

DREW UNIVERSITY

"THE SON OF MAN" AND THE THEOLOGICAL PURPOSE OF MARK

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	i
INTRODUCTION	1
I. THE SON OF MAN	3
A. SOURCES OF THE "SON OF MAN"	3
B. "THE SON OF MAN" USAGE IN MARK	13
II. THE THEOLOGICAL PURPOSE OF MARK	19
A. THE IDENTITY AND AUTHORITY OF JESUS	23
B. THE MISSION OF JESUS	29
CONCLUSION	34
BIBLIOGRAPHY	38

PREFACE: QUALIFICATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

One of the most intriguing and complex problems in New Testament Christology is undoubtedly the origin, meaning and usage of the title "Son of Man" in the Synoptics and particularly in Mark's gospel. The topic has demonstrated an uncanny ability to solicit a perennial and disproportionate degree of interest and attention.¹ The continuous debate has produced a seemingly endless variety of views and a massive volume of literature. Of considerable debate within this issue is the question regarding the authenticity of some² or all³ of the "Son of Man" sayings. Using the three recognized categories of these sayings, we can identify five possible approaches⁴ that emerge from the ongoing debate:

1. The Son of man saying are authentic and reveal Jesus' own self-understanding.
2. The Son of man sayings are all community products and do not reflect Jesus' own self-understanding.
3. The Son of man sayings which refer to the future are alone authentic but do not refer to Jesus.

¹See I. H. Marshall, "The Synoptic Son of Man Sayings in Recent Discussion," New Testament Studies, 12 (1966), pp.327-51; and R. Marlow, "The Son of Man in Recent Journal Literature," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 28 (1966), pp.20-39. For a recent sampling of the literature on this topic see Bruce, F. F., "The Background to the Son of Man Sayings," in Christ the Lord, ed. by H. H. Rowdon (Downer's Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1982), pp.50-69.

²Eg. Eduard Schweizer, "The Son of Man," Journal of Biblical Literature, 79 (1960), pp.119-129.

³Eg. P. Vielhauer discussed in A. J. B. Higgins, Jesus and the Son of Man, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), pp.22-23.

⁴These are listed and discussed in Donald Guthrie's New Testament Theology, (Downer's Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1981), pp,270-282.

4. The Son of man sayings which refer to the future are authentic and reflect Jesus' self-understanding as the heavenly Son of man.

5. The Son of man sayings which refer to Jesus' earthly life are alone authentic.

Substantial cases have been made for each of the above approaches and the approach taken will significantly affect the results of one's investigation.⁵ However, in this study of the Son of man sayings in their role within Mark's theological purpose, establishing the authenticity of the sayings is of secondary importance. Mark himself, or the pre-Markan community may be responsible for placing none, some, or all of the sayings on the lips of Jesus. The primary consideration is Mark's usage of those sayings in the arrangement and composition of his gospel. Objections to the authenticity of various Son of man sayings will be discussed as they arise in the course of investigation, but a comprehensive analysis and critique is not the purpose of this project. If I may tip my hand as to my own position, it would be to concur with Eduard Schweizer in his arguing that the confinement of the phrase to the lips of Jesus and the absence of its use in the early church as a self-designation of Jesus, provides strong proof of the authenticity of at least some of the sayings.⁶ For the sake of convenience I will treat the sayings "phenomenologically" in the text without qualification, although this is in no way an a priori acceptance of their authenticity, an issue which we have already concluded deserves separate treatment.

⁵See Marshall, "Son of Man Sayings," pp.327-335 for an excellent summary of the different views regarding the authenticity of the Son of man sayings. In this article he presents the major views beginning with H. Lietzmann (1896) to A. J. B. Higgin's work Jesus and the Son of Man (1964).

⁶E. Schweizer, "The Son of man," pp. 119-120. Cf. F. F. Bruce, "Background," pp.50-51.

In the topic before us the title "Son of man" presents a formidable problem. The difficulties in determining the exact derivation and meaning of this phrase have led some to despair of arriving at a definitive solution.⁷ However, much of the difficulty seems to stem from attempts to find a uniform meaning and usage by a particular evangelist. The fact that this title can be understood variously may well relate to our Lord's exclusive use as a means of self-designation and Mark's subtle but strategic usage in his gospel. Despite the difficulties it will be necessary to discuss the title "Son of man" in terms of its possible origins and its usage and meaning in general. Following this discussion we can proceed to examine how this title for Jesus fits into the theological scheme of Mark's Gospel.

⁷A. J. B. Higgins, "Is the Son of Man Problem Insoluble?" in Neotestamentica et Semitica, ed. by E. E. Ellis and M. Wilcox (Edinburgh: 1969), pp.70-87.

INTRODUCTION

Earlier we alluded to the difficulty biblical scholars have had in determining the exact origin, meaning and usage of the phrase "the Son of man". Generally you would expect obscurity with words or phrases having a paucity of citations. Such is not the case here as the phrase appears ninety-four times in the New Testament.⁸ One would think with that many occurrences the meaning of the phrase would be readily apparent. However, it is precisely because this phrase appears so often and in so many varied contexts that scholars have been led to conflicting conclusions as to its literary source and meaning. As John Bowker has pointed out, although the phrase "the Son of man" appears almost exclusively on the lips of Jesus,⁹ He presents the Son of man "in very different modes of activity, sometimes in the present, sometimes in the future, sometimes suffering, sometimes in glory ..." ¹⁰ Consequently, one is left to question where this phrase originated and how it came to be applicable to so many different contexts. We quickly learn that we are dealing with multiple sources with different meanings and associations. We are then led to ask the following questions: How did Jesus employ this phrase? Which source lies behind his usage? Why did Jesus use this phrase so often to refer to Himself? This last question actually dovetails with our final questions: How do the Son of man sayings serve Mark's "theological purpose" for his gospel? There are those that question whether Jesus ever used this phrase¹¹ and attribute its use to Mark

⁸Mt. 32x; Mk 14x; Lk 26x; Jn 12x; Acts 1x; Hb 1x; Rev 2x.

⁹Except for Jn. 12:34, where the phrase is used by Jesus' hearers, who are reiterating in question form his self-identification as the Son of man, the authors of the New Testament always have Jesus speaking these words in reference to Himself.

¹⁰John Bowker, "The Son of Man." Journal of Theological Studies. 28(April, 1977), p.18.

¹¹See Norman Perrin. "Creative Use of the Son of Man Traditions by Mark." Union Seminary., Quarterly Review 35 (Summer, 1968): 357-365. Perrin's thesis that Mark's usage of the Son of man sayings represents a significant development in New Testament

and/or the early church. It is unfortunate that such either/or bias exists. It is this author's intentions to show that Jesus' use of this phrase is apprehended (and comprehended) by Mark and presented so as to present the Gospel from his own unique theological perspective.

Christology (p.365) deserves attention and will be discussed later. It suffices to restate that the affirmation of authenticity does not preclude creative use by Mark of those sayings.

I. "THE SON OF MAN"

A. B. Bruce, the well-known British scholar of nearly a century ago, asked a very fundamental question concerning the phrase "the Son of man": "Was it current as a Messianic name among Jews in our Lord's time?"¹² After all this time and what must appear to some, barrels of printer's ink, we do not seem to have definitively answered the question.¹³ Nevertheless, Bruce's question distills the problem to its essence. What did the phrase "the Son of man" mean to Jesus' hearers? Did this phrase have more than one meaning and association? How did Jesus employ this expression? Why did he use it? These are questions that must be answered if we are to fully appreciate the distinctiveness of Mark's gospel and comprehend his theological purpose. To begin our task we must first investigate the origins of this enigmatic phrase, "the Son of man."

A. Sources of "the Son of man"

It is generally held by most biblical scholars that there are three possible sources for the phrase "the Son of man:" the Old Testament, Apocryphal Literature and colloquial Aramaic. An occasional reference is made to other ancient Near Eastern and Eastern material, but these are usually considered quite tenuous.¹⁴ J. W. Bowker gives passing mention to the ideas of primal or primordial man in such writings, but assesses that "it is

¹²A. B. Bruce, The Kingdom of God, 6th ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1904), p.166.

¹³Supra, p.3.

¹⁴John W. Bowker, "Son of Man", p.27. Writers have even attempted to show the possible connections between "the Son of Man" in Dan. 7 and figures in Indian, Babylonian, Egyptian and Canaanite Literature. Cf. Carsten Colpe, "ho huio tou anthropou" in The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. by G. Friedrich. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972).

even more difficult to establish a direct connection between them and the New Testament than it is to establish a direct connection between the New Testament and the apocalyptic uses."¹⁵ It seems prudent here to follow the example of the majority of scholars and limit ourselves to the three categories above.

1. The Old Testament

The most obvious and natural source for our phrase "the Son of man" is the Old Testament. Within the body of canonical scriptures the book of Ezekiel immediately comes to mind. Here we find the prophet addressed not by his own name, but as ben adam, "as an individual creature drawn from the genus man and contrasted with God."¹⁶ That the Hebrew idiom designates a "child of Adam" by descent is obvious,¹⁷ but the exact inference that should be drawn from its use is more difficult to determine. One writer has seen in its use in Ezekiel an allusion to Ezekiel's weakness (cf. Dan. 8:17) apart from the enabling of God to perform his prophetic mission.¹⁸ Derived from the above is the suggestion that the phrase was borrowed by Jesus to express his belonging to the same "prophetic line."¹⁹ H. Straton sees the phrase used of "a man who is completely

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶O. Michel, "The Son of man" in The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, ed. by C. Brown. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), p.613.

¹⁷R. B. Girdlestone, Synonyms of the Old Testament, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), p.46.

¹⁸James Stalker, "Son of Man" in International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, ed. by James Orr. (Chicago: The Howard Severance Co., 1915), p.2829.

¹⁹Ibid.

obedient to God, one whom God can use in contrast to the rest of his countrymen."²⁰

Regardless of the precise nuance of this phrase in Ezekiel, it appears safe to draw the general conclusion that it expressed a real identification and solidarity with mankind.²¹

In the Psalter the phrase appears in Hebrew parallelism with "man" used in the generic sense. Psalm 8:4 reads,

What is man that Thou dost take thought of him?
And the son of man, that Thou dost care for him?

It appears evident that the psalmist is using the phrase as equivalent to "man" (i.e. mankind). The author of Hebrews quotes Ps. 8:4-6 in referring to Christ in his humiliation as a necessary counterpart to his exaltation (cf. Heb. 2:9).

What is man that thou rememberest him?
Or the Son of man (ho huios tou anthropou) that Thou art concerned about him?
Thou has made him for a little while lower than the angels
Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor
And Hast appointed him over the works of Thy hands;
Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. (Heb. 2:6-8).

It is suggested that the author of Hebrews had sufficient cause to interpret this phrase within the Messianic motif. Psalm. 80:17 carries our phrase.

Let Thy hand be upon the man of Thy right hand, Upon the son of man whom Thou didst make strong for Thyself.

²⁰H. H. Straton, "Son of Man and the Messianic Secret" in Journal of Religious Thought, 24 #1 (1967-68), p.35.

²¹C. W. Carter, "Son of Man, The" in Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, ed. by M. C. Tenney, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), p.485.

Concerning this verse Stalker writes, "This is an appeal in an age of national decline, for the raising of a hero to redeem Israel; and it might well have kindled the spark of messianic consciousness in the heart of Jesus."²²

Probably the Old Testament source with the most apparent relevance to our study is Dan. 7:13f. Here we find the most probable source for the so-called "apocalyptic Son of man" of the Synoptics.²³

I kept looking in the night visions
 And behold, with clouds of heaven
 One like a Son of man was coming
 And He came up to the Ancient of Days
 And was presented before Him
 And to Him was given dominion
 Glory and a kingdom
 That all the peoples, nations, and (men of every) language
 Might serve him
 His dominion is an everlasting dominion
 which will not pass away
 And his kingdom is one
 Which will not be destroyed.

The linguistic affinity is so striking that one can hardly deny a connection. Mk. 8:26 had, "And then opsontai ton huion tou anthropou erchomenoi en nephelais with great power and glory." Before the Sanhedrin Jesus answers the high priest, "And opsesthe ton huion tou anthropou ek deksion kathemenon tes dunameos kai erchomenon meta ton nephelon tou ouranou (Mk 14:62). In addition the concepts of "kingdom" and "dominion" are implied in Mark's reference to "sitting at the right hand of power." The parallel passages

²²Stalker, "Son of Man" p.2829.

²³See Mk. 8:38; 13:26; 14:62; Mt. 10:23; 16:28; 19:38; Lk. 12:8, 40; 17:30; 22:67, 69. See Robert D. Rowe, "Is Daniel's 'Son of Man' Messianic?" in Christ the Lord ed. by H. H. Rowdon, pp.71-96. On p.72 Rowe points out that in Mk. 14:62 Jesus' allusion to Dan. 7:13 was in reply to the high priest's messianic question, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" (14:61).

in Matthew leave no doubt as to dependence by speaking of the son of man sitting on thronou dokses autou (19:28) and erchomenon en tei basileai autou (16:28).

In viewing Daniel as our Old Testament source for Jesus' use of Son of man in the apocalyptic motif one problem is readily apparent. Daniel's vision itself identifies the "Son of man" (7:13) with the "saints of the Highest One" (7:27). As Straton has observed, "In Daniel, the Son of man apparently is symbolic of Israel as a whole. The figure is a personification of the holy community rather than a personalized Messiah."²⁴ This problem is addressed by Cullmann who points out the "representative" character of the Son of man within the context of Daniel's vision.

Nevertheless, we must ask why it is as "man" that the nation of saints is contrasted with the four beasts. It has been rightly pointed out that the explanation of the vision contains a certain inconsistency: the beasts are interpreted as kings, as representatives of the world empires, but the "man" is the nation of the saints itself. The incongruity suggests that the "man" may also originally have been representative of the nation of saints. Representation easily becomes identity in Judaism. According to the Jewish concept of representation, the representative can be identified with the group he represents.²⁵

2. Apocryphal Literature

Although the question of whether Jesus' use of the title Son of man indicates his familiarity with the apocryphal concept of the "apocalyptic son of man" remains a moot

²⁴Straton, "The Son of Man ..." p.36. See also C. Colpe, "Ho huios tou anthropou," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 8. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1972), pp.415-419.

²⁵O. Cullmann, The Christology of the New Testament, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), p. 140. See also Rowe's presentation of the representative character of the Davidic king as both individual and messianic in the Psalms. "Daniel's Son of man," pp. 72-82.

point;²⁶ there is little doubt that certain apocryphal works exhibit evidence of extrapolating the apocalyptic Son of man of Daniel to the point of identification with a personal and particular Messiah.²⁷ Straton presents a catena of quotations from the Book of Enoch that shows considerable conceptual and linguistic affinity with Daniel 7. He concludes that Enoch not only was "influenced by Daniel's description of the son of man," but "follows a natural development and completely personalizes his heavenly figure."²⁸ Cullmann in addition to the particularization of the Son of man, points out Enoch's presentation of a transcendent heavenly being, who is called the Messiah and will come at the end of time in the clouds of heaven to judge and to rule over the world.²⁹ Although the evidence above is very attractive³⁰ there is one major drawback. The question of dating is still very much an open question. Bowker admits "the problems of dating these documents are notoriously difficult" and refers to the "Similtudes" (cc.37-71) which are entirely absent from the Qumran material, a phenomena quite unlikely unless it was written at a later period.³¹ Stalker has drawn attention to the "whole structure of the

²⁶See Carter, "Son of Man," p. 485.

²⁷Straton, "The Son-of-man ...", pp.36-37. Cf. O. Michel, "ho huios tou anthropou" in The New International Dictionary of NT Theology, Vol. 3 ed. by C. Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), pp. 614-615.

²⁸Ibid., p.36.

²⁹Cullmann, Christology, p.141, 150.

³⁰S. E. Johnson summarizes this same development and confidently concludes that "the book of Enoch appears to constitute the immediate background for some of the New Testament ideas of the Son of man." in "Son of Man" in The Interpreter's Bible Dictionary, ed. by G. A. Buttrick (New York: Abingdon, 1962), p.414.

³¹Bowker, "Son of Man," p.25-26. He points out that this is to be contrasted with allusions to other parts of Enoch that appear in the Qumran text. O. Michel alludes to linguistic peculiarities and differences between the Similtudes and the rest of the Ethiopic

Book of Enoch" as "loose and confused." He writes, "It must always have invited interpolation, and interpolations in it are recognized as numerous. The probability, therefore, is that the passages referring to the Son of man are of a later date and of Christian origin."³² On the other hand Lindars has argued that the Similitudes of Enoch identify Enoch with the Son of man and it is unlikely that a Christian would compose such a work.³³ Michel adds that even if a post-Christian dating be granted, "it need not necessarily exclude use of the Similitudes in establishing the background of thought to the New Testament usage of the Son of man," since the traditions used may well be earlier than the date of writing."³⁴

Two other apocryphal works that are often thought to have further developed the apocalyptic Son of man of Daniel are the Apocalypse of Baruch (c.70 to 100 A.D.) and 4th Ezra (2nd Esdras c.100 A. D.). Straton indicates that by this time the Son of man was understood as the Messiah and further identified as the Son of God (4 Ezra 13:23f).³⁵ Eduard Schweizer has highlighted the "eschatological role" of the Son of man in contemporaneous Jewish writings of which the Apocalypse of Baruch is mentioned.

version of Enoch. He suggests Christian influenced is behind these peculiarities and agrees with the assessment of J. T. Milik that the Similitudes were not part of the original book but a post-Christian insertion. See "Son of man" p.615.

³²Stalker, "Son of Man," p.2830.

³³Lindars, "Towards a Date for the Similitudes of Enoch: An Historical Approach," in New Testament Studies 14(1967), pp.551-565. Cited in Bowker, "The Son of man," p.26.

³⁴Michel, "Son of man," p.615.

³⁵Straton, "The Son of Man ..." p.37. He also mentions that the figure had definitely become a "supernatural person."

here, as reflected in Lk. 12:8, the Son of man assumes the role of the "decisive witness who brings about the judgment of God."³⁶

In summary what conclusions can be drawn from the Apocryphal references to the Son of man?

1. Whereas the dating of these materials is still uncertain it seems prudent not to assume our Lord's direct use or allusion to any particular apocryphal work.
2. However, it does seem tenable that the Son of man was a term in contemporaneous Jewish thought which provided the conceptual backdrop for our Lord's employment of the term.
3. Within this body of literature the Son of man is presented as a transcendent heavenly being who is identified as the Messiah. He is exalted by God and will come to establish his kingdom and bring salvation to the elect (Enoch 48:2-10). His coming is associated with His eschatological role of judgment.

3. Colloquial Aramaic

The positing of colloquial Aramaic as the source of meaning for the phrase "Son of man" is generally associated with the denial of a messianic interpretation and the adoption of a neutral sense. Stalker provides some of the historical background of this issue:

In 1896 Hanz Lietzmann, a young German scholar, startled the learned world with a speculation on the "Son of man." Making the assumption that Aramaic was the language spoken by Jesus, he contended that Jesus could not have applied to Himself the Messianic title because there is nothing corresponding with it in Aramaic. The only term approximating to it is barnash which means something very vague like "anyone" or "everyone" ... Many supposed Lietzmann to be arguing that Jesus had called Himself Anyman or Everyman; but this was not his intention. He

³⁶Eduard Schweizer, "The Son of Man Again," in New Testament Studies 9(April, 1963), p.259.

tried to prove that the Messianic title had been applied in the first half of the 2nd century so that the Gospels had been revised with the effect of substituting it for the first personal pronoun.³⁷

Lietzmann's work led scholars to explore further the Aramaic background to this phrase.

The question seems to have been definitively answered for some in the work of G.

Vermes.³⁸ Vermes, after exhaustively examining the early Palestinian Aramaic writings offered convincing evidence that both the indefinite bar nash and the definite bar nasha

sometimes functioned as a circumlocution of "I".³⁹ Consequently, the question that

Lietzman raised continued in modified form. The question was not whether Jesus

himself ever used the phrase "Son of man," but rather whether he always intended it to be

understood as a messianic self-designation. After all, as is pointed out, the Aramaic bar

nasha mirrors the neutral sense of ben 'adam of the Hebrew Old Testament and simply

means "man."⁴⁰ Scholars of this persuasion are not advocating an exclusively non-

messianic use or interpretation of the phrase "Son of man," but are calling for a re-

examination of the relevant passages to see if a less pregnant sense is warranted.⁴¹ Thus,

³⁷Stalker, "Son of Man," p.2825.

³⁸G. Vermes, "The Use of bar nash/bar nasha in Jewish Aramaic," in M. Black, An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1967), cited in Bowker, "The Son of man," p.21.

³⁹See W. Lane, The Gospel According to Mark, p.297.

⁴⁰Cullman writes, "The genitive in the construct state following bar thus designates the classification to which one belongs. Accordingly bar nasha refers to one who belongs to the human classification, i.e. it means simply "man, in Christology, p.138.

⁴¹An example of this trend is L. Hay's article, "The Son of Man in Mk. 2:10 and 2:28," Journal of Biblical Literature 89(March, 1970), pp.69-75. Hay argues that in both passages Jesus merely intends for the phrase to refer to "man" or mankind. Thus Jesus was declaring that God had given the authority to forgive sins to men; and that since the Sabbath was made for man, man is Lord over the Sabbath.

even Lane, who in no way excludes the messianic import of this phrase, can suggest, for example, that in Mk. 8:31 ("And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected ...") "it is not necessary that the disciples should have recognized in Jesus' usage of the 'Son of man' any more than the circumlocution for 'I'."⁴²

One final note concerning the Aramaic background to our phrase is in order. Students of the language admit to a certain flexibility in the use of bar nasha that would not preclude a definite particular reference that transcends the circumlocutionary use of "I". Cullmann has noted the fact that ho huios tou anthropou is an "inexact" and overly literal translation of bar nasha, which he says would be more accurately translated simply with anthropos.⁴³ Therefore, as Vermes concludes the phrase must have had a definite particular reference.

Without that distinction, it is virtually impossible to explain why the translators of the phrase in the Gospels did not employ the obvious huios anthropou, a son of man, so well established in the Greek Bible, but insisted ... on the extremely awkward and unusual Greek phrase in the definite form. The obvious inference is that they at least understood the definite form to be referring definitely.⁴⁴

B. "The Son of man" Usage in Mark

⁴²Lane, Gospel of Mark, p.297.

⁴³Cullmann, Christology. p.138.

⁴⁴Vermes, Jesus, the Jew, p.165. Cited in Bowker, The Son of Man, p.22. Bruce raises the same question and finds the answer in the distinctive use of the phrase in "two outstanding situations." 1. The Son of man appearing in glory and 2. the Son of man in his suffering. He concurs with M. Hengel that 'an unequivocal Christological conception' must stand behind the unusual translation. See "Background." pp.52-53, 60.

We now turn to the Gospel of Mark itself to ascertain how Mark employs this phrase. Numerically the phrase ho huios tou anthropou appears fourteen times in Mark and consistent with the rest of the New Testament almost always appears in the definite form. One should not overlook the importance of this observation, as it stands in stark contrast to the Hebrew Bible which employs the phrase in its indefinite form.⁴⁵ Earlier we observed that this phrase with one exception always appears on the lips of Jesus himself in apparent reference to himself. This fact combined with the consistency with which our phrase appears in the definite form leads us to conclude that "the Son of man" is a title which Jesus himself⁴⁶ employed for the purpose of self-designation. If it can be sufficiently demonstrated that this title had, at least to some, messianic overtones, then we have adequate grounds to determine, where context permits, that "the Son of man" is a

⁴⁵C. F. D. Moule in his article, "'Neglected features in the Problem of 'the Son of man'" writes, "It is not observed as often as it should be that ho huios tou anthropou (with the definite article) is an almost exclusively Christian term. In the plural of course, the phrase with the article is common enough: 'the sons of men' is no oddity. But in the singular, the 'Son of man' is virtually unknown outside the New Testament until I Enoch (aeth ken) and Christian tradition subsequent to the New Testament. In Hebrews, to the best of my knowledge, there is only one instance of 'the Son of man,' and that is in the Qumran scrolls, in iQS xi.20; and even there, the "h" is an addition, written by a scribe over the line. Everywhere in the Old Testament it is anarthrous, and is correspondingly represented in the LXX ... In the New Testament, the anarthrous form is used in John v.27 (where possibly it stands simply for 'humanity': Jesus, because he is a man is given authority to judge), but otherwise only in Heb. ii.6, where Ps. viii is directly quoted; and in Rev i.13 and xiv.14, where there is a barbarously literal rendering in Greek of the anarthrous Aramaic phrase of Dn. vii.13: kbr'ensh becomes homoios huios anthropou. Thus, with almost complete consistency, the New Testament, whenever the phrase is related to Jesus, adheres to a form which is otherwise virtually unexampled." Cited in Bowker, "The Son of man," p.20.

⁴⁶The suggestion that this title is an echo of the reflective faith of the early church inserted into the Gospels is still a viable interpretive option which we have alluded to earlier (Supra, p.2). However, Cullmann, who accepts the above view admits that the manner in which the early Christian community used "the Son of man" when introducing Jesus as the speaker "indicates that they are probably handing down an already established tradition that Jesus called himself by that name." See Christology, p.137.

reflection of Jesus' messianic consciousness. Whether we should always interpret "the Son of man" messianically must be answered exegetically and in light of one's view on Mark's theological purpose. This we will attempt to answer in our conclusion.

To provide an overview of the "Son of man" in Mark the following chart shows its usage in sequence:

"The Son of Man in Mark"

2:10 - has authority on earth to forgive sins
 :28 - is Lord of the Sabbath
 8:31 - must suffer many things, be rejected by elders, chief priest and scribes, be killed and after 3 days rise
 :38 - will come in the glory of His Father with the holy angels
 9: 9 - disciples are not to tell anyone ... until the Son of man rises from the dead
 :12 - should suffer many things and be treated with contempt
 :31 - is to be delivered into the hands of men ... killed ... and will rise after three days
 10:33f - will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, condemned to death and delivered to the Gentiles
 13:26 - will come in clouds with great power and glory
 14:21 - goes (to his death)
 :21 - is betrayed (concerning the betrayer after prophecy of betrayal)
 :41 - is betrayed into the hands of sinners
 :62 - (Israel's leaders) will see him sitting at the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven

A survey of the above chart reveals that the "Son of man" sayings seem to line up under three separate categories:

1. Relating to AUTHORITY -- 2:10, 28.
2. Relating to his PASSION (includes his betrayal, suffering, death and resurrection) -- 8:31; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33f, 45; 14:21, 21, 41.
3. Relating to his ESCHATOLOGICAL COMING -- 8:38; 13:26; 14:62.

Let us now briefly examine how our title "the Son of man" relates to these categories.

1. Authority - 2:10,28

In both these verses it is apparent that the underlying authority of Jesus' actions are called into question by the Pharisees. Indeed Mark seems to be leading up to just such a confrontation by first alluding to the unique authority (*exousia*) with which Jesus taught (1:22) and then recording an exhibition of that authority in action (1:23-27). In 2:7, it is the authority of Jesus to forgive sins that is questioned, a prerogative rightly understood as belonging to God alone. Mark 2:10 reads "hina de eidete hoti exousian echei ho huios tou anthropou ephienai hamartias epi tes ges -- legei toi paralutikoi."

Generally, it is conceded that "the Son of man" is to be identified with Jesus,⁴⁷ however, there is considerable debate as to what Jesus referred in its use.⁴⁸ Of course the question of whether we have the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus at all remains open. Lane sees 2:10a as one of several (including 2:15, 28; 7:3f, 19; 13:14) parenthetical asides to the Christian reader.⁴⁹ Taylor feels that the case for 2:10 being a creation of the Christian community is at best plausible. He comments that the alleged incongruity of 2:10 with the teachings of Jesus is without foundation and is predicated upon the belief that Jesus had no "distinctive concept of Messiahship."⁵⁰ Whether or not 2:10 is understood as a "logion"

⁴⁷One exception is Lewis Hay who is among those who read ho huios tou anthropou as simply "man". He interprets 2:10 as meaning nothing more than "that in Jesus' act it could be seen that God had given such authority to men." See "Mark 2:10 and 2:28," p.73.

⁴⁸Vincent Taylor provides a helpful summary of four competing views: 1)'man' in general, 2) the Elect Messianic Community with Jesus as the Head [see T. W. Manson, The Teaching of Jesus, (Cambridge University Press, 1951), pp.211-236], 3) himself as the Messiah, 4) himself, but not as the Messiah. See The Gospel According to St. Mark, (London: Macmillan, 1952), pp.197-198.

⁴⁹Lane, Gospel of Mark, p.98. Hay concurs adding, "the words 'But that you may know ...' simply do not logically, or in proper syntax follow v.9, nor are they properly complemented by what follows them." In "Mark 2:10 and 2:28," p.71.

⁵⁰Taylor, Mark, p.200.

of Jesus, the question concerning the basis of authority is still the issue. G. H. P. Thompson has noted that the phrase epi tes ges is intrinsic to a proper understanding of the divine prerogative exercised by the Son of man.⁵¹ Assigning more of an apocalyptic understanding to the title "Son of man", he sees 2:10 as affirming an activity already associated, in Jewish thought, with the Son of man.

... the Jews already believed in a heavenly Son of man such as is presented to us in the Similitudes of Enoch. For in this section of Enoch the Son of man is represented as very much a figure of heaven; his dwelling place is under the wings of the Lord of Spirits, and will sit on the throne of God. The presence of Jesus means that the Son of man, whose mission is not confined to heaven, is already present on earth in anticipation of his final coming Judgement (a prerogative of the Son of man in Enoch). One aspect of God's judgement is the forgiveness of men's sins and this activity is now operative in the mission of Jesus. The passage appears to be intelligible only if in the lifetime of Jesus a conception of the Son of man such as we find it in Enoch was known among the Jews.⁵²

In harmony with the whole of chapter two, Mark 2:28 follows another episode of confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees. This time the actions of Jesus' disciples in "picking heads of grain" are censured as a violation of the Sabbath. Jesus, after giving an illustration from the life of David, declares that "the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath" (v.27). This statement is not, even in the Jewish context,⁵³ as radical as what follows: hoste kurios estin ho huios tou anthropou kai tou sabbatou. Regardless of whether you attribute these words to Jesus or Mark's pen, the import is clear, consistent with his illustration of David, Jesus has declared that the Law is a ser-

⁵¹G. H. P. Thompson, "Son of Man -- Some Further Considerations," Journal of Theological Studies 12(October, 1961), pp.204-205.

⁵²Ibid., pp.205-206

⁵³Lane cites two Talmudic passages that make virtually the same pronouncement. See Mark, p.119 (fns. 99,100).

vant of man and can be set aside in the interest of mercy. It is important to note that it is the authority of Jesus in sanction-ing the actions of his disciples that is challenged. Therefore, in 2:28 Jesus is declared as having authority superceding Mosaic legislation. That the Pharisees understood this saying can be supported by the fact that they immediately sought for and perhaps arranged⁵⁴ an occasion whereby he might exercise his self-proclaimed authority in violation of the Sabbath.

2. The Passion

The passages that relate to the passion of Christ appear somewhat as an enigma when viewed from the background to "the Son of man". At first glance there does not appear to be any correlation between either the Old Testament or Apocryphal "Son of man" and the suffering and death prophesied by our Lord in these passages. However, upon closer examination of the Old Testament, glimpses of this motif can be found. Undoubtedly this is why Jesus asked in 9:12, "And yet how is it written of the Son of man that He should suffer many things and be treated with contempt?" His question assumes that such a motif does in fact exist in the Old Testament. For example, in Daniel 7 Israel, (as represented under the figure "Son of man" cf. vv. 13,27) is exalted to God and vindicated after persecution and suffering. Bowker lists references in Psalms, Job and Isaiah to show that "the Son of man" occurs in contexts which refer to his weakness in contrast to God and the angels, because he is subject to death.⁵⁵ He cites extensive

⁵⁴Note 3:2 where it says kai pareteroun auton ei tois Sabbasin therapeuei auton, hina kategoresosin.

⁵⁵He cites such passages as Ps. 144:3f; 146:3f; Job 16:21f; 25:6; Isa 51:12. See Bowker, "the Son of man" p.35. Similarly F. F. Bruce demonstrates that such a motif is present in the fourth Isaianic Servant Son (52:13 - 53:12) and the Psalms. He remarks that Jesus'

evidence from the Targums to show that this motif is Rabbinic thought was linked to the penalty of death places upon Adam.⁵⁶ Bowker sees the Markan portrayal of the passion of Jesus as combining the "Son of man subject to death" theme above with the vindicated "Son of man" of Daniel 7, who is also associated with suffering and death.⁵⁷ It should be observed with Cullmann that the "passion passages" find their roots more naturally in the suffering ebed Yahweh of Isaiah than either Psalms, Daniel or some other related apocryphal work.⁵⁸ "For even the Son did not come to be served but to serve and give His life a ransom for many" (Mk. 10:45).

3. Eschatological Coming

This point has been treated in our earlier discussion on the "apocalyptic Son of man" as found in Daniel 7:13f and certain apocryphal works. It can be noted that all three passages in Mark (8:38, 13:26, 14:62) mention the Son of man as "coming" and describe his coming in "regal" fashion. Both linguistically and conceptually they recall the passage from Daniel 7. Consequently, Bruce in commenting on 13:26 writes,

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Son of man coming in clouds harks back to the "one like a son of man" (aram kebar 'enas) who, in Daniel's vision of the day of judgment comes "with the clouds of heaven

words in Mark 9:12 call for testimony from the Hebrew Scriptures. See "Background," pp.56-57.

⁵⁶Ibid. pp.36-44.

⁵⁷Ibid., p.44.

⁵⁸See Cullmann, "Jesus the Suffering Servant of God" in Christology, p.51-82. Cf. Lane, Mark, p.302, who adds that the final triumph (vindication) of Isaiah's ebed Yahweh is over death itself and sees Hos. 6:1f as interpreting that vindication in terms of resurrection, the very thing we find repeatedly expressed in Mk. 9:9,31; 10:34 and 14:28.

to be presented before the Ancient of Days and to receive universal and eternal dominion from him. (Dn 7:13f)⁵⁹

Mark 8:38 implies the Son of man's eschatological role of judgment, a most prevalent theme in the apocryphal writings⁶⁰ and one certainly implicit in Dan. 7:13f. In 14:62 we find language similar to 13:26. To the high priest's question, "Are you the Christ?" Jesus responds, "I am, and you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." Here in Jesus' answer we have what looks like an emphasis of the judgment motif by the fusion of Dan 7:13f and Psalm 110:1 where the one called "my Lord" is asked to be seated until the Lord's enemies are completely subdued.⁶¹

⁵⁹Bruce, "Background," pp.53-54.

⁶⁰Supra., pp.8-11.

⁶¹Bruce, "Background," p.54.

II. THE THEOLOGICAL PURPOSE OF MARK

Earlier we alluded to the possibility of one or perhaps two references containing the title Son of man which may have come from the pen of Mark rather than the lips of Jesus (2:10,28).⁶² Those scholars who wish to emphasize the redactionary features of Mark's Gospel are likely to find in this approach support for their methodology. However, it should be noted that such lengths are unnecessary as Mark's redactionary handiwork can just as easily be seen in the selection, arrangement, and distinctive use of the "logia" of Jesus as it can by positing the existence of creative theological editorializing.

Furthermore, we have established that the phrase "the Son of man" is used in the neutral or generic sense meaning "man" (Heb. ben adam) and derived from the Aramaic (bar nasha) as a circum-locution for "I". It is of no small consequence to realize that establishing a neutral and non-messianic sense to "Son of man" is one thing while positing that it was Jesus' and/or Mark's intention to use it in this manner is entirely another. The final determination is made exegetically in keeping with a comprehensive view of the Gospel. Norman Perrin, although differing significantly with this author's conclusions, nonetheless saw the need for such an approach. Regarding the interpretation of Mark's gospel he wrote:

What is needed now is a critical method which does justice to an evangelist's literary activity and yet moves beyond concern for authorial

⁶²Supra., p.

activity and theology to include a concern for the text of the Gospel as a totality.⁶³

Concurring with the judgment of K. L. Schmidt in his Die Rahmen der Geschichte Jesus (1919) that the Markan outline is not "a chronological outline of the history of Jesus" but a "literary construct of the Evangelist himself" he observed that, an important starting point in the interpretation of the Gospel is recognition of the fact that the actual ordering of events by the Evangelist himself is an important expression of his interpretation of Jesus and his story.⁶⁴

With this insight we begin our analysis of Mark's theological purpose.⁶⁵

A. The Identity and Authority of Jesus

It seems hardly a coincidence that Mark's Gospel begins with a proclamation of Jesus' identity (1:1),⁶⁶ pivots on Peter's confession of Jesus as "the Christ" (8:29), and

⁶³N. Perrin, "The Interpretation of the Gospel of Mark," Interpretation 30(April, 1976), pp.115-124. Perrin faults form criticism for its failure to take seriously the Evangelist in "his literary activity" and in not crediting him with a substantial role in "systematic construction" of the material itself (pp. 116-117). Perrin's denial of the historicity of much of the material in Mark is forwarded in favor of assigning him a more creative literary role. It should be noted that assigning Mark a creative literary and theological role does not require the denial of the historicity of Markan material, as such a role can certainly be demonstrated in his selective use and arrangement of the traditional material. This, Perrin himself confirms by his discussion of R. H. Lightfoot and E. Lohmeyer's contribution to Markan studies (pp.118-19).

⁶⁴Ibid., p.116.

⁶⁵Perrin advocates what he calls a "literary criticism" of Mark which is carried out with regard to three major considerations: 1. search for literary model or genre; 2. concern for the themes pursued by the Evangelist; 3. concern for the structure of the Gospel. See "Interpretation," pp.122-123. My analysis will largely be concerned with the latter two considerations.

⁶⁶The question of whether huiou theou is authentic is open to debate. The manuscript evidence appears inconclusive and are presented as suspect in both the UBS (3rd ed) and Nestle (26th ed.) texts. The reading huiou theou has early attestation (B, Diatessaron and Irenaeus), wide geographic distribution of text types (B D L) and can explain all other variants except that which presents its omission. Apart from textual evidence Lane opts for its inclusion in the text on the grounds that it fits well into the general plan of Mark's

concludes with a Gentile declaration that Jesus is the "Son of God" (15:39). Furthermore, it is striking that shortly following the first two references you find Mark recording heavenly signs (1:11; 9:7) which result in a divine declaration of Jesus' identity as God's Son. If in the final editing of the Markan text the appender of 16:9-20 was aware of this motif, he may have consciously sought to complete the pattern.⁶⁷ The following chart could then be constructed:

Human-Earthly Confession

1:1 The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

8:29 And He continued by questioning them, "But who do you say I am?" Peter answered and said to Him, "Thou art the Christ."

15:39 And when the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

gospel which, if 1:1 is allowed, conspicuously has a three-fold declaration of Jesus' identity. See "Mark", p.41.

⁶⁷Modern scholarship has tended to regard the longer ending of Mark as secondary if not spurious, but the evidence is by no means unequivocal as witnessed by current debate. Cf. W. R. Farmer, The Last Twelve Verses of Mark, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974). R. P. Meyer, "Mark 16:8: The Ending of Mark's Gospel," Biblical Research 14(1969), pp.33-43; N. R. Peterson, "When is the End not the End? - Literary Reflections on the ending of Mark's Narrative," Interpretation 34(April, 1980), pp.151-166; C. J. Reedy, "Mark 8:31-11:10 and the Gospel Ending: A Redaction Study," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 34(April, 1972), pp.188-197.

Divine-Heavenly Sign as
Confirmation

1:11 And a voice came out of the heavens: "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased."

9:7 Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him."

16:9-20 (The Resurrection and Ascension) v.19 So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.

It is little wonder that R. G. Rank can make the following statement:

The chief concern of St. Mark's Gospel is the identity of Jesus. This may seem like an over simplification, but the risk is worth taking. On page after page, in scene after scene, through direct and indirect inquiries, through various titles given to Jesus, Mark seems bent on answering the question, "Who is this man?"⁶⁸

In his task of answering the above question Mark presents the concept of authority as intrinsic to and inseparable from that of identity.⁶⁹ Jesus' authority establishes his identity. Earlier we noted the Markan connection between the authority exhibited by Jesus in word and deed and his self-identification as "the Son of man" . Thus, Rank's conclusion that "in every occurrence of 'Son of man' it is the authority of Jesus that is at stake"⁷⁰ could just as easily be restated as, "in every occurrence of the 'Son of man' it is Jesus' identity that is at stake." This is readily apparent at the beginning of Mark's Gospel with our first two allusions to the Son of man (2:10, 28). After his early confrontations with and rejection by the scribes (2:1-10) and the Pharisees (2:23-3:1-6), he refrains from using it until after Peter's confession in 8:29. It is from this point on that he uses the title twelve times, all but once when speaking to his disciples. What seems clear is that the rejection of his authoritative words and deeds by the Pharisees

⁶⁸R. G. Rank, "Who is this Man? The Son of Man According to Mark," Bible Today 63(1972), p.959.

⁶⁹Perrin hinted at this connection when he states that "Mark intends both to stress the authority of Jesus and to claim that he exercised that authority as Son of man." See "Creative Use," p.361. Later in his conclusion regarding Mark's use of "Son of man" he states, "His overall purpose is to use the term to interpret and to give a correct content to the belief in Jesus as the Son of God, and he begins therefore with a clear statement of the theme of Jesus' earthly authority as Son of God/Son of man.

⁷⁰Ibid., p.964.

resulted in the refusal of Jesus to verbally reveal his identity (cf 11:33) in the face of such unbelief. Only to his disciples, who despite imperfect understanding accepted his authority, did he grant further revelation into his true identity.

The mention of Jesus' disciples raises the question of their apparent spiritual blindness in the face of the revelatory miracles of Jesus. As we survey the first eight chapters we notice a distinct pattern and progression leading up to Peter's confession. By means of miracles, healings, and exorcism, Mark appears to be presenting Jesus' self-disclosure through the demonstration of his unique authority.⁷¹ It can be represented thusly: authority over ..

Satan (demons)	1:21-27; 3:11; 5:1-20; 7:24-30
death	5:35-43
sickness	1:30-31; 1:40-45; 2:11-12; 3:1-5; 4:10; 5:25-34; 7:32-37
sin	2:5-10
the physical elements of this world	4:35-41; 6:30-44; 6:48-51; 8:1-9

In view of this impressive array of authoritative power the spiritual dullness of the disciples is quite startling.⁷² However, when we examine the miracle healing of the blind man of Bethsaida in Mk. 8:2-26 we get the impression Mark is providing his own commentary. S. E. Johnson notes the absence of this miracle from the other Synoptic Gospels and concludes that its

⁷¹Rank, "Who is this man?", pp.959, 964. Darrell J. Doughty confirms Perrin's suggestion that 2:1 - 3:6 "was carefully composed by Mark in order to exhibit the authority of Jesus ...," and concludes the miracles of Jesus serve as demonstrations of the earthly authority as Son of man. See "The Authority of the Son of man (Mk 2:1 - 3:6)," Zeitschrift Fur Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 74(1983), p.181.

appearance in Mark is to highlight the "blindness of the disciples."⁷³ However, he expresses his belief that Mark is as much commenting on progressive development of the disciples' understanding as he is their blindness.⁷⁴ Its strategic position in the Gospel, just preceding Peter's confession, can hardly be accidental. On this point Johnson has commented, "The placement of the pericope is particularly important because it appears at a decisive point in the gospel. It is generally recognized that viii. 27 - xi. 1 stands at the centre both of Mark's presentation of Jesus and of his teaching on discipleship, and that with Peter's confession and Jesus' open announcement of the passion Mark begins the second half of the gospel. Most exegetes also agree that there is some kind of symbolic relationship between the blind man and Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ."⁷⁵

It seems quite natural to see Mark's inclusion of this miracle as a symbolic picture of both the spiritual blindness and the progressive "healing" of that condition in the lives of the disciples. The objection that the disciples did not experience perfect spiritual vision is a valid one. However, Mark may have intended this miracle to be proleptic as well as symbolic. The disciples continued to have difficulty understanding Jesus' words concerning his imminent passion. Their imperfect understanding may be the reason behind Jesus' command not to relate the Transfiguration experience until after the resurrection (9:9). The Christian can only know Jesus in his true identity as he views him through the cross and resurrection. He must accept him

⁷²Twice Mark alludes to the disciples' "hardness of heart" (6:52; 8:17) and both times in connection with miracles that should have increased their spiritual insight.

⁷³S. E. Johnson, "Mark 8:22-26: The Blind Man From Bethsaida," New Testament Studies. 25(April, 1979), p.370.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp.380-381.

⁷⁵Ibid., p.375.

as the crucified and risen Lord. Despite his teaching and miracles the disciple's spiritual vision remained imperfect. As Johnson notes Peter's confession marks only the first stage of their healing.⁷⁶ It would require a second contact with Jesus (the resurrection) before they would see clearly.⁷⁷

B. The Mission of Jesus

The dominant role played by the passion narrative in Mark's Gospel has long been noted. Martin Kahler described Mark's gospel as "a passion narrative with an extended introduction."⁷⁸

In his commentary on Mark, William Lane introduces the passion narrative with this comment:

In the Gospel of Mark the passion narrative serves to sharpen the perspective from which all the incidents in Jesus' life and ministry are to be understood. The account of Jesus' betrayal, arrest, condemnation and execution furnishes a climax to the Gospel and brings together motifs and themes developed throughout the account.⁷⁹

The truth of the above statement becomes apparent even as one notices the disproportionate space given by Mark to the last few weeks of Jesus' life. From 8:31 - 10:52 Mark has Jesus on the road to Jerusalem where he will go to the cross. It is the cross that introduces an entirely new dimension to Mark's Gospel and which also provides a clue to the spiritual density of the disciples. As observed earlier Peter's confession in 8:29 marks somewhat of a climax the to question of Jesus' identity for his disciples, this despite Peter's quick relapse to

⁷⁶Ibid., p.382.

⁷⁷This seems to be further suggested by the thrice-repeated promise, "they/you will see" connected to passages pertaining to his coming glory and exaltation (8:38-9:1; 13:25; 14:62).

⁷⁸Cited in N. Perrin, "The Christology of Mark: A Study in Methodology," The Journal of Religion 51(1971), p.175.

⁷⁹Lane, Mark, p.485.

spiritual dullness when Jesus begins to teach concerning his passion (8:31). It should be noted, however, that Peter's lack of understanding does not concern Jesus' identity, but the purpose of his ministry or the goal of his mission. Indeed, Mark emphasizes this very point by recording the disciples' confused response to each of our Lord's pronouncements regarding his coming passion.⁸⁰ It should be further noted that all three of Jesus' passion prophecies come after Peter's confession of faith. In fact, the first (8:31) is presented as in response to Peter's recognition and confession of Jesus as the Christ: Thus Peter's confession is not only climatic, but pivotal⁸¹ in that it inaugurates the second half of the Gospel and introduces an entirely new orientation in Jesus' teaching and ministry.⁸² A brief topical outline will serve to illustrate this transition.

Prologue: Preparation for Ministry 1:1-13

Public Ministry of Jesus
1:14-8:30

emphasis on miracles

primarily to the world

based largely in and around Galilee (cc.1-8)

Private Ministry of Jesus
8:31ff

emphasis on teaching

primarily to his disciples

based in and around Jerusalem (cc.11-16)

Perean Ministry on the Way to Jerusalem(cc.9-10)

miracles and ministry focused on the identity
of Jesus (Who is Jesus/the Son of man?)

teaching focused on the purpose of his
mission (Why Jesus/the Son of man has
come?)

Key verse: 8:29

Key Verse: 10:45

⁸⁰8:31, cf. 8:32; 9:31, cf 9:32ff and 10:33f, cf 10:35-37.

⁸¹Perrin labels 8:27 - 9:1 "the watershed of Mark's literary composition." See "Christology of Mark," p.177.

⁸²Lane, Mark, p.292.

The above outline, although sketchy, serves to highlight the pivotal nature of Peter's confession and the transition effected thereby. Having settled the question of his identity Jesus can now move to the next phase of instruction regarding the purpose of his mission and the true nature of discipleship. The message of "the cross" serves as the core of that instruction. The following chart⁸³ shows Mark's deliberate attempt to represent this.

Prophecies of Jesus' Passion	Jesus' Call to Authentic Discipleship	
8:31 followed by an indication in 8:32 that the disciples did not understand. cf. 9:31 cf. 9:32f; cf. 10:33f cf. 10:35-37	8:34-38 9:33-37 10:38-45	involving self-sacrifice, humble service and suffering

The didactic character of Mark's gospel has been widely recognized.⁸⁴ Mark shows that it was crucial for Jesus to instruct his disciples what it means to acknowledge him as the Messiah.⁸⁵ One must ask at this point if the question of identity has really been set aside or simply raised to a different plane. Schweizer points out that in the call to discipleship (8:34ff) following the first passion prediction Mark indicates that, "Only in discipleship, following in the way of the cross, can one understand Jesus' way to the cross and so Jesus himself."⁸⁶ This development may, as some have suggested, hold the key to the concealment or secrecy motif

⁸³The parallelism of this motif is derived from comments drawn from Lane, Mark, p.293.

⁸⁴Perrin writes that though there is little consensus as to Mark's overall purpose in writing ... "we can with confidence say that the Gospel of Mark is in part didactic narrative. See "Christology of Mark," p.178.

⁸⁵Lane, Mark, p.295.

⁸⁶E. Schweizer, "The Question of the Messianic Secret in Mark," in The Messianic Secret, ed. by C. Tuckett, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p.70. See also Perrin, "Son of Man Traditions," pp.363-364.

well-known as the "Messianic Secret."⁸⁷ After noting the parallelism between 4:33 (parabolic instruction to his disciples) and 8:32 (speaking openly to his disciples), Schweizer notes that despite the plain speaking the passion saying remains incomprehensible to Jesus' disciples. He later adds,

Are not the commands to silence to be explained in that one cannot understand God's revelation in Jesus in any other way than in the way of discipleship, and so only after the suffering of the Son of Man.⁸⁸

One further development needs to be addressed in connection with the mission of Jesus, that is the eschatological manifestation of the Son of Man. It is to be noted that the three "Son of man" passion predictions are balanced in Mark by three texts promising his parousia in glory (8:38; 13:26; 14:62). The contrast between the Son of man's imminent passion and future transcendent glory is stark and hardly accidental. It illustrates the tension between "concealment" and "revelation" that we find throughout Mark's gospel.⁸⁹ The veiledness of the cross, symbolized by the disciples' inability to understand despite open proclamation, is set over against the revealed glory of the Son of man, which "they will see." (9:1, 13:26, 14:62). One is lead to wonder if Mark is not deliberately providing such a contrast or balance as a corrective to

⁸⁷Lane writes, "The necessity of the passion in obedience to the will of God accounts for the so-called secrecy phenomena in the Gospel. The "messianic secret" is God's intention to provide salvation through a suffering Savior who is identified with the people by his free decision to bear the burden of judgment upon human rebellion." See Mark, p.296.

⁸⁸Schweizer, "Messianic Secret," p.70. For an excellent survey of this multifaceted topic see the collection of essays in The Messianic Secret, ed. by C. Tuckett.

⁸⁹This tension is discussed in the form of a criticism of William Wrede's Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien by J. D. G. Dunn in "The Messianic Secret in Mark," See The Messianic Secret, ed. by C. Tuckett, pp.120-122.

a false Christology of some sort.⁹⁰ Although it is not easy to define the precise nature of this errant Christology, one thing seems apparent: Given the emphasis Mark gives to the passion of Jesus, it seems it was a Christology which laid stress on the transcendent, heavenly and perhaps divine aspects of Jesus as the Christ. Mark's stress on the "Son of man" and his earthly authority (2:10,28) and in his suffering (8:31, 9:31, 10:33f) serve to counter balance a lop-sided view of Jesus' life and ministry. The "Son of man" sayings, as Perrin observed, are strategic in Mark's effort to provide that balance:

I am moving toward the point of claiming that the Christology of Mark may best be approached by assuming that he uses "Christ" and "Son of God" to establish rapport with his readers and then deliberately reinterprets and gives conceptual content to these titles by the use of "Son of man", a designation which is not, properly speaking, a christological title but which to all intents and purposes becomes one as Mark uses it.⁹¹

Thus the "Son of man" sayings of Jesus are not so much his self-designation as Messiah, as a disclosure of the true and complete nature of the messianic ministry which after the "ebed Yahweh" of Isaiah 53 would involve suffering⁹² and death, but also vindication through the

⁹⁰This has been suggested by several authors with little consensus as to specific polemics being carried out. See Perrin, "Christology of Mark," pp.178ff who basically concurs with T. Weeden that Mark is involved in a polemic against a Hellenistic theios aner Christology. D. Doughty sees in Mark's use of 2:1-36 a conflict between the Christian community and Judaism with Mark's community appealing to Jesus' miracles as evidence of His divine authority. See "Authority" pp.180-181.

⁹¹Perrin, "Christology", p.181.

⁹²Various Old Testament allusions behind the "son of Man" passion sayings are posited. The traditional view of Is. 53 has been challenged by M. Hooker in The Son of Man in Mark, (London: SPCK, 1967) pp.11ff who argues that we should look to the persecuted "saints of the most high" of Dan. 7. F. F. Bruce counters that Dan. 7 texts may have had the Isaianic Servant Songs in view which combine the themes of persecution, wisdom and righteousness; in "Background," pp.58-59. Schweizer argues that the "psalms have obviously been the book in which the early church found the description of the passion of Jesus" because it presents the pattern of "the suffering righteous," in "The Son of Man Again." p.261. This debate cannot be settled here however it may be wise to conclude with M. Black that the Old Testament

resurrection. Perhaps the disciples, and/or the Markan community, quite in keeping with their Jewish background, were quite ready to identify and accept an "apocalyptic Son of Man" as their Messiah. However, they were unable and even unwilling (cf. 8:32) to reconcile that concept with the necessity of suffering. This necessity was unveiled after the resurrection, and only then was such a reconciliation possible (Lk 24:26). "Only the eye of faith," Lane writes, "can perceive the identity between the broken figure upon the cross and the transcendent majesty of the enthroned Son of man whose coming consummates history and initiates universal judgment."⁹³

CONCLUSION

To conclude let us reflect once more on the primary questions we have been attempting to answer in our study concerning the "Son of man":

1. What are the possible sources of this expression?
2. What are the meanings and associations of this expression?
3. How and why did Jesus use this expression in Mark?
4. What does Mark's record and use of this expression reveal about the theological purpose behind his Gospel?

From our study we discovered that the Old Testament uses the phrase in three distinct senses: 1) man in general, 2) the prophet, and 3) eschatological Israel (or the apocalyptic Son of

testimonia influencing the Markan text included segments from both the Psalms and Isaiah. See "The 'Son of man' Passion Sayings in the Gospel Tradition," Zeitschrift Fur Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 60(1969), pp.1-8.

⁹³Lane, Mark, p.299.

man).⁹⁴ The first category is represented best by some of the Wisdom and Poetical books where the phrase usually appears parallel to "man."⁹⁵ The second is representative of Ezekiel's usage, and the third is primarily found in Daniel. A source may contain all three senses⁹⁶ (eg. Daniel) of our phrase and not be meant to be exclusive.

Apocryphal works, like the Similitudes of Enoch, have developed the apocalyptic theme of Daniel and have particularized "the Son of Man" even so far as to, at one point, identify him with the Messiah (48:10). So close are the parallels with the eschatological Son of man in the Synoptics that apparently some see it as the only source or origin for the Son of man in the Synoptic Gospels.⁹⁷

The Aramaic source⁹⁸ of the "Son of man" provides yet another option. Similar to the neutral use of this term in the Old Testament, bar nasha can mean simply "man." It has also been shown that on occasion either the definite or indefinite form can be used as a circumlocution for "I", although particularity is not to be excluded with either form.

How and why does Jesus employ this expression? It is this author's studied opinion that Jesus does not ignore any of the nuances of this phrase, while never surrendering the messianic import. At first glance this may appear as "fence-straddling," however, I believe that this inclusive approach solves many problems. Chief among them is the dilemma of being in an either/or situation, either messianic or non-messianic, either definite or indefinite, either a title or not a title. After close scrutiny of both the background to "the Son of man" and its contextual usage in Mark, I am convinced the reason why our Lord chose this phrase as his favorite self-designation was because it was "freighted" with meaning and could be employed to express all

⁹⁴Schweizer, "The Son of Man Again," p.256.

⁹⁵See Ps. 8:4; 80:17; 144:3; Job 25:6;35:8.

⁹⁶Schweizer, p.256.

⁹⁷S. E. Johnson, "Son of Man," p.415.

⁹⁸Supra, p.

the aspects of His messianic ministry and mission. Drawing from Daniel and the Apocryphal literature he could make unprecedented claims to authority consistent with the Son of man's eschatological role. From the same well he could present himself as the apocalyptic Son of man and prophesy his parousia in glory. Using the same title he could draw from Ezekiel and present the Son of man's close identification and solidarity with mankind even to the point of suffering and death as perhaps the Psalms and definitely Isaiah allude to. But in spite of the wealth of Old Testament and apocryphal associations the title still possessed an intrinsic obscurity and indefiniteness. Schweizer hypothesizes that Jesus took up the term "Son of man" just because it was not yet a definite title, "and so could be employed to stimulate the hearer to reflection and direct him to the question of Jesus' identity."⁹⁹ Stalker has suggested that Jesus employed this title to both "half-conceal as well as half-reveal."¹⁰⁰ This explains why the title "Son of man" is so often associated with the so-called "Messianic secret."¹⁰¹

Although we cannot take up the complex issue of why Jesus is presented as hindering the knowledge of his identity, we can affirm that in paradoxical contrast a major theological purpose of Mark is to disclose to his readers Jesus' true and full identity¹⁰² of which the title Son of man plays a significant role. As alluded to earlier, by using this title, Jesus not only identified himself as the Messiah (8:29), but disclosed the purpose of his ministry on earth, "the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life a ransom for many." (10:45). Thus Jesus' use of

⁹⁹Schweizer, "Son of Man Again," p.259.

¹⁰⁰Stalker, "Son of Man," p.2830.

¹⁰¹Cf. T. A. Burkill, "Hidden Son of Man in St. Mark's Gospel," Zeitschrift Fur Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 52(1961), pp.189-213; J. J. Kilgallen, "The Messianic Secret and Mark's Purpose," Biblical Theology Bulletin 7(1977), p.60-65; H. H. Straton, "The Son of Man," pp.31-49.

¹⁰²Rank observes that "through out his Gospel, Mark uses many titles for Jesus ... he knew that Jesus was the one who summed up and fulfilled everything. For this reason, Mark explicitly identifies Jesus as the Messiah (8:29); Son of Man (8:31); Son of God (9:7); Son of David and King of Israel (10:47). Beyond this there is nothing to say, Jesus is all." See "Who is this Man?", p.965.

the Son of man in connection with his passion affords Mark the opportunity to emphasize what lay implicit in Jesus' teaching, i.e. that the Messiah's suffering is necessary for the salvation of mankind and is both prerequisite and prelude to his transcendent glory.¹⁰³ This may have been in response to a Christology which saw no such need of suffering.

Finally, Mark has taken the opportunity in the Son of man sayings to expound the true nature of discipleship, i.e., that one must identify with the cross of Christ (8:33-35) if one is to follow him on the way to glory.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³Perrin, "Son of Man," p.365.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

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