

the Day of the Lord, or an equivalent concept, on which those independent of the sovereignty of Yahweh will experience a terrifying visitation of judgment. This biblical usage would have been familiar to Jesus' contemporaries. Fourth, the series of woes which constituted the prophecy of Joshua ben Ananiah, a near contemporary of Jesus, are laments, not pronouncements of judgment.<sup>59</sup> In spite of the formal similarity of the woes of Jesus and those of Joshua ben Ananiah, they function quite differently in their respective contexts.

## V. PREDICTIONS OF THE COMING SON OF MAN

Few subjects have been as hotly debated in NT studies as the origin, history, and significance of the Son of man traditions preserved in the gospels.<sup>60</sup> The title "Son of man" is found only on the lips of Jesus, apart from two insignificant exceptions (John 12:34; Acts 7:56). The early church regarded the figure of the Son of man as identical with Jesus, though the evidence in support of this contention in the gospels appears only in the later strata of the tradition. In the Son of man oracles which we shall consider in this section, the title is consistently used by Jesus in the third person and never as a self-reference. That is, the sayings themselves do not indicate that Jesus was referring to himself, though the early Christian community and the evangelists certainly assumed that he was. Modern discussions of the Son of man traditions in the gospels have usually grouped them in three categories: (1) the "earthly," or present, Son of man sayings, (2) the "suffering" Son of man sayings, and (3) the "coming," or "eschatological," Son of man sayings. Although critical scholars have rejected the authenticity of one or another (or indeed all) of these categories, the one which is most consistently regarded as authentic is that which contains the eschatological Son of man sayings.<sup>61</sup> In this section we shall discuss those sayings which exhibit the form of a prediction by Jesus of the future coming of the Son of man.

One such prediction has occasioned a great deal of discussion in recent years. One version of this saying is found in Q, Matt. 10:32-33 par. Luke 12:8-9, and the other in Mark 8:38 and parallels (Matt. 16:27; Luke 9:26). The most original form of the saying appears to be the version found in Luke 12:8-9:

- a Every one who acknowledges me before men,
- b the son of man also will acknowledge before  
the angels of God;
- a' but he who denies me before men
- b' will be denied before the angels of God.<sup>62</sup>

The form of this saying is that of a pronouncement of sacral law in which the second couplet is antithetically parallel to the first. Although the Son of man is not identified with Jesus in the first couplet,<sup>63</sup> he does stand in a very close relationship to Jesus since he provides eschatological confirmation for the proclamation of Jesus. The passive "will be denied" in the last line of the second couplet is a circumlocution expressing divine activity, and therefore indicative of the status of the Son of man as the plenipotentiary of God. The soteriological dimensions of this saying are striking.<sup>64</sup> Those who respond to the proclamation of Jesus and are admitted to the fellowship of Jesus will be confirmed in their choice by the Son of man when the kingdom of God arrives in its fulness. While Jesus does not *explicitly* identify himself with this future Son of man, the complementary function of the two figures makes such an identification

implicit.<sup>65</sup> The saying is thoroughly apocalyptic in content and supposes that there will be a future judgment scene in which the righteous (those who acknowledge Jesus) will be separated from the sinners (those who deny Jesus). The “coming” of the Son of man, while not explicitly mentioned in this saying, is certainly presupposed; the saying was later elaborated to explicate this idea in Mark 8:38 (Matt. 16:27; Luke 9:26):

For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation,  
of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Along with the addition of the “coming” motif, the divine sonship of the Son of man is made explicit by the reference to “his Father.” The most original form of this saying, preserved in Luke 12:8-9, is probably authentic, although many regard the structure of the saying as a speech form of early Christian prophecy.<sup>66</sup>

The conception of the coming Son of man is rooted in Dan. 7:13-14:

I saw in the night visions,  
and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man,  
and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.  
And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom,  
that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him;  
his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away,  
and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Two other synoptic Son of man sayings are more clearly dependent on the Danielic Son of man, Mark 13:26-27 and 14:62:

And then they will see the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of earth to the ends of heaven.

And Jesus said, “I am [the son of the blessed]; and you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”

The association of clouds, the figure of the Son of man, and the verbs “see” and “come” make it quite clear that this constellation of imagery derives from Dan. 7:13-14. In addition, the reference to the seating of the Son of man at the right hand of Power is a clear reference to Ps. 110:1, which early Christians used in combination with Dan. 7:13-14 to conceptualize their faith in Jesus who had been resurrected and would some day return.<sup>67</sup> While the content of both sayings is clearly predictive, their authenticity is doubtful. Further, there is little in their form which would associate them with any specific forms of prophetic speech.

Another group of coming Son of man sayings is found almost exclusively in Q, and each conforms to the structure of the eschatological correlative discussed above. The first such saying is Luke 11:30 (Matt. 12:40):

For as Jonah became a sign to the men of Nineveh, so will the Son of man be to this generation.<sup>68</sup>

A second correlative is found in Luke 17:24 (Matt. 24:27):

For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of man be in his day.<sup>69</sup>

The third and fourth correlatives are preserved within a tightly structured framework in Luke 17:26-30 (Matt. 24:37-39):

- I    *a*    As it was in the days of Noah,  
       *b*    so will it be in the days of the Son of man.  
       *c*<sup>1</sup>     They ate, they drank,  
       *c*<sup>2</sup>     they married, they were given in marriage,  
       *d*    until the day when Noah entered the ark,  
       *e*    and the flood came and destroyed them all.
- II    *a*    Likewise as it was in the days of Lot—  
       *c*<sup>1</sup>     they ate, they drank,  
       *c*<sup>2</sup>     they bought, they sold,  
       *c*<sup>3</sup>     they planted, they built,  
       *d*    but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom  
       *e*    fire and sulphur rained from heaven and  
           destroyed them all—  
       *b*    so will it be on the day when the Son of  
           man is revealed.<sup>70</sup>

This saying of Jesus is characterized by a remarkably complex structure based on the principle of ring composition or chiasmus.<sup>71</sup> While the Semitic poetic structure alone does not guarantee that we are dealing with an authentic saying of Jesus, the presence of such an unusually complex structure is a forceful argument for authenticity.

The three sayings quoted above all exhibit the form of the eschatological correlative, and they all focus on the future judgment in which the figure of the Son of man will play a central role. As in the other coming Son of man sayings discussed above, so here the Son of man is not explicitly identified with Jesus. The correlative form is not exclusively a prophetic speech form, yet the apocalyptic content of these sayings indicates that it does function in that way here.<sup>72</sup>

The last prediction of the coming Son of man which we shall consider is Matt. 10:23, a saying whose form cannot easily be categorized:

When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel, before the Son of man comes.

Few sayings of Jesus have elicited as much controversy as this one, primarily because of the central role it played in A. Schweitzer's reconstruction of the life and ministry of Jesus.<sup>73</sup> Schweitzer regarded Matt. 10:23 as an authentic apocalyptic prediction of Jesus, who expected the present age to close and the future age to dawn before the mission of the Twelve was completed. According to Schweitzer, when this expectation failed to materialize Jesus experienced his first crisis, which led him to attempt to force the coming of the kingdom by going to Jerusalem. More recently Matt. 10:23 has been interpreted as an apocalyptic prediction which arose within early Jewish Christianity; the oracle is regarded as evidence for the lively expectation of the imminent return of the Son of man and for the urgency of the Christian mission in consequence of this belief.<sup>74</sup>

Several observations about this problematic text are in order. First, there is no guarantee that the saying originally was connected with the mission of the Twelve; more likely it circulated as an isolated logion.<sup>75</sup> Second, the time limit set for the coming of the Son of man is vague in that it is linked with the completion of a task

whose scope cannot easily be defined. Third, a saying of this nature appears authentic precisely because of its difficulty; it is no less likely to have originated with the historical Jesus than with the earliest Palestinian community.

The synoptic traditions of the coming Son of man are preserved in sayings of Jesus that appear to be prophetic in that they predict a future event which will be of momentous consequences for the present ministry and message of Jesus. The coming Son of man sayings which appear to have the greatest claim to authenticity are those which exhibit a two-part structure in terms of a present-future polarity. The Son of man was the agent of God who rendered judgment and provided salvation for those who had responded to the proclamation of Jesus in a negative or positive manner. Just as the prophets of the OT were in general not concerned with the future in and of itself but rather with the future as a divine response to the present (or past) behavior of mankind, so Jesus sees the future coming of the Son of man as an eschatological confirmation of the truth of his own proclamation.

## VI. THE OLIVET DISCOURSE (MARK 13 AND PARALLELS)

Jesus' eschatological discourse in Mark 13:1-32 (Matt. 24:1-36; Luke 21:5-33), sometimes referred to as the Synoptic Apocalypse, constitutes the longest and most concentrated section of the synoptic gospels devoted exclusively to the description of the events surrounding the end of the age. The content of this discourse may be summarized as follows. After emerging from the temple, one of Jesus' disciples commented on the beauty of the building, whereupon Jesus responded by predicting its total destruction (Mark 13:1-2).<sup>76</sup> Proceeding to the Mount of Olives, they sat down and some disciples asked Jesus, "When will this be, and what will be the sign when these things are all to be accomplished?" (vv. 3-4). Jesus then enumerated a variety of signs presaging the end: the appearance of charlatans, wars, earthquakes, and famines (vv. 5-8). Further, the disciples would experience hatred and persecution, "but he who endures to the end will be saved" (vv. 9-13). When the "desolating sacrilege" is seen, those in Judea must flee quickly; the tribulation which follows would be the worst the world has experienced (vv. 14-20). False messiahs and false prophets would appear to deceive even the elect with signs and wonders (vv. 21-23). After the tribulation there will be heavenly signs followed by the coming of the Son of man in the clouds to gather his elect from the earth (vv. 24-27). Just as one knows that summer is near when the fig tree starts to produce leaves, so when these events begin to unfold the Son of man is near (vv. 28-29). Finally, Jesus concluded by saying, "This generation will not pass away till all these things take place," yet no one — not even the Son of man — knows precisely when this will be (vv. 30-32).

The Olivet Discourse, like the Sermon on the Mount in Matt. 5-7, was not delivered by Jesus in the form in which it has come down to us in the synoptic gospels. The present unity of Mark 13 is the result of the editorial work of the evangelist, who welded together previously discrete sayings of Jesus into a relatively unified composition.<sup>77</sup> Since the discourse contains an apocalyptic scenario of the type frequently found in early Jewish apocalyptic literature, many have supposed that it was based on a previously existing Jewish apocalyptic tract which the evangelist adapted to its present context.<sup>78</sup> However, such a hypothesis is completely unnecessary.

Important progress in the modern study of Mark 13 was made by the Swedish scholar L. Hartman.<sup>79</sup> Through a careful analysis of the structural relationship of