

# Jesus in the Old Testament

November 17, 2024

## **Son of Man/ Son of God: Heavenly Title/ Earthly Title**

A priest, a pastor and a rabbit walk into a blood donation clinic. The nurse asks them what their blood type is. "I'm type A+," says the priest. "I'm type B-," says the pastor. "I'm not sure, but I think I might be a \_\_\_\_\_," says the rabbit.

*IF THERE IS ONE THING that Christians know about their religion, it is that it is not Judaism. If there is one thing that Jews know about their religion, it is that it is not Christianity. Daniel Boyarin. The Jewish Gospels:*

Jews read the book of Daniel like Christians read the book of Revelation.

*"Many Israelites at the time of Jesus were expecting a Messiah who would be divine and come to earth in the form of a human." – The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ by Daniel Boyarin*

**"As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat"** (Daniel 7:9)

Imagine to the Jew to discover more than one throne. This concept continues forward in the New Testament.

**Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.** (Revelation 22:1)

**No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.** (Revelation 22:3)

There are subtle hints in Scripture of Yahweh having a divine Son who would rule in the authority of his father.

**In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.** (Daniel 7:13)

Daniel Boyarin summarizes Daniel 7:13 as follows:

- (1) There are two thrones
- (2) There are two divine figures, one apparently old and one apparently young.
- (3) The young figure is to be the Redeemer and eternal ruler of the world.

In this book, there is a vision that describes “...**one like a son of man,**” who is “...**coming with the clouds.**”

To come on clouds in Ancient Near Eastern writing meant you were qualified to apply for the God position.

The Psalmist declares Yahweh as the one who “...**makes the clouds his chariot; he rides on the wings of the wind**” (Psalm 104:3).

Why is that a big deal? Because everywhere else that description occurs in the Old Testament, it was used only of God himself (Isa. 19:1; Deut. 33:26; Ps. 68:32-33; Ps. 104:1-4).<sup>1</sup>

*“The act of coming with clouds suggests a theophany of Yahweh himself. If Daniel 7:13 does not refer to a divine being, then it is the only exception out of about seventy passages in the Old Testament.”*

**Daniel Boyarin. The Jewish Gospels .**

Note that the response of the Jewish leadership was to accuse Jesus of blasphemy. Jewish leaders believed that the title of the Son of Man was as powerful as the title of God. **...you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.** (Matthew 26:64; Mark 14:62)

Anyone declaring themselves to be the Son of Man claimed to be heaven’s second power. Note the response of the high priest:

**Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy.”** (Matthew 26:65 ESV)

The response of everyone on the council was to condemn Jesus to death. The Sanhedrin did not say, “Jesus is claiming to be Yahweh in the flesh!”

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<sup>1</sup> Heiser, Michael S. Supernatural: What the Bible Teaches about the Unseen World And Why It Matters (p. 119). Lexham Press. Kindle Edition.

Jesus was announcing himself as the Son of Man who sits on the throne of His Father.

### **Claiming to be God (Yahweh) or Son of Man = Blasphemy**

**And the high priest tore his garments and said, “What further witnesses do we need? You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?” And they all condemned him as deserving death.** (Mark 14:63-64 ESV)

Jesus most often referred to himself as the Son of Man. The high priest responded harshly to Jesus' claim to this title because this claim was not true or false—it was true or blasphemous! His confession as the Son of Man brought Him the death penalty. This heavenly title is described in the vision of Daniel:

**He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.** (Daniel 7:14 NIV)

Jews in the time of Jesus understood the “one like the son of man” as another power in heaven. Yahweh was seated on his throne and called the “Ancient of Days.” Ancient Jewish rabbis described the dream in Daniel chapter two as follows:

*The younger one has his own throne (that's why there is more than one throne set up to start with), and he is invested by the older one with dominion, glory, and kingship over all the peoples of the world; not only that, but it will be an eternal kingship forever and ever. This is the vision that will become in the fullness of time the story of the Father and the Son.*

A Father enthroning his Son over his kingdom was the Biblical narrative in Jesus' time. Rabbi Boyarin summarizes by saying, *“If Daniel is the prophecy, the Gospels are the fulfillment.”*

### **The Son of God**

Most Christians assumed that the title “Son of God” inferred Jesus' heavenly identity, and the title “Son of Man” implied his connection to his humanity.

Yet the opposite is true. Luke's genealogy ends with **“...the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God”** (Luke 3:38 ESV).

Adam was considered a son of God. Matthew's genealogies go as far back as Abraham, but Luke's genealogies go back to Adam. To remember this fact,

note that Matthew and Abraham have seven letters each, and Luke and Adam have four.

*First of all, interestingly enough, the term “Son of God” is not often used to refer to Jesus in the New Testament. In Paul, the much more common term is “Lord.” In the Gospels, Jesus is more likely to be referred to (or actually to refer to himself) by the title “Son of Man.” Most Christians today, if they have thought about it at all, would think that by this title, Son of Man, Jesus’ human nature is being designated, while the title “Son of God” refers to his divine nature. This was indeed the interpretation of most of the Fathers of the Church. A new Bible translation called the Common English Bible has gone so far as to translate “Son of Man” as “the human one.” Almost the opposite was the case in the Gospel of Mark: “Son of God” referred to the king of Israel, the earthly king of David’s seat, while “Son of Man” referred to a heavenly figure and not a human being at all. Daniel Boyarin. The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ (p. 26).*

When Jesus was unjustly condemned to die, He identified Himself as the Son of man coming on the clouds. The “Son of Man” title is the heavenly title of Jesus, and the “Son of God” is the earthly title.

**The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” “Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: In the future, you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”** (Matthew 26:63-64 NIV)

Note that Jesus chooses to call Himself the Son of Man. He connects himself to the one spoken of in the book of Daniel. Jesus quotes Daniel 7: 13 to answer Caiaphas. The reaction is swift and unyielding. Caiaphas understood that Jesus was claiming to be the Son of Man figure of Daniel 7: 13—and that was an intolerable blasphemy. Jesus’ answer provides the high priest with the accusation he needs for a death sentence, but also gives us a clear testimony of Jesus as the final son of David.

Daniel Boyarin writes: “*Jesus entered into a role that existed prior to his birth, and this is why so many Jews were prepared to accept him as the Christ, as the Messiah, Son of Man.*”<sup>2</sup>

Jesus identified as the “Son of Man” because his audience understood the implications of his statement.

Nebuchadnezzar experienced the revelation of a God who had a son. As he cast three Hebrews into a burning furnace, he shouted:

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<sup>2</sup> Boyarin, Daniel. The Jewish Gospels . The New Press. Kindle Edition.

**“Look!” he answered, “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God”** (Daniel 3:25 NIV)

We should not be surprised about the fluidity of the narrative from the Old Testament to the New Testament. The Son of God was confirmed even by a pagan king who persecuted righteous Jews.

The Bible emphasizes the importance of a monarchy passing on the throne to a righteous son. A dynasty continues on into the future through godly offspring and establishes the kingdom from generation to generation.

The Bible is the most quoted book in history. But did you know that the Bible quotes other writings? The Book of Enoch is quoted in the book of Jude 14-15 which is found in the New Testament. Here is a portion of the Book of Enoch 48:2-3 where the Son of Man is mentioned, as described in Daniel chapter 2.

*And in that hour that Son of Man was named in the presence of the Lord of Spirits, and his name, before the Head of Days. Even before the sun and the constellations were created, before the stars of heaven were made, his name was named before the Lord of Spirits.*

The Son of Man is manifested in the person of Jesus. This figure in the book of Enoch allowed the Jewish people to understand who Jesus was and how they ought to respond to Him.

*And he will be the light of the nations, and he will be a hope for those who grieve in their hearts. All who dwell on the earth will fall down and worship before him, and they will glorify and bless and sing hymns to the name of the Lord of Spirits... for in his name they are saved, and he is the vindicator of their lives.(Enoch 48:4-7)*

This Son of Man will be worshipped on earth and in His name, those on earth will be saved and vindicated.

*And they had great joy, and they blessed and glorified and exalted, because the name of that son of man had been revealed to them. And he sat on the throne of glory and the whole judgment was given to the Son of Man, and he will make sinners vanish and perish from the face of the earth. (Enoch 69:26-27)*

And in Enoch 69:29, he will return to earth to judge the world.

*And he has sat down on the throne of his glory, and all evil will vanish from his presence. And the word of the Son of Man will go forth and will prevail in the presence of the Lord of Spirits.*

The Son of Man is seated at the right hand of the Ancient of Days. The conclusion must be that the Son of Man is in fact a second person. And all of the functions assigned to the divine figure called “one like a son of man” in Daniel 7 are given to this Son of Man, who is also called, as we have seen, the Christ.

The 3rd century church father Tertullian compares the Old Testament references to the “Son of Man” with the New Testament “Son of Man” sayings of Jesus to show that the Old Testament did, indeed, foretell the coming of Christ. Unfortunately, many Jews did not perceive the other power in heaven was the Son of Man in the book of Daniel.

“With respect to New Testament studies, the descriptive phrase “son of man” is intensely debated. Since it means “human one” and was a title used of prophets in the Old Testament, many scholars see no divine status attached to it.

**For just as the lightning shines forth, flashing from one place under heaven to another place under heaven, so the Son of Man will be in his day. But first it is necessary for him to suffer many things, and to be rejected by this generation** (Luke 17: 24-25).

*Christian ideas are not alien to us; they are our own offspring and sometimes, perhaps, among the most ancient of all Israelite-Jewish ideas. On the other hand, certain kinds of modern “liberal” Christian apologists will have to stop separating out a “good Jesus” from a “bad Christ.” I suggest that Jesus and Christ were one from the very beginning of the Jesus movement. It won’t be possible any longer to think of some ethical religious teacher who was later promoted to divinity under the influence of alien Greek notions, with his so-called original message being distorted and lost; the idea of Jesus as divine-human Messiah goes back to the very beginning of the Christian movement, to Jesus himself, and even before that.* **Daniel Boyarin, The Jewish Gospels:**

*I’m going to tell a very different historical story, a story of a time when Jews and Christians were much more mixed up with each other than they are now, when there were many Jews who believed in something quite like the Father and the Son and even in something quite like the incarnation of the Son in the Messiah, Jesus, when he came, came in a form that many, many Jews were expecting: a second divine figure incarnated in a human. The question was not “Is a divine Messiah coming?” but only “Is this carpenter from Nazareth the One we are expecting?”*

**Daniel Boyarin, The Jewish Gospels**

**Did the Jewish religious leaders abandon the idea of a second power in heaven after Jesus began to gain popularity.**