

The Son of Man in the Context of John's Gospel and Humanity: A Critical Theological Reflection

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Abstract

The central place of revelatory Son of Man in the Gospel of John and the Gospel's revelation of the life of Jesus are distinctive features of John when compared with the Synoptic Gospels. The Gospel indicate John's striking affinity with the genre of apocalypse in a sense that when attention is paid to modern genre theory by making an extensive biblical comparison with the standard definition of "apocalypse," the Gospel of John stands in tandem similarities with Jewish apocalypses in form, content, and function. Although the Gospel of John has similarities with the genre of apocalypse, John is not an apocalypse. In genre theory, John can be described as a gospel in kind and an apocalypse in mode. John's narrative of Jesus's life has been qualified and shaped by the genre of apocalypse, such that it can be called an "apocalyptic" gospel. Understanding the Son of Man in John's Gospel in an "apocalyptic" reading provides an explanation for John's appeal to Israel's Scriptures and Mosaic authority. Hence, this article focuses on a theological reflection on the Son of Man in John's gospel. Timothy Palmer (2015:4) opines that "Literally, theology is a word of God. Theology is our human reflection on the nature of God and his activities in the world." John F. Walvoord (1982:11) notes that "Christianity by its very name has always honoured Jesus Christ as its historical and theological centre." After the introduction and statement of the problem, attention is devoted to Issues with John's use of Son of Man as a theological reflection, the divine and human natures and bringing the discourse to a conclusion.

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1. Introduction

The unique revelation of God in Christ is clear because he is the One only Way of salvation for man, and that is through Jesus Christ. (John 14:6). Stephen Neill (1983:137) makes emphasis that “For the human sickness, there is one specific remedy, and this is it. There is no other. Naturally to the non-Christian hearer this must sound like crazy megalomania and religious imperialism of the very worst kind.” It must be recalled that Christ and his followers suffered worse accusations before the sinful world. God has revealed himself in general non-redemptive revelation. On the one hand, in the special redemptive revelation. However, in the context of traditional religions, the worship is merely an indication of an honest craving for God, which can be fulfilled only in biblical revelation through the incarnate Christ who died and rose again. Byang Kato (1985:20) allege that John Mbiti rightly affirmed that “The uniqueness of Christianity is in Jesus Christ. He is the stumbling block of all ideologies and religious systems and even if some of his teaching may overlap with what they teach and proclaim, his person is greater than can be contained in a religion or ideology.” The incarnation is God's appearance in the flesh (John 1:1-4). God works among created mankind in the language of the flesh (John 1:14). Therefore, for God to become incarnated, he must first be flesh with humanity. This is the most basic prerequisite. The implication of God's incarnation is that God uses and works in the flesh that in his very essence becomes flesh, becomes the Son of Man (John 3:16,17). This leads to the statement of the problem.

2. Statement of the Problem

Nothing in life can be separated from God and his revelation of himself. Some people try to keep their Christianity in one pocket, coming to church on Sunday and then forgetting all about God for the rest of the week. This attitude has caused controversy concerning the God-Man in Christendom. Byang Kato (1985:21) affirms that “Christological controversies did not end with his person. It may be agreed that the incarnate Christ is God-Man eternally since he came to earth.” Millard J. Erickson (2013:603) reiterates that “In the history of the church, the most heated debate in Christology has been over the understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Some theologians have researched the life of Jesus based on their determination that Christ cannot be both human and God.” Millard Erickson (2013:603) “In the history of the church, the most heated debate in Christology has been the person of Jesus Christ... Some theologians have researched the life of Jesus based on their determination that Christ cannot be both human and God.”

Erickson (2013:603) opines that “Others either have understood Christ from above, grounded in the Christ's proclamation, or from below, basing their view of Christ on historical investigation. Early in the life of the church, there came several departures from the understanding of Jesus as fully human. John's first letter opposed such a denial of the reality

of Jesus' humanity (I John 1:1-4)." J.F. Bethune-Baker(1903:80) notes that "In addition to a specific group of Christians known as Docetists, a basic denial of Jesus' humanity permeated many other movements within Christianity, including Gnosticism and Marcionism. Docetism takes its name from the Greek verb, (δοκεω, διόκό), which means "it seem or appear." Docetism's central thesis is that Jesus only seemed to be human. Jesus' humanity has physical nature, was simply an illusion, not a reality. Jesus was more like a ghost, an apparition, than a human being. Docetism is a denial of the reality of Jesus' humanity. Jesus took on genuine, but not complete nature." Mipo E. Dadang (2018:75,94) opines that "The Nestorius preferred the designate Mary as Christotokos (Christ-bearer; instead of Theotokos-God-bearer) because to Nestorius, Mary gave birth to a man in whom the union with the Logos had begun, but was still incomplete till after his baptism before he was called the Son of God. To Nestorius, the man Jesus was only an instrument that God used or a temple in in which God dwelt." Therefore, an overview of the Title "Son of Man" is necessary to lay a basis for a theological reflection on the phrase.

3. The Title Son of Man

Benjamin E. Reynolds (2020:329) Opines that "Draws on modern genre theory to compare the Gospel of John and Jewish apocalypses. Explains the importance of revelation in John and John's portrayal of Jesus as a figure descending from heaven. Explores reception history, including Byzantine iconography, to consider historical explanations for the apocalyptic shaping of the Gospel." The title 'Son of Man' in the Gospel of John is an apocalyptic reference that highlights, among a number of things, that Jesus is a heavenly figure. In his book, *John Among the Apocalypses: Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition and the Apocalyptic Gospel*, Benjamin E. Reynolds (2020:330) analyses the background of 'Son of Man' from the 'one like a son of man' in Daniel 7 and the interpretations of this figure in Jewish apocalyptic and early Christian literature. Although there is no established 'Son of Man concept', the Daniel son of man is interpreted with common characteristics that suggest there was at least some general understanding of this figure in the Second Temple period. The author shows that these common characteristics are noticeable throughout the Son of Man sayings in John's Gospel.

The context and the interpretation of these sayings point to an understanding of the Johannine Son of Man similar to those in the interpretations of the Daniel figure. However, even though these similarities exist, the Johannine figure is distinct from the previous interpretations, just as they are distinct from one another. One obvious difference is the present reality of the Son of Man's role in judgment and salvation. The Johannine Son of Man is an apocalyptic figure, and thus 'Son of Man' does not function to draw attention to Jesus' humanity in the Gospel of John. Nor is the title synonymous with 'Son of God'. 'Son of Man' may overlap in meaning with other titles, particularly 'Son of God' and 'Messiah', but 'Son of Man' points to aspects of Jesus' identity that are not indicated by any other title. Along with the other titles, it helps to present a richer Christological portrait of the Johannine Jesus. This is the more reason why (Packer 1993:6) notes that "Jewish theology used it as a title for the expected (human) Messiah." It is possible to give a theological understanding and a more sophisticated historical understanding.

4. A Theological Basis for Son of Man

The theological understanding is that "Son of God" implies his deity—which it does—and that "Son of Man" implies his humanity, which it does too. He was a son of man, that is, a human being. And he is the Son of God, in that he has always existed as the Eternally Begotten One who comes forth from the Father forever. He always has, and he always will. He is the Second Person of the Trinity with all of the divine nature fully in him. He is born of a virgin. He had a human father but he didn't have sex with this virgin until Jesus was born. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit in the virgin Mary. Thus, he is human—fully human. The Bible wants to emphasize that he is fully human. So that's the common understanding: he is both divine and he is human—two natures, one person. The more sophisticated and important historical insight is that the term "Son of Man" doesn't merely align him with humanity. It is probably taken from Daniel 7. Reading the chapter, the Son of Man is a very exalted figure and not just a human figure but an exalted figure. It was Jesus' favourite self-designation.

Studying the term "Son of Man" in the Gospels, Jesus he did **not** refer to himself most often as Son of God but as Son of Man. For example, in Mark 10:45, he said, "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." So, he calls himself Son of Man very often. From a logical point of view, he did so is because, on the face of it, Son of Man is an ordinary phrase for "human being." He was born of a man. There is no offense there. Who is **not** a son of man? But those with ears to hear could hear Daniel 7, in which he was claiming a very exalted role in the history of redemption who meant to do it. Jesus was very subtle in that he was always opening his identity to those with eyes to see, but he was **not** opening it so blatantly that everybody would come and make him king. He had to steer a very narrow course in disclosing his identity, not just openly saying, "I'm the Messiah, I'm the King of the World. Come and acknowledge me as King." That is why Hahn (1969:347,351) asserts that John¹² brings the Johannine Christology of the Son of Man to a climax and not merely a title.

Craig S. Keener (1999:69) a New Testament scholar affirms that "In the Gospel tradition, Jesus implied his Messiahship, spoke of a Son of Man and was introduced by John's prophecy of the coming One." He did **not** talk like that. He was quiet. He was subtle. And he would make claims that were explicit in certain settings and implicit in others. And only when the time was right—mainly when he was on trial for his life, and they said, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the living God?"—did he say, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man coming with great power and glory." So, he confessed his open deity right at the point where he knew he would be crucified for it. "Son of Man" has the double meaning of human being and, according to Daniel 7, exalted heavenly one. And Jesus means to communicate both of those. Why is Jesus called "Son of Man"? This is why a significant desire to do a theological reflection on the title Son of Man in the Gospel of John. Who is this Son of Man in John's Gospel?

5. Identification of the Son of Man

Barnabas Lindar (1992:30,50) opines that "the Son of Man, expound the central Christological theme of the identity of Jesus who is intimately both of God and of human kind." Joel Green, Scot McKnight and Howard Marshall argue that "This view portrays Lindar as leaving out an important theme more than just a main purpose. It also appears limited for not taking into consideration the narrative purpose of John's Christology seems

first of all is to address and explain the intimate relationship in essence.” J.N.D. Kelly notes that “Jesus was divine as well as human.” Another reason is to explain the saving relationship between Jesus and those who believe in Him. The third is to offer the divine nature of the Son. These three theological issues call attention to examine the phrase “the Son of Man” in the Gospel. The occurrences of the “Son of Man” have important elements such as, revelation, judgment, and life giving, are clearly presented by the Evangelist leading to their ultimate fulfilment in the cross. Marshall (1996:775, 776) reiterates, “Words in the Gospels and in the New Testament refer to Jesus generally (Acts 7:36; Hebrews 2:6, Psalm 8:5; Revelation 1:13; 14:14. The phrase, “Son of Man” is used more frequently to refer to Jesus in the Gospels. Biblical reference refers to the “Son of Man,” in all four Gospels (John 3:14, 15; 8:28; 12:34).” The Son of Man occurs fourteen times in Mark. It is used thirty times by Matthew and Luke uses it twenty-five times. Since the aim of this article is not examine the phrase in the entire Gospels, concentration is on the Gospel of John. The theological discussion is therefore in context Son of Man. John presents the Son of Man as coming down from heaven and ascending to where he originally came. The parallels illustrate saying about the angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man. What does John's theological expression on Son of Man, wants his readers to understand about the Son of Man? How does he actualize it? R. Alan Culpepper (1999:66,67,68,69,86,87) notes that “The central aim of Johannine Christology is to explain the intimate relationship between Jesus and God (John 3:13). John takes over the idea of the Son of Man, and ending in his ultimate obedient act at the cross.” Furthermore, from biblical and theological point of view, Culpepper theological view does not resolve the comprehensive meaning of the Son of Man.

There is more in presenting Jesus, as the Son of Man in John's Gospel because his use of ‘the Son of Man’ is not accidental. Francis J. Moloney (1999:14) opines that “It is used to express Jesus' relationship to God particularly in the contexts of Judgement, life-giving, passion and exaltation. It is incomplete to isolate and systematize Christological motifs” on the basis of historical theories and argues for a holistic approach.” These views of scholars spark a question on what really is John's usage of Son of Man, is different from Son of God? Mark uses the term Son of man to emphasize the humanity of Jesus. While John emphasizes the deity of Jesus. It is true that there is the witness of the Son of Man humanity and his passion. But how is John's use of this terminology differing from that of the Synoptics? How does John's use of the phrase explain the hypostatic union? The presentation of Son of Man in the Gospel of John differs from the Synoptics in the sense that in John 1:51, Son of Man is presented as contact with God through angelic instrumentality. While in John 6:26 and 6:53 the Son of Man provides life through his death, and in John 5:27, the Son of Man holds the power to judge men. Thus, a theological position of the Son of Man in the Gospel of John needs explanation.

5.1. Pre-Existent Son of Man

The Son of man in the Gospel of John descends from the pre-existent status as God (John 1:1) to incarnate himself in human flesh and dwell among humanity. John Painter (1992:1878) explains that “The only one qualified to ascend to heaven is the pre-existent one who descended from heave. The Son of Man is Jesus' own self-description he uses the title twelve times in the Gospel of John (John 1:51, 3:13, 14; 5:27; 6:27, 53, 62; 8:28; 9:35; 12:23;13:31). In John 12:34, his language is quoted back to him. It ranks second behind “Son” in the sense of Son of God as Jesus' favorite self-description in the Gospel of John.

Son of God reflects the unique and intimate relationship between the Father and Jesus. He is uniquely Son because he is monogenes, that is the only one of his kind, (John 3:16). There is no other sonship like his.

Father and Son share an intimacy that is rooted in their essence of divinity. They are one. Son of Man has often been characterized as a focus on the humanity of Jesus, that is, he was born of woman. He is a human being. The Gospel of John certainly stresses the humanity of Jesus. Jesus ate and drank like other humans. He experienced fatigue. But another question is, what is the function of this title Jesus employed? Does Jesus use the title to alert his hearers to his own humanity and his identification with human predicament? Does Jesus use Son of God to refer to his divinity and Son of Man to signal his humanity? Is there more narrative to the story than that? John Painter (1983:48) notes that "The relationship between Jesus and the Father begins with the pre-existence of the Logos forming the Gospel's Christology." David L. Mealand (1979:450,452,459,460) notes that "Jesus' relationship with God is particularly in view in the first half of the Gospel. The title 'Son of God' means a great deal much more than simply 'King of Israel' or Hellenistic God-man." Mealand (1979:459,460) reiterates that "The relationship between the Father and the Son means that the Father glorifies the Son, who in turn glorifies the Father. Jesus is the Son of God in an exclusive sense, exercising the divine functions of judgment and giving his life." Jesus alone has seen, speaks for, and works for his Father (John 3:16-17; 3:35; 5:20, 22, 26; 10:38; 3:36; 5:21,23; 6:40; 1:14; 18; 3:16,18; 5:22, 30; 8:16; 9:39; 4:14; 6:40,47,54, 10:28; 6:46; 8:38; 3:34; 8:26-28 and 32, 37) Pedder Borgen (1968:137,138,148) opines that "Jesus sent by God has a Jewish legal flavor in that the sent One can fully represent the sender." W. E. Sproston (1985:79) opines that "In crucifixion, the consummation of Christ's predictions that he would manifest the full glory of God." This position has internal evidence in John 12:23; 13:31; 17:1). The relationship between Christ and believers is stressed in John's Gospel. This relationship appears in the prologue (John 1:12-13). The emphasis on eschatology presents in John's Gospel serves to highlight the life and death importance. The two themes are intertwined (John 6:37-40). The salvation of the believer is the Father's purposeful, inexorable, gift to the Son in the sense that the Son will grant the requests of believers in order that the Father should be glorified in the Son (John 14:13). Jesus' prayer is an example of the relationship between the Father, the Son and believers (John 17). "

The post-resurrection climax is that God is my Father, my God and your God (John 20:30). This is the two-fold concept: "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). Putting the pre-existent concept in its proper biblical context, John's presentation of Jesus in both pre-existent divinity and humanity is worthy of both his soteriological and Christological essence right. F. Hahn (1969:347,348,349, 350, & 351), notes that "The crowds understand that Jesus is the dying Son of Man but they do not understand how this son of Man can also be Christ." Leon Morris (1971:173) notes that "In John's Gospel, the term is always associated with either Christ's heavenly glory or with the salvation he came to bring. The "Son of Man" then points us to Christ's conception of himself as of heavenly origin and as the processor of heavenly glory. At one and at the same time, it points us to his lowliness and his sufferings for [humanity]. The two are the same." Beasley-Murray (199:28) notes that "While the synoptic give prominence to the future revelation of the Son of Man, the Evangelist stresses the revelation of the divine sovereignty in the incarnate life of the Son of Man..."

The Son of Man in John's Gospel is aimed at explaining the cordial relationship between Jesus and God and to further explain the saving relationship between Jesus and those who believe in him. Although the first theme is logical and ontological prior to the second, the Evangelist is aiming to explain both the ultimate act of expressing the intimate relationship between him and the Father and the means by which believers can enter into a saving relationship. The incarnate life of the Son of Man culminates in his exaltation to heaven via the cross. Also, the intimate relationship is fulfilled in the salvation of believers and the basis of salvation is their intimate relationship in Christ. The incarnate life of the Son of Man as well as his presentation as the Son of God is themes that cannot be separated.

The Son of Man is a revelatory title that has a significant role in explaining both themes. The concept of the Evangelist's soteriology is not separated from his Christological knowledge so he presents the Son of Man to explain the importance. We only know the Son of God through the Son of Man, and we are judged for how we act on the basis of this knowledge. Reading it within context of the Old Testament, the Son of Man motif in Daniel climaxes with the installation of the Son of Man as eternal king; where one 'like a son of man' comes with the clouds of heaven, is presented before the Ancient of Days and given universal and everlasting dominion and glory, and appears to represent the persecuted and vindicate the people of God. (Daniel 7). The "Son of Man" in John's Gospel has come under theological debate. What is the use of the son of Man in the Gospel?

5.2. Use of Son of Man in the Gospel of John

The initial use of the title Son of Man in the Gospel is recorded in (John 1:51). John 1 shows that the titles applied to Jesus. The Son of Man is referred to as God (John 1:1), Son (John 1:18), Lamb (John 1:29, 36), Elect (John 1:34), Messiah (1:41) and Son of Joseph (1:45). "Son of Man" is Jesus' own language for his identity. Nathaniel believed on Jesus because of Jesus' intimate knowledge of him, but Jesus promised that he would "see greater things than that." Specifically, and with the emphatic emphasis of "I tell you the truth," he promised all the disciples that they would "see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." The language alludes to Jacob's vision in Genesis 28:12. It is a rich metaphor which probably includes several ideas. Jesus is where humanity and divinity intersect. He is the revelatory Word of God addressing humanity through the presence of divine glory. That "heaven opened" pictures the pouring out of divine reality into the world which includes judgment (Isaiah 24:18; cf. John 5:27) and life (Deuteronomy 28:12; cf. John 6:53).

Jesus is the locus of divine glory on earth—the place where heaven and earth meet. In the story of Nicodemus (John 3:13-14), Jesus declares that kingdom people are born "from above" through the work of the Spirit. This, according to Jesus, is a "heavenly" thing, and only the one who can speak it is the one "who came from heaven—the Son of Man." At the same time the one "came from heaven" is also the only one who "has ever gone into heaven." This is the language of descent and ascent. The Son of Man is a heavenly person who comes down from heaven (incarnation; cf. John 1:14) and returns to heaven (ascension; cf. John 20:17). However, between the descent and the ascent is a crucial saving event called "lifting up." Like the snake in the wilderness (Numbers 21:4-9), "the Son of Man must be lifted up." The wilderness event saved those who trusted in God through looking at the snake, but judged those who refused. In the same way, the cross of Jesus will save those who believe but condemn those who reject the Son (John 3:16, 36). Life comes to those who believe but

judgment to those who do not. In the judgment theme (John 5:27), Jesus rehearses a similar theme in John 5:24— “whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life” but those who do not will be condemned (John 5:29).

The Son of God is given “authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.” This judgment is eschatological in character, that is, it occurs on a coming day when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of Man and rise to life or condemnation. The Son has authority to give life (John 5:21) or to condemn (Judge; John 5:27). Concerning the Living Food (John 6:27, 53, 62), the Son of Man, Jesus tells those who are seeking loaves that only satisfy for a moment, gives “food that endures to eternal life” (John 6:27). Indeed, the Son of Man is himself the living bread of the Passover meal. He is the “bread of life” (John 6:35). This eternal life is present but also eschatological, that is, it is the life of the resurrection on the last day (John 6:40). Jesus, then, becomes more specific about the reality of this living food which gives eternal life. One must, Jesus says, “eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood” in order to have life (John 6:53). Flesh and blood clearly point to the humanity of the Son of Man but the “eternal life” (John 6:54) that comes through eating and drinking points us to the heavenly nature of the Son of Man. Eating and drinking are means by which, Jesus says, one “remains in me, and I in him.” It is a spiritual union, an intimacy that is made possible by the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb and by our ingesting that sacrifice. “Eating flesh” is too much for some disciples as they grumbled about his meaning. But this eating is a one that is rooted in the exalted nature of the Son of Man whom they will “see...ascend to where he was before” (John 6:62). His return to heaven—the ascension—empowers the Spirit to give life even when flesh in and of itself “counts for nothing” (John 6:63).

The exalted, ascended Son of Man gives life by the power of the Spirit to his disciples through the eating of his flesh and the drinking of his blood. The uniqueness of the Son in John 8:28, shows that Jesus is the “light of the world” (John 8:12)—the revelation of God, the Word of God. This is rooted in his unique relationship with the father (John 8:16) and the fact that he is “not of this world” (John 8:23). He has come down from heaven as one sent by the Father. But the climactic revelation of this relationship is the cross when fallen humanity lifts up the Son of Man (John 8:28). In that moment the heavenly origin of Jesus will be revealed and the world judged? From biblical point of view, there is healing Presence (John 9:35). In Jerusalem Jesus healed a man who had been born blind. Refusing to accept the miracle, the temple leaders excluded him. When Jesus “found him,” he asked, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” The association of “Son of Man” title with this healing act reflects the eschatological reality that the Son of Man will inaugurate. There will be no curse, no blindness, but only the revelation of the glory of God. A blind man sees the Son of Man—that is the life and joy that God brings through the Son of Man.

The Son is Lifted Up (John 12:23, 34). Now the “hour” has arrived. It is the moment when the Son of Man is to be lifted up—and this involves both glorification (John 12:23) and death (John 12:32-34). When the Son of Man is lifted up, the name of the Father is glorified (John 12:28). Also, when the Son of Man is lifted up, the Son of Man dies like a “kernel of wheat” planted in the ground to produce life. George Moloney (1977:11,12, 13,22) opines that “Since the Son of Man is usually associated with being lifted up, it is reasonably clear that the suffering figure in Isaiah has been used to exegete Daniel 7.” The Son of Man glorifies the Father through submissive obedience as an expression of the intimacy the Son feels for the Father (John 12:27-28) and this glorifies the Father. The Son of Man is the Lamb of God who goes to the slaughter (cf. Isaiah 53:1 quoted in John 12:38) and is lifted up for

the sake of the world in obedience to the Father. Disciples who serve Jesus must also “follow” him in honouring the Father who will in return honour the one who serves Jesus (John 12:26). The Glory of the Son of Man in John 13:31, is to glorify the Father through his death, and in response God will glorify the Son. This is the intimacy of their relationship. The Son of Man obeys the Father and the Father loves the Son, and they share the glory of redemption by inviting humanity into their own communion.

The glory of the Son and Father is the inclusion of broken humanity in the Triune unity of the Father, Son and Spirit—a theme prominent in the Farewell Discourse (John 13:31-17:26). From a theological and biblical understanding, one can say it is appropriate to compare the enthronement of the Messiah. Psalms 2 and 110, speak of the decree of God concerning the Messiah. That is why John's initial mention of the Son of Man has eternal evidence that climax to a series of identifying Jesus as the lamb, elect of God, Messiah, Son of Joseph and Son of God who is the king of Israel (John 1:29; 36, 34, 41,45, and 49). Thus, the theology of the Son of Man in the Gospel of John is significant.

6. A theological Reflection of the Son of Man

The way forward is to analyse the Gospel's entire narrative in order to come up with the purpose for which the Evangelist uses the phrase "Son of Man" in his Gospel. The relationship between Jesus and the Father begins from (John 1:1-2) onwards, with the pre-existence of the Logos forming the fundamental presupposition of the Gospel's Christology." David L. Mealand (1979:450,452,459,460) notes that "Jesus' relationship with God is particularly in view in the first half of the Gospel. The title 'Son of God' means a great deal much more than simply 'King of Israel' or Hellenistic God-man." Mealand (1979:459,460) reiterates that "The relationship between the Father and the Son means that the Father glorifies the Son, who in turn glorifies the Father. Jesus is the Son of God in an exclusive sense, exercising the divine functions of judgment and giving his life."

The identity of Jesus as the Son is the one who descended from heaven to obey the Father by being lifted up on a cross in order that believers might have eternal life in the resurrection and the disobedient judged by the light of God's glory. The Son of Man as the Descended Heavenly Figure demonstrates Jesus' role as the "Son of Man" is deeply connected with his unique relationship to the Father as the Son of God. It is because he is Son of God that he comes to earth as Son of Man. The Son of Man is sent by God from heaven to earth to accomplish the redemption of humanity through his obedience and to be the light of God in the midst of the world's darkness. The Son of Man descends from a pre-existent status as "God" (John 1:1) to incarnate himself in human flesh and dwell among us. This is the one who not only lived in the bosom of the Father but now comes to earth to reveal the Father and manifest the glory of God in a broken world.

The Son of Man is not simply a human being but the one who comes from heaven and is returning to heaven. Their intimacy bears the fruit of redemption in the cross. The cross of Jesus, however, both saves and condemns. The cross draws some into fellowship with the Father but it repels others. Some trust in Jesus but others reject him. The cross is God's saving act for believers but it condemns those who trust the darkness. The Son of Man is an apocalyptic Savior and judge—the whole cosmos will answer to him. The cross is the focus of both God's saving work and his judgment. The Son of Man as Ascended Eschatological Figure does not remain dead but is born again through resurrection (I Corinthians 14).

The seed that is planted in death produces a new life in the resurrection. In this sense the Son of Man is a human being from the future. He is new humanity anticipating a new creation. The resurrection inaugurates a new reality that will be consummated in a new heaven and new earth. The Son of Man, as new human, returns to heaven; he ascends to the Father. There he pours out the Holy Spirit upon his disciples who live in the intimacy, power and giftedness of the Spirit for the mission entrusted to them. By the power of that Spirit, the Son of Man is yet present to his disciples through eating and drinking, that is, the Lord's Supper. This is life, and it is the eternal life of the Ascended One who will raise us from the dead on the last day. The Son of Man is both the guarantor of believers' own resurrection and the life of their resurrection because of his own resurrection.

7. Conclusion

From the many biblical contexts and conclusions that might be drawn from the work of this article, about the Son of Man in John's Gospel, first, the Gospel can no longer be taken in isolation from the Synoptic Gospels. John encourages among other things, to take all the

Gospels together in order to arrive at a properly rounded view of Jesus and Christian tradition about him. It is not an accident to have all four Gospels. Thus, John complements the others to show how to interpret them. Second, there is much about the historical nature of John's tradition which has come to light. While John's Gospel is seriously concerned about the historical basis of Christian faith that appears to be writing against the background of reliable Christian tradition, John is not only concerned with history in a sense of what happened. John is aware of his theological meaning and existential appeal for all time in his uses of Son of Man.

The words of Jesus, the Son of Man in John's Gospel which are the words of the risen Jesus, can still be his words for contemporary Christians today. Third, Smalley (1998:282) confirms "That history traceable from Revelation to 3 John, reveals a circle of wrestling with the implications of Jesus' tradition for their own belief and behavior, and we can learn from this struggle and from real experience of God in Christ to which John himself is laying claim in his evangel." In the light of this context, it is important to raise the question of significance and meaning for the contemporary church and Christians in society. There are many points to raise, but four are particularly significant for our present walk with God. First, the Son of God became Son of Man in order to reveal the Father. Humanity knows the Father most clearly and fundamentally through Jesus as the image of the Father.

The Son of Man is the revelatory bridge between God and humanity. He is the intersection between heaven and earth and the way, the truth and the Life to the Father (John 14:6). J. I. Packer (1993:59) affirms that "The incarnation is in itself an unfathomable mystery, but it makes sense of everything else that the New Testament contains." Second, through the Son of Man Christians are united to the Father and experience the same intimacy with the Father that the Son of Man has with the Father. The Father loves believers just as he loves the Son (John 17:23). The Father dwells in them and they in him just as the Father dwells in the Son and the Son in him. The Father and Son did not abandon Christians when the Son returned to heaven but sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in them through whom they experience the intimate communion and love of the Triune God. Believers' intimacy with the Father in the Son and the Spirit is real, authentic and it is available to all who trust in the one who was lifted up for their sakes. Third, the Father, the Son of Man and power of the Holy Spirit is among believers always and when they eat and drink at the table of the Lord.

The realistic language upsets many as it did disciples at the time it was spoken but the reality is the spiritual communion between Jesus and his disciples. Through the relationship of the Triune God, Christians enjoy not only the forgiveness that the death of Jesus produced for them but they also enjoy the eternal life that is experienced in the communion of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit with those who sit at the table eating and drinking in the kingdom of God. This is communal, spiritual nourishment as they experience eternal life even now while they yet live in these broken bodies. When they eat and drink the life of the Son at this table, they experience even now the new, abundant life he brings and anticipate the fullness of that life in the coming resurrection.

Fourth, just as the Son of Man was sent, so now he sends his disciples. The Son of Man was obedient, even to the cross, and those who believe on him must follow him, even to the cross. Just as the Son of Man, Christians are sent into the world for the sake of the world to the glory of God. His mission has become their mission, that is, to obey the Father so that the glory of God might shine in the world. Redeemed by the Father, son, and by the Holy Spirit. Klaus Detlev Schulz (2009:287) concretely notes that "Christians already immersed in

the life of the Church may serve precisely as those who assist first -hearers in deepening their knowledge of the Gospel.” Schulz (2009:299) further reiterates “As God's redeemed community, she continues to receive life from God but then also unselfishly passes on the gift of life in Christ in the world (John 3:16). The church administers the precious lifelines of the Word and Sacrament, not only in the context of worship but also in a kerygmatic sacramental activity to the unbelieving world.” Therefore, to keep the Church in contemporary era live with expectation of the return of the Son of Man, certain biblical recommendations are inevitable.

8. Recommendations

When considering the Son of Man incarnation two important theological and biblical truths should be borne in mind: First, Christ, the Son of Man/Son of God at the same time and in the absolute sense very God and very man. Second, in becoming Son of Man in the flesh, he though laying aside his glory, in no sense laid aside his deity. In his son incarnation, he retained every eternal attribute of deity. His full deity and full humanity are in tandem to his work on the cross. If he were not man, he could not die. If he were not God, his death would not have had infinite value. Third, in his book, *A Cry for Help*.

Dadang (2022:142) reiterate his theological conviction that the distance between God and humanity is already bridged in Christ by the Holy Spirit and through his active church, and not that mission bridges the gap between God and humanity (John 3:17; 5:30; 11:42; 14:26; 16:7; 17:18). The incarnation of God in Jesus Christ is the union of a divine and human nature in one person (John 1:1–4, 14; 10:30). Jesus needed to possess both the divine and human natures in order to redeem humanity (John 1:29–34). Divine power was necessary in order to affect the redemption, and Christ's humanity was necessary in order for the redemption to be accomplished in it (Col 1:13–14, 19–20). The peak is the cross, death, and his resurrection (John 19:30, 11:25; 1 Pet 1:3). The Logos, the second person of the Trinity who became incarnate in Jesus Christ, is never without the human nature. Christ's relationship of potency was an entirely voluntary act of the most extreme self-renunciation imaginable (Phil 2:6–7). The Trinitarian concept is that salvation consists in its fullness of acts by God the Father sending forth the Son and the Father and Son sending the Holy Spirit. Hence, the relationship of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ remains united (John 1:1–5, 14, 10:30).

Fourth, humanity is not saved from judgment by believing that Jesus has an intimate relationship with God, which was revealed by his death. Rather, humans are saved from judgment by believing in the Son of Man himself. He is the One who came down from heaven. He is in unique relationship with the Father and He died for our sins, thereby saving us from judgment and giving us life, now and forever. John has both a theology of the cross and a consistent eschatology but is concerned, above all, to relate everything to the historical person of Jesus Christ who came in the flesh (compare John 4:2, 2John 1:7). He wants us to know two things about Jesus Christ: First, there is an intimate relationship between Jesus and God. Second, there is a saving relationship between Jesus and those who believe in him. The 'Son of Man' is an important aspect of this Christological revelation. Fifth, in the economy of God, the Father sends the Son, the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit, and the Triune God sends the church.

Sixth, that is why Hahn (1969:347,351) asserts that John 12 brings the Johannine Christology of the Son of Man to a climax and not merely a title. Manfred Brauch during the

Spring of 2004 explained when he taught the Gospel of John concluded that the Incarnation of the life-giving resorting, supporting, creating and transforming word of God in Jesus must find expression in the life and relationships of those who are his disciples. For John, this is the mission of the church, the community of Jesus' followers, empowered by the [Holy Spirit] ...bearing witness to that truth and living the life that leads to transformed human life and relationships: life in its fullness. The cross is of supreme importance for both themes in the Johannine Christology. It is the primary act of obedience of Jesus to the Father. But it is not a subjective obedient act, as if the Son suffers simply because the Father wants him to. It is a purposeful obedient act with the aim of dying for and saving sinners and hence glorifying both the Father and the Son. Therefore, the Church is to uphold the doctrinal stand point that Son of Man is an eternal and human heavenly figure.

Seventh, John F. Walvoord (1982: 12) affirms that "Discussions concerning the relationship of the human and divine natures finally achieved a standard of orthodoxy when the person of Christ was defined as having a complete human nature and a complete divine nature united in one person without moral complication." The incarnation of God in Jesus Christ is the union of the divine and the human nature in one person (John 1:1-4; 14; 10:30). Jesus needed to possess both the divine and human in order to redeem humanity (John 1:29). Divine power was necessary in order to affect the redemption, and human being was necessary in order for the redemption to be accomplished in it (Colossians 1:13-14; John 19:20). Palmer (2015:76,77) argues that "It should be obvious that Jesus was fully human. John said that the Word became flesh and lived among us (John 1:14). Jesus was born of a human mother in Bethlehem. In our modern times, liberalism denies Christ's divinity. But the global evangelical movement affirms this historic truth. In 451 the early church held a council at Chalcedon. This council concluded that Jesus is one person with two natures: a divine nature and a human nature."

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