch 48.8), and preincarnate election (Is. 49.1, cf. 1 Enoch 48.2).

70. There seems to be a polemic in 1 Enoch against wisdom literature. Cf. 42.1–3 and Sirach 24.1–12.

71. Nickelsburg sees the Son of Man as embodying “the ‘one like a son of man’ in Daniel 7.13–14; the Servant of the Lord in Second Isaiah…the Anointed One of the Lord (usually called ‘the Messiah’) in the royal oracles of the Psalms and the Prophets; and heavenly Wisdom in Proverbs 8 and Sirach 24, who existed before creation” (George W.E. Nickelsburg, “First and Second Enoch: A Cry Against Oppression and the Promise of Deliverance,” in The Historical Jesus in Context [ed. Amy-Jill Levine, Dale C. Allison Jr., and John Dominic Crossan; Princeton Readings in Religions 12; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006], 90).


74. He suggests that “What we have…is a virtual allegory of different historical trends within historical Judaism, those who remained faithful to the old ways, continuing to believe in the Son of Man and being declared heretics, and those who turn from such beliefs and adopted the new, improved, ‘purer’ rabbinic Judaism” (“Sectarian Document,” 383–84).

75. Cf. Michael E. Stone, “Enoch’s Date in Limbo; or, Some Considerations on David Suter’s Analysis of the Book of Parables,” in Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables (ed. Gabriele Boccaccini; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 449.
Since other portions of 1 Enoch were composed in Palestine,\textsuperscript{76} it also seems likely that the
Parables originate from the same region. Charlesworth argues that the group lived in Galilee,\textsuperscript{77}
and Nickelsburg even suggests that some of the members of this community may have joined the
early Jesus movement.\textsuperscript{78} Behind the present Ethiopic text probably stands a Semitic original,\textsuperscript{79}
and so the expression in the Parables is likely one of the Semitic phrases mentioned earlier.

\textbf{Date of composition.} The relevance of the Parables for New Testament studies has been most
strongly contested by J.T. Milik, who argued that the Parables are actually a late Christian document.\textsuperscript{80} In essence, he contended that because no identifiable part of the Parables were found at
Qumran with the other fragments of 1 Enoch, and because the church fathers never clearly reference
the Parables specifically, it probably dates sometime shortly before the conversion of Constantine.\textsuperscript{81} However, these arguments are rather tenuous. For one, it is neither certain that the Parables were absent from Qumran,\textsuperscript{82} nor that its absence from Qumran bespeaks its late date.\textsuperscript{83} Concerning its absence among the church fathers, Daniel Olson has pointed out a number of possible allusions to the Parables, the earliest one dating around 170 CE.\textsuperscript{84} It is emphatically clear that the


\textsuperscript{77} We will attend to his arguments for this more closely when we inquire concerning the date of composition
(cf. James H. Charlesworth, “Can We Discern the Composition Date of the Parables of Enoch?” in \textit{Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables} [ed. Gabriele Boccaccini; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007], 452).

\textsuperscript{78} Cf. Nickelsburg, “First and Second Enoch,” 91.


\textsuperscript{80} Cf. Burkett, \textit{Debate}, 71.


\textsuperscript{82} “We possess only about 10 to 20 percent of the manuscripts that were in the Qumran caves before, or in, June 68 CE” (James H. Charlesworth, “Composition Date,” 456)!  

\textsuperscript{83} Esther also is yet to be found at Qumran! Boyarin makes an interesting argument that there was some relationship between “Enochic Judaism” and “Qumran Judaism,” and the Parables actually represent a break between these two similar sects, thus explaining its absence from Qumran: “Whether or not we need speak of a full-blown parting of the ways, it seems nevertheless compellingly the case that Qumranic sectarianism and the ethos behind the Parables of Enoch represent distinct forms of Jewish religious imagination and distinctly different types of community” (“Sectarian Document,” 383). Charlesworth makes a similar suggestion: “The ideas in the Rule of the Community are not conducive to the claim that the Messiah is to be identified as the Son of Man…the Qumranites would not have agreed with the claim that involved celebrating Enoch above Moses or the Righteous Teacher” (“Composition Date,” 457).

\textsuperscript{84} Daniel C. Olson, “An Overlooked Patristic Allusion to the Parables of Enoch?” in \textit{Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables} (ed. Gabriele Boccaccini; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 492–96. Even if these allusions are rejected, it may be that the early church fathers saw a mistaken apologetic in the Parables concerning the nature and identity of the Son of Man, leading them on the whole to avoid this portion of the book (cf. James H. Charlesworth, “Composition Date,” 457).
Parables are not a Christian document as there is nothing in the text to indicate that Jesus could be identified with the Son of Man, and so it is undoubtedly a Jewish text.\(^8^5\)

The next question with respect to the date is whether or not the Parables were composed early enough to have influenced Jesus and early Christianity, or if they merely reflect a contemporary development. A number of scholars have taken the position that it is a first century CE Jewish work roughly contemporaneous to Jesus.\(^8^6\) A late first century date for the composition is unlikely because “the transformation of Son of Man messianism in 4 Ezra” implies that the Parables stand at an earlier stage of development.\(^8^7\) The lack of any indication of the destruction of Jerusalem also militates against dating the Parables after 70 CE.\(^8^8\)

Although “this question is not easy to answer,”\(^8^9\) there are a number of clues that hint at a date for the Parables around the reign of Herod the Great. The first is found in 1 Enoch 56.5–6:

In those days, the angels will assemble and thrust themselves to the east at the Parthians and Medes. They will shake up the kings (so that) a spirit of unrest shall come upon them, and stir them up from their thrones; and they will break forth from their beds like lions and like hungry hyenas among their own flocks. And they will go up and trample upon the land of my elect ones, and the land of my elect ones will be before them like a threshing floor or a highway.\(^9^0\)

This is possibly an allusion to the Parthian invasion during the civil war between Herod and Antigonus, which temporarily forced Herod out of Palestine.\(^9^1\) Charlesworth argues that this is the most likely explanation, and so “the Parables of Enoch would postdate that event, but prob-

\(^{85}\) Cf. Burkett, *Debate*, 73. Charlesworth states that “in 1977, during a congress of specialists on 1 Enoch, no one agreed with Milik that the work is Christian” (“Composition Date,” 451). This is especially clear in light of how Christians tended to interpolate other Second Temple texts, such as the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs or the Ascension of Isaiah (cf. Knibb, “Date of Parables,” 350). The absence of any such additions in the Parables suggests that it may have been deemed “beyond the pale” by many early Christians, and so was by-and-large ignored. Knibb goes on to say that “the evidence for the view that the Parables are a Jewish, rather than a Christian, composition is overwhelming” (“Date of Parables,” 350). Caragounis argues that, “Were it not for the silence of Qumran—a negative argument of dubious value—there would hardly be any reason to deny the pre-Christian date of the Parables and the thesis that this work reflects a part of Jewish thought at the time of Jesus” (*The Son of Man: Vision and Interpretation* [WUNT; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1986], 93).

\(^{86}\) This is the position of Suter (“Enoch in Sheol: Updating the Dating of the Book of Parables,” in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables* [ed. Gabriele Boccaccini; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007], 441), Burkett (*Debate*, 73), Adela Yarbro Collins (“Son of Man,” 343), and Knibb (Knibb, “Date of Parables,” 358).

\(^{87}\) Cf. Suter, “Enoch’s Date,” 440.

\(^{88}\) *Pace* Knibb, “Date of Parables,” 358.

\(^{89}\) James H. Charlesworth, “Composition Date,” 457.


ably not by many years or decades, since…the crisis seems rather recent and still disturbing to the
author….”

Given that there is little else in the text to situate it chronologically, this point merits
consideration. The other clue is that the author of the Parables adds “landlords,” or “dwellers on
the earth,” to the more traditional condemnation against “kings and mighty ones.” This peculiar
addition implies, according to Charlesworth, that the authorship and audience may have been
robbed of their property by the political elite. This was especially the case in the swampy region
around Galilee, suggesting that the Parables was composed by a group of Galileean Jews. Charlesworth
observes that “During the time of Herod the Great…Palestinian Jews were losing
their farms and becoming tenant farmers.” Therefore, the Parables most likely date from “the
period during the peak of King Herod’s reign (20–4 BCE), when more and more non-Jews are
becoming landowners.” Nickelsburg’s suggestion, that 1 Enoch 12–16 also probably comes
from Upper Galilee, strengthens the suggestion that the Parables was composed in Galilee.
The Parables, then, demonstrate that “the Son of Man” was most likely an expression known to some
Galileean Jews prior to Jesus’ ministry in Galilee.

Terms referring to the Son of Man. As previously stated, the Son of Man in the Parables is an
amalgamation of a number of figures drawn from the Hebrew Bible. Before examining the func-
tion and identity of the Son of Man in the Parables, it will be helpful to identify the titles ascribed
to him. The four major descriptions and titles are “the/that Son of Man,” “Righteous One,”
“Anointed One/Messiah,” and “Chosen/Elect One.”

The first title used is “Righteous One” (38.2), an ascription which occurs by itself as a title, in
correlation with other titles (53.6), as a description of the Son of Man (46.3), and as a description
of the chosen people as a whole (38.4). The Righteous One judges the wicked and reveals himself
to the righteous ones (38.1–3), and his appearance is described in theophanic language (53.6–

92. James H. Charlesworth, “Composition Date,” 458–59. Cf. also Nickelsburg, Literature, 219; and
Caragounis, Son of Man, 91. Pace Knibb, who argues that the “Parthians and Medes” simply reflect typical
prophetic expectation about the invasion of an enemy into the land, becoming a sort of “Gog” and “Magog”
(cf. Ezekiel 38–39). He also suggests that ch. 56 may be a later interpolation, but this seems to be special
pleading (“Date of Parables,” 355).

93. Cf. 1 Enoch 38.4; 46.6; 48.8; 62.2–9; and 63.12.


Baltzer; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 119.

The close correlation between the Righteous One and the “righteous ones” is similar to that of the Son of Man and the saints of the Most High in Daniel 7.

The second title used is “Elect/Chosen One” (39.6), a phrase used for both the Son of Man and the saints (cf. 40.5). The Elect One sits on “the seat of glory” (45.5) and on God’s throne (51.2–5), judges “Azaz’el and all his company” (55.4), and will dwell with the holy ones on earth eternally (45.4–5). In the Elect One dwell seven spirits (49.2–4), an image also found in Isaiah 11.1–2, which describes the shoot of Jesse. At the presence of the Elect One, the mountains will melt “like a honeycomb” (52.6), language used of God in Micah 1.4 and 1 Enoch 1.6. The Elect One is an enigmatic figure who will surprise the wicked when he is revealed (62.1). The Son of Man is said to have become “the Chosen One” (48.6).

The next title is the “Son of Man,” introducing the Daniel 7 figure most clearly (46.1–3). Interestingly, after this introduction, “Son of Man” ceases to function as a title like the other expressions, but always occurs with a demonstrative pronoun, indicating that even at this stage in the tradition, “son of man” remained a description. The Son of Man is named before the creation of the heavens (48.2–3), a passage that recalls Isaiah 40–55. The Son of Man has been concealed “from the beginning” to be revealed at the end of days (62.7), hinting at his preexistence. The Son of Man will live forever (69.27), and, when Enoch ascends to heaven finally, he is raised up “before that Son of Man” (70.1). The last occurrence of the phrase is more contested, occurring as a term of direct address for Enoch himself (71.14,17). This final passage will be addressed in more detail below.

The last title, “Anointed One/Messiah,” is not prominent, but functions at least to indicate that the author of the Parables clearly identified this figure with the Son of Man. The wicked are said to be those who “have denied the Lord of the Spirits and his Messiah” (48.10). The events which

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100. Cf. Isaiah 40.3–4: “A voice cries out: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low…” (NRSV); Psalm 114.7–8: “Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the God of Jacob, who turns the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a spring of water” (NRSV).

101. Note that there are three separate Ethiopic phrases that stand behind this term. As VanderKam points out, “the reason for the changes is not always clear” (“1 Enoch 37–71,” 174).

102. Cf. “This Son of Man” (46.4); “that Son of Man” (48.2; 62.9,14; 69.27,29; 70.1; 71.17). An exception to this occurs in 62.7, but it follows a reference to “that Son of Man” in 62.5.

103. Cf. John J. Collins, “The Heavenly Representative: The ‘Son of Man’ in the Similitudes of Enoch,” in Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms (ed. John J. Collins and George W.E. Nickelsburg; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1980), 112; and Hooker, Son of Man, 44. Caragounis suggests that “the author of the Parables is hampered by one serious difficulty: the term ‘Son of Man’ is not a current messianic title…” (Son of Man, 110). R.H. Charles, however, saw these Ethiopic pronouns as hinting that in an earlier Greek form of the text, the phrase was used with the definite article, suggesting a titular usage (cf. Burkett, Debate, 69).

104. Cf. 1 Enoch 48.3 with Isaiah 42.6–7; 49.6.
Enoch sees all “happen by the authority of his Messiah” (52.4), reflecting the “dominion” given to the Son of Man in Daniel 7.14.105

Wisdom motifs are also present in the Parables, and, although the Son of Man is not expressly identified with the figure of Wisdom, there a number of interesting correlations between it and the Son of Man. For instance, in 1 Enoch 42.1–3, the author states that

Wisdom could not find a place in which she could dwell, but a place (for her) was found in the heavens. Then Wisdom went out to dwell with the children of the people, but she found no dwelling place. (So) Wisdom returned to her place and she settled permanently among the angels.106

The heavenly abode of Wisdom is comparable to that of the Son of Man. Furthermore, the Elect One is said to possess “all the secrets of wisdom” (51.3). Another interesting parallel with sapiential literature is found in Wisdom of Solomon 2–5: just as the unrighteous “will be shaken with dreadful fear…speak to one another in repentance, and in anguish of spirit they will groan” before the righteous (Wisdom 5.2–3, NRSV), so too at the presence of the Son of Man the wicked “shall glance at [each other]; they shall be terrified and dejected; and pain shall seize them…. [They] shall (try to) bless, glorify, and extol him who rules over everything…” (62.5–6).107 There is certainly a polemical edge to this ascription, perhaps because the author felt that the Son of Man was Wisdom incarnate, but in a different manner than as represented in these sapiential texts.108

Role of the Son of Man. The author has clearly taken over messianic language to describe the Son of Man. However, in the Parables, he is not merely the Davidic heir, but is a divine, transcendent, and preexistent individual. This recasting of messianic motifs may be because “the author of the Parables…has lost faith in a traditional human messiah of David’s line…[so] he looks for a superhuman being as alone fit to deal with human as well as spiritual lawlessness….”109 If the Parables was written during the reign of Herod the Great, then it could be that this community had been disabused of earthly messianic expectations, and so they identified the Messiah with the heavenly Son of Man and emphasized his hiddenness (62.7). The motif of hiddenness helps the


106. Cf. Sirach 24.3–9: “I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, and covered the earth like a mist….Then the Creator of all things gave me a command, and my Creator chose the place for my tent. He said ‘Make your dwelling in Jacob, and in Israel receive your inheritance.’ Before the ages, in the beginning, he created me, and for all the ages I shall not cease to be.”


108. This co-opting of Wisdom motifs may stem from an earlier portion of 1 Enoch: “And then wisdom shall be given to the elect. And they shall all live and not return again to sin…” (5.8).

109. Caragounis, Son of Man, 111.
author explain why the figure was not recognized explicitly by the prophets or Daniel; he is being revealed solely to the elect ones at the end of days.\textsuperscript{110}

The author has a high view of the Son of Man, as he is described in language usually reserved for God in the prophets and even in other parts of 1 Enoch.\textsuperscript{111} It has already been noted that the appearance of the Elect One is described with theophanic language.\textsuperscript{112} The Son of Man also takes over the judicial functions which belonged to the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7 and 1 Enoch 14–16 (cf. 63).\textsuperscript{113} This transformation is most clear in that the traditional “Day of the Lord” in the prophets (cf. Isaiah 24.21–24) becomes the “Day of the Elect One” (cf. 1 Enoch 61.5).\textsuperscript{114}

The Son of Man represents the “righteous” community, especially since his titles apply also to them throughout the text (cf. 56.6, 58.1). It is at the revelation of the Son of Man that “the righteous and elect ones shall be saved…they shall eat and rest and rise with that Son of Man forever and ever” (62.13–14). The main difference between the two is that, while the holy ones suffer, the “Righteous One” does not, but rather acts as judge on their behalf.

The Son of Man is a preexistent figure in the Parables, since he is given a name before creation (48.2) and he is said to have been “concealed from the beginning” (62.7) This is where the Wisdom motif is most evident:

The clearest parallel for a preexistent figure in pre-Christian Judaism is the portrayal of wisdom in Prov 8.22–31… the Parables here developed the identity of the Son of Man well beyond anything that we found in Daniel, by applying to him language that is elsewhere used of wisdom.\textsuperscript{115}

The revelatory function of the Son of Man also suggests his identification with Wisdom.\textsuperscript{116} While some have argued that the Parables do not speak of preexistence, but rather only the primitive election of the Son of Man,\textsuperscript{117} it is more likely, given the significance of naming in Semitic culture

\textsuperscript{110} Cf. Caragounis, \textit{Son of Man}, 115.

\textsuperscript{111} Cf. James H. Charlesworth, “Composition Date,” 453.

\textsuperscript{112} Micah 1.3–4: “For lo, the LORD is coming out of his place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. Then the mountains will melt under him and the valleys will burst open, like wax near the fire, like waters poured down a steep place” (NRSV). Cf. also Enoch 1.5–9.


\textsuperscript{114} Cf. Burkett, \textit{Debate}, 98.

\textsuperscript{115} John J. Collins, “Enoch and Son of Man,” 225.


\textsuperscript{117} Cf. VanderKam, “1 Enoch 37–71,” 180. T.W. Manson strongly objects to the idea of preexistence: “[the concepts of preexistence] are thoroughly vague and ambiguous, and I cannot help thinking that we should get on better without them” (“Son of Man,” 181). This is also the perspective of Rudolf Otto: “Taken strictly, the meaning is that he himself would not really exist until at the End. His existence is at first only that of the name, which is named before God in the earliest beginning” (\textit{The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man} [2nd; trans. Floyd V. Filson and Bertram Lee-Woolf; Boston: Starr King Press, 1957], 188).
and the fact that preexistence is not foreign to Jewish thought, that the Parables represent one of the earliest instances of the preexistent Messiah/Son of Man: “The data suggests that the author of the similitudes interpreted the ‘one like a son of man’ in Daniel 7:13-14 as the Messiah and understood him to be a pre-existent, heavenly being.”

Identity of the Son of Man. As indicated above, the reason why this text is absent from Qumran and the early church fathers may be due to its perceived heterodoxy. At the conclusion of the Parables, Enoch ascends into heaven, and an angel speaks to him and says, “You, son of man, who art born in righteousness and upon whom righteousness has dwelt, the righteousness of the Antecedent of Time will not forsake you…[and] together with you shall be [the holy ones’] dwelling places…” (71.14–16). Although “son of man” could simply be construed as a Hebraism referring to Enoch as a human, it seems more likely that Enoch is here identified as the Son of Man.

A number of points support this. The motif of hiddenness is applied to both the Son of Man (48.6) and Enoch (71.5). The ascription of righteousness to the Son of Man is similar to the ascription given to Enoch (71.16). Enoch’s new knowledge of “all the secrets” (71.4–5) fits well with the Son of Man’s function as revealer of secret things (48.7; 51.3). The chronology of 37.1 which reminds the reader that Enoch is a “son of Adam” might foreshadow his status as the “Son of Man.” He reveals “words of wisdom” (37.2) like the Son of Man (51.3). He possesses wisdom (37.4) which dwells with Son of Man (49.3). His portion has already been reserved for him in heaven (39.8), akin to the Son of Man (48.2). The description of Wisdom noted above fits both Enoch as well as the Son of Man in the Parables. As the Elect One dwells with the holy ones (45.4), so too will Enoch (71.16). Chapter 71 recalls a number of images which may derive from chapters 14–15, depicting the Son of Man as Enoch was in those previous chapters.

118. Cf. Bowman, “Son of Man,” 288, for a number of rabbinic examples that speak of the preexistence of the Messiah. He also points out that one’s name was bound closely with one’s existence and personhood.


120. Suter sees the absence of patristic citations of the Parables as evidence that the present, Ethiopic form of the book may have been taken over from a form preserved in Jewish Hekhalot circles rather than Christian circles (cf. “Enoch’s Date,” 428). This could explain how it seems a Greek text of 1 Enoch is used by the patristics (which may have been translated before the composition of the Parables) while a Semitic one stands behind the translation of the Parables in the Ethiopic (having been taken over from Jewish circles).


122. This may also be an interpretive expansion of 1 Enoch 12.1–2, where Enoch is said to be hidden away. Collins, however, does not think so (cf. “Enoch and Son of Man,” 226).


124. Particularly relevant are Enoch’s role as a judge over the Watchers (14.3), and Enoch’s status as a “righteous man” and a “scribe of righteousness” (15.1).
Some scholars have argued against this by contending that chapter 71 was a later addition to the text, possibly added as a polemic against Christianity.\textsuperscript{125} However, as Black admits, “the designation of Enoch as the Son of man who approached the Throne of God is in line with the concepts of Enoch….”\textsuperscript{126} R.H. Charles, who originally viewed 71 as a late addition, later changed his mind and considered it original.\textsuperscript{127} The motif of hiddenness in the Parables can explain why he is not identified as Enoch until the very end.\textsuperscript{128} As VanderKam fittingly summarizes,

no passage requires that one think of a separate being called the son of man existing in heaven while Enoch lives elsewhere. Enoch sees the son of man in visions of the future, not in disclosures of the present. He is seeing only what he will become.\textsuperscript{129}

The lack of any manuscript evidence for an omission of chapter 71 indicates that it should be viewed as the appropriate climax of the Parables, completing “the biography of Enoch.”\textsuperscript{130} The fact that a strand of later Jewish mysticism, as evidenced by 3 Enoch, identified him as an exalted and transcendent figure makes it more credible to think that such a tradition quite possibly arose from earlier beliefs, of which the Parables of Enoch may be the earliest example.\textsuperscript{131}

Importance of the Parables. The Parables demonstrate “the way in which at least one Jew of this period interpreted Dan. 7.”\textsuperscript{132} The Parables are also “the most ancient…witness to the messianic interpretation of the servant.”\textsuperscript{133} If we are correct in placing the composition of the Parables in Galilee during the reign of Herod the Great, then it may provide the missing interpretive link between Daniel 7 and the New Testament. It can also explain how the Son of Man went from

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{125}So Black states that “No very satisfactory explanation of the identification of Enoch as the Son of man has ever been offered, except, of course, that it must be a Jewish idea, is probably late and even cabballistic; it could belong to the mediaeval furnishings of the Book” (“Parables,” 7). Cf. John J. Collins, “Enoch and Son of Man,” 222–23. Collins suggests that “this development in the Enoch tradition was…a reaction to the Christian appropriation of the phrase ‘son of man’ for another who was believed to have made the transition from earth to heaven” (“Son of Man,” 126).
\item \textsuperscript{126}“Parables,” 7.
\item \textsuperscript{127} Cf. James H. Charlesworth, “Composition Date,” 450.
\item \textsuperscript{128} Cf. VanderKam, “1 Enoch 37–71,” 181.
\item \textsuperscript{129} VanderKam, “1 Enoch 37–71,” 183–84.
\item \textsuperscript{130} VanderKam, “1 Enoch 37–71,” 182.
\item \textsuperscript{131} Cf. John J. Collins, “Enoch and Son of Man,” 222. Mearns suggests that the shorter recension of the Testament of Abraham contains a polemic against the view that Enoch is the Son of Man (cf. Christopher L. Mearns, “Dating the Similitudes of Enoch,” New Testament Studies 25, no. 3 [April 1979]: 363–64). This recension probably dates from around the end of the first century CE (cf. E.P. Sanders, “Testament of Abraham,” in Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments [ed. James H. Charlesworth; vol. 1 of The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha; New York: Doubleday, 1983], 875). The author of the Testament writes that “it is not Enoch’s business to give sentence” (11.6), which could be taken to imply that there was a contemporary group that believed he did in fact function as a divine judge.
\item \textsuperscript{132} Hooker, Son of Man, 48.
\item \textsuperscript{133} VanderKam, “1 Enoch 37–71,” 190.
\end{itemize}
being a passive agent in Daniel 7 to an active judge in the Gospels (cf. Matthew 25.31–32). The identification of the Son of Man with a glorified human, i.e. Enoch, may have provided the basis for Jesus to use the phrase in this manner also. In sum, if it is maintained that the Parables have in some way influenced Jesus’ use of the expression, it can more adequately account for the variety of ways which it is used in the Gospels.

4 Ezra.

Introduction. At the end of the 1st century CE are the writings of the visionary who claimed to be biblical Ezra. This date is ascertained due to the report of 3.1 that the visions began “in the thirtieth year after the destruction of our city,” a clear reference to the events of 70 CE. According to Metzger, “the obvious Semitic coloration of the work” suggests both that it was probably produced in Palestine, and that underlying the present Latin text is a Hebrew original. Its importance is demonstrated by its citation in the Epistle of Barnabas, as well as the later Christian redaction of the text which added the first two chapters to the present work. Notably, the expression “son of man” does not actually appear in the text; yet it is undeniably clear that the Son of Man figure is the character referred to in 13.3ff. 4 Ezra bookends the New Testament era and helps create a fuller portrait of Second Temple Jewish eschatology, most notably revealing how beliefs were adapted and altered after the catastrophic events in 70 CE.

Sources of 4 Ezra. 4 Ezra is most obviously indebted to Daniel for much of its contents: “The eagle which you saw coming up from the sea is the fourth kingdom which appeared in a vision to your brother Daniel” (12.11). Many scholars also think that certain similarities between the Son of Man figure in 4 Ezra and the Parables of Enoch indicate that it also served as a source.

139.It appears that chs. 3–14, however, have been left virtually free of Christian interpolation, particularly with respect to the visions in which the Messiah and the Son of Man appear (chs. 7, 11–13). Cf. Caragounis, Son of Man, 121.
140.Cf. James H. Charlesworth, “Composition Date,” 455. John Collins points out that the line introducing the man is missing in the Latin (as is evident in the King James Version of 4 Ezra, which omits the first mention of him in 13.2–3). The Syriac translation of 4 Ezra suggests that the original phrase was either ben adam or bar enosh (cf. John J. Collins, Daniel [Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1993], 82).
141.There are a number of parallels between the two works, the most obvious being the motif of hiddenness of the Son of Man seen in the Parables and 4 Ezra 13.26. Cf. Caragounis, Son of Man, 92, for this and other parallels. Nickelsburg suggests that in 4 Ezra, “[the Son of Man] differs from the one…in Daniel 7 but parallels the Elect One in the parables of Enoch” (Literature, 292).
surprising, then, that the Son of Man is an individual in 4 Ezra, as he was in the Parables. However, the author of 4 Ezra has not utilized these sources without making significant modifications, even departing significantly at times from their depictions of the figure. 4 Ezra thus demonstrates a continuity with this tradition but represents further developments beyond the eschatology of Daniel and the Parables.

**Visions of the Messiah/Son of Man.** The author of 4 Ezra, like the author of the Parables, has clearly identified the Son of Man as the Messiah. In 12.32, as an angel interprets Ezra’s vision of a lion confronting an eagle, he is told that “[the lion which you saw] is the Messiah whom the Most High has kept until the end of days, who will arise from the posterity of David….” Parallel to this, in 13.26, as an angel interprets Ezra’s vision of “something like the figure of a man” coming up out of the sea, he is told that “[the man] is he whom the Most High has been keeping for many ages….”

Since they clearly are the same individual, we must back up to where the Messiah is first introduced in chapter seven. In Ezra’s third vision, after he inquires as to why Israel suffers so greatly, he is given a vision of the end of days:

> For behold, the time will come, when the signs which I have foretold to you will come to pass [cf. 6.17–28]; the city which now is not seen shall appear, and the land which now is hidden shall be disclosed. And everyone who has been delivered from the evils that I have foretold shall see my wonders. For my son the Messiah shall be revealed with those who are with him, and those who remain shall rejoice four hundred years. And after these years my son the Messiah shall die, and all who draw human breath. (4 Ezra 7.26–29)

Like Daniel, the Son of Man is presented after the final cataclysm, rather than as the one bringing it about, as in the Parables. He appears after God has already set up the messianic kingdom. However, there is a twist unlike both Daniel and the Parables: the Messiah is not a permanent figure, but rather arrives to celebrate temporarily with those who survive the final cataclysm, and after a 400 year period he dies (7.28–29). He is not mentioned with respect to the final judgment, where God alone acts as final judge (7.33ff).

This is not all that is said about the Messiah/Son of Man, however. In the fifth vision, which is an expanded and modified form of Daniel 7, the eagle—a clear allusion to the Roman Empire—is confronted by “a creature like a lion” (11.37) who speaks with a man’s voice and utters words of judgment against the eagle. The symbol of the lion is obviously a Judahite image (cf. Genesis 49.9), so 4 Ezra has retained traditional messianic expectations that the Messiah would be from the line of David. In an expansion from chapter seven, the lion is identified as the Messiah who will “set [the kings] living before his judgment seat, and when he has reproved them, then he will destroy them” (12.33). Here, then, the expansion gives the Son of Man responsibility for executing eschatological judgment, similar to his role in the Parables.

The Son of Man is more explicitly introduced in the sixth vision:
After seven days I dreamed a dream in the night; and behold, a wind arose from the sea and stirred up all its waves. And I looked, and behold, this wind made something like the figure of a man come up out of the heart of the sea. And I looked, and behold, that man flew with the clouds of heaven; and wherever he turned his face to look, everything under his gaze trembled, and whenever his voice issued from his mouth, all who heard his voice melted as wax melts when it feels the fire. After this I looked, and behold an innumerable multitude of men were gathered together from the four winds of heaven to make war against the man who came up out of the sea. And I looked, and behold, he carved out for himself a great mountain, and flew up upon it. And I tried to see the region or place from which the mountain was carved, but I could not. (4 Ezra 13.1–7)

The vision is clearly a fusion of Daniel 2 and Daniel 7, with the Son of Man being identified along with the “stone not cut by human hands” (Daniel 2.34). The appearance of the Son of Man is described here much as God’s appearance is traditionally depicted (cf. Micah 1.4). Further down, the Son of Man is said to have “sent forth from his mouth as it were a stream of fire, and from his lips a flaming breath” (13.10), language which reflects the shoot of Jesse: “he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked” (Isaiah 11.4, NRSV). It also reflects the judgment of God: “Smoke went up from his nostrils, and devouring fire from his mouth” (Psalm 18.8, NRSV). The result of this “flaming breath” is that “nothing was seen of the innumerable multitude but only the dust of ashes and the smell of smoke” (13.11), language which likely echoes Isaiah 66: “For the LORD will come in fire…and those slain by the LORD shall be many” (Isaiah 66.15–16, NRSV). In this vision, then, the Son of Man resembles God, functions as eschatological warrior, and defeats his enemies in traditional messianic fashion.

**Interpretation of the sixth vision.** Caragounis rightly comments that, although adopting classical messianic motifs, “the author supplements them by introducing conceptions of more recent vintage.” Similarities with the Parables suggest that the author of 4 Ezra’s vision may have been “dissatisfied with the traditional idea of a human messiah,” perhaps in light of the recent failures of the Jewish revolts. The Son of Man in the vision is a transcendent, divine figure.

At the same time, the Son of Man is rather dissimilar from the individual in the Parables. This is most starkly evident in the interpretation of the sixth vision, wherein “the man” is treated not as a straightforward expression, but rather as a symbol, much like the lion in the fifth vision. While the vision has much in common with a tradition like the Parables, the interpretation downplays many of these similarities. In fact, because of a number of differences between the vision and the

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142. Cf. also Psalm 97.3,5; 104.32. Even in 4 Ezra 8.23, God is described accordingly: “whose look dries up the depths and whose indignation makes the mountain melt away.”


144. Caragounis, *Son of Man*, 125.

interpretation, scholars have suggested that the vision itself actually predates 4 Ezra, and was taken over and reinterpreted by the author.\textsuperscript{146}

Burkett suggests that the original vision of the man rising from the sea is an image that depicts a “soul brought up from the underworld and reincarnated or resurrected.”\textsuperscript{147} The vision would then represent a stream of Jewish thought that expected the Messiah would in some way be David \textit{redivivus} (cf. Ezekiel 34.23). This belief is likely evident in early apostolic exegesis: Peter quotes Psalm 16.10, in which David rejoices that God will not abandon him to Sheol, to demonstrate how the resurrection of Jesus had been foreseen by the prophets (cf. Acts 2.25–31).

The interpretation of the vision does not speak of a figure rising from the dead, however. Instead, he is said to be preexistent in some manner,\textsuperscript{148} who, when he is revealed, will “deliver his creation” (13.26). The sea is not a metaphor for death, but instead is a metaphor for the incomprehensibility regarding the identity of Son of Man (13.52). Additionally, while the Son of Man is the eschatological warrior in the vision, the interpretation indicates that it is God who is more directly responsible for delivering “those who are on the earth” (13.29). The Son of Man is called “my son” as he was in chapter 7 (13.32), recalling 2 Samuel 7.14, which was paradigmatic for Davidic messianic expectations: “I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me” (NRSV).\textsuperscript{149} In the interpretation, the Son of Man does not come on a mountain which he himself had carved out (13.6), but rather rides on Mount Zion which had been “carved out without hands” (13.36), suggesting that God is directly empowering him as he comes in final judgment. He acts as judge over the wicked nations, but this is again not by his own power or authority, but “by the law” (13.38). This judgment, too, is not the final judgment as in the Parables, which was reserved for God, as the third vision made clear. Instead, it is much more like the judgment one would expect to come from an earthly messianic deliverer (cf. Psalm 2.9–12). The actions performed by the Son of Man in the vision are treated as metaphors, which when interpreted reveal

\textsuperscript{146}Stone states that “the author is here writing his own interpretation to a previously existent allegory. Only the attempt to give a new interpretation to a previously extant vision can explain...the overall contrast between this interpretation and the carefully structured interpretation of the eagle vision” (\textit{Fourth Ezra}, 211). He suggests elsewhere that “the author produced such a botched job” despite being an able litterateur “because he was writing an interpretation to a strongly crystallized preexistent vision” (\textit{Fourth Ezra}, 399).

\textsuperscript{147}Cf. Debate, 104.

\textsuperscript{148}So Knibb, “Date of Parables,” 359; Metzger, “The Fourth Book of Ezra,” 521; and Stone, \textit{Fourth Ezra}, 212.

\textsuperscript{149}On this matter, Stone suggests that the word “Son” is probably a mistranslation of an original Hebrew \textit{ebed} mediated through the Greek \textit{pais}, which was then misunderstood by the Latin translator to mean “child” rather than “servant” (cf. Stone, \textit{Fourth Ezra}, 207). However, Psalm 2.7 (“He said to me, ‘You are my son...’” \texttext{[NRSV]}) corroborates the fact that the Messiah could be considered the “Son of God.” 1 Enoch 105.2 as well speaks of “I and my son” joining the people forever. “Son,” then, is probably a correct translation.
the figure to be much more human than the vision would have suggested. Stone correctly states that in the interpretation “the Messiah is seen only as God’s instrument.”

It may be that the Son of Man was not a readily identifiable figure to the audience of 4 Ezra, explaining why the interpretation can deviate so far from the apparent meaning of the vision: “the author...has shorn this figure of all of its particular characteristics in the interpretation and treated it as a symbol. This would be inconceivable if the ‘Son of man’ concept was readily recognizable to him and his readers.” It seems more likely, however, that after the New Testament era, the Son of Man would have been a known figure and expression, and so the author evidently was trying to downplay his role and identity in contrast to traditions such as the Parables and the Gospels. That the author went so far as to adopt a preexisting vision and to reinterpret it in order to de-emphasize the role the Son of Man would play in the eschaton suggests that this author was attempting to bring these sorts of apocalyptic speculations in line with “traditional” messianic beliefs that would become predominant in later Judaism, pulling the Son of Man figure away from the beliefs espoused by groups like the community of the Parables and the followers of Jesus.

Given this diminishing role for the Son of Man, it appears that “the Messiah...was not the answer to the questions that Ezra was asking.” The Son of Man has not disappeared altogether from the author’s eschatology, but instead has been adapted and downplayed, especially in comparison with the exalted Son of Man in the Parables. Though the author’s views are at points muddled because of the appropriation of preexisting traditions, the Son of Man appears to function along the lines of the Daniel 7 figure: in chapter 7 he appears only after the judgment, and in chapters 12 and 13, even though the Son of Man himself acts as judge to an extent, he is heavily dependent on God. If 4 Ezra expects a kingly Messiah, it also anticipates a much more human-like Son of Man than earlier traditions have supposed. Still, the vision of the Son of Man does give Ezra some peace, as this is the final vision revealing God’s plan for the end of days. Thus, he is important, but not central to 4 Ezra’s eschatology.

Importance of 4 Ezra. 4 Ezra gives us a glimpse into the eschatological expectations of a group of Jews at the end of the first century CE. The author has taken up traditional messianic language to describe the coming of a transcendent one who had been hidden away for many ages. Yet this transcendent one turns out to be much more human than previously believed. God returns to center stage, with the Son of Man acting much more under commission, rather than his own might and authority. The coming of the Messiah is not the final solution, for he too will one day die, revealing his mortality, after which God will be the one to set all things right in the day of judgment. The influence of 4 Ezra can be seen on later texts such as 2 Baruch (cf. 36–40),


wherein the Messiah/Son of Man is an exalted, but still very human, figure. Undoubtedly, then, Metzger is right to suggest that messianism in 4 Ezra is an “overshadowed” theme. All of this suggests that, at the end of the era, Jewish beliefs about the Son of Man were turning away from the high view found among earlier Second Temple groups.

The Son of Man in the New Testament—Possibilities and Suggestions

Inevitably, “If all roads lead to Rome, so too, all Son of Man studies are bound to converge in Jesus.” With the various portraits of the Son of Man in Second Temple literature in mind, the question is raised: how does one understand the titular use of the expression on the lips of Jesus in the New Testament, wherein he speaks frequently of the Son of Man, who is identified variously as one who will suffer and die (Mark 9.31), who will ascend to heaven in glory (cf. Matthew 28.16–20), and who will return as a cosmological judge (Matthew 25.31–32)?

The problem scholars have had with Jesus’ use of the expression is that it does not neatly align with any other known use of it. This has led scholars to debate the authenticity of the Son of Man sayings, with some arguing that only the apocalyptic sayings are authentic, others that only the non-apocalyptic sayings are authentic, and others that none of the sayings are authentic. Geza Vermes has argued that the expression was a well-known Semitic idiom with no apocalyptic overtones or allusions whatsoever. More recently, the Jesus Seminar has popularized the view that Jesus spoke of someone else as the Son of Man, which the early church then modified to turn it into a reference to Jesus. With scholarly opinion in such disarray, it is hard to know where to begin.

Space fails here to account for the variegated usage of the term in the Gospels, but a few suggestions need to be made here concerning the question of authenticity. First, any view must account for the fact that “the term is to be found some 80 times in the NT and with just one

154.Caragounis, Son of Man, 4.
157.Burkett cites Wrede, who argues that it is impossible to imagine that Jesus employed “in reality a manner of speaking such as that which the Evangelists expect of him” (Debate, 40). This is also the view of Case, Käsemann, and Perrin (cf. Burkett, Debate, 50ff). Burkett summarizes: “The early church knew no ready-made ‘Son of Man’ with which to identify Jesus; rather they developed the Son of Man sayings by a midrashic interpretation of Daniel 7.13 and other Scriptures” (Debate, 74).
exception only in the words of Jesus.”161 Those who argue for the inauthenticity of the sayings must explain this one difficulty: “Were it the case that the main impetus for the emergence of the ‘Son of Man’ as a title for Jesus came from beyond the first Easter, why did the title not feature more widely within earliest Christianity?”162 Second, it is unlikely that the later Church would have concocted these sayings: the earliest Christian interpretations of the expression often overlook the apocalyptic significance of the phrase,163 treating it merely as a metaphor implying that Jesus was truly human.164 Randall Buth expresses this problem: “In spite of the development within the Greek gospel tradition where the ‘son of man’ sayings are linked to Daniel 7, our early Church traditions ignore this link to Daniel 7.”165 Whence, then, the apocalyptic sayings, if they are not authentic in some way? Third, as Morna Hooker asked, “If we place a saying or tradition to the credit of the Church, are we necessarily obliged to debit it from our picture of Jesus?”166 In other words, even if the Gospel writers had a hand in shaping the meaning of the expression (which, in some manner, they undeniably did), that does not mean a priori that Jesus did not use it. It is much more likely that the Church would have built on a known Jesus tradition rather than try to create a new one.

The situation is by no means a simple one, and any solution may inevitably be guilty of Dunn’s criticism, that it might “create as many problems as it resolves.”167 This is due to the polyphonous way which the Gospels make use of the phrase. If Jesus had in mind a preexisting expression, without a doubt he creatively reinterpreted it and modified its meaning—something we might expect from a man who had no difficulty doing the same with well-establish Jewish beliefs and traditions. How, then, do we understand the Son of Man on the lips of Jesus?

Before making specific suggestions, it is to be noted that Jesus’ varied use of the phrase means that any neat, homogenous solution might not suffice; rather, “the NT phrase must be so interpreted as to fit the varied uses made of it in differing situations.”168 One must recognize up

163. “A Danielic Son of Man christology was not of much, if any, continuing importance within the rest of Christianity as represented in the NT” (Dunn, “Daniel in NT,” 539).
166. Son of Man, 6 (emphasis hers).
front the inherent limitations faced in a historical inquiry about Jesus. Adela Yarbro Collins recognized this important principle for Son of Man research: “It reminds us to let Jesus be a stranger to us and not to cast an image of him in our own cultural likeness and theological preference.” For Burkett, this subject serves as a “prime illustration of the limits of New Testament scholarship…both in our own inevitable subjectivity as scholars and in the intractable nature of the sources at our disposal.” At the end of the day, we must work with what we possess, leaving room for ambiguity when we just do not have enough data to work with. Starting in the “knowns” of the Gospels, however, seems a good way forward at the present time.

The Gospels at least hint that “son of man” was a known and understood expression. For example, when Jesus appears before the high priest in Mark 14.60–64, he not only claims to be the Christ and the “Son of the Beloved,” but adds: “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven” (14.62). This occasions the high priest to tear his garments and pronounce Jesus’ words blasphemy. By surpassing his inquisitors’ questions, Jesus leaves no room for uncertainty about his identity; he declares himself to be the Son of Man, and the priest understands his meaning. Another example occurs after the triumphal entry in John. The crowd, puzzled by Jesus’ statement that he will be lifted up from the earth (12.32), responds by saying, “We heard from the law that the Christ remains forever, so how can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?” (12.34). The crowd understands the Christ and the Son of Man to be the same person, and what they believe about the Christ contradicts what Jesus is saying about the Son of Man.

A number of reasons point to Daniel 7 as the root for Jesus’ use of the expression. The apocalyptic Son of Man sayings are both the most dominant use of the phrase in the Gospels and the one most likely to embarrass the Church, given the delay in the Parousia which they had to grapple with right around the time of the composition of the Gospels. Time and again throughout the Gospels, it also stands out as the clearest allusion of the expression. Scholars often reject this by arguing from their interpretation of Daniel 7 that Jesus did not have this association in mind; however, this ignores the obvious fact that passages prone to messianic or

apocalyptic interpretation were interpreted quite freely by various groups, as has been observed above, and so matters would have been no different with Jesus.  

If we are right in arguing for a Galileean provenance of the Parables of Enoch, then it too would shed light on Jesus’ usage. Because of uncertainty regarding its date, scholars have tended to dismiss its possible influence on Jesus and the New Testament, but as argued above, it is feasible to think that the Parables of Enoch “was a prototype for NT speculation about the Son of Man…” A number of scholars have recognized that Daniel 7 alone cannot account for the Gospels’ usage, and a number of similarities with the Parables suggest its influence. One clear example can be seen in the so-called “messianic secret” in the Gospels, a concept which dovetails nicely with the Parables, for “one of the most distinctive characteristics of the Son of Man in the Parables is his hiddenness.” So too does the judicial role of the Son of Man in the Gospels reflect development beyond Daniel 7 but an affinity with the Parables. The Wisdom motif in the Parables of Enoch could further explain some of the so-called non-apocalyptic sayings, for both Wisdom in the Parables (cf. 42.1–3) and Jesus in the Gospels could be described by the statement that “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man

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175. As Bowman argues, “To establish by modern critical methods what ['like a son of man'] meant to Daniel may throw no light on what Jesus’ contemporaries took it to mean…” (“Son of Man,” 285).

176. Carter calls any connection “doubtful” (“Son of Man,” 580). Knibb states that “there is little more than a general similarity of thought or language, and it is difficult to accept seriously the suggestion that the New Testament passages in question were influenced by, or are dependent on, the Book of Enoch” (Knibb, “Date of Parables,” 355). Walck thinks that the similarities between the Parables and the Gospels “do not admit of direct, literary dependence” (“The Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and the Gospels,” in Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables [ed. Gabriele Boccaccini; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007], 336). Burkett and Walck, however, both think that the Parables do eventually show up in a late redaction of Matthew (cf. Debate, 78; and Walck, “Enoch and Gospels,” 337).


178. Cf. George W.E. Nickelsburg, “Son of Man,” in Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary, vol. 6 (D.N. Freedman, gen. ed.; New York: Doubleday, 1996), 516; and Adela Yarbro Collins, “The Secret Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and the Gospel of Mark: A Response to Leslie Walck,” in Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables (ed. Gabriele Boccaccini; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 340. Otto goes so far as to suggest that the Son of Man tradition which Jesus builds on “is preserved in the apocalyptic books of Enoch” (Son of Man, 176). Black states that “the synthesis between prophetic Scripture and Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, begun in the Similitudes, is realized in Jesus” (in Geza Vermes, “בר נש”), 329). Charlesworth is open to the idea that “Jesus discussed ideas, concepts, and terms with those in or related to the Enoch group…[for] if those in the Enoch group were known as the great scholars who had special and secret knowledge, and if they lived in Galilee, then Jesus would most likely have had an opportunity to learn firsthand about their teachings through discussion and debates” (“Composition Date,” 467).


181. Cf. especially Matthew 19.28; 24.26–27; 25.31–46; Mark 8.38; Luke 12.8–9; and John 5.27.

has no resting place for his head” (Matthew 8.20). The fact that people think the Son of Man is Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets (cf. Matthew 16.14), tantalizingly hints that perhaps some may have thought that Enoch was.

Without a doubt there are many differences between the Parables and the Gospels: “those with the Enochic teaching of the son of man in their minds would find it as difficult to recognize in Jesus of Nazareth the heavenly son of man, as others to see in him the King Messiah.”¹⁸³ Just like messianic expectations, however, Jesus may very well have taken over a preexisting tradition familiar to many in his audience, and reworked it so as to allow for enough uncertainty about his true meaning to force them to rethink their beliefs: “No term was more fitted both to conceal, yet at the same time to reveal to those whom had ears to hear, the Son of Man’s real identity.”¹⁸⁴

At the end of the first century, 4 Ezra exhibits continuity and discontinuity with preexisting beliefs about the function and identity of the Son of Man. He still figures in the apocalyptic scheme, but is certainly not the transcendent figure of the Parables. He is part of God’s eschatological solution, but only a temporary one, who will help to make things right but in a way that is much more dependent on God’s oversight. In some ways, the Son of Man looks like Jesus, for he is called “my son” and appears after a series of messianic woes (13.31–32), much like the Son of Man in Mark 13//Matthew 24. The advent of the Son of Man is associated with the restoration of all the tribes of Israel in both 4 Ezra (cf. 13.40) and the Gospels (cf. Matthew 19.28). In 4 Ezra, the Son of Man will act as a judge over the nations (cf. 13.37), much like the Son of Man in Matthew 25.31–46. Yet Ezra’s Son of Man is also quite different: his judgment is effected “by the law” and evidently not on his own authority (13.38); it is this-worldly, with the final judgment reserved for the Most High (cf. 7.31–38); and in the end, he will pass away along with the rest of the world (7.29). For the author of 4 Ezra, standing at the end of a century full of high fervor and expectations, beliefs about a transcendent Son of Man found among earlier Jewish sects had gone too far and were ultimately mistaken.

Conclusion

It has been demonstrated that Jesus’ usage of the expression “son of man” need not be explained only by recourse to arguments about authenticity or complex linguistic conjectures. Nor must the New Testament Son of Man be dispelled into the novel category of “non-Jewish

¹³⁹ Black, in Geza Vermes, “בר נש.” 329 In response to those who argue that Jesus used the expression simply as a way to speak of himself in the third person (e.g., Vermes), Bauckham aptly comments, “There seems no reason why Jesus could not have exploited the coincidence between his accustomed form of oblique self-reference and the language of Dan. 7.13, so that bar enash in a saying alluding to Dan. 7.13 becomes the same kind of veiled hint of his own status as other authentic son of Man sayings convey” (“Son of Man,” 100). Dunn similarly suggests that “it is hardly implausible to argue that it was Jesus himself who linked his own idiomatic [bar enosha] usage to the Danielic [bar enosh] figure” (“Daniel in NT,” 547).
conceptions of the Messiah.” The Son of Man, while not homogenous or fixed, already existed as an apocalyptic figure in some Jewish circles before the time of Jesus, and it endured in modified form after him. Thus he stands in the center of a complex, yet explicable, interpretive tradition.

What the Second Temple period evidences, then, is “not a common model, but a common set of building blocks—messianic and messianically interpreted passages of scripture—which are creatively combined and understood in various ways to produce...a variety of portraits of the Messiah.” The phrase, first appropriated in Daniel 7 to describe an anticipated apocalyptic figure, was picked up by the author of the Parables and identified as the eschatological judge who shared much in common with God himself, and eventually was reinterpreted by the author of 4 Ezra to bring it more in line with what became typical Jewish expectations. Jesus and the Gospel authors stand within this tradition, and contribute to the overall picture of how the “one like a son of man” was understood within Second Temple Judaism.