

The Son of Man in Luke 5:24

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A. Background for the Discussion

The Son of Man title is one of the most complex issues in New Testament studies.¹ The issue has produced endless discussion in this century.² Among the key, recent studies is S. Kim, *The Son of Man as Son of God*.³ We have some sympathy for his basic thesis which relates the Son of Man to the exalted heavenly figure of Daniel 7, which takes Daniel 7 to refer to an individual figure, and which argues that the Son of Man title in Jesus' usage points to Jesus as Son of God who builds the new people of God. However, we are not as confident that it can be established that the title's usage in the NT always explicitly pointed to this background.⁴ Such may be the case, but the NT and

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extra-biblical evidence, as it stands currently, does not allow one to be quite so confident of this conclusion. Even Kim has recognized his hypothesis needs more work to become an established proposal. In the meantime, we set out on a different trail. In short, we end up at the same destination as Kim, but take a different road to get there. His work appears to be part of the equation, but not all of it.

In Luke 5:24, Jesus heals a paralytic and relates that healing to his authority as the "Son of Man." The wording of the verse, including the unusual parenthetical break in the middle, is virtually identical in all three gospels. The fact that all three gospels share the unusual construction suggests a similar source. This verse marks the first use of the title "Son of Man" by Luke. It parallels Mark 2:10, which is also the first appearance of the title in that gospel.⁵ The Matthean

¹ Special thanks goes to participants in the post graduate seminar at the University of Tübingen, who responded to a draft of this article given on May 14, 1990. Particular thanks also goes to Otto Betz and E. Earle Ellis, whose comments were particularly helpful. In addition, special appreciation must be expressed to I. Howard Marshall, who read and carefully commented on the original draft of this article.

² Colpe, *TDNT* 8:400-477, covers many of the issues, but he has but one of several full studies. Among the key recent studies are Casey, *The Son of Man: The Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7* (London: SPCK, 1979) and Caragounis, *The Son of Man: Vision and Interpretation* *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 38 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1986). The most influential German study is Tödt, *Der Menschensohn in der synoptischen Überlieferung*, 4th ed. (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn/Gütersloher Verlaghaus, 1979 ed. of 1959 work), whose work Kim in particular critiques. These works have full bibliographies on the topic.

³ Kim, *The Son of Man as Son of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985 printing of 1983 ed.). Of particular interest is his discussion on pp. 15-30, of the background of the term in relation to apocalyptic imagery and Ezekiel 1.

⁴ One of the fundamental premises of this article is that one must distinguish between what Jesus may have known and how he presented his understanding to his audience. We believe Kim is on the right track regarding the former question, but that the second issue is not so clearly treated.

⁵ Matt 8:20 contains the first use of the title in Matthew.

parallel, Matt 9:6, is the second appearance of the title in that gospel. Luke uses this title 25 times in his gospel, but this text is unique in yet another way. It is the only Son of Man saying in the gospels which is bound immediately and directly to a miracle.⁶ As such, it is a crucial text, not only because it appears early in Jesus' ministry, but also because it links his teaching about himself to his work, showing the connection between the two.

Now some background is needed to understand this title, this text, and the discussion surrounding it. Seven points set the framework for the discussion. On these items there is little debate, though the issue of the "Son of Man" concept and its association to apocalyptic images is opening up again.⁷

1) The phrase in a few Gospel passages is related to Dan 7:13-14 (Luke 21:27; 22:69) and in Hebrews is associated with Psalm 8 (Heb 2:6).

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2) The term comes from Aramaic and would have been used by Jesus in an Aramaic form.⁸

3) The usage in Daniel is not technically speaking a title, but is a description of a human figure who approaches God to receive dominion. In other words, there is no reference to "the" Son of Man here; only the imagery is present.⁹ It should not be ignored, however, that the presence of this figure with this description makes the passage capable of generating a title. Its later history in the NT, 1 Enoch, and 2 Esdras indicates this. The relevant passages appear in 1 Enoch 46:37; 48:4-10; 62:3-9, 14; 63:11; 69:27-29, and 2 Esdras 13. The uses in Enoch point to a revealer (46:3), a judge (62:1-5), a universal ruler (62:12-13), an object of worship (69:29, 62:6-7), and an authority and judge (48:5; 62:6, 9). The image is one of authority derived from Daniel 7. It also is to be noted that the association of this figure with coming on the clouds is an image suggesting divinity.¹⁰

⁶ Matt 12:32 is a Son of Man saying which discusses miracles in relation to the Beelzebul controversy, while John 5:27 and 9:35 relate the Son of Man to miracles, either by discussing Sabbath authority (John 5) or by raising the issue of the identity of the Son of Man (John 9). The saying associated with Luke 5:24 is the only Son of Man saying that comes in the midst of a healing itself.

⁷ This recent, new discussion on apocalyptic may eventually effect points 3-5 below, especially point 5 about whether Jesus or the church is responsible for the use as a title. Kim's work, *The Son of Man as Son of God*, 15-30, summarizes this recent discussion. Defining terms is advisable. When we speak of the Son of Man concept, we speak about the use of the image, "one like a Son of Man." When we speak of the Son of Man as a title, we have in mind its use to describe a specific, eschatological figure, who can then be spoken of as "The Son of Man." In particular, the Son of Man title as a NT phenomena has messianic overtones, but this does not mean, as we shall see, that the phrase when it was used in its original Aramaic setting had such overtones. The phrase in Aramaic may merely have presented an idiom, which could be related to the concept. More on this distinction later.

⁸ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I-IX* (Anchor Bible 28; Garden City, NJ: Doubleday & Co., 1981) 208-9.

⁹ The text simply describes "one like a son of man."

¹⁰ Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern* (JSNTS 12; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987) 133-35. Kim, *The Son of Man as Son of God*, 17-19, though he seems to overemphasize the divinity of the figure at the expense of the humanity in the picture. The Daniel 7 imagery suggests deity; it does not declare it.

4) There is currently no clear evidence that the term at the time of Christ existed as a fixed, specific messianic title in Judaism.¹¹ 1 Enoch 46-48, 62-71 and 2 Esdras 13 are too late to be related to this period with confidence, given that the specific chapters of Enoch are missing in the Qumran materials and that 2 Esdras is too late to be confidently tied to such an early period. Some texts exist, which may eventually challenge this conclusion, but they are too uncertain and fragmentary at the moment to be considered as clear evidence.

5) Thus, the term as a specific messianic title probably emerged either from Jesus or the early church. The presence of the title in the

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NT is almost always with a definite article suggesting a definite reference and a titular use for the NT texts.¹²

6) In this tradition, the key point of association, at least in the synoptics, is Dan 7:13-14.

7) In the NT tradition, with the exception of Acts 7:56, the title is found exclusively on Jesus' lips.

Now scholars will divide these passages into three distinct systems of classification. 1) Most will classify the synoptic uses as: present ministry (or earthly ministry) Son of Man sayings (of which Luke 5:24 is one), suffering Son of Man sayings, and future return (or exaltation) Son of Man sayings.¹³ The benefit of this system is that it relates the sayings to various divisions of Jesus' career: earthly ministry, death, and exaltation-return. The problem with this system is that some sayings refer to more than one period. For example, the concept of rejection can apply to both Jesus' earthly ministry and to his death.

¹¹ Kim, *The Son of Man as Son of God*, 19 and n. 25, mentions that a "heavenly," redemptive figure identified alternatively with Enoch, Abel, or Melchizedek may have existed in the ancient Jewish tradition. But he notes these claims are disputable, since the clear examples are late. He also notes, pp. 20-22, that 4Qps DanA^a (=4Q 243) may prove this limitation incorrect, but it is too early to know what this text means, since all of it has not been published, and it has many gaps. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I-IX*, 209-10, argues that 1 Enoch may be relevant as a transitional move to an apocalyptic individualized use, but he treats the point as too unclear to base much on it. Kim, 19, n. 25, notes all undisputed examples from 1 Enoch and 2 Esdras are later than the Gospels. For the sake of completeness, we list the rabbinic references to the Son of Man concept: t. Sanh. 98a; Midrash Rabbah Number 13:14; Midrash Hag-gadol Gen 49:10; Agadath Bereshith 14:3 and 23:1; p.t. Tannith 2:1; t. Hagiga 11, 1 (14a); t. Sanh. 98b; and Tanhuma Toledot 20 (70b). The major passage in these texts is Dan 7:9-13, though Num 23:19, Zech 9, Ps 72:11, Dan 2:35, and 1 Chr 3:24 also each appear in one passage each.

¹² One exception to this is John 5:27. Rev 1:13 and 14:14 have the "like a son of man" image. The title appears about 82 times in the gospels; BAGD p. 835, 2c; Bauer, *Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (6th ed.), col. 1665, 2c. Both these entries also have bibliography. On the issue of the title in its original setting as a saying of Jesus, see note 7 above.

¹³ Caragounis notes that the title is used 69 times in the synoptics and twelve times in John. He divides the uses as follows: Matthew—30 times with 7 tied to earthly ministry, 10 to suffering and 13 to exaltation; Mark—14 times with 2 tied to earthly ministry, 9 to suffering, and 3 to exaltation; Luke—25 times with 7 tied to earthly ministry, 8 to suffering, and 10 to exaltation. John's gospel does not fit this pattern so it is broken down into three times ("lifted up"), 2 times ("glorified or exalted"), 2 times (going to heaven), 2 times (gives men life through his death), 1 time (ascending/descending), 1 time (object of saving faith), 1 time (authority).

2) Others will classify them as sayings with no reference to Daniel, sayings with indirect reference to Daniel (allusions to Daniel 7, something more than the mere title), or sayings that directly refer to Daniel (citations of Daniel 7).¹⁴ Luke 5:24 would be disputed whether it is a saying with no reference to Daniel or an indirect reference saying. The classification dispute with this system may turn on whether one distinguishes Jesus' understanding of the title from how he reveals it. The value of this system is that it shows the level of OT use in the saying.

3) Still another simpler breakdown is two categories: Authority Son of Man sayings and Rejection Son of Man sayings.¹⁵ In this system, Luke 5:24 is an authority Son of Man saying. The benefit of this twofold division is that the focus is on the biblical concept, not a mix of time and function as appears in the first classification system. What

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is lost is any attempt to focus on which phase or phases of Jesus' ministry are in view. Regardless of the classification system chosen, any category by itself is not good enough by itself to become the basis of decisions about authenticity, such as was done by earlier form critics. Authenticity must be examined on a case by case basis.

B. The Current Debate About the Phrase "Son of Man" in Aramaic

Turning to the meaning of the phrase in the first century Aramaic setting, the debate becomes very complex. The debate centers upon what the Aramaic phrase meant in the first century, given that it was not yet a formal title. The phrase "son of man" by itself, refers to a human, just as the idiom "son of a carpenter" refers to a descendant of a carpenter. Recently, the key participants in this aspect of the debate have been Fitzmyer and Vermes.¹⁶ They both are agreed that the phrase can have two senses. It can mean "someone" or it can mean "man." The debate is whether the term can be another way to say "I," so that a speaker can indirectly refer to just himself, much like English has the editorial "we."¹⁷ In other words, does the phrase mean "people in general, so me included" or to "I and nobody else"? Vermes argues that it can refer exclusively to an individual, while Fitzmyer believes this additional meaning is not attested in material early

¹⁴ So Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (London: Collins, 1973) 178, who discusses both types of classification and prefers the latter.

¹⁵ O. Betz, *Jesus and das Danielbuch: Band II Die Menschensohn Jesu and die Zukunftserwartung des Paulus (Daniel 7,13-14)*, (Arbeiten zum Neuen Testament and Judentum, Band 6/II; Bern: Verlag Peter Lang, 1985) 13.

¹⁶ Fitzmyer, *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (SBLMS 25; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979) 143-61 and his article, "Another View of the 'Son of Man' Debate," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 4 (1979) 58-68. Vermes has an article in Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 3rd ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967) 310-30; also has remarks in *Jesus the Jew*, 188-91.

¹⁷ They speak of a "circumlocution."

enough to support the presence of this sense in the first century.¹⁸ He also argues most recently that it is possible a "circumlocution" use exists in the gospels, as Vermes argues, but goes on to suggest that this is the work of the evangelist which is a "coincidental creation."¹⁹ In other words, the use of the phrase as a narrow title referring exclusively to Jesus is the work of the gospels, not Jesus. For Fitzmyer, if Jesus used the phrase, he used it generically. Fitzmyer still thinks that it is unlikely Jesus used the phrase just of himself. What is one to make of this discussion and the debate that surrounds it? How is the debate relevant (or irrelevant) to Luke 5:24?

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C. The "Son of Man" in Luke 5:24

The debate, in our view, may be a huge rabbit trail. This is not to demean the value of the discussion about the force of the phrase in the original Aramaic. We just think it is not as central an issue as many make it. The value of the background is that it tells us more precisely how Jesus' remark applied to himself. Clearly a circumlocution for "I" (Vermes) is more direct than the reference to "someone" (Fitzmyer). Our point is that the New Testament force works either way the term was taken in its original setting, when it is placed in context with the event. In other words, our aim is to show that the phrase works and has an exclusive referent in Luke 5:24, even with an ambiguous force of "someone." The context of Luke 5:24 makes it clear that in the original setting either sense of the Aramaic, even the ambiguous sense, would contain a veiled reference to Jesus. Either way, contextually, the force of Jesus' use would point just to him. But to argue this point requires the saying can be authentic, which needs defense.

Some argue Jesus may have used the phrase "son of man," but question whether he used it of himself. For example, some, like Bultmann, see the term originally as a reference to all men and appeal to Mark 2:27-28, or else, as Bultmann also argued, they see a reference to another figure besides Jesus.²⁰ Interestingly in Luke 5:24, Bultmann appeals to the plural of the parallel in Matt 9:8, which reads ἐδόξασαν τὸν θεὸν τὸν δόντα ἐξουσίαν τοιαύτην τοῖς ἀνθρώποις. He sees the Matthean form as the earliest form of the tradition, where the church is expressing her claim to be able to forgive sins. This ecclesiastical authority was then rewritten in Mark 2:10 and Luke 5:24 into an expression of Jesus' authority, using the circumlocution sense of Son of Man as meaning "I." But there is a fundamental problem with this approach to Matt 9:8 and its parallel, Luke 5:24. In fact, the problem exists for all attempts to argue that Son of Man means "men" or is a figure for someone other than Jesus. The problem has always been that it cannot really explain the consistent tie of the term exclusively to Jesus in the NT. The early church would not create such usage about Jesus nor use the term of anyone else, because the early church itself does not use this articular form of the title for Jesus in the epistles or in Revelation, nor does the tradition apply the title to anyone but Jesus.

¹⁸ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I-IX*, 209-10, retreats slightly from his earlier position which argued such attestation is entirely missing from the extra-biblical texts. But he argues the evidence from Gen 4:14 Targum Neofiti I and Cairo Targum B is too late to be relevant.

¹⁹ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I-IX*, 210.

²⁰ Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1976 printing of 1963 ed.) 16, 84, 151-52, where he also discusses Luke 12:8-9 and Mark 8:28. On Luke 5:24 and its parallels, 15-16.

Luke 5:24 is a good example of how the term works. The issue in the passage is Jesus' authority. In fact, it is only his authority which is the issue. Let us assume the most ambiguous Aramaic reference to a

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"human" ("someone") for Luke 5:24. Does this broad sense rule out an exclusive self-reference to Jesus? Luke 5:24 reads ἵνα δὲ εἰδῆτε ὅτι ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐξουσίαν ἔχει ἐπι τῆς γῆς ἀφιέναι ἁμαρτίας. The phrase, with its original ambiguous Aramaic force, would translate "so you might know that *a man or someone*²¹ (= NT The Son of Man) has authority to forgive sins on earth." Even with the broad sense, in this context the phrase would mean "so you might know this man has authority to forgive sins"; since 1) it is a given in Judaism that all men did not have this authority (in fact, only God does—Exod 34:6; Ps 103:12, Isa 1:18, 43:25; Jer 31:34), and 2) Jesus is the man who performs the healing in question. The saying is to be applied only to him.

Now the Pharisees in the account get that point clearly (v 21) even before the Son of Man declaration of v 24. Jesus' remark in v 24 only underscores the point. The pursuit of the history of usage fails to deal with issues raised by the passage itself, by assuming that the ambiguous reference cannot fit and that the expression is ambiguous in the reconstructed original form. But there is no problem nor is there ambiguity.²² One other implication exists for the phrase in this original context. The term is not clearly a messianic title in this context. It is only a reference to a human, "someone," who also does something unique.

It is time to consider objections to this approach to Luke 5:24. Now it is interesting in the face of this debate about whether Son of Man refers to one person (circumlocution) or to many (ambiguous), that Matt 9:8, the parallel to Luke 5:24, places the crowd's response in very general, ambiguous terms. There the crowd offers praise because God had given such authority to men (τοῖς ἀνθρώποις). Does this not indicate a wider, original reference for the title (or better, in the original context, the idiom)? Does not Matthew's usage show that the debate about the Aramaic expression's force is a central question? The answer is both yes and no. Yes, the reply does suggest the audience heard a general reference. But, no, even in this context, it is the uniqueness of Jesus' action that has drawn attention. The crowd is amazed "men" have such authority, but it is Jesus who amazes them. So the attention is really not on men, but on this man.

It is also important to note that terms can be gradually unveiled in terms of the full force of their meaning. In other words, there can be a

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difference between what Jesus understood a term to mean and how he went about revealing that understanding. We believe that is the case with Jesus' use of the term/idiom "Son of Man," as

²¹ Both italicized senses render the term Son of Man and represent the disputed option.

²² Those who argue the title is inserted later or is a narrative comment from the evangelist will not be addressed so clearly by this argument, but the handling of that narrative issue awaits our discussion below. Against an addition of the title in the tradition is the fact the title is in all three renderings of this passage (Luke 5:24; Mark 2:10; Matt 9:6).

evidenced by its usage in Luke 5:24 (and parallels). Jesus' action and saying is a conundrum, like those which he often offers his audiences.²³ It is the second such conundrum in this passage. The first was the "which is easier" remark in v 23. On the level of speaking, it is easier to declare sins to be forgiven than to provide the empirical reality of healing someone. One thing is seen and evident; the other is not. But the remark is really ironic, since it is actually harder to possess the authority to forgive sins. So Jesus' Son of Man saying in v 24 is the second "riddle" of the passage. He says, assuming the ambiguous use, "Know someone has this authority." But the paradox and irony is that generic man does not have this authority, as the Pharisees had already noted! So the question for the crowd is how can Jesus have such authority? The passage, even if the Son of Man reference were originally ambiguous, still raises the question of who this special man is. What Jesus will eventually make clear by his usage of the term later in his ministry is that the indirect reference to himself as "Son of Man," even in a sense as ambiguous as "a man," or "someone," is really an allusion to the authoritative figure of Daniel 7 (Luke 21:27; 22:69 and parr.). In Luke 5:24 all Jesus may have done is introduce the phrase and the concept without elaboration. Jesus then simply displays his authority to support his point that at least one human has such authority. To understand the phrase's force all one really needs is the event and the saying with its idiom, not its specific background.

Now if Kim is right about establishing a background for the clear presence of an apocalyptic Son of Man image, then our position becomes unlikely, or better, unnecessary. He argues that the text has three elements in it that point to Daniel 7. 1) Jesus claims authority from Dan 7:13-14. 2) He is the eschatological judge. 3) Jesus sees himself as "Son of Man who, by giving of himself as the atoning, covenant-establishing sacrifice to sinners, is to make them God's eschatological people whose sins are atoned for."²⁴ These points may well summarize how Jesus saw the Son of Man, but they are not transparent from the account of Luke 5 alone. Daniel 7 does not refer explicitly to the authority to forgive sins, nor is it clear that Jesus' action in Luke 5 is that of an eschatological judge, neither is there any atonement imagery in the passage. Once one has put the "Son of Man" references of the synoptics together, then one can speak of these associations, but these conclusions are not explicit in this text when it is considered by

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itself. Kim's position can only work in Luke 5:24 if the idiom is enough by itself to evoke the Daniel 7 association. But given that such background is currently uncertain, our point is that Jesus may well have gradually revealed how he saw this image in categories his audience could eventually grasp, since they may not have been experts in apocalyptic imagery.²⁵ One must distinguish between what Jesus may have understood and how he revealed that understanding. Jesus starts out throwing the idiom around and attaching, his work to it, until its importance

²³ One thinks of the Psalm 110 conundrum as another example (Luke 20:41-44).

²⁴ Kim, *The Son of Man as Son of God*, 96.

²⁵ Our reaction to the position of Caragounis, *The Son of Man: Vision and Interpretation*, 188, differs little from our reaction to Kim. He argues that the terms authority, Son of Man, and the fact that these actions occur on earth allude to Daniel 7. He argues that the idea that a man is present is totally absent. We are less confident that the humanity of the figure should be deemphasized, though the implications of the connection (and of the Pharisees' charge) are also present.

requires an explanation, which is supplied eventually in terms of Daniel 7 and its heavenly, authoritative emphasis.

What does this discussion mean for Luke 5:24? Jesus, in using the term initially, is suggesting that he is a man through whom God is now working in *relation to sin*. But this is a *unique* man, who has a certain unique authority. It is to be noted that in Judaism the rabbis never associated any man with the authority to forgive sins. The only currently extant Jewish text, which possibly makes an association between a man and the forgiveness of sins is from Qumran, The Prayer of Nabonidus (4QprNab 1:4). Here a Jewish exorcist is said to have "pardoned my [Nabonidus'] sins." But this text's translation is disputed; and the text is fragmentary.²⁶ Regardless of the dispute over Qumran, it is clear that Jesus' association at the very least, was very rare for Jewish circles, if not unprecedented. It was a view that

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certainly did not reside in what became normative in Judaism, as the Jewish leaders' own reaction in the gospels shows. The remark is surprising and thus is intended to point to his uniqueness.

Now the general force of Jesus' remark still leads to the frequent force of Jesus' use of the title elsewhere, which often suggests Jesus' authority. These thoughts draw on the picture of the Danielic "son of man" receiving dominion from the Ancient of Days.²⁷ This connection is important, since it also indicates that when the gospel tradition takes this general Aramaic phrase that refers to "a man" and renders it in Greek as a specific title, it is being faithful to the semantic

²⁶ See the discussion in Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings of Qumran* (Glouster, MA: Peter Smith, 1973) 322, esp. n. 3, where he defends a translation like the one cited, and compare to the translation of the text as noted in K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984) 223-24. Beyer actually prints out the Aramaic text, the key phrase of which is *זחמא' שבק לה גור*. The problem is that some terms before the key phrase need to be supplied. Dupont-Sommer translates the full disputed text of 4QprNab 1:3b-4 as "[of the sons of men. But I prayed to the Most High God] and an exorcist forgave my sins." Beyer translates the key line as "Aber derjenige, [welcher] bestimmt hat [meinen Lohn] and meme Strafe, sparte sich einen, Wahrsager auf, and zwar was es ein Jude." Beyer's translation is similar to Milik's, who discussed the text and included a picture of it in "Prière de Nabonide," *RB* 63 (1956) 407-11 and 415. Milik's translation reads "[But when I had confessed my sins] and faults, (God) granted me a diviner." Dupont-Sommer's footnote discusses and disputes this translation. The text, if read with Dupont-Sommer's translation, is not a self-claim by a healer, but is a description by the king of what the exorcist did. If this sense applies, it may be that the text simply means that because the king was healed, sins were forgiven. Nonetheless, the text has several breaks, uses a rare and disputed term *גור*, and requires that some terms in the context be supplied. Thus certainty as to its force is not possible.

²⁷ For a defense of the general authenticity of sayings in each of the sayings groups of present ministry, suffering, and future return sayings, see I. H. Marshall, "The Synoptic Son of Man Sayings in Recent Discussion," *NTS* 12 (1965-1966) 327-51. Also R. Maddox, "The Function of the Son of Man according to the Synoptic Gospels," *NTS* 15 (1968-1969) 45-74, stresses the picture of Jesus as Judge as a result of the connection to Daniel 7, as does Kim, *The Son of Man as Son of God*, 89-93. Kim also argues the title eventually is tied into the designation of Jesus as Son of God. For Luke and the Son of Man, see Bovon, *Dos Evangelium nach Lukas (Lk 1,1-9,50)* (EKK III/1; Zurich: Benziger Verlag, 1989) 249, n. 31 and Schneider, "Der Menschensohn in der lukanischen Christologie," in his *Lukas, Theologe der Heilsgeschichte* (Bonner biblische Beiträge 59; Königsten: Verlag Peter Hanstein, 1985) 98-113; originally in *Jesus and der Menschensohn: Festschrift für A. Vögtle*, ed. by Pesch and Schnackenburg (Freiburg: Herder, 1975) 267-82.

force of the usage in the context of the portrayed event, because the activity of this man shows him to be unique. The gospels have not imported to the term more ideas than its original usage had, for it always described the unique position Jesus occupies. Its meaning was always suggested not just by the term itself but by the event which expounded its meaning. It is the failure to see a connection between event and usage that has tripped up some into long excursions of background which really are not central to the issue of authenticity.²⁸ So the rendering of the idiom as a title in the NT, even if the original phrase involved the use of a mere ambiguous idiom, still renders its real force.

D. Other Objections to Authenticity

Two other possibilities about the verse's authenticity need attention. 1) Some argue that what is present here is a "suture" verse to bring together two different accounts and traditions, namely a miracle story with a pronouncement.²⁹ However, the idea of a suture verse is to be rejected, because the verse's themes of authority, sin, and forgiveness are so intertwined in the account that to view them in this manner does

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not disentangle the account; rather it leaves a gaping hole in the story.³⁰ Here it appears the verse is a victim of the insistence that a mixing of forms is not possible in the early tradition. But pronouncement and miracle have to go together for this miracle to be elevated beyond a "silent" act. Mark 2:5 and its parallels, including Luke 5:20-21, already make forgiveness of sins central in the passage. Jesus' exposition is central to his earlier remarks and merely makes sense of the action. The omission of the remark, despite its syntactical awkwardness, leaves the account vague and incomplete. Without such pronouncements, it would not be clear what Jesus intended by his actions.

2) Others suggest that Mark has inserted an editorial remark here which Jesus did not utter.³¹ This latter view argues that Mark in a parenthesis is giving the significance of this event to his readers. This view sees the ἵνα with a quasi-imperative force. It is different from the "suture" view in that it sees Mark speaking directly to his readers rather than the evangelist speaking through Jesus' remark.

²⁸ If, of course, Vermes is right that the term did mean "I and no other," then the claim is more direct and the meaning is transparent. Matthew 9 suggests either that this is not the force or that the crowd misunderstood the claim. Either option is possible in Matthew 9.

²⁹ Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 14-16. He is followed by Tödt.

³⁰ Hooker, *The Son of Man in Mark* (London: SPCK, 1967) 86.

³¹ Cranfield, *Mark*, The Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary (Cambridge: University Press, 1959) 100-101; W. Lane, *Commentary on the Gospel of Mark*, 96-98, agrees with Cranfield. So Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I-IX*, 579; Boobyer, "Mark II, 10a and the Healing of the Paralytic," *Harvard Theological Review* 47 (1954) 115-20; Ceroke, "Is Mk 2, 10 a Saying of Jesus," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 22 (1960) 369-90. Of course, what is true of Mark is also true of the parallels in Matthew and Luke.

This last approach on the surface is quite possible.³² One reason the suggestion exists is because of the otherwise unprecedented tie between the Son of Man and forgiveness of sins. This association is viewed by some as so unlikely in this early ministry setting that it must be a later, accurate reflection of Mark on the true significance of the event. The second reason is the verse's awkward syntax.

But as good as the reasons are, they are not persuasive. The theological argument fails, since if Jesus had a sense of his unique calling and authority, like that expressed through Isaiah 61 in Luke 4 or through the baptismal vision of Luke 3:22, then such an association, though unique, becomes just as possible here for Jesus as anywhere in his ministry. Once Jesus defined his mission in terms of preaching forgiveness by the call of God and in terms of Isaiah's hope, such associations become available for him. His miraculous work only confirms the connection. Another important point to be made is that in Judaism a sinner is not supposed to receive healing from God, and certainly not through one making false claims.³³ The healing serves to underline the claim. The two events are inseparable.

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An appeal to a syntactical, editorial approach also does not work. Such an editorial aside seems to have been poorly marked out for the reader.³⁴ It seems unlikely that only the reader's perception is in view and that Mark intended to suggest the original audience of the healing did not receive this expositional remark. Its presence fits the setting of a controversy, which dominates the passage.³⁵

E. Summary

The "Son of Man" in Luke 5:24 can refer to Jesus as a representative man called by God to exercise authority over sin. The authority, however, is one unique to Jesus and as such, upon reflection, means the representative is unique. In fact, if the healing evidences the verbal claim, then divine prerogative is exercised uniquely by a man. Jesus' innovations with the Son of Man concept as they emerge from Luke 5:24 would be: 1) the claim to be able to identify the authoritative, heavenly-human figure (as himself!) and 2) the association of that figure with the right of the Son of Man to forgive sins. This latter claim is also suggested as authentic, because the association of the Son of Man with forgiveness of sins is dissimilar to both Judaism and the early church. In other words, the reference is one that goes back to Jesus himself, even if the term was used in its most ambiguous sense. So the representative man is a "unique" man or "the" man through whom God works. As a result, the NT is right to see a titular use to a specific figure, for

³² Mark 13:14b is a syntactical parallel; Fitzmyer, 579.

³³ t. Nedarim 41a. The presupposition here is that God shows His healing mercy only to the righteous. A sinner can count on nothing from God. Neither will God work through one who makes false claims.

³⁴ Caragounis, *The Son of Man: Vision and Interpretation*, 180-86, has a full and effective critique of this approach. He notes only one clear example of the imperatival ἵνα clause in Eph 5:33 and it requires the context to make that usage clear. He also notes that Jesus' remark does have an ellipse, as noted by the brackets below. The full idea of Luke 5:24a is "that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins, [now I heal this man]." The construction is like Exod 4:4-5 LXX.

³⁵ Marshall, 215-16, also defends the authenticity of the saying.

that is the force of the saying in conjunction with the action. As Hooker points out in this account, the title is not the issue, but the nature of the authority of the title bearer is the point.³⁶ We would add that his actions underlined this authority and defined it. It also helped to explain the force of Jesus' remark. Who "the" man was and is became clearer as Jesus' ministry proceeded. In the context of further ministry and pronouncement, the OT background of the phrase "Son of Man" emerged more clearly, being tied both to the authoritative image of Daniel 7 and also, it would seem, to the picture of the suffering servant of Isa 52:13-53:12, yet another innovation by Jesus of the Son of Man concept. What eventually emerged is that

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heavenly and human authority were wed together in one unique person, who also suffered. Luke 5:24 is an initial glimpse of that union of authority and is a major clue to the eventual individual force of the title. The issue of uniqueness is effectively raised by the claim of authority to forgive sins. The claim itself receives confirmation by the fact the paralytic was able to get up in response to Jesus' call. The event says, put together the remark and the event. If one does, one can know how unique a figure Jesus is. In fact, he exercises divine prerogatives. In the view of this pericope either Jesus blasphemes, as the Jewish leadership claims, or he is uniquely related to God. What happens to the paralytic determines the conclusion.

So Jesus turns to the paralytic and gives him three commands. He is to get up; take his mat with him, which attests to his healing; and go to his home. If the man is able to walk home, then one is to reflect on what this healing says about Jesus' claim to have authority over sin. If God really does not heal a sinner, what does the healing mean? Moreover, if God does not work through an imposter or liar, then what does this healing mean? If only God forgives sin, what does this imply about Jesus' direct claim to forgive sin?³⁷ The success of the miracle narrows the options. In fact, the miracle is the real issue of the passage, since it supports the claim. It leaves the audience both of the event and of Luke's gospel to ponder the appropriate conclusion.

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³⁶ Hooker, *The Son of Man in Mark*, 93. Her own position on authenticity is not entirely clear, though the fact she ends her remarks with this observation may suggest she leans towards authenticity.

³⁷ It should be noted in passing that in Luke 5:20, the term ἀφεῶνται is passive, still suggesting that God does the forgiving. Nonetheless, Jesus' apparent failure to note more explicitly that God is doing the forgiving brings offense and the claim of blasphemy which follows. Jesus only makes such a direct declaration in one other place, Luke 7:47, also using this passive construction and with the same reaction from the officials present. The difference between Jesus' declaration and that of the prophets can be seen in Isa 1:18, where the prophet speaks for God who offers forgiveness. In the synoptics, Jesus enhances the claim in his next remark by speaking of the Son of Man's authority to forgive sins (v 24), thus showing his right to speak directly on the topic. Luke alone uses the perfect, while Mark and Matthew use the present, but this makes no difference to the essential point.