

THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN IN MARK'S GOSPEL¹

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Summary

This article defends the view that Mark's sayings on the coming of the Son of Man (Mark 8:38; 13:24-27; 14:62) refer to Jesus' parousia, against claims made by R. T. France and N. T. Wright. According to France and Wright, these sayings call attention to the vision of Daniel 7:9-14, in which 'one like a son of man' comes into the presence of God for the purpose of enthronement, and point to Jesus' post-mortem vindication, not his second coming. It is argued here that the Markan passages in question link Daniel 7:13 with other Old Testament texts and motifs, in particular, texts (such as Zechariah 14:3) and images about God's future coming to earth; the selective combination of Scriptures and scriptural images and their application to Jesus generates the essential concept of his parousia – his coming as exalted Lord from heaven to earth at the end of history.

1. Introduction

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus makes three references to the future coming of the Son of Man (8:38; 13:24-27; 14:62).² These sayings are normally

¹ This article is a revised version of my Tyndale New Testament Lecture, at the Tyndale Triennial conference, Regents Park Conference Centre, Nantwich, 2003. I am grateful for comments made on that occasion. I am especially grateful to the editor and the independent reviewer for the Bulletin for their very helpful advice.

² Matthew has ten sayings concerning the coming Son of Man: Matt. 10:23; 16:27 (=Mark 8:38), 28 (=Mark 8:39); 24:27, 30 (=Mark 13:26), 37, 39, 44; 25:31; 24:64 (=Mark 14:62). In Matt. 24:27, 37 and 39 (cf. 24:3), the noun παρουσία is used rather than the usual verb ἐρχομαι. Luke has four sayings: Luke 9:26 (=Mark 8:38); 12:40 (=Matt. 24:44); 18:8; 21:27 (=Mark 13:26). In Luke 17:24, 26 and 30, Jesus speaks of the day/s of the Son of Man; in the Matthean parallels, he refers to his coming (Matt. 24:27, 37, 39).

understood in terms of Jesus' parousia, or eschatological return,³ but R. T. France and N. T. Wright have challenged the conventional interpretation.⁴ They maintain that Gospel sayings on the coming of the Son of Man have in view not Jesus' second coming, but his vindication after death.

According to France and Wright, the Gospel theme of the coming of the Son of Man alludes to the vision of Daniel 7:9-14; it 'is intended to conjure up the whole Danielic scene' in which 'one like a son of man' comes to the Ancient One to take up his throne.⁵ Daniel 7:9-14, they point out, is not about the descent or return of the humanlike one to earth, but his coming *to God* for vindication.⁶ Wright insists that nothing in Daniel or in first-century re-readings of Daniel, pushes the Gospel sayings in the direction of a 'parousia' in the scholarly sense of the term.⁷ He claims that language of the coming of the son of man was 'good first-century metaphorical language' for the vindication of the true people of God.⁸

In France's opinion, Jesus applied the 'coming' of Daniel 7:13 to his own post-mortem exaltation and reign and the manifestation of his dominion in a historical act of judgement – the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple.⁹ Mark faithfully reproduces Jesus' usage.

³ E.g. J. T. Carroll, 'The Parousia of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts' in *The Return of Jesus in Early Christianity*, ed. J. T. Carroll et al. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000): 5-45, esp. 11; I. H. Marshall, 'The Parousia in the New Testament – and Today' in *Worship, Theology and Ministry in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Ralph P. Martin*, ed. M. J. Wilkins and T. Paige (JSNTSup, 87; Sheffield: 1992): 194-211, esp. pp. 195-98.

⁴ R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and his Mission* (London: Tyndale, 1971): 139-48; *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGNT; Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002): 341-43; 500-3; 530-37; 610-13; N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God, Volume Two* (London: SPCK, 1996): 341; 360-67; 510-19; 632; *Mark for Everyone* (London: SPCK, 2001): 111-12; 183-84; 205.

⁵ Wright, *Jesus*: 640.

⁶ France, *Jesus*: 144; Wright, *Mark*: 184.

⁷ Wright, *Jesus*: 361.

⁸ Wright, *Jesus*: 362.

⁹ France, *Jesus*: 145. France accepts that there is a fully eschatological application of the language in Matt. 25:31, but he insists that this saying does not envisage a descent to earth; rather it presents a heavenly judgement scene (144). France is not the first to argue that the reference in Mark 13:24-27 is to the ruin of Jerusalem. The view has a long history, though it has never been more than a minority opinion: see G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Future* (London, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1954): 167-71; M. Casey, *Son of Man: the Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7* (London: SPCK, 1979): 172; France, *Jesus*: 229-31.

According to Wright, from Jesus' point of view, the coming of the Son of Man 'concerns the vindication of his entire programme and mission which God will bring to pass, after his own death, with the destruction of the Temple that has come to symbolise all that his gospel opposes.'¹⁰ From the perspective of Mark, it is about Jesus' total vindication: his resurrection, ascension and the fulfilment of his prophecy against the temple.¹¹

This approach to Gospel language of the Son of Man's coming has its attractions, not the least of which is that it rescues Jesus and the evangelists from error when they appear to put the event within their own generation (Matt. 10:23; 16:28; Mark 13:26, 30 + par.). But I am not persuaded. In this article, I will try to show that the mainstream parousia interpretation of Mark's 'coming' Son of Man sayings is correct.¹² Others have sought to defend the parousia reading of Mark 13:24-27, against the claims of France and Wright, by appealing to the universal New Testament testimony 'to belief in the return of Jesus, an event often referred to as his coming'¹³ or the close relationship between these verses and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, a passage in which Paul describes the eschatological advent of Christ.¹⁴ For France and Wright, such arguments simply confirm their view that the parousia interpretation of Mark 13:24-27 is an *exegetical* one (a reference to Christ's parousia has to be read *into* the text).¹⁵ I will endeavour to

¹⁰ Wright, *Mark*: 184.

¹¹ Wright, *Mark*: 184. Wright (*Matthew for Everyone: Part 2, Chapters 16-28*, London: SPCK, 2002: 143) concedes that the picture in Matt. 25:31 is one of final judgement but suggests that it actually refers to 'what is happening throughout human history' from Jesus' ascension onwards.

¹² My concern, it should be stressed, is with the meaning of language of the coming of Son of Man for Mark, rather than the 'historical Jesus'. For a detailed survey of scholarship on the expression 'Son of Man', see D. Burkett, *The Son of Man Debate: A History and Evaluation* (SNTSMS 107; Cambridge: CUP, 1999).

¹³ M. Casey, *Son of Man*: 176.

¹⁴ D. C. Allison, 'Jesus and the Victory of Apocalyptic' in *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N. T. Wright's Jesus and the Victory of God*, ed. C. Newman (Downers Grove: IVP; Paternoster: Carlisle, 1999): 126-41, esp. 134-35.

¹⁵ France, *Mark*: 503 n. 28; N. T. Wright, 'In Grateful Dialogue: A Response' in *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel*: 244-77, esp. 266-67. France (*Mark*: 503) and Wright (*The New Testament and the People of God*, London: SPCK, 1992: 462) admit that Dan. 7:13 is used elsewhere in the NT (Acts 1:9-11; Rev. 1:7) in connection with the parousia of Jesus, but insist that this subsequent deployment should not be imported into the Gospels.

make the case that the idea of Jesus' parousia, which may be defined as 'the coming of the exalted Jesus from heaven to earth', an event associated with the judgement of God and the winding up of human history,¹⁶ emerges naturally from the three Markan sayings themselves when proper attention is paid to the scriptural associations they involve.

Whereas France and Wright claim that the Gospel image of the coming Son of Man implies the whole visionary complex of Daniel 7 with its central feature of a coming to God for vindication, my argument is that the 'coming of the Son of Man' motif, taken from Daniel 7:13, functions in relation to other Old Testament texts and images in such a way as to invoke another scenario: the eschatological coming of God, with Jesus as the exalted Son of Man acting in the divine capacity.

Richard Bauckham points out that 'much early Christian thinking about the Parousia did not derive from applying Old Testament messianic texts to Jesus but from the direct use of Old Testament texts about the coming of God'.¹⁷ To a significant extent, the New Testament expectation of Jesus' parousia is a christological specification of the Old Testament and Jewish hope of God's end-time coming.¹⁸ It is my contention that Mark's sayings on the coming of the Son of Man reflect this wider pattern of transferring the hope of God's advent to the exalted Christ, and so express the essential concept of Jesus' parousia.

The article proceeds as follows. I shall look first at the role of the 'one like a son of man' in Daniel 7 and then at the use of this figure in *1 Enoch* 37-71 and *4 Ezra* 13, the two main pieces of evidence for first-century Jewish interpretation of Daniel 7:13.

¹⁶ Marshall, 'Parousia': 194.

¹⁷ R. J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (WBC 50; Waco: Word, 1983): 97. In early Israelite hymns, God's coming is a past intervention on behalf of his people (Deut. 33:2; Judg. 5:4-5). In OT prophecy, the coming of God is future. In early prophecy, it is connected (but not equated) with a political crisis on the immediate horizon (e.g. Isa. 19:1; Mic. 1:2-5). In Isa. 40:10, it is associated with deliverance from exile. In late prophecy, it is unambiguously a universal, final event (Isa. 66:15-16; Zech. 14:1-9). In subsequent Jewish texts, God's advent is clearly envisioned as the final intervention and is associated with the last judgement (e.g. *1 Enoch* 1:3-9; 91:7; 100:4; *T.Mos.* 10:1-10), the appearance of the kingdom (*T.Mos.* 10:1-10), the resurrection of the dead (Pseudo-Philo, *Bib. Ant.* 19:12-13) and the transformation of creation (*Jub.* 1:27-29).

¹⁸ As Matthew Black notes '[I]t is within this theophanic tradition that the New Testament Parousia expectation belongs.' 'The Maranatha invocation and Jude 14, 15 (1 Enoch 1:9)', in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament: in Honour of Charles Francis Digby Moule*, ed. B. Lindars & S. S. Smalley (Cambridge: CUP, 1973): 189-96, esp. 194.

After making some introductory comments on Mark's Son of Man Christology, I shall then examine each of Mark's 'coming' Son of Man sayings in their immediate literary contexts, engaging with the exegesis of France and Wright, but especially France (since his exegesis is more detailed). Returning to Mark's overall Son of Man Christology, I shall conclude that the evangelist develops a narrative scheme of coming, going away and coming *again*.

2. The 'one like a son of man' in Daniel 7

The vision to which Daniel 7:13 belongs is one in which four beasts, representing world empires, rise out of the sea and wreak havoc on earth (vv. 1-8). In verse 9, the scene switches to a throne-room/courtroom. Thrones are set in place and the Ancient One sits down, with angels in attendance (vv. 9-10). The court session begins and the judgement books are opened. The last and most terrifying of the four beasts is slain and its carcass burned; the other beasts are immobilised (vv. 11-12). Then 'one like a son of man' comes towards the divine throne, is presented before the Ancient One and is given authority, glory and an indestructible kingdom (vv. 13-14). Both France and Wright assume that the movement of this figure is upward but, as Collins points out, '[t]he text does not indicate whether the figure is ascending or descending or moving horizontally'.¹⁹ It is not explicitly said in the text that the humanlike one is enthroned, but this is a logical inference. As Collins states, he 'is given a kingdom, so it is reasonable to assume that he is enthroned'.²⁰

In the interpretation of the vision that follows (vv. 15-28), no further mention is made of the humanlike one. The kingdom is said to be given to 'the holy ones of the Most High' (v. 18) and 'the people of the holy one of the Most High' (v. 27).

The identity of the humanlike figure has been endlessly debated. Some, including Wright, argue that he is a figure representing the people of God;²¹ others think he is an angelic being.²² The point, though, is not crucial for the argument of the present article.

¹⁹ J. J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993): 311-12.

²⁰ Collins, *Daniel*: 301.

²¹ Wright, *People*: 295-96. Wright (*People*: 289-91) distinguishes between three kinds of representation – literary, sociological and metaphysical. He argues that the 'one like

Within the vision of Daniel 7:1-14, the ‘one like a son of man’ does not appear until after the court has concluded its judgement and the sentence has been carried out. He plays no part in the judicial process. He does not have a juridical function. Wright disputes this, pointing out that ‘the whole scene is precisely forensic’ and that the humanlike one is installed as ‘the executive officer of the central Judge’.²³ But while the right to judge may well be implied in the authority given to him at his installation, his forensic capacity is not developed *in any way* in the Danielic passage. Even though the context is one of judgement, the fact remains that the humanlike one does not *do* any of the judging.²⁴ His only active function is to approach the Ancient One.

3. The Use of Daniel 7:13 in 1 Enoch 37–71 and 4 Ezra 13²⁵

In the *Similitudes of Enoch* (1 Enoch 37–71), a work difficult to date but which is unlikely to be later than AD 70, the formulation ‘Son of Man’ is applied to a singular figure who is also designated the ‘elect one’ (e.g. 1 Enoch 52:6; 53:6) and ‘messiah’ (48:10; 52:4).²⁶ He first appears as Son of Man in chapter 46, in a scene clearly intended to recall that of Daniel 7:9-14. Nothing is said of his coming to God.

a son of man’ represents the ‘people of the saints of the most high’ in a literary sense (296).

²² J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (2nd edn.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998): 101-7.

²³ Wright, *Jesus*: 514, n. 18.

²⁴ Stressed by J. C. VanderKam, ‘Righteous One, Messiah, Chosen One, and Son of Man in 1 Enoch 37–71’ in *The Messiah* ed. J.H. Charlesworth (Fortress: Minneapolis, 1992): 169-91, esp. 188.

²⁵ See Burkett, *Son of Man Debate*: 98-108; J. J. Collins, ‘The Son of Man in First Century Judaism’, *NTS* 38 (1992): 448-66; P. M. Head, *Christology and the Synoptic Problem: An Assessment of One Argument for Markan Priority* (SNTSMS; Cambridge: CUP, 1997): 221-23; W. Horbury, ‘The Messianic Associations of “The Son of Man”’, *JTS* 36 (1985): 34-55; T. B. Slater, ‘One Like a Son of Man in First-Century AD Judaism’, *NTS* 41 (1995): 183-98; VanderKam, ‘Righteous One’; Wright, *People*: 314-20.

²⁶ As Burkett (*Son of Man Debate*: 100) emphasises, ‘Daniel 7:13 is only one of several scriptural texts that go to make his portrayal.’

When he is introduced, he is already with the Head of Days (46:1). As Wright states, the *Similitudes* begin ‘more or less where Daniel 7 leaves off’.²⁷ As the ‘narrative’ of the *Similitudes* progresses, he appears in other settings. The activity of this figure goes considerably beyond what is pictured in Daniel’s vision.²⁸ Unlike in Daniel, the elect one/Son of Man is given an active eschatological role. His main function is that of judge at the last judgement, seated on the divine throne (cf. 45:3; 51:3; 55:4; 61:8; 62:2-5; 69:29). He judges the deeds of angels (61:8), kings and rulers of the earth (62:3-12) and sinners (45:2-3). After the judgement and its execution, the elect one rules over a transformed heaven and earth (45:4-5).

The arrival of the elect one is marked by geophysical upheaval. The mountains become flat and the hills turn to water at his revelation (53:7). In the allegorical vision of 52, the metal mountains melt like wax at his presence (52:6). The levelling or dissolving of mountains is a characteristic feature of the coming of God in Old Testament texts (e.g. Ps. 97:5; Mic. 1:4; Hab. 3:6). To a certain extent, therefore, the revelation of the elect one is presented as a divine epiphany.²⁹

Chapter 71 is a re-depiction of Daniel 7:9-13, with Enoch as the Son of Man. The ‘coming’ of Daniel 7:13 is interpreted as the ascent of the patriarch into heaven, though the actual language of ‘coming’ (with the clouds of heaven) is not taken up in the description.³⁰ This section, which stands in tension with what has preceded, is very probably a later addition to the original work.³¹

4 Ezra, composed towards the end of the first century, contains a vision which draws on Daniel 7:13. In *4 Ezra* 13:1-13, someone ‘like the figure of a man’ is seen coming up out of the depths of the sea, flying with clouds of heaven.³² Everything under his gaze trembles and those who hear his voice melt like wax. He carves out a mountain and sets himself upon it. A vast multitude is gathered together to make war against him, but he destroys them with a stream of flame from his lips.

²⁷ Wright, *People*: 317.

²⁸ Wright (*People*: 318) agrees that what we have in *1 Enoch* 37–70 ‘is a substantial development from the picture in Daniel 7’.

²⁹ Cf. Burkett, *Son of Man*: 100.

³⁰ Burkett, *Son of Man*: 102.

³¹ Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*: 190-91.

³² Wright (*People*: 314-17) discusses *4 Ezra* 13 in connection with the ‘eagle vision’ of *4 Ezra* 11–12 which also alludes to Daniel 7.

Having eradicated his foes, he comes down from the mountain and is greeted by a peaceable multitude.

The manlike one of *4 Ezra* 13 is clearly the ‘one like a son of man’ of Daniel 7:13. But as Collins states, ‘[t]he description of this figure departs radically from Daniel.’³³ The character is portrayed with Old Testament imagery used for God. Of the Lord it is said that he looks on the earth and it trembles (Ps. 104:32) and that he causes the wicked to perish as wax (Ps. 68:2). The trembling of nature (e.g. Ps. 18:7; 97:4; Hab. 3:6), the use of fire as a weapon and instrument of judgement (e.g. Ps. 18:8; 97:3; Isa. 66:15-16) and the image of things/people melting like wax (Mic. 1:4; cf. Jdt. 16:15; *1 Enoch* 1:6) are typical features of biblical portraits of the coming of God.³⁴ As Stone comments, the manlike one is described using language drawn ‘from biblical descriptions of God, particularly his epiphanies as divine warrior’.³⁵ The larger picture envisaged is also quite different from that of Daniel 7:9-14. In *4 Ezra* 13:1-13, the scenario is that of the eschatological holy war.³⁶ There is no hint in *4 Ezra* 13:1-13 of a coming to God to receive glory.

In the lengthy interpretation given in verses 25-58, the manlike figure is identified as the messiah. He acts as deliverer, rescuing the righteous of Israel from her oppressors and establishing his rule, but he does not act in the role of divine warrior. The supernatural features assigned to the figure in verses 1-13 are re-interpreted in non-supernatural terms or ignored altogether. The incongruity strongly suggests that the vision of *4 Ezra* 13:1-13 is a pre-formed source which the author has incorporated into his work, but reinterpreted to fit his own eschatological schema. Even so, it is clear that the scenario depicted in verses 25-58 is still that of the eschatological holy war, and that the key figure functions as a saviour. He is the one whom God has appointed to liberate his creation (v. 26) and rescue those who inhabit the earth (v. 30). His ‘coming’ is plainly interpreted as a coming for judgement and salvation, not a coming to God for vindication (vv. 32-38). At no stage does the messiah figure come toward God to receive a throne.

³³ Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*: 207.

³⁴ Cf. Burkett, *Son of Man*: 105.

³⁵ M. E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Four Ezra* (Hermeneia, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999): 212.

³⁶ Cf. Ezek. 38-39; Joel 4:14-16; Zech. 12:1-9; 14:1-5.

From the foregoing, three points may be deduced for the present argument. First, both these texts show that in first-century Judaism, Daniel 7:13 was open to significant re-interpretation.³⁷ In *1 Enoch* 37–71 and *4 Ezra* 13, Daniel 7:13 is brought into a creative association with other Old Testament passages, the linkages generating different and new ideas.³⁸ In both first-century sources, Daniel's 'one like a son of man' is combined with other biblical figures and images to form a composite portrait of the coming deliver (messiah).³⁹ The deliverer figure is not tied to the enthronement scene of Daniel 7:9-14. In *1 Enoch* 37–70, the elect one emerges as Son of Man in a setting reminiscent of Daniel 7, but he soon moves out of it and acts in different situations. The episode involving the manlike one in *4 Ezra* 13:1-13 is far removed from the visionary story of Daniel 7:9-14. The first-century Jewish evidence thus indicates that the humanlike figure of Daniel 7:13 *could* be drawn out of his original Danielic context and function in other scenarios.

Second, *1 Enoch* 37–71 and *4 Ezra* 13 offer no evidence for Wright's claim that language of the coming of the son of man was a first-century metaphor for the vindication of Israel. Neither the *Similitudes* nor *4 Ezra* take up the specific language of the humanlike one's 'coming'. In the first century AD, the literary image of the 'coming' of the 'one like of son of man' was surely as open to re-deployment and adaptation as the Danielic figure himself. Third, neither *1 Enoch* 37–71 nor *4 Ezra* 13 use Daniel 7:13 in a way that corresponds to the parousia reading traditionally alleged for the Gospel 'coming' Son of Man sayings. Nevertheless, in both texts, the deliverer, modelled partly on Daniel 7:13, functions as God at the coming deliverance. This is a *partial* parallel to the casting of Jesus/the Son of Man in the role of God in his eschatological coming in Mark

³⁷ Wright himself admits (*People*: 317) that in the first century AD, 'it was clearly possible to use and reuse the imagery of Daniel in a variety of ways, focused on the coming deliverance for Israel, and representing the coming Deliverer in a variety of literary images.'

³⁸ It was through scriptural associations of this kind that Jewish messianism developed: cf. W. Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM, 1998): 2.

³⁹ So Head, *Christology*: 223; cf. Horbury, 'Messianic Associations': 36.

8:38, 13:24-27 and 14:62 – the interpretative move which creates the idea of Christ’s parousia.⁴⁰

4. The Son of Man in Mark

Jesus’ various statements on the Son of Man constitute an important strand in Mark’s christological tapestry. In Mark (and the canonical Gospels generally), the Son of Man is a ‘titled’ individual who is none other than Jesus himself. Mark has fourteen Son of Man sayings in all (though the saying in 9:9 is presented as indirect speech). The first two direct attention to his authority and lordship on earth (2:10, 28). Most of the sayings which follow place emphasis on his suffering and/or death (8:31; 9:12, 31; 10:33-34; 10:45; 14:21a; 14:21b, 41). The resurrection of the Son of Man is the exclusive focus of 9:9; the resurrection is also mentioned in the suffering/death sayings of 8:31 and 9:31. Reference is made to the exalted position of the Son of Man at God’s right hand in the final saying in 14:62. The sayings concerning the future coming of the Son of Man, though comparatively few in number, occur at significant points in the narrative: in the pericope following Peter’s confession and Jesus’ first prediction of his suffering and death (8:38); at the climax of the eschatological scenario of chapter 13 (13:24-27); at Jesus’ trial before the high priest (14:62). We look now at each of these sayings in turn.

5. Mark 8:38: Coming in Glory with the Holy Angels

This verse is part of a short unit, Mark 8:34–9:1, consisting of a set of closely linked sayings, the head theme of which is the cost of discipleship. The theme of suffering links this section to the preceding passion prediction (8:31-33) and establishes a link between the destiny of Jesus and the fate of those who would follow him (‘take up their cross’, ‘lose their life’, ‘forfeit their life’). Verse 38 is the climax of the unit, with 9:1 serving as an addendum. Jesus issues a warning:

⁴⁰ By contrast, there is *nothing* in first-century Jewish sources remotely approaching a parallel to the use of Dan. 7:13 which France and Wright claim to find in the Gospel tradition – its deployment *against* the temple/city of Jerusalem. Wright freely admits (*Jesus*: 519) that the application of ‘coming’ Son of Man language to the fall to the temple, which he alleges for Mark 13:24-27, is a ‘*novum*’ of ‘enormous’ proportions.

‘those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.’⁴¹ A contrast is clearly set up between the present and a coming situation. The words ἐν τῇ γενεᾷ ταύτῃ seem equivalent to νῦν ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τούτῳ in Mark 10:30 and suggest an eschatological contrast.⁴²

According to France, the scene being evoked in the second half of this verse is that of Daniel 7:9-14 in which God is on his throne surrounded by the angelic court and the Son of Man is enthroned to rule over the earth. The mention of angels (cf. Dan. 7:9-10) and the theme of glory (cf. Dan. 7:14), he claims, confirm the connection with Daniel’s vision.⁴³ In France’s view, Jesus here looks ahead to the power and authority he will receive and exercise as the exalted Son of Man.⁴⁴ The saying contrasts ‘two theatres’: this generation, i.e., Israel in rebellion against God, and the heavenly theatre in which Jesus is revealed as the true judge. Jesus warns that ‘it is before the heavenly authority of the Son of Man that the disciples must answer for their loyalty or cowardice’.⁴⁵

That the basic idea of a coming Son/son of man, υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου, is drawn from Daniel 7:13, there is no question, but it is very doubtful that the whole picture of Daniel 7:9-14 is implied. There are notable differences between the saying of Mark 8:38 and Daniel’s vision precisely at the points of apparent similarity.

In Mark 8:38, ‘coming’ is for the purpose of judgement.⁴⁶ A coming for judgement is logically required by the preceding verses and by the first half of verse 38 itself. In verses 34-38, Jesus sets out two alternatives: allegiance to him or denial of him. The consequence of present defection is future ‘shaming’. The verb ἐπαισχύνομαι, as Marcus observes, ‘carries a nuance of eschatological judgment, as in the Septuagint.’⁴⁷ In Daniel 7:9-14, as we have seen, judgement precedes the coming of ‘one like a son of man’; he arrives on the scene

⁴¹ Quotations of Mark follow the NSRV translation.

⁴² In Mark 10:30, ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τούτῳ is set against ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τῷ ἐρχομένῳ.

⁴³ France, *Jesus*: 139; *Mark*: 342.

⁴⁴ France, *Mark*: 343.

⁴⁵ France, *Mark*: 343.

⁴⁶ In Matthew’s version of the saying, the judgement is universal in scope (Matt. 16:27).

⁴⁷ J. Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (SNTW; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993): 166.

after judgement has taken place. France recognises that coming does not lead to judgment in Daniel 7:13-14, but he sees the (ongoing) exercise of judgement as involved in the dominion which is given by God to the humanlike one. In his view, it is this idea which Mark 8:38 brings out. It does so, he argues, by taking up the language of ‘coming’ from Daniel 7:13, but applying it to the continuing *state* of exaltation envisaged in Daniel 7:14. Thus, while in Daniel, ‘the “coming” is the entry of the υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου into his kingship’, in Mark, the ‘language refers not to a specific event, but to the state of sovereign authority to which Jesus looks forward as the proper destiny of the Son of Man’.⁴⁸ But Mark’s wording is against this interpretation: the temporal conjunction ὅταν expresses a *point* in time not a temporal duration.⁴⁹ The ‘coming’ is here construed as an event, not a state resulting from an event. What Mark 8:38 envisages is an *advent* which is followed by *the enactment of judgement*, and this is not part of the sequence of thought in Daniel 7:9-14.⁵⁰

In Mark 8:38, the Son of Man *comes with* an angelic entourage (μετὰ τῶν ἀγγέλων τῶν ἁγίων); angels accompany him in his very act of coming.⁵¹ In Daniel’s vision, the humanlike figure *arrives into* the presence of angels; angelic attendants (οἱ παρεστηκότες, LXX, ‘those standing by’) escort him to the throne of the Ancient One upon his arrival.

In Mark 8:38, the Son of Man comes *in* or *with* glory (ἐν τῇ δόξῃ). In Daniel 7:13, glory is *given* to the humanlike one *following* his coming and his presentation before the Ancient One. In Mark, the glory with which he comes is said to that of ‘his Father’ (τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ) and this is completely without parallel in Daniel.

These points of dissimilarity together with the lack of specific mention of a court or throne, and above all, of coming to God, make it

⁴⁸ France, *Mark*: 343.

⁴⁹ J. P. Louw & E. A. Nida, ed., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains, Volume One: Introduction and Domains* (second edn; New York: UBS, 1989): 633.

⁵⁰ According to Wright (*People*: 318 n.121), to press the distinction between Daniel, where judgement precedes the coming of the son of man, and the Gospels, where it comes afterwards is to over-systematize and to read Daniel 7 in ‘an unliterary way’. But a literary reading is surely one that pays attention to sequential relations in narrative.

⁵¹ There is an alternative form of the saying of Mark 8:38 (+ par.) in Luke 12:8 (=Matt. 10:32). In this saying, which does not involve the idea of the Son of Man’s coming, an angelic court, rather than an angelic entourage seems to be in view.

unlikely that the evangelist is trying to reproduce the entire picture of Daniel 7:9-14. The only concrete connection with the passage in Daniel is the image of a coming υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου.

The reading which France proposes, on the basis of the alleged allusion to the whole enthronement scene of Daniel 7:9-14, does not, in any case, fit with Mark's narrative christology. France claims that Jesus 'looks forward' to receiving his sovereign authority at his exaltation. But in Mark's story, the Son of Man is invested with sovereign authority *from the outset of his ministry* (2:10, 28).

Daniel 7:13 is not the only Old Testament text to which Mark 8:38 points; there is also a clear allusion to Zechariah 14:5: 'Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.'⁵² Both France and Wright acknowledge the presence of this echo but make nothing of it.⁵³ Zechariah 14 envisions God's end-time coming from heaven to earth with his angelic forces to rescue his people from their enemies (v. 5). The scene is thoroughly eschatological; as MacKenzie writes, the main event 'is as clearly final as the author could make it'.⁵⁴ In Zechariah's vision, God's advent is followed by 'fundamental alterations in the natural world' (vv. 6-10)⁵⁵ as well as the institution of his worldwide reign (v. 9).

The allusion to Zechariah 14:5 illumines the connection between 'coming' and judgement which Mark 8:38 presumes. Self-evidently, it clarifies the reference to coming 'with' (μετά) angels. The influence of Zechariah 14:5 also sheds light on the unusual designation of God as 'his Father'. Zechariah uses the personal possessive when speaking of God in his coming: 'the Lord my God'. The desire to establish the personal relationship between God and the Son of Man, resulting in the fusion of the normally distinct categories of Son of God and Son of Man, could well have arisen from the prophet's wording. There is no mention of 'glory' in Zechariah 14:5 or its surrounding context. The manifestation of 'glory', however, figures in other Old Testament descriptions of the coming of God (Isa. 59:19; 66:18; Hab. 3:3).

⁵² The LXX reads: καὶ ἦξει κύριος ὁ θεός μου καὶ πάντες οἱ ἅγιοι μετ' αὐτοῦ. The MT has רַבָּא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי כָל־קְדוֹשִׁים עִמָּו.

⁵³ France, *Mark*: 342; Wright, *Mark*: 111.

⁵⁴ J. L. McKenzie, *A Theology of the Old Testament* (London, Geoffrey Chapman: 1974): 305.

⁵⁵ C. L. Meyers & E. M. Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 25c; New York: Doubleday, 1993): 497.

Mark 8:38b is thus a combination of Daniel 7:13 with Zechariah 14:5 on the basis of the link verb ‘to come’.⁵⁶ The Zechariah reference is the dominant one: it ‘attracts’ the idea of the ‘coming of the son of man’ from Daniel 7:13, and places it in a different context.⁵⁷ The Danielic ‘son of man’ is identified with Jesus. His ‘coming’ is no longer a coming to God, but a coming as God’s agent, from heaven to earth, for the purpose of eschatological judgement. It is unlikely that the whole prophecy of Zechariah 14 is being evoked in all its details; what the Markan text takes from Zechariah is the basic idea of God’s eschatological coming to earth in judgement.⁵⁸ The divine function is transferred to Jesus, the Son of Man. In essence, therefore, this saying is about the parousia of Jesus.⁵⁹

6. Mark 13:24-27: Coming in Clouds with Power and Glory

Mark 13 concerns Jesus’ prophecy that the temple will be destroyed (vv. 1-2), the questions of the disciples following on from this (vv. 3-4) and the discourse that is given in reply (vv. 5-37). The main part of the discourse describes wars and natural disasters (vv. 7-8), the persecution of the faithful (vv. 9-11, 13), civil strife (v. 12), a great time of trouble in Judea (vv. 14-18) and the appearance of deceivers (vv. 5-6, 21-22). These troubles build up to the coming of the Son of Man narrated in verses 24-27. The conventional view takes this section as an account of events that lead up to the parousia and the end of

⁵⁶ In the LXX of Zech. 14:5, the verb ἦκω is used, rather than ἔρχομαι. Generally in the LXX, ἦκω is the preferred word for expressing the idea of God’s coming: e.g. Deut. 33:2; Ps. 97:9; Isa. 19:1; 35:4; 59:19-20. But ἔρχομαι is also used: Ps. 95:13; Isa. 30:27; 40:10; 66:18. According to Mundle (‘ἔρχομαι’, *NIDNTT* 1:320-24, esp. 320), the use of ἔρχομαι and ἦκω in the LXX and the NT ‘passes over into each other’.

⁵⁷ The words in the quotation marks are Wright’s (*People*: 462 n. 66)! This is how he explains the linkage of Zech. 14:5 and Dan. 7:13 in Matt. 25:31 (on which see n. 11 above).

⁵⁸ Zech. 14:5 is applied to the parousia of Jesus in 1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Thess. 1:7-8; *Did.* 16:7; cf. Jude 14-15.

⁵⁹ Comment should briefly be made on Mark 9:1. The verse reads: ‘I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see kingdom of God come with power.’ In my view, these words are a kind of postscript to 8:34-38, and mark the transition to 9:2-8, the account of the transfiguration. In the flow of the narrative, the saying of 9:1 finds its fulfilment in the transfiguration – the event functioning for Mark as a fleeting manifestation of the kingdom’s powerful presence.

history. Most think that verses 5-27 cover both events surrounding Jerusalem's fall in AD 70 (especially in vv. 14-18) and the final end, though it is debated whether Mark is placing the temple's demise and the return of Jesus in close chronological succession or whether he envisages an interval between them.⁶⁰ For both France and Wright, everything in the discourse up to verse 31 (including the crucial v. 30 which predicts fulfilment within a generation) concerns the destruction of the temple/city and events relating to it. France thinks that the subject changes at verse 32; the mention of 'that day' signals a shift in interest from the temple's demise to the parousia of Jesus.⁶¹ In Wright's view, the fate of the city and its temple remains the focus to the end of the discourse.⁶² Verses 24-27 run as follows:

²⁴But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. ²⁷Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

According to France, these verses are about the heavenly enthronement of the Son of Man and its visible consequences.⁶³ Again France thinks that the reference to the Son of Man's coming in the central verse, with the addition of 'in clouds', is intended to call to mind Daniel's enthronement vision as a whole. The surrounding verses indicate that the accession to the throne has visible consequences, both negative and positive. The negative outcome is conveyed in verses 24-25, by the prophetic imagery of cosmic catastrophe, which for both France and Wright is 'powerful symbolism of political changes within world history'.⁶⁴ The wording, they point out, is drawn from Isaiah 13:10 and 34:4, which belong to oracles against Babylon and Edom respectively. Jesus takes up Old Testament imagery for the fall of pagan cities and nations and 'uses it with regard to the fate of Jerusalem and its

⁶⁰ G. R. Beasley-Murray's outstanding work, *Jesus and the Last Days: The Interpretation of the Olivet Discourse* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1993) remains the best account of scholarly discussion of Mark 13.

⁶¹ France, *Mark*: 500-2.

⁶² Wright, *Mark*: 185-88.

⁶³ France, *Mark*: 530-37; cf. *Jesus*: 233-39.

⁶⁴ France, *Mark*: 533; cf. Wright, *People*: 362.

temple'.⁶⁵ Verse 27 sets forth the positive evidence: the world-wide growth of the church.⁶⁶

6:1 The Eschatological Nature of Mark 13:4-27

On France's interpretation, an eschatological perspective does not come into Mark 13 until verse 32. This is very hard to sustain. There can surely be little doubt that what Mark's Jesus is describing from verses 5-23 is the end-time woes, the period of distress expected to precede the close of history – a well-established concept by this time.⁶⁷ This judgement is not based, as France supposes, on the single word 'woes' in verse 8 (and the mistaken assumption that it connotes the later idea of the *messianic* woes), but the pattern of verses 5-23 as a whole. Wars, natural disasters (including earthquakes and famines), the persecution of the faithful, betrayal within families and among friends are typical of descriptions of the final time of trouble. The end-time woes reach their conclusion, in most of the examples of the schema which predate or are close in time to Mark, with an unmistakably 'final' event: God's advent (*I Enoch* 1; 91:5-10; *Testament of Moses* 10:1-7) or his awesome intervention (*Sibylline Oracles* 3:669-701); the day of judgement (*I Enoch* 100:1-4); the end of all things (*Sibylline Oracles* 3:796-808); the destruction of the present cosmos and the creation of a new world (*I Enoch* 80:2-8; cf. 72:1).⁶⁸ Given the extent to which Mark 13:5-23 corresponds to the well-known scheme, it is entirely legitimate to take the word τέλος in verses 7 and 13, usually translated 'end', as referring to the eschatological finale. This reading is not in the least undermined 'by the fact

⁶⁵ France, *Mark*: 533.

⁶⁶ Other recent scholars who have argued for a historical reading of Mark 13:24-27 include K. D. Dyer, 'When Is the End Not the End? The Fate of the Earth in Biblical Eschatology (Mark 13)', in N. C. Habel & V. Balabanski, ed., *The Earth Story in the New Testament* (London: Sheffield Academic Press/Continuum, 2002): 44-56, esp. 51-53; T. R. Hatina, 'The Focus of Mark 13:24-27: The Parousia, or the Destruction of the Temple?', *BBR* 6 (1996): 43-66.

⁶⁷ E.g. *I Enoch* 91:5-7; 93:9-10; 80:2-8; 100:1-4; *Jub.* 23:13-23; *Sib. Or.* 3:657-808; *T.Mos.* 7-10. See further D. C. Allison, *The End of the Ages has Come: an Early Interpretation of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985): 5-25; L. Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted: The Formation of Some Jewish Apocalyptic Texts and of the Eschatological Discourse of Mark 13 par.* (ConBNT 1; Lund: Gleerup, 1966): 28-34.

⁶⁸ In *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*, the tribulation precedes the coming of the messiah: *4 Ezra* 5:1-13; 6:13-25; etc; *2 Apoc. Bar.* 26-30; *70. Jub.* 23:13-23 would be exceptional if, as Allison thinks, it depicts the tribulation as past: see Allison, *End of the Ages*, 17-19.

the whole section is couched in terms of what [Mark's] actual readers are to witness and experience'.⁶⁹ Jewish descriptions of the end-time woes often incorporate current or soon expected events.

The eschatological direction that the discourse will follow is already signalled in the second part of the disciples' initial question: 'What will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?' (τί τὸ σημεῖον ὅταν μέλλῃ ταῦτα συντελεῖσθαι πάντα). This interpretation rests not on the verb συντελέω on its own, as France maintains when he dismisses the view, but on the fact we have here a fairly clear allusion to Daniel 12:6-7.⁷⁰ In this text, Daniel asks how long it would be until the end, and the angel replies 'when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end, all these things would be accomplished' (καὶ συντελεσθήσεται πάντα ταῦτα, Dan. 12:7 LXX). In Daniel 12:6-7 'all these things' refers to the events described in 11:29-45, the events of the Antiochan crisis, and 'the end' is the end of this time of affliction (12:1). In the first century AD, Daniel 12 would have been read in terms of the final eschatological tribulation.⁷¹ The event which demonstrates that 'all these things' have been accomplished would be, for the disciples, the final intervention. Mark thus portrays the disciples as associating the fall of the temple, of which Jesus has just spoken, with the end-times woes and the final deliverance.⁷²

The opening of verse 24 signals a shift to what follows immediately *after* the tribulation has run its course (μετὰ τὴν θλίψιν ἐκείνην). First-century readers familiar with contemporary Jewish eschatological expectation would naturally expect a reference to the final denouement at this point. According to France, at verse 24 we come not to the parousia, but the destruction of the temple/Jerusalem, the point to which the whole discourse has been leading. In France's view, the disciples' question in verse 4 requires Jesus specifically to mention the

⁶⁹ France, *Jesus*: 231.

⁷⁰ See Hartman, *Prophecy*: 145. France (*Mark*: 507-8), in discussing Mark 13:4, does not indicate any awareness of this well recognised allusion.

⁷¹ This is indicated by the allusion to Dan. 12:1 in *T.Mos.* 8:1. Note that in Mark 13:19, Jesus himself picks up the language of Dan. 12:1.

⁷² Thus Matthew's rendition of the disciples' question ('Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?', Matt. 24:3) correctly interprets Mark 13:4. For the linkage of a (perceived) historical catastrophe with the 'end of the world' in a contemporary Graeco-Roman text, see my, 'Historical Crisis and Cosmic Crisis in Mark 13 and Lucan's *Civil War*', *TynBul* 48 (1997): 329-44.

destruction of the temple within the discourse. Since Jesus has not done so up to this stage, we must presume that he comes to it now, describing it 'not in the prosaic terms of verse 2' but in the evocative language of Old Testament prophecy.⁷³ But there is nothing in the question of verse 4 that necessitates a reference to the temple's demise *at any point in the discourse*. In verse 4a, the disciples ask Jesus about the *timing* of the temple event; they do not ask him to elaborate further on the event itself. Mark's Jesus has no need to repeat his earlier prediction.⁷⁴

That the cosmic imagery of verses 24-25 refers to the destruction of the temple/Jerusalem is unlikely. First, it is not clear that the Old Testament prophets used this kind of imagery as symbolism for political change. To be sure, the prophets often employed language of natural/cosmic disaster *in close association* with the pronouncement of doom on specific nations and cities.⁷⁵ But in doing so, they were very probably arguing from the greater to the lesser, appealing to the (very real) expectation of ultimate cosmic/universal judgement to reinforce the threat of upcoming local judgement.⁷⁶ Second, in Isaiah 13 and 34, there is an explicit move from cosmic to local doom; the switch to Babylon and Edom is made abundantly clear in the discourse (Isa. 13:19; 34:5). But, in Mark 13:24-27, there is no explicit mention of judgement on Jerusalem; unlike Isaiah, Jesus does not 'particularize' the cosmic perspective and apply it to a local target.⁷⁷ Third, in Jewish pseudepigraphal texts, language of cosmic upheaval is much more clearly used in connection with the end of history.⁷⁸ An 'end of history' sense in Mark 13:24-27 fits with the eschatological nature of the preceding verses.

⁷³ France, *Mark*: 530; cf. *Jesus*: 233.

⁷⁴ Cf. Casey, *Son of Man*: 173. With most commentators, I take vv. 14-18 to be referring to events associated with the fall of the temple.

⁷⁵ See also Mic. 1; Nah. 1; Zeph. 1.

⁷⁶ See further P. R. Raabe, 'The Particularizing of Universal Judgment in Prophetic Discourse', *CBQ* 64 (2002): 652-74.

⁷⁷ Cf. Raabe, 'Particularizing': 653.

⁷⁸ France admits this (*Mark*: 533 n. 8), but it is heavily disputed by Wright (*People*: 333). Space precludes a discussion of the relevant pseudepigraphical texts (e.g. *2 Apoc. Bar.* 32:1; *1 Enoch* 1:3-9; 102:1-3; *Sib. Or.* 3:80-92; 675-81; *T.Mos.* 10:3-6).

6:2 Mark 13:24-27 as the Eschatological Epiphany of the Son of Man

The allusion to Daniel 7:13 in Mark 13:26 extends beyond the words ἔρχομαι and υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου to the mention of clouds. This extended allusion shows further interest in the ‘coming’ motif of Daniel 7:13, but not necessarily the whole Danielic vision. As in 8:38, the mention of glory in 13:26 and the reference to angels superficially strengthen the linkage to Daniel 7:9-14, but again, their Markan function is different.

It is highly likely that Mark would want his readers to understand this reference to the coming of the Son of Man in the light of the previous mention at 8:38. The Old Testament allusions and associations in 13:24-27 fit a picture of the advent of God, with Jesus as the Son of Man in the main role.

As noted earlier, the shaking of nature is a characteristic feature of Old Testament descriptions of God’s coming.⁷⁹ It is true that none of the Old Testament texts on which Mark 13:24-25 draws – Isaiah. 13:10; 34:4; Joel 2:10; 4:15 – concern the coming of God. Rather they are about the ‘day of the Lord’. The idea of God’s coming, however, is strongly indicated by the verb σαλεύω which occurs in the final line of verse 25 and which is not found in any of the four Old Testament passages just noted. As Beasley-Murray states, the verb ‘is a standard term in Old Testament descriptions of theophany’.⁸⁰ Also, by Mark’s time, images of cosmic darkening had become associated with the eschatological advent of God. In *Testament of Moses* 10:5, the failure of the sun and moon is part of the upheaval caused by God’s awesome coming.

Generally, in the Old Testament, it is God who travels with clouds.⁸¹ Daniel’s portrayal of the humanlike one as the cloud-rider is a re-working of the traditional image of Yahweh. Clouds figure in some of the most vivid Old Testament descriptions of God’s coming, involving ‘shaking’ in nature.⁸² It is likely that the cloud reference in Daniel 7:13

⁷⁹ In Sir. 16:18-19, the shaking extends to the heavens.

⁸⁰ Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days*: 424. See also, J. Verheyden, ‘Describing the Parousia: The Cosmic Phenomena in Mark 13,24-25’, in C. M. Tuckett, ed., *The Scriptures in the Gospels* (BETL 131; Leuven: University Press, 1997): 525-50, esp. 544-46. The verb σαλεύω occurs in LXX of Judg. 5:5; Ps. 17:8 (=MT 18:7); 76:19 (=77:18); 95:9 (=96:9); 96:4 (=97:4); 97:7 (=98:7) 113:7 (=114:7); Job 9:6; Amos 9:5; Nah.1:5; Hab. 3:6; Jdt. 16:15; Sir. 16:18; 43:16.

⁸¹ Exod. 19:9; 34:5; Num. 11:25; 12:5; 2 Sam. 22:12; Ps. 18:11-12; 97:2; Isa. 19:1; Nah. 1:3.

⁸² Judg. 5:4-5; 2 Sam. 22:8-20; Ps. 18:7-19; 97:2-5; Nah. 1:3-5.

is taken up precisely because it is a recognisable element of the imagery of the divine advent.⁸³ When God comes with/in clouds, the direction of movement is from heaven to earth.⁸⁴ Although the referent of ὄψονται ('they will see') in verse 26 is not clear, it suggests an earthly vantage-point.

As we have already seen, in several theophany texts in the Old Testament, God's coming issues in a revelation of his 'glory'. 'Power' is not immediately connected with the advent of God in the Old Testament, but it is a commonly mentioned attribute of Yahweh, especially in salvific contexts.⁸⁵

The angelic entourage is another typical feature of the divine coming.⁸⁶ God comes with his heavenly army to fight on behalf of his people. Here, the Son of Man functions as the divine commander of the heavenly host. Rather than executing judgement on God's enemies, the angels have the more positive role of assisting the Son of Man in the gathering of the elect.

The gathering together of the dispersed people of God is a prominent element of Old Testament hope.⁸⁷ The wording of verse 27 echoes Deuteronomy 13:7, 30:4 and Zechariah 2:6. These texts refer to the gathering of Jewish exiles out of their far-flung places of captivity. But in Mark, 'the elect' extends beyond the elect of Israel. Thus the language of universality drawn from these texts functions to indicate the redeemed company is *made up* of people from all nations (cf. 13:10). The thought here, especially in view of the mention of glory in verse 26, is very close to Isaiah 66:18, in which the Lord declares: 'I am coming to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and shall see my glory.'⁸⁸

⁸³ Mark's ἐν νεφέλαις differs from Daniel's ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ (LXX). ἐν νεφέλαις is used in Ps. 18:11 (LXX 17:12).

⁸⁴ Whether the clouds of Mark 13:26 are literal or figurative is difficult to tell. Wright balks at the idea of Jesus coming back on an actual cloud (*Jesus*: 341), but this seems to be what is envisaged in Acts 1:9-11 (as Wright appears to recognise: *People*: 462).

⁸⁵ E.g. Ps. 21:13; 46:1; 59:16; 66:3.

⁸⁶ In addition to Zech. 14:5, see Deut. 33:2; Ps. 68:17; Zech. 9:14-15; *I Enoch* 1:9.

⁸⁷ Isa. 11:11, 27:12-13; 43:6; 60:1-9, etc.

⁸⁸ Cf C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary* (translated by D. M. H. Stalker, London: SCM, 1969): 424.

In summary, the various motifs in Mark 13:24-27 form a cluster of images consistent with a picture of the coming of God. The Old Testament echoes and associations build on the allusion to the divine advent in 8:38. Again, the transference of the divine function to Jesus/the Son of Man expresses the general idea of Jesus' parousia. The event is both cosmic/universal (vv. 24b-25, 27) and final (v. 24a).⁸⁹

7. Mark 14:62: Coming with Clouds of Heaven

The third and last reference to the future coming of the Son of Man is found in Mark 14:62. At his trial before the High Priest, Jesus is asked if he is the messiah. He replies positively and adds that his accusers will see the Son of Man 'sitting at the right hand of the power on high and coming with clouds of heaven' (ἐκ δεξιῶν καθήμενον τῆς δυνάμεως καὶ ἐρχόμενον μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ). This statement combines Daniel 7:13 with Psalm 110:1.

France complains that the traditional parousia interpretation makes too much of the order, sitting *then* coming, which is taken as indicating that exaltation followed by second coming is meant. According to France, this reading lays too much weight on the simple καί which is presumed to conceal a time gap between the two events.⁹⁰ In France's view, we have here a 'mixture of metaphors', sitting and coming referring to the one concept, that of 'sovereign authority'.⁹¹

If we let Mark's two previous references to the coming of the Son of Man guide us in our interpretation (as we ought), the coming must be viewed as a coming *to earth*. It is right, then, to draw a distinction between the sitting and the coming. 'Sitting', though, does not refer to the ascension/exaltation of Jesus; rather it denotes his heavenly session. The event of the exaltation is presupposed by the participle καθήμενον but it is not expressed by it. The καί conveys a basic sequence – sitting *precedes* coming – but it does not conceal a break in

⁸⁹ There remains the problem of how to interpret v. 30, which predicts the fulfilment of 'all these things' within a generation. In my view, 'all these things' refers back to the 'these things' of v. 29, which clearly do not include the parousia. 'All these things' are to be seen or experienced by Jesus' generation, but not necessarily fully exhausted within their lifetime.

⁹⁰ France, *Mark*: 612.

⁹¹ France, *Mark*: 612.

time between the two. Sitting is a state; coming is an action. The connective signals a movement from one to the other. The picture envisaged, I suggest, is not dissimilar to that of *Testament of Moses* 10:3-6 in which God *rises* from his heavenly throne where he has been seated, and *descends* to earth ‘in full view’ to work vengeance on the nations. The difference is that in Mark, it is Jesus, rather than God, who comes down from his throne on high.

It is not made clear how Jesus’ accusers will see either his heavenly reign or his eschatological return. The essential point is that of reversal: the one who stands under the judgement of earthly judges will have ultimate authority over them.

8. Conclusion

There are thus good exegetical reasons for taking Mark’s three sayings on the coming of the Son of Man as referring to what has come to be known as Jesus’ parousia. The first ‘coming’ Son of Man saying, in 8:38, is the determinative one; it establishes the way in which the others should be read. As Marshall states, ‘What is said ... in the Old Testament about a future coming of God himself in judgment (Zechariah 14:5) is here attributed to the Son of Man as his agent.’⁹² In Mark 13:24-27, the picture is developed with additional Old Testament images relating to God’s coming. The context indicates that a final, history-consummating event is in view. Mark 14:62, through its linkage of Daniel 7:13 and Psalm 110:1, clarifies the heavenly point of origin of the coming and makes explicit the exalted status of the Son of Man who comes.

From these passages, we can construct a ‘discourse concept’⁹³ of the coming of the Son of Man in Mark.

The coming Son of Man is the exalted Jesus (14:62). He comes, at the close of history (13:24), from his heavenly seat of power (14:62), as the divine warrior (8:38), at the head of an angelic force (8:38; 13:27) to effect judgement (8:38; 14:62) and to rescue the elect (13:27). His coming is visible (13:26; 14:62) and its effects are global (13:27) and cosmic (13:24-25).

⁹² I. H. Marshall, ‘Son of Man’, in J. B. Green *et al.*, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove/Leicester: IVP, 1992): 775-81, esp. 776.

⁹³ On discourse concepts, see P. Cotterell and M. Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (London: SPCK, 1989): 180-81.

Mark's overall concept of the future coming of the Son of Man more than meets the basic definition of Jesus' parousia with which we set out.

Mark's 'coming' Son of Man sayings join his other Son of Man references to form a coherent sequence of activity and events: 1) the Son of Man exercises his lordship on earth (2:10, 28); 2) the Son of Man suffers and dies (8:31; 9:12, 31; 10:33-34; 10:45; 14:21, 41); 3) the Son of Man is raised (8:31; 9:9, 31); 4) the Son of Man sits at God's right hand (having been exalted, 14:62); 5) the Son of Man comes from heaven, to enact final judgement and bring deliverance to his elect (8:38; 13:24-27; 14:62). It is possible to discern in Mark's narrative a basic scheme of the Son of Man's coming (Mark 10:45), going (14:21)⁹⁴ and coming *again* (8:38, etc.).

The parousia interpretation of Mark's 'coming' Son of Man sayings has often been, as France rightly protests, an 'instinctive interpretation' – assumed rather than argued for. I hope to have shown that the idea of Jesus' parousia can be derived from a close analysis of the relevant Markan texts which is sensitive to a) the scriptural associations made, b) Jewish eschatological currents and c) the larger narrative Christology. According to France, if one reads the 'coming' Son of Man sayings in the context of 'first century understanding of prophetic and apocalyptic language', the traditional parousia reading is not at all obvious.⁹⁵ I beg to differ.

⁹⁴ While ὑπάγει is usually taken in 14:21 as a euphemism for death, it is possible that the verb has in view the total 'departure' event (Jesus' death and ascent into heaven) as in the Fourth Gospel (e.g. John 7:33; 8:14).

⁹⁵ France, *Mark*: 503.