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INTRODUCTION

*Messianic Grammar and Matthew's
Suffering Messiah*

It is in sentences that real theological thinking is done.

—James Barr

1.1 Matthew's Problem

The First Gospel is riven with a striking tension. At one end, Matthew's first line baldly asserts that Jesus is "the messiah, the son of David" (1:1). At the other, the book ends with, among other things, Jesus dying a humiliating death on a Roman cross. Exacerbating this tension is the fact that many expected the Davidic messiah to kill, not to be killed by, the Romans. Thus, in order to convince readers of his claim that Jesus was the Davidic messiah, Matthew's challenge is to bridge the chasm between blue-blooded messianic claimant and disgraced executee, what one scholar calls the "clash of contradictory images" between "Jesus' heinous suffering and [the claim of] his messianic status."¹

This book attempts to understand the narrative, intertextual way in which Matthew goes about bridging this gap. Specifically, I argue that Matthew seeks to substantiate his claim that Jesus is the Davidic messiah in the passion narrative by alluding to texts in which David, too, suffered. Such an intertextual play allows Matthew to coordinate his first line with his messiah's final words on the cross, thereby lending cogency to his astonishing assertion that, despite his death, Jesus is the Davidic messiah.

Such an argument, while refreshingly simple, has also been widely overlooked: to date no thorough study on the topic exists. Indeed, though Matthew is widely recognized as the most thoroughly Davidic of the four canonical Gospels – increasing Mark's references to the son of David from four to ten and referring to Jesus by this Davidic patronym

¹ Joel B. Green, "The Death of Jesus and the Ways of God: Jesus and the Gospels on Messianic Status and Shameful Suffering," *Int* 52 (1998): 35.

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more than the other canonical Gospels combined² – nevertheless scholarship has virtually only focused on David material in Matthew 1–22, to the exclusion of chapters 23–28. As such, this book is the first full-scale study on Matthew's response to the problem of the suffering Davidic messiah in the climax of his Gospel, the passion narrative.

Before examining Matthew's allusive use of David texts in his passion narrative, this chapter first lays out what others have said about David in Matthew, including the reasons for the passion narrative's previous neglect. Following this survey, I offer a historiographical and methodological corrective, then lay out the book's thesis and argument. But first, I will briefly expand on the "problem of the suffering messiah" that confronted Matthew and early Jesus-groups in the late first century CE.

1.2 The Problem of the Suffering Messiah

Though modern scholars of religion routinely accept that Jesus of Nazareth died by crucifixion, the cross was, to use Paul's famous formulation, truly a "scandal" to the first-century mind. As Justin Martyr's Trypho purportedly puts it, "What we want you to prove to us is that [the messiah] was to be crucified and subjected to so disgraceful and shameful a death (which even in the Law is cursed). We find it impossible to think that this could be so" (*Dial.* 70.1 [FC 3:140]). Justin's Trypho, of course, functions as a literary construct which enables Justin to narrativize his proof-texting via diatribe, and so this may or may not reflect true opposition to the crucified messiah. But other ancient sources reveal that Justin's Trypho may indeed be representative in looking upon this type of execution as disgraceful and shameful.³ As Seneca asks his reader,

Can anyone be found who would prefer wasting away in pain dying limb by limb, or letting out his life drop by drop, rather than expiring once for all? Can any man be found willing to be fastened to the accursed tree, long sickly, already deformed, swelling with ugly weals on shoulders and chest, and drawing

² These figures include non-titular references in the Question about David's Son, hence: Matt 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30, 31; 21:9; 21:15; 22:42, 45. See Mark 10:47–48; 12:35, 37; Luke 18:38, 39; 20:41, 44. Cf. Luke 1:32; John 7:42.

³ In terms of specific reactions to *Jesus's* crucifixion, and not simply crucifixion in general, see Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44.3; Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 9.4; Celsus in Origen, *Cels.* 6.10; Porphyry in Augustine, *Civ.* 19.23.

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the breath of life amid long drawn-out agony? He would have many excuses for dying even before mounting the cross.⁴

Similarly, Cicero enjoins his Roman elite audience to avoid even the thought of crucifixion:

The executioner, the veiling of the head and the very word “cross” should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen but from his thoughts, his eyes and his ears. For it is not only the actual occurrence of these things or the endurance of them, but liability to them, the expectation, indeed the very mention of them, that is unworthy of a Roman citizen and a free man.⁵

The horrors of crucifixion were, in polite antique company, quite literally “unspeakable.” How then could one convince their audience that this “most bitter torment” to become “evil food for birds of prey and grim pickings for dogs” is not a shameful, but actually a necessary and even courageous, death?⁶ Mark Goodacre puts the problem in this way:

On the whole, the very idea of any victim of crucifixion being the kind of hero who would warrant a literary narrative telling the story of his misery would have been unthinkable, far less that such a narrative would be the climax of the story of Israel’s Messiah.⁷

This is just right: Crucifixion is not only horrible and ghastly, but *unthinkable* – it is not the stuff of a good story,⁸ though it was used by some to sadistically poke fun at their enemies.⁹ As Douglas Geyer frames it:

Crucifixion is an ideal expression of the anomalous frightful. In accordance with ancient evidence about types of death and the destinies of those killed violently, it is terrifying, ghastly, and laden with uncertainty. It is a violent and abrupt end of

⁴ Seneca, Epistle 101 to Lucilius; trans. Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 31–32.

⁵ Cicero, *Pro Rabirio* 16 (trans. Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 42).

⁶ Ps.-Manetho, *Apotelesmatica* 4.199 (trans. Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 9).

⁷ Mark Goodacre, “Scripturalization in Mark’s Crucifixion Narrative,” in *The Trial and Death of Jesus: Essays on the Passion Narrative in Mark*, ed. Geert van Oyen and Tom Shepherd, CBET 45 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 35.

⁸ See, for example, the tragic death of Polykrates of Samos by crucifixion in Herodotus, *Hist.* 3.125.3.

⁹ See the mocking crucifixions of Judeans by Roman soldiers in Josephus, *J.W.* 5.449–51.

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mortal life, and it remained this volatile problem for the ancient audience of the Gospels. The tenacity of this problem for early Christianity is not to be underestimated.¹⁰

Since the terrorizing function of crucifixion was viscerally experienced in the ancient world, and especially in occupied Israel, how could one convince a listener that crucifixion has any value; how is a story that leads to what Cicero calls the “tree of shame” (*arbori infelici*) in any sense εὐαγγέλιον?¹¹ Goodacre again calls us to inhabit an ancient imaginary to bear in mind “how the claim that the Messiah had been crucified would have sounded to many an ancient hearer – preposterous. The point of crucifixion was to terrorise the population; it was an example; it was not an honourable death like a death on the battlefield.”¹²

If Matthew believed that Jesus is the messiah – which he announces in his incipit – then he had a difficult task ahead of him in convincing others why this was so. Yet in this very same opening line, Matthew also hints at his solution to the problem of a suffering messiah, namely, that Jesus is “the messiah, the son of David.” The aim of this book is to trace out the narrative logic of Matthew’s intertextual argument that Jesus is both the Davidic messiah and “the crucified one” (ὁ ἐσταυρωμένος, Matt 28:5). Indeed, Matthew’s daring thesis is that Jesus is the Davidic messiah *because* he is the crucified one. Before setting out Matthew’s intertextual argument, however, it is important to examine what previous scholarship has said about Jesus as David in the First Gospel.

1.3 Matthew’s David in Previous Research

The lacuna this book aims to address is the lack of literature on David in Matthew’s passion narrative. But this is not to suggest that there is little literature on David in Matthew – far from it. If on the former topic the scholar is met with scarcity, on the latter she finds abundance. Because of Matthew’s obvious affinity for David in general¹³ and for the “Son of David” title in

¹⁰ Douglas W. Geyer, *Fear, Anomaly, and Uncertainty in the Gospel of Mark*, ATLA Monograph Series 47 (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2002), 10. Quoted in Goodacre, “Scripturalization,” 34.

¹¹ Cicero, *Pro Rabirio* 16 (trans. Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 42). For examples of crucifixions in ancient Palestine, see Josephus, who calls it “the most miserable of deaths” (*J.W.* 7.202–3); *Ant.* 12.259; 17.295; *J.W.* 2.253, 306–8.

¹² Goodacre, “Scripturalization,” 36.

¹³ As W. D. Davies notes: “But of all the New Testament writers it is Matthew who most emphasizes that Jesus is of Davidic ancestry. ‘Son of David’ ... was apparently Matthew’s most characteristic designation for the earthly Jesus, the Messiah. ... for him

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particular, there is a surfeit of critical scholarship on David in Matthew.¹⁴ The literature divides into roughly three phases of scholarship. And during each of these, one perennial puzzle (Matt 22:40–45) occupied interpreters. Each phase corresponded to particular problems concerning David in the First Gospel. All were significant for advancing Matthean scholarship. Yet, for reasons to be discussed, none engaged Matthew's passion narrative. It is therefore important to survey the various stages of inquiry, noting what methodological assumptions led to the avoidance of Matt 23–28 and what difference these chapters' inclusion might make.

1.3.1 Matthew's Son of David and Jesus's Origins

Examination of Jesus's relation to David came to the attention of biblical critics with William Wrede's posthumously published study "Jesus als Davidsohn." This short piece in many ways mapped the parameters for further phases of analysis. As one might expect given his prominence in the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, Wrede's interest was primarily historical. He first investigated whether Jesus himself was truly a Davidide, concluding (unsurprisingly) that he was not.¹⁵ Rather, Wrede saw Davidic

the determination of history is messianically aimed: the emergence of Jesus, the Son of David, is its climax" ("The Jewish Sources of Matthew's Messianism," in *The Messiah*, ed. James H. Charlesworth [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992], 500).

¹⁴ For literature on David in Matthew not otherwise discussed in this chapter, see Bas van Iersel, *'Der Sohn' in den synoptischen Jesusworten*, NovTSup 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1961), 171–73; Sherman E. Johnson, "The Davidic-Royal Motif in the Gospels," *JBL* 87 (1968): 136–50; P. J. Farla, *Jesus' oordeel over Israël: een form- en redaktionsgeschichtliche analyse van Mc 10,46–12,40* (Kampen: Kok, 1978), 272–84; Marinus de Jonge, "Jesus, Son of David and Son of God," in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings: Essay in Honour of Bas van Iersel* (Kampen: Kok, 1989), 95–104; Donald J. Verspeut, "The Davidic Messiah and Matthew's Jewish Christianity," ed. Eugene H. Lovering, *SBLSP* 34 (1995): 102–16; Lidija Novakovic, "Jesus as the Davidic Messiah in Matthew," *HBT* 19 (1997): 148–91; Matthias Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), 18–52; Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), 146–53. There are notable exceptions to the lack of focus on Matthew's passion, especially among pre-critical authors. These will be noted in subsequent chapters.

¹⁵ "[D]oubts about its authenticity arise easily enough" (William Wrede, "Jesus als Davidsohn," in *Vorträge und Studien* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1907], 171). Unless otherwise noted, translations are from William Wrede, "Jesus as the Son of David," in *Lectures and Studies*, trans. Max Botner and Simon Duerr (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, forthcoming). This accords with Wrede's larger project to show that the historical Jesus did not see himself as the messiah, as argued in his classic 1901 study, *The Messianic Secret*, Library of Theological Translations (Cambridge: J. Clarke, 1971). Indeed, since Wrede's 1907 study goes through and systematically eliminates the historical value of David pericopes in the Synoptic Gospels, one could justly call his 1907 study "The Davidic Messianic Secret."

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messianism as a natural outgrowth of the primitive Christian community's claim that Jesus was the messiah. If so, Wrede reasoned, then creating a Davidic genealogy for Jesus *de novo* followed intuitively. Next, he turned to "die Geschichte der Davidsohnschaft Jesu in der ältesten Christenheit," arguing that some early Christians (cf. Barn. 12:10) rejected Jesus's Davidic descent as politically problematic. Thus, for Wrede, Davidic messianism in Christianity ceased almost as soon as it began, a "Jewish" tenant of early Christianity that faded with the inclusion of Gentiles uninterested in endless genealogies.¹⁶ As Max Botner recently summarizes, "Wrede's approach to the Son-of-David question sets a clear agenda for subsequent research: one attempts to identify an author's [especially an Evangelist's] position on this 'Jewish' desideratum by isolating (a) genealogical material, and (b) titles and scriptural proof texts containing the name David."¹⁷ As will be seen, this aspect of Wrede's reading became programmatic. Armed with Markan priority, his primary piece of evidence is the question about David's son in Mark 12:35–37. On this pericope, Wrede argues that Jesus straightforwardly rejected the application of Davidic sonship to himself. However, his reading of Matthew, which had a slighter impact on subsequent scholarship, is also important to consider. Wrede deems Matthew to be a further step in the evolution of the messianic interpretation of Jesus's life and ministry, and so he attempts to plot Matthew as a stage in this development. He writes:

The text of Matthew is critical here. He has Jesus asking the question, "What does it seem to you with respect to the messiah, *whose* son is he?" This form of the questions presupposes, in my opinion, that more than *one* sonship is in play, in other words, that what is held in contrast to son of David is son of God.¹⁸

For Wrede, Matthew's Gospel says explicitly what Mark says implicitly: that Davidic and divine sonship are in competition, and that the early Christians behind the first two Gospels preferred the latter to the former.¹⁹

¹⁶ I use the quotes around Jewish advisedly – Wrede's stance is troubling on this count.

¹⁷ Max Botner, "What Has Mark's Christ to Do with David's Son? A History of Interpretation," *CBR* 16 (2017): 50–70.

¹⁸ Wrede, "Jesus als Davidsohn," 174, trans. Botner and Duerr.

¹⁹ Jesus is "in truth ... the son of another, namely, *of God*. The exegesis I have designated as the orthodox one is thus, in my opinion, as in numerous other points of gospel interpretation, right about one major issue over against the liberal explanation: it rightly recognizes that the intended contrast is between son of David and son of God" (Wrede, "Jesus als Davidsohn," 175, trans. Botner and Duerr). The impact of disassociating Davidic and divine sonship is surprisingly common; for example, Donald Verseput comments that

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Thus, the outcome of Wrede's reading of Matthew is, ironically, to reinscribe what he himself labels the "orthodox" reading of the text that views Jesus as the son of God *instead of* the son of David. Wrede inquires: "'Whose son is he?' This question can only ever mean: Does he stem from David, or does he *stem* from God? Whether Matthew himself believed that both predicates, David's son and God's son, could be harmonized, something I would accept for certain reasons, is moot."²⁰ Since Wrede is not forthcoming with these certain reasons (*bestimmten Gründen*), it remains unclear if, as Botner suggests, he "embraces the 'plain meaning,'" or if he is simply indifferent to Matthew's intent.²¹

Nevertheless, because of Wrede's *historical* interest in Davidic sonship, his reading inaugurated the earliest phase of scholarship on Jesus and David in Matthew, in which two areas of inquiry dominated: Matthew's genealogy/infancy narrative, and the Question about David's Son (hereafter, the *Davidsohnfrage* [Mark 12:35–37; Matt 22:41–45]). Concerning the former historical query, a broad consensus soon emerged. Against Wrede's thoroughgoing skepticism, many scholars argued that Jesus was indeed a true "son of David," a Davidide, as Matthew's genealogy purported.²² Since affirming Jesus's Davidic sonship obviously implicated

"the relationship between the two christological complexes, Son of David and Son of God" in Matthew is "a relationship all the more provocative because of its lack of common parallels in Judaism" (!) ("The Role and Meaning of the 'Son of God' Title in Matthew's Gospel," *NTS* 33 [1987]: 533).

²⁰ Wrede, "Jesus als Davidsohn," 174, trans. Botner and Duerr.

²¹ Botner's otherwise lucid *Forschungsbericht* is puzzling on this account; he writes: "In the case of Matthew's Gospel, Wrede conceded that there was simply too much counter-evidence to conclude that the evangelist embraced the 'plain meaning' [i.e., rejection of Davidic sonship] of the *Davidsohnfrage*" ("What Has Mark's Christ to Do with David's Son?," 52).

²² So Gustaf Dalman, *The Words of Jesus* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), 316–24; Ernst Lohmeyer, *Gottesknecht und Davidsohn*, 2nd ed., FRLANT 61 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1953), 75–84; Wilhelm Michaelis, "Die Davidsohnschaft Jesu als historisches und kerygmatisches Problem," in *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus: Beiträge zum Christusverständnis in Forschung und Verkündigung*, ed. Helmut Ristow and Karl Matthiae, 2nd ed., FRLANT 43 (Berlin: Evangelische, 1961), 321–24; Bas van Iersel, "Fils de David et Fils de Dieu," in *Le Venue du Messie: messianisme et eschatologie*, ed. É Massaux (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1962), 113–32; Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, 2nd ed., NTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 127–33; Eduard Lohse, "Der König aus Davids Geschlecht: Bemerkungen zur messianischen Erwartung der Synagoge," in *Abraham unser Vater: Festschrift für Otto Michel*, ed. Otto Betz, Martin Hengel, and Peter Schmidt, AGJU 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1963), 337–45; Ferdinand Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology: Their History in Early Christianity* (London: Lutterworth, 1969), 240–45. As Lohmeyer summarizes, Jesus "is only called this [Son of David] in his earthly life, not as the crucified and risen Lord" (*Gottesknecht und Davidsohn*, 77). Agreeing with Wrede on the dubious historical value of the Davidic genealogy were Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from*

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one's understanding of the *Davidssonfrage*, another near-consensus formed: The *Davidssonfrage* was not rejecting descent from David in *Matthew*, but rather carried within itself a Two-Stage Christology (*Zweistufenchristologie*) akin to Rom 1:3–4, wherein Jesus is “from the seed of David” in his earthly existence, then “installed as Son of God” at his resurrection and/or ascension.²³ As Ferdinand Hahn formulates it: “the sonship of David is a characteristic of the earthly reality of Jesus, and has the value of a prior stage of exaltation existing alongside the confession of the messianic power of the exalted One.”²⁴ Because the interest was *religionsgeschichtlich*, Mark and Matthew were used primarily as witnesses to early Christian belief, with little attention given to their particular narrative contributions to Christology.²⁵

1.3.2 The “Purpose and Pattern” of Matthew's Son of David

The first phase's area of oversight – lack of attention to Matthew's narrative – became the central focus of the second phase of scholarship, which aimed to trace the development of the “Son of David” title in Matthew's Gospel specifically. Whereas Wrede was uninterested in Matthew's distinctive voice except as a means for recovering earlier tradition, James M. Gibbs attempted to develop an understanding

the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013), 34–35; Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), 1:28.

²³ I have attempted to deal with the numerous problems with this approach in Nathan C. Johnson, “Romans 1:3–4: Beyond Antithetical Parallelism,” *JBL* 136 (2017): 467–90. See also Paula Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 139–41.

²⁴ Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology*, 253. Here Hahn takes up the suggestion of Gunther Bornkamm, who speaks of Jesus's “irdischen Niedrigkeit Davids Sohn, aber als Erhöhter der Kyrios ist” (“Enderwartung und Kirche im Matthäus-Evangelium,” in *Studien zum Matthäus-Evangelium*, ed. Werner Zager, WMANT 125 [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2009], 25; English translation in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, NTL [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963]). Others agree, among them: A. Fuchs, “Mehr als Davids Sohn: Mk 12,35–37a par Mt 22,41–46 par Lk 20,41–44,” *SNTSU* 26 (2001): 111–28; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 224 (“For Matthew the answer is beyond all doubt: David's son is the Son of God”); Charles H. Talbert, *Matthew*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 256 (“The messiah is more than, but not other than, a son of David”).

²⁵ When examining Matthew, Wrede repeatedly argues that the first evangelist may have had an understanding of Davidic sonship that was not incompatible with divine sonship, but that this is “irrelevant” to his purpose, which is to see what in Matthew might “fit in the mouth of the historical Jesus” (“Jesus als Davidsohn,” 174, author's translation). As he writes elsewhere, the genealogies and son-of-David episodes in the Synoptics are “highly dubious material” (“Jesus als Davidsohn,” 159, trans. Botner and Duerr).

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of υἱὸς Δαυὶδ within the confines of Matthew's narrative. Gibbs sought to answer two related questions: "Why does the title 'Son of David' occur more frequently in Matthew than in the other Gospels? Do these more numerous references serve any real purpose in Matthew?"²⁶ Unsurprisingly, he answers the second question in the affirmative, concluding that there is a "purpose and pattern" to Matthew's use, namely, to reveal the blindness of Israel's leadership to Jesus's messiahship. Yet even here one still detects a Wredean influence. Gibbs suspiciously finds that "Matthew emphasizes Jesus as the Son of David, in whom are fulfilled all legitimate Jewish Messianic hopes, far more than do Mark and Luke, but he then uses the result even more strongly than they do *as a springboard with which to push onward to Jesus as the Son of God.*"²⁷ As with Wrede, Davidic and divine sonship are in competition, with "son of God" eventually winning out as the weightier title.

Variations on Gibbs's strategy of coordinating the occurrences of "son of David" in Matthew appeared later in the works of Alfred Suhl, Jack Dean Kingsbury, and William Loader.²⁸ While more narratively oriented than previous studies, this cadre of scholars nonetheless agree with Hahn and company on one methodical particular: It is the appearance of the title "son of David" – and that only – that admits a pericope for consideration.

1.3.3 Healing, Exorcism, and the Therapeutic Son of David

The greatest bulk of scholarship on David in Matthew – the third phase – has concerned itself with a peculiarly Matthean puzzle located between the poles of the Davidic genealogy and the *Davidssonfrage*: Matthew's use of the "son of David" title in conjunction with healings

²⁶ J. M. Gibbs, "Purpose and Pattern in Matthew's Use of the Title 'Son of David,'" *NTS* 10 (1964): 446.

²⁷ Gibbs, "'Son of David,'" 463. Emphasis added.

²⁸ Alfred Suhl finds a slightly more sophisticated and satisfying "pattern" than Gibbs: (1) Believing followers use son of David to implore Jesus's help and "see" Jesus as the messiah; (2) the crowds use son of David as messiah of their Jewish expectation, yet "the messiah declaration Son of David in the mouth of the crowd attests only to their incomprehension" (79); (3) the leaders of the people (primarily Pharisees) are shown to be spiritually blind in their disbelief of Jesus as the Son of David ("Der Davidsson im Matthäus-Evangelium," *ZNW* 59 [1968]: 81). See also Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Title 'Son of David' in Matthew's Gospel," *JBL* 95 (1976): 591–602; William R. G. Loader, "Son of David, Blindness, Possession, and Duality in Matthew," *CBQ* 44 (1982): 570–85. Inasmuch as he sees an "inextricable relation" between son of God and son of David, see also Versepunt, "The Role and Meaning of the 'Son of God' Title in Matthew's Gospel," 544.

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(9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30, 31; 21:15). The issue is a tradition-historical one: Since Second Temple Judaism did not apparently associate this title with healing, why is Jesus acclaimed υἱὸς Δαυὶδ in healing contexts? As Dennis Duling introduced it in his influential 1978 article, the problem is threefold: Since Matthew has a marked “preference for the verb θεραπεύω” and the son of David title, it follows that “the Son of David in Matthew’s gospel is essentially a therapeutic Son of David,” but the question remains of *whence Matthew “derives his basic conception of the therapeutic Son of David.”*²⁹ Lidija Novakovic’s framing of the issue is succinct (if a shade hyperbolic): “It is a well-known axiom accepted by every reputable scholar that the Messiah was neither expected to do miracles nor to be a healer,” yet it “does not require much research to see that the Matthean Jesus is addressed with the messianic title ‘Son of David’ almost exclusively within the context of his healing activity.”³⁰ Scholars have proposed essentially three answers to the problem.

1.3.3.1 *Expansion of Mark 10:46*

The simplest explanation for the connection between “son of David” and healing in Matthew is, for a number of scholars, the right one: Matthew merely imports and expands what he received from Mark 10:46–52:

They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” But stopping, Jesus said: “Call him.” ... And Jesus said to him, “Go, your faith has healed you.”

Three of Matthew’s six uses of “son of David” in healing contexts derive from a twofold multiplication of this episode, including his first such use (9:27; cf. 20:30, 31). As Christoph Burger noted in his watershed monograph, *Jesus als Davidsson*:

Die grösste Bedeutung gewinnt dabei der Markusbericht von der Blindenheilung bei Jereicho. Allein heir tritt in der

²⁹ Dennis C. Duling, “The Therapeutic Son of David: An Element in Matthew’s Christological Apologetic,” *NTS* 24 (1978): 393, 399, 409. Emphasis added.

³⁰ Lidija Novakovic, *Messiah, the Healer of the Sick: A Study of Jesus as the Son of David in the Gospel of Matthew*, WUNT 2/170 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 1.