

BENJAMIN E. REYNOLDS

The Apocalyptic  
Son of Man  
in the Gospel of John

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen  
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

249

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**Mohr Siebeck**

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Benjamin E. Reynolds

The Apocalyptic Son of Man  
in the Gospel of John

Mohr Siebeck

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*For my dearest Lizzie*



## Preface

This work is a revised version of my doctoral thesis completed at the University of Aberdeen in 2007. In the early stages of my doctoral research on the Gospel of John, when the words ‘Son of Man’ first came up in discussion with my supervisor, my initial response was to avoid them at all costs. Thankfully, I did not and since then I have had the opportunity to wade into the midst of this perennial New Testament problem. It has proven to be a fruitful experience of research and learning.

This thesis would not have been possible without the guidance, advice, and encouragement of numerous people. I would like to thank my thesis examiners Dr Catrin H. Williams and Dr Peter J. Williams for their critiques and penetrating questions. They challenged me at a number of points and helped me to clarify my argument, for which I am grateful. I am also grateful to Dr Simon Gathercole for his excellent supervision and direction, and more importantly, for his friendship. Joey Dodson and Preston Sprinkle deserve many thanks for reading and critiquing the bulk of this thesis at various stages of writing. Thanks to their watchful eyes some of what they read is mercifully not included here.

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I could not have completed my doctoral study without financial support. I would like to thank the Panacea Society for two generous grants (2005–2006 and 2006–2007) and also to my grandfather Philip Reynolds for his seemingly boundless generosity.

My parents Roger and Melissa Reynolds and my parents-in-law Don and Joan Fothergill have been behind me from the beginning and have encouraged us along this journey in numerous ways. Their visits with us in Aberdeen are cherished memories.

And most importantly, I want to thank my wife Lizzie, to whom this study is dedicated. You are my best friend. Thank you for all your love, support, encouragement, and sacrifice during this whole process. I could not have done this without you...nor would I have wanted to. Thanks for filling my gaps. How I love you.

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## Introduction

# The Apocalyptic Son of Man in the Gospel of John

Jesus' titles in the four Gospels have played an important part in discussions of early Christology,<sup>1</sup> and while Jesus' titles are not the only way in which New Testament Christology can be approached,<sup>2</sup> they communicate some of what the early Christians believed about Jesus. The title 'Son of Man' is one of these Christological titles, and its origin and meaning have continued to vex NT scholarship. From where does this title originate? What did it mean to the people of first century Palestine? Was 'Son of Man' thought of as a title before the Gospel writers used it? What did it mean to Jesus? Was there such a thing as an established 'Son of Man concept'? Does 'Son of Man' refer to the 'one like a son of man' from Dan 7.13–14 or does it mean 'a human being' or 'one like me'? The issues illustrated by these questions constitute what is called the Son of Man problem. Although scholars have even debated whether or not the Son of Man problem can be solved,<sup>3</sup> the questions concerning the Son of Man sayings never cease to be asked in NT scholarship.<sup>4</sup> The meaning of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ

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<sup>1</sup> O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (S.C. Guthrie and C.A.M. Hall, trans.; London: SCM, 1959); F. Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology: Their History in Early Christianity* (H. Knight and G. Ogg, trans.; London: Lutterworth, 1969); J.D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: An Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (London: SCM, 1989<sup>2</sup>). Cf. W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus* (J.E. Steely, trans.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1970); L.W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> See R. Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> A.J.B. Higgins, 'Is the Son of Man Problem Soluble?' in E.E. Ellis and M. Wilcox (eds.), *Neotestamentica et Semitica. Studies in honour of Matthew Black* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1969) 70–87; M.D. Hooker, 'Is the Son of Man Problem Really Insoluble?' in E. Best and R. McL. Wilson (eds.), *Text and Interpretation: Studies in the New Testament presented to Matthew Black* (Cambridge: CUP, 1979) 155–68; D. Burkett, *The Son of Man Debate: A History and Evaluation* (SNTS.MS 107; Cambridge: CUP, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> See most recently A.R. Angel, *Chaos and the Son of Man: The Hebrew Chaoskampf Tradition in the Period 515 BCE to 200 CE* (LSTS 60; London: T&T Clark, 2006) and M. Casey, *The Solution to the Son of Man Problem* (LNTS 343; London: T&T Clark, 2007).

ἀνθρώπου for the historical Jesus is a question that will continue to be debated.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, the Son of Man sayings in John's Gospel are often neglected in the Son of Man debate, mainly because the Gospel of John is not considered historical.<sup>6</sup> Although the Gospel of John may not hold the key to the Son of Man problem, the Johannine use of the 'Son of Man' title is important for Johannine Christology. For this reason, the following study is unconcerned with the Son of Man problem. Rather, it is an attempt to examine the portrayal and interpretation of the Son of Man title within the framework of John's Gospel and to determine the significance of the title for Johannine Christology.

## 1. Previous Research on the Son of Man in the Gospel of John

Compared to the study of the Son of Man in the Synoptic Gospels, the study of the Johannine Son of Man is a relatively recent development in critical scholarship. As recently as forty years ago, introductions to studies of the Johannine Son of Man noted the dearth of published secondary literature.<sup>7</sup> Since that time, the situation has changed significantly with a no-

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<sup>5</sup> For further study on the Son of Man problem see Burkett, *Debate*.

<sup>6</sup> H.E. Tödt, *The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition* (D.M. Barton, trans.; London: SCM, 1965); Hahn, *Titles*, 15–67. In Casey's first book on the Son of Man, John 1.51 and 5.27 are the only Johannine sayings discussed (M. Casey, *Son of Man: The Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7* [London: SPCK, 1979] 197–99; cf. M. Müller, *Der Ausdruck "Menschensohn" in den Evangelien. Voraussetzungen und Bedeutung* [Leiden: Brill, 1984]). See M. Casey, *Is John's Gospel True?* (Routledge: London, 1996); M.M. Thompson, 'The Historical Jesus and the Johannine Christ', in R.A. Culpepper and C.C. Black (eds.), *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996) 21–42. Note the recent discussions of the historicity of John in F.J. Moloney, 'The Fourth Gospel and the Jesus of History', *NTS* 46 (2000) 42–58; C.L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues and Commentary* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 2001); P.N. Anderson, *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus: Modern Foundations Reconsidered* (LNTS 321; London: T&T Clark, 2006); P.N. Anderson, F. Just, T. Thatcher (eds.), *John, Jesus, and History, Volume 1: A Critical Appraisal of Critical Views* (Atlanta: SBL, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John* (3 vols.; Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1967) 1.529; S.S. Smalley, 'The Johannine Son of Man Sayings', *NTS* 15 (1969) 278–301; B. Lindars, 'The Son of Man in the Johannine Christology', in B. Lindars and S.S. Smalley (eds.), *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament: Studies in Honour of Charles Francis Digby Moule* (Cambridge: CUP, 1973) 43–60; R. Maddox, 'The Function of the Son of Man in the Gospel of John', in R. Banks (ed.), *Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 186–204; F.J. Moloney, *The Johannine Son of Man* (Biblioteca di Scienze Religiose 14; Rome: LAS, 1978<sup>2</sup>) 1. Cf. H. Dieckmann, '„Der Sohn des Menschen“ im Jo-

table growth in the secondary literature during the late 1960s and 1970s, and this growth resulted in numerous opinions on both the origin and the meaning of John's Son of Man. Scholars who generally agree on the origin of the Johannine use of the title do not always agree on its Christological meaning.

The following survey of previous scholarship on the 'Son of Man' in the Gospel of John has been arranged according to four broad Christological categories: (1) the title 'Son of Man' as highlighting the humanity of Jesus; (2) 'Son of Man' as a sort of divine-Man, drawing attention to both Jesus' humanity and divinity; (3) 'Son of Man' as synonymous with 'Son of God'; (4) 'Son of Man' as a heavenly or divine figure. For the purposes of clarity and succinctness, each category is represented by a single scholar, but subcategories and nuances within these Christological categories are also noted.

### 1.1. 'Son of Man' and Jesus' Humanity

The Johannine use of the expression 'Son of Man' is commonly understood by not a few scholars as a reference to Jesus' humanity. One of the more influential proponents of this view is Francis J. Moloney, who wrote the first major English monograph on the Son of Man in the Gospel of John. In a conscious attempt to avoid placing too much emphasis on the possible origins of the title 'Son of Man',<sup>8</sup> Moloney concentrates primarily on the narrative context of the Son of Man sayings and the Christology of the Gospel of John. As the first study of its kind, it provides an excellent examination of the Johannine Son of Man sayings in their context. Throughout his thesis, Moloney argues that the Son of Man is the unique revealer of God who has come down from heaven and whose revelation causes people to judge themselves. However, Moloney understands this revelation to take place through the Son of Man as a human among humanity. This understanding leads him to conclude: 'The Johannine Son of Man is the human Jesus, the incarnate Logos; he has come to reveal God with a unique authority and in the acceptance or refusal of this revelation the

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hannesevangelium', *Scholastik* 2 (1927) 229–47; F.J. Moloney, 'The Johannine Son of Man Revisited', in G. Van Belle, J.G. van der Watt, and P. Maritz (eds.), *Theology and Christology in the Fourth Gospel: Essays by the Members of the SNTS Johannine Writings Seminar* (BETL 184; Leuven: Leuven University, 2005) 177–202.

<sup>8</sup> See Moloney's comments in 'A Johannine Son of Man Discussion?' *Salesianum* 39 (1977) 93–102: 'Very often scholars – perhaps under the spell of the debate over the Synoptic Son of Man – delve into the background of John's use of the term. This is a legitimate and necessary course of research, but it pays too little attention to the Christology involved in the "putting together" of the various elements which may have formed the text as we have it now.'

world judges itself.’<sup>9</sup> For Moloney, Jesus’ humanity is so much the meaning of the expression ‘Son of Man’ that he can say that the title is ‘entirely dependent upon the incarnation’.<sup>10</sup>

Although Moloney does not focus on the possible origins of the Son of Man title in his study, he does contend that the ‘one like a son of man’ from Daniel 7 stands in the background, but he understands this background as having been reinterpreted by John via the Synoptic portrait of the Son of Man.<sup>11</sup> Other scholars who argue that the Johannine use of ‘Son of Man’ highlights Jesus’ humanity find the background for this meaning in Psalms 8 and 80, Ezekiel, and/or the Wisdom tradition.<sup>12</sup> Rather than seeing a reference to Jesus’ humanity, some scholars maintain that the title draws attention more specifically to Jesus’ earthly life and ministry,<sup>13</sup> to his representative or ideal humanity,<sup>14</sup> or his role as a human prophet.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Moloney, *Johannine*, 220; *idem*, ‘Revisited’, 200.

<sup>10</sup> Moloney, *Johannine*, 213; cf. 180–81. See also E.A. Abbott, *“The Son of Man” or Contributions to the Study of the Thoughts of Jesus* (Cambridge: CUP, 1910) 407–563 [§3374–§3477]; E.M. Sidebottom, ‘The Son of Man as Man in the Fourth Gospel’, *ExpT* 68 (1957) 231–35, 280–83; *idem*, ‘The Ascent and Descent of the Son of Man in the Gospel of St. John’, *ATHR* 39 (1957) 115–22; *idem*, *The Christ of the Fourth Gospel in Light of First-Century Thought* (London: SPCK, 1961); E. Ruckstuhl, ‘Die johanneische Menschensohnforschung 1957–1969’, in J. Pfammatter and F. Furger (eds.), *Theologische Berichte 1* (Zurich: Benziger, 1972) 171–284; *idem*, ‘Abstieg und Erhöhung des johanneischen Menschensohns’, in R. Pesch and R. Schnackenburg (eds.), *Jesus und der Menschensohn. Für Anton Vögtle* (Freiburg: Herder, 1975) 315–41; J. Coppens, ‘Le fils de l’homme dans l’évangile johannique’, *ETL* 52 (1976) 28–81; C. Colpe, ‘ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου’, *TDNT*, VIII.400–81; D.R.A. Hare, *The Son of Man Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 79–111; G.W.E. Nickelsburg, ‘Son of Man’, *ABD* 6.137–50; Casey, *Solution*, 274–313.

<sup>11</sup> Moloney, *Johannine*, 220.

<sup>12</sup> See Abbott, *Son of Man*, 427, 464–74; Sidebottom, ‘Son of Man’, 232, 234; *idem*, ‘Ascent’, 117; *idem*, *Christ*, 84–96; R. Rhea, *The Johannine Son of Man* (ATHANT 76; Zürich: Theologischer, 1990) 70.

<sup>13</sup> E. Kinniburgh, ‘The Johannine “Son of Man”’, *SE* 4 (= TU 102) (F.L. Cross, ed.; Berlin: Akademie, 1968) 64–71; B. Lindars, *Jesus Son of Man: A Fresh Examination of the Son of Man Sayings in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984; first pub. London: SPCK, 1983) 145–57. J.L. Martyn (*History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003<sup>3</sup>] 125–36) seems to understand ‘Son of Man’ to refer to Jesus’ existence on earth based on his positive quotation of E. Käsemann (*The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17* [G. Krodel, trans.; London: SCM, 1968] 13), but Martyn’s view must be understood within the context of his ‘two-level drama’.

<sup>14</sup> C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: CUP, 1953, 1968) 43–44, 243; Smalley, ‘Sayings’, 278–301; M. Pamment, ‘The Son of Man in the Fourth Gospel’, *JTS* 36 (1985) 56–66; F.F. Ramos, ‘El hijo del hombre en el cuarto evangelio’, *Studium Legionense* 40 (1999) 45–92. See also W.H. Cadman, *The Open Heaven: The Revelation of God in the Johannine Sayings of Jesus* (G.B. Caird, ed.; Oxford: Blackwell,

As we will see throughout the course of this study, there are a number of difficulties faced by the view that the title ‘Son of Man’ in the Gospel of John emphasizes Jesus’ humanity. Most significantly, the scholars who hold this view are often silent about Jesus’ humanity in John 9.35 when Jesus asks: ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’ Another difficulty involves the Son of Man’s ascent and descent. For, how can the Son of Man descend from heaven if the title is concerned with Jesus’ humanity or earthly life? The Gospel of John seems to indicate that there is some sort of heavenly or divine aspect to this figure (cf. 3.13).

### 1.2. The Son of Man as Human and Divine

Some scholars have rightly recognized the heavenly connotation of the ‘Son of Man’ title in the Gospel of John, but they also claim that the title retains a human implication.<sup>16</sup> In a lengthy article, the French scholar Théo Preiss argues that ‘Son of Man’ is the unifying feature of Johannine Christology and is synonymous with ‘Son’. However, Preiss maintains that *le sens primitif* of ‘Son of Man’, along with an ‘inclusive’ or representative aspect of the title, signifies that the Johannine Son of Man is the divine Man.<sup>17</sup> It is the Johannine Son of Man’s representation of humanity in heaven before God that indicates his divine and human nature.<sup>18</sup> Preiss states: ‘En tant que Fils de l’Homme préexistant, il est non seulement chef des anges, de toute la création, il est l’Homme divin, le seul homme qui mérite ce nom!’<sup>19</sup>

Preiss and others who insist that ‘Son of Man’ in the Gospel of John communicates a divine and human aspect of this figure correctly recognize the divine connotation of the title.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, this view still main-

1969) 41; W. Wink, “‘The Son of the Man’ in the Gospel of John”, in R.T. Fortna and T. Thatcher (eds.), *Jesus in the Johannine Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001) 117–23. Cf. Abbott, *Son of Man*, 427.

<sup>15</sup> Rhea, *Johannine*, 36, 43; J. Guillet, ‘Le Fils de l’homme: Titre eschatologique ou mission prophétique?’ *RSR* 88.4 (2000) 615–38. A fifth human category could include the view of Müller (*Ausdruck*, 247–60), who maintains that the expression ‘Son of Man’ originally functioned as a paraphrase for the speaker. Cf. Hare, *Son of Man*, 79–111.

<sup>16</sup> Sidebottom (‘Son of Man’, 283), Nickelsburg (‘Son of Man’, 146–47), Ramos (‘Hijo, 52, 68), and Wink (‘Son of the Man’, 123) argue primarily for the human meaning of ‘Son of Man’ but allow for some sort of divine meaning.

<sup>17</sup> T. Preiss, ‘Le fils de l’homme dans le IV<sup>e</sup> Évangile’, *ETR* 28 (1953) 7–61. See also T. Preiss, *Life in Christ* (H. Knight, trans.; SBT 13; London: SCM, 1954) 43–60.

<sup>18</sup> Preiss, ‘Fils de l’homme’, 17–18.

<sup>19</sup> Preiss, ‘Fils de l’homme’, 58.

<sup>20</sup> Dieckmann, ‘Sohn des Menschen’, 242, 247; J. Héring, *Le Royaume de Dieu et sa Venue. Étude sur l’espérance de Jésus et l’apôtre Paul* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1959<sup>2</sup>) 254–57; F.H. Borsch, *The Son of Man in Myth and History* (Philadelphia: West-

tains that ‘Son of Man’ has a human nuance. As mentioned above, this human meaning has a number of difficulties that will be addressed in the course of this thesis.

### 1.3. ‘Son of Man’ as equivalent to ‘Son of God’

A third understanding of John’s use of ‘Son of Man’ explains the title as equivalent to ‘Son of God’.<sup>21</sup> The most substantial argument for this synonymy between the titles ‘Son of Man’ and ‘Son of God’ is made by Delbert Burkett.<sup>22</sup> Focusing on the ascent-descent theme, Burkett asserts that Prov 30.1–4 serves as the background for the Johannine Son of Man sayings because of the combination of the words ‘ascend’ and ‘descend’ in the passage. Based on re-vocalization of the Hebrew text and some help from the Greek version of Proverbs, Burkett posits that Prov 30.1–4 presents the words of a father (‘the Man’), whom Burkett understands as God, to his son (‘the son of *the* Man’) who is thus ‘the Son of God’. He translates Prov 30.1 and 30.4 as follows:

Store up my words, my son, receive the oracle [אָנֹכִי בְּיָדֶיךָ הַמְּשֵׁשׂא] says the Man to Ithiel (‘God is with me’) [אֲנִי אִתְּךָ הַגִּבֹּר לְאִתְּיָאֵל], to ‘God is with me so that I am able’ [לְאִתְּיָאֵל וְאֶבְלֵ]...Who has ascended to heaven and descended? Who has gathered wind in his garments? Who has wrapped water in a mantle? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name and what is his son’s name? For you know.<sup>23</sup>

Burkett then argues that in Prov 30.4 only God and his son (‘the son of *the* Man’) can accomplish the ascent and descent.

For Burkett, John 3.13 is ‘the key to understanding the origin and meaning of the expression “the Son of the Man” as it is used in the Fourth Gospel’,<sup>24</sup> and he claims that Jesus’ statement about ascent and descent in John 3.13 is a reference to the ‘Son of the Man’ in Proverbs 30 (cf. Gen 28.12;

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minster, 1967); E. Harris, *Prologue and Gospel: The Theology of the Fourth Evangelist* (JSNT.S 107; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994) 116–29. Cf. C. Ham, ‘The Title “Son of Man” in the Gospel of John’, *Stone-Campbell Journal* 1 (1998) 67–84; J.F. McGrath, *John’s Apologetic Christology: Legitimation and Development in Johannine Christology* (SNTS.MS 111; Cambridge: CUP, 2001).

<sup>21</sup> Some of the scholars who contend that ‘Son of Man’ draws attention to Jesus’ humanity have not found this view to be incompatible with synonymy between the titles ‘Son of Man’ and ‘Son of God’. See Dieckmann, ‘Sohn des Menschen’, 246–47; Preiss, ‘Fils de l’homme’, 9, 13, 18; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 244; Sidebottom, ‘Son of Man’, 283; Cadman, *Open Heaven*, 41; Wink, ‘Son of the Man’, 120. Cf. Borsch, *Son of Man*, 258.

<sup>22</sup> D. Burkett, *The Son of the Man in the Gospel of John* (JSNT.S 56; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991). Burkett has been followed by H. Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium* (HNT 6; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

<sup>23</sup> Burkett, *Son of the Man*, 51. The Hebrew listed is from the BHS. Burkett makes some emendations to the text and re-vocalizes some of the letters.

<sup>24</sup> Burkett, *Son of the Man*, 76.

Isa 55).<sup>25</sup> Because Burkett understands ‘the Man’ of Prov 30.1–4 as God, he maintains that the titles ‘Son of *the* Man’ and ‘Son of God’ are synonymous.

It is worth noting briefly two of the difficulties with Burkett’s position. Even if his exegesis of Prov 30.1–4 is correct and if there is some connection with the ascent and descent in John 3.13, Burkett is unable to show the relevance of Proverbs 30 for the rest of the Son of Man sayings in the Gospel of John.<sup>26</sup> Secondly, Burkett dismisses Dan 7.13–14 and 4 Ezra 13 as possible backgrounds for the ‘Son of Man’ title on the grounds that ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου is not found in either of these texts, but neither is the phrase ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου found in the Greek text of Prov 30.1–4.<sup>27</sup>

Although Burkett’s argument for synonymy is more complicated than some and is based on a distinctive background, he is not alone in arguing that the Gospel of John’s Son of Man Christology is equivalent to its Son of God Christology.<sup>28</sup> Those who equate the titles ‘Son of Man’ and ‘Son of God’ correctly recognize the heavenly nature of the Johannine Son of Man, but although ‘Son of Man’ and ‘Son of God’ are found in similar contexts and their meanings may overlap, the two titles have different implications that will become more obvious as this study progresses.

#### 1.4 The Son of Man as a Heavenly Figure

The final category to discuss includes those scholars who maintain that the Johannine Son of Man is a heavenly or divine figure. In the most recent monograph on the Johannine Son of Man, Markus Sasse grounds the Son of Man Christology in the situation of the Johannine community and argues that it was important for their identity, especially as an answer to Jewish accusations of ditheism and as an answer to questions about Jesus’ identity and death.<sup>29</sup> Against this background, Sasse argues that the Johan-

<sup>25</sup> Burkett, *Son of the Man*, 49–50.

<sup>26</sup> See a similar critique by R. Bauckham, Review of Delbert Burkett, *The Son of the Man in the Gospel of John*, *EvQ* 65 (1993) 266–68.

<sup>27</sup> The Hebrew word that Burkett translates as ‘the Man’ is אֱנוֹשׁ and not אָדָם or אִנְשׁ. In the Greek text of Proverbs, the word used is ὁ ἀνὴρ.

<sup>28</sup> See E.D. Freed, ‘The Son of Man in the Fourth Gospel’, *JBL* 86 (1967) 402–9; A.J.B. Higgins, *Jesus and the Son of Man* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964) 153–84, 202; R. Schnackenburg, ‘Der Menschensohn im Johannesevangelium’, *NTS* 11 (1964–65) 123–37; *idem*, *Gospel*, 1.527–42, 1.543–57; S. Kim, ‘The “Son of Man” as the Son of God (WUNT 30; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983); R.E. Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John* (F.J. Moloney, ed.; New York: Doubleday, 2003). Cf. M.C. de Boer (*Johannine Perspectives on the Death of Jesus* [CBET 17; Kampen: Pharos, 1996] 102–5, 147–217) who seems to affirm some sort of synonymy between ‘Son of Man’ and ‘Son of God’.

<sup>29</sup> M. Sasse, *Der Menschensohn im Evangelium nach Johannes* (TANZ 35; Tübingen, Basel: Francke, 2000).

nine Son of Man is a heavenly figure whose primary functions are life-giving and judgment. He argues further that the 'Son' Christology is the dominant Christology of the Gospel and that 'Son of Man' interprets 'Son' and often serves as a corrective to incorrect Christological understanding.<sup>30</sup>

In distinction from the current study, Sasse understands the origin of the Johannine Son of Man to derive from a number of backgrounds. For example, the Son of Man's function as judge derives from Daniel 7, the 'lifting up' sayings from the 'martyr-theology', and the ascent-descent sayings from OT theophanies.<sup>31</sup> In order to describe the Son of Man figure as heavenly, Sasse maintains that the origin of the Johannine Son of Man is found in these various traditions, rather than focusing primarily on the Danielic and apocalyptic background of 'Son of Man'.

Further, Sasse does not argue for a thoroughgoing apocalyptic Son of Man in John's Gospel. His argument that the Johannine Son of Man is a heavenly figure depends almost solely upon the Son of Man sayings in 3.13 and 6.25–59.<sup>32</sup> Sasse relegates the 'lifting-up' and glorification sayings to one chapter and gives little discussion to 8.28 and 13.31–32. In addition, his chapters on 1.51, 5.27, and 9.35 are noticeably slim. The apocalyptic background of the Johannine Son of Man is more evident in each of the Johannine Son of Man sayings than Sasse's discussion indicates.

As with Sasse, some other scholars make a case for a heavenly Son of Man by combining traditional apocalyptic works (i.e., Daniel 7, the Similitudes of Enoch, and 4 *Ezra*) with other backgrounds that have a different center of gravity (e.g., Wisdom traditions,<sup>33</sup> Moses' Sinai ascent,<sup>34</sup> etc.<sup>35</sup>). There are other scholars, however, who locate the origin of the heavenly

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<sup>30</sup> Sasse, *Menschensohn*, 247, 258–62.

<sup>31</sup> Sasse, *Menschensohn*, 173–74, 241. Sasse neither sufficiently explains nor defends this 'martyr-theology'.

<sup>32</sup> Together his chapters on John 3.13 and 6.25–59 take up 134 pages of the 166 total on the Johannine Son of Man sayings.

<sup>33</sup> H.-M. Dion, 'Quelques traits originaux de la conception johannique du Fils de l'Homme', *ScEcccl* 19 (1967) 49–65; R.G. Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence, Wisdom, and the Son of Man: A Study of the Idea of Pre-Existence in the New Testament* (SNTS.MS 21; Cambridge: CUP, 1973) 224–41.

<sup>34</sup> P. Borgen, 'Some Jewish Exegetical Traditions as Background for Son of Man Sayings in John's Gospel (Jn 3, 13–14 and context)', in M. de Jonge (ed.), *L'Évangile de Jean* (Gembloux, Belgium: Duculot, 1977) 243–58.

<sup>35</sup> J.-A. Bühner, *Der Gesandte und sein Weg im 4. Evangelium* (WUNT 2.2; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1977) 374–99, 422–29; W. Roth, 'Jesus as the Son of Man: The Scriptural Identity of a Johannine Image', in D.E. Groh and R. Jewett (eds.), *The Living Text: Essays in Honor of Ernest W. Saunders* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985) 11–26.

Son of Man mainly in apocalyptic literature,<sup>36</sup> but they make this argument on the basis of a relatively few Johannine Son of Man sayings, namely 1.51; 3.13; and/or 5.27.<sup>37</sup> Although the heavenly nature of the Johannine Son of Man has been correctly recognized by these scholars, they fail to see ‘Son of Man’ as either originating principally in apocalyptic literature or that the apocalyptic depiction of the Johannine Son of Man is apparent in each of the Johannine Son of Man sayings and not only in a few of them.<sup>38</sup>

### 1.5 Conclusion to History of Research

Previously, the argument for the Johannine Son of Man’s apocalyptic nature has largely depended upon a few Son of Man sayings (1.51; 3.13; and/or 5.27). Further, those who focus mainly on John 5.27 point to the theme of judgment in Daniel 7 and *1 Enoch* 62 and 69 as the main evidence for an apocalyptic background. This argument is a weak support on which to hang the entire claim that John’s Son of Man is apocalyptic. Some, like Burkett, who disagree with the idea of an apocalyptic Son of

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<sup>36</sup> S. Schulz, *Untersuchungen zur Menschensohn-Christologie im Johannesevangelium. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Methodengeschichte der Auslegung des 4. Evangeliums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957); J. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: OUP, 1991) 337–73; J. Painter, ‘The Enigmatic Johannine Son of Man’, in F. Van Segbroeck, C.M. Tuckett, G. Van Belle, and J. Verheyden (eds.), *Four Gospels 1992. Festschrift Frans Neirynck* (BETL 100; 3 vols.; Louvain: Peeters, 1992) 1869–87. Almost simultaneously with Schulz, Ch. de Beus (‘Het Gebruik en de Betekenis van de Uitdrukking „De Zoon des Mensen” in het Evangelie van Johannes’, *NedTT* 10 [1955–56] 237–51) made the case that the Son of Man title is primarily a messianic title with no obvious earthly or heavenly aspects, but he hinted at the figure’s heavenly origin by highlighting the eschatological role of the Son of Man based upon Dan 7.13.

<sup>37</sup> Maddox (‘Function’, 186–204) is an exception. He addresses each of the Son of Man sayings equally, but he argues that ‘Son of Man’ has assimilated to ‘Son’, although he does not think that the assimilation is complete. Uniquely, J.H. Ellens (‘Exegesis of Second Temple Texts in a Fourth Gospel Son of Man Logion’, in I. Kalini and P.J. Haas [eds.], *Biblical Interpretation in Judaism and Christianity* [LHBOTS 439; London: T&T Clark, 2006] 131–49) argues that the phrase ‘Son of Man’ originally referred to an eschatological judge as in the Similitudes of Enoch, but that the Gospel of John has reinterpreted the phrase to indicate Jesus’ role as savior rather than judge. A puzzling aspect of Ellens’ theory is his claim that ‘Son of Man’ was interpolated into the Gospel at a later stage, but he asserts that the interpolation occurred because a ‘proper gospel, even at the end of the first century or the beginning of the second century’ could not have been written without the phrase ‘Son of Man’ (138). Yet, Ellens fails to explain how the first edition of the Gospel appears to have been written without the phrase.

<sup>38</sup> One scholar who does not fit easily into these four categories is M.M. Pazdan, *The Son of Man: A Metaphor for Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Zacchaeus Studies: New Testament; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1991). She argues that ‘Son of Man’ functions as a metaphor for Jesus in the Gospel of John and is related to the other titles.

Man, have only argued against the connection between Daniel 7 and John 5.27 in order to refute the apocalyptic nature of the Johannine Son of Man. What will be argued in the rest of this study is that the Johannine Son of Man is apocalyptic and that the evidence of this can be found *throughout* the Son of Man sayings, not merely in 1.51, 3.13, and/or 5.27. In addition, the Son of Man in John is connected with more apocalyptic texts than simply Daniel 7 and *1 Enoch* 62 and 69.

A need exists for a study that thoroughly investigates the possible relationship between the ‘one like a son of man’ in Daniel 7, the interpretations of the Danielic figure, and the Johannine Son of Man. Although it is not completely new to suggest that the Son of Man in John has a Danielic or an apocalyptic background, surprisingly, no one has written a study similar to Morna Hooker’s excellent examination of the Son of Man in Mark.<sup>39</sup> This deficiency becomes all the more important now considering the increased interest in apocalyptic literature over the last twenty years.<sup>40</sup> Against this backdrop of recent scholarly work on apocalyptic literature, a thorough assessment of the Son of Man in the Gospel of John with regard to the interpretations of the Danielic son of man<sup>41</sup> should provide a constructive and valuable area of study, especially considering recent resistance to an apocalyptic Son of Man in John’s Gospel.<sup>42</sup>

## 2. Defining ‘Apocalyptic’, ‘Apocalypse’, and ‘apocalyptic Son of Man’

### 2.1. Defining ‘Apocalyptic’

Before going further, it will be necessary to clarify the meaning of the term ‘apocalyptic’ and the phrase ‘apocalyptic Son of Man’ as used in this study. The word ‘apocalyptic’ is often used loosely in scholarship, which

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<sup>39</sup> M.D. Hooker, *The Son of Man in Mark: A Study of the Background of the Term “Son of Man” and Its Use in St Mark’s Gospel* (Montreal: McGill University, 1967).

<sup>40</sup> This can be seen in the work of G. Boccaccini, J.J. Collins, G.W.E. Nickelsburg, C. Rowland, P. Sacchi, J. VanderKam and others, in the annual Enoch Seminar organized by G. Boccaccini, and in the recent ten year celebration of the Society of Biblical Literature Jewish and Christian Mysticism Group (see A.D. DeConick [ed.], *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism* [Symposium 11; Atlanta: SBL, 2006]).

<sup>41</sup> ‘Son of Man’ will not be capitalized in the phrase ‘Danielic son of man’ because it is not used as a title in Daniel; however, in reference to John, where the use of the expression is titular, ‘Son of Man’ will be capitalized.

<sup>42</sup> See especially Burkett, *Son of the Man*, 38–45; Rhea, *Johannine*, 35–39, 47; Hare, *Son of Man*, 83, 92.

leads to a blurring of its meaning.<sup>43</sup> Some of the confusion has been caused by the term's use in English as both a noun and an adjective, with the noun use most likely being a derivation of the German term *Apokalyphtik*.<sup>44</sup> Adding to the complexity, the English noun 'apocalyptic' has been used to designate apocalypses (apocalyptic genre), apocalypticism (apocalyptic eschatology), and apocalyptic tradition.<sup>45</sup> Elucidating these issues is beyond the scope of this study, but the defining of terms is not, especially since our concern is with the adjectival use of the term 'apocalyptic' and its relevance for the Son of Man in the Gospel of John.<sup>46</sup>

In general discussions concerning 'the Son of Man', the term 'apocalyptic' most often refers to the 'one like a son of man' from Daniel 7 and/or the interpretations of this figure found in Jewish apocalypses, particularly the Similitudes of Enoch and 4 *Ezra*. Some of the Synoptic Son of Man sayings have been referred to as 'apocalyptic Son of Man' sayings.<sup>47</sup> These 'apocalyptic Son of Man' sayings form the third group of Synoptic Son of Man sayings, which are also called the 'coming' sayings, 'heavenly' sayings, or 'glorification' sayings, and have been more readily traced back to Dan 7.13 (Mark 13.26; 14.62; Matt 24.30; 25.31; 26.64; Luke 21.27; 22.69).

With regard to the Johannine Son of Man, the term 'apocalyptic' has been used in two different ways, either as synonymous with future eschatology or as related to the Jewish apocalypses of Daniel, 1 *Enoch*, and/or 4 *Ezra*. Elizabeth Kinniburgh understands 'apocalyptic' primarily as a refer-

<sup>43</sup> See J.R. Davila, 'The Animal Apocalypse and Daniel', in G. Boccaccini (ed.), *Enoch and Qumran Origins: New Light on a Forgotten Connection* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 35–38.

<sup>44</sup> See D.C. Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew* (SNTS.MS 88; Cambridge: CUP, 1996) 23–31.

<sup>45</sup> G. Boccaccini, 'Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition: The Contribution of Italian Scholarship', in J.J. Collins and J.H. Charlesworth (eds.), *Mysteries and Revelation: Apocalyptic Studies since the Uppsala Colloquium* (JSP.S 9; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991) 33–50; J.J. Collins, 'Prophecy, Apocalypse and Eschatology', in L.L. Grabbe and R.D. Haak (eds.), *Knowing the End from the Beginning: The Prophetic, the Apocalyptic and their Relationships* (London: T&T Clark, 2003) 44–52.

<sup>46</sup> Confusion in the meaning of 'apocalyptic' has also possibly arisen because of the popular use of the term to refer to world disasters and to cataclysmic events or language (see 'Next Stop Iran?', *The Economist*, February 10–16, 2007, 13: the 'apocalyptic speeches' of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the president of Iran; 'The politics of the Iraq War: Showcasing disunity', *The Economist*, February 10–16, 2007, 48: 'heavily armed apocalyptic factions'). Also note the movie titles 'Apocalypse Now' and 'Apolypto').

<sup>47</sup> N. Perrin, 'The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition', in *A Modern Pilgrimage in New Testament Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974 [orig. *Biblical Research* 13 (1968) 1–23]) 57–83; Higgins, *Jesus*, 15; A. Yarbro Collins, 'The Apocalyptic Son of Man Sayings', in B.A. Pearson (ed.), *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) 220–28.

ence to future eschatology in the Gospel of John, and on the basis of a completely realized eschatology in John, she argues that the Johannine Son of Man is not apocalyptic.<sup>48</sup> While the term ‘apocalyptic’ does have an eschatological connotation, this does not require that it refer to the end of the world or to future eschatology.<sup>49</sup> The fate of the wicked and the righteous is often a concern of apocalypses, but their fate is not always connected to the end of history.<sup>50</sup> Although the phrase ‘apocalyptic Son of Man’ is used by some to indicate a purely eschatological figure, the following discussion will explain why this definition of ‘apocalyptic’ will not be used in this study.

As with general discussions on the ‘Son of Man’, the more common use of the term ‘apocalyptic’ in Johannine studies is with reference to the Jewish apocalypses. Although Douglas Hare disagrees with defining the Johannine Son of Man in apocalyptic terms, he uses the word ‘apocalyptic’ to indicate a link with the Jewish apocalypses, in particular the book of Daniel. He states: ‘The nonapocalyptic nature of John’s vision of truth suggests that he would not have found the Danielic apocalypse particularly congenial.’<sup>51</sup> Those who allow for an apocalyptic background to the Son of Man in John’s Gospel also understand the word ‘apocalyptic’ to indicate the son of man figures in Jewish apocalypses.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, the understanding of the majority of scholars who use the phrase ‘apocalyptic Son of Man’ in discussions of the Johannine Son

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<sup>48</sup> Kinniburgh, ‘Johannine’, 70. See also Ramos, ‘Hijo’, 51, 77–78.

<sup>49</sup> See C. Rowland, ‘Apocalyptic, Mysticism and the New Testament’, in H. Cancik, H. Lichtenberger, and P. Schäfer (eds.), *Geschichte-Tradition-Reflexion: Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996) 405–30 at 422.

<sup>50</sup> See J.J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998<sup>2</sup>] 6, 9–12; *idem*, ‘Apocalyptic Eschatology as the Transcendence of Death’, in *Seers, Sibyls and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* (Boston/Leiden: Brill, 2001) 75–97; *idem*, ‘Response: The Apocalyptic Worldview of Daniel’, in G. Boccaccini (ed.), *Enoch and Qumran Origins: New Light on a Forgotten Connection* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 59–66; Davila, ‘Animal Apocalypse’, 36–37.

<sup>51</sup> Hare, *Son of Man*, 92. See also the negative views of R. Leivestad, ‘Exit the Apocalyptic Son of Man’, *NTS* 18 (1972) 243–67; J. Schmitt, ‘Apocalyptique et Christologie Johannique’, in *Apocalypses et théologie de l’espérance. Congrès de Toulouse (1975)* (LD 95; Paris: Cerf, 1977) 337–50; Burkett, *Son of the Man*, 16–20, 38–45; *idem*, *Debate*, 22–33, 68–81, 97–120; Rhea, *Johannine*, 69; Ramos, ‘Hijo’, 51.

<sup>52</sup> See J.H. Bernard, *A Critical Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to John* (ICC; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928) l.cxxx–cxxxii; de Beus, ‘Gebruik’, 237, 240; Preiss, ‘Fils de l’homme’, 8–9; Smalley, ‘Sayings’, 281–85, 301; Maddox, ‘Function’, 197 n. 3, 200 n. 3, 202 n. 4, 203; Painter, ‘Enigmatic’, 1872; Sasse, *Menschensohn*, 242, 247. Note that Painter sees the apocalyptic aspect of John’s Gospel as dualistic (‘Enigmatic’, 1871 n. 10; *idem*, ‘Theology, Eschatology and the Prologue of John’, *SJT* 46 [1993] 27–42; cf. Martyn, *History*, 130–36; Schmitt, ‘Apocalyptique’, 337; Ashton, *Understanding*, 383–406). Such dualism is not necessarily apocalyptic.

of Man employ the phrase to indicate that this figure has an origin in or shows similarities with the 'one like a son of man' in Daniel 7 and/or the interpretations of this figure in Jewish apocalypses. This adjectival use of 'apocalyptic' is in accord with recent scholarship on apocalyptic literature in that the meaning of the adjective 'apocalyptic' should be grounded in the meaning of the literary genre of 'apocalypse'. John Collins states: 'The term "apocalyptic" refers first and foremost to the kind of material found in apocalypses. To use the word in any other way is to invite terminological confusion.'<sup>53</sup>

## 2.2. Defining 'Apocalypse'

Since our definitions of 'apocalyptic' and 'apocalyptic Son of Man' are dependent upon a definition of 'apocalypse', a definition of the literary genre of apocalypse is necessary to further clarify the adjectival use of 'apocalyptic'.<sup>54</sup> The most significant contribution to the definition of 'apocalypse' was developed by the Society of Biblical Literature Genres Project. The definition, which will be our starting point for understanding the term 'apocalypse', states that an apocalypse is:

a genre of 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.<sup>55</sup>

There have been various critiques and emendations made to this definition. Of special interest to this study are the criticisms raised by John Ashton, who cogently argues for a connection between the Gospel of John and apocalyptic genre. In his book, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, Ashton highlights the similar emphases on revelation both in apocalypses and in John's Gospel, but at the same time, he notes the differences that exist between the Apocalypse of John and the Gospel of John, arguing that the Gospel is not a true apocalypse but 'an apocalypse – in reverse, upside

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<sup>53</sup> Collins, 'Genre', 27; *idem*, 'Prophecy', 46. See also, K. Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic* (SBT 22; London: SCM, 1972) 20, 35; Russell, *Divine Disclosure*, 6; Davila, 'Animal Apocalypse', 37. Cf. Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic*, 35, 40–41. *Contra* R.E. Sturm, 'Defining the Word "Apocalyptic": A Problem in Biblical Criticism', in J. Marcus and M.L. Soards (eds.), *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn* (JSNT.S 24; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1989) 17–48.

<sup>54</sup> There is general agreement concerning which texts are considered apocalypses (see C. Rowland, 'Apocalyptic Literature', in D.A. Carson and H.G.M. Williamson (eds.), *It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture: Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars*, SSF [Cambridge: CUP, 1988] 170–89).

<sup>55</sup> J.J. Collins, 'Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre', *Semeia* 14 (1979) 1–20 at 9; *idem*, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 4–5.