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Messianic Expectation

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I am grateful for the invitation to address the Messianic expectation that surrounded Jesus's first coming, and, in particular, how Jesus both fulfilled and subverted such expectations, and to do so as a theologically-engaged historical Jesus scholar. I therefore begin with historical questions, and here follow the dominant (though not unanimous) scholarly view that our earliest substantive sources for Jesus are Mark and what scholars call "Q" (material shared by Matthew and Luke yet not found in Mark).¹

Because the Gospels contain our first lengthy narrative theological reflections on Jesus's life, however, and the Gospel writers presumably had much more information about the historical Jesus—who lived just one to two generations before them—than do we, I have also framed some theological reflections based on the Gospels (with an additional brief insight from Hebrews). Entire books have addressed some of these themes, and in the time and space allotted I can only note sample themes here. In light of Prof. Moltmann's discussion of the birth of a child, my theological discussion from the Gospels appeals disproportionately to the narratives surrounding Jesus's birth. Because of the limits of this essay I document lightly, but full documentation may be found in my other work on these subjects.²

1. Jesus and Contemporary Jewish Expectations

Ancient Jewish messianic views diverged widely. Some of Jesus's views about himself fall within this range, but others diverge from all known messianic expectations in his era.

a. Views of messiahship in antiquity

Because the range of messianic views in antiquity was broad, all teachers and messianic claimants inevitably dissented from some other messianic views. Judahite prophets had promised an eschatological king and/or dynasty descended from David (Isa 9:7; Jer 23:5),³ a theme that continued in early Judaism.⁴ Because the king was the "anointed one," Second Temple Judean sources often grant the eschatological anointed king, the king par excellence, the articular title, "the messiah." "Anointed" (for both royal and

¹ I personally accept the witness of much more than Mark or Q, but many scholars engaged in historical Jesus studies consider these the earliest secure sources, and in light of the historical aspect of the invitation am functioning here in part of this essay in my role as a historical Jesus scholar.

² Esp. *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); secondarily *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); and at points *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003); *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (4 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012-2015).

³ That the eschatological ruler would be a restoration after the Davidic rule had been cut off is apparently suggested by preexilic prophets (Jesse's "stump" in Isa 11:1; cf. perhaps David's fallen tent [as opposed to "house"] in Amos 9:11, although scholars debate both the passage's meaning and date).

⁴ E.g., *Ps. Sol.* 17.21; 4Q252 frg. 1, col. 5.1-4; *b. Sanh.* 97b-98a; *p. Suk.* 5:1, §7; *Tg.* on Jer 30:9. See further Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (2nd ed.; SBLSPS 5; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1974), 113-26.

nonroyal uses) came into the old Greek versions of the Hebrew Bible regularly as *christos*.⁵

The pre-Christian *Psalms of Solomon* declare hope in the coming king (17:32), a warrior messiah (17:21-25). The Gospels provide the impression that Judeans generally expected a “messiah” (Mark 12:35; 14:61; 15:32; John 1:25, 41). Writing for a Diaspora after the disastrous Judean-Roman war of 66-73 C.E., Josephus has reason to play down messianic figures. Nevertheless, he describes various figures who apparently sought to establish a restored Judean kingdom, some by militant resistance and others through miraculous divine intervention (see e.g., *Ant.* 18.85-87; 20.97-98, 169-71; *War* 2.261-66; also Acts 5:36; 21:38). Even after the devastation of 66-73, some leading rabbis hailed a messianic figure in the early second century (during the Bar Kochba revolt of 132-35 C.E.) This revolt’s failure led to messianic disillusionment in the early rabbinic sources, but eventually messianism surrounding a promised Son of David revived.⁶

The Davidic Messiah was, by any definition of the type, a future ruler ordained by God with political (not merely spiritual) rule. The regularly-prayed *Amida*, probably rooted in the pre-70 period, longs for the restoration of David’s house. Nevertheless, views about this Messiah diverged widely. In at least some periods, the Qumran sectarians expected two major eschatological anointed figures, a Davidic Messiah (i.e., the king) and an anointed high priest.⁷ Apparently both *4 Ezra* 13 and Enoch’s *Similitudes* even suggest a preexistent individual Messiah of some sort who will destroy the wicked.⁸ In the earlier Qumran scrolls, earth and apparently heaven heed the Messiah (4Q521 f2ii+4.1).

b. Jesus’s belief that he was Messiah—of some sort

A variety of messianic views thus existed. The perspectives articulated by Jesus and his followers exist within this range in its Jewish environment, but are distinctive, not derived entirely from any single source. Given the term’s inadequacy in the Diaspora and in later Christian christology, the Gospels clearly did not simply invent this usage.⁹ Writing in a Diaspora setting where “anointed one” was normally unintelligible as a title,¹⁰ Paul, our earliest extant NT writer, sometimes uses “Christ” virtually as Jesus’s surname, so the idea of Jesus as “Messiah” certainly predates Paul.

⁵For texts that could be regarded as messianic by some of Jesus’s contemporaries, see e.g., Ps 2:2; 18:50; 132:10, 17.

⁶ The rabbinic idea of two messiahs, one triumphant and the other suffering, probably arose only after the failed Bar Kochba revolt (Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian’s Reading of the Gospels* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973], 140).

⁷ E.g., 1QSa 2.11-17; 4Q174 3.11-12. At least some Qumran sources, however, may have expected a single anointed priestly king.

⁸ See John J. Collins, “The Son of Man in First-Century Judaism,” *NTS* 38 (3, 1992): 448–66.

⁹ “Son of David” christology is far less prominent among Diaspora Christians than wisdom, lord, and other christologies; in the NT outside the Gospels, for example, “son of David” christology appears only in Rom 1:3; 2 Tim 2:8; in the Apostolic Fathers, *Barn.* 12.10 simply echoes the Gospels.

¹⁰ A probable exception may be the source behind the “Chrestus” of Suetonius *Claud.* 25.4.

Even most scholars who doubt that Jesus believed himself Messiah question whether he can fit within merely sage or prophetic categories alone.¹¹ Jesus's preaching about the kingdom has implications for his own identity;¹² Jesus seems to claim that the kingdom is present in him (Matt 12:28//Luke 11:20).¹³ He claims to be greater than king Solomon or the temple (Matt 12:42//Luke 11:32). The earliest strands of the Jesus tradition indicate that Jesus taught that his disciples would have a role in the messianic kingdom (e.g., Matt 19:28//Luke 22:30), a promise that would naturally imply that he attributed to himself a messianic role.¹⁴ Jesus surely recognized the frequent connection between Jewish eschatology and biblical expectations of an end-time Davidic ruler and that his growing following and invitations to follow could not but have stirred speculations.¹⁵ Such teachings cohere well with the secure information that Jesus was executed on the charge of claiming to be Israel's rightful king.¹⁶

In the Gospels, Pilate ordered Jesus executed on the charge of sedition, for claiming kingship. Nearly all historical Jesus scholars recognize this charge against Jesus as "king of the Jews" (Mark 15:2, 9, 12, 26) as historical. Christians would not have invented the charge "King of the Jews." Although Jesus's earliest followers viewed him as Messiah, Jesus's "you say" in the tradition (Mark 15:2) suggests that "king of the Jews" is not even the title that they believed that Jesus would have emphasized. More importantly, Christians would have hardly invented the claim that Jesus was crucified on these grounds, since such a claim invited potential repression for themselves as well (cf. Acts 17:7).

Both Pilate (who had Jesus executed) and the unanimous extant views of Jesus's earliest followers view Jesus as a Jewish king. *Yet it is highly improbable that either Pilate or the disciples got the idea from each other; certainly the later church did not get the idea from Pilate.* The source that Pilate and the disciples shared in common was Jesus—which is in fact what our only extant sources claim.

c. Why a messianic secret?

A primary objection that many scholars have raised against Jesus claiming to be messiah is that the sources portray him accepting the claim only privately and at the end of his ministry. Attempts at privacy or at least crowd control pervade Mark's (and to some

¹¹ Martin Hengel, "Jesus, the Messiah of Israel: The Debate About the "Messianic Mission" of Jesus," pages 323-49 in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus* (ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans; NTTS 28.2; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 344, summarizing their view.

¹² George R. Beasley-Murray, "The Kingdom of God and Christology in the Gospels," pages 22-36 in *Jesus of Nazareth, Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology* (ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle, U.K.: Paternoster, 1994), 27-32 (indicating Jesus's Messiahship).

¹³ Hengel, "Messiah," 345.

¹⁴ Cf. E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 234, 307.

¹⁵ Ben F. Meyer, "Appointed Deed, Appointed Doer: Jesus and the Scriptures," pages 155-76 in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, 171-72.

¹⁶ Hengel, "Messiah," 347.

extent probably independently John's)¹⁷ story about Jesus. Jesus often urges his followers to silence, perhaps to reduce undue pressure from premature popularity. This popularity demands other measures as well, such as speaking from a boat separate from the crowds (Mark 3:9), praying alone before sunrise (Mark 1:35), taking the disciples apart alone (Mark 6:31-32; 7:24; cf. 8:27), or evading further crowds in one town in order to fulfill his mission in another (Mark 1:38).

Jesus admonishing his disciples to silence about his messianic identity (Mark 8:29-30) thus fits a larger pattern of trying to control undue publicity until Jesus's final ministry in Jerusalem. It may also guard against even greater dangers than lack of crowd control—such as premature exposure to the authorities as a political threat.

Scholars have, however, widely debated the reason for this “messianic secret” (noticed already in antiquity, e.g., John Chrysostom *Hom. John* 3). In the early twentieth century Wilhelm Wrede contended that Mark invented the messianic secret to explain why some traditions denied that Jesus claimed Messiahship, although Wrede later expressed reservations about his proposal.¹⁸ Most scholars today, however, judge Wrede's thesis to be inadequate because it dismisses too much of the data.

Others suggest that Jesus rejects the title initially due to its military connotations;¹⁹ no public acclamation of Jesus's Messiahship could be understood accurately until after the crucifixion and resurrection (Mark 9:9; 15:26). Indeed, some scholars argue that Jesus could be viewed only as Messiah-designate until after the resurrection anyway, explaining the reticence of Josephus's prophetic leaders to claim messianic roles prematurely.²⁰ Further, some prominent biblical prophets often worked clandestinely, endeavoring to accomplish their mission without seeking their own honor (e.g., 1 Kgs 11:29; 13:8-9; 21:18; 2 Kgs 9:1-10), partly because they were investing their time especially in a small circle of disciples they were training (1 Sam 19:20; 2 Kgs 4:38; 6:1-3).²¹

But because the “secret” of the kingdom extended far beyond Jesus's messiahship (Mark 4:11), solutions addressing only a “*messianic secret*” may be too narrow. That Jesus offered private teaching to his disciples is no more unusual than that some other teachers

¹⁷ Although John's Jesus repeatedly hints at his exalted status, in public he often avoids being explicit, speaking in riddles (cf. John 2:9, 19-22; 3:13; 7:25-27; 10:34-36; 12:16; 14:21-22; 16:29-30; 18:19-23, 33-37). See Keener, *John*, 76-77, 290, 397, 545-46, 771-72, 824, 870; cf. D. Moody Smith, *John* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 210; for riddles in John, see Tom Thatcher, *The Riddles of Jesus in John: A Study in Tradition and Folklore* (SBLMS; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000); for riddling in the Jesus tradition more generally, see idem, *Jesus the Riddler: The Power of Ambiguity in the Gospels* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006).

¹⁸ Wrede, *The Messianic Secret* (trans. J. C. G. Greig; Cambridge, U.K.: James Clarke, 1971), 17-18, 228.

¹⁹ Oscar Cullmann, *The State in the New Testament* (New York: Scribner's, 1956), 26.

²⁰ Richard N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity* (London: SCM, 1970), 68-73. In the broader culture, self-testimony may have seemed inappropriate, especially in view of the sentiment against self-boasting in the first-century Mediterranean world.

²¹ Keener, *Matthew*, 262.

of his day did so.²² Nevertheless, in addition to some of the other arguments above, at least one important reason for allowing claims of his messiahship only toward the end of his ministry was a matter of practical strategy. If Jesus knew anything at all about the political situation in Jerusalem, he would know that a public royal claim would lead to his almost immediate execution; in Mark, it does.²³ Even when traveling to Jerusalem, Jesus does not arm his followers or offer signs of resistance; the Gospel narratives are thus plausible as they stand, offering a plausible reason for Jesus's silence.

d. Qualifying "Messiahship": the triumphal entry

Although Jesus allows eventual recognition that he is messiah, he rejects the title in what was likely the most common *traditional* sense, that of a warrior king.²⁴ When he does accept the title, he immediately qualifies it in light of his mission to suffer (Mark 8:29-31; cf. 15:2).²⁵

Mark portrays Jesus entering Jerusalem in a way that some could construe as royal, yet not as a military challenger to the elite or toward Rome (Mark 11:7-10). Mark's perspective here surely reflects genuine history.²⁶ Clearly Jesus entered Jerusalem for Passover, and clearly he already enjoyed the reputation of a prophet; *something* like the triumphal entry is therefore inevitable. Indeed, the crowds' acclamation ("Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the Lord's name," Psalm 118:25-26) was part of the Hallel sung at Passover,²⁷ though later Christians probably would not know this (hence would not fabricate it). (Such allusions to the Hallel appear also in the parable of vineyard and at last supper, in every case during the Passover season. Nevertheless, none of these passages betray any overt connection with Passover, hence do not appear to be deliberate forgeries of verisimilitude.)

Moreover, if Jesus entered the city in a memorable way at all (and there was no other reason to preserve the story), he had to acquire the animal by some means.²⁸ Correspondingly, if he rode an ass, he himself probably intended the allusion to Zechariah²⁹ (an allusion that Mark, likely the earliest extant Gospel, never makes explicit). And why not, if Jesus both knew the Hebrew Bible and believed himself the future king?

²² See full documentation in Keener, *Matthew*, 378-79. Compare "mysteries" in apocalyptic texts, especially in Daniel and the Dead Sea Scrolls (e.g., 1QS 5.11-12; 9.18; 11.3-5; 1QM 3.9; 14.14; 17.9).

²³ See David Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 87; cf. Augustine *Tractates on John*, 113.

²⁴Cf. *Ps. Sol.* 17:21-25.

²⁵Mark 14:61-62 accepts a messianic title, but cf. more ambiguously Matt 26:63-64; for a combination, Luke 22:67-70.

²⁶ See e.g., Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 306-8, though arguing for a limited scale.

²⁷ See e.g., *m. Pes.* 5:7; 9:3; 10:5-7; *tos. Pisha* 8:22.

²⁸ A donkey could cost between two months' and two years' wages, depending on its age and condition. If a farmer had two, however, he sometimes rented one out (Naphtali Lewis, *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1983], 130).

²⁹ E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (New York: Penguin, 1993), 254.

Hopes for redemption ran high in the crowded fervor of Jerusalem near Passover, requiring the Roman governor to increase security during this time. Thus the arrival of a prophet from Galilee already associated with eschatologically significant acts (e.g., Mark 6:34-44; Matt 12:28//Luke 11:20) could lead the Galileans in the crowd, who were most familiar with Jesus's works, to acclaim the imminent restoration of the Davidic kingdom (Mark 11:10).

The later church or Jesus's Jewish followers could have chosen for Jesus a more militant steed, but Jesus chose a beast of burden that would convey the image of Zech 9:9,³⁰ which later teachers and probably Jesus's contemporaries regarded this prophecy as Messianic.³¹ Many scholars who observe the actions believe that Jesus was announcing that he was indeed a king, but not a warrior-king.³² Jesus may have responded ambivalently to the idea of Messiah because his mission defined the concept differently than the popular title would suggest.³³

Jesus reverses other expectations as well, though space affords only one sample theme here.³⁴ Widespread attestation and the criterion of dissimilarity strongly favor the tradition that Jesus did eat with those whom the Pharisees and other pietists considered sinners.³⁵ The Messiah should epitomize holiness; yet for Jesus's contemporaries, eating with sinners signified acceptance of them,³⁶ behavior that thoroughly violated his contemporaries' understanding of holiness.³⁷ Both Scripture (Ps 1:1; 119:63; Prov 13:20; 14:7; 28:7) and Jewish tradition³⁸ warned against fellowship with sinners; Jesus, however, was influencing sinners rather than the reverse.

2. More than Messiah?

The earliest sources not only suggest that Jesus qualified views about his kingship, but also that he appears to be more than a merely mortal king.

a. The eschatological judge in "Q"

³⁰ Cf. Judg 10:4; 1 Kgs 1:44; cf. discussion in Sanders, *Figure*, 254.

³¹ E.g., *b. Sanh.* 98a; 99a; *Gen. Rab.* 75:6; S. L. Edgar, "The New Testament and Rabbinic Messianic Interpretation," *NTS* 5 (1, 1958): 47-54, here 48-49; Samuel Tobias Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Hoboken, N.J.: KTAV; New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'Nai B'Rith, 1987), 344.

³² E.g., C. F. D. Moule, *The Gospel according to Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 87; Sanders, *Figure*, 242.

³³ Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah—From Gethsemane to Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* (2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 473-80.

³⁴ See others in Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (2nd rev. ed.; New York: Scribner's, 1972), 221-22.

³⁵ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 174-75.

³⁶ Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus, a New Vision: Spirit, Culture, and the Life of Discipleship* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 101.

³⁷ *Syr. Men. Sent.* 148-53, 333-35; cf. Sir 12:4, 7; Marcus J. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness, and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus* (SBEC 5; New York: Edwin Mellen, 1984), 78-95.

³⁸ E.g., Sir 6:7-12; 12:13-18; 13:1; *Let. Aris.* 130; *m. Abot* 1:6-7; 2:9; *Sipre Deut.* 286.11.4; *Ps.-Phoc.* 134; among Christians, 1 Cor 15:33.

Fairly high christology appears already in Q, possibly composed before Mark and possibly even before Paul's letters. In "Q," John the Baptist announces the coming of someone who will baptize in God's Spirit and fire (Matt 3:11//Luke 3:16; cf. Mark 1:8; John 1:33). In John's Bible, however, only God would pour out the divine Spirit (e.g., Isa 44:3; Ezek 39:29; Joel 2:28-29) and fiery end-time judgment. John also claims that he is unworthy to handle the coming one's sandals (Mark 1:7), i.e., unworthy to be his servant. Because John's Bible calls prophets servants of God, John's image implies some superhuman or even divine role for the coming one.

In one "Q" parable, Jesus emphasizes his eschatological role. In both Luke and Matthew, Jesus's sermon on ethics climaxes with a parable that provides the authority for his ethics (Luke 6:47-49//Matt 7:24-27). The vast majority of historical Jesus scholars agree that parables are characteristic of Jesus's own teaching rather than that of his followers; they would thus normally deem a "Q" parable particularly reliable. In Jesus's parable, whoever builds on his wise words will endure testing,³⁹ whereas whoever does not will be swept away.

An early second-century teacher, not dependent on Jesus but probably dependent on a common tradition, offered a similar parable. In this parable, one who studies Torah and has good works "may be likened to" one who lays a foundation of stones and then of bricks, so that rising water or rain cannot overturn it. But one who studies Torah and has no good works is like one who builds with bricks on the bottom, so that even a small amount of water overturns it.⁴⁰ The language of this example is almost as similar to Matthew's as Luke's version of the parable is. Jesus's parable refers to his own words in the way that Jewish teachers generally referred to God's law.⁴¹

Jesus's exalted role also appears elsewhere in "Q."⁴² For example, Jesus desires to gather his people under his wings (Matt 23:37//Luke 13:34)—recalling a biblical and early Jewish image of God sheltering his people under his wings.⁴³

b. David's Lord in Mark 12:35-37

³⁹ Some suggest that, in the context of Jesus's message, the storm points especially to the day of judgment (e.g., Joachim Jeremias, *The Sermon on the Mount* [trans. Norman Perrin; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963], 8-9) or the final tribulation (Jeremias, *Parables*, 169). The ultimate storm here may recall the flood that Jesus elsewhere uses to prefigure the final day (Matt 24:37-39//Luke 17:26-27; Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News according to Matthew* [trans. David E. Green; Atlanta: John Knox, 1975], 191).

⁴⁰ *Ab. R. Nat.* 24A; a similar example in Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (trans. John Marsh; 2nd ed.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1968), 202.

⁴¹ Jeremias, *Parables*, 194; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary* (trans. Wilhelm C. Linss; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 452.

⁴² For Q's "high" Christology (i.e., Jesus is venerated as in other early Christian circles), see especially Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 217-57.

⁴³ E.g., Exod 19:4; Deut 32:11; Ps 17:8; 36:7; 63:7; 91:4; *I En.* 39:7; *Sipre Deut.* 296.3.1; 306.4.1; 314.1.1-6. Cf. also the image for conversion in 2 *Bar.* 41:4; *Sipre Num.* 80.1.1.

A central characteristic of the expected Messiah was his royal descent from David. But in Mark, Jesus begins to hint his messianic identity publicly at Mark 12:6,⁴⁴ yet quickly implies an identity greater than that of David in 12:35-37. Jesus is no mere David redivivus, no mere warrior king like David, but one far greater than David. If he is David's "lord," enthroned not simply in Jerusalem but at God's right hand, how can he be his "son"?

It seems unlikely that early Christians would have created an ambiguously-worded tradition that could be used to challenge Jesus's Davidic descent, hence his messiahship.⁴⁵ Jesus's messiahship was precisely a point of debate with their Jewish contemporaries, and Jesus's wording here could be used against his movement's case on that point. Why would Mark, who clearly affirms that Jesus is Christ (Mark 1:1; 8:29; 9:41; 14:61-62) and seems to also affirm that he is son of David (Mark 10:47-48; cf. 11:10), take this risk if not following genuine tradition? That Ps 110 became widespread in a wide range of early Christian circles⁴⁶ probably suggests that a common authority, namely Jesus, stands behind its usage.

Indeed, in Mark's context, Jesus had just used the title "Lord" for the only true God of the Shema (Mark 12:29-30); Jewish interpreters commonly linked texts on the basis of common key words.⁴⁷ Even in the original psalm, if the psalmist spoke to a lord besides Yahweh, a lord who would be enthroned at God's right hand as his vice-regent, then this king was someone greater than an ordinary royal descendant of David. Some in the psalmist's day might have understood the image on the Near Eastern analogy of divine kings.⁴⁸

c. Jesus's special relation to God

The heart of Jesus's self-image was not his culture's messianic expectation, but his intimate relationship with his Father. Jesus's special designation of himself as God's "son" not only lent itself to his followers' later use of it as a title for him,⁴⁹ but it also connotes special intimacy with the Father. Jesus thus addresses God as "Abba" (Mark

⁴⁴ See e.g., Jack Dean Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 150.

⁴⁵ So e.g., Robert H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel: With Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* (NovTSup 18; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 200; Ben Witherington, III, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 190.

⁴⁶ Including some allusions, see e.g., Acts 2:34-35; 7:55; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; Mark 16:19; Justin *I Apol.* 45.

⁴⁷ See e.g., CD 7.15-20; *Mek. Nez.* 10.15-16, 26, 38; 17.17; *Pisha* 5.103. Although the Hebrew terms are different, the divine name was pronounced simply as "lord."

⁴⁸ On Jesus's exalted lordship at an early stage, cf. further Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 109-18; I. Howard Marshall, *The Origins of New Testament Christology* (2nd ed.; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1990), 97-111. On Jesus's divine identity in some sense early in Christian tradition, see (in various forms) Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*; Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 276-81; Richard B. Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014).

⁴⁹ This use was natural; God's son already appears as a messianic title in 4QFlor.

14:36),⁵⁰ an Aramaic title of filial affection that carried over into the early church (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6) and is usually recognized as original with Jesus.⁵¹

Moreover, other early traditions attest that Jesus depicted himself in such terms. Thus for example he calls himself “the Son” in Mark 13:32, where his confessed ignorance of eschatological timing cannot easily be attributed to early Christian invention. Likewise it appears in a “Q” saying emphasizing Jesus’s special relationship with the Father (Matt 11:25-27//Luke 10:21-22).⁵²

d. Jesus’s resistance to conventional expectations (Matt 4:1-11//Luke 4:1-13)

Matthew and Luke share (perhaps in “Q”) a more expanded temptation narrative than appears in Mark (Matt 4:1-11//Luke 4:1-13; cf. Mark 1:12-13).⁵³ In each of these Gospels, the temptations follow God’s declaration of Jesus’s identity as his son (Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; cf. Luke 3:38). In the longer version, the devil directly challenges this declaration in two temptations, but grammatically may be challenging not the fact but the *nature* of Jesus’s sonship. “Since you are God’s son,” he insists, Jesus must fit some of the various worldly expectations for power (Matt 4:3//Luke 4:3; Matt 4:6//Luke 4:9). Jesus’s refuses to comply in each case.⁵⁴

First, resisting one recognized role of spiritual power in his milieu, Jesus shows that he is not a magician (Matt 4:3//Luke 4:3). Magicians were known for trying to transform one substance into another.⁵⁵ Jesus instead appeals to a biblical model for defining his sonship: God himself provided for his “son” Israel in the wilderness (Deut 8:2-5; Jesus quotes from v. 3). Though Jesus will feed multitudes (Mark 6:41-44; 8:6-9), he refuses to transform stones to bread to assuage his own hunger in the wilderness.

Second, Jesus refuses to presume on his relationship with the Father, despite the devil’s appeal to Scripture out of context (Matt 4:5-7//Luke 4:9-11). Satan cites a promise about angels protecting the righteous (Ps 91:11-12) to urge Jesus to jump from the height of the temple; the psalm’s context, however, refers to falling, not jumping, and Jesus recognizes

⁵⁰ See Martin Hengel, *The Son of God* (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 63; also a point emphasized in Pope Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger), *Jesus of Nazareth* (trans. Adrian J. Walker; New York: Doubleday, 2007).

⁵¹ Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), 57, may have overstated the title’s uniqueness, but his detractors on the issue (e.g., Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 210-13) have focused on exceptions rather than the preponderance of evidence (indeed, Jeremias himself noted this exception [“‘Abba as an Address to God,” pages 201-6 in *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research* (ed. James D. G. Dunn and Scot McKnight; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 204], explaining it differently).

⁵² See further Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 271-76.

⁵³ Scholars often deem this narrative a parable or some other artificial construct because of its appeal to a superhuman, personal dimension of evil. A supernatural dimension’s existence is, however, a philosophic/theological question and not a strictly exegetical one (see discussion in Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts* [2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011]).

⁵⁴ This challenges also his human critics’ views of his identity (Mark 3:22; 14:61; 15:2, 31-32).

⁵⁵ E.g., Homer *Od.* 10.239-40; Ovid *Metam.* 14.414-15; *y. Hag.* 2:2, §5; *Sanh.* 6:6, §2.

that his mission will include suffering.⁵⁶ Jesus responds to the devil with the same section of Deuteronomy as before; when he warns against “putting God to the test” (Deut 6:16) he alludes to Israel’s dissatisfaction with God’s provision in the wilderness (e.g., Exod 17:2-3, 7).

Finally, Jesus is not a revolutionary or a merely political ruler such as Caesar (Matt 4:8-10//Luke 4:5-8). Satan invites Jesus to rule the world’s kingdoms without the cross, so long as Jesus first worships Satan. Jesus responds from the same context in Deuteronomy as before: one must worship the Lord alone (Deut 6:13), and eschew other deities (6:14). Although at this point the devil leaves Jesus (Matt 4:11//Luke 4:13), it is only for a time (Luke 4:13; cf. 22:3, 31).

In the Gospels Jesus’s own disciple Peter echoes Satan’s theology regarding this matter, insisting on a messianic kingdom without the cross (Mark 8:32).⁵⁷ Jesus thus responds in the same way to Peter as he did to Satan: “Get behind me, Satan!” (Mark 8:33; Matt 16:23). Bystanders and religious leaders at the cross again echo Satan’s theology: if Jesus is the Christ, let him save himself (Mark 15:29-32). Matthew frames the echo even more clearly: if Jesus is God’s son, let God rescue him from the cross (Matt 27:40-43; cf. Wisdom of Solomon 2:16-20).

Finding divinely ordained models for his mission in Scripture, Jesus resists culturally-defined models of power offered by the devil. Consistent with other passages surveyed above, Jesus here refuses to accommodate the expectations of his contemporaries. They rightly found some labels in Scripture that applied to the messianic mission, but unlike them, Jesus distinctively understood that the Father’s mission for him also included suffering.

3. Subverted expectations in the infancy narratives

The Gospels suggest that even from the beginning, Jesus’s coming subverted some contemporary expectations for the Messiah.

a. Fulfillment and subversion in Matthew’s genealogy (Matt 1:2-17)

The opening words of Matthew’s Gospel signify a fulfillment Christology: “the book of the genesis of Jesus Christ” (1:1). In Greek, this “genesis” frames the genealogy (1:1, 18), and clearly echoes that phrase in the genealogies of Genesis (for which the Book of Genesis in Greek and English is named). But Genesis’s genealogies typically list a person’s *descendants* after this phrase, rather than a person’s ancestors (Gen 5:1; 10:1). Matthew’s point here is profound: so much is Jesus the focal point of history, that his even his *ancestors*, and thus Israel’s heritage, depend on him for their meaning.

⁵⁶ Many scholars find this expectation of suffering in the other possible allusions offered by the heavenly voice that declares Jesus’s sonship: usually held to be Gen 22:2 (esp. in Mark) or Isa 42:1 (esp. in Matthew; see e.g., I. Howard Marshall, “Son of God or Servant of Yahweh? A Reconsideration of Mark i.11,” *NTS* 15 (1969): 326-36; Kingsbury, *Christology*, 40, 65).

⁵⁷ Probably this is an attempt to dissuade from martyrdom, as in 2 Macc 6:21-22; *Mart. Pol.* 9.2.

While Matthew's most obvious point is the connection of Jesus with Israel's history, however, another point would also probably strike his biblically sensitive ideal readers forcefully. Ancient genealogies typically included only men (see e.g., most genealogies in 1—2 Chronicles), so the unexpected appearance of four women draws attention to them. Had Matthew intended the inclusion of women merely to evoke the history of Israel in a general way again, he could have named the famous four matriarchs of Israel: Sarah, Rebekah, Leah and Rachel. Instead he names four women whose primary shared link is their Gentile connection: Tamar of Canaan, Rahab of Jericho (whom Matthew weaves into the Old Testament line here), Ruth the Moabitess, and the widow of Uriah the Hittite. Indeed, most Jewish tradition subsequent to the Old Testament amplifies record of their Gentile character further.⁵⁸ Jewish people regarded genealogies as important to establish the purity of their lineage.⁵⁹ Yet Matthew seems to purposely highlight the *mixed* nature of Jesus's legal lineage!

b. Luke's subversion of status in the annunciation narrative (Luke 1)

Many Jewish people expected an eschatological inversion in the end-time, especially delivering Israel from foreign oppression.⁶⁰ Luke, however, from the beginning depicts an inversion of status that runs deeper than this. This contrast appears, for example, in the way that Luke compares and contrasts the lowly virgin Mary, in the village of Nazareth, with the respected and aged priest Zechariah, serving in the Jerusalem temple.

Zechariah (Luke 1:12-22)⁶¹	Mary (Luke 1:26-38)
Luke 1:12: Zechariah is started	Luke 1:29: Mary is troubled
1:13: Do not be afraid	1:30: Do not be afraid
1:13: You are to call him John	1:31: You are to call him Jesus
1:15: He will be great in the sight of the Lord	1:32: He will be great
1:15: He will be filled with the *Holy Spirit even before he is born	1:35: The Holy Spirit will come upon you
1:16–17: He will turn people back to God	1:32–33: He will reign
1:18: How can I be sure?	1:34: How will this be?
1:19–20: proof or explanation	1:35–37: proof or explanation
1:20: You did not believe my words	1:45: Blessed is she who believed

Soon after this series of narrative contrasts, Mary's song echoes the song of despised Hannah, who compares favorably in 1 Sam 1 with the high priest Eli. Like Hannah, Mary

⁵⁸ E.g., *Gen. Rab.* 50:10; 85:6.

⁵⁹ Josephus *Apion* 1.30-33, 36; cf. 1 Esdras 5:39-40; *t. Hag.* 2:9; 7:1; *b. Pesah.* 62b; *y. Ter.* 7:1; Marshall D. Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies: With Special Reference to the Setting of the Genealogies of Jesus* (2nd ed.; SNTSMS 8; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 88-95.

⁶⁰ E.g., *1 Enoch* 46:5-6; 96:8; 104:2; *1QM* 14.14-15; *Sib. Or.* 3.350-55; *Wis* 5:3-5; *2 Bar.* 83:5; *T. Jud.* 25:4; *t. Taan.* 3:14; *Sipra Behuq.* pq. 3.263.1.8; *Sipre Deut.* 307.3.2-3.

⁶¹ Keener, *Acts*, 1:557.

celebrates the exaltation of the lowly and the bringing down of the proud (Luke 1:51-53; cf. 1 Sam 2:3-8). (I highlight below only elements related to this theme.)⁶²

1 Sam 2:1-10	Luke 1:46-55
God exalts lowly (2:1, 4-5, 8)	God exalts lowly (1:48, 52-53)
Proud brought down (2:3-5)	Proud brought down (1:51-53)
Humble exalted, proud brought down (2:4-5)	Humble exalted, proud brought down (1:52-53)
Celebration of God's sovereignty in such reversals (2:3, 6-9)	Celebration of God's sovereignty in such reversals (1:51-53)
Barren given children (2:5)	(Context: Elizabeth's pregnancy)
Poor vs. rich (2:7-8)	Rich emptyhanded (1:53)
Hungry vs. full (2:5)	Filled the hungry (1:53)
Poor displacing nobles (δυναστων, 2:8)	Brought down rulers (δυναστας, 1:52) [the same term]
Shift from personal deliverance to God's anointed king (2:10)	Shift from personal deliverance to Israel's deliverance

Luke, who highlights this theme up front, certainly appreciates it. As Jesus puts it later in the Gospel, echoing promises of earlier prophets (e.g., Isa 2:11-12, 17), those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted (Luke 14:11; 18:14; the saying also appears in Matt 23:12).

c. Luke's antiimperial birth narrative (Luke 2:1-14)

Ancient biographers liked to report elements about their protagonists that portended their future roles. In Luke, Augustus's decree sets the stage for Jesus's birth in Bethlehem. This imperial decree also sets the stage, however, for decisive contrasts between Jesus in this narrative and what was commonly known of the emperor.

Augustus

Augustus ruled from a palace

Earthly choirs in imperial temples praised

Jesus

Jesus is born in an animal feeding trough

Heavenly choirs praise Jesus at his birth

⁶² See again more fully Keener, *Acts*, 1:557.

Augustus, celebrating his birthday	
Augustus was hailed as bringer of the <i>Pax Romana</i> , the Roman peace	Heaven's choirs praise Jesus as bringer of true peace
Augustus was hailed as *savior and Lord	The angel of the Lord announces Jesus as savior and Lord
Augustus enjoyed the praise of the powerful	Angels announce Jesus's birth to shepherds, who were considered lowly and often despised

The pomp of the earthly political ruler could not compare with the glory of the heavenly king, yet the latter came first among the broken and the lowly. Mary continued to treasure these signs of hope in her heart (2:19). While Jesus would fulfill his people's hopes, however, he would first suffer, bringing down and exalting many in Israel (2:34-35).

d. Rejected king, ethnic inclusion in Matthew's infancy narrative (Matt 2:1-12)

In keeping with Matthew's theme of the Gentile mission (e.g., 1:3, 5-6; 3:9; 4:15; 8:10-12), he here challenges ingrained prejudices among his people. Pagan astrologers worship Jesus; Israel's ruler seeks his death, acting like a pagan king; Jerusalem's religious elite—forerunners of those in the passion narrative—take Jesus for granted. Matthew forces his audience to identify with the pagan Magi rather than with Herod or Jerusalem's religious elite, and hence to recognize God's interest in the Gentile mission.

Matthew's ideal audience will recall the Magi from their Greek translation of the Old Testament: Daniel's enemies, selfish, incompetent and brutal pagans (cf. Dan 2:2, 10). This negative depiction of Magi is even clearer in some later Greek versions of the Old Testament.⁶³ Yet here the Magi come to honor the "king of the Jews" (Matt 2:2, 11).

Matthew further challenges prejudice that unjustly accommodates political power (2:3, 7-8). Judeans long remembered Herod, a client-king of Rome. That the Magi seek one "born King of the Jews" may further underline the challenge to Herod, who was widely known to have achieved rule by warfare and politics, not by birth.⁶⁴ That all Jerusalem was troubled with him (a strong term; cf. 14:26) may indicate the degree to which Jerusalem felt threatened by the possibility of political instability more than they longed for a deliverer.

Ancient rulers also proved paranoid about astrologers,⁶⁵ but for Matthew's Jewish ideal audience Herod's behavior would link him especially with a particular figure. Like Pharaoh, Herod slays male Israelite children (Exod 1:16—2:5). In Jewish tradition, both Pharaoh and his people feared when they learned in advance of the coming of Israel's

⁶³ Theodotian: Dan 1:20; 2:2, 10, 27; 4:7; 5:7, 11, 15; Aquila: Deut 18:11; 1 Sam 28:3, 7-9; 2 Kings 21:6; 23:24; Isa 29:4; see also Josephus *Ant.* 10.195-203.

⁶⁴ John Andrew Overman, *Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel according to Matthew* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1996), 43.

⁶⁵ See e.g., Ramsay MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest, and Alienation in the Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), 133.

deliverer.⁶⁶ Likewise, the angelic orders to return to the holy land because those seeking the child's life were dead (2:19-21) plainly evoke the command for Moses to return to Egypt in Exod 4:19-20. In various ways, Matthew casts Judea's political leadership as equivalent to the ancient oppressors of God's people.

Matthew also challenges prejudice favoring religious and local elites. Not knowing himself where the king would be born, Herod gathers the religious experts (Matt 2:4), most of whom by this period were loyal to his agendas (cf. Josephus *Ant.* 15.2, 5). Although these religious leaders know where the Messiah will be born, they do not join the Magi in their quest. The successors of these experts in the following generation—the chief priests (cf. 16:21; 21:15, 23, 45; 26:3; 27:41, 62; 28:11) and scribes (cf. 7:29; 15:1; 17:10; 21:15; 23:2; 26:3; 27:41)—frequently become Jesus's enemies. They failed to act on their biblical knowledge. Although they did not desire to kill Jesus as Herod did, their successors a generation later did seek his death (26:57, 59).

Matthew subverts our expectations: neither Jesus's friends nor his enemies are what we might expect. Neither religion nor ethnic ties ensure our loyalty to God's purposes.

4. Other Considerations

Other teachings of Jesus's early movement also commend themselves to our consideration, including Jesus's signs of the kingdom, his coming to impart the Spirit, early Christian expectation of his future return, and Jesus's expectation of his own suffering and restoration.

a. Signs of the kingdom versus John's expectations (Matt 11:2-6//Luke 7:18-23)

Most scholars accept Jesus's response to John's query in Matt 11:4-6//Luke 7:22-23 as authentic words of Jesus. Jesus's words fit his riddling style of teaching, his interest in good news for the poor (Matt 5:3//Luke 6:20), and his multiply attested ministry of healing. Nor would we expect early Christians, who valued John's witness to Jesus, to concoct John's doubts about him (Matt 11:3//Luke 7:19-20), doubts never resolved within the narrative itself.⁶⁷

Pace some scholars, John's doubts about Jesus here cohere well with his earlier proclamation about the coming one, because Jesus's ministry had so far fulfilled *none* of John's eschatological promises. John had preached that the coming one would baptize in the Spirit and fire, casting the wicked into a furnace of fire (Matt 3:10-12//Luke 3:9, 16-17); Jesus was simply healing people and casting out spirits. John's questions arose *when* he heard of Jesus's deeds (Matt 11:2-3//Luke 7:18), not in spite of them.

⁶⁶ Josephus *Ant.* 2.206; Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 146.

⁶⁷ See W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (3 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988-97), 2:244; John P. Meier, *Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (vol. 2 in *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 130-37; Walter Wink, "Jesus' Reply to John. Matt 11:2-6/Luke 7:18-23," *Forum* 5 (1989): 121-28.

In response, Jesus alludes to biblical passages (Isa 35:5-6; 61:1) that describe his current works as part of the eschatological restoration; when Jesus heals and brings good news for the poor, he offers a foretaste—though only a foretaste—of the world made right. The kingdom was already as well as not yet (cf. Jesus’s parables in Mark 4:31-32; Matt 13:33//Luke 13:21). But in the Gospels only Jesus yet knew the price he would pay for these healings and to ultimately make the world new (cf. Matt 8:17; John 2:4).

“Stumbling” is serious language (see e.g., Mark 9:42-47); Jesus may suggest here that one’s response to him determines one’s place at the final judgment.⁶⁸ Indeed, if Jesus continues to evoke Isaiah here, he may allude to God himself as a stumbling stone to Israel and Judah (Isa 8:14-15), but not to those who trust him (Isa 8:13; Matt 11:6//Luke 7:23).

b. Presence in the midst of this world (John 14:1-3)

Because the king who is yet to come has already come, Christians celebrate a dimension of realized as well as future eschatology. Many take Jesus’s words in John 14:1-3 (“In my Father’s house . . . I will come again”) as a promise of his future coming. But the context in 14:4-6 makes plain the place Jesus intends in this Gospel: he goes to the Father, and, by coming through Jesus, the disciples will arrive there also (14:6). After Jesus’s glorification is complete, he will come to them and impart the Spirit to them so that they may continue in his presence (20:19-23). This is the only “coming” of which the context speaks (14:18, 23, 28). Likewise, the only other use of the Greek term for dwelling places in 14:2 in biblical Greek is in 14:23—where Jesus and the Father make their dwelling in believers through the Spirit.

Matthew even frames the narrative of his Gospel with Jesus’s divine presence. In the Gospel’s first narrative paragraph, Jesus is Isaiah’s “God with us” in 1:23. In the Gospel’s final paragraph, as Jesus’s disciples make disciples by baptizing in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Jesus is “with” us until the end of the age (28:20). In Jewish teaching, only God was omnipresent. Another saying in Matthew’s Gospel proves even more explicit: “Where two or three gather themselves in my name, I am there in their midst” (18:20). This echoes a familiar Jewish saying regarding God’s own presence.⁶⁹

c. Early Christian expectations for Jesus’s future return

In the New Testament, the kingdom’s presence is a foretaste of its future consummation. Scholars often debate whether Jesus anticipated his own eschatological return and whether, if he did, he expected an interim period before it. I believe that it is clear, however, that Paul’s Thessalonian correspondence, probably the earliest Christian writing we possess, already echoes sayings about Jesus’s future coming also preserved in the

⁶⁸ Witherington, *Christology of Jesus*, 43-44.

⁶⁹ See e.g., *m. Abot* 3:2, 6; *Mek. Bahodesh* 11.48ff; cf. Morton Smith, *Tannaitic Parallels to the Gospels* (Philadelphia: SBL, 1951), 152-53.

Synoptics' later eschatological discourse.⁷⁰ At other points 1 Thessalonians also describes Jesus's return in language echoing earlier biblical prophecies about God's coming.⁷¹

In the context of Jesus's proclamation of the kingdom, pervasive throughout the gospel tradition, this coming would ultimately inaugurate the promised messianic era and publicly consummate the transformation of the world (Mark 13:24-28; Matt 5:3//Luke 6:20; Matt 6:9//Luke 11:2). That is, many of his people's hopes of messianic restoration would be fulfilled—but they did not reckon with a first coming to begin to transform the world from the inside.

The Gospels suggest that many of the religious elite failed to recognize Jesus at his first coming; it violated their expectations. Yet the Gospels highlight this example at least partly to warn subsequent religious leaders not to repeat the same mistake before Jesus's future return (compare Matt 23:1-39 with 24:45-51; Mark 12:38-40 with 13:34-37; Luke 12:35-48).

d. Jesus's own expectation (Gethsemane and Heb 12:1-2)

The writer of Hebrews speaks of Jesus's passionate prayers to be spared death (Heb 5:7), probably an allusion to Gethsemane (Mark 14:35-39). Historians may question the Gethsemane tradition because the presumably likeliest witnesses, the disciples, are said to have been asleep (14:37-41); or may affirm it on grounds of the criterion of embarrassment because of Jesus's desire to evade death or the distinction between his will and the Father's (14:36).

Against many scholars, however, it is difficult in any case to deny that Jesus expected to die. He did not merely predict his death; he openly provoked it. Most historical Jesus scholars do affirm that Jesus defied the temple authorities when he overturned the moneychangers' tables.⁷² If a populist Galilean sage publicly challenged the authorities' honor and disturbed the peace, he could flee the vicinity or raise an army. If, however, he continued visiting the temple and courting public opinion against the priestly aristocracy, he had to expect either a miraculous divine intervention (as Schweitzer thought Jesus mistakenly expected) or his martyrdom. The multiply-attested words about his body and blood at the last supper⁷³ suggest that Jesus in fact expected to die a martyr's death to atone for his people's sins, a concept familiar at the time although not yet associated with a messiah.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ See Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 252-54, 361-71; David Wenham, *The Rediscovery of Jesus' Eschatological Discourse* (ed. R. T. France and David Wenham; Sheffield: JSOT Press, The University of Sheffield, 1984).

⁷¹ E.g., 1 Thess 3:13 with Zech 14:5; see more fully T. Francis Glasson, *The Second Advent: The Origin of the New Testament Doctrine* (3rd rev. ed.; London: Epworth, 1963), 162-79.

⁷² See e.g., Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 301-5.

⁷³ For Aramaisms, Jewish context and other support, see Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (trans. Norman Perrin; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966); Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

⁷⁴ See e.g., 2 Macc 7:37-38; 4 Macc 6:27-30; 9:7, 24; 17:21-22; further discussion in Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 301; Jintae Kim, "The Concept of Atonement in Early Rabbinic Thought and the New Testament

Yet Jesus, like probably the majority of Judeans and Galileans, expected life beyond martyrdom (cf. e.g., 2 Macc 7:14).⁷⁵ Some may debate whether Jesus expected his raising in three days, as the Gospels report (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34), but we lack any reason to doubt that he expected to share in and play a significant role in the coming kingdom, as the Gospels also report (e.g., Matt 19:28//Luke 22:30; Mark 14:25).

Reminding his hearers of their past sufferings for Christ (Heb 10:32-39), the author of Hebrews traces various models of the faith through history, showing how they endured because they expected future reward (11:1-40). Finally, after departing from rhetorical anaphora in 11:32, the author climaxes his historical retrospective by pointing to the originator and perfecter of our faith: Jesus, who endured the cross in light of the expectation set before him, and is now enthroned at God's right hand (12:2; cf. 1:3, 13).

5. Jesus as a Model: Transforming Expectations

Numerous studies reveal that positive religious coping encourages human flourishing and reduces mortality.⁷⁶ Hope itself undoubtedly plays a significant role in such coping. The subject of the Christian hope, however, is not simply reduced mortality; it is Jesus's conquest of death. The benefit promised by the Christian gospel is not merely the byproduct of reduced anxiety about the future, but a transformed future world that invites us to work for the world's transformation now, although its fullness awaits eschatological verification.

The Epicurean ideal was pleasure, particularly embodied in the lack of pain.⁷⁷ For much of ancient philosophy, the chief goal, aside from virtue, was happiness (*εὐδαιμονία*);⁷⁸ among most philosophers, wisdom and virtue rather than bodily pleasure yielded happiness.⁷⁹ Biblical Greek, by contrast, entirely lacks the term, perhaps because the goal of most biblical ethics was oriented toward God's pleasure more than that of mortals.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, *joy* is prominent in Scripture, including in ethical contexts (see esp. Gal

Writings," *JGRCJ* 2 (2001-5): 117-45; idem, "Targum Isaiah 53 and the New Testament Concept of Atonement," *JGRCJ* 5 (2008): 81-98.

⁷⁵ For the widespread Judean expectation of an eschatological resurrection of the dead, see e.g., Dan 12:2; 2 Macc 7:10-11; 14:46; *1 En.* 61:5; *Ps. Sol.* 3:16; 13:9; 14:4-10; 2 *Bar.* 51:1-2.

⁷⁶ See discussion in Keener, *Miracles*, 620-29, esp. 625-27.

⁷⁷ E.g., Diogenes Laertius 10.131; 10.144.17; see sources in Keener, *Acts*, 3:2585-86; idem, "Epicureans," in *Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

⁷⁸ E.g., Musonius Rufus 7, p. 58.13-15; Arius Didymus *Epit.* 2.7.5b5, pp. 20-21.15-16; 2.7.6d, pp. 38.34-41.3; 2.7.6e, pp. 40-41.11-13.

⁷⁹ E.g., Cicero *Parad.* 16-19; *Leg.* 1.23.60; *Tusc.* 5.7.19-20; Musonius Rufus 7, p. 58.13; 17 p. 108.7 (Lutz); Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 23; 27.3-4; 59.10; *Ben.* 7.2.3; *Dial.* 7.16.1-3; Epictetus *Diatr.* 4.7.9; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 25.1; Arius Didymus 2.7.6e, pp. 40-41.13-15; 2.7.11g, pp. 70.33-73.4; Lucian *Dem.* 19-20; Iamblichus *Life of Pythagoras* 31.196.

⁸⁰ Though cf. a more hellenized Christian approach in e.g., *Ep. Diogn.* 10.5; also, the term and its cognates appear 151 times in Josephus (e.g., *Ant.* 1.14, 20, 41, 44, 46, 69, 98, 104, 113, 142-43) and 189 times in Philo (e.g., *Alleg. Interp.* 1.4; 2.10, 82, 101-2; 3.52, 83, 205, 209, 218-19, 245).

5:22). (Although Stoics mistrusted many emotions,⁸¹ Greek philosophers, including Stoics, valued joy.)⁸² The writer of Hebrews claims that Jesus endured the cross because he knew the joy that awaited him at his exaltation (Heb 12:3).

Jesus models realistic expectation: eschatological divine transformation balanced with the reality of genuine suffering in this world. Many of Jesus's contemporaries associated the Messiah's coming with the hope of their future resurrection and God's unchallenged reign in the world. Jesus indeed associated his ministry with such hopes for the future, but first by sharing our experience of mortal humanity and suffering in the present. The Gospel of Mark opens with the preaching of the kingdom, but climaxes with the king's crucifixion.

The confident expectation of the Christian gospel, though, recognizes that even in the cross, even in the epitome of human pain and injustice, when the world's powerbrokers executed God in the flesh, God was still at work to bring about his promises. The preaching of the cross is foolishness to the world, but for those of us who trust Christ's resurrection it is the message of salvation.

⁸¹E.g., Simo Knuutila and Juha Sihvola, "How the Philosophical Analysis of the Emotions Was Introduced," pages 1–19 in *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy* (ed. Juha Sihvola and Troels Engberg-Pedersen; Dordrecht, Neth.: Kluwer Academic, 1998), 13, 15. Still, Marcus Aurelius appreciated positive, "sane" emotions (Troels Engberg-Pedersen, "Marcus Aurelius on Emotions," pages 305–37 in *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy*, 334–35).

⁸²E.g., Musonius Rufus 17, p. 108.7; Arius Didymus *Epit.* 2.7.5k, pp. 34–35.1; 2.7.11e, pp. 68–69.12–16; Iamblichus *Life of Pythagoras* 31.196. Stoics approved of joy as a good emotion (Troels Engberg-Pedersen, "Paul, Virtues, and Vices," pages 608–33 in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook* [ed. J. Paul Sampley; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2003], 612; idem, *Paul and the Stoics* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000], 73). Stoics appreciated a "calm pleasure" concerning what was good (Tad Brennan, "The Old Stoic Theory of Emotions," pages 21–70 in *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy*, 57).