

# The New Exodus Depicted in the Descent and Ascent of the Son of Man in John

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### I. Introduction: Situating the Study in Notable, Recent Scholarship

It has been almost 50 years since Wayne Meeks published the “Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism”, wherein he analyzed the importance of the descending and ascending Son of Man to the symbolic structure of the Gospel of John and identity of the Johannine Community. Since then, a flurry of articles, theses, and chapters have been released examining the background, literary function, and theological importance of the Son of Man and His movement in the Gospel of John.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, to situate this study and its argument, a brief examination of Meek’s article and John’s Ashton’s recent article published 40 years later.

A provocative reply to Bultmann’s proposed “Johannine Puzzle”,<sup>2</sup> Meeks’ article locates the descent-ascent motif as, “not only the key to his identity and identification, but the primary content of his esoteric knowledge which distinguishes him from the men who belong to ‘this world.’”<sup>3</sup> By looking at the function of the descent-ascent Motif in the discourse of Nicodemus, Meeks concludes that Jesus reveals not that he is the Revealer, but that he is an enigma. Nicodemus leaves his conversation with Jesus even more confused than when he began. Thus, the descent functions as a judgement of the world because of its refusal to embrace the Son of Man. However, there is a positive christology at work in the ironic exaltation of the Son of Man on the cross. Yet, it is only the Johannine community that understands the full significance of this content. Meeks notes the parallel of this descent with a common Jewish Wisdom myth, “Wisdom sought a home among men, in the world which was made through her, but found no acceptance—except, most Jewish versions would add, finally in Israel, through the revelation at Sinai. It is precisely that exception that is rejected by vs. 11: those who accepted—and there were some who

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, Francis J Moloney, *The Johannine Son of Man Second Edition*. (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007), <http://public.eblib.com/choice/PublicFullRecord.aspx?p=6337664>; John Ashton, “The Johannine Son of Man: A New Proposal,” *New Testament Studies* 57, no. 4 (October 2011): 508–29, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688511000178>; Margaret Pamment, “THE SON OF MAN IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 36, no. 1 (1985): 56–66, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/36.1.56>; Seyoon Kim, “The ‘Son of Man’ as the Son of God,” *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 30 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1983); John Pryor, “The Johannine Son of Man and the Descent-Ascent Motif,” *JETS* 34, no. 3 (September 1991): 341–51; William O. Walker, “John 1.43–51 and ‘the Son of Man’ in the Fourth Gospel,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 17, no. 56 (April 1995): 31–42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X9501705602>; George R. Beasley-Murray, “John 12,31—32: The Eschatological Significance of the Lifting up of the Son of Man,” in *Studien Zum Text Und Zur Ethik Des Neuen Testaments*, ed. Wolfgang Schrage (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 1986), 70–81, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110850154-006>; George Raymond Beasley-Murray, *Gospel of Life: Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, The 1990 Payton Lectures (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991); John Behr, *John the Theologian and His Paschal Gospel: A Prologue to Theology*, First edition (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2019); Charles H. Talbert, “The Myth of a Descending-Ascending Redeemer in Mediterranean Antiquity,” *New Testament Studies* 22, no. 4 (July 1976): 418–40, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688500010109>.

<sup>2</sup> The puzzle, briefly stated, is that the Fourth Gospel identifies Jesus as a revealer from heaven who can uniquely communicate what he has seen and heard, but such content is never revealed. The revelation instead, is that Jesus is the Revealer. Bultmann surmises that this puzzle points to the Fourth Gospel as a demythologization of gnostic redeemer myths Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (Waco, Tex: Baylor University Press, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Wayne A. Meeks, “The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91, no. 1 (March 1972): 44, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3262920>. p.60-61.

accepted (vs. 12)- are not "his own," the Jews, but some yet-to-be-defined group whose extraordinary status... is miraculous."<sup>4</sup> Thus, the Son of Man does not represent the union of heaven and earth but rather the contrast and estrangement between God, Christ, the small group of the faithful and the world. As a result, The Son of Man motif tells the story not just of Jesus' judgement, but also the community's progressive induction to intimacy with Jesus. A few sentences from Meeks are worth quoting at length:

The depiction of Jesus as the man "who comes down from heaven" marks him as the alien from all men of the world. Though the Jews are "his own," when he comes to them they reject him, thus revealing themselves as not his own after all but his enemies; not from God, but from the devil, from "below," from "this world." The story describes the progressive alienation of Jesus from the Jews. But something else is happening, for there are some few who do respond to Jesus' signs and words, and these, while they also frequently "misunderstand," are progressively enlightened and drawn into intense intimacy with Jesus, until they, like him, are not "of this world."<sup>5</sup>

Yet for all the advances Meeks makes in this paper, he makes no attempt to account for the origins of the descent/ascent motif aside from the groundwork laid by Bultmann. He surmises that the Johannine sect's cultural distancing of itself from the world led to the modification of the gnostic Sophia myth.

However, there are strong reasons to doubt strong reliance on gnostic myths for the Gospel of John. Most important of them is the fact that many Gnostic documents appear later than John, making the Gospel's dependence on them impossible.<sup>6</sup> Here Ashton's recent article attempts to locate the background of the motif in the confluence of two traditions, one of Jesus as a visionary seer, and the outcome of a debate with the "disciples of Moses" about Jesus' origin.<sup>7</sup> From v 3:13, Ashton, believes that the background for the ascent-descent motif is a tradition, "That Jesus had indeed ascended into heaven during his lifetime, and the affirmation concerning such an ascent was made in the teeth of rival claims of other Jewish groups on behalf of a variety of prophets and patriarchs."<sup>8</sup> This tradition, Ashton claims, could be gleaned from the Transfiguration in the Synoptics. Thus, he draws a parallel between a rabbinic tradition that claims that Moses twice ascended, once at Sinai, and second at the end of his life. So Jesus as the Son of Man ascends twice, once on Earth, and second at the end of his life. Moreover, instead of seeking a background for the exaltation of the Son of Man as the brutal crucifixion, he resorts to viewing the paradox as a result of the mystical experience of the evangelist. Bringing these strands together, Ashton remarks on the content of the heavenly things Jesus says to Nicodemus in John 3:

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<sup>4</sup> Meeks, "Man from Heaven", p. 61.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.69.

<sup>6</sup> Moreover, see Charles E. Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). Hill examines the issue of "Orthodox Johannophobia", which claims that the early Church rejected John because of Gnostic tendencies. The hypothesis rests on three claims, (1) the silence of the earliest sources concerning John, (2) Gnostic Johannophilia, and (3) The suspicion of the Gospel of John by pre-Nicene critics. In response to these claims, Hill finds that (1) there are early Orthodox Patristic allusions to the Gospel outside the rigid formula criteria, (2) Until the Valentinians, John's use by Gnostic groups was largely critical or adversarial, and (3) There is no real evidence that the Great Church of the second century rejected John.

<sup>7</sup> Ashton, "The Johannine Son of Man." p.528.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 515.

“Having descended from heaven, the Son of Man must now be exalted, and this exaltation (only later revealed to be the crucifixion) will fulfill what is now said to be a mission: that is to say the mission of the Son of God, God’s loving gift to the world, which will be a source of life to all who believe in him.”<sup>9</sup>

## **II. Thesis**

Meeks and Ashton, while arguing for a symbolic coherence to the descent-ascent Son of Man Motif and a non-gnostic background, do not explore the possibility of an Old Testament New Exodus paradigm as providing the background for the Son of Man’s movements. From examining instances of ascending/descending and Son of Man sayings, this paper will argue that as the Danielic Son of Man, Jesus descends from Heaven to lead His people in a New Exodus, culminating in His exaltation on the cross as the Paschal sacrifice that leads His people out of darkness into the light of the Temple of his body. As a result of this paradigm, the Gospel of John shows that Jesus reveals himself as the one sent from God, and that all “who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” (John 1:12). The Gospel then does not have a sectarian audience in mind, but in intending to show that Jesus is the Christ, desires that believers might look upon him and have eternal life.

## **III. Warrant and Methodology for finding a New Exodus Paradigm in the Descent-Ascent of the Son of Man**

Interest in the New Exodus paradigm and Moses typology in John is not new. Wayne Meeks has a seminal book on the Gospel’s allusions to Moses in the depiction of Jesus as a Prophet-King.<sup>10</sup> Robert Smith has written an article arguing for a parallel between the signs of Jesus and the plagues by Moses in Egypt.<sup>11</sup> In fact, he attempts to correlate the seven Johannine signs to Moses’ plagues.<sup>12</sup> The first sign of turning water to wine as a new creation wedding banquet parallels the first plague of turning the water of the Nile to blood. Similarly, the last sign of the raising of Lazarus parallels the tenth plague of the death of the firstborn. As interesting as such parallels are, Smith limits himself to the literary design of Exodus and John instead of examining the Exodus paradigm in general, which would allow him to also draw a parallel between the feeding of the five-thousand in John 6 with the feeding of the Israelites in Exodus 16 instead of resorting to draw a parallel with the plague of locusts only.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 527.

<sup>10</sup> See Wayne Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology*. (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017).

<sup>11</sup> Robert Houston Smith, “Exodus Typology in the Fourth Gospel,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81, no. 4 (December 1962): 329, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3265088>.

<sup>12</sup> Though there is some discussion on which of the miracles are signs, there is general agreement that there are seven signs in the first half of the book of the Gospel of John. Seven, being a biblical number signifying completeness, serves John’s theological agenda that Jesus completely manifested his glory, with the seventh sign, the raising of Lazarus, most closely resembling the thing signified—the resurrection. For discussion of the signs see: Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2012); Raymond Edward Brown and Johannes, *The Gospel According to John. I-XII*, 1. Yale Univ. Press impr, The Anchor Yale Bible 29 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2008); George Raymond Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary 36 (Dallas, Tex: Word Books, 1987); D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, England: Grand Rapids, Mich: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991); C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P, 1968).

On the New Exodus paradigm in general, Andrew Brunson has written a thesis examining the use of Psalm 118 in the Gospel of John. Building off of Wright's claim that many second temple Jews saw themselves in a state of continuing exile awaiting eschaton, Brunson argues that Psalm 118 is used in the Gospel of John to depict Jesus as not just God's agent, but God's mediated presence. Jesus, as the presence of Yahweh, comes as the King inaugurating the New Exodus.<sup>13</sup> Recently, Paul S. Coxon, has published a dissertation arguing for the Paschal New Exodus paradigm as an important interpretive key to John 5-10. He notes that every episode in this cycle takes place in the context of a Jewish feast. Coxon shows how the episodes show Jesus as the very fulfillment that the festivals point to, which is an inaugurated people. By drawing on the broad array of Old Testament sources, Coxon depicts the New Exodus in John as this: Jesus will lead his people from the holds of wolves and false shepherds, disarm the powers of Sin, Death, and Satan, and ultimately lead his people into God's presence and into the temple of his body.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, these studies demonstrate that while so far there has not been an extended study on the relation of the Son of Man with the New Exodus, previous studies on the New Exodus elsewhere in John make such a study an interesting endeavor.

As for methodology, this study relies on the fundamental literary unity and symbolic coherence of the Gospel of John. Numerous studies have been released testifying to John's literary and narrative unity.<sup>15</sup> The prologue to the Gospel serves as a preface to Jesus' mission which occurs in the context of Jewish feasts, whose hope is fulfilled in Jesus. The use of irony, double meaning, and metaphors serve to show how Jesus and the Gospel is to be understood and to serve the purpose detailed in 20:31. In Culpepper's own words:

The characters comprise the peculiar population of John's narrative world, and each is part of a unified continuum of responses to Jesus. The characters also typify reactions and problems the reader may share. By entering this narrative world through the experience of reading the gospel, readers may see more clearly what is lacking in their own response to Jesus. They may also be moved to embrace the response articulated by the narrator and dramatized by the Beloved Disciple and those who overcome their lack of understanding.<sup>16</sup>

The author's comment about these characters and their reactions are done through the use of double-meanings, irony, and literary foils, all of which work together to show how to trust and believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Andrew C. Brunson, *Psalm 118 in the Gospel of John: An Intertextual Study on the New Exodus Pattern in the Theology of John*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 158 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> Paul S. Coxon, *Exploring the New Exodus in John: A Biblical Theological Investigation of John Chapters 5-10* (Eugene, Oregon: Resource Publications, 2014).

<sup>15</sup> See R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*, Nachdr. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1996); Mark W. G. Stibbe, *John's Gospel*, New Testament Readings (London ; New York: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>16</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*. p.257.

<sup>17</sup> For studies on literary devices and more see Paul D. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985); Gail R. O'Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Mode and Theological Claim* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986); Gail O'Day, "Anatomies of Narrative Criticism: The Past, Present, and Futures of the Fourth Gospel as Literature," *Biblical Interpretation* 18, no. 4-5 (2010): 515-17, <https://doi.org/10.1163/092725609X12531037979562>; David W Wead and R. Alan Culpepper, *The Literary Devices*

Of these literary devices, one especially of note in this study is the use of symbolism.<sup>18</sup> Koester defines a symbol as, “an image, an action, or a person that is understood to have transcendent significance.”<sup>19</sup> In the context of the Gospel of John, symbolism functions as a set of concentric circles with Jesus at the heart of what is signified. The symbols illuminate who Jesus is. Koester distinguishes between core and supporting symbols, with both working together to create a motif. For example, Jesus says, “I am the light of the world.” (8:12), establishes light as a core symbol, illuminating certain actions in the story such as Nicodemus coming to Jesus at night as signifying his own ignorance of Jesus’ person. In line with Culpepper’s thesis, symbolism also has an implication for discipleship. “He who comes to me shall not hunger” follows after “I am the bread of life”. Lastly, symbols work in contexts, which include the context of the scripture.

The issue of scriptural allusion brings up the final notable tool in this study: spiritual echoes/allusions. This study presupposes that the Gospel was written for an indefinite audience, as opposed to an individual “church” or network of churches. Moreover, the Gospel works upon a broad use of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>20</sup> At this juncture, Hays’ criteria of echoes remains a useful heuristic tool for finding allusions. Hays notes that “the concept of allusion depends both on the notion of authorial intention and on the assumption that the reader will share with the author the requisite ‘portable library’ to recognize the source of the allusion.”<sup>21</sup> Some allusions can be explicit, as shown in a direct citation of Scripture, while some are more subtle. Consequently, the following (modified) questions will be the test for finding and applying appropriating subtle Old Testament allusions:

1. Availability: Was the proposed source of the allusion/echo available to the author and/or original hearers?
2. Volume: What is the degree of explicit repetition of words or syntactical patterns?
3. Thematic Coherence: How well does the alleged echo fit into the line of argument that John is developing?
4. Historical Plausibility: Could John have intended the alleged meaning effect?
5. Satisfaction: Does the proposed reading make sense?<sup>22</sup>

Putting all of this together, we see that explicit and subtle allusions, working within symbols and other literary elements, form larger typologies. For example, John’s preface says, “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). While not setting up a direct contrast between Moses and Christ, the preface alerts readers to this

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in *John’s Gospel: Revised and Expanded Edition*. (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018), <https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=5510987>.

<sup>18</sup> Koester has written the seminal book on Symbolism in the Gospel of John. See; Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community*, 2nd ed (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p.4.

<sup>20</sup> See Edward W. Klink, *The Sheep of the Fold: The Audience and Origin of the Gospel of John*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 141 (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Richard Bauckham, ed., *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998).

<sup>21</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Pr, 1989). p.32.

<sup>22</sup> See Hays.

comparison, which then is elaborated in the symbols, literary devices, and allusions within the OT.

These principles applied to the descent-ascent of the Son of Man focus the scope of this study. This motif has two distinct but dependent symbols, the Son of Man, and the ascent-descent motif. Moreover, the symbol of descent-ascent takes place outside the explicit Greek words of *anabaino* (ascend) and *katabaino* (descend). For example, God sending the Son can be an instance of descent, and the exaltation/lifting up can be an instance of ascent. These semantic similarities will arise by looking at the literary context and use of allusions. Further, the descent-ascent of the Son of Man occurs explicitly, but is also a larger movement in the Gospel itself. Thus, this study will look at the descent-ascent and the Son of Man in the following sections: the prologue set alongside John 6, Jesus' discourse with Nathanael, Jesus' discourse with Nicodemus, and the Son of Man sayings in John 5 and 9.

#### **IV. Descent and Ascent in the Prologue & Its Relation to John 6**

First, this study starts with the prologue because the background of the Logos has influenced the background of the descent-ascent motif.<sup>23</sup> While Meeks in particular notes that the descent of the Son of Man is always assumed. Yet there is a descent described in the prologue, warranting further analysis.

On the question of background, Peder Borgen compellingly argues that the background of the prologue is an exposition of Genesis 1. Furthermore, he notes several parallels between the Logos and Torah,

There are several likenesses between the ideas bound up in the Torah in Judaism and ideas in John 1:4-9... Jewish texts where primordial light from the creation (Gen 1:3) came into appearance at the lawgiving are a thought-parallel to primordial light in John 1:4-5, which appeared with the coming of Jesus v.9... Thus, there are very good grounds for concluding that the conception of logos-light's coming in John 1:9 has as a model the conception of Torah-light's coming with Moses.<sup>24</sup>

If this parallel holds, then John's appearance is an event in salvation-history that prepares the coming of the Light. John is not the Light, but prepares the Light. Just as Moses is not the Torah, but brings the Torah-light down from Israel, so John prepares the way for the Light's coming.

However, John notes that the light shines and the darkness could not seize it, implying the existence of a state of darkness. Borgen points out the context of this darkness can have multiple referents, most convincing the sin of Adam and the sin of the first generation in the wilderness.<sup>25</sup> In both cases, John implies that the life and light was removed at the Fall and are now brought back by the descent of the Logos.

Borgen's thesis can be nuanced by noting that the Logos takes in the background of both Torah and Wisdom. Dodd helpfully says that "all the statements made in the Prologue regarding

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<sup>23</sup>See Meeks' essay and for further discussion, J. G. Van der Watt, R. Alan Culpepper, and Udo Schnelle, eds., *The Prologue of the Gospel of John: Its Literary, Theological, and Philosophical Contexts: Papers Read at the Colloquium Ioanneum 2013*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 359 (Colloquium Ioanneum, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016).

<sup>24</sup> Peder Borgen, "Logos Was the True Light: Contributions to the Interpretation of the Prologue of John," *Novum Testamentum* 14, no. 2 (April 1972): 115, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1560178>. p. 125.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p.128.

the Logos (except, of course, ‘the Word was made flesh’) can be paralleled with statements made in Jewish sources about Wisdom, or the Torah.”<sup>26</sup> Moreover, Keener notes in the prophetic literature the promise of a law that would descend from Zion instead of Sinai. “In the context of a New Exodus, God would inaugurate a new covenant, writing his laws on the hearts of his people so they would break them no longer (Jer 31:31–34; Ezek 36:27).”<sup>27</sup> Given this fact, and the existence of a descent and ascent tradition of Wisdom in Jewish sources, the background of Logos seems to be a combination of the personification of Torah as Wisdom and the coming of the Torah-light in a New Exodus. Keener notes the payoff of this idea, “A neutral term like Logos could draw on associations with personified Wisdom already offered in Hellenistic Judaism, without compromising its bridge to the Torah, which was also recognized as God’s Word.”<sup>28</sup> Indeed, while Wisdom ascends because of her inability to find a home on Earth, the Son of Man in John is said to ascend to prepare a place for believers (John 14:3), which closely aligns with the theme of the New Exodus gleaned from the Torah background.

With this composite background in mind, v.14 of the Prologue becomes the definitive descent in the Gospel. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” This part of the prologue introduces the community, the “we”, and its origin in beholding the Word. The Word that was with God is among us and that the Word was God<sup>29</sup> became flesh. The word, “dwelt” in 14b, ἐσκήνωσεν, is the third person, aorist active indicative of σκηνώω, which has its glosses, “make a dwelling” or “pitch a tent.” Consequently, the word evokes the concept of God tabernacling with his people as in the days of Moses. As a replica of the Holy mountain of God, the Tabernacle is God’s mobile dwelling place where God descends to commune with Israel. Kline notes the salvific, new creation, elements of the Tabernacle:

The history of the exodus, culminating in the building of the tabernacle, is so related as to bring out its nature as a redemptive re-enactment of creation. In this re-creation event the Glory theophany is again viewed as a sanctuary canopy and it is found to function again as a creative paradigm. It hovers at the top of Sinai over the wilderness-tohu and reproduces its likeness in the world below.<sup>30</sup>

Further, in evoking the tabernacle, John’s prologue imports the prophetic tradition concerning God’s dwelling. For instance, Zech 2:10 proclaims at the occasion of the return from Babylonian Exile, “Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for look, I come and will make my dwelling [*kataskenoun*] in your midst” (2:10). Describing the ideal temple, Ezekiel 43:7 notes, “Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the people of Israel forever.” With these verses in mind, the Word dwelling amidst the people makes Jesus the locus between God and man, the fulfillment of the Tabernacle.

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<sup>26</sup> Dodd, “Background”, in *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*.

<sup>27</sup> Keener, *The Gospel of John*. p. 358

<sup>28</sup> Keener. p.362. For more discussion on Sophia and Wisdom see Martin Scott, “Sophia and the Johannine Jesus,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113, no. 1 (1994): 152, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3266335>; “The Jewish Background of the Gnostic Sophia Myth,” 2021, 17.

<sup>29</sup> For a detailed treatment for the Logos having the Divine Nature see Murray J Harris, *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of Theos in Reference to Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008). There is also the agreed upon bookend between the v14 and Thomas’ confession in chapter 20 of Jesus, “My Lord, and My God” (John 20:28), which further solidifies the high Christology at work.

<sup>30</sup> Meredith G Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock, 1999). P. 81

Yet, in this descent, there is also an ascent implied. Exploring the intratextual meaning of “flesh” reveals this aspect. To be sure, there are instances in the Gospel that denote the worldliness of flesh and its opposition against heavenly things: “That which is born of flesh is flesh” (John 1:13) and “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all” (John 6:63). However, Jesus connects the flesh of his body with the bread of eternal life in 6:51-57:

**50** This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. **51** I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”....**53** “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. **54** Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. **55** For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. **56** Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. **57** As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.<sup>31</sup>

Here 6:51 describes the descent of the Son of Man from Heaven in the aorist participle (καταβάς) to give the bread of life. But this descent is conditioned by the future giving (δώσω) of his flesh. 6:27 reaffirms that the Son of Man is the One who descends and the one who gives eternal life: “Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.” The implication from these two passages is that Jesus becomes the food of life eternal in his exaltation on the cross. The flesh and the blood, having a sacramental character in view, are given to those who believe, only when the Son of Man is lifted up. Jesus is the bread from heaven not as the divinely-commissioned messenger, but as the Word became flesh that was crucified on the cross. Here there is a double descent and a double ascent. The first descent is the bodily descent of the Word into the human world. The first ascent is the “lifting up” of the Son of Man on the cross. The second descent is the descent of the eternal bread (and blood) of life to believers, administered by the Spirit (6:53), which happens because of the cross. Finally, the second ascent is the ascent of the Son of Man to the heavens after his resurrection. These distinctions attempt to clarify an intentional merging of the narrative time in the Gospel and the time of John and his readers. The Son of Man descends and ascends in the narrative (the final ascent to heaven is said, but not recorded), and the Son of Man descends to the Johannine community in true flesh and true blood and brings them to ascend to behold the glory the Son shares with the Father.<sup>32</sup> The interrelatedness of the descent from heaven and the ascent on the cross illuminates the “glory” beheld in 1:14. The glory described here is specifically the glory revealed on the cross which is available not only to the direct eyewitnesses, but to those who drink his blood and eat his flesh.

Tying this valence of flesh, with the intertextual reference to the Tabernacle motif evoked by, ἐσκήνωσεν, the prologue emerges as the summary of the Gospel that describes the descent and ascent of the Son of Man in a New Exodus. The Son of Man descends from Heaven and becomes true bread and true flesh in the Paschal sacrifice on the cross. This ascent reveals the glory the Son had with God the Father and invites the believing community to abide, behold, and partake

<sup>31</sup> All verses unless otherwise noted are from the ESV.

<sup>32</sup> For understanding the mystical or personal aspect of the Fourth Gospel see: Louis William Countryman, *The Mystical Way in the Fourth Gospel: Crossing over into God*, Rev. ed (Valley Forge, Pa: Trinity Press International, 1994).



in it. Thus, this line itself contains the building blocks of the New Exodus in John, beginning with the Word descending from Heaven in order to cast out the darkness and bring people into the glory of God.

## **V. 1:51: The Glory Shown in the Heavens Opened by the Lifting of the Son of Man**

In 1:51, the glory revealed in the Son of Man's union with Heaven and Earth in the new Tabernacle is made explicit. As the first "Son of Man" saying, 1:51, emerges as a foundation for understanding the meaning of the Son of Man's movements.

However, some context from v44-50 is necessary. First, v.45 places Jesus as the telos of the writings of the Torah and the prophets. Phillip says to Nathanael, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote." The scope of the reference moves from the Torah and prophets in general to Jacob in particular when Jesus addresses Nathanael as an "Israelite in whom there is no deceit." (1:47). Jacob is associated with 'deceit' because he employed trickery to obtain a blessing that was reserved for his brother (Gen 27:35). Nathanael, unlike Israel, has no deceit, despite him questioning where or not "anything good can come from Nazareth." This happens because Nathanael recognizes that Jesus is, "the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" (1:49). Bauckham notes that the Nathanael and Jacob typology hinges on the prophecy of Zephaniah which predicts a renewed people, "They will do no wrong; they will tell no lies//A deceitful tongue will not be found in their mouths." (Zeph 3:13).<sup>33</sup> Moreover, Koester also notes, as an exercise in 'Messianic Exegesis', that Zechariah 3:10 is alluded to as well, "In that day, says the Lord of hosts, a man will call his neighbor under a vine and under a fig tree." The Zechariah context speaks of the coming of the Messianic branch who would reign. Being called by a friend under the fig tree is a sign of this new reign.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, Jesus' address to Nathanael addresses the arrival of the renewed people of Israel and the arrival of the Messianic king.

This eschatological dimension further emerges when examining Jesus' use of Jacob's ladder. In v.51 Jesus says, "Truly, Truly I say to you, you will see the heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.". Here lies an allusion to two Old Testament passages.

The first is Ezekiel 1:1: "and the Heavens were opened and I saw visions of God." Manning notes that while there are other passages about the opened heavens, only in Ezekiel is the opened heaven used to introduce revelation. Moreover, the vision of Ezekiel presents the vision of God's throne and chariot descending to Earth.<sup>35</sup> Applied to 1:51, the heavens open to reveal the Son of Man.

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<sup>33</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2015). "Nathanael, Representative of the Renewed Israel (1:45-51)"

<sup>34</sup> Craig R. Koester, "Messianic Exegesis and the Call of Nathanael (John 1.45-51)," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 12, no. 39 (May 1990): 23-34, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X9001203902>.

<sup>35</sup> For John's use of Ezekiel see: William G. Fowler, Michael Strickland, and William G. Fowler, eds., *The Influence of Ezekiel in the Fourth Gospel: Intertextuality and Interpretation*, Biblical Interpretation Series, volume 167 (Boston: Brill, 2018); Gary T. Manning, *Echoes of a Prophet: The Use of Ezekiel in the Gospel of John and in Literature of the Second Temple Period*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 270 (London ; New York: T & T Clark International, 2004); Brian Neil Peterson, *John's Use of Ezekiel: Understanding the Unique Perspective of the Fourth Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015).

The true implications of this are revealed with the second allusion, which is Jacob's ladder in Gen 28:12: "And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!" Thus the Gen 28:12 allusion shows Jesus' self-identification as the Son of Man with the true ladder (κλίμαξ), the only connection between Heaven and Earth; the way up and the way down. In the Genesis story, Jacob responded to this vision by saying, "How awesome is this place! This is nothing other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven" (Gen 28:17). Now, this is what Jacob concluded about the place of the vision, Bethel. Consequently, Jesus takes what is true of the place and makes it true for himself. Jesus, the Son of Man, is the true place where God dwells. He is "the house of God"-Bethel.

The combination of these two allusions imply that Jacob and Ezekiel had the same vision. If John notes that Isaiah beheld the glory of the Son (Jn 12:41), then the glory beheld by Ezekiel and Jacob are the same glory, which is the Son. These allusions draw on the themes of Jesus as the new dwelling place of God and seat of glory. Manning, quoting, David Johnson's dissertation, lists thematic parallels:

Both passages also share a Temple theme. Jacob's use of names like 'House of God' (Bethel) and 'Gate of Heaven' to describe the place of revelation led the OT prophets to see Jacob's vision as 'a proleptic symbol of the significance of the Jerusalem temple and of the angelic Cherubim.' Likewise, Ezekiel's vision shows God's presence, first leaving the Temple, then returning to a restored Temple.<sup>36</sup>

Altogether, Jesus' words promise something as great as the vision of Jacob and Ezekiel-the revelation of the Messiah.

With the Prologue's insights in mind, this revelation is the glory of the Son of Man lifted up on the cross. With this hint in the background, the use of Jacob's ladder as a paradigm for Jesus' mission begins to make sense. For instance, while the Hebrew word for ladder occurs only once in the bible, the word derives from the root *sll*, meaning to lift up, which is synonymous with the Greek word, ὑψόω (hypsoun), the term used to describe the lifting up of the Son of Man. Further, Bauckham helpfully points out another layer of intertextuality: "It may well be relevant that a word closely related to *sullām* ("ladder") is *mēsillā*, which means a "raised highway" and is used in Isa. 40:3 for the highway, the way of the Lord, that John the Baptist, according to the Gospels (John 1:23), prepared, as well as in related Isaiah passages about the highway by which the exiles will return to Zion (Isa. 11:16)"<sup>37</sup> With this in mind, the symbol of Jacob's ladder becomes invested with multiple intertexts. Concerning the use of Isaiah, Jesus is making a claim that He is the Son of Man who will deliver the redeemed. Jesus is not just the fullness of God's presence (Bethel), but also the very salvation Isaiah prophesied.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Manning, *Echoes of a Prophet*, p.154, quoting Johnson, *Our Father Jacob*, p. 48-49.

<sup>37</sup> Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory*. "Jesus as Jacob's Ladder". Bauckham also uses gematria to identify the Son of Man with the Ladder: "The Hebrew phrase "a ladder set up on the earth" (*sullām muṣṣāb 'arṣā*), occurring in Gen. 28:12, has the numerical value 558. This is also the numerical value of the phrase "the Son of Man" in Aramaic, the language in which Jesus would have used this expression. This helps to explain how John came to understand this biblical text as a prophecy of Jesus's death-and-exaltation."

<sup>38</sup> The question of the angels in the allusion is left. The angels are the ones ascending and descending, not the Son of Man, but this movement seems to be really the host of angels that are around and serve the throne of God. Daniel 7:10 is relevant here: A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened."

Thus the New Exodus paradigm again explains the Son of Man's descent and ascent. The Heavens open to have the Son of Man descend, and his ascent on the cross establishes the ladder, the temple, humanity's contact with God. His descent from Heaven corresponds to coming of the true Israelites from below, who receive life from his ascent. His death on the cross makes the glory beheld by the true Israelites, represented by Nathanael, possible.

#### **VI. John 3:13-17: The Salvific Nature of the Lifting Up of the Son of Man**

If Nathanael represents the community drawn to the Son of Man, Nicodemus, a teacher of Israel, represents those left confused and perplexed by Jesus' coming. In this context, Jesus utters these words about the Son of Man:

**11** ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω σοι ὅτι ὁ οἶδαμεν λαλοῦμεν καὶ ὁ ἐωράκαμεν μαρτυροῦμεν, καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἡμῶν οὐ λαμβάνετε. **12** εἰ τὰ ἐπίγεια εἶπον ὑμῖν καὶ οὐ πιστεύετε, πῶς ἂν εἴπω ὑμῖν τὰ ἐπουράνια πιστεύσετε;

Truly, Truly I say to you that what we know, we speak and testify to what we have seen but out testimony you do not receive. If earthly things I told you and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

**13** καὶ οὐδεὶς ἀναβέβηκεν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εἰ μὴ ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. **14** καὶ καθὼς Μωϋσῆς ὕψωσεν τὸν ὄφιν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, οὕτως ὕψωθῆναι δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, **15** ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν ἔχῃ ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

And no one has ascended into heaven except he who from heaven descended, the Son of Man; and as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up so that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

**16** οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ' ἔχῃ ζωὴν αἰώνιον. **17** οὐ γὰρ ἀπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἵνα κρίνῃ τὸν κόσμον, ἀλλ' ἵνα σωθῇ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ.

For God so loved the world that he gave His only-begotten Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world but to save the world.<sup>39</sup>

In this passage, the descended (καταβάς) is in the aorist principle and the "has ascended" (ἀναβέβηκεν) is a perfect tense, implying that Jesus had already ascended and descended from Heaven as the Son of Man.<sup>40</sup> However, the arguments for a prior ascent or even a prior heavenly enthronement must reckon with the parallel laid out with v.14, in which Jesus explains his

<sup>39</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>40</sup> This is the view taken by Ashton, "The Johannine Son of Man"; Hugo Odeberg, *The Fourth Gospel: Interpr. in Its Relation to Contemp. Relig. Currents in Palestine and the Hellenistic-Oriental World*, Unchanged reprint of the ed. Uppsala 1929 (Amsterdam: Grüner, 1974).

mission in the context of Moses' bronze serpent in Num 21. In that passage, the people of Israel rebelled against God and were bitten by fiery serpents as punishment. When the people repented, God told Moses to craft a bronze serpent for the people so that all who look at it would be healed. Applied to Jesus, the Son of the Man is lifted on the cross, giving all those who believe in him eternal life. At this point, the passage echoes Isaiah 52:13-14, the prophecy of the sin-bearing servant:

**13** Behold, my servant shall act wisely  
he shall be high and lifted up,  
and shall be exalted.

**14** As many were astonished at you—  
his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance,  
and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—

This allusion solidifies the connection between the lifting up of the Son of Man on the cross with the lifting up of the serpent as God's remedy for salvation and glorification of his name. God's servant in Isaiah is lifted yet pierced for people's transgressions. Consequently, Jesus is lifted and glorified precisely on his salvific death on the cross. This concept then confirms why the allusion to the lifted-up serpent makes sense.<sup>41</sup>

With the ascension and exaltation intertwined, the perfect verb in v.13 is best explained as a proverbial perfect. The ascent does not precede the descent. Instead, Jesus is making a statement that only someone from Heaven could truly reveal heavenly matters. No one ascends except the Son of Man who descended to reveal heavenly realities, culminating in his salvific exaltation on the cross.<sup>42</sup>

Additionally, v.16 adds another layer of complexity to the line of thought: οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ' ἔχῃ ζωὴν αἰώνιον." The giving of the Son is the descent, giving way to the lifting up the Son of Man. At the same time, the descent of the Son, corresponds to the ascent of those who believe in him to eternal life. Again, descent and ascent are intertwined for both the Son of Man and his people. What emerges is that the central movement of descent-ascent signifies the arrival of salvation and deliverance from the death of the Son of Man which makes him the new temple, the contact point between Heaven and Earth. In this New Exodus, some recognize the Messiah and receive eternal life in receiving the benefits of his descent. Likewise, those who do not recognize the Son of Man and do not expect the ascent of the Son of Man to consist of his brutal crucifixion are rendered perplexed and confused.

<sup>41</sup> Hollis also provocatively surmises a possible root of the pun in Joseph's dream (in Gen 40) to his two other prisoners. One is lifted up back to a place of status and the other's head is lifted up. Both take part in the span of three days. See H. Hollis, "The Root of the Johannine Pun – 'ΥΨΩΘΗΝΑΙ,'" *New Testament Studies* 35, no. 3 (July 1989): 475–78, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688500016891>.

<sup>42</sup> See Pierce, Madison N., and Benjamin E. Reynolds. "The Perfect Tense-Form and the Son of Man in John 3.13: Developments in Greek Grammar as a Viable Solution to the Timing of the Ascent and Descent." *New Testament Studies* 60, no. 1 (January 2014): 149–55. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688513000301>. It is probable that 3:13 is a polemic against Merkabah mystics and ascent-descent schemas. See Jey J Kanagaraj, "JESUS THE KING, MERKABAH MYSTICISM AND THE GOSPEL OF JOHN," *TYNDALE BULLETIN*, 1996, 18; Jeyaseelan Joseph Kanagaraj, "'Mysticism' in the Gospel of John: An Inquiry into the Background of John in Jewish Mysticism" (n.d.); C.P. Toby Holleman Jr, "Descent and Ascent in the Fourth Gospel: The Johannine Deconstruction of the Heavenly Ascent Revelatory Paradigm" (Rice University, n.d.), <https://scholarship.rice.edu/handle/1911/16350?show=full>.

## VII. John 5 & 9: The Judgement Enacted by the Coming of the Son of Man

In fact, while John 5 and John 9 do not speak directly of a descent or an ascent, they reveal the judgment that occurs in the presence of the Son of Man. John 5 and John 9 are put together because they offer Son of Man sayings done in the context of healings. Moreover, the respective healed man offers contrasting depictions of discipleship and responses to the Son of Man. Culpepper lists the parallels and contrasts as follows.<sup>43</sup>

### Lame man

- (1) History described (5:5)
- (2) Jesus takes the initiative (5:6)
- (3) Pool's healing powers
- (4) Jesus heals on Sabbath (5:9)
- (5) Jews accuse him of violating Sabbath (5:10)
- (6) Jews ask who healed him (5:12)
- (7) Doesn't know where or who Jesus is (5:13)
- (8) Jesus finds him and invites belief (5:14)<sup>47</sup>
- (9) Jesus implies the relation between his sin and suffering (5:14)
- (10) Man goes to Jews (5:15)
- (11) Jesus works as his Father is working (5:17)

### Blind man

- (1) History described (9:1)
- (2) Jesus takes the initiative (9:6)
- (3) Pool of Siloam, healing (9:7)
- (4) Jesus heals on Sabbath (9:14)
- (5) Pharisees accuse Jesus of violating Sabbath (9:16)
- (6) Pharisees ask who healed him (9:15)
- (7) Doesn't know where or who Jesus is (9:12)
- (8) Jesus finds him and invites belief (9:35)
- (9) Jesus rejects sin as explanation for his suffering (9:3)
- (10) Jews cast man out (9:34-35)
- (11) Jesus must do the works of one who sent him (9:4)

Therefore, analyzing the Son of Man sayings together allows each instance to mutually inform the other. They are listed together below.

### Gen 5:25-29

**25** “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. **26** For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. **27** And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. **28** Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will

### Gen 9:35-41

**35** Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” **36** He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” **37** Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” **38** He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him. **39** Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become

<sup>43</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*. p.139.

hear his voice **29** and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

blind.” **40** Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, “Are we also blind?” **41** Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.

In the first saying, Jesus says the Son of Man has given him authority to execute judgment. This judgment consists of giving eternal life to some and punishment to others. This construction implies an allusion to Daniel 12:2, “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” In this context, eternal life takes place in the return to land, which is a New Exodus. As Jesus has the authority to heal the lame man, to literally breathe life into his bones (Ezek 37), so he also has the authority from the Father to bring his people from darkness into light, into the land and temple of his body. The investiture with authority with the Son of Man is a direct invocation of Daniel 7:13-14:

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

The Danielic Son of Man shares divine glory and judges on God’s behalf as God’s vice-regent. Consequently, Jesus as the Son of Man will judge with all authority and power. This authority comes with the Messianic mission of representing his people, atoning for their sins, rising from the dead, and then raising the dead. The authority and judgment of the Son of Man shown here is connected then to the ascent of believers to eternal life. In response to this proclamation of the Son of Man’s authority, the lame man returns to the Jewish authorities.

By contrast, the blind man does not go back to the temple, but is cast out of the temple because of his confession of belief in the Son. Jesus finds the blind man cast out and then reveals himself as the Son of Man in whom he believes in. With the Danielic connotations at play, Jesus’ address reinforces not just the Son of Man’s authority to judge on the last day, but the Son of Man’s ability to determine the place of worship and locus of God’s presence, which is himself (the blind man worshipped the Son). The Son of Man’s mission brings division, and the very people who claim to be representatives of God make themselves dull and blind. Thus, there is an irony, a reversal between the blind man who sees the Son, and the Pharisees, who believing themselves to be in the light, are blind. At the center this reversal is summarized by Isaiah 6:10:

**10** Make the heart of this people dull,  
and their ears heavy,

and blind their eyes;  
lest they see with their eyes,  
and hear with their ears,  
and understand with their hearts,  
and turn and be healed.

Thus, those who recognize the Son of Man, through faith are saved and given life, while those who do not recognize him are already blind and already judged. Both the lame man who returns to the Jewish authorities, and the blind man who returns to Jesus show the power of the Son and the judgment that occurs at his coming. Yet, it is only those that believe, those that see like Nathanael and the blind man, that recognize the Son of Man, who are able to receive eternal life and are given the right to become children of God. The Son of Man's descent and ascent split humanity into two: those that recognize and those that do not.

### **VIII. Concluding Remarks: Being Caught Up in the Descent and Ascend**

However, just as there is a blending of the times of descent and ascent that correspond with the narrative of Jesus versus John and his readers, there is a blending of the time of judgment. While there is indeed a final judgment at the end of the age, Jesus enacts judgment on the cross. For instance, in John 12:31-32 Jesus says, "Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." The ejection of the ruler of the world is a unique use of apocalyptic imagery that signifies in the narrative a decisive turning point.<sup>44</sup> At the week of his betrayal, Jesus by his authority as the crucified-and-risen Son of Man will cast out the Evil One and exercise rule over the world for which he died. In this rule, he will draw all people to himself. This drawing occurs not six feet above the crowd but in his exalted throne. Yet again, this is the throne he has because of his crucifixion. So, then the reader, aware of Jesus' crucified-exalted status is exhorted to believe in him, and in believing in him, enter from the domain of darkness into light by the flesh and blood of Jesus' crucified body. This is the implication for discipleship that arises from the descent-ascent motif. The Son of Man has descended and has ascended, now the reader must decide if he is to be taken up in the Son's descent to him in flesh and blood and ascent to share the glory of the Father.

So it is not as if Jesus merely reveals that he is the Revealer, nor that he is an enigma understandable to some and not to (many) others. Rather, Jesus' Son of Man imagery, located in the context of rich inter and intra textual allusion, shows Jesus as Yahweh Himself coming down to lead his people in a New Exodus, bringing by his blood, a people that will behold his glory. Just as the source of confusion and split comes from the refusal to believe that the Son of Man ascended in glory through the cross. Those who do not believe are blind to the very glory the Son has with the Father, and in refusing to see this glory, remain in the dark, in the land of slavery, bondage, and death. The Gospel in showing the descent and ascent of the Son of Man, hopes, by the work of the Paraclete, to invite the reader to believe in Jesus and in believing, join the New Exodus and behold his glory and abide in the temple of his body.

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<sup>44</sup> See Beasley-Murray, "John 12,31—32."

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