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The Son of Man and His Mission to Save in Luke 19:10: An Interpretation

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Abstract

The expression 'Son of Man' is one of the most used titles by Jesus in the Gospels. Its meaning and Jesus' intention for using the title to describe his mission in Luke 19:10 constitute the basis for this study. Using the Historical-Critical Method of studying ancient texts, this work explores instances in the Gospels where the term is used in relation to Jesus. It identifies a common pattern, attempts an explanation of the meaning of the term in relation to Jesus and uses that understanding to interpret the passage and give a concluding statement on the importance of the title in the light of Jesus' mission to save. It concludes that the term 'Son of Man' in Luke 19:10 is used to denote Jesus as an eschatological agent who in human form achieves divine salvation through human suffering.

Key Words: Luke, Messiah, Salvation, Son of Man, Tax Collectors

Introduction

The message of Jesus at the closing of the encounter between him, Zacchaeus and the crowd in Luke 19:1-10 is couched in the third person phrase 'the son of man came to seek and to save the lost.' This passage raises questions regarding the meaning of the phrase 'son of man,' and the relationship of the term to the mission of Jesus to seek and save the lost.

The term is found severally on the lips of Jesus in the Gospels and it is used by Jesus in Luke 19:10 to describe the nature and purpose of his mission. The verb 'to come' is expressive of 'the one who is to come' and therefore messianic. 'To save' is an activity of a saviour who brings salvation and 'the lost' are those alienated from God and therefore the beneficiaries of messianic salvation. The appearance of the term 'son of man' alongside these messianic concepts represents it in the context of Luke 19 as one of the titles used by Jesus and the early

Christians to describe Jesus in his earthly ministry as the Messiah who came to reconcile humanity with God.

The verb 'to seek' on the other hand is a human activity expressive of the status of the one who seeks as a member of the human family sharing in its limitations of losing and going in search of. Thus while 'the one who comes' and 'the one who saves' is the Messiah and Saviour, 'the one who seeks' is the human one and both are identified in the passage as the son of man. The term is therefore expressive of both the human and divine side of Jesus as Son of God made man. It is used in Luke 19:10 therefore to accentuate the divine initiative of Jesus becoming human to place himself at the same level with humanity in an attempt to speak its language, experience its pains, aspirations and limitations and thus draw humankind from its inhibitions and bring to completion its process of divinization.

The objective of this paper is to trace the origin, and development of the phrase 'son of man' and establish in what sense it is used in the passage by Jesus to describe himself as the Messiah and as a member of the human family whose mission it is to bring salvation to those alienated from God.

LUKE 19:10 in Context

Luke 19:10 is part of the concluding section of the encounter between Jesus and the chief tax farmer Zacchaeus in 19:1-10. The interpretation of the pericope has been a matter for constant debate; some scholars have interpreted it as a conversion story, while others have understood it as a vindication story. Scholars have recently interpreted as a design by the evangelist to imply both conviction and vindication (Naseri 2012, 17). The pericope is divided into 5 units: the arrival at Jericho and introduction of Zacchaeus (vv. 1-4), the meeting of Jesus with Zacchaeus (vv. 5-6), the disapproval of the crowd and the reaction of Zacchaeus (vv. 7-8), and the reaction of Jesus to the crowd and Zacchaeus (vv. 9-10).

The narrative is built around the status of Zacchaeus as a social outcast, the Jewish society's disdain for him, Jesus' preference for Zacchaeus against the objection of the crowd and his offer of salvation to Zacchaeus as an antithesis to the entire sequence of activities. It is about the tension between Jesus' solidarity with Zacchaeus and the crowd's unwavering objection to the gesture. At the heart of the tension and therefore the epicentre of the episode is the status of Zacchaeus as an outcast. Zacchaeus' status as an outcast originates from his choice of job as a chief toll collector. It is therefore pertinent to review the office of tax collectors in Palestine as a key to interpreting the pericope and v. 10 in particular.

The Social and Moral Status of Tax Collectors in Palestine at the Time of Jesus

Tax collectors bought from the Roman authority the right to collect toll in the region of Galilee on behalf of the state. The novelty in the system of tax farming was that of the contractor making an estimated bulk payment to the state at the beginning of each fiscal year for the citizens' taxes. In return the tax-farmer took the responsibility of collecting taxes from citizens all through the year to break even and make his interest. The state however made effort to ensure that the tax gatherers did not over bill its citizens (Michel 1972, 89).

As investors the toll collectors were driven by the desire to make interest and were therefore given to over taxing the people. The line between taxation and extortion was blurred and raised the moral questions of avarice, Justice and equity (see Luke 2:13). Taxation was therefore unacceptable to the people and the toll collectors were considered dishonest and therefore loathsome and overbearing. The Jews considered it unacceptable to be asked to pay taxes to a foreign authority; Jews whose job it was to collect taxes were therefore identified as traitors

who made themselves agents of foreign domination over their land. They were seen to be working for a Gentile interest and therefore despicable and unworthy of the kinship of Abraham. By entering into the service of foreign oppressors they were considered as Jews who had made themselves Gentiles; in other words, quislings (Donahue 1971, 39). They were seen as carriers of impurity because of their constant contact with different groups of people especially pagans and were equally to be avoided for fear of being defiled by them. They were considered therefore to have alienated themselves from the Jewish society.

Zacchaeus was by virtue of his job regarded as one of such extortionists and agents of foreign domination. He was therefore despised by his fellow Jews and considered unworthy of the name son of Abraham and therefore unmeritorious of the blessings of Abraham.

Tax Collectors as Sinners

Those depicted as sinners in the NT include not only those who violate the law of ritual purity but essentially persons of proven dishonesty and holders of dubious or demeaning occupation (Abraham 1917, 55). These sinners are categorized into three groups in the Gospels and Jewish literature: (1) Jewish sinners who had the possibility of reformation, (2) Gentile sinners who were not sure of forgiveness and (3) Jews who had made themselves Gentiles (Perrin 1967, 93). The tax collectors are said to belong to this third group of sinners by virtue of accepting to work for the interest of a foreign authority and the Gospels typify this classification when they are addressed along with other sets of persons with questionable integrity as tax collectors and harlots (Matt 21:32), tax collectors and robbers (Luke 18:11), tax collectors and sinners (Luke 15:1; 18:13) and tax collectors and Gentiles (Matt 18:17). By virtue of his occupation, Zacchaeus was therefore considered and treated as a sinner *hamartōlos anēr* (Luke 19:7) and as the head of the toll collectors; *architelōnēs* (Luke 19:2) his people's dissatisfaction with him was enormous.

From his study of rabbinical literature Joachim Jeremias also identifies series of trades which were considered despicable among the Jews; his fourth lists in *b. Sanhedrin 25b* has: dice gamblers, usurers, pigeon trainers, dealers in produce of the sabbatical year, herdsmen, tax collectors and publicans. Those in this group were considered dishonest, and repentance was considered almost impossible for them because the herdsmen, tax collectors and Publicans especially were never in a position to know and make restitution to every person they had injured or cheated. It was forbidden to accept alms for the poor or use money for exchange from the purse of the tax collectors because such money was tainted (Jeremias 1969, 304, 310-311).

It follows then that in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus, tax collectors were considered as Gentiles, and therefore sinners with little or no guarantee for repentance and forgiveness. They were seen as irredeemable and it was therefore pointless attempting to rehabilitate them. They were morally at a cross road, making restitution as noted above was impossible since they were unable to know and identify the so numerous victims of their exploitations and extortions. Abandoning their occupation was not equally a solution since the bad name acquired from past dubious dealings had become association with their personality. They were a liability either way and therefore a perished set of people in the proper sense of the word. Their situation in the eyes of their co-nationals rightly qualifies them as those the Gospels clearly characterize as the 'lost' who are of primary concern for Jesus (Luke 19:10).

The Social Implication of Jesus' Visit to Zacchaeus

The decision by Jesus to be guest to Zacchaeus, of all the Jews in Jericho was ridiculous and unacceptable; thus, the reaction by the crowd towards Jesus' decision was uncomplimentary. The verb used is *diagongyzō* (Luke 19:7) and means 'to complain' as an indication of a strong

'sense of dissatisfaction,' or 'to grumble' over 'disappointed hopes.' It denotes an atmosphere in which that which is considered a 'legitimate claim' is not met. It is most times used to describe Israel's reaction over certain unpleasant circumstances (Ex 16:2) (Rengstorf 1964, 728-729). Jesus' mission has met with these murmurings or grumbings especially in reaction to his association with the 'so called' sinners of his society and his attempt to reverse acceptable class distinctions (Luke 5:30; 15:2). The unanimity of the disagreement is expressed in Luke's use of the indefinite adjective *pantes* which has an elative significance; that is, 'full' or 'total.' This implies that the totality of those around objected to Jesus' decision to visit Zacchaeus because all of them disapproved of him, his trade and what he stood for and feared Jesus would contact impurity from Zacchaeus and would put them then at the risk of contacting same through association with Jesus. Above all, the position of Jesus as a righteous teacher implied that he was to have nothing to do with those who were considered as sinners; they were never to be part of his company.

Given what Jesus claimed to have stood for; 'a good or righteous master' and promoter of the cause of the Jew as teacher of the law his action was unprecedented and radical. It therefore attracted rebuke from the crowd because his people felt disappointed by him, a teacher of righteousness whom they expected to have known better. In fact, Perrin has advanced a supposition that it was his identification with sinners and tax collectors who were considered as traitors that contributed to Jesus being handed over to the Roman authorities for crucifixion (1967: 103). Luke 19:10 is a reflection of this radical stance by Jesus.

The Phrase Son of Man

The Greek *ho huios tou anthrōpou* is a 'literary monstrosity' (Donahue 1986, 486) whose meaning in the Gospels, background and development continue to elude interpreters. The Hebrew equivalent is *ben 'ādām* which from the root word *'ādāmā* underscores the earthly origin and character of the human person in its weakness and incapacities. It is used in Ezekiel 2ff in a manner that confronts this weakness and lowliness of the human person with the majesty and supernatural power of God. This encounter results in God countering the susceptibility of the human person by empowering the prophet for his divinely assigned mission (see Ezek 2:2). A similar context is evident in Dan 8:17 which incidentally appears in the part of the book written in Hebrew.

The Aramaic version of the phrase predates both the Hebrew and Greek versions; and the Greek version is often considered a too literal translation of the Aramaic. It is *bar('é)nāš(ā ')*; a determinative expression which uses *Bar* (son) as a genitive construct to identify a classification *Nasha* (man) which one belongs to. It means someone who belongs to the family of men/women; a certain member of the human family 'son of man;' 'a human being' in the generic sense. The sense of creaturely weakness and incapacities proper to the human family is equally implied here.

The phrase was used in the Aramaic of Jesus' time as the surrogate of the indefinite pronoun 'someone' or 'anyone,' and was figuratively taken up to inversely function as a circumlocution for the first-person pronoun 'I' of the person speaking. This idiomatic usage would generally allow the speaker to make his or her point with greater delicacy than would be possible otherwise. Making a case that implies the risk of misunderstanding or commenting on sensitive and delicate issues that seem to challenge the *status quo* or even a reference to one's death would generally make for such subtlety (Vermees 1973, 163-168).

Daniel 7:13-14 however, employs the phrase in a rather transcendental manner to depict a scene of an eschatological judgement. His famous 'one like a son of man' is considered a divine agent

who though divine appears in Daniel's human eye as human; 'one like;' a figure in human form. The Aramaic/Hebrew preposition *Kū* 'like' is of utmost importance in understanding the phrase because it underscores the distinction between the reality that appears and what it is like in the optic view of the visionary. The appearances of divine agents like angels are in the Jewish biblical setting/cosmology always represented in human form and these representations are in reality an expression of the point of view of the human recipient of the object. Thus, Abraham is said to have seen and spoken with three men who were in fact angels but appeared like men to him in Gen 18 (compare Gen 19:1 where two of them are called angels). This interpretation is corroborated in Dan 18:15 where Gabriel the angel is described as 'one having the appearance of a man' (see also Dan 10:16).

The 'one like a son of man' is also sometimes interpreted to mean not a real individual but a symbol (Hartman 1990, 416-417). It is identified as a figurative representation of the new Israel or holy ones of the Most High (see Dan 7:18) after judgement when an end is brought to the evil inflicted on God's chosen people by the four nations represented by the four beasts in Dan 7:3ff. Proper then to this phrase of Daniel is the eschatological scene of a theocentric kingdom and Judgement/dominion it depicts and the divine attributes of the celestial figure who functions as agent of God's definitive intervention (Colpe 1972, 421).

The *Similitudes* of *1 Enoch* 37-71 suspected to be the part of *Enoch* which post-dates Daniel and pre-dates the Gospels takes up this image of the Danielic son of man, and interprets it along messianic lines. Drawing its inspiration from Daniel 7 the parables represent 'the son of man' as divine, vindicator, Messiah, Judge and universal king who condemns evil powers and attracts worship (Caragounis 1986, 71-80; Kuhn 2007, 32-33). Apocalyptic writings like *Enoch* which pre-date the time of Christ therefore shift the concept of the son of man in Daniel from a figure of speech for the theocentric kingdom in judgement and give it a titular interpretation by transforming it into a term for the messianic king himself. This shift is not oblivious of the dynamics in the Book of Daniel where the thought of 'kingdom' often swings imperceptibly towards the notion of 'kingship' (Hartman 1990, 417).

Thus, as far back as in the 1900 Schmidt interpreted the 'one like a son of man' of Daniel 7:13 to mean an angel and more particularly angel Michael which he suggested is the guardian angel and representative of Israel in the celestial court. Michael is the angel who receives on Israel's behalf the world-kingdom after having risen triumphant (see Dan 10:21; 12:1). In conclusion Schmidt sustains that it was only a natural course in the evolution of thoughts that with the growth of messianic idea, the activity of Michael and the tribute given to him as Israel's representative should shift to the shoulders of the Messiah and be transformed into a messianic concept (Schmidt 1900, 26-28).

Jesus and the Son of Man in the Synoptic Gospels

The phrase 'son of man' is copious in the Synoptic Gospels and is found only on the lips of Jesus. These occurrences can be briefly classified under five headings (McKenzie 1966, 832).

- (1) It is used in context where Jesus draws attention to his status as a human person. Here he speaks of not having a place to lay his head (Luke 9:58; Matt 8:20) and associates with others by eating and drinking with them (Luke 7:34; Matt 11:19).
- (2) The phrase appears in circumstances where Jesus' supernatural power is underscored; these include the ability to forgive sins (Luke 5:24; Mark 2:10; Matt 9:6) and his authority over the Sabbath (Luke 6:5; Mark 2:28; Matt 12:8).

- (3) It is used in contexts which allude to the mission of Jesus as the dispenser of the message of salvation; he is the one who sows the word of God (Matt 13:37), who seeks and saves the lost (Luke 19:10); the one who must be identified (Matt 16:13), who is spoken against (Luke 12:10; Matt 12:32) and for whom the disciples must be ready to suffer (Luke 6:22; Matt 5:11).
- (4) It is used in a more frequent manner to allude to the passion and death of Jesus; these include among others (Luke 9:44; 11:30; 18:31; Mark 9:31; 10:33; Matt 12:40; 17:12,22; 20:18). In his death he offers his life for the benefit of many (Luke 9:22; 22:22, 48; 24:7; Mark 8:31; 9:12; 10:45; 14:21, 41; Matt 20:28; 26:2, 24, 45).
- (5) It is employed to refer to the eschatological return of Jesus in glory as Judge; where after his resurrection he will come in glory with the clouds accompanied by angels; a scene evocative of Dan 7:13 (Luke 9:26; 12:8; 22:69; 17:24, 26; 21:27; Mark 9:9; 13:26; 14:62; Matt 10:23; 13:41; 16:28; 17:9; 24:27,30, 37, 39,44; 25:31). He will be enthroned at God's right hand (Luke 22:69; Mark 14:62; Matt 13:41; 16:27; 19:28; 25:31ff; 26:64).

Son of man is used in the Gospels as a title and from the classification above three basic aspects of the title stand out in the Synoptic Gospels; it alludes to the earthly ministry of Jesus, his death and resurrection, and his impending exaltation and return as judge. It has not been scholarly concluded if the historical Jesus actually used this title for himself or it was attributed to him by the early church or the redactors. It is most probable that Jesus used the phrase himself to describe his person and his activities. The term is used in the Gospels by Jesus as a circumlocution to identify himself in the third person as a member of the human family who participates in its destiny and in a titular sense to underscore in a coded manner his status as the Messiah. In other words, Jesus employs the figurative Aramaic sense of the phrase to state his position on the highly sensitive issue of Messianology in a more conservative manner that eludes the attention his audience. This figurative sense detaches "Jesus from what he is saying about himself and enhances the impression that he is speaking about the proper destiny of the Messiah" (Donahue 1986, p. 493). While this figurative sense derives from the Aramaic idiom surrounding the phrase, the messianic content of his statements which the idiom shrouds is the titular sense and derives from the divine agent of Daniel 7:13. In this latter the Gospels and Jesus follow the line of the *Similitudes* of *1 Enoch* which had earlier on employed the non-titular image of 'one like a son of man' of Daniel in a titular manner to construct a Messiah-figure out of it. Jesus and the early Christians therefore take up an Aramaic idiom and employ/interpret it along messianic line in the light of the eschatological figure of 'one like a son of man' in Dan 7:13-14. While the use of the phrase as a surrogate of the first person pronoun (circumlocution) permits Jesus to speak on such delicate issues like his messianic suffering and death the titular sense which this work traces to Daniel 7 via an existing apocalyptic sense in *1 Enoch* 37-71 allows him to speak of his return in glory as an eschatological Judge.

The figurative Aramaic sense takes up the son of man sense of human modesty, susceptibility and unworthiness in Ezekiel and identifies Jesus with humanity in its weakness. This kinship with the human family exposes Jesus to suffering, rejection and death, a trait characteristic of the Suffering Servant, in the divine attempt to empower humanity for good. In his identification he equally becomes the agent for that divinization of humanity. This is the context in which as son of man Jesus eats and drinks with tax collectors, seeks and saves the lost. This last is very important because seeking is an earthly activity of the son of man while saving is an

eschatological activity of the eschatological judge. This eschatological dimension of the son of man is the sense derived from Daniel 7.

Understanding The 'Son of Man' in Luke 19:10

The comment of Jesus in Luke 19:10: "the son of man came to seek and to save the lost (RSV)" summarizes the nature and objective of the mission of Jesus as divine agent in reconciling humanity with God. The nature of his mission consists in making himself a member of the human family and in searching for the lost so that, as his objective, he might save them.

'The One Who Comes' and 'the One Who Seeks'

The verb 'to come' is expressive of the messianic theme of 'the one who comes:' *ho erchomenos*. In Luke 19:38 Jesus is described by his disciples as the 'one who comes in the name of the Lord.' The 'one who comes' implies 'the one who was to come' and means the 'Expected One;' and was used in the time of Jesus to express Jewish messianic expectations. The expression therefore identifies Jesus as the Messiah that was expected. The verb 'to come' used in Luke 19:10 of the son of man identifies this son of man as the expected one and is expressive therefore of the messianic activity of Jesus.

Religiously considered the verb 'to seek' is both a divine and human activity, and divine seeking involves especially divine possessing. It means to look for what one initially possessed and has lost with the intention of bringing it back into a relationship with oneself (see Luke 2:45-48; 15:9). The verb therefore implies essentially possession, absence, lack or deficiency, renewal, preservation and protection, and in the sphere of religion all of these inform a relationship between the divine and the human. Though within the generality of the divine initiative to re-establish union with his creatures the biblical 'seeking or searching' by Jesus involves the human procedure of actually walking the streets and looking around for that which was lost like the woman in search of her lost coin in Luke 15:8. At this point the search by Jesus in Luke 19:10 implies a human activity in the manner expressive of his participation in the limitations of space and time proper to the human nature. Thus the son of man actively seeks or searches for his own and this seeking is what distinguishes him from the false shepherd of Ezek 34:4. So as son of man Jesus is the Messiah or Expected One who comes and as son of man he is the human one and therefore a member of the human family who searches for his own.

'The One Who Saves'

The son of man's mission 'to save' is to be understood in the context of Luke 19:9b where Jesus speaks of the arrival of salvation to the house of Zacchaeus. This arrival is the consequence of his Messianic presence there; a pro-active presence which always evokes a response from his target audience and in the case of Zacchaeus a response that is amenable to the offer of salvation. Salvation is a biblical concept and means deliverance, rescue, or preservation which ethically involves concession of safety to the soul especially by the intervention of an agent. Thus, the beneficiary of the offer of salvation is brought out of a threatening situation safe and sound. In the New Testament it has God as its initiator and Christ as its principal agent.

When Jesus states therefore that the son of man came to save, the salvation he alludes to is messianic and involves deliverance from sin and its consequences of death, from oppressive structures, demonic possessions, ill-health, and from the perverse generation (Acts 2:40) and the wrath of God consequent on all of the above (see Rom 5:9). It involves preservation from transcendental danger or destruction and deliverance from mortal danger so that the person so delivered might prosper and thrive (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other*

Early Christian Literature, 8th ed., s.v. “sōzō.”). It entails a guarantee of well-being (Luke 8:36; 18:42) and the re-establishment of lost integrity through the elimination of chronic impairment like blood flow (Luke 8:48), blindness, leprosy (Luke 17:19) or lameness. It includes restoration that comes when death has already occurred (Luke 8:50). The beneficiaries of this offer of salvation are identified as ‘the lost.’

‘The Lost’

The phrase ‘the lost’ is used in the figurative sense to speak of those who have strayed from the covenant relationship made between God and Israel; those who have wandered from the way and are alienated from God. They are indicated as the beneficiaries of the salvation Jesus brings. In the New Testament, it can be understood generally as referring to the entire house of Israel which actively lost the relationship of love with God and for whom Jesus came to recover and rehabilitate (Luke 2:38). From this inclusive perspective equally follows the more restrictive understanding which refers to the individual members of the house of Israel identified by the society as perished; ‘the lost sheep of the house of Israel (see Matt 15:24) to whom the collaborators in the mission of Jesus are mandated (Matt 10:6). To this category belong the tax collectors, Gentiles, robbers and sinners who at the time of Jesus were considered irredeemable and avoidable (Luke 15:1-2); Zacchaeus belongs to this group. They are the lost sheep who as the psalmist says ‘are to be sought for’ by God himself (Ps 119:175 RSV). The choice of the adjective ‘lost’ rather than ‘perished implies the hope that when sought they may be found (Ezek 34:16; Luke 15:6).

When in his polemics with the authority figures of his time Jesus refers to ‘the lost’ especially in Luke, he is almost always having this second category in mind. Those branded by the society as hopeless sinners with no guarantee of repentance and forgiveness. They are those discriminated upon and condemned by the court of public opinion and for whom Jesus himself is misrepresented and misjudged and in defence of whom his many parables of losing, searching, discovering, celebrating and rejoicing are narrated especially in Luke 15.

They are those declared spiritually dead and eternally perished and therefore incapable of restoration and rehabilitation. Deliverance for this group of sinners therefore implies a divine initiative and in doing so Jesus represents himself as that divine or messianic agent who alone is capable of offering salvation (Acts 4:12). So ‘the lost’ is used by Jesus in Luke 19:10 from the perspective of redemption (Kretzer 1990, 136); in other words, there is salvation because there is ‘the lost,’ and salvation is a messianic privilege.

The presence of Jesus makes this salvation a present reality while affiliation to or friendship with him turns it into a continuous event that leads to the future where a Christian is preserved from eternal death to earn eternal life. This implies a relationship of faith and underscores a relationship that exists between faith and salvation. There can therefore be no salvation without faith and as the one who saves and establishes this relationship of faith the son of man is the Messiah and has ‘the lost’ as the destination of his mission.

Conclusion

The mission of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke is to save the lost and his presence among men and women as the son of man is the beginning of salvation which he proposes as an offer that does not discriminate. Thus in v. 9 of Luke 19 Jesus declares that salvation has come to the house of Zacchaeus for he too is the son of Abraham; Zacchaeus is here identified as the lost sheep of the house of Israel for whom Jesus came to save. While his fellow Jews consider Zacchaeus an irredeemable sinner unworthy of the title Son of Abraham, Jesus identifies him with Abraham and consequently exercises his role as the one who fulfils God’s promise of blessing to

Abraham's posterity. It is in his exercise of this role that he auto-identifies himself in Luke 19:10 as the Son of Man who comes to save what was lost. His identification as son of man makes him a member of the human family who shares the pains and limitations of the humankind. These limitations subject him to going in search of that which was lost. What was lost was alienated from God and therefore in need of the saving intervention of God himself. This intervention is messianic salvation which only the Messiah/Saviour provides, and as an activity ascribed to the 'son of man' in Luke 19:10 it follows that in this passage the term 'son of man' is equally synonymous with the Messiah. So, the son of man is both the 'Human one' and 'the Messiah'. Seeking and saving the lost therefore means 'making messianic salvation humanly possible so that the persons saved might re-enter into a relationship with their creator by faith in Jesus and prosper.

The statement of Jesus in Luke 19:10 is an affirmation that the son of man is at work both as a member of the human family susceptible to sufferings, pains and death and as an eschatological agent who grants salvation. Luke 19:10 is therefore the fusion of 'Son of Man' with 'the Suffering Servant of the Lord' so that son of man becomes then in Luke a vehicle for the Suffering Servant in the divine design to save humanity (see Luke 9:22).

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