

THE IRONIC PORTRAYAL OF THE IDENTITY OF JESUS
IN LUKE'S PASSION NARRATIVE
AS A PARALLEL OF 9:7-36

Laura Welker

Student Box # 2066

Wes Olmstead, PhD

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OUTLINE

Thesis: Through Luke's careful redaction, the primary identities of Jesus emphasized in 9:7-36—that of Prophet, Christ of God, Son of Man, and Son of God—are each reiterated again in his passion narrative in ironic parallels that are intended to stimulate reflection upon the reader's response to the identity of Jesus.

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Scholars have noted the numerous parallels that exist in Luke between the sayings and events in chapter nine and the passion account in chapters 22-23. Though some cases are stronger than others, correlations have been noted between the feeding of the five thousand and the Last Supper, the events of the transfiguration upon a mountain and the pre-passion prayer on the Mount of Olives, and the language of cross-bearing discipleship with the actions of Simon from Cyrene, among many others. This paper will focus upon the principal theme of chapter nine, the question of the identity of Jesus, and its contrasting parallels within chapters twenty-two and twenty-three. Through Luke's careful redaction, the primary identities of Jesus emphasized in 9:7-36—that of Prophet, Christ of God, Son of Man, and Son of God—are each reiterated again in his passion narrative in ironic parallels that are intended to stimulate reflection upon the reader's response to the identity of Jesus. What was divinely revealed in 9:7-36 in private glimpses is now known to all; what was predicted then has now come about; what was a profession of faith then is now a term of mockery and unbelief. One of the greatest ironies of all time is brilliantly portrayed by the hand of a master writer.

As the events and sayings in chapter nine form the foundation for their parallels in the passion narratives, these will be examined first in their context and redaction. Robert O'Toole nicely demonstrates that 9:1-50 forms a "transitional unit in which Luke sums up what the apostles, the disciples, and the crowds understand about Jesus up to this point and directs our attention to Jesus' sonship and the journey to Jerusalem."¹ The first half of the chapter in particular, 9:7-36, focuses upon the question of the identity of Jesus, a question that is asked initially by Herod and answered incrementally and correctively by the opinions of the people, the faith statement of Peter, the clarification of Jesus, and the affirmation of the Father.² It is

¹ Robert F. O'Toole, "Luke's Message in Luke 9:1-50," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 49:1 (Jan 1987): 75.

intentionally redacted by Luke to set up the theme of Jesus as the suffering Christ of God that reaches its climax in his passion in Jerusalem.

Though introduced briefly in 7:49 and 8:25, the question of the identity of Jesus comes to the fore on the lips of Herod in 9:7-9: “Who, then, is this I hear such things about?”³ Luke follows Mark’s general account but introduces perplexity into Herod’s response to various reports of Jesus, and the question itself is unique to Luke.⁴ It is intriguing that Herod is chosen to voice this question, for his appearance in Luke is always linked with deadly events.⁵ So it is whispered even here that the question of the identity of Jesus is to be linked with suffering and death. Luke causes this question to reverberate through the rest of the chapter until it is adequately answered. He removes the account of John’s death (Matt 14:3-12//Mark 6:17-29), and, while retaining the feeding of the five thousand (Matt 14:13-21//Mark 6:32-44), he then displaces the entire section of Mark 6:45-8:26 in order to draw the answer to Jesus’ identity into closer proximity with Herod’s question and cast the Markan accounts in a different light.⁶

² While it is debated whether 9:18-27, the account of Peter’s confession of Christ, or 9:28-36, the transfiguration, is the focal point of this section, both offer correct descriptions of Jesus that are reiterated in his passion, and both will be examined here. Donald Miller, “Luke 9:18-24” *Interpretation 37:1* (Jan 1983): 64 calls Peter’s confession “the fulcrum on which the Gospel balances,” while O’Toole, “Luke’s Message in Luke 9:1-50,” 77, believes the transfiguration account receives the emphasis of the chapter and is the only “completely satisfactory answer given to the question of who Jesus is.”

³ All scripture citations are from the New International Version (unless otherwise indicated).

⁴ John Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989), 430, notes that Mark appears to be Luke’s only source at this point, with differences attributed solely to Luke’s redaction.

⁵ The Herodian dynasty is portrayed consistently as the arch-antagonist and persecutor of Jesus and his relative John (cf. 3:1-6, 19-20; 13:31; 23:7-12) and it is only in Luke that Jesus appears before Herod during his trial. Having just beheaded John, mentioned only here in Luke, the fact that the attention of Herod has turned to Jesus hints at a coming conflict of deadly proportions that will be announced for the first time later in this chapter. For further reading on the significance of Herod in this section, see O’Toole, “Luke’s Message in Luke 9:1-50,” 79, Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 360 and Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, The Anchor Bible Commentary (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 757.

⁶ Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 430; Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 756. That Luke chose to retain the account of the feeding of the five thousand and juxtapose it between Herod’s question and the answers to follow indicates that it has some

Luke 9:18-27 presents the climactic response to the question Herod posed—the true identity of Jesus.⁷ After private prayer (a Lucan addition and one that characteristically precedes special revelation),⁸ Jesus asks his disciples, “Who do the crowds say I am?” Reiterating the rumors Herod heard in 9:7-8, the disciples respond, John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the ancient prophets.⁹ This first answer given by the crowds, that Jesus’ identity is that of a great prophet, is valid but is still insufficient, as shown by Jesus’ further questioning of the disciples and his adversative use of $\delta\tilde{\epsilon}$.¹⁰ Jesus then asks the disciples what they believe his identity to be. Peter, speaking for the rest, replies, “The Christ of God” (τὸν χριστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ). Anticipated since the birth narrative, here for the first time in Luke a human acknowledges Jesus as the Christ.¹¹

The title, “The Christ of God,” is found in this form only in Luke, as Mark says simply, “You are the Christ” (Mark 8:29) and Matthew expands it to, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt 16:16). *Christos*, meaning either “Christ” or “Messiah,” is the most important title for Jesus in Luke, and the reader has been prepared to associate it with Davidic lordship

role in revealing the identity of Christ, though exactly how is debated. At the least, the obvious parallels with the miracles of manna during the Exodus (Exod 16; Num 11) and the similar multiplication by Elisha (2 Kings 4:42-44) demonstrate that Jesus ranks among the most revered of the Jewish prophets (Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 435-439, 445-446; Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 763-764). The disciples’ construal of Jesus as more than a prophet but the Christ himself Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 363, attributes to both this event and Jesus’ prayer in 9:18.

⁷ O’Toole would prefer to give this designation to the transfiguration, but I agree with Nolland that Peter’s confession appears to be the climactic part of this chapter, and the transfiguration is a divine confirmation of it.

⁸ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 369 notes prayer before the reception of guidance, empowerment and divine disclosure in Luke 3:21-22; 5:16; 6:12-20; 9:28-29; 10:21-24; 23:34. Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 773: “The mention of Jesus at prayer enhances the occasion not only for Peter’s confession, but much more importantly for the declaration that he himself will make in v. 22; for his prayer is usually introduced when there is some significant episode to be recounted.”

⁹ Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 448, observes that Luke edits Mark in order to make the views of vv 7-8 and 19 equal, which “reinforces the bracketing role Luke gives to the accounts.”

¹⁰ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 369; Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 452.

¹¹ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 369 and n. 49: “though Luke’s readers are aware of Jesus’ identity as Messiah, this is privileged knowledge shared heretofore only by supernatural characters”: angels in 1:31-35; 2:11; God in 2:26; demons in 4:41; and the narrator in 3:15.

(1:32-33; 2:11; 3:31; 6:5), divine anointing (3:21-22; 4:18), and salvific purpose (2:11, 30; 4:18).¹² What Peter and the rest of the disciples understood or intended by the term is uncertain, but it would have probably denoted “an expected anointed agent sent by God either in the Davidic, kingly or political, tradition for the restoration of Israel and the triumph of God’s power and dominion or in the priestly tradition.”¹³ Luke’s special addition to the Markan title, the genitive τοῦ θεοῦ, emphasizes God as the author of Jesus’ anointing as well as Jesus’ special relationship to him.¹⁴

Luke continues his redaction of Matthew and Mark in order to highlight the identity of Jesus as the focus of this passage. He removes completely Jesus’ praise of Peter (Matt 16:17-19), as well as Peter’s later rebuke of Jesus and Jesus’ stern response (Matt 16:22-23//Mark 8:32-33). This enables the narrative to not be sidetracked from the central issue, and it corresponds with Luke’s milder treatment of the disciples. Jesus’ command for silence is retained and is linked more strongly than the other evangelists with the first passion prediction that immediately follows. In this manner, Jesus’ rebuke is not against the application of the title of Christ to him, but rather is a forbidding of the public use of this title at that time because of its dangerous political connotations. Even more, this particular redaction emphasizes that the disciples’ understanding is incomplete, for Jesus immediately corrects their assumptions of the nature of the Messiah by describing himself as the suffering Son of Man.¹⁵

¹² Green, *Luke*, 369-370. It is related to the *christon Kyriou*, “the Lord’s Christ,” of 2:26 and similar OT expressions concerning the Lord’s anointed (cf. 1 Sam 24:6).

¹³ Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 198; also Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 369-370.

¹⁴ Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 199, 744; Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 454.

¹⁵ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 370; Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 775. As John Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1993), *Luke 9:21-18:34*, 467, succinctly puts it, “Jesus is the Christ, but should only be announced as such by those who realize that the Christ must suffer and enter into his glory.”

Up until now, the answers to the identity of Jesus have come from the people (a prophet) and the disciples (the Christ of God). Now Jesus offers his own answer: he is the Son of Man who must “suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life” (9:22).¹⁶ Rather than becoming the conquering king the disciples had expected, Jesus would fulfill his role as the Christ through suffering and death.¹⁷ In this moment the tide has turned, as predictions of Jesus’ coming passion come frequently and inexorably, all accompanied by Jesus’ self-applied title of the Son of Man. Luke follows Mark in using this as Jesus’ favorite designation of himself as an expression of his humanity, which becomes painfully evident during his passion. It possibly also reflects the heavenly figure of Daniel 7:13, which is congruent with his statements of authority and glorification.¹⁸ Like in Mark, the two terms of “Christ” and “the Son of Man” are related in Luke, for “we are led to a suffering Christ by means of a suffering Son of Man (and probably also to a Christ of cosmic rule through a Danielic [Jewish apocalyptic?] Son of Man).”¹⁹

In a further reorientation of the disciple’s optimistic political expectations, Jesus defines what a disciple of the Son of Man, the true Christ, must be like. Language of self-denial, cross-bearing, and loss of life denotes a follower befitting of the suffering Son of Man. The one who demonstrates shame and rejection of such a Messiah will in turn be shamed and rejected when

¹⁶ O’Toole, “Luke’s Message in Luke 9:1-50,” 76: “logically the first prediction of the passion goes with the questions about who Jesus is because it serves as a corrective of all the answers given, but it also introduces the next part of Luke 9:1-50. Or, more correctly, Luke in the whole of Luke 9:21-50 perfects the answers given to the question of who Jesus is.”

¹⁷ John T. Carroll and Joel B. Green, “The Death of Jesus in the Gospel According to Luke,” in *The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 68 comment on the “must” (δεῖ): “The inevitability of Jesus’ suffering, rejection, and death flows from a divine necessity, from God’s redemptive purpose, disclosed long another in Scripture. Jesus dies not simply because Satan contrives it and not simply because Jesus’ enemies thereby gain the upper hand. Rather, he also dies because God purposes his death.” The theme of the divine purpose for Jesus’ death is strongest in Luke.

¹⁸ Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 211.

¹⁹ Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 254.

this Messiah returns “in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels” (9:26). Luke alone includes “in his glory,” highlighting the vindication and exaltation the Son of Man will receive after his suffering, and likewise, his faithful followers.²⁰ It also portends the events of the next passage: the transfiguration.

The transfiguration account of Luke 9:28-36 has numerous parallels to various events in Luke-Acts, but of special interest here is its link with the previous section and its foreshadowing of the passion account.²¹ Again, it is after prayer that revelation concerning Jesus’ identity occurs. First, the glory of the “Son of Man” (9:26) is briefly unveiled as he is transfigured with a brilliant appearance.²² Second, Moses and Elijah appear and talk with Jesus concerning “his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem” (9:31) in a verse unique to Luke. Here again, the glory of Jesus, the Christ of God, is tempered by his impending, purposed doom. This is the first time in Luke that Jesus’ fateful journey to Jerusalem is mentioned, and prepares the reader for Jesus’ resolute departure a few verses later in 9:51. The prophet identity of 9:7-8 and 9:19 is confirmed again in Jesus’ association with Israel’s two greatest prophets, but another, greater revelation is to follow. A cloud surrounds them and a voice says, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him” (9:35). Jesus is the great prophet predicted by Moses (Deut 18:15), but he is more—he is the Chosen Son of God. The title “Son of God” (also “my Son” and “Son of the Most High God”) has like that of “Christ” been precipitated previously in

²⁰ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 375. Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, 482: Luke also adds “daily” to cross-bearing, making the metaphor of Mark a principle for a sacrificial lifestyle for *all* (πάντας) followers of Christ, not just the limited group of disciples in Matthew 16:24 and Mark 8:34.

²¹ Scholars note that it also points both forward to the resurrection of chapter 24 and ascension of Acts 1, and backward to Moses’ meeting with God on Mount Sinai and the Exodus account (Exod 24; 33-34); Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, 490, 498; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 378-379.

²² Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 380: “Throughout Luke-Acts, clothes are a signifier of status, dazzling clothes denoting heavenly glory”; cf. 24:4; Acts 10:10.

Luke by supernatural figures,²³ and while probably not endowed with the full christological understanding of the later church, Luke's use of the "Son of God" title denotes the unparalleled relationship Jesus has with YHWH, as well as his complete obedience to him.²⁴ Finally, Luke substitutes Mark's "beloved" with "chosen"; that Jesus is "chosen" by God bears connotations of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 42:1.²⁵

Having established Luke's unique revelation of the identity of Jesus in chapter nine as the great prophet, the anticipated Christ of God, the suffering Son of Man, and the chosen Son of God, we shall now direct our attention to their parallels (one could even say climactic fulfillment) in chapters 22-23: the trial, suffering and death of Jesus.²⁶ The primarily Lucan theme of the suffering Christ found throughout his gospel is now brought to pass, and the divinely initiated confessions of Jesus' identity are now used as sources of irony and mockery.²⁷

²³ At his birth by angels (1:32, 35), at his encounters with demonic forces (4:3, 9, 41; 8:28), and by the voice from heaven at his baptism (3:22). Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 206, demonstrates that the motif of the "Son of God" has no connection in later Jewish literature with messianic expectations, but the title is not unknown in OT and pagan writings: there are many references to "son(s) of God" in the OT as angels, royal lines and Israel in a collective sense; this is even evident in Luke's genealogy in 3:38. Pagan kings were often thought of as sons of gods, and Fitzmyer notes, "In such a context the use of this title implied divine favor, divine adoption, and even divine power, being conferred often at the time of enthronement."

²⁴ Ibid., 207-208. Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 164, elaborates on this: "For Luke, Jesus' sonship involves more and is more fundamental than anything that can be contained in normal messianic categories. It may be compared with (but also contrasted to) that of Adam (see at 3:38 and 4:1-13) and Israel (see at 4:1-13). It may be traced to a distinct divine involvement in his human conception (1:35) which makes it no surprise that he is able to participate in the resources of the divine power (see at 4:3). As Son, Jesus is uniquely qualified to speak for God (9:35) and to reveal God (10:22). An unparalleled approach of God and his rule is implicated in Jesus' identity as Son (cf. 5:8, 21, 24, 26; 11:20; 17:21, etc.)."

²⁵ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 384; Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, 501; O'Toole, 80, is slightly more tentative: "If H. Schurmann is correct that the use of *eklelegmenos* ("chosen," Luke 9:35) instead of Mark's *agapetos* ("beloved") involves a stronger comparison with Isa 42:1, which beings the first suffering servant hymn, there is yet another stress on Jesus' suffering."

²⁶ O'Toole, "Luke's Message in Luke 9:1-50," 86: "Luke definitely wanted his readers to see a parallel between Luke 9 and 22-23. [Offers examples of parallels]. . . . These parallels manifest a christological interest."

²⁷ Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall, editors, "Death of Jesus," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 159-160: "The Third Evangelist leaves his readers in no doubt as to the centrality of Jesus' death for his Gospel. . . . throughout Luke-Acts he sounds the cadence: "the Christ must suffer!"

Our first parallel is found in Peter's denial of Jesus in 22:54-62. While this passage most obviously correlates with Jesus' prediction of Peter's betrayal in 22:31-34, one is also drawn back to Peter's confession in chapter nine to reflect upon the contrast. While Peter follows (22:54: ἀκολουθέω) Jesus at a distance, the proper action of a disciple (9:23: ἀκολουθέω), his resolve rapidly wilts. Accused of association with Jesus and of being his disciple, he thrice denies knowing Jesus and any identification of himself as Jesus' disciple (22:56-60).²⁸ In the climactic event of 9:20, Peter confidently asserted his belief that Jesus was the Christ of God. Now, his expectations shattered by the arrest, he vehemently denies association with Jesus in three exclamations of fearful unbelief, demonstrating both the failure of his conviction that Jesus was the expected Christ of God and his failure to heed Jesus' frequent predictions of his suffering (cf. 9:21, 35, 44).²⁹

Peter thus acts out the very warnings given in the description of the true disciples of the suffering Son of Man: "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. . . . If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him" (9:24, 26). Facing the threat of arrest and mild persecution, Peter demonstrates a greater desire to preserve his own life as well as outright shame of a humiliated, criminalized Christ.³⁰ Rather than denying himself (9:23: ἀρνήομαι), he denies (22:57: ἀρνήομαι) the very Christ whom he had previously confessed.

²⁸ Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, The Anchor Bible (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 1460, observes: "The first accusation involved association with Jesus; the second, association with his disciples—Peter denies his discipleship!"

²⁹ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 787: "Luke adds to the intensity of this scene, first, by noting the passing of time between each confrontation, allowing Peter opportunity to reconsider his position and to reflect on Jesus' earlier teaching regarding the importance of acknowledging Jesus before others and the promise of divine provision in the midst of examinations such as the one he is experiencing (e.g., 9:23-26; 12:4-12; 21:12-19)." Yet, Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 361, notes that Luke is gentler on Peter by eliminating the cursing and swearing found in Mark and Matthew.

Our next parallels fall heavily within the account of Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin, Luke 22:66-71. Like his redaction in chapter 9, Luke edits out a significant portion of Mark in order to draw two accounts dealing with the identity of Jesus closer together and bring this motif to the forefront.³¹ That this section intentionally parallels chapter nine is seen most vividly in the fact that the three primary identities of Jesus revealed there—the Christ, the Son of Man, and the Son [of God]—are used again here, in the same order, and with a dramatic contrast.³² This is the result of deliberate Lucan redaction, for he alone separates the two titles of “the Christ, the Son of the Blessed” in Mark (Matthew has “God” in the place of “Blessed”) in order to add greater emphasis to each title.³³ For this first trial, the triad of Jewish leadership, the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, are assembled—the same persons predicted to reject and kill Jesus in 9:22 (cf. 9:44; 17:25; 18:31-33). Heil notes the dramatic irony: while these leaders are unaware of the predictions against them, the reader is prepared for and expecting the negative outcome, knowing that the divine purpose mentioned so frequently in Luke will come to pass.³⁴

The first title is found in the blunt question immediately posed to Jesus, “If you are the Christ, tell us” (22:67). There is no buildup to this question in Luke's version, for it has been

³⁰ John Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1993), 1095, 1097: “Of what is Peter frightened? There had been no attempt at the arrest of Jesus to take his companions as well. At most, Peter might have expected to be abused or beaten up and expelled from the courtyard. Staying there to see what would happen to Jesus was for Peter becoming dependent upon denying the very link to Jesus that caused him to be there in the first place.”

³¹ This pericope is Matthew 26:59-63//Mark 15:55-60: the questioning of false witnesses and the accusation of prophesied destruction of the temple. Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 1461: because of the removal of this section, “the entire questioning is addressed to Jesus himself. . . [concerning] his messiahship and his divine sonship alone. . . . The emphasis in the Lucan interrogation scene is christological.”

³² O'Toole, “Luke's Message in Luke 9:1-50,” 86.

³³ Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1109, posits that Luke is probably following a second source (“L”) by making the single title into a double question.

³⁴ John Paul Heil, “Reader-Response and the Irony of Jesus before the Sanhedrin in Luke 22:66-71,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 51:2 (Apr 1989): 277; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 793.

fully anticipated throughout the gospel.³⁵ It sets the direction of the trial before the Sanhedrin, for unlike the scattered accusations of Matthew and Mark, it remains focused on a single issue: Christology. “Who is Jesus? That is the key question for this Gospel.”³⁶ Rather than answering in the simple affirmative, “I am” of Mark, or the slightly more ambiguous, “Yes, it is as you say” of Matthew, Luke has Jesus answering with the sarcastic, “If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I asked you, you would not answer” (22:67-69). Why does Jesus answer in this fashion? Fitzmyer believes it is from the uselessness of the question,³⁷ but Heil again notes the dramatic irony for the reader:

Of course they will not *believe*, if he tells them he is the Christ! For them the issue is not believing in him but condemning him. . . . But the reply of Jesus causes the reader to realize his control of the confrontation by refusing to answer on the level of the Sanhedrin. He answers on his own terms and for the reader transforms the Sanhedrin’s issue of condemnation into one of belief.³⁸

This scene contrasts ironically with the second-to-last use of the title “Christ” in Luke—Peter’s confession in 9:20.³⁹ Whereas there Jesus is affirmed to be the Christ in a statement of belief, here the emphasis is specifically upon the unbelief of the Sanhedrin that Jesus is the Christ.

The second title is found in Jesus’ continued response to the Sanhedrin’s question: “But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God” (22:69). The comparisons and contrasts to chapter nine are many. In both pericope, Jesus uses this title to describe himself after being called the Christ. Both here and in 9:26 this title is used in a prediction of Jesus’ exaltation by and on level with the Father. Contrast is also found with 9:22,

³⁵ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 794.

³⁶ Bock, *Luke*, 362.

³⁷ Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 1462.

³⁸ Heil, “Reader-Response and the Irony of Jesus before the Sanhedrin in Luke 22:66-71,” 278.

³⁹ O’Toole, “Luke’s Message in Luke 9:1-50,” 86.

for there the prediction is primarily of his suffering and death, with only a brief mention of his resurrection. Now, the prediction of Jesus' passion in 9:22 is finding its fulfillment, and "from now on" (ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν) Jesus can look forward to his vindication and exaltation to "the right hand of the mighty God."⁴⁰ Whereas in 9:22 the "Son of Man" is an expression of humanity and mortality, here it is proof of his divinely appointed status to rule and judge those who are now judging him.⁴¹ The obvious allusions to the exalted Son of Man in Daniel 7 and the Davidic royal enthronement of Psa 110:1 speak even more loudly of Jesus' Messiahship than the simple affirmation to the first question of Mark, and vividly demonstrates a relationship between the two titles of "Christ" and "Son of Man."⁴² This implication is not lost on the studied audience: "In sum, Jesus makes himself and his authority the issue. The leaders are astute enough to see the claim"—hence the substance and vehemence of their final question.⁴³

The third title is now addressed. "All" (πάντες) of the Sanhedrin exclaim, "Are you then the Son of God?" (22:70). This question is similar to but more significant than the first question, for the titles "Christ" and "Son of God" are not equivalent—the latter is now an even greater assertion.⁴⁴ "They sense the depth of what Jesus is claiming—that Jesus uniquely shares God's

⁴⁰ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 795. Heil, "Reader-Response and the Irony of Jesus before the Sanhedrin in Luke 22:66-71," 279-280, again notes the irony: "now that the Sanhedrin are beginning to fulfill the passion predictions, and now that they definitely 'will not believe' (22:67), Jesus, as the heavenly, transcendent, and exalted 'Son of Man,' will ultimately triumph over them. The reader thus experiences the surprising irony that the Sanhedrin, in attempting to triumph over Jesus through their Satanic 'power of darkness,' are, as the unwitting victims of the irony, actually bringing about the triumph of Jesus over them through the 'power of God'. . . . This irony thus causes the reader to experience the mysterious paradox of Jesus' becoming the exalted and triumphant Son of Man not only despite but in and through the attempt of the Jewish leaders to condemn him to death."

⁴¹ Bock, *Luke*, 362.

⁴² Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 110; Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 1462.

⁴³ Bock, *Luke*, 362.

⁴⁴ Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 1463 believes the two terms are not closely related, whereas Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 796, believes they are in Luke's theology.

rule and power.”⁴⁵ Jesus again answers in indirect terms: “You are right in saying I am” (22:70). This statement is literally, “You say that I am” (ὁμεις λέγετε ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι)—a half affirmative answer that “throws the implied accusation back on his interrogators. He stresses that they are actually saying it, even if they do not believe it.”⁴⁶ This is the first time Jesus is titled the “Son [of God]” since the divine affirmation given in the transfiguration account of chapter nine, and the irony is direct. Whereas the previous use was in a context of such great majesty and splendor that the disciples were afraid (9:34), here the context is the antagonistic atmosphere of a criminal’s trial. Whereas the first was given along with a divine imperative to listen to (and, by inference, believe) the words of Jesus because of his authority as the Son (9:35), here the audience listens in a spirit of unbelief in order to trap and condemn him by his words (22:71). “The two major christological identifications of Jesus in Luke 9:1-50 form the answer to the council’s questioning of Jesus, but they would not listen or reply. They only want to justify their condemnation of him.”⁴⁷ And, in fulfillment of his prophesy of 9:22, Jesus is rejected by the Jewish leadership and is soon condemned to death.

After these climactic parallels with the events and dialogue in chapter nine, a few more can be observed in the passion narrative. The identity given by the crowds in 9:8 and 9:19 of Jesus, that of a great prophet, is reiterated in 22:63-65. Before the trial, the guards beat Jesus and mock his reputation as a prophet. Blindfolding him, they demand, “Prophesy! Who hit you?” (22:64). This is especially ironic considering that Jesus’ prophetic abilities were just confirmed

⁴⁵ Bock, *Luke*, 362.

⁴⁶ Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 1463. Again, Heil, “Reader-Response and the Irony of Jesus before the Sanhedrin in Luke 22:66-71,” 282 observes, “Jesus not only courageously admits that he is the Son of God but also draws the Sanhedrin into this same admission. This brings the reader to a more intense experience of the tragic irony that the Sanhedrin, in what they are saying in order to condemn Jesus, are unknowingly saying what they need to believe in him. Through this irony, then, the reader tastes the tragedy of the Sanhedrin’s rejecting the one who is truly their Christ, the exalted Son of Man and Son of God.”

⁴⁷ O’Toole, “Luke’s Message in Luke 9:1-50,” 86.

in Peter's denial of him immediately before, as well as in Jesus' many predictions of this very event of ridicule and suffering.⁴⁸

The mockery continues after Jesus is crucified, in a form unique to Luke. The rulers ridicule him saying, "Let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One" (ὁ χριστὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἐκλεκτός, 23:35). Here both of the revealed identities of Jesus from chapter nine—the Christ of God, and the Chosen [Son]—are given together in one breath. Quite possibly, apart from 9:20, this is the only other place the exact title, "the Christ of God" (ὁ χριστὸς τοῦ θεοῦ), is found in the New Testament. The only difficulty is determining whether to attribute the genitive "of God" with "Christ" or with "the Chosen One"; hence, the interpretation can either be "the Christ, the Chosen One of God" or "the Christ of God, the Chosen One."⁴⁹ If it is the latter, which is the choice of standard English translations, then it is the most direct parallel with chapter nine found in the passion narrative.⁵⁰ Interestingly, in chapter nine both of these titles are specifically mentioned as having been given privately, in the company of select disciples (9:18, 28). Jesus sternly warns them not to speak publicly of the first title (9:21), and the disciples kept secret the revelation of the second title (9:36). Now, both titles are widely known among the public, and are the source of caustic, faithless mockery. "Ironically, then, these Jewish leaders refer to Jesus correctly, and even employ language that draws together the identity of Jesus as the Servant of Yahweh and as the Messiah, language that leaves the door open for the identification of a Messiah who suffers."⁵¹

⁴⁸ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 789.

⁴⁹ Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 453.

⁵⁰ Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 1504: Luke changes Mark's "the Christ, this king of Israel" (15:32) in order to eliminate the mention of "Israel" and substitute the form of 9:20. Fitzmyer also sees "the Chosen One" as a direct reference to 9:35 (as, also, does Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1146).

⁵¹ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 821.

We have seen from the narrow window of three chapters just how concerned Luke to impress upon his reader the question of the identity of Jesus. The question is specifically asked by Herod in a verse original to Luke, and then answered in careful redaction as the Christ of God, the Son of Man, and the Son of God—each offered privately, in the context of faith, and resonating with Jesus’ impending doom. The question is asked again in Jesus’ interrogation using the same three titles by people outside the disciples’ circle, in the context of unbelief, at the very time when Jesus’ doom has come upon him. Even at the moment of crucifixion the titles are combined in public mockery—the idea of that the Christ of God has been chosen to suffer is ludicrous. “The rapid repetition of the titles, a detail unique to Luke, keeps Jesus’ person the issue. Is he who he claimed to be? That is the question Luke wishes his reader to ponder.”⁵² The reader is invited through these parallels to reflect upon the contrast of their contexts: will the reader follow Peter and the Voice on the mountain in chapter nine and in faith confidently proclaim Jesus to be the Christ of God, the Chosen Son? Or will the reader follow the Jewish leadership and take offense at the idea of the Christ of God in a criminal’s trial, hanging from an instrument of death? Will the reader choose to be a model disciple, and unashamedly follow Jesus to self-denial, suffering and death, or will the reader at the slightest threat deny any association with a ridiculed, incarcerated Christ? For Luke, there is no question surrounding the paradox: Jesus is equally and fully the great Prophet, the anticipated Christ of God, the suffering Son of Man, and the exalted Son of God.

⁵² Bock, *Luke*, 374.

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