

The Son of Man

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to analyze and discuss the Markan perspective of the Son of Man. Further, it will also discuss the significance of this view and its meanings for the present day, and how should the church stand in front of it.

The Son of Man in Markan Perspective

Jesus, the Son of Man is one of the identities of the Markan Jesus that is very important to the understanding of the Gospel, and also so relevant to the contemporary church today. The letter of Paul to the Philippians says "who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness."¹ Jesus emptied himself of his glory, and as a new 'Adam, or the second Adam, he is the representation of humanity restored with his death on the cross and resurrection.²

Although the Book of Matthew to be the first canonical Gospel, Mark is the earliest Gospel in which scholars argue that had served as support and source for the other Synoptic Gospels. According to Witherington "the argument for Markan priority

¹ Philippians 2:6-7, NIV.

² Marie N. Sabin, *Reopening the Word: Reading Mark as Theology in the Context of Early Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), Kindle Locations 2310.

becomes as close to a certainty as one can imagine in scholarly discourse."³ Sabin argues that there is "an early church tradition based on Eusebius's fourth-century Ecclesiastical History that cites a fragment from the second-century bishop Papias, who posited "Mark" as the author of the earliest gospel and linked with Peter"⁴ Mark's Gospel is dated between 66-70 CE during the Jewish Revolt against Rome. Mark a partner of Peter, is believed to have recorded the stories through oral tradition, written sources, such as the M and the Q documents, and the source of apocalyptic prophecies.⁵

The Gospel of Mark focuses on the Jesus' miracles. The four canonical Gospels are the principal source of information about the Jesus' life and teachings. Thus, Mark is the main source for the other Synoptic Gospels, showing that Jesus is the Son of Man and suffering servant. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus' activities are not listed in chronological order like in the other Gospels. Mark presents Jesus as being constantly on the move going from village to village preaching until his final fatal confrontation in Jerusalem.⁶

The Son of Man, Example of Humility

³ Ben Witherington III. *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2001), Kindle Locations 428.

⁴ Sabin, *Reopening the Word*, Kindle Locations 163-165.

⁵ Stephen L. Harris, *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2015), 108.

⁶ Ibid, 107.

One significant point of Jesus' return to His hometown is that the people rejected Him even they were amazed with his teachings and miracles. Mark describes when Jesus began to teach in the synagogue of his hometown, many who heard him were amazed.⁷ However, when they knew what family he was from, Jesus' wisdom and knowledge about Scriptures were rejected and despised by them. Witherington notes "they neither dispute that he has wisdom or that he performs mighty works; they are just dumbfounded that it comes from a hometown boy like Jesus."⁸ In fact, the importance of where someone comes from, his or her hometown and family origins, it was a normal understanding in that context to determine "who a person is and what his capacities will always be. They see Jesus as someone who is not merely exceeding expectations but rather is overreaching."⁹

Further, that was an affront to those people in the Synagogue due to "some important manuscripts scripts have the reading "the son of the carpenter, the son of Mary." Also, the expression "son of Mary" can be understood as an insult.¹⁰ The text shows the public was completely scandalized by Jesus. Thus, Jesus' knowledge of scripture and his miracles was a deep

⁷ Mark 6:2, NIV.

⁸ Witherington. *The Gospel of Mark*, Kindle Locations 2855-2856.

⁹ Ibid., Kindle Locations 2856-2858.

¹⁰ Ibid., Kindle Locations 2869-2871.

religious offense to them.¹¹ However, this fact did not stop Jesus in his journey.

Therefore, regarding to ministry in the twenty-first century, the important is to do what we need to do, how Jesus did, even not receiving honor. Indeed, even today there are people that evaluate a person by his or her origin, ethnicity, family, position, studies or income. However, God uses people independent of their origin.

Those that want to follow Jesus and to be part of His Kingdom need to follow His steps of humility, as Jesus said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."¹² Humility is a quality that is missing in today's church. This occurs principally due to false teachings inside the church today. One of those false teachings is the prosperity gospel that uses biblical texts outside the context such as the verse: "The Lord will make you the head, not the tail."¹³ The most important for those who support this false gospel is not the salvation and transformation of lives but in conquering lands, buildings, and properties.

Further, False Christian leaders had been used the name of Jesus and the name of God to reach their human ambitions and seek

¹¹ Witherington. *The Gospel of Mark*, Kindle Locations 2891-2894

¹² Matthew 16:24, NIV.

¹³ Deuteronomy 28:13, NIV.

of the power, not the God's power, but the power that destroys. This power that destroys does not come from God, and it is totally against the Jesus' Gospel and his teachings about the Kingdom of God.

The Significance of the Transfiguration of the Son of Man

The transfiguration represents and reinforces the picture of "Jesus as a human and yet divine figure."¹⁴ Further, Jesus in Mark does not consider glory without observing the presence of suffering as part of the God's plan described in Scripture.¹⁵ That is a fulfillment in Jesus Christ of that redemptive plan, spoke through the prophets in Old Testament, as Isaiah said, "He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain."¹⁶ Therefore, the significance of this event to Jesus is the recognition, before the representation of disciples and prophets, that He is the Son of Man, the Messiah who will fulfill the redemptive plan of God.

The transfiguration was a significant event that brought a great glimpse of glory to a privileged group of disciples, Peter, James and John.¹⁷ Thus, the transfiguration event is basically for the benefit of those disciples as live testimonies.¹⁸ Mark

¹⁴ Ibid., Kindle Locations 3829.

¹⁵ Darrell L. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture: Restoring the Portrait from the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 236.

¹⁶ Isaiah 53:3a, NIV.

¹⁷ Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*, 234.

¹⁸ Mark 9:7b, NIV.

reports a voice speaks from the cloud, reproducing what was alone to Jesus in his baptism. The voice now is heard by the disciples. "This is my beloved Son. Listen to Him."¹⁹ This note about listening indicates that the disciples still had much to learn. "Peter had wanted to honor Moses, Elijah, and Jesus as equals. The voice, in contrast, singles out the Son."²⁰

The significance of the appearance of Moses and Elijah is related to the meaning and the eschatological time of fulfillment of the God redemptive plan through the Messiah, the Son of Man.⁷ According to Bock, "Elijah is an allusion to John Baptist, the prophet who preached eschatological hope and restoration to the nation in preparation for the arrival of God's deliverance."²¹

¹⁹ Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*, 235.

²⁰ Witherington. *The Gospel of Mark*, Kindle Locations 3959-3962.

²¹ Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*, 236.

Son of Man, The Suffering Servant

Unlike Luke's Gospel, in which the principal significance of Jesus's death is more related with forgiveness of sins, in the Markan perspective, Jesus' death is more about "deliverance of God's people from oppression and death."²² We can see that when Mark says "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."²³ In fact, Markan perspective makes clear that forgiving sins is part of Jesus' healing ministry and is seemingly not determined on the cross.²⁴ Further, the Markan narrative suggests Jesus' death is part of the God's plan and the covenanted people of God, "who have been ransomed from captivity and set free to follow Jesus in his march toward the reign of God."²⁵

The passion narrative in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is portrayed as having need of human help and support.²⁶ In that context, despite the fact that Jesus is a divine person, he was at the same time human. Thus, as a human being, Jesus felt anguish and afraid of the coming physical suffering. Jesus sought help at times when he felt the need for human support. Some examples of those moments were when Jesus calls some of his

²² Witherington. *The Gospel of Mark*, Kindle Locations 5504-5505.

²³ Mark 10:45, NIV.

²⁴ Sharyn Dowd and Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Jesus' Death in Mark*, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, no. 2 (2006), 276.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 297.

²⁶ Witherington. *The Gospel of Mark*, Kindle Location 6109.

disciples to pray with him in the Garden of Gethsemane, as well as when Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry the crosspiece.²⁷ According to Witherington, "God chooses to partner with human beings that have wills and minds of their own, there is indeed a need for us to do our part for the kingdom of God."²⁸ One great example of that is "the prayer" where we can be part of the kingdom of God even while we are living on earth. Prayer is a direct relationship with God, that moves us closer to His will.

The Son of Man in the Old Testament

The scene that Daniel saw "Ancient of Days" seated on one of the thrones placed in heaven recorded in Daniel chapter 7, verse 9, corresponds to the vision of John described in Revelation 4-5. In Daniel 7, there is an interpretation that the holy ones (saints) are angels or Jews. Collins states "the interpretation of the holy ones as angels fits naturally with the identification of the one like a son of man as Michael, leader of the heavenly host."²⁹ In the Scriptures, it is clear that "saints" are the body of Christ (the Christians of the Church). All Christians are "saints", and in the same time they are called to be Christ's holy people, as Paul said to the Church in Corinth: "to those

²⁷ Witherington. *The Gospel of Mark*, Kindle Locations 6112-6114.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Collins, John J., *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature, The Biblical Resource Series* (Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 2010), 106.

sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."³⁰

The Ancient of Days suggests to correspond to God the Father, as distinct from God the Son who is presented in Daniel 7:13 as the "son of man."³¹ However, Christ as the Son has a similar glory to God the Father, even though their persons are distinguished. I agree when Collins states "what is remarkable about this picture is that two figures from Daniel 7, the white-headed Ancient of Days and the one like a Son of Man, are fused into one."³² Indeed, as Jesus said: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father,"³³ and "I and the Father are one."³⁴

Moreover, according to Daniel's vision, to the Son of Man (Jesus Christ) "was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him."³⁵ The Son of man, Jesus Christ, is also the Lamb who was slain, the Suffering Servant worthy "to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"³⁶

The judgment concluded on behalf of, or for the saints releases them from the unrighteous oppression and the destructive

³⁰I Corinthians 1:2, NIV.

³¹ John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The John Prophecy Commentaries* (Chicago: Moody Publish, 2012), 202.

³² Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 273.

³³ John 14:9, NIV.

³⁴ John 10:30, NIV.

³⁵ Daniel 7:14a, NIV.

³⁶ Revelation 5:12 (NIV)

power, symbolized in Daniel's vision by the beasts. Therefore, this judgment prepares the saints, the body and the Church of Christ to receive the kingdom of heaven in its fullness.³⁷ That will be the climax of world history in the second coming of Jesus Christ and the inauguration of the eternal kingdom of God in its plenitude, "represented as a fifth and final kingdom which is from heaven."³⁸ The holy people of the Most High (the Church of Christ) "will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever,"³⁹ Thus, The Lord Jesus Christ will reign with His saints and "His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."⁴⁰

³⁷ Walvoord, *Daniel*, 214.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 181.

³⁹ Daniel 7:18, NIV.

⁴⁰ Daniel 7:14, NIV.

Conclusion

Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, despite His divinity, has emptied himself of his glory, suffered and died a human death for us. God becoming human with His son Jesus, the Suffering Servant, is the great proof of God's love for mankind. Thus, by the God's Grace, we can be part of his Kingdom of love. Jesus, as the Son of Man, by his own example, teach us that to be part of his reign of love, we, as the church today, should empty of ourselves, and as Paul said "do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves."⁴¹

Moreover, as Christ' followers, that is a process in our life journey, through our relationship with God. The perseverance produced by our faith keeps us on the lifelong journey of our spiritual formation. Spiritual formation is a process of being conformed and shaped to the image of Christ,⁴² the Son of Man. That process is a God's work by Grace in our lives.

⁴¹ Philippians 2:3, NIV

⁴² M. Robert Mulholland Jr. *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation*, Kindle Location 62.

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