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THE SON OF MAN

The first intentional use of Son of man by Jesus functions as a substitute for His personal pronoun "I," and as such conveys extraordinary claims of authority on His part, quite different from its ordinary and simple reference to "man" in the psalms and as a form of address in Ezekiel. As Jesus uses the title in Mark 2:10, He claims the authority to forgive sins, indicating that He is consciously and creatively investing the title with deep spiritual meaning, tantamount to sharing the prerogatives of God.

Similarly His use of the title in the grain-field episode of Mark 2:28 indicates his authority over the sacred σαββατη, another claim of correlativity with God. The explicitly redemptive character of His ministry is evidenced by His personal claim that "the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 8:20; 11:19; 12:32), which indicates His servanthood.

The second sounds His familiar theme of open table fellowship with outcasts, and the third concludes a powerful passage on His binding of Satan and a warning about "the unforgivable sin" against the Holy Spirit, by whose power Jesus is invading the demonic kingdom, another personal claim to correlativity with God. Matthew sayings are two in number (13:3; 11:13) and imply respectively that is, He is the Lord of the harvest), and that He knows who He is.

For since the Christology is so high and Jesus so aware of His equality with God, radical redaction criticism must be completely reassessed as to the originality of Jesus and the creativity of the early Church if these sayings are accepted as genuine.

Son of Man as Prophecy - This is equally true of the second group of Son of man sayings in which Jesus prophesies of His future suffering. If the first group is accepted as authentic, the second follows coherently. If on a priori grounds the first is rejected, then the second group will be rejected as "prophecies" of the church created after the fact. Of the eleven passages in this category, eight are in Mark (8:31; 9:12, 31; 10:33; 14:21, 41) and all disclose Jesus' messianic awareness that He is to suffer as a ransom for many. In considerable detail Jesus foretells His betrayal, condemnation, death, and resurrection.

The temptation of the naturalistic critic will be to explain these prophecies as church created, but only if the reality of biblical prophecy and the incarnation are discounted. On the assumption that the evangelist is giving an authentic account of Jesus' prophecies; a coherent picture of His personal awareness of His redemptive mission and His authority as the true Prophet of God [Deut. 18:15-22].

The third group appears to be more enigmatic in the sense that Jesus refers to the Son of man in the third person. A number of more radical interpreters take this to mean that Jesus was referring to another than Himself, and since the sayings, interpreted in this fashion, would not suggest His messianic self-consciousness, they are willing to allow the possibility of authenticity. There are nineteen of these

sayings, all of which portray the Son of man as a glorified divine being, whereas in the first two groupings Jesus generally speaks of Himself in terms of humility and suffering.

It is important to note that, the Son of man, who is given everlasting dominion and glory and kingdom by the Ancient of Days. Jesus consciously personifies the Son of man, and as He draws His disciples about Him and empowers them to participate in His redemptive reign He allows them to share in the corporate Son of man as saints of the Most High, and in His reign as He as king inaugurates the kingdom of God. Son of man and kingdom of God appear to be nearly interchangeable in both individual and corporate senses.