

## ***The "Son of Man" Passages in Mark***

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*The fourteen "Son of Man" passages in Mark fall into three groups. Mark 1-6 portrays Jesus as the authoritative "Son of Man" perceived in Psalm 8. In Mark 8-14 there are nine "Son of Man" passages that portray Jesus as the suffering servant of the LORD perceived in Isa 52:13-53:12, even following the sequence of that passage. The three passages in Mark that predict that the "Son of Man" will come again were inspired by Isa 5:26-30, where Jesus is perceived coming "with a great force" of angels. Isa 5:30 forecasts "clouds," and so does Mark 13:26; 14:62. The words attributed to John in Mark 1:7 cannot be linked to Daniel 7, because the allusion was to Isa 5:26-30. Mark 12:6 even portrays Jesus as the "beloved" son perceived in Isa 5:1.*

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Why do the "Son of Man" passages in Mark fall into three groups? They fall into three groups because the expression "the Son of Man" was applied to the authoritative "son of man" perceived in Psalm 8 (Mark 2:10, 28) and to the suffering servant of the LORD perceived in Isa 52:13-53:12 (Mark 8:31-14:41) and to the mighty one whose coming was perceived in prophetic Isa 5:26-30 (Mark 8:38; 13:26; 14:62b).

It is well known that Mark 12:35-37 interpreted Ps 110:1 messianically and that Mark 14:62a expected Jesus to fulfill Ps 110:1 by sitting "at the right; hand of the Power." In 1 Cor 15:25-28; Eph 1:20-22; Heb 1:13; 2:5-9 the person who was perceived in Ps 110:1 was equated to the person who was perceived in Psalm 8.<sup>1</sup>

1. The linking of Ps 110:1 and Psalm 8 by early Christians has been discussed by Norman Perrin ("Son of Man," *IDBSup* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1976] 834-35). Acts 2:34-35 argued that "David did not go up into the heavens" in Ps 110:1, and John 3:13 argued that "no one has gone up into heaven except the one who came down out of heaven, the Son of Man" in Ps 8:5 (8:4 in English).

Did Mark perceive Jesus in Psalm 8? In my opinion, Mark 1-6 did, and there are five reasons for this opinion. First, Ps 8:5 said, "What is . . . the son of man that you visit him (תפקדנו)," and Mark 1:10-11 portrayed *Jesus* as being visited by the Father. Second, Ps 8:6 said, "And you let him lack little (ותחסרהו מעט) from God," and Mark 1:13c portrayed *Jesus* as being waited on by the angels. In parallel Matt 4:11 they "came to" (προσηλθον) him, and in John 1:51 I visualize "the angels of God . . . coming down to (ἐπί) the Son of Man" (compare 6:16, where ἐπί means "to"). Third, Ps 8:7 said, "You give him authority (תמשיליהו) over the works of your hands, you have put all under his feet," and Mark 2:10, 28 claimed that "the Son of Man has authority" to forgive sins on the earth and "is lord" even of the Sabbath. Fourth, Ps 8:8 said, "and even wild animals (בהמות שד)," and Mark 1:13b portrayed *Jesus* as being "with the wild animals." Fifth, Ps 8:9 described one who was "traversing (singular עבר) paths of seas," and Mark 6:48-49 portrayed *Jesus* as "walking along on the sea." For these reasons I consider it probable that Mark 1-6 perceived Jesus in every verse of Ps 8:5-9 (4-8 in English), the very verses that described the "son of man." Mark 1-6 did perceive in hyperbolic Psalm 8 the person whom 1 Cor 15:27; Eph 1:22; Heb 2:5-9 perceived there.

Mark 2:10, 28 not only perceived Jesus in Psalm 8 but also applied to him the expression from that psalm: בן אדם ("son of man"), υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου in the Septuagint (= Heb 2:6) and in John 5:27. In Markan quotations ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ("the 'son of man' ") will be rendered as "the בן אדם" to signify its ultimate Hebrew origin. The term in Mark 2:10, 28 may have been interpreted generically in parallel Matt 9:6-8; 12:8. Generic interpretations could have been inspired not by Daniel 7 but by Psalm 8.

Mark 8:31 claimed that Jesus "began to teach them that it is necessary for the בן אדם . . . to be killed and after three days to rise (ἀναστῆναι)." The key verb "rise" was repeated in 9:9: "when the בן אדם from dead ones rises (ἀναστῆ). As part of a reversal of fortune for the servant of the LORD oracular Isa 52:13 predicted that "he shall rise" (יָרוּם). Isa 53:8 said that "he was cut off from the land of living ones," and John 20:9 mentioned "the scripture that it is necessary for him from dead ones to rise (ἀναστῆναι)." Why did Mark 8:31 say that it was necessary for the Son of Man "to rise"? Presumably because the scripture (Isa 52:13) said, "He shall rise."

If the "son of man" from Psalm 8 was equated in Mark 8:31; 9:9 to the servant of the LORD in Isa 52:13-53:12, it should come as no great surprise that according to Mark 9:12 Jesus said, "And how has been written about the בן אדם? That he should suffer many things and be despised!" The side margin of *Novum Testamentum Graece* rightly refers the reader to Isa 53:3.

According to Mark 9:31 Jesus said, "The  $\square\text{דס } \text{ןב}$  in is handed over ( $\text{παράδίδοται}$ ) into human hands. . ." The fact that the Septuagint translated  $\text{בן } \text{הפנייה } \text{יהוה}$  in Isa 53:6b as  $\text{καὶ κύριος παρέδωκεν αὐτὸν}$  ("and the Lord handed him over") suggests that Isa 52:13-53:12 was still being interpreted in Mark 9:31. If so, the key verb in 9:31 has been translated more appropriately in the RSV ("will be delivered") than in the NRSV ("is to be betrayed").

Mark 10:32b claimed that Jesus "began for them to tell ( $\text{λέγειν}$ ) the things that were going to happen to him. . ." Verses 32b-34 clearly identified Jesus with "the Son of Man" (v. 33) for the reader. The Hebrew verb form  $\text{תשי}$  ("he will tell") occurs only once in the OT, and that is in Isa 53:8a: "and his fortune who could tell?" Why did Mark 10:32b-34 say that Jesus began to "tell" what was going to happen to the Son of Man? Presumably because Isa 52:13-53:12 was still being interpreted in Mark 10:32b-34. Passages in Mark where Jesus tells the Son of Man's fortune may have been inspired by Isa 53:8a. Any allusion to Isa 53:8a in Mark 10:32b is absent from parallel Matt 20:17 and Luke 18:31, just as any allusion to Isa 52:13 in Mark 8:31; 9:9 is not discernible in parallel Matt 16:21; 17:9 and Luke 9:22, 36.

According to Mark 10:45 Jesus said, "For even the  $\square\text{דס } \text{ןב}$  came not to be served but to serve and to give ( $\text{δοῦναι}$ ) his life ransom ( $\text{λύτρον}$ ) for many." The Hebrew noun  $\text{זש}$  occurs 46 times in the OT but only once in Isaiah, and that is in 53:10a. Isa 53:10a is also the only place in the OT where that noun is the object of the verb  $\text{ש}$ , which was translated with the verb "give" in the Septuagint. One meaning of the noun is "compensation," and in Isa 53:10a the servant of the LORD (a "slave of rulers" in 49:7) was being offered for sale: "If you give the compensation/ransom of his life ( $\text{נפשם } \text{אשם } \text{נפש}$ ), he will see offspring, he will continue to live. . ." Why did Mark 10:45 say that the Son of Man came "to give . . . ransom"? Presumably because Isa 53:10a said, "If you give (= someone gives) the ransom of his life." Mark 10:45 understood the Hebrew text of Isa 53:10a better than the Septuagint and the targum did. In parallel Luke 22:27 there is no allusion to Isa 53:10a.

According to Mark 14:21, 41 Jesus said, "See, the  $\square\text{דס } \text{ןב}$  in is handed over ( $\text{παράδίδοται}$ ) into the hands of the sinners" by a "human being/man" ( $\text{ἄνθρωπος}$ ). Isaiah 53 ends with  $\text{לפשיהם } \text{יפניע}$ , and the Septuagint translated the masculine singular verb as  $\text{παρεδόθη}$  ("he was handed over"). Why did Mark 14:41 say that he was handed over "into the hands of the sinners"? Presumably because Isa 53:12c has unique but ambiguous  $\text{לפשיהם}$  ("to/for the transgressors"). Parallel Matt 26:45 lacks the definite article before "hands" and "sinners." In Mark 14:41 English versions omit the definite article before "sinners," obscuring any allusion to Isa 53:12c.

As we have seen, the majority (nine) of the fourteen occurrences of the expression "the Son of Man" in Mark portrayed him as "it has been written" (9:12; 14:21) in Isa 52:13-53:12. What is unexpected is that those nine occurrences even follow the *sequence* of Isa 52:13-53:12:

Isa	52:13	Mark	8:31; 9:9
	53:3		9:12
	53:6b		9:31
	53:8a		10:32b-34
	53:10a		10:45
	53:12c		14:21 (twice), 41

If *Jesus* fulfilled Isa 52:13; 53:3, 6b, 8a, 12c, then Mark 10:45 could argue from Isa 53:10a that *Jesus* gave his life ransom for many.<sup>2</sup> The secrecy in Mark 9:9 may have been inspired by secrecy perceived in Isa 52:15b.

If Mark called the servant of the LORD in Isa 52:13-53:12 "the Son of Man," that helps to explain another "Son of Man" passage: Mark 8:38. From "is ashamed of" in 8:38 we may deduce that v. 32b portrayed *Peter* as ashamed of Jesus and his "words" in v. 31. Why did v. 32a portray Jesus as not embarrassed ("and openly he was saying the thing") and v. 32b portray Peter as ashamed of Jesus? Perhaps because Isa 50:6 said that the servant of the LORD did not hide his (face and 53:3b spoke of someone hiding (masculine singular מִסְתַּר) his face from the servant. And perhaps Mark 8:34 said "let him deny himself" because reflexive נִעַנְהוּ וְהִוָּא ("but he humbled himself") in Isa 53:7a was interpreted as "but he denied himself."

Mark 8:38 warned not to be ashamed of Jesus, because the Son of Man would reciprocate, "when he comes (ἔλθῃ) in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." The functional equivalent of "with the holy angels" (μετὰ τῶν ἁγγέλων τῶν ἁγίων) in 8:38 is "with a large force" (μετὰ δυνάμεως πολλῆς) in 13:26, the military phrase which appears in 1 Macc 7:10, 11; 9:60 (compare Isa 36:2). Both phrases correspond to "with angels of his force" (μετ' ἁγγέλων δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ) in 2 Thess 1:7. The masculine singular Hebrew verb form יָבוֹא, ("he will come") occurs 158 times in the OT, but the only *military* coming that could have

2. Between Mark 10:45 and 14:41, which interpreted Isa 53:10a and v. 12c, there is a passage which interpreted v. 12bc. In v. 12ab the LORD declared that his servant (the "slave of rulers" in 49:7) would share profit with potentates "under whom he exhausted himself to death" (תחת אשר הערה למות נפשו). Mark 14:22-24 interpreted הערה as "he poured out." "For many" was presumably inspired by the indefinite plural רבים in Isa 53:12c: "And he the offense of many has borne." In vv. 11b, 12a plural רבים is definite (compare "and all the great ones of the king of Babylon" in Jer 39:13 and "their great ones" in Mark 10:42).

inspired Mark 8:38; 13:26 is the one in Isa 5:26. Why did those two passages say that the Son of Man would "come" with a force of angels? Presumably because oracular Isa 5:26-30 could be understood as predicting that "he will come" with the military force in vv. 27-28. Readers who did not take "it" ("a sign for the nations") as the subject of "will come" in v. 26 were left with "he" as the subject.

Sinners in Isa 5:18-19 wanted to "see," but the military sight in v. 26b was frightening: "And see, . . . he/it will come." According to Mark 13:26 "they will see the אֱלֹהִים בָּרִבְּבֵי coming," and 14:53, 55, 62 portrayed the Sanhedrin as viewers (plural "you will see"). Why did Mark 14:62 say that the *Sanhedrin* would see him coming? Perhaps because the members of the Sanhedrin (the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders in 11:27) were being portrayed as the evil tenants (12:1-9, 12) of the metaphorical "vineyard" in Isaiah 5 (compare 3:14). Mark 14:62a expected the Son of Man's footstool (enemies) in Ps 110:1 to see him "seated at the right hand of the Power."

They will see the Son of Man coming "in clouds" according to Mark 13:26 and "with the clouds of the sky/heaven" according to 14:62b. Daniel dreamed of winds (Dan 7:2) and then clouds (v. 13):

I was seeing in the visions of the night,  
and see, with the clouds of the sky/heaven  
(what looked) like a son of man was arriving.

The dream man was seen with clouds, and he "was coming," but an arrival in the sky/heaven is not the Parousia, and what Daniel dreamed in Dan 7:13 is not what was predicted in Mark 8:38; 13:26; 14:62b.

If "with the holy angels" in Mark 8:38 and "with a large force" in 13:26 alluded to Isa 5:26-30, that is the logical place to look for the clouds in Mark 13:26; 14:62b. Unamended Isa 5:26 says of the LORD:

And he will lift up a sign for the nations (נֹסֵף לְגוֹיִם) from far,  
and he will whistle to him/it (לְוֹ) from the end of the earth,  
and see, (in a) hurry (מְהֵרָה), fast (קָל) he/it will come.<sup>3</sup>

Verse 28b says, "And his/its [war-chariot] wheels (seem) like the whirlwind."<sup>4</sup> Verse 30b says:

3. According to John 3:14, "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness" on a נֹסֵף ("sign") in Num 21:8-9, "so must the Son of Man be lifted up" on a נֹסֵף in the first line of Isa 5:26. In the first two lines John 6:44; 12:32 perceived the Father and Jesus drawing everyone on earth to Jesus. John 12:33 added, "But this he was telling, signing (σημαίνων) by what death he was going to die." In the third line adverbial מְהֵרָה was interpreted by Rev 22:7,12 as ταχύ ("quickly" or even "soon"), as in the Septuagint, and Mark 13:33-37 probably interpreted the adverb(s) as ἐξαίφνης ("suddenly").

4. "Like the whirlwind" in Isa 5:28b appears to have influenced the interpretation of "fast" in v. 26b in the targum: "And see, with speed a king with his forces like fast clouds will come (כְּעֵנָנִין קָלֵי יַיִן יִהְיֶה)." Compare Jer 4:11-13.

And he will look to the land, but see, darkness, distress (צַר), and light was dark in its clouds (בַּעֲרֵיפִיּוֹד).<sup>5</sup>

After the "distress" (θλιψις) in Mark 13:19 will come the darkness (vv. 24-25) "and then they will see the בן אדם in coming in clouds (ἐν νεφέλαις) with a large force and glory" (v. 26). The verb "look" (נָבַט) appears in Isa 5:30b and in Zech 12:10, and if Matt 24:30; Rev 1:7 linked the two predictions, the "clouds" in Matt 24:30; Rev 1:7 were probably inspired by the clouds in Isa 5:30b rather than by the clouds in Dan 7:13.

The evidence compels one to entertain the hypothesis that Isa 5:26-30 inspired the "Son of Man" passages in Mark 8:38; 13:26. The passages in Mark did not explicitly mention scripture, but the Parousia passage in 1 Thess 4:15-17 was based on "word of the Lord," and "in clouds" in v. 17 suggests that the "word of the Lord" was Isa 5:25-30.<sup>6</sup> "The sign of the Son of Man in heaven" in Matt 24:30 was probably the "sign" in Isa 5:26a, as one can see from "the sign of your coming" in Matt 24:3. Matt 24:27, like Mark 13:33-37, interpreted the adverb(s) in Isa 5:26b as "suddenly." The corpse passage in Matt 24:28 was presumably inspired by singular "corpse" in Isa 5:25 (and Jer 7:33). Luke 21:23b-25 perceived events in Isa 5:25-30 in the Septuagint that would precede the coming of the Son of Man (Luke 21:27).<sup>7</sup>

Two other elements in Mark 8:38 require comment, the "glory" and "his Father." The servant of the LORD in Isa 53:2b initially had no glory, but in Psalm 8 the LORD crowns the son of man with "glory and honor." Heb 2:9 argued that *Jesus* was crowned with glory and honor after his death, and that is when John 12:23; 13:31 expected the Son of Man to be glorified. "His Father" in Mark 8:38 refers back to 1:11, where Jesus was visited and called "my Son, the Beloved." The parable of the "beloved" son in 12:1-9 was inspired by metaphorical Isa

5. "His people" in Isa 5:25 and "prey" in v. 29b are masculine singular, and either may be the subject of "he will look." Matt 10:23 may have interpreted "the land" in Isa 5:30b as "Israel" and expected the Parousia there, and "from end of earth" in Mark 13:27 may have interpreted "from the end of the earth" in Isa 5:26a.

6. G. D. Kirchhevel, "He That Cometh in Mark 1:7 and Matt 24:30," *BBR* 4 (1994) 110-11.

7. "In its clouds" in Isa 5:30b was interpreted figuratively in the Septuagint ("in their perplexity"), and in Luke 21:25b "in perplexity" (ἐν ἀπορίᾳ) reflects that English Bibles have long had a cross-reference to Luke 21:25 at Isa 5:30 but regrettably still do not have the reciprocal reference to Isa 5:25-30 at Luke 21:23b-25. 1 Thess 4:15-17 was as optimistic as *Tg. Isa* 5:30b ("the righteous who are in that time will be covered from the evil"), but Luke 18:8b was as pessimistic as the Septuagint, which perceived "the nations" coming in Isa 5:26. Luke 21:23b-24 predicted "anger" against this "people" and predicted that "the nations" would come, but neither the Septuagint nor Luke forecast clouds. The "clouds" which were predicted in Mark 13:26 became "a cloud" in Luke 21:27.

5:1-2, which said, "My beloved had a vineyard." If *Jesus* fulfilled Isa 5:1 (Mark 1:11; 9:7), then Mark 8:38; 13:26; 14:62b could argue from Isa 5:26-30 that *Jesus* will come. The Parousia passage in 2 Pet 1:16-19 did just that, arguing that when the Father called Jesus "the/my Beloved" in Mark 9:7, that confirmed "the prophetic word" (Isaiah 5).

As we have seen, the earliest readers of Mark could have understood the "Son of Man" passages principally in terms of *three* OT scriptures: unprophetic Psalm 8 (Mark 2:10, 28) and prophetic Isa 52:13-53:12 (Mark 8:31; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:32b-34, 45; 14:21, 41) and Isaiah 5 (Mark 8:38; 13:26; 14:62b). Those who knew Hebrew were best equipped to understand everything written about "the Son of Man" in Mark in terms of those three scriptures (plus Ps 110:1 for Mark 14:62a). Why has no one been able to link John's prediction about the coming mighty one in Mark 1:7 to Daniel 7? Because the allusion was to Isa 5:26-30. Verse 27b may have been interpreted as "and the thong of his sandals has not been removed."

In Mark "the Son of Man" was always referred to in the third person as the one in the OT Scriptures, and the only scriptures you need to understand all the references are Psalms and Isaiah. "The Son of Man" whom Mark presented as having authority and lordship (Psalm 8) and portrayed as fulfilling Isa 52:13; 53:3, 6b, 8a, 10a, 12c and predicted would come with a large force of angels (Isa 5:26-30) was none other than Jesus.

Modern readers of Mark need translations of Psalm 8 that are literal enough to let them recognize in Mark 1:9-11 the visitation of the "Son of Man." And they need translations of Isa 5:26-30 that are literal enough to let them see what Mark 1:7; 8:38; 13:26; 14:62b perceived. In Isa 5:26a in the RSV and NRSV "for a nation" is a modern "correction" of "for the nations." The author of Mark made no such correction and presumably believed, like the targum, that v. 26b said, "he will come."