



The Son of Man in the Hebrew Bible

MORTAL, ESCHATOLOGICAL FIGURE,
SOMETHING ELSE?.

Psalm 8; Isaiah 51 (again); Ezekiel 2–6;
Daniel 7–9; Moses 7:51–66.

“Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise” (hymn no. 41)

1. Let Zion in her beauty rise;
Her light begins to shine.
Ere long her King will rend the skies,
Majestic and divine,
The gospel spreading thru the land,
A people to prepare
To meet the Lord and Enoch's band
Triumphant in the air.

2. Ye heralds, sound the golden trump
To earth's remotest bound.
Go spread the news from pole to pole
In all the nations round:
That Jesus in the clouds above,
With hosts of angels too,
Will soon appear, his Saints to save,
His enemies subdue.

3. That glorious rest will then commence
Which prophets did foretell,
When Saints will reign with Christ on earth,
And in his presence dwell
A thousand years, oh, glorious day!
Dear Lord, prepare my heart
To stand with thee on Zion's mount
And nevermore to part.

Son of Man as a Mortal (or Son of Adam)



*“THE SON OF MAN” WILL BE JESUS’ MOST COMMON TITLE FOR HIMSELF, BUT
WHAT DID IT MEAN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?*

Psalm 8



¹O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!
who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

³When I consider thy heavens,
the work of thy fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which thou hast ordained;

⁴***What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
and the son of man, that thou visitest him?***

⁵For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels,
and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

⁶Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands;
thou hast put all things under his feet:

⁷All sheep and oxen,
yea, and the beasts of the field;

⁸The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea,
and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

⁹O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

Isaiah 51

¹Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness,
ye that seek the Lord:
look unto the rock whence ye are hewn,
and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.

²Look unto Abraham your father,
and unto Sarah that bare you:
for I called him alone,
and blessed him,
and increased him.

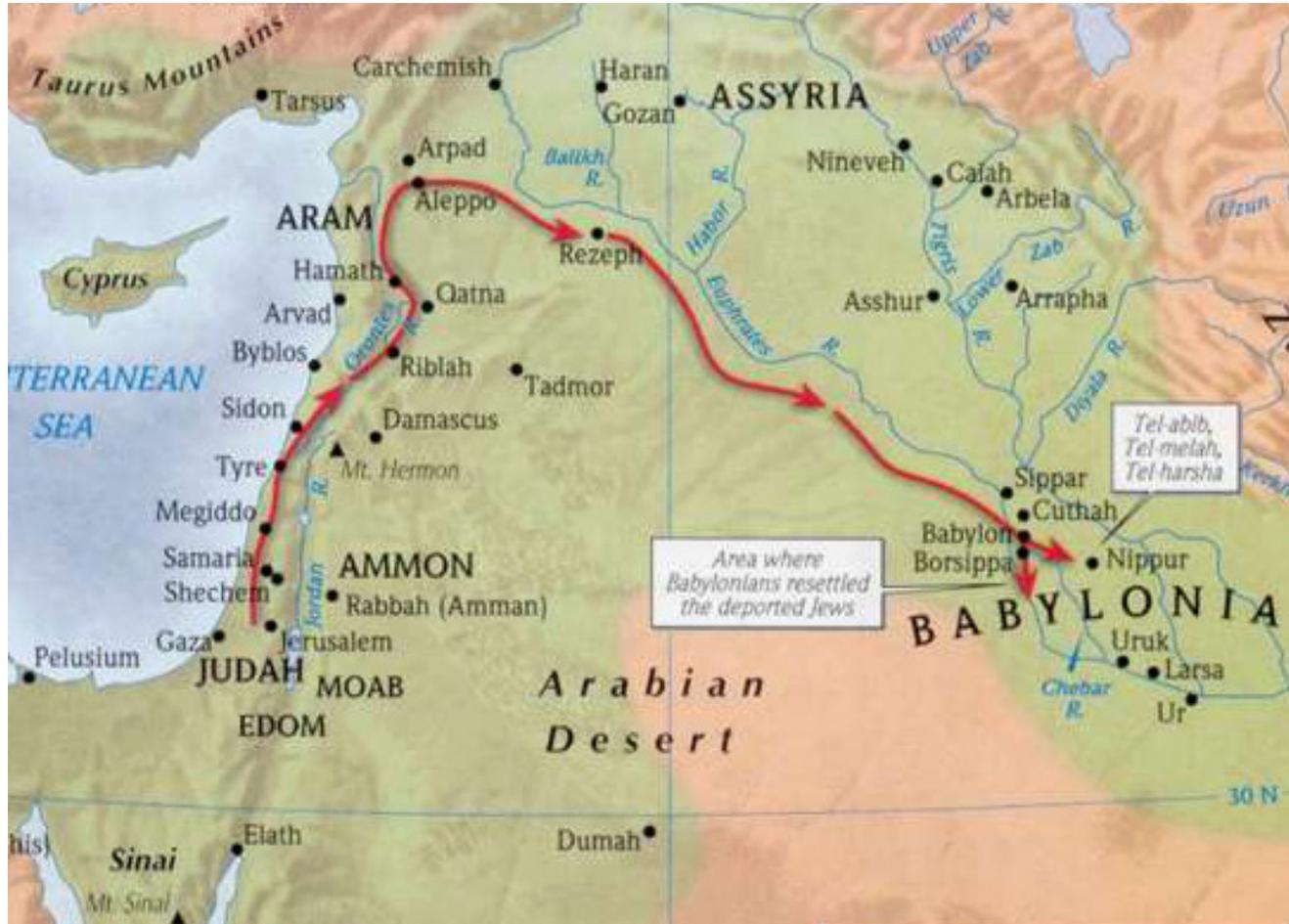
⁶Lift up your eyes to the heavens,
and look upon the earth beneath:
for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke,
and the earth shall wax old like a garment,
and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner:
but my salvation shall be for ever,
and my righteousness shall not be abolished.

¹²I, even I, am he that comforteth you:
who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man
that shall die,
and of the son of man
which shall be made as grass;
¹³And forgettest the Lord thy maker,
that hath stretched forth the heavens,
and laid the foundations of the earth;
and hast feared continually every day
because of the fury of the oppressor,
as if he were ready to destroy?
and where is the fury of the oppressor?

Ezekiel

- *Yehezqē'l* = “God will strengthen”
 - Taken with Jehoiachin in the first deportation (c. 597 B.C.)
 - Settled at *Tel Abib* (“Hill of the Deluge,” modern Tel Aviv is named for it)
- Both prophet and priest
 - Is a “watchman” for Israel
 - Often speaks in terms of purity and impurity, makes references to Leviticus
 - ***Begins with a vision of a desecrated temple ready for destruction*** and ***ends with a vision of a renewed temple***
- **Began his prophetic ministry at age 30, the traditional age for priests to begin their service**
 - Could not serve in the temple, but he could still serve God!
 - Prophesied from 593–571 B.C.
 - ***His visions were ecstatic and symbolic, earning him the title “the father of apocalyptic”***
 - **Intensely vulnerable to the spirit**—note how often the word of God comes on him, the spirit “picks him up,” etc.
 - *Rabbinic tradition later held that only a mature man well-versed in Torah dare read the opening of Ezekiel!*

“By the river of Chebar . . .”



The Chebar was an irrigation canal south and west of Babylon. Next to it at Tel-abib many, including Ezekiel, of the first deportation were settled

The Messages of Ezekiel

- Theological
 - *God can be present with his people, even in exile*
 - *God's glory, power, knowledge are indescribable*
- Moral
 - **Israel and Judah's punishment was a result of their own sin—especially their covenant unfaithfulness to YHWH**
 - Main message before 587 B.C.
 - Although the *group* suffers to some extent for the sins of their predecessors, *individuals will be judged according to their own guilt; repentance can save even the wicked* (18:1–32)
 - Nevertheless, **God is faithful and will one day restore Israel**
 - Consolation and restoration are the major messages after 587 B.C.
- Prophetic
 - The task of God's messenger is to serve as **a sentinel or watchman** who may individually succeed or fail
 - As a priestly or scapegoat figure, **he intercedes** (sc. prophet as mediator) **for his people and can symbolically bear their burdens . . . is responsible if he does not warn them** (3:12–21; cf. Jacob 1:19, 2:2–3)
 - *In some ways, the prophet is a type or anticipation of Christ*

Overview of the Book of Ezekiel

Unlike Jeremiah, very chronological—note the frequent date references

- **Ezekiel's Call and Commissioning (1:1–3:27)**

- Ezekiel's Circumstances (1:1–3)
- Ezekiel's Vision of God (1:4–28)
- The Vision of the Scroll (2:1–3:27)

- **Prophecies Against Judah and Jerusalem (4:1–24:27)**

- Prophecies through Symbols (4:1–5:17)
- Prophecies Through Visions (8:1–11:25)
- Judgment Through Signs, Messages, and Parables (12:1–24:27)

- **Prophecies Against Foreign Nations (25:1–32:32)**

Note the formulaic expression, “Thou shalt/they shall know that I am the Lord”

- **Prophecies of Israel's Restoration (33:1–39:29)**

- The Resuscitation of the Nation: the Valley of dry bones (37:1–14)
- The Reuniting of the Nation: Two sticks (37:15–28)

- **Prophecies Concerning Israel in the Millennial Kingdom (40:1–48:35)**

- **Ezekiel is repeatedly described as “son of man”**

- The Hebrew is *ben 'ādām*, literally “son of Adam,” which the NRSV translates simply as “mortal”
- The prophet Ezekiel, like the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, can serve as a **type of Christ—sent by God to a rebellious people**

Ezekiel's Call (Ezekiel 2:1-8)

¹And he said unto me, **Son of man**, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. ²And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me.

³And he said unto me,

**Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel,
to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me:
they and their fathers have transgressed against me,
even unto this very day.**

⁴For they are impudent children and stiffhearted.

I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God. ⁵And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for **they are a rebellious house**,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.

Ezekiel's Commissioning (Ezekiel 2:9–3:11)

⁹And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, **a roll of a book was therein**; ¹⁰And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

^{3:1}Moreover he said unto me,

“**Son of man**, eat that thou findest;
eat this roll,
and go speak unto the house of Israel.”

²So I opened my mouth, and **he caused me to eat that roll**.

³And he said unto me,

“**Son of man**, cause thy belly to eat,
and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee.”

Then did I eat it; and **it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness**.

⁴And he said unto me, “**Son of man**, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. ⁵For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, but to the house of Israel; ⁶Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee. **⁷But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted.**”

¹⁰Moreover he said unto me, “**Son of man**, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears. ¹¹And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord God; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.”

Ezekiel as a Watchman (Ezekiel 3:17–21; 33:1–9)

^{3:17}**Son of man**, I have made *thee a watchman unto the house of Israel*: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

¹⁹Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, **he shall die in his iniquity**; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

²¹Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul.

^{33:7}So thou, **O son of man**, *I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel*; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.

⁸When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. ⁹Nevertheless, **if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity**; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

Son of Man as a Divine, Eschatological Figure

Daniel, the Prophet and the Book

- **The Daniel Figure**

- *Dāniyyē`l* means “God is Judge”
- Non-biblical (Ugaritic) texts—a wise man
- Ezekiel 14:14–20, 28:3—with Noah and Job, a righteous man
- Main character in all but chapter 3 of Book of Daniel
 - A young Jewish man taken as a hostage by the Babylonians 606 B.C.

- **Book of Daniel**

- **Stories of Faithfulness (1:1–6:28)**
 - Folktales focusing on living righteously in a foreign land
- **Visions of Daniel (7:1–12:13)**
 - Apocalyptic accounts of future events
 - *Apocalypse: a heavily symbolic vision in narrative form, meditated by otherworldly characters and intended to provide comfort to a persecuted or endangered group*
 - Early apocalyptic in Isaiah 24:1–27:13 and Zechariah; also 1 Nephi 11–14; most other examples later (e.g., 1 Enoch, Revelation)

A “Writing” Rather than a Prophetic Book

- In the Hebrew Bible, Daniel is part of the Writings (*Ketuvim*) rather than the Prophets (*Nevi'im*)
 - Its setting is 6th century but it did not reach its final literary form until 167 B.C.
 - Much of it in Aramaic, not Hebrew
 - *Oracles and visions could have been Daniel's but the stories about him were later*
- In the **Stories of Faithfulness (1:1–6:28)** Daniel functions as the advisor of foreign kings and not a “watchman for Israel”
- In the **Visions of Daniel (7:1–12:13)** he does serve as a messenger (of the future) and as a mediator (esp. 9:3–19)
 - he then begins to “seal” visions (a characteristic of apocalyptic literature) rather than revealing God's message

Overview of Daniel

- **Stories of Faithfulness (1:1–6:28)**

- Daniel's Faithfulness (1:1–21)
- Nebuchadnezzar's Dream: The Great Image (2:1–49)
- The Fiery Furnace: A Lesson in Faith (3:1–30)
- Nebuchadnezzar's Vision of the High Tree (4:1–37)
- Belshazzar's Feast (5:1–31)
- Daniel in the Lions' Den (6:1–28)

- **Visions of Daniel (7:1–12:13)**

- Daniel's Vision of the Four Beasts and the Ancient of Days (7:1–28)
- Daniel's Vision of the Ram, Goat, and Small Horn (8:1–27)
- Daniel's Prophecy of Seventy Weeks of Years (9:1–27)
- Daniel's Prophetic Panorama (10:1–12:13)

- **In some of Daniel's visions, a supernatural figure described as “the Son of Man” appears**

- *This is different than the usual biblical use for “mortal”*

Apocalyptic Imagery in Daniel



As “father of apocalyptic,” Ezekiel had set the pattern for trying to describe an indescribably God

Daniel added to the growing symbolic repertoire of apocalyptic by adding bizarre beasts, etc., to represent future and symbolic kingdoms and figures

Daniel's Visions and the Coming One

Without worrying about the details of the visions, note the references to a figure who will overcome the world and restore it to God

- Daniel's Vision of the Four Beasts and the Ancient of Days (7:1–28)
 - **The Son of Man (see next slide)**
- Daniel's Vision of the Ram, Goat, and Small Horn (8:1–27)
 - **The Prince of Princes**
- Daniel's Prophecy of Seventy Weeks of Years (9:1–27)
 - **Messiah the Prince, who shall be cut off to make reconciliation for iniquity**

Daniel's Son of Man (Daniel 7:9-14)



⁹I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days (Aramaic *'atiq yomin*) did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire (see Ezekiel 1:15-19). ¹⁰A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and **the books were opened**.

¹³I saw in the night visions, and, behold, **one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven**, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. ¹⁴And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Ancient of Days, Son of Man, son of man



"The Ancient of Days," a 14th-century fresco from Ubisi, Georgia.

- In the received text, **the Ancient of Days seems to refer to God** (cf. Ezekiel 1:26, "upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.")
 - **Joseph Smith, however, seems to have seen him as Adam**
 - D&C 27:11, "Michael, or Adam, the father of all, the prince of all, the ancient of days"
 - See D&C 116, though the wording could imply that while Adam-ondi-Ahman is the place where Adam will visit his people, it is *also* the place where God himself will sit in judgment)
 - "'Ancient of Days' appears to be his title because he is 'the first and oldest of all.'" (TPJS, 167)
- Unlike Psalms, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, where "**son of man**" is a mortal, here we have **an eschatological figure who comes from heaven with God's power**
 - *Eschatology is the study of the end of the world and destiny of mankind*
- **Daniel himself, however, is referred to as "a son of man" in 8:17**

Son of Man as Son of God



Jesus as Son of the Father

- “Behold, I am God; **Man of Holiness** is my name; Man of Counsel is my name; and Endless and Eternal is my name, also” (Moses 7:35)
- “in the language of Adam, **Man of Holiness is his name**, and the name of his **Only Begotten is the Son of Man**, even Jesus Christ, a righteous Judge, who shall come in the meridian of time” (Moses 6:57; see D&C 78:20; 95:17, where *Ahman* is apparently Adamic for God)

Revelations to Enoch about the Son of Man (Moses 7:51–66)

- After foreseeing the destruction of wicked humanity in the flood (a type of their destruction at the end of the world), Enoch prays about Messiah. He then sees the following:
 - The Son of Man come in the flesh to die upon the cross (7:54–55)
 - Death and Hell conquered (souls freed from the grave and prison, 7:56–57)
 - The Son of Man ascend to the Father (7:59a)
 - The Son of Man return to finish the conquest of death and the establishment of New Jerusalem and the return of Zion (7:62–65)

Exegetical Exercise

See online directions, grade sheet, and sample paper

- **Picking a Passage and Background Study**

- Consider a new passage from the following: Genesis 3:15; 49:10; Deuteronomy 18:15; 2 Samuel 7:12–14; Psalm 24:9–10; 34:20; 69:21; Micah 5:2; Jeremiah 23:5–6; 33:14–15; Hosea 11:1; Zechariah 9:9; 11:12–13; 12:10; Malachi 3:1–4.
- Read the Bible Dictionary entry for your passage *and* the introduction to the book in which it is found from *HarperCollins Study Bible* (online) or another resource
- Also look for the outline of your book so you can discuss how your passage fits into its larger context.

- **Paper Format**

- Introductory paragraph: description of pericope and a statement of the passage's significance
- Historical paragraph: occasion of the event described, source (author and book), and any historical factors or context that help better understand the passage (such as surrounding events or any relevant customs or practices)
- Literary paragraph: the genre or type of writing the passage represents; any editing or compositional issues that may have affected how the event was recorded; the literary context (including the section of the book in which it appears and what comes immediately before or after); any literary features or devices that help better understand the passage
- 1–2 theological paragraphs: summation of the theological principle or point that the passage made for its original audience (exegesis), followed by an explication of its meaning and application to readers today (exposition). This will serve as the conclusion of your paper