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A SURVEY OF THE “SON OF MAN” FROM
DANIEL TO JESUS, PART 1: A REEVALUATION OF
DANIEL 7 AND ITS SUBSEQUENT IMPLICATIONS
ON THE “SON OF MAN” DEBATE

HALEY WILSON

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The Problem

Arguably one of the biggest conundrums of biblical scholarship can be found in a single verse of the apocalyptic book of Daniel: “I saw one like a son of man [NRSV: “human being”] coming with the clouds of heaven.” (7:13) Understood in Hebrew as בן אדם and Aramaic as בר אנש (as it appears in Daniel 7), both may be translated as “human being” or “someone.” The plural, בני אדם, is often used to refer to humanity in a general sense. The same understanding can be lent to the Aramaic בר (א)נשא and בר (א)נש.¹ For quite some time an association has been made between the Semitic idiom and the Greek expression of the New Testament, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, literally “the son of the man,” which occurs more than fifty times in the Gospels with reference to Jesus.²

1. Though it is after our period of interest for this work, the anachronism בר אנש is worth noting in light of the fact that the 𐤁 coalesced into the 𐤅 in Western Aramaic in the rabbinical writings (post 200 CE). See J. Fitzmyer, *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 149.

2. It is noteworthy that by the time the phrase appears in the synoptic tradition it appears in some instances as indefinite and in others as definite (υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου and ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου respectively) with the Greek “o” acting as the nominative singular definite article and “του” acting as the genitive singular definite article (leading some scholars to translate ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου literally as “the son of the man”). This change can be explained in two ways. First we could argue that Jesus himself referred to Daniel 7 in his teachings about the kingdom of God and he thus spoke of “the” son of man (of Daniel 7:13) as about to come to inaugurate the kingdom of God on earth. The other option is that the phrase “one like a son of man” in Daniel 7:13 was transformed into a title for Jesus after his death by his followers who identified the risen and exalted Jesus with the figure of Daniel 7. While the first suggestion is possible, the second is more pertinent to our particular discussion of the “son of man” in the synoptic tradition and will be an important facet of the discussion in the future. (A. Yarboro Collins, “The Origin of the Designation of Jesus as ‘Son of Man,’” in *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism* [Leiden: Brill, 2000], 139–58, see 145).

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While the Hebrew/Aramaic idiom refers quite frequently to humanity in a collective context, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου typically refers to a specific individual.³ It is the Aramaic idiom and its allusion to humanity that will be of interest in this work.

Since within the parameters of this paper I cannot meticulously and comprehensively trace the son of man debate from its conception to the present, the focus of this study will be confined to the Jewish literature ranging from the Babylonian exile until just before the second half of the first century CE, utilizing a brief textual survey. With the hopes of offering a better understanding surrounding the development of the son of man in Jewish thought, this paper will propose and defend the view that the son of man phrase, as it appears in the Gospels, alludes to but is not directly connected with “one like a son of man” in Daniel 7:13. It will be argued that, originally, the idiomatic son of man of Daniel was utilized as a descriptive metaphorical literary device and was not meant to be understood messianically. However, by the first century CE, with the texts of 1 Enoch and later 4 Ezra, it had developed into a title with messianic connotations.

This will be accomplished by first examining the phrase as it was likely understood in the historical context of Daniel 7, with emphasis placed on the possible intent of the author, followed by an analysis of the phrase as it appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls to demonstrate its use before the first century CE as a reference to humanity and not the Jewish Messiah. Finally, I will examine the pseudepigraphic text of 1 Enoch, which is important for our discussion since it is the first instance in Jewish literature that the son of man appears in an eschatological context. I will conclude the survey with an analysis of 4 Ezra to solidify and support my claim. By reexamining and emphasizing the context of Daniel 7, it is my argument that we will be able to better understand the son of man sayings as they were attributed to the peasant-turned-preacher, Jesus of Nazareth.

The Debate Today

In what can only be categorized as the most extensive work on the subject to date, D. Burckett observed, “The son of man debate . . . serves as a prime

3. For a more in-depth study of the Semitic idiom in relation to the Greek phrase refer to Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 156–166; see also Mogens Muller, *The Expression “Son of Man” and the Development of Christology: A History of Interpretation* (London: Equinox, 2008), who not only provides a well-thought-out history of the “son of man” phrase but does so in the context of the development of christology.

illustration of the limits of New Testament scholarship.”⁴ Due in part to this fact, the scholarship which has been done and the interpretations that have arisen as a result are so extensive and varied that an in-depth discussion is not possible in this work. However, in order to better understand varying scholars’ treatments of Daniel’s son of man, a brief summary regarding recent scholarship, which establishes a relationship between the son of man of Daniel and the son of man of the New Testament, is a necessity to begin this study.

An Aramaic Idiom vs. the Greek Title

Ever since the second century, scholars and exegetes have observed a correlation between Daniel’s son of man and Jesus’ son of man sayings in the Gospels.⁵ However it wasn’t until the twentieth century that landmark studies were done which began to suggest a connection between the Aramaic and the Greek. In what is arguably the most comprehensive treatment of the son of man problem from the early nineteenth century, Paul Fiebig deconstructed the phrase *בר אנש* and treated the words separately as *בר* and *אנש*. Invaluable to our study is his conclusion that there is no detectable difference in meaning in the uses of *אנש*, *אנשא*, *אנשא*, *בר*, and *בר אנש*.⁶ Twenty years later, J. H. Moulton

4. See introduction; D. Burkett, *The Son of Man Debate: A History and Evaluation* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 5; other scholars who have commented on the difficulty of the debate include the following: R. Fuller, “Review of *Die Entchristologisierung des Menschensohnes*, by Rollin Kearns,” *JBL* 109 (1990): 721–23, “The problem of the son of man is a can of worms. No one can write anything about it which will command general assent or provide a definitive solution”; and W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vols. 1 and 2 (Edinburgh: Clark, 1988–91), “Study of the mysterious synoptic title, ‘the son of man,’ has become a specialized field of its own wherein scholarly discord reigns supreme. . . . The ever-mushrooming literature on the son of man offers a host of conflicting and sometimes confusing claims and counterclaims.”

5. Tertullian, *Adversus Marcion*, 4.10. In this particular section Tertullian is discussing Jesus’ use of the son of man phrase in Mark 2:10, “Was it not that it was his wish by this title son of man from the book of Daniel to turn their complaint back upon them in such form as to prove that he who was forgiving sins was both God and Man—that one and only son of man in terms of Daniel’s prophecy, who had obtained power to judge, and by it of course the power to forgive sins (for he who judges also acquits)—and so after that cause of offence had been dispersed by his citation of scripture, they might the more readily recognize from that very act of forgiving sins that he and no other was the son of man? Actually, he had never before professed himself the son of man, but on this occasion first on which he first forgave sins—that is, on which he first exercised judgement, by acquittal.”

6. Paul Fiebig, *Der Menschensohn: Jesu Selbstbezeichnung mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des aramaischen Sprachgebrauches für Mench* (Tubingen: Halle a. S., 1901), 59–60. Fiebig concludes that the four phrases are essentially all connected in their meaning. This is significant since in Isaiah 56:2, in the poetic context of a prophetic oracle in general and in a “proverb”-like saying, the phrase “son of man [בן אדם]” occurs parallel to “man [אנוש]”: “Happy is the man [NRSV, ‘mortal’] who does this, the son of man [NRSV, ‘one’] who holds fast.” Again in Psalm 8:4, “What is man [אנוש] that you are mindful of him, and

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made the following statement in regards to the studies that appeared at the turn of the century and the perplexities that surrounded the attempted methods of connecting the Greek to the Aramaic: “The fascinating pursuit of Aramaic originals may lead to a good percentage of successful guesses; but they are mere guesses still, except when a decided failure in the Greek can be cleared up by an Aramaic which explains the error and this acts as corroboration.”⁷

Moulton’s statement, though made almost one hundred years ago, clarifies the fundamental problem with scholarly tenacity to assert that ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου is appropriated from a non-Greek source. It is not so far-fetched to claim that when Jesus used the phrase he was speaking Greek, as opposed to Aramaic or even Hebrew. It is noteworthy that only a few scholars have argued for his speaking of Hebrew.⁸ I am of the opinion that Jesus likely spoke Aramaic. However, it is widely accepted by scholars that the Gospels were likely composed in Greek, yet there has been no unanimous consensus regarding the original language of the phrase. Suffice it to say that just because the phrase does not fit with one language does not mean it belongs to another. In short, scholars who jump to the conclusion that ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου is an unusual Greek construction and thus must be Aramaic or Hebrew arguably do not have enough data to take that plunge. In fact, until further research is done

a son of man [בן אדם] that you care for him?” It should be noted that these particular verses, which speak of the exaltation of man [NRSV, “human beings,” “mortals”], are cited (from the Septuagint) and applied to Jesus in Hebrews 2:6–8. In the LXX, the terms are ἀνθρώπος and υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου. One final pre-Danielic passage of note is Psalm 144:3, which carries a similar meaning as Psalm 8:4, “O LORD, what is man [אדם] that you regard him, or a son of man [בן אנוש] that you think of him?” We see then that the phrases אנוש, בר אנוש, and אדם בן אדם are interchangeable, and this is true for Daniel 7:13 (apart from the comparative כ which gives the phrase an almost simile-like element). The similarities between the three phrases is, in my opinion, a good starting point for arguing that the son of man of Daniel 7 did not initially have any messianic connotation attached to it.

7. J. H. Moulton, *Accidence and Word-Formation*, vol. 2 of *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920), 116.

8. For an argument of the phrase being of Aramaic origin, see Maurice Casey’s recent work, *The Solution to the ‘Son of Man’ Problem* (London: T&T Clark, 2009). For defense of a Greek origin, see Gerard Mussies, “Greek in Palestine and the Diaspora,” in *The Jewish People in the First Century*, CRINT (1976), 1040–60; Jonas Greenfield, “The Languages of Palestine, 200 BCE–200 CE,” in *Jewish Languages: Theme and Variations*, ed. H. H. Paper (Cambridge, MA: Association for Jewish Studies, 1978), 150; Stanley Porter, “Did Jesus Ever Teach in Greek?,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 44.2 (1993): 199–235; and Jan N. Sevenster, *Do You Know Greek? How Much Greek Could the First Jewish Christians Have Known?*, NovTSup 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1968). For a decent discussion of all possibilities and support of my general opinion, see A. Lukaszewski, “Issues Concerning the Aramaic Behind ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου: A Critical Review of Scholarship,” in *Who Is This Son of Man? The Latest Scholarship on a Puzzling Expression of the Historical Jesus*, eds. L. Hurtado and P. Owen, LNTS 390 (New York: T&T Clarke, 2012), 14–27.

on the syntax of the languages involved, no further clarification seems possible with respect to an Aramaic son of man.

Jesus and the Son of Man

Another facet to this debate is the number of conceptualizations surrounding the son of man, as used by Jesus. Not surprisingly, the amount is as great as the number of articles written on the subject. On one side, we see the “human son of man,” in which it is argued that the phrase is used to designate Jesus’ humanity.⁹ Within this claim lie three distinct interpretations: the son of man as simply human, as the lowly human, and as the ideal human. An observable trend shows that frequently when scholars argue the son of man sayings as referring to a solely human son of man, they tend to rely on the Greek form relating to the presumably earlier Semitic form. The problem with this approach as a whole is that these scholars seem to ignore the obvious differences between the Aramaic/Semitic phrase “one like *a* son of man” versus the Greek “*the* son of man”—in other words, the difference between the phrase as an idiom versus a title.¹⁰

While we have already briefly touched on the subject, it is worthwhile to note that in a study conducted by Seyoon Kim,¹¹ the proposition was made that when we speak of the son of man concept, we refer to the use of the image, “one like a son of man,” as found in Daniel 7. When we refer to the son of man as a title, we have in mind its use to describe a certain, apocalyptic figure, who can then be spoken of as “the son of man.” It is specifically the son of man title as a New Testament phenomenon that appears to have had messianic overtones,¹² while the messianic overtones (or lack thereof) of the original Aramaic phrase are uncertain. As I also mentioned previously, many scholars will argue that it cannot be determined, and thus it is doubtful whether the Greek phrase “son of man” could be equated with the Jewish Messiah at the time of Jesus; these scholars go so far as to reject the phrase as a title.¹³ Yet there are many scholars

9. Craig A. Evans, “Mark 8:27–16:20,” in *World Biblical Commentary on Mark* (Waco, TX: Word, 2001), xxv. Evans focuses his attention on the Aramaic phrase ܐܢܫܐ ܕܒܪܐ ܕܢܫܐ as meaning “a son of man” in a general sense. This idea is supported by L. W. Hurtado’s work, *Lord Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), in which Hurtado discusses the humanity of Jesus expressed by the son of man sayings in the Gospel of Mark.

10. Arguably one of the few individuals who shares such a contrasting view between the phrases. See Martine E. Sheldon, *Jesus, Fourth Ezra and a Son of Man Tradition in the First Century A.D.* (MA thesis, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, May 1998).

11. S. Kim, *The Son of Man as Son of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).

12. Bock, “The Son of Man in Luke 5:24,” 110 (see footnote 7).

13. One of the most noted scholars that rejects the idea of the son of man as a title is Craig A. Evans who devotes but one paragraph to this point in his book, *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 46,

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that contend to the contrary, claiming that the utilization of the titular phrase designated Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah and deliverer.¹⁴ To put it simply, no consensus can be reached. Scholars have examined the etymological traits of the Aramaic idiom and the Greek title to prove their individual points. At the same time, scholars have increasingly begun to look at the use of the son of man in scripture and other literature. It is a similar approach that I wish to take as I reevaluate the importance of the original context of Daniel 7.

Analysis of Daniel

The book itself is pseudepigraphic in authorship. It was allegedly written in the name of an Israelite captive named Daniel who was favored by God and interpreted dreams. Yet it is uncertain whether the events surrounding the life of this Daniel figure as they are recorded in the work of Daniel actually occurred, and it continues to be a topic of debate for many scholars to this day.

stating, "There is no clear evidence that 'son of man' in the time of Jesus was understood as a title of the Messiah." Another individual who shares Evan's opinion is Manson, *The Servant-Messiah* (Cambridge, 1953), 72–4. Likewise, C. H. Dodd in *According to the Scriptures* (London, 1952), 116, writes that Jesus used it to identify "with the people of God as their 'inclusive representative'". See also: F. D. Moule, *The Origins of Christology* (Cambridge, 1977), 11–14; and F. D. Moule, "Neglected Features in the Problem of the Son of Man," in *Essays in New Testament Interpretation* (London: Cambridge, 1982), 11–22, in which Moule states that the son of man phrase is "not a title so much as a description . . . of his martyr-ministry on earth in the past and for his heavenly vindication looked for in the future." Similarly, Hooker in *The Son of Man in Mark* (London: McGill, 1967), 174–98 (especially 192), argues that the term is not a reference to the Messiah but rather is an expression of his basic purpose, meaning, and destiny: "It expresses his position in the world, a position found upon his relationship with God." J. C. O'Neill in "The Silence of Jesus," *NTS* 15.2 (1969): 153–67, maintains that Jesus' messianic consciousness was not expressed by the use of any messianic titles; for further discussion, see also G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (Fortress Press, 1981), 168–77.

14. This perspective is taken by Kim, *The Son of Man as Son of God*, and Darell B Bock, "The Son of Man in Luke 5:24," *BBR* 1 (1991): 109–21, who agrees with Kim but feels that his argument is not clearly defined. Also in Darrell Bock's *Blasphemy and Exaltation: A Philological-Historical Study of the Key Jewish Themes Impacting Mark 14:61–64* (Tubingen: J. C. B., 1998), 203, he maintains his original opinion and further states that Jesus utilizes the concept of the son of man to assert his divine identity. Other scholars who support the usage of the son of man phrase as reference to the Messiah by Jesus include the following: Fiebig, *Der Menschensohn* (Tubingen and Leipzig, 1901), 95, who regarded the phrase as open to a messianic understanding by Jews in general; Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums im spathellenistischen Zeitalter*, 3rd ed., rev. by H. Cressmann (Tubingen, 1926), 268; idem, *Kyrios Christos*, 2nd ed. (1921; repr., Gottingen, 1966), 13, who thought that the son of man was reference to a "distinctly apocalyptic Messiah" based on 1 Enoch; Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* (ET Oxford, 1959), 360–65, who borrowed elements of Fiebig's view with Bousset's theory, asserted that "the son of man was widely regarded as one with the Messiah," but added, "in apocalyptic circles the phrase did not refer to the Messiah [but rather] a distinct heavenly eschatological figure."

By genre, Daniel 7 is classified as an apocalypse.¹⁵ With this as a backdrop, a distinction must be made between a “historical apocalypse,” like the passage of Daniel 7, and an otherworldly journey, similar to that of the Enoch literature. The otherworldly journey contains a stronger interest in cosmological speculation.¹⁶ In contrast, Daniel is a “historical” apocalypse, which is characterized by visions with an interest in historical events. So what is to be said about the dating and background of the pericope of Daniel 7?

The original author places Daniel, the hero of sorts, in the midst of the Babylonian exile. The date of the book itself has been debated by scholars almost as intensely as the reality of its protagonist.¹⁷ I am well aware that the dating of Daniel carries a great amount of influence over my argument and acknowledge the fact that under different dating parameters my conclusions could be considered lacking in certain areas. In this work I will argue an early sixth century dating which seems most probable on circumstantial and linguistic grounds.

While there are many scholars who argue a later dating, there are other scholars who believe that Daniel was more likely composed in the sixth century BCE, by an unknown author living in the midst of the Babylonian captivity.¹⁸ The scholars who support this idea have given numerous reasons as to why an earlier date is more probable. One of the most persuasive arguments is the evidence that the book of Daniel was well known by the second

15. The word *apokalypsis* (ἀποκάλυψη) in Greek literally means a “revelation” or “unveiling.” This particular work will utilize the definition as outlined by the Society of Biblical Literature Genres Project, which defined this genre as “revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.” See J. J. Collins, ed., *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre, Semeia* 14 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979).

16. M. Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell: An Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983).

17. A later dating of the second century BCE was suggested by the Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry in the third century. He argued that, although Daniel was set during the Babylonian exile, it was actually composed around the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and this theory has withstood the test of time. While it is debatable whether Daniel 1–6 could have been written in the Babylonian exile, it has been widely accepted that Daniel 7–12 refers to the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. See the works of P. M. Casey, “Porphyry and the Origin of the Book of Daniel,” *JTS* 27 (1976): 15–33; and J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Livonia, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 88–89, for more on this debate.

18. Among scholars who maintain this opinion are William H. Shea, “The Neo Babylonian Historical Setting for Daniel 7,” *AUSS* 24 (1986): 31–36; and Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994).

century.¹⁹ Another point to consider is the languages found in the text. Critics against an early date will claim that the use of Persian, Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic, as found in Daniel, provides evidence for a later date. Realistically, we must consider the alternative. There are three words of Greek origin found in the entire book. The crux of the criticism is the argument that Alexander the Great did not spread Greek through the Near East until the fourth century; thus, there is no way that Daniel could have had any knowledge of the language. However, all three of the words are musical instruments (see Dan 3:5, 7; 10:15). The word *lyre* (NRSV, Dan 3:5, or *zither* in NIV) comes from the Greek word *kithara*, a term which is found in Homer's works *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* (dating back to the eighth century). While the other two Greek words (*psalterion*—harp, and *symphonia*—pipes) are not found in other works, I suggest that if Daniel had been composed in the second century it is probable that we would see more than just three Greek words appearing in the work. It is in this context of the sixth century that the convoluted figure who is "one like a son of man" must be considered. In order to do this we must understand, in a general sense, how the messianic expectations of the Jewish people developed and evolved during this time period.

Few scholars and historians will argue that dramatic shifts did not take place among the Israelites during and after Babylon. Disputably one of the most notable transformations can be seen in the ritualistic and theological practices of the people.²⁰ While we have stated that "son of man" as a title does not appear until the Enoch literature, it is not surprising that as the Jews underwent intense persecution, first in Babylon then later by rulers such as Antiochus IV Epiphanies, we see this general change in worldview. Specifically, they attributed the disaster of the exile to their own impurity. They had betrayed their God and allowed the Mosaic laws and cultic practices to become corrupt; the Babylonian Exile was thus understood as proof of Yahweh's displeasure.

19. Miller, *Daniel*, 25–26, points out that that the author of Ben Sira may have been acquainted with Daniel. Miller mentions Hebrew fragments that have been discovered, which cover about two-thirds of Ben Sira, originally written in Hebrew (195 BCE) but later translated into Greek (about 130 BCE). These Hebrew fragments seem to depend on the Hebrew portions of Daniel.

20. In an examination of the subject carried out by George A. Barton, Barton concludes that "in a remote, yet direct way, the exile helped to transform the messianic expectations of the Jews from the simple character in which they had been held by the prophets to the supernatural character that they take on in the apocalyptic literature." See George A. Barton, "Influence of the Babylonian Exile on the Religion of Israel," in *The Biblical World* 37, no. 6 (University of Chicago Press, 1911): 369–78.

During this period, Jewish leaders focused less on a theology of judgment and shifted their emphasis to a theology of salvation.²¹ With this transformation, it is not surprising that a figure like that of Daniel 7:13, who is to ultimately liberate the “holy ones” and act as the medium through which they would receive “an everlasting kingdom” (Dan 7:27), would, in time, become synonymous with the Davidic Messiah whose appearance would usher in the deliverance of God’s people.

7:1–8 (Vision of the Four Beasts)

Now that a historical backdrop has been erected, let us begin our discussion of the pericope itself. Daniel’s vision begins in 7:2 when the four winds of heavens stir up the great sea, alluding to other ancient Near Eastern creation traditions in which the sea is associated with mythological monsters and forces of chaos (see Ps 74:13–14). Indeed, in this pericope four beasts do come out of the sea, each representing a distinct kingdom. “The first was like a lion and had eagle’s wings. . . . It was made to stand on two feet like a human and given a human mind,” (7:4) which is a reference to the Babylonian empire, since lions and eagles were frequently utilized in Assyro-Babylonian art.²² The second beast “looked like a bear . . . [with] three tusks in its mouth,” (7:5) and can be understood to be a representation of Media, for we read in other passages that, just like a bear was feared for its ferocity (see 1 Sam 17:34 and Prov 28:15), Media was feared for its cruelty (see Isa 13:17 and Jer 51:11, 28). The third beast is described as a leopard “with four wings of a bird on its back and four heads” (7:6). According to D. S. Russell, in regard to this third beast/kingdom, “the four wings may represent the speed of Persia’s conquest and the four heads perhaps refer to the four kings familiar to the Jews—Cyrus, Xerxes, Artaxerxes, and Darius.”²³ And then there is the fourth beast, “terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong . . . [with] ten horns . . . [and] another horn appeared. . . . There were eyes like human eyes in this horn and a mouth speaking arrogantly” (7:7–8). For those scholars who seek to argue a later dating, it has been, for the most part, undisputed that this fourth beast symbolizes the Greek kingdom under Alexander the Great and his successors: a threat to the Jews, as these rulers sought to Hellenize the Near East. The very human horn that appears and speaks arrogantly is usually understood by these scholars to be Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who uprooted the three kings which

21. In texts such as Ezekiel and Isaiah, we see hopeful prophecies that the Israelites would, at some unknown future point in time, be gathered together once more, their society and religion would be purified, and the unified Davidic kingdom would be re-established.

22. D. S. Russell, *Daniel*, (Westminster John Knox Press, 1981), 116.

23. Russell, *Daniel*, 117.

had laid hold of the throne before him. Because he was ruthless and arrogant, the Jews suffered abominably under his rule (see 1 Macc 1:24; 2 Macc 5:17). However, there are no clues in the text which indicate that this abominable creature (or any of the beasts in general) absolutely has to be understood as Antiochus IV Epiphanes (or the other rulers we have previously mentioned). However, it is quite possible that this “great and terrible” beast could represent someone like Nebuchadnezzar, who invaded Israel and deported many of the people to Babylon, where they would live in captivity for roughly the next fifty years. The book of Daniel, however, does not provide enough evidence to be certain of who or what the beasts were meant to represent.

7:9–14 (Judgment and Heavenly Council)

The figure of the ancient of days (עתיק יומים) and the later-appearing human being (כבר אנוש)²⁴ give a sharp contrast to the four monstrous beasts mentioned previously.²⁵ As the language becomes more poetic, we are introduced to a very human figure seated upon a throne, preparing to judge the world. He is surrounded by an innumerable concourse of heavenly attendants. His hair is the same color as his raiment: a radiant and dazzling white. All of this evokes the same imagery as the heavenly council presented in 1 Kings 22:19, Job 1:6, Ezekiel 1, and Isaiah 6:6, in which God presides over his heavenly court. In addition, much of the imagery is borrowed from the Psalms (see Pss 82:1; 90:2). The personification of God as judge, accompanied by the fire of judgment which engulfs his throne and consumes the wheels around it,²⁶ is also not uncommon in the imagery of the Hebrew Bible (see Pss 50:3 and 97:3). In Daniel 7:11 the fourth beast is judged and put to death and the rest of the beasts are stripped of the dominion that they possess.

It is in the last two verses of this section of the pericope that we find our point of interest. In Daniel 7:13 we see for the first time in Jewish literature “one like a son man” who comes riding upon the clouds of heaven. He appears before the ancient one from whom he receives power and dominion and

24. This Aramaic phrase denotes the same meaning as the Hebrew equivalent *ben adam* בן אדם (found scattered throughout the OT, especially in the book of Ezekiel in reference to the prophet himself).

25. While the *HarperCollins* translates these verses utilizing “ancient one” and “human being,” translations such as the Septuagint render the translation as “ancient of days” and “son of man,” respectively. (Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* [London: Oxford University Press, 2007], 1012).

26. This imagery of a throne ablaze with fire recalls the chariot throne of Ezekiel from which fire erupted (see Ezek 1:26; 43:6).

authority over all things.²⁷ It is here that further discussion is merited regarding what scholars think of this original “son of man.” Since no interpretation of the son of man is provided later in the pericope, we must confine our analysis to verses 13 and 14.

Daniel 7:13–14 Reconsidered

Just like the volume of scholarship done on the phrase itself, the pericope of Daniel 7 (specifically vv. 13 and 14) has attracted the minds and opinions of scholars for quite some time, especially in recent decades. Due to the vast number of opinions, only three distinct views expressed by different scholars will be briefly discussed and analyzed in order to shed further clarity on the original phrase as it was found in the Jewish context of Daniel. These three opinions have previously been discussed by John J. Collins, who claimed that, while there have been many varying points of view, three main categories of explanation have been proposed “since the emergence of critical scholarship.” They are (1) a heavenly being (usually considered to be the archangel Michael), (2) an exalted human being such as a king or a messianic figure who fulfills the promises made to David, and (3) a collective symbol of the Jewish people.²⁸ These are the three viewpoints that will now be addressed and examined. Ultimately, I will offer a fourth option: that the author’s initial intention was simply to explain what he saw in a way that would have made sense to his original Jewish audience.

An Angel: Michael?

Verse 13 of Daniel 7 in its entirety reads, “I saw one like a son of man [NRSV “human being”] coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him.” For most scholars proposing that this figure represents an angel, the foundation of their argument is the association that they make between the son of man and the clouds. In my opinion, there are those who take this meaning and association a little too far. They connect the clouds with the heavens and thus with angels and more specifically the archangel Michael. According to Norman Russell,²⁹ the

27. Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Harvard University Press, 1997), 16; M. Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts*, VTSup 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1955), 32.

28. John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 308.

29. Norman Russell, *Doctrine of the Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (London: Oxford, 2005), 67; “It should be noted that the discrediting of the notion of ‘corporate personality’ (Rogerson 1970) has made the idea of the son of man as a representative figure one that must be treated cautiously.” John J. Collins, “The Son of Man and the

simplest explanation is the most satisfactory. He claims the "one like a son of man" is an angel, probably Michael, entrusted with the protection of the people of Israel. He notes that only later, in Christian tradition and in the book of Parables (1 Enoch 37–71), does he become a messianic figure, the elect of God. Albani, while a supporter of the corporate figure interpretation, adds, "there are good reasons for the angelic interpretation."³⁰ Yet if we are to truly understand what the author intended in this case, we must look at the original Aramaic. It should be noted that while an association can be made, the preposition utilized to establish the connection should not be overlooked. We are told that "one like a son of man" comes "with" (עִם) the clouds of heaven. The preposition suggests association and should not be confused with the article עַל, which would mean that the son of man came "upon" the clouds of heaven. This meaning would deify him, as if he were Yahweh or some other figure associated with God.³² Along a similar thread of thought, E. J. Young argues against this connection entirely, stating, "Nowhere in the Old Testament are the clouds represented as the accompaniment of an angel, but rather that which belongs to the Lord."³³

Saints of the Most High in the Book of Daniel," *JBL* 93 (1974): 61 was a good example of this caution when he stated "it is most probable that the figure of 'one like a son of man' represents an angelic host and/or its leader," leaving room for the possibility that this figure could be equated with both the people of Israel and the angels of Heaven. See also I. Grill, *Untersuchungen über die Entstehung des vierten Evangeliums*, (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1902), 50; M. Noth, "The Holy Ones of the Most High," in *The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Studies* (Oliver & Boyd, 1966), 215; L. Dequeker, "The 'Saints of the Most High' in Qumran and Daniel," *OTS* 18 (1973): 108. There is only one individual (that I am aware of) who claims the figure is Gabriel. He argues this from the identity of Gabriel in Daniel 9:21; see Z. Zevit, "The Structure and Elements of Daniel 7," *ZAW* 80 (1968): 385–96 (396).

30. Matthias Albani, "The 'One Like a Son of Man' (Dan. 7.13) and the Royal Ideology," in *Enoch and Qumran Origins: New Light on a Forgotten Connection*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 47, argues that in the Hebrew Bible the throne of the most high is usually surrounded by heavenly attendants (see Dan 7:10; 8:10), which are described as human-like beings (see Dan 10:16, 18; cf. 8:15; 9:18; 10:5). He proposes that one like a son of man "means likeness to, but not necessarily identity with a human being." The archangel Michael is thus best understood as "one like a human being."

31. According to *Strong's Biblical Concordance*, Entry H5973, the word עִם is defined as the "adverb or preposition, with (i.e. in conjunction with), in varied applications; specifically, equally with; often with prepositional prefix (and then usually unrepresented in English):—accompanying, against, and, as (× long as), before, beside, by (reason of), for all, from (among, between), in, like, more than, of, (un-) to, with(-al)." It should be noted that nowhere is the preposition "upon" associated with עִם.

32. E. J. Young, *Daniel's Vision of the Son of Man* (London: Cambridge, 1958), 12. He writes that the clouds are regarded as an accompaniment to the Lord (see 2 Sam 22:12; Job 22:14; Ps 128:34).

33. Young, *Daniel's Vision*, 13.

A Messianic Symbol

In traditional biblical imagery, the rider upon the clouds is typically understood to be Yahweh. J. A. Emerton argues, “The act of coming with clouds suggests a theophany of Yahweh himself. If Dan 7.13 does not refer to a divine being, then it is the only exception out of about seventy passages in the Old Testament.”³⁴ This association is easily explained by the fact that this same imagery appears in, and may have originated from, Ugaritic myths in which Baal (often referred to as a rider of the clouds) is subordinate to El, the father of gods and human beings. Drawing a similar conclusion, Benjamin Reynolds argues that based on the Old Greek reading the figure of the son of man is messianic.³⁵ Yet this claim is rather tenuous, because it assumes that the idea of God’s messianic kingdom and the Messiah himself were considered by the author of Daniel to be one in the same. That is something we cannot determine from the evidence at hand. Despite this flaw in reasoning, some scholars attempt to draw a connection between one like a son of man and the rider on the clouds. Heinz Eduard Todt claimed a messianic understanding, seeing in Daniel 7:13–14 the figure of a “transcendent redeemer.”³⁶ Yet, as we will discuss in the following section, the association between this metaphorical son of man and the clouds is merely a contrasting element that connects him to heaven as opposed to the four beasts that come out of the sea. Ultimately, the preposition עַל does not imply a direct association, as all the previously mentioned scholars make it out to be, no matter how one approaches the argument. Nor are there enough indicators in the text itself to suggest such a connection. Thus, the son of man cannot be associated with either an angelic or a messianic figure.

A Corporate Figure

Perhaps the most popular theory upheld by scholars is the idea that “one like a son of man” is to be interpreted collectively as the people of Israel. The

34. J.A. Emerton, “The Origin of the Son of Man Imagery,” *JTS* (1958): 225–42, (see 231–32). For a counterargument, see J. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1927), 303, who states, “Position upon the clouds, which the writer avoids, would rather be the attribute of Deity” (see Isa 19:1; Ps 104:3), thus going back to the discussion of עַל and עַל (footnote 23).

35. Benjamin Reynolds, “The ‘One Like a Son of Man’ According to the Old Greek of Daniel 7,13–14” *Bib* 89 (2008): 70–80. This concept has previously been supported by scholars such as Geerhardus Vos, *The Self-Disclosure of Jesus* (New York: George H. Doran, 1926), 228 ff., who maintained that the passage in Daniel was genuine messianic prophecy and the one like a son of man is none other than the Messiah.

36. See Heinz Eduard Todt, *The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. D. M. Barton (London: SMC, 1965), 22. Likewise R. B. Y. Scott, “Behold He Cometh With the Clouds,” *NTS* 5 (1958–9): 127–32, emphasizes the transcendence of the scene, referring especially to the clouds.

Israelites were symbolized as the single individual that was belittled and crushed under persecution but later restored to its former glory. This concept was proposed by C. H. Dodd³⁷ and is shared by D. S. Russell, who states that the son of man is collective in sense and “represents the kingdom of God given to the people of God.”³⁸ In his recent work *He That Cometh*, Sigmund Mowinckel states, “In the present form of Daniel’s visions of the beasts, the son of man is a pictorial symbol of the people of Israel, not an individual figure, and not a personal Messiah of any kind.”³⁹ Scholars like Mowinckel firmly contend that this symbol of the fifth kingdom (God’s kingdom) is a human figure, which purposefully contrasts sharply with the animal-like symbols of the beasts. The difference is further emphasized by the fact that this human figure comes from and is connected to heaven, while the beasts came up out of the abyss of the chaotic sea. It is from this vantage point that I propose a fourth suggestion: the son of man was nothing more than a literary device utilized by the author to explain what he saw. In other words, a metaphor to describe the indescribable.

What Did the Author Really Mean?

While it is difficult to know exactly what the author was thinking thousands of years ago when he wrote a text, there are a few indicators within the text itself that provide us with some insight. These particular clues include the comparative כ coupled with the alternate reading of the Septuagint and a lack of interpretation of the man-like figure later in the pericope. Taking these specific linguistic elements into consideration, it is far easier to understand that the author of Daniel intended to explain what he saw through the utilization of images familiar to the reader, notably, the reader himself.

I have previously mentioned in this work that the comparative כ attached to the phrase בר אנוש only appears in Daniel 7. However, its importance cannot

37. See C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Substructure of New Testament Theology* (London: Nisbet and Co., 1952), 118.

38. Russell, *Daniel*, 122. Another proponent of this idea is Albani, “The ‘One Like a Son of Man,’” 47–53. Albani finds proof of the son of man as a corporate figure in the collective interpretation of Daniel 7:18, 27. He states, “There is no doubt that ‘the one like a son of man’ here represents in some way ‘the people of the holy ones of the Most High,’ a collective symbol of the Jewish people.”

39. Sigmund Mowinckel and G. W. Anderson, *He That Cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism* (MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 350. One can also read a similar opinion by James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*. Matthew Black, “The Throne-Theophany Prophetic Commission and the ‘Son of Man’: A Study in Tradition-History,” in *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Religious Cultures in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 56–73, goes so far as to say that the author of Daniel was setting forth an “apotheosis of Israel in the end time, a deification of the Saints of the most High.”

be overemphasized. According to the Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon,⁴⁰ the article כ is typically used as a prefix meaning “like of” or “like as,” denoting a comparative statement or metaphorical clause. This is the case in Daniel 7:13. The author tells us that Daniel witnessed one “like a son of man.” He did not even go as far to say he saw “a son of man,” which would have suggested an individual; rather, as the Old Greek of the LXX reads “as it were a son of man.” Important to our discussion is that this method of description in the Old Testament is not confined to this one instance. It is worth noting that within the pericope of Daniel 7 we see further examples. The author in verses 4 through 6 describes the first beast “like a lion (כאריה)” who stood on two feet “like a human being (כאנוש)” and the third beast “like a leopard (כנמר).” We see in all these examples the comparative כ, obviously a literary mechanism frequently utilized by the writer of Daniel 7 to describe manifestations, which Daniel witnessed, in ways that the reader could comprehend and envision himself. Finally, it must be remembered that the whole chapter recounts a vision that Daniel experienced. It is possible that he did not see an actual sea nor actual animals arising out of it. Arguably, it could be considered one large and intricate metaphor.

Another important textual evidence is that later in the pericope, no interpretation of the figure is offered.⁴¹ We read in verse 16 that Daniel approaches an angelic attendant which lingered nearby and questioned him with the desire to understand what he had seen. In verse 17 the interpretation begins with the four great beasts being described as four kings “which shall arise out of the earth.” In verse 18 we are told that the holy ones will receive the kingdom and possess it forever. Yet it is important to note that the “saints” mentioned here are the people of God and should not be confused with heavenly beings.⁴²

These explanations, it has been argued, are substantial and similar enough to identify the figure like a son of man with the saints of the most high. I concur that the resemblance in the language is present and should not simply be swept aside without careful examination and a justification of one’s reasoning. It is clear that to the son of man and also the saints, a kingdom, eternal in nature, was given. In the one instance it is said to be the kingdom of the man-like figure; in the other it is identified as the kingdom of the holy ones. These facts

40. See F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891–1906), 453.

41. For scholars who believe an interpretation for the son of man is provided, see Hugo Gressmann, *Der Messias* (Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht Goettingen, 1929), 344, 356.

42. This opinion is maintained by Martin Noth, “Die Heiligen Des Höchsten,” in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (München: Kaiser, 1957), 274–90.

cannot be denied, but does the conclusion really follow that there is an actual interpretation of the one like a son of man similar to the later interpretation provided of the four beasts?

E. J. Young brings up two points that I believe answer this question.⁴³ The first contends that nowhere is an explanation given of the son of man as it is supplied for the four beasts. With respect to the beasts we have seen, it is clearly stated: “As for these four great beasts, four kings shall arise out of the earth.” (Dan 7:17) Later we read, “As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth that shall be different from all the other kingdoms,” (Dan 7:23) and again, “As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise.” (Dan 7:24) Nowhere in the chapter do we find expounded such an idea as “the one like a son of man is the saint of the most high.” This obvious fact cannot be overlooked. The second point that Young argues is that the nature of the description of the saints of the most high is not one that warrants the assertion that it is the son of man who is being depicted. In verse 18 the saints are said to receive (יקבלוּן) the kingdom and to possess it (יקבלוּן). Judgment was given to the saints (or, for the saints), and the dominion and sovereignty and greatness of the kingdoms under all the heavens were given to the people of the saints of the most high. From here an obvious question arises: From whom will this eternal kingdom be received? Those scholars who favor the theory that the son of man embodies Israel will say that the kingdom is received from God. Yet let us consider an interpretation that is equally possible, which asserts that the kingdom is received by the saints from the son of man to whom it had been given by God in verse 14. The saints, we are told, are to receive and to possess the kingdom. This appears to suggest that they receive the kingdom somewhat as a steward for his master; it is entrusted to them forever. At the same time, it is a kingdom which belongs to God and which has only been temporarily relegated to the saints. Ultimately, it is the son of man who acts as mediator through which the kingdom is bestowed.

To conclude this section, let us recall that in light of the ubiquitous usage of the Hebrew/Aramaic כּ as a comparative mechanism to denote metaphorical references, and due to the lack of an explicit interpretation of “one like a son of man” in the chapter, I have asserted that the passage of Daniel 7:13 has, in many instances, been over analyzed, and the original intent of the author has been stretched beyond reasonable boundaries. Given different dating parameters and language interpretations, the conclusions which I have argued against could be considered reasonable. We should also not completely disregard the

43. Young, “Daniel’s Vision,” 9–10.

implications that these varying approaches to the passage could have on our understanding of the pericope as a whole. However, in many cases extensive analysis of “one like a son of man” is unnecessary and overreaching. In short, it is a desperate attempt by scholars to complicate that which was never intended to be complex. Based on prior discussion and textual evidence, I maintain that “one like a son of man” was intended as a literary device, and the author, in utilizing it, fully expected the reader of his day to understand this intent. I believe that there was no special meaning or translation behind the original phrase. It is only after some time that “one like a son of man” becomes more than just a stylistic literary device; indeed it would transform into a title for the Jewish Messiah.

Texts of the Intertestamental Period

Yet this transformation did not occur overnight. In this section, and the following, I will commence the aforementioned survey of the son of man phrase (בר אנש) as it appears in texts from the intertestamental period. The survey will narrow its focus to the Jewish texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls: the Testament of Joseph and Wisdom of Sirach (two texts only extant in Greek). It will then look at 1 Enoch (where the phrase appears in a titular sense for the first time), and finally end with 4 Ezra. The survey will demonstrate that, while some scholars have claimed a messianic interpretation for the son of man figure as early as Daniel, such an interpretation cannot be demonstrated in the texts until the first century CE with the parables of Enoch. Let us begin with the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Dead Sea Scrolls

Most scholars date the fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls to the mid second century BCE. The phrase as it appears in Daniel 7:13 (כבר אנש) minus the comparative כ, is found in the Genesis Apocryphon and the targum fragments of 11QtgJob 9:9 and 26:3. Receiving lesser attention than documents such as the Community Rule and Melchizedek scroll is the Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen 21:13), in which the phrase בר אנש (“a son of man”) appears as an indefinite reference equivalent to the Hebrew איש (“human being”) found in Genesis 13:16 (which the Apocryphon seems to paraphrase). In both texts, God makes the following promise to Abraham: “And I will multiply your seed like the dust of the earth which no son of man (בר אנש) can count.”⁴⁴ Here the phrase seems to take on the connotation of “a human being” or more

44. Here I utilized the translation of M. Casey, in his work, “Aramaic Idiom and the Son of Man Problem,” *JSNT* 25 (2002): 3–32 (29). It should be noted that Yochanan

accurately “no one.” Finally, the targums of 11QtgJob 9:9 and 26:3 are worthy of note. In these texts the generic singular offers a sense of human beings in distinction from God. In these instances the phrase is still utilized as an idiomatic expression referring to a “human being” and בר אנוש appears to simply replace the Hebrew בן אדם. As it stands, neither suggests a messianic figure.

Testament of Joseph

The text of interest stems from a pseudepigraphic body of texts consisting of twelve sections or “testaments,” each one attributed to one of the twelve patriarchs of Israel.⁴⁵ Over the years, scholarly debate has focused primarily with speculations surrounding date and provenance of such a compilation, especially with recent discoveries of The Testaments at Qumran. In the course of the discussion, two main options have emerged for understanding the development of the work as a whole: The first is that a Jewish writer compiled a selection of testaments associated with Jacob’s twelve sons and later a Christian editor or copyist(s) interpolated a few excerpts to relate the text more directly to Jesus. The other predominant theory follows that a Christian assembled the testaments utilizing Jewish sources. According to James Vanderkam, due to the scarce occurrences of demonstrably Christian excerpts, it seems more likely that the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs is a Jewish work with some Christian emendations.⁴⁶ While I agree with Vanderkam’s assessment

Thorion, “אדם and בן אדם in den Qumrantexten,” *RdQ* 10 (1980): 305–308, confirms that the Hebrew has the same meaning.

45. According to Raymond E. Surburg, in each of the testaments three distinct elements can be noticed. “First the patriarch gives the history of his own life, telling of the sins he has committed and also the virtues he has demonstrated. . . . Next, the writer draws for his readers a practical lesson from the material related, warning them against the sins of the heroes in the story; on the other hand, they are encouraged to emulate the virtues related. Ethical instruction was a prominent feature of this work. Finally, the patriarch enters the field of the apocalyptic, and informs his sons of future happenings.” Raymond E. Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1975), 129.

46. See James C. VanderKam, *Introduction to Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 100–101, in which he adds, “at Qumran texts that may be related to two of the testaments have been found: the Aramaic Levi text has a large amount of the material that appears in the Testament of Levi, and a Testament of Naphtali (4Q215) shares some points with the Greek work of the same name. In light of the uncertainties about the genesis of the Testaments, it is very difficult to date. Suggestions have ranged from the second century BCE to the second century CE.” Similarly, Leonard Rost has written “The date and milieu proper to the Testaments has been a matter of debate ever since the manuscripts were discovered. Most recently M. de Jonge has attempted to demonstrate that they were composed by a Christian author around A.D. 200 on the basis of earlier Jewish traditions. The author, according to de Jonge, had only the Testaments of Levi and Naphtali before him; the rest of his material he drew from the traditions of the Book of Jubilees and the midrashim in order to preach his Christian ethics using the sons of Jacob as examples.” *Judaism Outside the Hebrew Canon* [Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1976], 144.)

of authorship, there is still an issue of date which cannot be solved within the parameters of this work. However, it must be sufficient for the present to assert that the text itself dates to around the second century BCE, and the Christian passages are merely interpolations added later.⁴⁷

Of specific interest to this work is one of the testaments attributed to Joseph, the full title of which reads: The Testament of Joseph, The Eleventh Son of Jacob and Rachel. In chapter 2, Joseph recounts his experience in the house of the Pharaoh when his brothers sold him into Egypt. In his recount to his posterity of the lessons he learned in prison we find the phrase “son of man.” According to a translation offered by R. H. Charles, the passage of interest (verse 5) is rendered: “For God is not put to shame as a man, Nor as the son of man (ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου) is he afraid, Nor as one that is earth-born is He [weak or] affrighted.”⁴⁸ We see in this passage that “the son of man” is associated with the “earth-born” and “man” in a general sense. The Greek is arguably similar to the Hebrew בן אדם and the Aramaic בר אנש and is nothing more than a textual allusion meant to distinguish between the superiority of a mighty God and the inferiority of lowly humanity. It is evident that any hint of a messianic context is lacking in connection with this “son of man.”

Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach

According to *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach is “a book of instruction and proverbs, written in Hebrew around 180 BCE in Jerusalem by an instructor of wealthy youths. It was later translated into Greek in Alexandria by the author's grandson sometime after 132 BCE.” Though Sirach 17 exists only in Greek, as far as we know, a brief discussion of the Hebrew fragments merits brief discussion in order to demonstrate that Hebrew was in fact the original language.

Until recently, Hebrew fragments of Sirach were only known in several rabbinic quotations.⁴⁹ Yet the Greek manuscripts survived to be utilized by Christians due to the book's presence in the Septuagint. Of note here are the Cairo Genizah manuscripts copied in the 10th–12th centuries CE. These manuscripts exist today because they were the work of a non-rabbinic Jewish group (the Karaites). The Hebrew manuscripts were placed in the storeroom (*genizah*) of the synagogue at Old Cairo and were rediscovered in 1896. As

47. This view is shared by Emil Schurer, *The Literature of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus* (New York: Schocken, 1973), 118–20 (cf. n. 45 in regards to debates about dating).

48. R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).

49. The original Hebrew was lost as a result of the rabbinic canon excluding it from their books. Despite this fact, some continued to reference it.

a result, we now have six Genizah manuscripts covering about two-thirds of Sirach; however, the Hebrew text is still missing for Sirach 1:1–3:5 and most of Sirach 16:27–30:10.

The other known Hebrew fragments of Sirach were found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Small, late first-century fragments of Sirach 6 were discovered in 1952 in Cave 2 of Qumran. Then, in 1956, excavators discovered in Cave 11 the Psalms scroll (dated to the early first century CE). The scroll contained half of Ben Sirach's concluding poem on wisdom (51:13–20). Arguably more significant is another discovery made at Masada in 1964 containing parts of six chapters of Sirach (39:27–44:17). This manuscript dates from the early first century BCE, only one hundred years after the original.⁵⁰

The section of interest is chapter 7, specifically verse 30, which is rendered in the NRSV as "For all things cannot be in men, since a son of man (ὁ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου) is not immortal." Immediately the reader can draw a connection between "a son of man" and "humanity" in light of the fact that both are not "immortal." Just as in the Testaments, we see that "son of man" is nothing more than a reference to humanity, demonstrating that as late as the first century BCE, the phrase "son of man" continued as a sort of metaphorical literary device and was utilized (similarly suggested in previous instances) as a reference to humanity's inferiority to God.

Pseudepigraphic Literature

Up to this point we have discussed instances of the phrase that demonstrate absolutely no messianic interests in the figure of the son of man. There has been no indication that an association had yet been established between a messianic deliverer and that of the man-like figure who came with the clouds of heaven. It is however not surprising that over time the concept would develop and evolve into a reference which could be associated and identified with God's anointed one. Many scholars have established that by the first century CE, messianic expectations, while quite diverse and varied, had been defined. E. W. Heaton supported this stance, expounding, "There is no evidence that the writer [of Daniel] even thought of a messianic leader . . . but when later such an interest did arise, it is understandable there should have been a close connection between (and therefore terminology common to) . . . the individual figure who came to be thought of as its principal and embodiment." Evidence of this "interest" in a later symbol for the Messiah can be noted in

50. See "Sirach," *NIDB* 5 (2005): 285–89 (esp. 289).

1 Enoch 37–41 and 4 Ezra 7:28 and 12:32.⁵¹ Let us examine these two works outside the context of the New Testament in order to shed some light and understanding on this issue.

*The Parables of Enoch*⁵²

1 Enoch is a text enveloped in conjecture and uncertainty. Known also as the Ethiopic book of Enoch, our interest lies in perhaps the most baffling of the sections known as the Parables. Like the title of the composite work insinuates, the only full manuscript preserved in its entirety is written in Gêez, or classical Ethiopic, the liturgical and canonical language of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Fragments of the other sections that make up the book of Enoch have indeed come down to us in small extracts of Latin, Coptic, and Syriac, along with some Aramaic fragments from Qumran and a substantial arsenal of Greek manuscripts. Unfortunately, however, the Ethiopic remains are the only witness to the text of the Parables.

Thus begins the conundrum. At least a thousand years of copying separates the earliest manuscripts of the Parables from its introduction into Ethiopia. This is based on the conjecture that the earliest Ethiopic manuscript of Enoch, Lake Tana 9, dates from the early fifteenth century.⁵³ This fact, along with the ample evidence of textual corruption, leads many scholars to suggest and support the theory that the Ethiopic text represents a translation of a translation. Darrell D. Hannah states, “We cannot be certain whether the original language of the Parables, as opposed to the other portions of Enoch, was Aramaic or Hebrew.”⁵⁴ Perhaps most interesting is the fact that upon comparing those

51. At this point, the phrase “son of man” has become a proper noun, a title of the divine figure. The son of man approaches a figure similar to the anointed of days, known in 4 Ezra as the obviously related “Head of Days.” The son of man comes out of the water upon the clouds of heaven (4 Ezra 13:3). He is made to sit upon the throne in place of the “Head of Days,” and all the kings and mighty men worship and adore him as he judges them (see 1 Enoch 61:8; 62:2, 5; 69:27–29). He is not only a royal figure closely related to the “Head of Days” but he is also the Messiah, the anointed one (1 Enoch 48:10; 52:4). Along with this, he is the Son. Scholars have often argued that Christians influenced or modified the aforementioned works in order to associate them with Jesus.

52. The following section and discussion is heavily indebted to Darrell D. Hannah, “The Elect Son of Man of the Parables of Enoch,” in LNTS 390, eds. Larry W. Hurtado and Paul L. Owen (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 130–58.

53. Other early manuscripts include EMLL 7584 (late 15th c.), Paris Abbadianus 55 (15–16th), EMLL 1768 (15–16th), EMLL 2080 (15–16th), British Library Or. 485 (early 16th), and Berlin Or. Petermann II, Nachtrag 29 (16th).

54. Hannah, “The Elect Son of Man,” 134. He expounds upon this statement by telling us that there is evidence (limited but not uncontroversial) that the Ethiopic translators had access to a Semitic *Vorlage*, as well as the Greek. For this same idea, see E. Ullendorf, “An Aramaic ‘Vorlage’ of the Ethiopic Text of Enoch?” in *Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Etiopici (Roma, 2–4 aprile 1959)* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1960),

portions of the book of Enoch which exist in Aramaic, Greek, and Ethiopic, we can see evidence of editing. In others words, the Greek and Ethiopic versions are not simple translations of the Aramaic, but rather, a reworking of it. In reality, we do not possess the original text, and some evidence proposes that the text we do have should be treated with caution and care.⁵⁵

The text of the first book of Enoch consists of five sections, with the Parables (1 En. 37-71) forming the second major section after the book of Watchers (6-36) and coming before the book of Heavenly Luminaries (72-82), the Dream Vision (83-90), and the Epistle of Enoch (91-105).⁵⁶ It is widely accepted that of these five sections, the Parables are regarded as the last to be written. As with many ancient texts, the exact date of composition is up for debate. Today, most place the Parables at the turn of the century (between first century BCE and first century CE).⁵⁷ Still, there are some that argue for a date later in the first century CE.⁵⁸ However, this idea is easily argued considering

259-67; and M. A. Knibb, "The Date of the Parables of Enoch: A Critical Review," *NTS* 25 (1978-79), 345-59 (esp. 351).

55. M. A. Knibb, "The Book of Enoch or Books of Enoch: The Textual Evidence for 1 Enoch," in *Essays on the Book of Enoch and Other Early Jewish Texts and Traditions*, SVTP 22 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 36-55 (esp. 44). He ultimately concludes, "The relationship between the Ethiopic and Greek on the one hand and the Aramaic on the other is not that of straight translation, but is rather comparable to that between the Hebrew of the Masoretic Text of Jeremiah and the Hebrew text that served as the *Vorlage* of the Greek of Jeremiah."

56. Knibb, "The Book of Enoch," 41, n. 23.

57. Scholars who maintain this view include: J. C. Greenfield and M. E. Stone, "The Enochic Pentateuch and the Date of the Similitudes," *HTR* 70 (1977), 51-65; M. E. Stone, "Enoch's Date in Limbo; or Some Considerations on David Suter's Analysis of the Book of Parables," in Boccaccini, *Enoch*, 444-49; G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah* (London: SCM, 1981), 221-23; J. H. Charlesworth, "Can We Discern the Composition Date of the Parables of Enoch?," in Boccaccini, *Enoch*, 450-68; G. Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Parting of the Ways Between Qumran and Enochic Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 144-49; cf. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 177-78, who would place the Parables in the early or mid-first century BCE.

58. E. G. Knibb, "The Date of the Parables," 358, argues for the end of the first century based on a theory proposed by Milik who pointed out the absence of any portion of the Parables in the eleven different copies of the book of Enoch, including the portions from Qumran. Suter is of a similar opinion placing the date of the Parables "as close as possible to the fall of Jerusalem." See D. W. Suter, "Enoch in Sheol: Updating the Dating of the Book of Enoch," in Boccaccini, *Enoch*, 415-43 (esp. 440). James Charlesworth writes, "This pseudigraph has evoked divergent opinions; but today there is a consensus that the book is a composite, portions of which are clearly pre-Christian as demonstrated by the discovery of Aramaic and Hebrew fragments from four of the five sections of the book among the Dead Sea Scrolls. One of these fragments, moreover, Hena, was copied in the second half of the second century B.C. The main question concerns the date of the second section, chapters 37-71, which contains the son of man sayings. J. T. Milik (esp. no. 755) has shown that this section, which is not represented among the early fragments, is probably a later addition to 1 Enoch; but his contention that it was composed around A.D. 270 (no. 755, p. 377) is very speculative. If, as most specialists concur, the early portions of 1 Enoch date from the first half of the second century B.C., chapters 37-71 could have been added in the first century

that only about five percent of the entire book of Enoch has been retained in the eleven Qumran manuscripts. Thus it does not aid one in establishing a credible argument in favor of a later date.⁵⁹ Not surprisingly, these very same “late dating” scholars claim that Christians influenced the content of the Parables. Michael Knibb, contending this idea, has stated, “given the subject matter of the Parables it seems very hard to understand the absence of clear references to Christ if the Parables are Christian.”⁶⁰

Thus we are left to consider the text, arguably under a Jewish context and outside of Christian influences. The parable of interest to us is found in 46:1–4,⁶¹ where the Parables seem to draw from, or at least, follow, a similar tradition as Daniel 7. Here Enoch beholds one who has “a head of days” (from here on he is referred to as “the Head of Days”) and with him, one who is described as having the appearance of a man and “a gracious face, like the angels.” Here the phrase “son of man” is introduced:

He answered and said to me: “This is the son of man who has righteousness, with whom dwells righteousness, and who reveals all the treasures of that which is hidden, because the Lord of the spirits has chosen him, and whose lot has the pre-eminence before the Lord of the spirits in uprightness for ever. This son of man whom you have seen shall raise up the kings and the mighty from their seats and the strong from their thrones, and shall loosen the reins of the strong and break the teeth of the sinners. (1 Enoch 46:3–4)

Throughout the parables (69:27 being the exception) the expression is rendered “this/that son of man” or “the son of man who . . .” It should be noted that in classical Ethiopic (which we have reasoned to be the original language of the text) there is no definite article,⁶² thus the demonstratives “this” and “that,” are utilized. The phrase “son of man” used most frequently is also used in the Ethiopic Bible to translate “one like a son of man” in Daniel 7:13 (and later the son of man sayings in the New Testament). In the context of the final judgment, the hiddenness of the son of man is discussed, as well as his

B.C. or first century A.D. The original language of 1 Enoch appears to be Aramaic, except for the Noah traditions, which were probably composed in Hebrew. The earliest portions display impressive parallels with the nascent thoughts of the Jewish sect which eventually settled at Qumran.” (*The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research* [Chico, CA: Scholars Press for SBL, 1981], 98.)

59. Stone, “Enoch’s Date in Limbo,” 446.

60. Knibb, “The Date of the Parables,” 350.

61. I have not attempted here to survey all of the references to the son of man or the passages that seem to allude to Daniel 7 in the Parables of 1 Enoch. For this reason it is worthy to note that, in addition to 46:1–4, such imagery appears in 48:2; 62:5, 7, 9, 14; 63:11; 69:27, 29; 70:1; and 71:14, 17.

62. See Stefan Weninger, ed., *The Semitic Languages, The International Handbook* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 169–70.

revelation to the chosen one (62:7). There are obvious connections to Daniel 7, especially in chapters 46–48.

At this point it is important to note the other potential Old Testament sources for the text, which include Psalm 2 and Isaiah 11, 42, 49, 52 and 53.⁶³ Through the utilization of this additional material the anonymous writer creates a composite figure consisting of the one like a son of man, the Davidic King, and the Lord's servant found in the pseudepigraphic text of Second Isaiah. The connection among these three figures tentatively suggests that the author intended to take the man-like figure of Daniel 7 and describe him in language borrowed from Davidic royal oracles and Deutero-Isaianic texts about the servant of the Lord. It should be noted, however, that in 1 Enoch, this "son of man" is not the bearer of God's eternal kingdom like he is bequeathed in Daniel 7. He is seated on the divine throne of glory in order to execute judgment (see 69:27–29). Thus we see this transformation from Daniel's "one like a son of man," a metaphorical literary device, into a messianic title⁶⁴ of "this/that son of man" of the Parables, who executes the judgement of God among his people. Whether it is meant to be messianic or simply an apocalyptic figure whose coming represented the onset of God's reckoning cannot be determined, and opinions may vary, but what we can safely say is that by 1 Enoch the phrase becomes a title for a specific individual associated with deity and the end of days.

4 Ezra (2 Esdras)

Since the phrase *בן אדם* does not appear in 4 Ezra, and there is also extensive debate on whether it was heavily influenced by Christian writers, many scholars may find the inclusion of this source a bit superfluous and misplaced. I would argue to the contrary, but proceeding with a certain level of caution is a must. I assert that from portions of the text, which profess a lack of Christian influences, we can see that the man-like figure, which was previously

63. George W. E. Nickelsburg, "Son of Man," *ABD* 6 (1991): 137–40.

64. According to Nickelsburg in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, this author employs language from the servant passages and royal oracles, "in order to describe this function, which Daniel does not attribute to the 'one like a son of man.' It is this goal to convey this function that underlies a dramatic shift in intent." Here it is important to note the landmark work of Ulrich B. Muller's *Messias und Menschensohn in jüdischen Apokalypsen und in der Offenbarung des Johannes* from 1972. Muller claims that the concept of the son of man first emerges in 1 Enoch through the personification of God's intervention in the last days in the figure of 'the Elected' being connected with the man-like of Dan. 7.13. He isolates as secondary concerns 1 Enoch 48.10 and 52.4, where the designation 'the Anointed' was introduced, similar to 1 Enoch 71. While I do not entirely agree with him, Muller ultimately concludes that 1 Enoch remains the only true witness to a special son of man concept (see pp. 38–43, 107–55, and 157–216).

associated with messianic expectations in 1 Enoch, is now individualized and specified as a single entity.⁶⁵

An allusion to the figure of Daniel 7:13–14 is established in the identification of a man in a vision “kept for ages by the Most High to deliver His creation” with the Messiah, who takes his stand on the Mount of Zion and burns up Israel’s enemies (4 Ezra 12:26; 13:33–38, 52). The first instance in which we see a reference to the son of man specifically is in 4 Ezra 13:3 where we read, “And I looked and beheld, the wind made something like the figure of a man come up out of the heart of the sea, and I looked and beheld that the man flew with the clouds of heaven.” While the text does not explicitly read “one like a son of man,” the connection to and potential influence of Daniel 7 is undeniable. We see the man-like figure that, in this case, “flew with the clouds of heaven” and is later referred to in the same chapter by the Most High God as “My Son . . . as a man coming up from the sea” (13:32). Thus we see this man-like figure, who is called the Son of God, take on the role of the Messiah as judge of all the world, for God tells Ezra, “And he, my Son, will reprove the assembled nations for their ungodliness and will reproach them to their face with their evil thoughts and the torments with which they are to be tortured, and will destroy them without effort by the law” (13:37–38).⁶⁶

Therefore, we can deduce that the “man” of 4 Ezra, though not explicitly mentioned, is not merely a duplication of “one like a son of man” of Daniel 7. As we saw with 1 Enoch, by 4 Ezra the phrase has taken on distinctive features, and this is the peak of the tradition: a messianic figure which has been saved to judge the world, ultimately destroying the wicked and rewarding the righteous. As we mentioned previously, the son of man has become an individual figure in contrast to the abstract entity of Daniel. We see also that the attributive adjective that was Daniel’s son of man has transformed into a title by 1 Enoch and is confirmed by the text of 4 Ezra. Finally, in both texts it is evident

65. For scholars who express similar sentiments regarding 1 Enoch and 4 Ezra, see J. Bowman, “The Background of the Term ‘Son of Man’ in the Old Biblical Literature,” *ET* 60 (1948–49): 11–15 (see 13–15); Pierre Grelot, “Le Messie dans les Apocryphes de l’Ancien Testament. Etat de la question,” in *La Venue du Messie. Messianisme et Eschatologie*, ed. Edouard Massaux (Bruges: Deschlee de Brouwer, 1962), 19–50; F. M. Wilson, “The son of man in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature,” *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 8 (1978): 28–52 (38–49); Barnabas Lindars, “Enoch and Christology,” *ET* 92 (1980–81): 295–299; C. K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of John* (1984), 108–112; James C. VanderKam, “Daniel 7 in the Similitudes of Enoch (1 Enoch 37–71),” in *Biblical Traditions in Transmission*, eds. Charlotte Hempel and Judith Lieu (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 291–307.

66. For a support of my argument regarding 4 Ezra and the son of man, see Sheldon, *Jesus, Fourth Ezra*, 45–86 (esp. 85–86).

that the "son of man" has grown from an ambiguous reference to a specific designation for the Messiah.

Conclusion: Implications for the Debate

The question remains: how does a reconsideration of Daniel 7 contribute to the volumes of scholarship that already exist? The main goal of my paper is to provide a more thoughtful survey of "one like a son of man" in its original Jewish context that would aid scholars in their study of the extant evidence. Rather than persisting in looking for new and unconsidered possibilities, we need to reexamine what we have previously explored. In reflecting back on what has been done and looking forward to what will be accomplished in regards to the son of man phrase, scholars need to be careful to not let tradition and popular ideas convolute their thinking and perceptions of the issues.

In future studies I believe that my discussion of Daniel will aid in surveys on the "son of man" phrase attributed to Jesus by the Gospel writers. While there is not room to discuss the many facets of the controversy, it is important to note that as we move forward with an understanding of Daniel's "son of man" acting as a literary device and not a messianic symbol, it will be far easier to reconstruct the original intent of the later Gospel writers, who wrote about a Jewish peasant who came to be known by the Christians as not only a Jewish Messiah but also a Savior to all the world. Perhaps, in so doing, we will be one step closer in reconciling the Jesus of faith with the Jesus of history and ultimately unlocking the key to the man that was the historical Jesus of Nazareth.