

Jesus. Of the thirteen occurrences of the title, eight clearly refer to the cross; they speak of the Son of Man's being "lifted up" (3:14; 8:28; 12:32, 34 [twice]) or "glorified" (12:23) and of his "going up" (3:13; 6:62). Two others concern the eucharistic food (6:27, 53), related explicitly to the vicarious death of Jesus (cf. 6:51).⁵⁵ But Moloney's attempt to show that the phrase focuses attention on the "human figure" of Jesus is not convincing. On the contrary, the emphasis is on Jesus as a superhuman figure, who comes down from heaven (3:13)⁵⁶ and ascends to "where he was before" (6:62; cf. 8:28–29).

Although less frequent than "Son" or "Son of God," the title "Son of Man" is an important one in the Fourth Gospel. It is used at climactic points in the narrative—for example, in 1:51, where it is the last of several titles applied to Jesus. In the carefully crafted drama of John 9 a series of scenes leads up to Jesus' challenge to the blind man to "believe in the Son of Man" (9:35).⁵⁷ The blind man's answer, "And who is he, sir, that I might believe in him?" (9:36), like so much in this Gospel, can be read on more than one level. As a narrative device, it provides the dramatic setting for Jesus' solemn self-identification. But it can also be seen as a window into the christological reflections of the author and his community. Exactly who, they must have asked, is the enigmatic "Son of Man" described in Dan 7:13 and other texts, and how do the predictions about him help us understand the meaning of Jesus' coming and his departure?

A similar question is found at the end of our passage in John 12:20–36. When Jesus says that he must be lifted up (v. 32), the crowd cross-examines him: "We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever, and how do you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" (12:34). Who was this Son of Man about whom this group of Christian Jews in the late first century debated? He is, of course, Jesus, but a Jesus who has much in common with the heavenly "one like a Son of Man" of Daniel and other apocalyptic writings.

Several recent studies have warned against assuming that there was a clearly fixed concept of *the* Son of Man at the time of Jesus.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, a comparison of the apocalypses of the first century that speak of a Son of Man, or "one like a Son of Man" or "one like the figure of a man" (the Similitudes of Enoch, 4 Ezra, and Revelation) suggests that there was, in apocalyptic circles, a fairly consistent picture of such a heavenly figure.⁵⁹ The future Son of Man sayings in the Synoptics also seem to draw on this tradition, which was based

⁵⁵ Of the remaining three references, 5:27 and 9:35 speak of the Son of Man as judge, while 1:51 associates him with a vision of the opened heaven.

⁵⁶ John 3:13 presents particular problems for Moloney's interpretation. See the criticisms of his exegesis summarized in his appendix (*Son of Man*, 244–47).

⁵⁷ See the analysis of this text in Martyn, *History*, 24–36.

⁵⁸ See, e.g., A. Yarbro Collins, "Origin"; also eadem, "The 'Son of Man' Tradition and the Book of Revelation," in *The Messiah* (ed. J. Charlesworth; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 536–68.

⁵⁹ See J. J. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 85.

on interpretation of Dan 7:13–14. The Son of Man, or “one like a Son of Man,” is:⁶⁰

1. A heavenly, superhuman figure (Dan 7:13;⁶¹ 1 Enoch 48:2; 62:7; 4 Ezra 13:3, 26; Mark 14:62; Matt 25:31; Rev 1:12–18; 14:14)
2. A ruler who is given eternal dominion and authority (Dan 7:14; 1 Enoch 69:27–29; Matt 16:27; 25:34; cf. Rev 1:5; 3:21; 5:12–13; 17:14; 1 Enoch 45:3; 49:2; 55:4; 61:8)
3. A judge who executes the final, righteous judgment of God (1 Enoch 62:7–14; 63:11–12; 69:27; 4 Ezra 13:37–39; Rev 1:18; 14:14 [as reaper]; Matt 13:41–43; 16:27; 19:28; 25:31–46; cf. Rev 2:22–23; 19:11; 1 Enoch 45:3; 49:4; 55:4; 61:8–9)⁶²
4. A warrior who is victorious over the forces of evil (1 Enoch 46:3–6; 62:7–12; 4 Ezra 13:4–11; cf. Rev 2:16; 3:21; 17:17; 19:11)⁶³

All of these attributes are ascribed to Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, and it would seem that traditions about a Son of Man current in apocalyptic circles have played a formative role in the development of the distinctive christology of this Gospel.⁶⁴ It is certainly no accident that the Gospel's very first reference to the Son of Man (1:51) uses the characteristically apocalyptic motif of the open heaven.⁶⁵ Martyn has argued that several passages in the Gospel (3:1ff.; 6:1ff.; 7:25ff.; 9:1ff.) are designed to lead the reader from an understanding of Jesus as the Mosaic Prophet-Messiah to a perception of him as the Son of Man:

From [these texts] we see that John never allows the identification of Jesus as Mosaic Prophet-Messiah to occupy center stage without causing it shortly thereafter to be replaced by another motif. Furthermore, this other motif always has to do with the Son of Man.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ This is a representative list, not a complete one; texts cited to “compare” (cf.) do not actually use the phrase “Son of Man,” but the figure they describe is called “Son of Man” elsewhere in the same work; see n. 67 below.

⁶¹ See J. J. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 82, for a persuasive argument against the view that the “one like a son of man” in Daniel is “merely or purely” a symbol of human realities.

⁶² In Daniel 7 the “one like a son of man” is not described as a judge, but he receives power in the context of the great judgment scene that begins in 7:9.

⁶³ Although Daniel 7 does not directly ascribe this function to the “one like a son of man,” it mentions the destruction of the demonic beast immediately before he appears. In the parallel vision of Daniel 10–12, Michael and Gabriel do battle against the angelic princes of the nations (10:13, 20–21; 12:1–2). J. J. Collins sees a close relationship between the “one like a son of man” and these angelic warriors (*Apocalyptic Imagination*, 82).

⁶⁴ On the development of Johannine Christology, see Martyn, *History*, 102–51; also his *The Gospel of John in Christian History* (New York: Paulist, 1979) 9–54 and 90–121; Ashton, *Fourth Gospel*, 238–373; B. Lindars, “Re-enter the Apocalyptic Son of Man,” *NTS* 22 (1975) 52–72, who disputes the conclusions of R. Leivestad, “Exit the Apocalyptic Son of Man,” *NTS* 18 (1972) 243–67.

⁶⁵ See, e.g., 1 Enoch 14:15; T. Levi 2:6; 2 Bar. 22:1; cf. C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982) esp. 54 and 78. On John 1:51, see Rowland, “John 1.51, Jewish Apocalyptic and Targumic Tradition,” *NTS* 30 (1984) 498–507.

⁶⁶ Martyn, *History*, 134; cf. 130–31.

Outside of the Gospels, the largest concentration of texts concerning the Son of Man is found in the Similitudes of Enoch (*1 Enoch* 37–71). Indeed, the appearance of the “Son of Man”—who is also called the Chosen One, the Righteous One, and the Messiah⁶⁷—and his future judgment are the central themes of this book. Studies of the Son of Man in the Fourth Gospel have given surprisingly little attention to these texts in the Similitudes, owing perhaps to the influence of Milik’s thesis that the Similitudes do not reflect Jewish ideas of the first century but are instead a second- or third-century Christian work.⁶⁸ Recently, however, the consensus about the dating and provenance of the Similitudes has shifted, and a number of scholars now argue that it is Jewish, not Christian, and that its *terminus ante quem* is the first century CE.⁶⁹

The Similitudes, like the Fourth Gospel, present the Son of Man (=the Chosen One) as a superhuman figure, a warrior and judge who defeats the forces of evil:

This is the Son of Man, who has righteousness, and with whom righteousness dwells. . . . and through uprightness his lot has conquered⁷⁰ all before the Lord of the Spirits for ever. And this Son of Man whom you have seen will rouse the kings and the powerful from their resting places, and the strong from their thrones. (46:3–4)

You powerful kings, who dwell upon the dry ground, will be obliged to watch my Chosen One sit down on the throne of my glory, and judge, in the name of the Lord of Spirits, Azazel and all his associates and all his hosts. (55:4)

In addition to these features, which are paralleled in other apocalyptic texts (see list above), the Son of Man (Chosen One) of the Similitudes resembles the Johannine Jesus at several other points. He is a preexistent being who was present with God before creation: “And at that hour that Son of Man was named Even before the sun and the constellations were created, before the stars of heaven were made, his name was named before the Lord of Spirits” (48:2–3, 7; cf. 62:7).⁷¹ He is also a revealer: “he will reveal all the treasures of

⁶⁷ I assume, with M. Black (*The Book of Enoch* [Leiden: Brill, 1985] 189) and J. J. Collins (*Apocalyptic Imagination*, 148), that the author (or the editor) of the Similitudes uses all these terms to refer to the same figure. Thus, I include in my discussion passages that use the other titles.

⁶⁸ J. T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976) 89–98. Milik’s argument is based, in part, on the fact that of the five books that make up *1 Enoch*, only the Similitudes is not attested at Qumran.

⁶⁹ D. Suter, “Weighed in the Balance: The Similitudes of Enoch in Recent Discussion,” *RSR* 7 (1981) 21; J. J. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 142–43; Black, *Enoch*, 187; M. Stone, “Apocalyptic Literature,” in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (ed. M. Stone; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 400–401; J. A. Fitzmyer, “Implications of the New Enoch Literature from Qumran,” *TS* 38 (1977) 332–45.

⁷⁰ This clause follows the wording in Knibb’s footnote (see Sparks, *Apocryphal Old Testament*, 227 n. 4). E. Isaac (*OTP* 1. 34) translates: “he is destined to be victorious.”

⁷¹ Schnackenburg mentions these texts in an excursus on preexistence (*Gospel*, 1. 494–506), but he plays down the importance of the Similitudes for understanding Johannine Christology.

that which is secret" (46:3, cf. 49:3; 51:3). His functions of judge and revealer are intertwined: as judge, the Son reveals and dispenses eschatological rewards and punishments (46:2-5; 49:1-4; cf. John 3:16-21). Further, the Johannine characterization of the future reward of the elect as a "dwelling or abiding with" Jesus (John 14:3; cf. 10:9, 27-28; 13:36; 14:16, 20, 23; 15:4) also has parallels in the Similitudes (62:13-14; cf. 45:4).

The Glorification of the Son of Man

It appears, then, that apocalyptic traditions about a superhuman Son of Man have shaped the way the Fourth Evangelist presents Jesus. The texts I have cited from the Similitudes may also have some bearing on the meaning of *δοξάζειν* in John 12:23 ("Now is the hour for the Son of Man to be glorified"). That the verb refers to Jesus' death is evident,⁷² but it is harder to understand what specific sense of glory the evangelist has in mind and how he can be so audacious as to describe the ignominious act of crucifixion in such exalted terms.

Schnackenburg sums up the various senses *δόξα* and *δοξάζειν* have in the Gospel as follows:

Since the underlying concept of *doxa* draws on the Old Testament idea of God's *kabod*, in which God reveals himself in theophanies as mighty to save . . . [t]he subject is the historical and eschatological revelation of God in his Son.⁷³

That *δοξάζειν* in John 12:23 may have a further nuance is suggested by several texts in the Similitudes that speak of the enthronement of the Son of Man (Chosen One) on his "throne of glory":

And from then on there will be nothing corruptible, for that Son of Man has appeared and has sat on the throne of his glory and everything evil will pass away from before him. (69:29)

And in those days the Chosen One will sit on his throne, and all the secrets of wisdom will flow out from the counsel of his mouth, for the Lord of Spirits has appointed him and glorified him. (51:3; cf. 45:3; 55:4; 62:2-7)

Given the many similarities we have already noted between the Son of Man texts in *1 Enoch* and the Fourth Gospel, it seems quite plausible that the image of the "throne of glory" lies behind the term "glorify" in John 12:23.

⁷² Pace Nicholson, who claims that "the 'glorification of the Son of Man' does not refer to the death of Jesus but to something which the Father does to the Son, either coincident with or subsequent to, the return of Jesus above (17:5)" (*Death as Departure*, 149).

⁷³ Schnackenburg, *Gospel*, 2, 402; cf. 2, 398-410. On "glorification," see further W. Thüsing, *Die Erhöhung und Verherrlichung Jesu im Johannesevangelium* (2d ed.; Munich: Aschendorff, 1970); and G. B. Caird, "The Glory of God in the Fourth Gospel: An Exercise in Biblical Semantics," *NTS* 15 (1968/69) 265-77.

There is evidence in other NT books that the Son of Man traditions from the Similitudes were known in early Christian circles. J. Theisohn has argued that two special Matthean sayings (25:31–32 and 19:28) are dependent on the Similitudes.⁷⁴ A. Yarbro Collins, comparing the description of "one like a son of man" in Rev 14:14 with 1 *Enoch* 69:27, finds it likely that the author of Revelation was familiar with the apocalyptic tradition reflected in the Similitudes.⁷⁵

In the Similitudes, the Son of Man/Chosen One, newly enthroned on the "throne of glory," judges and defeats the human and superhuman powers of evil. The Fourth Gospel appears to draw on this tradition when it portrays the crucifixion as a victorious enthronement. At the glorification/enthronement of the Son of Man (12:23), the "ruler of this world" is cast out and judged (12:31).

In the ancient Near Eastern texts mentioned above, enthronement is the result of, and the reward for, the divine warrior's victory over his enemies. In the book of Revelation, this ancient pattern of enthronement as vindication, or reward for victory, is adapted and applied to Christ. Jesus' faithful death (cf. Rev 1:5) is portrayed as a victory over the forces of evil, which leads to his enthronement: "To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne" (3:21; cf. 5:12). In the concluding cycle of visions, the pattern of victory and enthronement is expressed through combat imagery:

Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse! Its rider is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. . . . He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood. . . . From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, "King of kings and Lord of lords." (19:11–16)⁷⁶

These texts have much in common with what we find in John 12:23 and 31–32, and the more concrete, mythic images of Revelation help us imagine what the Fourth Evangelist means to convey when he speaks, more abstractly, of the "glorification of the Son of Man."

Further evidence that the Fourth Evangelist views Jesus' death as his triumphant enthronement is the way he portrays the trial before Pilate and the crucifixion. Wayne A. Meeks has shown that the whole emphasis in the Pilate trial is on Jesus' death as the secret (paradoxical) enthronement of the divine king and judge.⁷⁷ Schnackenburg sees a similar theme in the Johannine presen-

⁷⁴ J. Theisohn, *Der auserwählte Richter: Untersuchungen zum traditions-geschichtlichen Ort der Menschensohngestalt der Bilderreden des Äthiopischen Henoch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975) 149–82; cf. Suter, "Similitudes," 218.

⁷⁵ A. Yarbro Collins, "Son of Man' Tradition," 563–64.

⁷⁶ On Jesus' kingship and enthronement, see also Rev 1:5; 5:10; 17:14; 20:4, 6.

⁷⁷ Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet King* (Leiden: Brill, 1967) 61–81; cf. Blank, *Krisis*; idem, "Die Verhandlung vor Pilatus, Joh. 18,28–19,16 im Lichte johanneischer Theologie," *BZ n.F.* 3 (1959) 60–81.

Fourth Evangelist, drawing on earlier tradition, has developed his own distinctive understanding of the death of Christ. What is distinctive, however, is not that he ascribes less importance to the death of Christ but that he interprets it as realized eschatology. The book of Revelation describes Jesus' victory over the powers of evil in terms of three sequential events: Jesus' faithful death, his vindication in heaven (5:6–14), and his final victory over and judgment of evil at his second coming (19:11–21). In the Gospel of John, these three events are collapsed into one: as he faithfully ascends the cross, Jesus is exalted and vindicated. The crucifixion, not the parousia, is the point at which the powers of evil are judged. The point of this reinterpretation is not to deny the salvific import of the crucifixion but precisely to accent it.

The Fourth Evangelist does not write an apocalypse, but he has taken several characteristically apocalyptic themes⁸³ and recast them in light of his belief that the Son of Man—the preexistent revealer, warrior, judge, and king—has already appeared on earth. In the death of Jesus Christ the final judgment has already begun, and the decisive engagement in the cosmic battle between God and Satan has been won: “But take courage; I have conquered the world!” (John 16:33b).

⁸³ In addition to the story of cosmic combat and the figure of the Son of Man, note the emphasis on revelation from the heavenly world and on a final, universal judgment, and, above all, the two-level view of reality, in which heaven and earth are contrasted but closely interrelated. One reason for the general failure of NT scholars to recognize the relevance of apocalyptic texts to the Fourth Gospel is the influence of E. Käsemann's one-sided definition of apocalyptic as “future eschatology” (“On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic,” in *New Testament Questions of Today* [Philadelphia, Fortress, 1969] 108–9n). Important as it is in many apocalypses, future eschatology is not the sum total of apocalyptic thought, nor is it a required component of every apocalypse; see Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 23–29; and J. J. Collins et al., *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre* (Semeia 14; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1979).