

DEFINING THE TITLES “CHRIST” AND “SON OF GOD” IN MARK’S NARRATIVE PRESENTATION OF JESUS

HERBERT W. BATEMAN IV*

In Dan Brown’s novel *The DaVinci Code* Teabing, a fictional character presented as a world-renowned historian, states quite emphatically that “Jesus’ establishment as ‘the Son of God’ was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea.”¹ As twenty-first-century readers of Brown’s book, we know Teabing has questioned, along with the historical events of the Nicean Council, the deity of Jesus. In fact, Bart Ehrman, a present-day historical theologian, clearly understands the meaning of Teabing’s assertion and counters accordingly in his evaluation of Brown’s portrayal of the events at Nicaea. “It is absolutely not true,” says Ehrman, “that Jesus was not considered divine until the Council of Nicaea, that before that he was considered merely as ‘a mortal prophet.’ The vast majority of Christians by the early fourth century acknowledged him as divine.”²

My point is not to evaluate Brown and his factious theory concerning Christianity. It is, however, to point out our predisposition about Teabing’s statement. Without even thinking about it, we automatically and rightly concluded that it challenges our belief that Jesus is God. Granted, the

* Herbert W. Bateman resides at 4078 Oldfield Drive, Leesburg, IN 46538. He first wrote this article while participating in the University of Notre Dame’s Visiting Scholar Program (2001–2002).

¹ Dan Brown, *The DaVinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003) 233. Brown obviously reflects, through Teabing, a theological perspective articulated by others who study religion. Brown admittedly confesses, “[T]he theory I reveal is one that has been whispered for centuries” (<http://www.danbrown.com/noveldavinci>). Although Brown’s theory involves more than just challenging the deity of Jesus, it is a significant challenge that has been stated in the past. For instance, Strauss challenged the deity of Jesus in 1865 when he said, “Jesus is to be regarded as a person, as a great—and as far as I am concerned, the greatest—personality in the series of religious geniuses, but still only a man like others, and the Gospels are to be regarded as the oldest collections of the myths which were attached around the core of this personality.” David Friedrich Strauss, *Der Christus des Glaubens und der Jesus der Geschichte* (ed. Hans-Jürgen Geischer; Gütersloh: G. Mohn, 1971; ET *The Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History: A Critique of Schleiermacher’s Life of Jesus* (trans. and ed. Leander E. Keck; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 161, cf. 773.

² Bart D. Ehrman, “Errors of Religious Omission and Commission in *The DaVinci Code*,” in *Secrets of the Code: The Unauthorized Guide to the Mysteries Behind the DaVinci Code* (ed. Dan Burstein; New York: CDS Books, 2004) 130. More recently Ehrman argues, “Christians for 250 years had agreed that Jesus was divine. The only question was *how* he was divine, and that was what the Council of Nicaea was called to resolve.” *Truth and Fiction in the Da Vinci Code: A Historian Reveals What We Really Know About Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and Constantine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 14–23. See also Darrell L. Bock, *Breaking the Da Vinci Code: Answers to the Questions Everyone’s Asking* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004) 102–9.

Nicean Creed, a creed that correctly presented Jesus to be ontologically and functionally the second person of the Godhead, was and remains correct. Yet to what extent are we conditioned to think in certain theological categories about Jesus due to centuries of theological dialogue and debate? Let me reframe the question with a more specific focus: “Have the church’s creeds, confessional statements, and later systems of theology concerning the deity of Jesus clouded our ability to make unbiased interpretations of an earlier and not-so-developed usage of the titles ‘Christ’ and ‘Son of God’ in a NT book such as the Gospel of Mark?”

This article explores Mark’s use and the plain meaning of the titles “Christ” and “Son of God” as they appear in Mark’s first-century narrative story about Jesus. Naturally, Mark’s title “the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus, the Christ, the son of God” (Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ θεοῦ)³ prepares readers for an ordered collection of material about Jesus. As Mark’s rendition of the good news about Jesus unfolds, the titles “Christ” and “Son of God” serve as pivotal confessions in the narrative first spoken by a Jewish disciple (8:29) and then by a Roman soldier (15:39). Moving beyond their literary significance, however, they are also pivotal in defining Mark’s explicit portrayal of Jesus. Whereas the one confession appears to rest upon the miraculous acts of Jesus (1:14–8:21),⁴ the other is grounded in Jesus’ suffering and death (11:1–16:8).

Yet, what exactly are Peter and the Roman centurion confessing? Is “Jesus Christ” (Ἰησοῦς Χριστός) in Mark a proper name or a name with a title? Or

³ Although absent from $\kappa^c \Theta 28^c$, υἱοῦ θεοῦ occurs in $\kappa^c B D L W$. A variation of the title (υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ) exists in A \mathfrak{B} G^{sup} K M U Γ Δ Π $f^1 f^2$ 2 33 565 579. There are three typical arguments presented for a scribe adding the title “Son of God”: (1) an intentional omission of such a ubiquitous and important epithet is improbable; (2) it seems unlikely that a scribe could make an omission of error due to fatigue; (3) the tendency existed to expand titles and quasi-titles of books (i.e. Revelation). See Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8* (AB 27; New York: Doubleday, 2000) 141; Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2d ed.; Stuttgart: Biblia-Druck, 1994) 62. More convincing arguments, however, are evident in the external as well as the internal evidence: (1) B D W is strong external evidence; (2) a mechanical error of omission may exist due to the six identical endings, which were often times abbreviated in ancient manuscripts; (3) the reappearance of the phrase in 15:39 would seem to support this reading because “Mark is fond of both foreshadowings and overarching interconnections”; (4) the frequent use of *inclusio* in Gospel literature (“Immanuel . . . God with us” in Matt 1:23 and “I am with you” in Matt 28:20; “the Word was God” in John 1:1 and “My Lord and my God” in 20:28). See Robert A Guelich, *Mark 1–8* (WBC 34a; Waco, TX: Word, 1989) 9; John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (SacPag 2; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2002) 60; R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 49; NET n. 2.

⁴ After Mark’s title (1:1) and introduction (1:2–13), the narrative may be divided into three major sections: (1) The Miraculous Ministry in Galilee and Beyond (1:14–8:21); (2) The Passion Predictions “On the Way” (8:22–10:52); and (3) The Temple and the Cross in Jerusalem (11:1–16:8). Whereas Mark 1:14–8:21 contains fourteen miracle stories, the third major section of Mark 11:1–16:8 has only one miracle of Jesus (the cursing of the fig tree in 11:12–14, 20–23). Jesus’ miraculous ministry appears to serve as a basis for Peter’s confession in 8:29. For other threefold divisions of Mark compare Brooks, *Mark* 33–35; Donahue and Harrington, *Mark* 47–50; Marcus, *Mark 1–8* 64; France, *Mark* vii–ix.

perhaps a bit more controversial inquiry is whether "Son of God" (υἱὸς θεοῦ) in Mark's Gospel is something other than a title declaring Jesus to be God.⁵ Is it a veiled description of a supernatural being, but one that lacks the explicit description in Phil 2:6 and other NT passages (Rom 9:5; Titus 2:13; etc.) in order to move *his* readers beyond a misconceived perception that Jesus was just another "divine man" (θεῖος ἀνὴρ)?⁶ Or, did he simply employ the title "Son of God" (υἱὸς θεοῦ) to be in simple apposition to the title "Christ" (Χριστός) and thereby serve as just another messianic designation

⁵ To be theologically predisposed about the title "Son of God" appears to be common among theologians and commentators alike. In his book concerning the life of Jesus, Neander contends, "What, then, is the special presupposition with which we must approach the contemplation of the Life of Christ?" "It is, in a word, the belief that *Jesus Christ is the Son of God in a sense which cannot be predicated of any human being*,—the perfect image of the personal GOD in the form of that humanity that was estranged from him; that in him the source of Divine life itself in humanity appeared; that by him the idea of humanity was realized." Augustus Neander, *Life of Jesus Christ in its Historical Connexion and Historical Development* (trans. from the 4th German ed. by John McClintock and Charles E. Blumenthal; 3d ed.; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1851) 2–3; cf. 4–5. More recently, Doriani shares the same presupposition when he sets out to prove that Jesus was self-conscious of his deity via the culmination of *implicit* acts within the Synoptic Gospels. Daniel Doriani, "The Deity of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels," *JETS* 37 (1994) 333–50; see particularly p. 334. In a similar manner, older and even recent commentators assume the phrase speaks of deity. Henry Barclay Swete, *Commentary on Mark* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977) xc, 2, 388–89; Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966; repr. 1981) 120–22, 152, 567–68, 597; Lenski, *Mark 22–23*; R. Alan Cole, *Mark* (TNTC 2; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961; repr. 1983) 56; William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 44, n. 23, 576 (Hellenistic divine man). More recently for Edwards, the title "Son of God" speaks to Jesus' divine sonship. He avers, "The divine Sonship of Jesus is the theological keystone to the Gospel of Mark." Furthermore, he argues that Jesus "exhibits his divine Sonship in the midst of a troubled world" and that "the surprise—and key—to understanding the Son of God is in his suffering." For Edwards, the use of "Son of God" at Jesus' baptism and transfiguration supports Jesus' divine sonship. James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 15, 34–39, 261–68. Perhaps also Donahue and Harrington, *Mark* 60, 423, 449; James A. Brooks, *Mark* (NAC 23; Nashville: Broadman, 1991) 30, 39.

⁶ Some scholars contend that υἱὸς θεοῦ is derived from the Hellenistic conception of the θεῖος ἀνὴρ (divine man). See s.v. θεῖος, *TDNT* 3.122–23. At first, the divine man concept was used in a positive sense to present Jesus as a divine man in Jewish-Hellenistic terms, without the Pauline emphasis of preexistence. When Jesus was baptized, he became the divine man. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (trans. Kendrick Grobel; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 1.130–31. Later, the divine man concept was used in a negative manner. This understanding of the divine man argues that Mark was written to counteract a divine man Christology and thereby considered the basis for understanding Mark's Christology. Theodore J. Weeden, *Mark—Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971). Over time, the expression *theios anēr* was determined to have intrinsic ambiguity and many scholars today doubt the legitimacy of using *theios anēr* as a *terminus technicus* or as a concrete, well-defined category. See Otto Betz, "The Concept of the So-called 'Divine Man' in Mark's Christology," in *Studies in New Testament and Early Christian Literature* (ed. David Edward Aune; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972) 229–40; and Carl H. Holladay, *Theios Aner in Hellenistic-Judaism: A Critique of the Use of This Category in New Testament Christology* (SBLDS; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977). Compare Jack Dean Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 28–33; Adela Yabro Collins, "Mark and His Readers: The Son of God among Greeks and Romans," *HTR* 93 (2000) 85–100; and Jacob Chacko Naluparayil, "Jesus of the Gospel of Mark: Present State of Research," *CRBR* 8 (2000) 191–226, esp. 197–202.

for Jesus?⁷ Ultimately our quest must answer this question: “Do any of the variant designations for Jesus in Mark’s Gospel leading up to the pivotal confessions about Jesus by Peter (8:29) and the Roman centurion (15:39) define him to be anything more than a self-giving (serving) and self-sacrificing (suffering) Christ? A Messiah? It appears to me that most of the titles ascribed to Jesus throughout Mark’s narrative story about Jesus and in Mark 1:1 serve only to present Jesus to be “the Christ.”⁸

I. THE TITLE “CHRIST”

Although the title “Christ” (Χριστός) is one of Mark’s central messianic titles for Jesus, Mark was not limited to a single epithet. In fact, the term Χριστός is only one of the many ways a Jew of the first century could refer to a hoped-for-anointed one.⁹ Like other first-century Jews, Mark was aware

⁷ Paulus appears to be the first person during the Enlightenment period to reevaluate the phrase “Son of God” and demonstrate that the royal descendants of David were described as sons of God. Heinrich Eberhard Gottlob Paulus, *Das Leben Jusu, als Grundlage einer reinen Geschichte des Urchristentums* (4 vols.; Heidelberg: C. F. Winter, 1828) 1.55. “In itself,” Moule more recently argues, “the Son of God’ . . . need be no more than a purely messianic term.” Charles F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) 22–31, particularly pp. 27–28. See also Martin Hengel, *The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and the History of the Jewish-Hellenistic Religion* (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976).

⁸ According to Naluparayil, there are three main approaches taken in examining the Christological titles in Mark: (1) some have sought the meaning through historical criticism, especially as it pertained to the concept of “divine man” (see note 6 above); (2) some have sought the meaning through the use of redaction criticism with particular attention given to the messianic secret (Wrede); (3) some have sought the meaning via narrative criticism (Kingsbury); moreover, some have taken a hierarchy approach favoring “Christ” over “Son of God” or *vice versa* (Naluparayil, “Jesus of the Gospel of Mark” 192–93). This article approaches the titular Christology of Mark primarily through a narrative and historical critical approach that defines the titles from a Jewish context, while also recognizing that Mark redacted his material to include a variety of titles to portray Jesus to be “the Christ.” In the end, there is no hierarchical contest between the use of “Christ” or “Son of God.”

⁹ Χριστός, the Greek translation for Hebrew term “Messiah” (מָשִׁיחַ), means “anointed” and is used to speak of the anointing of Davidic kings (1 Kgdms 16:12–13 cf. Sir 46:13; 3 Kgdms 1:45 cf. 1 Chr 29:22). At the close of the First Temple period when the dismantling of the Davidic dynasty becomes an increasing reality, prophets employed new terms to speak of new Davidites. On the one hand, Amos 9:11–12 speaks of the reemergence of the “Davidic house.” Jeremiah 23:5–6, on the other hand, says, “I will raise up for David a righteous branch” (cf. Zech 3:8; 6:12–14; see an earlier historical reference to the Branch in Isa 11:1, 10). During the Second Temple period, these and other terms are used to develop messianic profiles: (1) a human “Messiah” or “Christ” (CD 12:23–3:1; 14:19; 19:10–11; 20:1; 1Q28 9:11; 1Q28a 2:11–12, 14–15, 20–21; 4Q252 5:3–4; 4Q382 16:2; 4Q521 1ii:1, 17:3; *Pss. Sol.* 17:32; 18:5, 9) or apocalyptic “Messiah” or “Christ” (*I Enoch* 48:10; 54:4; 2 *Bar.* 29:3; 30:1; 39:7; 40:1; 70:9; 72:2; 4 *Ezra* 7:28–29; 11:37–12:34); (2) “the Branch” (4Q161 7–10iii:22; 4Q174 1–3i:11–13; 4Q252 5:3–4; 4Q285 5:3, 4); (3) “Son,” “Son of God,” and “firstborn Son” (4Q174 3:1–11; 4Q246 2:1–9; 1Q28a 2:11–15; 4Q369 2:6–12; *Pss. Sol.* 17:21–33; 4 *Ezra* 7:28–29; 11:32, 37, 52; 14:9); and (4) “the prince,” “leader,” and “chief” (1Q28b 5:17–28; 1QM 3:13–17, 4:15–5:2; 4Q285 4:2–10, 7:1–4; 4Q376 fliii:1–3; 4Q423 5:1–5; 4Q496 10:2–4). In Matthew, those marginalized by the religious establishment call Jesus “Son of David” (blind people: 9:27; 20:30, 31; the crowds: 12:23; 21:9; 21:15; a Canaanite woman: 15:22; cf. Jesus: 22:42, 45). For further reading about multiple messiah figures see Jacob Neusner, William S. Green, Ernest

of other expressions for "the Christ," and he employed them throughout his narrative. Two other clear expressions Mark used of Jesus are "son of David" (υἱὸς Δαυίδ: 10:47, 48; 12:35, 37) and "king of the Jews" (ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων: 15:2, 9, 12, 18, 26, 32). Of particular significance for the present discussion is the title "Son of David" in the story of blind Bartimaeus (10:46–52). Before examining the healing of Bartimaeus, however, some observations about Mark's unique use of the title "Christ" warrant discussion.

1. *Mark's use of "Christ."* Whether we assume the composition of Mark's Gospel to be sometime during the later 50s or 60s, the term "Christ" was becoming something like a last name for Jesus. This is true particularly in Paul's epistles.¹⁰ This does not, however, seem to be the case in Mark's narrative use of the term. First, whereas Mark consistently uses the human name "Jesus" throughout his Gospel for the historical Jesus (some 82 times), the title "Christ" is used sparingly (7 times). Second, with the exception of Mark 1:1 and 9:1, Χριστός always has the definite article ὁ (the Christ: 8:29; 12:35; 13:21; 14:61; 15:32), which points Jesus out to be "the Christ" or "the Messiah" *par excellence*.¹¹ Third, the appearance of "Jesus" (Ἰησοῦς) and the title "Christ" (Χριστός) together occurs in Mark 1:1 alone. They never again appear side by side in Mark. Finally and perhaps most significantly, the title "Christ" is not employed again until Peter's confession and thereby appears to serve as a central confessional title for Jesus (8:29).

Frerichs, eds., *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995); and James H. Charlesworth, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Gerbern S. Oegema, eds., *Qumran-Messianism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998); Moule, *The Origin of Christology* 31–35.

¹⁰ Perhaps "a last name" is an overstatement. We can say, however, that Jesus Christ had become virtually a proper name in Paul. See Donahue and Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* 60. In the Synoptic Gospels, the words "Jesus Christ" appear together twice (Matt 1:18; Mark 1:1). Just in Paul's undisputed writings, the *Hauptbriefe*, they appear 41 times: Galatians, 7 times (1:1, 3, 12; 3:1, 22; 6:14, 18); 1 and 2 Corinthians, 17 times (1 Cor 1:1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10; 2:2; 3:11; 6:11; 8:6; 15:57; 2 Cor 1:2, 3; 8:9; 13:5, 14); and Romans, 17 times (1:4, 6, 7, 8; 3:22; 5:1, 11, 15, 17, 25; 7:25; 13:14; 15:6, 30; 16:24, 25, 37). In other undisputed Pauline texts, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ appears 15 times: Philippians (1:2, 11, 19; 2:11, 21; 3:20; 4:23); Colossians/Philemon (Col 1:3; Phlm 3, 25); and 1 Thessalonians (1:1, 3; 5:9, 23, 28). My point here is not to address Pauline authorship, nor is this note meant to be exhaustive, but rather to affirm Paul's usage of Jesus Christ in his most notable and undisputed works.

¹¹ On the one hand, my classification of the article as *par excellence* points out that Jesus, as the Christ, is in a class by himself and thereby the only one deserving of the name. Thus Mark seems to use the article to point out that Jesus is the only one worthy of the name "Christ." On the other hand, the article could be monadic to point out that Jesus is one-of-a-kind. Yet what compels me to choose *par excellence* over monadic is simply this: there is no modifier. For example, "the kingdom of God" (τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ) in Mark 9:47 is monadic because of the modifier "of God," while "the kingdom" (ἡ βασιλεία) in Matt 9:35 is *par excellence* because it has no modifier. Here in Mark 1:1, there is no modifier, but rather a title is followed by another title. The second title is in simple apposition to the first and thereby equivalent: "the Christ is the Son of God" or "the Son of God is the Christ." See the discussion of the *par excellence* and monadic articles in Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 224.

Peter, as he is portrayed in Mark's narrative, appears to know Jesus to be "the Christ" (ὁ Χριστός) solely because of the miraculous ministry of Jesus as presented by Mark in the first major portion of his narrative (1:14–8:21). Such an expectation, however, was in keeping with some first-century Jewish beliefs. 4Q521 (4QMessAp) reveals that the people of Qumran believed the heavens and the earth would listen to the Lord's Messiah. In fact, the manuscript says that during the age of the Messiah the Qumranians expected to see, through the Messiah, the resurrection of the dead, the healing of the critically wounded, and the sending of the good news to the afflicted.¹² John the Baptist and Jesus appear to share that same belief. While he was imprisoned, John sent his disciples to Jesus with the question, "Are you the one who is to come?" Jesus answered John's question in this manner: "Go tell John what you hear and see: the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news proclaimed to them" (Matt 11:2–5).

Therefore Mark 1:14–8:21 displays Jesus' power over disease, death, demons, and the domains of nature. Consequently, Jesus appears to be "the Christ" because Jesus is a superior miracle worker. Yet despite Peter's enthusiasm about what he understands about Jesus' messiahship, Jesus does not hesitate to correct Peter's misunderstanding and teaches the disciples about the impending cross that awaits everyone who wishes to follow him (8:31–9:1). Thus the Markan Christ was a suffering one. Later in this second major division of Mark's narrative (8:21–10:52) Bartimaeus, a person who is generally recognized to exemplify what true discipleship is, refers to Jesus not as "the Christ" (ὁ Χριστός) but as "Son of David" (υἱὸς Δαυίδ). The question to be addressed here is simply this: "Are these to be interpreted as synonymous titles for Jesus?"

2. *Mark's use of "Son of David."* In the second major section of Mark, Jesus, along with his disciples, was "on the way" (ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ) up to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast (8:22–10:22). As they were coming out from Jericho, a blind man named Bartimaeus was begging "along the side of the road" (παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν). Based upon what he had heard and obviously believed, Bartimaeus began to cry out (κράζειν) for "Jesus, Son of David." Despite the crowd's rebuke (ἐπετίμησεν), he cried out relentlessly for mercy (ἐλέησον). At that point Jesus stopped, called, and healed Bartimaeus (10:49–52a). Now he was no longer a blind beggar sitting "along the side of the road" (παρὰ τὴν

¹² More specifically, 4Q521 (4QMessAp) f2ii:1 reads, "For the heavens and the earth shall listen to his anointed one (or "Messiah")." Furthermore, "the Lord will perform marvelous acts such as have not existed, just as he said, for he will heal the badly wounded and will make the dead live (or "revive the dead"), and will proclaim good news to the poor . . . and enrich the hungry" (f2ii:1, 12–13). Translated by Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition*, Volume 2 (4Q274–11Q31) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 1045. The alternative renderings are from Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: HarperSan Francisco, 1996) 420–21. Whether it is the Lord himself or the Lord through his messianic agent, the Qumranians believed miraculous things would occur during the messianic age.

ὁδόν). As one who believed and saw, he now followed the “Son of David” “on the way” (ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ) to Jerusalem where Jesus, the “Son of David,” would suffer and die.

What can we conclude from this cry of mercy, directed at Jesus, the son of David? First, as it was in Mark 1:1, the titles “the Christ” and “Son of David” are in apposition to the name “Jesus.” Such a parallel construction in Mark’s narrative may warrant the two phrases to be synonymous titles. Another suggestion is that “Son of David” serves as a literary parallel to Peter’s messianic confession at Caesarea Philippi (8:29)¹³ and thereby supports, once again, that “Son of David” and “the Christ” are perhaps synonymous titles used to describe Jesus to be “the Christ.” Second, the title “son of David” could be used in at least two ways. On the one hand, it could be a polite appellation for any Jew.¹⁴ On the other hand, it could be used of a hoped-for anointed figure, which is the case in the *Psalms of Solomon*: “See, Lord, and raise up for them their king, the son of David, to rule over your servant Israel in the time known to you, O God.”¹⁵ In fact, this and other Jewish phrases were often used for a multitude of messiah types.¹⁶

¹³ M. D. Hooker, *The Message of Mark* (London: Epworth, 1983) 63; Earnest Best, *Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1981) 140.

¹⁴ Swete suggests that the phrase “Son of David” may have been a respectful form of address employed by Jews without direct Davidic descent (“our father David,” Mark 11:10; 12:35; Acts 4:25). Swete, *Commentary on Mark* 243–44. Yet here in Mark, it appears that Bartimaeus knows who Jesus is, he is “the Christ,” the heir of David in much the same way Peter knows Jesus to be “the Christ.” Thus, according to Best, both follow Jesus with imperfect confessions. Best, *Following Jesus* 140. See the following notes, particularly notes 15 and 16.

¹⁵ *Pss. Sol.* 17:21 translated by R. B. Wright, “Psalms of Solomon” in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* vol. 2 (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1985) 639–70. Composed during the first century (ca. 70–45 BC) specifically around the time of Pompey’s invasion of Jerusalem (63 BC), the author of the *Psalms of Solomon* wrote when a spirit of nationalism existed in Palestine. The Hasmonean dynasty was crumbling because of family disputes over who would rule Palestine. Both John Hyrcanus II (backed by Antipater and the Pharisees) and his brother Aristobulus II (backed by the Sadducees) looked to Rome (Pompey) to resolve their differences. Delay led to Aristobulus’s hostile response, Pompey’s defeat of Jerusalem, and Rome’s securing Palestine for herself. Thus Wright labels the *Psalms of Solomon* as “literature of crisis.” He further contends that within this body of literature is “one of the most detailed messianic expectations in the immediate pre-Christian centuries.” Wright also notes that the Davidic covenant is the author’s central thought. The *Psalms of Solomon* record an author’s plea for Yahweh’s intervention, based upon his covenant with David. *Pss. Sol.* 17:4 says: “Lord, you chose David to be king over Israel, and you swore to him about his descendants forever, that his kingdom should not fail before you.” The author believed that God promised David a kingdom—a kingdom that would not fail. This belief is based upon 2 Sam 7:11b–16 and echoed in Ps 89:3–4 (MT 89:4–5, LXX 88:4–5), which says, “I swore to David My servant, I will establish your seed forever and build your throne to all generations.” Two titles are favored in the work: “Son of David” and “Lord Messiah.” Whereas God clearly rules (5:8–19), his agent is the Son of David (17:4, 21–25) or the Lord Messiah (17:31, 18:5–9).

¹⁶ In the OT, prophets (1 Kgs 19:15–16), priests (Exod 40:13–15; cf. Lev 7:36, 16:32), and kings (1 Sam 16:12–13; 1 Kgs 1:45; 19:15–16) were typically anointed for a particular service. The latter two figures become a hoped-for diarchy during the Second Temple period: a priestly Messiah as well as political Messiah from the line of David (CD 12:23–3:1, 14:19; 19:10–11; 20:1 1Q28 [1QS] 9:11; 1Q28a [1QSa] 2:11–22). See note 9 above for various Second Temple messianic profiles. S.v. “Messiahs” in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2 vols; ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 2.537–38.

In Mark 12:35–37, it appears that Jesus appeals to his Davidic sonship to speak of his kingship.¹⁷ Thus it seems likely that Mark assumed his readers would understand “son of David” to be another expression for “the Christ.” Perhaps the application of this title to Jesus served to correct a pervading misunderstanding of “Son of David” among Mark’s readers, namely, that it is an appellation for one of many christs. It seems important also that no exhortation to silence exists here.¹⁸ Jesus allowed Bartimaeus and subsequent crowds to declare him king (11:8–10). Thus there is no mistake here. Mark presents Jesus as “the Christ” from the line of David.

Third, at the beginning of this third passion prediction section (10:32–34), the disciples in the narrative were “amazed” and “afraid.”¹⁹ In contrast, at the end of this section Bartimaeus exhibited courage and faith. He understood who Jesus was and was undaunted by opposition. His continual cry for mercy from the “Son of David” and his courage exemplify what a disciple does when faced with opposition. Finally, the way in which Mark positions this presentation of Jesus in the narrative seems significant. As resolute as he was to get to Jerusalem,²⁰ Jesus is presented as a self-denying Son of David who

¹⁷ Psalm 110:1 is frequently quoted in this section. It first appears in Mark’s Gospel when Jesus is in the temple (11:1–13:37). He arrives at the temple (11:1–11), cleanses the temple (11:12–25), and experiences controversy in the temple (11:26–12:37). It was during Jesus’ controversy in the temple that Jesus quotes Ps 110:1. The first and last controversy stories form an *inclusio* dealing with Jesus’ authority (11:27–12:12) and his Davidic sonship (12:35–37). The middle three are challenges to Jesus’ teaching on taxes (12:13–17), resurrection (12:18–27), and the greatest command (12:28–34). It seems Jesus appeals to Ps 110:1 as a way to speak of his authority as Lord (cf. 1 Chr 29:23; 1 Kgs 1:48) in much the same way it may have been originally employed by David at a coronation of Solomon. Thus Jesus is declaring his authority as “the Christ,” namely as God’s commissioned and empowered anointed one. Herbert W. Bateman IV, “The Use of Psalm 110:1 in the New Testament,” *BSac* 149 (1992) 438–53.

¹⁸ Throughout the Miraculous Ministry in Galilee and Beyond section (1:14–8:21), speculation about Jesus abounds: “Who is this man?” (1:27, 4:41, 6:3). Jesus, however, commands demons (1:25, 1:34; 3:11) and humans to remain silent (1:44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26, 30; 9:9). Commands to silence, however, are confined to the first half of Mark. Despite the many inquiries of Jesus’ identity in the first section (6:14–16; 8:27–28), in the later two sections of Mark’s Gospel (8:21–10:52; 11:1–16:9), Bartimaeus also knows Jesus to be “the Christ.” The ironic questioning and mocking of Jesus as “King of the Jews” (by Pilate: 15:2, 9, 12; by soldiers: 15:18; by inscription: 15:26; by chief priest and experts: 15:32) will further confirm it.

¹⁹ In Mark 10:32, the Greek construction καὶ ἔθαμβοῦντο, οἱ δὲ ἀκολουθοῦντες ἐφοβοῦντο is less than clear. A question exists as to whether one or two groups of disciples are mentioned. Perhaps two groups are represented. “And *the inner core of disciples* were amazed (the other two occurrences of θαμβέω are in Mark 1:27; 10:24), while the *others* who followed were afraid” (for φοβέω see also 4:41; 5:15, 33, 36; 6:50; 9:32; 11:18; 16:8). Regardless of how one takes the phrase, the point is that the disciples are amazed and frightened at Jesus’ acceptance of what was in store for them in Jerusalem (see note 20 below). The author will return to this theme in 16:7–8, at which time he will emphasize that as followers of Jesus, the Christ, the readers need not fear the opposition but, rather, they need to speak up for Jesus. Bartimaeus spoke up despite the opposition he faced, followed Jesus, and served as a positive example of what a disciple is. See Joel F. Williams, *Other Followers of Jesus: Minor Characters as Major Figures in Mark’s Gospel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994) 159–71.

²⁰ In Mark 10:32, καὶ ἦν πρόαγων αὐτοῦς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, namely, the disciples. Although the phrase corresponds with the Jewish custom for a disciple to follow before his teacher (Elisha follows Elijah, 1 Kgs 19:20; Jos. *Ant.*, 8.353), the context suggests more than a custom (s.v. ἀκολουθεῖω, *TDNT*,

stops to serve by extending mercy to someone in need. Thus Mark’s account of Bartimaeus as well as Jesus’ act of healing appears to portray for his readers the true meaning of discipleship and servanthood (10:45). Disciples who choose to follow Jesus (8:34–38) are to be like Jesus, the Son of David. They are to extend mercy to people who are in need while they are in the process of living life as a follower of Jesus (i.e. “on the way”; cf. 9:35, 10:43–45).

It would seem then that Mark’s use of “Christ” (1:1) and “Son of David” (10:47) in apposition to Jesus’ name, his parallel usage of the “Son of David” (10:47–48) with Peter’s confessional use of “the Christ” (8:29), and first-century Jewish expectations of a “Son of David” Messiah figure suggests that Mark used at least two epithets to speak of Jesus as “the Christ,” which brings us to our next question. Is “Son of God” (υἱὸς θεοῦ), like “Son of David” (υἱὸς Δαυὶδ), an alternate expression for “Christ” (Χριστός)?

II. THE TITLE “SON OF GOD”

In the OT and Second Temple literature, “Son of God” (υἱὸς θεοῦ) or simply “Son” and “sons” (υἱός / υἱοῖ) typically refer to Adam (Luke 3:38); God’s angels;²¹ God’s chosen people Israel;²² God’s chosen leaders;²³ and God’s chosen king from the line of David.²⁴ Of the five, the last usage appears to be the most likely parallel in Mark because of the quote from Ps 2:7. The question that warrants our attention is this: “Does Mark’s use of ‘Son of God’ signal the reader to move beyond the OT concept of chosen king?” In this section, attention is directed to variations and use of “Son” evidenced in

1:211–13). The phrase may be understood as “Jesus was resolute as he pressed on to Jerusalem,” or “Jesus was deliberate as he headed toward Jerusalem,” or “Jesus was focused as he traveled to Jerusalem” (cf. Luke 9:51). Thus Mark reflects Jesus’ conscious acceptance of his mission as suffering Messiah (10:33–34) and presses on to Jerusalem.

²¹ Clear passages are Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7 [11QtgJob 30:5]. A somewhat debatable passage is Gen 6:2, 4 [1 *Enoch* 6:1–2]. Another debatable passage is Deut 32:8–9. The MT reads “sons of Israel” (בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל), the LXX reads: “sons of God” (υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ), and 4QDeut^j reads: “sons of God” (בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים). Another even more debatable passage is Deut 32:43. Whereas the MT has no reference to “sons of God,” the LXX does (υἱοὶ θεοῦ) as does Odes 2:43, Justin Martyr in *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo*, and 4QDeut^g “all you gods” (כָּל אֱלֹהִים).

²² Although Hos 1:10 is one passage, other clear passages where Israelites are declared “sons of God” are missing in the OT, though several occurrences exist in Wisdom when speaking of a righteous person as a “son of God” (2:18; 5:5) and the nation of Israel as a “son of God” (18:13). Nevertheless, OT national Israel is spoken of as a “son,” and Israelites are spoken of as “sons” and “daughters.” Compare Paul G. Bretscher, “Exodus 4:22–23 and the Voice from Heaven,” *JBL* 87 (1968) 301–11.

²³ In the *Life of Moses* from the early first century, the author depicts Moses as a king and vice regent figure. He even bears the title God (1.155–56). In fact, such a high regard for Jewish leaders existed in Israel that to argue against them was seen as a form of blasphemy. Exodus 22:27 links blasphemy of God and rulers together, which carries over in later Jewish history (Moses and Aaron: Num 16:30; the king: 1 Kgs 21:10; Isa 8:21; the temple: 1 Macc 2:6–13; Jos. *Ant.* 10.233, 242; and the priests: Jos. *Ant.* 12.406; Acts 23:3–4).

²⁴ Clear OT passages are 2 Sam 7:14, Ps 2:7, and Ps 89:26. One less than clear passage is Ps 110:3. Thus it should not surprise us that Second Temple authors might build on the concept of royal “son”: 4Q174 (4QFlor), 4Q246 (4QapocrDan ar), 4Q369 (4QprayerEnosh), and *Pss. Sol.* 17. For other extrabiblical passages see 1 *Enoch* 105:2; 4 *Ezra* 7:28–29; 13:32, 37, 52; 14:9.

(1) the declarations by God; (2) designations by demons; and (3) the demand by the high priest for Jesus to identify himself. The question to be answered is simply this: “Do any of the title variations support an explicit portrayal of Jesus as *divine*?”

1. *Declarations by God.* Mark presents two divine declarations of Jesus as “Son,” one at his baptism (1:9–11) and the other at his transfiguration (9:2–10). In both cases, a near-exact quotation from Ps 2:7 is employed. Originally, Psalm 2 served to reinforce Yahweh’s appointment of and support for a king over Israel prior to Nebuchadnezzar’s dismantling of the Davidic dynasty and destruction of Solomon’s temple in 586 BC. Perhaps it was initially used during the coronation of a royal Davidite (Ps 2:2, 6, 7).²⁵ Central to the Psalm is the proclamation of Yahweh concerning his unique relationship with the king: “You are my son! This very day I have become your Father” (v. 7). In fact, verse 7 appears to echo Yahweh’s covenant of promise to David about Solomon: “I will be his Father and he will be my son” (2 Sam 7:14).

Much later, after Pompey’s entrance into the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem (Jos. *Ant.* 1.152–53) and the subsequent Roman occupation of Palestine in 63 BC, Jewish hopefuls made more explicit connections between Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7 to speak of their particular hoped-for Anointed One (4Q174 3:7–13; *Pss. Sol.* 17:21). Thus the concept of “sonship” in Ps 2:7 appears to be a way of speaking about a hoped-for anointed one during the first century. For some, it more pointedly spoke of a royal Davidite. It seems likely that Mark shared a similar conceptual understanding of sonship, which compelled him to place Ps 2:7 strategically in his Gospel as an alternative way to speak of Jesus as “the Christ.”²⁶ If so, how might a first-century Jewish understanding of Psalm 2:7 impact the interpretation of God’s declarations at the baptism and transfiguration of Jesus in Mark?

a. *The baptism of Jesus.* The baptism of Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee is placed strategically at the beginning of Mark’s narrative to introduce his

²⁵ In his treatment of Mark’s Christological use of the OT themes and vocabulary, Marcus argues that “Jewish sources from the biblical period on . . . overwhelmingly interpret Psalm 2 as a reference to an eschatological victory by God, a victory sometime won through the instrumentality of the Messiah.” Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1972) 61. See also Herbert W. Bateman IV, “Hebrews 1:5–13 and 4QFlorilegium,” in *Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1:5–13: The Impact of Early Jewish Exegesis on the Interpretation of a Significant New Testament Passage* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997) 164–69.

²⁶ I must interject, however, that I do not deny that “sonship” in Ps 2:7 is eventually escalated to mean *divine* sonship in other NT writings, which later Church fathers equated with the deity of Jesus. Clear evidence of the escalation of sonship in Ps 2:7 to that of *divine* sonship occurs in Heb 1:5–13. See my discussion in “Hebrews 1:5–13 and 4QFlorilegium” in *Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1:5–13* 149–206. Yet, Mark never develops a *divine* sonship theme from Ps 2:7. Mark’s Jesus not only has limited knowledge (13:32), he has limited authority (10:40). Nevertheless, Smith rightly identifies that Jesus knows he is the one sent from God, the one who acts on behalf of God, and the one who speaks for God. C. Drew Smith, “‘This is my Beloved Son: Listen to Him’: Theology and Christology in the Gospel of Mark,” *HBT* 24 (2002) 53–86.

main subject, Jesus (1:9–13). In Mark's opening and rather dramatic presentation of Jesus' baptism, Jesus sees "the ripping open of the heavens" (σχιζομένους τοὺς οὐρανοὺς). He sees God's Spirit "descend upon him" (καταβαῖνον εἰς αὐτόν). And he hears God address him, "You are my beloved son" (σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός).²⁷ Thus during the baptism of Jesus the verbal connection with "son" from Ps 2:7 appears to be in keeping with first-century Jewish expectations about a messianic figure, and thereby serves to be God's endorsement, commissioning, and empowerment of Jesus for ministry as "the Christ."

Moving beyond the verbal and conceptual link of royal sonship evident in Ps 2:7 and in first-century Jewish literature, another conceptual link exists between Mark and Jewish literature concerning the Spirit and the Messiah. Prior to the time of Jesus, some Jewish people expected "the Christ" to be empowered with God's Spirit. For instance, in 4Q161 (4QIsaPesh^a), it was understood that the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon a person, symbolically referred to as "the Branch" who will come from the stem of Jesse.²⁸ Furthermore, it is said of the Davidic Messiah, in accordance with Isaiah 11, "And he will not weaken in his days, (relying) upon God, for God made him powerful in the Holy Spirit and wise in the counsel of understanding with strength and righteousness" (*Pss. Sol.* 17:37).²⁹ Naturally, such an expectation mirrors the Spirit's involvement when David was anointed (1 Sam 16:12–13).

Thus Mark, in keeping with first-century Jewish messianic expectations, appears to make a verbal link through God's quotation of Ps 2:7 and a conceptual link through the Spirit's descent from heaven to endorse, commission, and empower Jesus for ministry as "the Christ." "Mark emphasizes," according to Marcus, "the inseparable link between God and Jesus while at the same time maintaining the distinction between them. Jesus is God's *son*,

²⁷ God's complete statement is, "You are my beloved Son, in you I take great delight." Whereas "You are my beloved Son" is a near-exact citation of Ps 2:7, "in you I take great delight" alludes to Isa 42:1. Both citations make significant contributions to Mark's message of Jesus as a servant-king (8:27; 10:45). In addition, the use of "beloved one" identifies God's unique relationship with Jesus. However, we will limit our attention to the psalm. Yet, in his work whereby he sketches and argues for an Isaianic New Exodus hermeneutic, Watts contends that the baptism of Jesus may be presenting Jesus as both 'royal' son of God and Yahweh's true son, Israel. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* 108–21. For another discussion see Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26* 34.

²⁸ Quoting more specifically from 4Q161 (4QIsaPesh^a) about the Branch from Jesse, we read, "Upon him will be placed the spirit of YHWH; the spirit of discretion and wisdom, the spirit of advice and courage, the spirit of knowledge and of respect for YHWH, and his delight will be in respecting YHWH" (3:11–13). Translated by Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition*, Volume 1 (1Q1–4Q273) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 317. For other Second Temple works that profile the Messiah as "the branch" see note 9.

²⁹ *Pss. Sol.* 17:37 is translated by Wright, "Psalms of Solomon" 2.668. According to Wright, the Messiah's source of power is "entirely spiritual" (*Pss. Sol.* 17:33f), he is "imbued with the spirit of holiness" (*Pss. Sol.* 17:37), and he has "the power to purify the people and impart to them a holy wisdom." Wright, "Psalms of Solomon" 2.645. Likewise, Paulus contends, "It is the Spirit which makes him to be the true Messiah." Paulus, *Das Leben Jesu* 1.55. More recently, Collins argued that the Spirit's descent from heaven upon Jesus had both prophetic and messianic connotations within Jewish literature. Elisha's endowment with the Spirit signifies installation into the prophetic office (2 Kgs 2:9, 15; cf. 1 Kgs 19:16). Adela Yarbro Collins, "Mark and His Readers: The Son of God among Jews," *HTR* 92 (1999) 193–208. Cf. Marcus, *Mark 1–8* 164.

not God himself. As son, however, he shares in God's βασιλεία, his kingly power, and becomes the instrument of its extension into every corner of the creation."³⁰ Thus Jesus is God's Son, "the Son of God," "the Christ."

Unique to Mark's narrative presentation of Jesus' baptism, however, is the fact that no mention is made of anyone other than Jesus who sees and hears these divine acts; Jesus *alone* saw the Spirit descend upon him and he alone heard God's voice. Thus the readers know something about Jesus that the characters in the narrative do not. This enables Mark to reveal Jesus as "the Christ" gradually to both the characters presented in the narrative story as well as to set into motion for the people reading the story to learn something as well. Also unique to Mark is the way the baptismal event will serve to anticipate later events at the cross. When Jesus breathes out his spirit, the curtain of the temple is violently ripped, and the Roman soldier proclaims that Jesus is the Son of God (15:37–39).³¹ Thus the beginning and the ending of Jesus' ministry appear to be unmistakably linked in Mark's Gospel. In both life and death, Jesus is God's chosen, beloved Son, "the Christ."

b. *The transfiguration of Jesus.* Placed strategically at the beginning of the second major section (8:22–10:52) after Peter's confession (8:29) and misunderstanding of Jesus' passion prediction (8:32–33), Mark employs God's declaration during the transfiguration to provide further credence about Jesus' message concerning the cross, namely, the betrayal, death, and the resurrection that awaits him in Jerusalem. While alone with Jesus on a mountain, Peter, James, and John saw him transformed before their very eyes (μεταμορφώθη ἔμπροσθεν αὐτῶν).³² Furthermore, the three disciples saw

³⁰ Marcus recognizes that the most obvious nuance of the title "Son of God" is a royal one. Jesus, as God's Son, like the former Davidites, shares in God's kingly rule as "God's royal executive." This is significant because Jesus is granted, as God's Son, "superhuman power necessary to accomplish that task" of kingship as well as "substantial participation in God's holiness, God's effective opposition to the powers of evil." In an excursus on the title "Son of God" in ancient Judaism, Marcus suggests that Mark may have adopted the phrase "Son of God" because it *may have had* a "quasi divinity" sense. Elsewhere Marcus argues that Mark's "Jesus is one whose identity approaches the category of divinity." Marcus, *The Way of the Lord* 59–72, 77–79, 92. Terms like "quasi-divine" and phrases like "approaches the category of divinity" do not argue for "Son of God" as a means to describe Jesus as divine. What is clear is that the title "Son of God" in Mark's narrative speaks of Jesus as "the Christ."

³¹ David Ulansey, "The Heavenly Veil Torn: Mark's Cosmic 'Inclusio,'" *JBL* 110 (1991) 123–25; Marcus, *Mark 1–8* 164. A similar use of *inclusio* exists in Matthew. The author, according to Greidanus, opens his Gospel with the use of the Old Testament promise of Immanuel, "God with us" (1:23) and reminds us of the quote at the end of his work when Jesus says, "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (28:20). Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 311–41.

³² Μεταμορφώω means "transform" or "change form." The verb occurs four times in the NT and only in the passive (Mark 9:2, Matt 17:2; Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 3:18). Here in Mark, Jesus' form is changed. The passive points to an action of God. At least two perspectives are possible here. Is the human form of Jesus changed back into his glorified divine form? Or is the human form of Jesus changed to a glorified human form? It seems the latter fits the context best because Jesus has just predicted that he will be condemned by the chief priests, put to death, and rise again three days later (8:31). Thus Jesus' earthly body is transformed into a glorified "resurrected-like" body.

Elijah and Moses appear, who then spoke with Jesus. Yet, when Peter wanted to mark the event with a few shelters, an overshadowing cloud surrounded them and *they now* heard a voice say, "This is my beloved son. Listen to him!" (οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ).

The significance of the transfiguration of Jesus appears to be threefold. (1) It points to his *association* with two highly exalted prophets. (2) It confirms to Peter, James, and John that Jesus has a *divine commission* as "the Christ." Finally, (3) it also serves as a *divine authentication* of Jesus' passion predictions (8:32b–33; 9:30–31; 10:32–34), particularly his resurrection.³³ He, too, like Elijah and Moses, would be resurrected and exalted, and it foreshadows Jesus' statement yet to be made to the high priest (14:62). Thus as the royal son foretold the events about his mission, the disciples were directed by God to listen to him (lit. "hear him," ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ; cf. 4:2, 9, 12, 23; 8:18 with 11:14, 21).

What, then, can we conclude from God's declaration of Jesus as "Son" at the baptism and again at the transfiguration? First, both include a divine declaration to or about Jesus from Ps 2:7. In keeping with first-century Jewish expectations for an Anointed One, we can safely say "Son" in Ps 2:7 was seen as another way to refer to "the Christ" or God's chosen king. In his summary of Mark's Christology Watts concludes, "this language must first be seen in terms of Jesus being 'true Israel' who after all was intended to be Yahweh's 'son' (Ex 4:22) and in which category Israel's messianic kingship was likewise understood (Ps 2)."³⁴

³³ Although the transfiguration story parallels the description of Moses on Mount Sinai in Exodus 24 and 34, the theme of Mark is Jesus' messiahship. Jesus as "the Christ" is Israel's deliverer. Jesus is a deliverer from the line of David. Nevertheless, these are some common features: the high mountain (Mark 9:2 and Exod 24:12, 15–18; 34:3); the presence of a special group (Mark 9:6 and Exod 24:1–2, 16); radiance from the central figure (Mark 9:6 and Exod 34:29–30, 35); fear among the onlookers (Mark 9:6 and Exod 34:29–30); the cloud (Mark 9:7 and Exod 24:15–18; 34:5); and the voice from the cloud (Mark 9:7 and Exod 24:16). See Donahue and Harrington, *Mark* 275. In both narratives, the event served to authenticate God's servant.

³⁴ Watts goes on to say, "Jesus is not only 'true Israel but also 'blind and deaf' Israel's messianic deliverer (tg. Isa 42; Ps 2)." Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* 383–84. Although I appeal to Watts's developed messianic theme in Mark, he sees a pervasive servant Christology over a royal Christology in Mark (p. 303) because of his Isaianic New Exodus hermeneutic, a hermeneutic he traces throughout the Gospel. Nevertheless, he recognizes that Mark "never expected any of his readers to doubt for a moment that Jesus is the Davidic Messiah" (p. 289). Yet, the Markan Jesus is more than a Davidic Messiah figure. In keeping with an Isaianic New Exodus hermeneutic, Jesus is Yahweh's warrior. Nevertheless, Watts's work validates both themes well. However, he occasionally strays from the explicit and plain meaning of Mark's narrative. For instance, he contends that the Beelzebul controversy and the sea-walking events are implications "*tending toward identifying Jesus as the Son of God*" (p. 289; emphasis mine). At other times he wants to see Jesus as Yahweh himself having come to earth and executing the new exodus (pp. 84, 90, 286, 303, 388). Needless to say, Watts appears to see beyond the plain meaning of the text. He is, however, on solid ground when he describes Jesus via Mark's explicit presentation of him as Yahweh's agent (p. 256), Yahweh's representative (p. 307), Yahweh's warrior (p. 307, 348), Yahweh's messianic Son (p. 257, 288, 348), Yahweh's Isaianic Servant (p. 303, 384–85). All of these designations clearly serve to identify Jesus' unique relationship with Yahweh as the Christ. Watts's attempt to see Jesus as God appears to me to be just that, an attempt that moves beyond the plain meaning of the Markan narrative story about Jesus. To his credit, however, Watts recognizes that further study is warranted concerning what seems to him to be "the very coming of Yahweh himself" in Mark (p. 388).

Second, whereas the divine declaration as well as the driving force of God's Spirit at Jesus' baptism initially authenticated the Son's miraculous ministry in and beyond Galilee (1:14–8:21), Jesus' transfiguration authenticated the Son's disturbing prediction, namely, his suffering, death, and resurrection (8:31, 9:31, 10:33–34). Third, we can safely say that whereas the *people* in the narrative are asking, "Who then is this?" (4:14; cf. 8:27), Mark's readers already know that God pronounced Jesus to be his royal Son. They know Jesus has God's Spirit, who, as "the Christ," has enabled him to perform the miraculous. They also know that Jesus, the royal Son, will die. Yet, the reader's perception about the type of Christ Jesus is may need correction, or perhaps their view of Jesus as "the Christ" is in need of clarification because of God's exhortation to "listen to him." What are they to hear? Perhaps they too are to prepare themselves to suffer, namely that their call to discipleship is a call to suffering, just as Jesus suffered.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, is the intentional literary parallel between the baptism (1:10–12) and the cross (15:37–39). If "Son" is a reference to Jesus as God's chosen king in 1:10–12, it seems safe to conclude that a parallel understanding exists with "Son of God" when confessed at the foot of the cross.³⁵ Thus in both life and death Jesus was and is "the Christ." But perhaps the designations by demons will alter our perspective.

2. *Designations by demons.* In the first major section of Mark's Gospel (1:14–8:21) Jesus confronts demons (or the cosmic forces) on several occasions. Two events of particular interest to us are presented in two miracle stories where demons or unclean spirits offer different titles for Jesus. Another designation exists in one of Mark's summary statements (3:7–12). Obviously, the demons in the narrative know about Jesus, but what do they know exactly? Do they know he is the *divine* Son or merely God's chosen Son, namely "the Christ"?

a. *The demon-possessed in Jewish territory.* The first event takes place in Capernaum, at a synagogue, on the Sabbath (1:23–28). The (Jewish?) man controlled by a "unclean spirit" (πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ) in the synagogue would be problematic in any religious setting. What made matters worse was that the demon cried out (ἐκράζον) and referred to Jesus as "the Nazarene" and "the Holy One of God" (ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ). Jesus' twofold solution was: (1) to rebuke (ἐπετίμησεν) the unclean spirit telling it to keep silent; and

³⁵ Earl Johnson contends that the title "Son of God" is ambiguous because it had a wide range of meanings. See notes 21–24. Nevertheless, he seeks to define the title in the context of the passion narrative as it stands along with other ironic statements at the foot of the cross about who Jesus is: King of the Jews (15:2), Savior (15:31), Christ, the King of Israel (15:32), One connected with Elijah (15:36), a son of God (15:39). For Johnson, "the Gospel does not require a fixed or complete Christology, because ending with no one fully understanding who Jesus is and the women fleeing from the tomb . . . extends the question of Jesus' identity fully into the future." Earl S. Johnson, "Is Mark 15:39 the Key to Mark's Christology," *JSNT* 31 (1987) 3–22. Although I do not share all of Johnson's conclusions, I do share his belief that the meaning of the title "Son of God" is found in the context and ironic statements at the foot of the cross. See note 18.

(2) to cast the demon out of the man. When the unclean spirit left the man, the people were amazed (ἐθαμβήθησαν).

In considering this first exorcism, both the literary placement of the event and the title terminology strike me as important. First, in Mark’s narration of the event, readers face an immediate contrast between Jesus, who bears God’s *holy* “Spirit,” and a man, who bears an “unclean spirit.” Returning to Mark’s introduction (1:2–13), it was during his baptism that Jesus saw “the Spirit (τὸ πνεῦμα) descending on him like a dove” (1:10) and then “the Spirit (τὸ πνεῦμα) drove him into the wilderness” (1:12) to encounter Satan (1:13). As God’s “Son,” Jesus as well as Mark’s readers is well aware of Jesus’ commission and spiritual empowerment by God for ministry as “the Christ.”

Second, the unclean spirit in the narrative appears to be aware of Jesus’ commission as well because of the demon’s designation for Jesus. In verse 24, this “unclean spirit” says “leave us alone” (τί ἡμῖν καὶ σοῦ)³⁶ and calls Jesus the “Holy One of God” (ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ). This title “the Holy One” occurs only three times in the NT (Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34; John 6:69). Although “Holy One” can refer to God (1 *Enoch* 10:1; “the Holy One of Israel who chose you”; 4Q176 [4QTanh] ffi–ii 2:4–9), the expression may speak of men as well. In the LXX, it is used of Elisha (4 *Kdgm* 4:9), Samson (*Judg* 16:17), and Aaron (*Ps* 105[106]:16). Similarly, in Acts Jesus is described with the familiar messianic epithets “the Holy and Righteous One” by Peter (τὸν ἅγιον καὶ δίκαιον, 3:14) and “the Coming or Righteous One” (περὶ τῆς ἐλεύσεως τοῦ δικαίου, 7:52) by Stephen.³⁷ Furthermore, in the Gospel of Mark, Antipas was “in awe” (ἐφοβεῖτο) of John the Baptist because he was a “righteous and holy man” (ἄνδρα δίκαιον καὶ ἅγιον; 6:20). The reader, well aware that during Jesus’ baptism he is identified as chosen by and consecrated to God as “the Christ,” knows Jesus to be “the Holy One of God.” Thus the demon’s designation in Mark 1:24 acknowledges what the reader already knows, namely, that Jesus has been set apart as God’s spiritually empowered Christ, namely the Holy One of God, who confronts the unholy (i.e. unclean) spirits. Furthermore, it was believed during the Second Temple period that a Messiah figure would purge the land and its people of all impurity and that he would rule in righteousness.³⁸ Thus Mark’s literary placement and presentation of Jesus’ authority to silence and cast out the unclean spirit within a Jewish synagogue

³⁶ The unclean spirit says, “We have nothing to do with one another.” The phrase literally is translated “What to us and to you?” (τί ἡμῖν καὶ σοῦ). This Hebraic idiom (cf. *Jdg* 11:12, 2 *Chr* 35:2, 1 *Kgs* 17:18, 2 *Kgs* 3:13, *Hos* 14:8) expresses hostility between Jesus and the demons and might be better translated “leave us alone.” See C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (2d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959; repr. 1984) 46; NET 1801–2, n. 21.

³⁷ Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) 188–94. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1998) 285–86, 385. C. K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994) 1.195–96, 376–77; Hans Conzelmann, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) 28, 56–57.

³⁸ See *Pss. Sol.* 17:21–27, 30b–32; 18:5–9; 2 *Bar.* 72:2 and 73:1–4; 1Q28b (1QSb) 5:20–25; 11Q13 (11QMelch) 2:6–25. Of particular significance is 11Q13 (11QMelch) 2:25 where a Melchizedek figure (whether an angelic being or messianic figure is debated) “will deliver them from the power of Belial.” See notes 30 and 44.

not only confirms his empowerment through God's Spirit to be "the Christ," it is very much in keeping with first-century Jewish expectations of a coming messianic figure.

b. *The demon-possessed in Gentile territory.*³⁹ The second event takes place across the Sea of Galilee in the region of the Gerasenes (5:1–20). A seemingly uncontrollable man (Jew? or Gentile?) with an "unclean spirit" (πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ) is once again problematic, even in Gentile territory. As it was with the unclean spirit who possessed the (Jewish?) man, so it was with this unclean spirit. He cried out (κράζας) with a loud voice. Here, however, the unclean spirit called Jesus, "Son of the Most High God" (ὡς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου). This time, Jesus does not rebuke the demon to keep silent. Nor does he cast out the unclean spirit into some unknown place. Rather, his solution was to send the demon named "Legion" into a herd of pigs. Upon entry, the herd ran immediately into the Sea of Galilee and drowned. The response of the people in the narrative was mixed. When some saw the previously demon-possessed man seated, clothed, and in his right mind—they became frightened (ἐφοβήθησαν) and asked Jesus to leave. Others, however, when they saw and heard this previously possessed man proclaim what Jesus had done for him, were amazed (ἐθαύμαζον).

In considering this second exorcism, the literary placement and the title terminology once again appear to play an important role. First, in Mark's narration this exorcism is second in a series of four miracle stories. These miracle stories are linked by a situation that is uncontrollable. Each is presented as a situation beyond any person's control (the storm at sea, 4:37; the demoniac, 5:4; the bleeding woman, 5:26; and Jairus's dead daughter, 5:35). Yet, Jesus, God's "Son," the man who has God's authentication, commissioning, and empowerment for a messianic ministry (1:9–13), is able to overpower the uncontrollable. In keeping with the first-century Jewish expectation of a Jewish Messiah, Jesus is presented as a wonder worker—a "Christ" marvel, who works wonders in both Jewish and Gentile territory.

Second, this "unclean spirit" says "leave me alone" (τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί)⁴⁰ and proceeds to refer to Jesus as "Son of the Most High God" (ὡς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου).⁴¹ The title occurs twice in the NT (Mark 5:7; Luke 8:28) with a

³⁹ Several points need to be made here. First, like many others, I wrestle with whether or not the possessed man is a Gentile. Yet, the fact that the land east of Galilee was predominately Gentile, the herding of pigs, and the man's use of "Son of the Most High God" may support the view that this is a demon-possessed Gentile (cf. Marcus, *Mark 1–8* 342 with Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* 164–66). Second, I assume this to be a miracle story, though some scholars have questioned its form. See Guelich, *Mark 1:1–8:26* 272–73.

⁴⁰ Mark 5:7 has the same idiomatic construction as Mark 1:23. See note 36 above. Here, however, the phrase is literally translated, "What to me and to you" (τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί).

⁴¹ From *El Elyon*, the title is ancient. It first occurs in the OT when describing the God of Melchizedek (Gen 14:18–20). Although not distinctively a Jewish title for God, "Most High God" in the OT and Jewish texts is generally associated with God's sovereignty over Israel, the Gentiles, and spiritual realms (Marcus, *Mark 1–8* 343–44). This is most certainly true in *1 Enoch* 9:3, 10:1. S.v. "Most High" in *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period* (ed. Jacob Neusner and William Scott Green; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999) 439–40.

close parallel in Acts 16:17. In Acts, a Gentile girl with a demonic “spirit of divination” refers to Paul and those traveling with him as “servants of the Most High God” (δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου). Some at Qumran believed a human successor to David’s throne would arise, who “will be called great” and who “will be called the Son of God, they will call him Son of the Most High” (4Q246 1:9, 2:1; cp. Luke 1:32–33, 35).⁴² A parallel expression for individuals also exists at Qumran, “holy ones of Elyon” (CD 20:8). Here in Mark 5, God’s Son, the one whom the demon calls “Son of the Most High,” overpowers a Legion of demons (5:9–13).⁴³ Mark, then, appears to portray Jesus once again as God’s “Son,” “the Christ,” via the unclean spirits’ designation of Jesus as “Son of the Most High.” Less clear, however, is the designation directed at Jesus in Mark’s summary statement in 3:11–12.

c. *Summary statement.* Within Mark’s summary statement concerning the developing opposition in Galilee (3:7–6:6a), he says among other things, “And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him (προσέπιπτον αὐτῷ) and cried out (ἔκραζον), ‘You are the Son of God’” (σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ). At which point, they were “rebuked” (ἐπετίμα) and told not to make known Jesus’ identity.

Based on what is provided in Mark 3:11–12, can we conclude that the unclean spirits know Jesus to be a *divine* Son? I am not sure that we can. The phrase “You are the Son of God” (σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ) closely parallels that found in the baptism of Jesus when God declares, “You are my beloved Son” (σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς μου ὁ ἀγαπητός). It seems the unclean spirits recognized

⁴² The Qumran manuscript 4Q246 (4QapocrDan ar), sometimes known as the “Son of God” text, was first acquired in 1958, lectured on at Harvard University in 1972, and eventually published in 1992. The delayed publication of this two-column fragment generated an aura of mystery and divergent discussions, but 4Q246 eventually transformed our understanding of the first-century Jewish use of the title “Son of God.” See Wise, Abegg, Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* 267–68. Compare J. Fitzmyer, “4Q246: The ‘Son of God’ Document from Qumran,” *Bib* 74 (1993) 153–74 with C. Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries* (AGJU 25; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995) 107–11. Unlike Fitzmyer, Evans defends a probable messianic reading for 4Q246. Cf. “Aramaic Apocalypse” in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* 1.51; Collins, “The Messiah as the Son of God,” in *The Scepter and the Star* 154–72. Garcia Martinez, “The Eschatological Figure of 4Q246,” in *Qumran and Apocalyptic: Studies in the Aramaic Texts from Qumran* (New York: Brill, 1992) 162–67; Johannes Zimmermann, “Observations on 4Q246: The ‘Son of God’” in *Qumran-Messianism* (ed. James H. Charlesworth, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Gerbern S. Oegema; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998) 135–53.

⁴³ Derrett suggests that there are military overtones in this miracle story. J. D. M. Derrett, “Contributions to the Study of the Gerasene Demoniac,” *JSNT* 3 (1979) 2–17. Watts appeals to the demonic exorcisms, but particularly the Beelzebul story, to support his view that Jesus is the Isaianic Yahweh-Warrior who makes possible a New Exodus. Thus Jesus is the personal presence or manifestation of Yahweh who inaugurates the Isaianic New Exodus and subsequent kingdom of God. Watts, *Isaiah’s New Exodus in Mark* 136–82. Watts suggests that further study may support the idea that “Mark’s apparent application of the Yahweh-Warrior motif to Jesus and his use of Isaiah and Malachi in his opening sentence—both of which seem to deal with the very coming of Yahweh himself—an interesting line of endeavor might be to assess whether or not a high Christology is already in place, perhaps even presupposed, at this early stage” (p. 388). However, it seems Davidic kings were Yahweh’s warrior in the flesh, through whom Yahweh carried out his battles (Psalms 2, 110).

Jesus for who he was, God's chosen "Son," "the Christ," as presented in 1:10–11 and confirmed by a subsequent encounter with the unclean spirit in 1:23–27. Mark's summary statement appears to serve as a reminder to the readers of something they already know and to prepare them for what is yet to be revealed in the narrative (5:1–20). The fact that these unclean spirits fell before Jesus may be due solely to their recognition of Jesus' superior empowerment by the *divine Spirit* of God within him. They know they are no match against God's Spirit within Jesus, who is "the Christ." The idea, however, of unclean spirits falling before Jesus recalls a first-century Jewish perspective about Solomon. It was believed by some during the Second Temple period that the "Son of David" *par excellence* was to be like Solomon who exhibited both wisdom and healing powers (*Jos. Ant.* 8.42–49).⁴⁴ In fact, demons are presented to be no match for Solomon in 11Q11 (11QApPs^a), in that Solomon could cast out demons.⁴⁵ I wonder what connection, if any, can be made with Matthew's Jesus who contends that he himself is greater than Solomon, and to what extent is Jesus greater than Solomon (12:42)?

Regardless of how we might answer the question for Matthew, the question to be answered here is this: "Do the demon designations, 'Holy One of God,' 'Son of the Most High God,' and 'Son of God,' tell us that demons knew Jesus to be a *divine* Son?" I am not sure that they do. The demons do, however, appear to know Jesus to be "the Christ." Mark appears to use "Son of David," "Son of God," "Son of the Most High," and "Holy one of God" as parallel epithets in his narrative presentation to speak of Jesus as "the Christ." Yet there still remains the demand by the high priest. Will his demand of Jesus alter our perspective?

d. *Demand by the high priest.* As we close our discussion on the "Son of God," we want to look briefly at one more person, the high priest. At the trial of Jesus in Mark 14:53–65, the high priest demands that Jesus identify himself when he asks, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" (σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ εὐλογητοῦ). As we begin our examination, it seems important to recognize first Mark's royal presentation of Jesus as Mark's Jesus approached the city of Jerusalem. Watts rightly stresses the royal and most certainly messianic entry of Mark's Jesus in this manner: (1) Jesus rode upon an animal rather than walk (cf. 11:7 w/ 1 Kgs 1:33, 38; Zech 9:9);

⁴⁴ Despite the fact that the Queen of Sheba came from afar to hear Solomon's wisdom (1 Kgs 10:1–13), the Jews of Jesus' time refuse to listen to the wisdom of Matthew's Jesus. For reasons not to equate Jesus with wisdom, see Jon Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest: The Rest Motif in the New Testament with Special Reference to Mt 11 and Heb 3–4* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1997) 159–208.

⁴⁵ 4Q11 (11QApPsa) 2:2–9 reads: "Solomon, and he will invoke . . . the spirits and the demons, . . . These are the demons, and the Prince of Animosity . . . who . . . the abyss . . . the great . . . his people . . . cure." Translation by Garcia Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* 2.1201. For further discussion of first-century perspective of Solomon and other extrabiblical sources see Dennis C. Duling, "Solomon, Exorcism, and the Son of David," *HTR* 68 (1975) 235–52. See also Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996) 453.

(2) Jesus was hailed king (cf. 11:10 with 1 Kgs 1:34, 39; Zech 9:9); (3) the chorus “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord” had messianic overtones (cf. 11:9 with Ps 118:26); (4) the covering of the path with garments recalled Jehu’s acclamation (2 Kgs 9:12–13; cf. 1 Macc 13:51).⁴⁶ Mark obviously intended his readers to detect the messianic overtones in verses 9–10. “Taken together,” Watts concludes, “this [sic] data suggests that Mark intentionally presents Jesus’ coming in ‘royal’, and almost certainly, ‘messianic’ terms which are then picked up in Jesus’ anointing (14:3), the repeated statements during the trial (15:2, 9, 12), Pilate’s epigraphy on the cross (15:26), and the mockery of the Jews (15:32).”⁴⁷ We might also add the high priest’s demand of Jesus, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?”

The high priest’s use of “Blessed One” (ὁ εὐλογητός), a designation synonymous with God, serves to create an air of Jewish piety. Yet the phrase “the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One” (ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ εὐλογητοῦ) is merely a variation of Mark’s title, “Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God” (Ἰησοῦς Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ θεοῦ).⁴⁸ In response, Jesus answers affirmatively. He says, “I am” (ἐγὼ εἰμι). His response appears to leave nothing to question. Jesus seems to add insult to the already injured, however, when he quotes and then applies two OT passages to himself “and you shall see the son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven” (Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13). Together, these two statements from the OT present Jesus coming as a glorious end-time figure. Jesus’ declaration results in the high priest’s dramatic charge of blasphemy (14:63–64a) and ends with a verdict of condemnation (14:64b) and the mocking of Jesus’ prophetic abilities (14:65).

⁴⁶ Watts, *Isaiah’s New Exodus in Mark* 305–6.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 306.

⁴⁸ In Matt 26:63, the High Priest asks, “Are you the Christ, the Son of God?” (σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ). Thus “Son of the Blessed One” and “Son of God” appear to be two ways of saying the same thing. However, Marcus has argued that “Son of the Blessed One” is a restrictive apposition that defines what sort of Messiah Jesus is, namely a divine Messiah, and thus the accent falls on the fact that Jesus is God. Nevertheless, Marcus’s premise appears to be that if Jesus is not claiming to be divine, “What is blasphemous about claiming to be the Messiah?” Joel Marcus, “Mark 14:61: ‘Are you the Messiah-Son-of-God,’” *NovT* 31 (1989) 125–41 (cf. France, *The Gospel of Mark* 609–10). Bock, however, has argued the High Priest’s “examination was about messiahship, so that a socio-political issue could be taken to Rome.” Thus “Jesus’ reply responds to this messianic query and yet does even more. It represents a severe assault on the sensibilities of the Jewish leaders at two levels. First, the reply speaks for an exalted Jesus who sees himself as too close to God in the leadership’s view. Second, he makes claims as a judge who one day will render a verdict and/or experience a vindication against the very leadership that sees itself as appointed by God.” Darrell L. Bock, *Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism: The Charge against Jesus in Mark 14:53–65* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1998; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000) 231. Thus the charge of blasphemy need not be Jesus’ claim to deity and thereby render the “Son of the Blessed One” as a restrictive apposition. Rather, “Son of the Blessed One” is a nonrestrictive apposition that merely supplements the title “Messiah.” In other words, the title “the Christ” equals “Son of the Blessed One” just as “the Christ” equals “Son of God” in Mark 1:1. They are two titles for speaking of the Jewish Messiah. For others who view the two titles as synonymous or as nonrestrictive appositions see NASB, NIV, and NET. See also Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* 535; Juel, *Messianic Exegesis* 79–81; Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20* (WBC 34a; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001) 448.

On some level, the assumption often made is that Jesus claims ontological or functional equality with God when he provides this unambiguous affirmation to the high priest, namely, "Yes, I am 'the Christ', the son of the Blessed One." Yet does such a perspective move beyond the plain meaning of Mark's narrative presentation of Jesus? Does it necessarily follow that the charge of blasphemy arises at this point because Jesus claims or implies deity for himself? I do not think that it does. First, throughout his narrative Mark has operated consistently with titles typically used by first-century Jews that appear to present Jesus to be a royal messianic figure, namely, "the Christ."

Second, it seems a charge of blasphemy could be leveled against Jesus for reasons other than claiming equality with God. During the Second Temple period charges of blasphemy could be leveled against someone for one of three reasons: (1) using the divine name of God; (2) arrogant disrespect of God (as in Mark 2:1–12); and (3) insulting the chosen leaders of Israel (as in Mark 2:13–3:6; 14:53–65).⁴⁹ Although judgment in the OT belongs to God (Deut 1:17), human judges and kings had a divine-like function as Yahweh's representatives to carry out and maintain God's divine justice (Ps 82:6a; 45:7–8; cf. 10:34–38). This perspective appears to manifest itself in Second Temple literature, for to go against Jewish leadership was considered an act of blasphemy. Early on in Mark, Jesus certainly rebelled against the Jewish leadership, particularly as he came into conflict with Second Temple religious practices or "path markers" (2:13–3:6).⁵⁰ The Pharisees conspire with the Herodians in order to kill Jesus (3:6). Furthermore, the attacks leveled against him at the temple (11:12–25; 13:1–2) and the testimony delivered by witnesses against him at the trial (14:55–58; cf. 15:29–30) compound the charge of blasphemy.

Third, OT saints are frequently exalted to places of honor in extra-biblical material.⁵¹ With the exception of Moses, each of these exalted human figures executes eschatological judgment. Exalting a dead person to such an honor was acceptable. However, no living Jew ever exalted himself to such eschatological privileges as Jesus had done. Jesus, in anticipation of his eschatological Messianic privileges (13:24–27) because he is a *Spirit-driven* Christ and prophet (1:12; cf. 6:1–6b; 9:7, 9; 13:2, 6–37; 14:65), exalts himself to a place of Christological honor during his trial (14:62). It is

⁴⁹ For extensive documentation see Darrell L. Bock, *Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism* 30–112.

⁵⁰ Holmén, in *Jesus & Jewish Covenant Thinking*, coins two phrases, "path searching" and "path markers," to describe how a Jew remained loyal to the Mosaic covenant during the Second Temple period. Holmén's results are twofold: (1) "Jesus did not participate in covenant path searching"; and (2) Jesus' "dismissal of path markers seems to have been caused by the message of the kingdom of God" (p. 331). Tom Holmén, *Jesus & Jewish Covenant Thinking* (Biblical Interpretation 55; Boston: Brill, 2001).

⁵¹ For example: Adam (Sir 49:14–16; *Life of Adam and Eve* 47:3; judge: *T. Abr.* 11:10–12; 13:2–3), Abel (judge: *AscIsa* 9:8–42; 13:1–3); Enoch (Sir 49:14–16; judge: *1 Enoch* 12:1–5, 51:3; *Jub.* 4:17–23; *T. Abr.* 11:3–8 [recension B]); Moses (Sir 45:1–5, mediator prophet: *Sifre Deut.* 34:5 §357). For other passages on exalted figures see Darrell L. Bock, *Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism* 113–83.

one thing to bestow honor to someone who is already dead, yet it is quite another to assume it for yourself. Thus according to Bock, "the self-made claim to sit at the right hand and ride the clouds would be read as a blasphemous utterance."⁵² So, Mark's Jesus is a suffering-serving "Christ," who dies in Jerusalem in a manner in keeping with the practice of the Romans during the Second Temple period, death on a cross. Thus it appears that the title "Son of the Blessed One" is yet another title in a sequence of several different messianic titles, used by Mark to present Jesus as "the Christ."

III. CONCLUSION

Without a doubt, Scripture supports the Christian orthodox doctrine that Jesus, the exalted Christ, was and is God (Rom 9:5; Phil 2:5–8; Tit 2:13). Furthermore, within the Jewish context of monotheism, Jesus is frequently presented in the NT as Creator and Ruler, which clearly identifies him as God (John 1:1–5; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:15–16; Heb 1:5–13; Rev 3:14). According to Bauckham, "The participation of Christ in the creative work of God is necessary, in Jewish monotheistic terms, to complete the otherwise incomplete inclusion of him in the divine identity."⁵³ Mark, however, never explicitly presents Jesus as Creator. The Spirit's descent from heaven upon Jesus at his baptism has clear first-century messianic connections. From the very outset of Mark's Gospel, Jesus has been given authority and power over sin, disease, death, demons, and the domain of nature as one who is God's Son, the Christ.

So as not to say too much concerning the titles "the Christ" and particularly "the Son of God," it seems safe to define these titles according to the plain meaning of Mark's narrative presentation of Jesus in the following manner. It seems to me that Mark fully understood them to speak of the divine authentication, commissioning, and empowerment of Jesus for ministry as "the Christ" (1:1). Certainly for us as twenty-first-century readers of Mark, "Christ" (8:29) and "Son of David" (10:47–48) are straightforward titles that point to Jesus to be the Christ.⁵⁴

This is not to say that Mark *never* addresses Jesus' deity. It is to say, however, that most of the titles used throughout Mark's presentation of Jesus underscore Jesus to be "the Christ." God speaks of Jesus as "beloved Son" in a manner in keeping with OT Davidic kings (1:9–11, 9:2–10). Demons refer to him with three titles that support Jesus to be God's chosen "Christ":

⁵² Bock, *Blasphemy and Exaltation* 203; cf. Morna Hooker's statement quoted on pp. 205–6.

⁵³ Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 36.

⁵⁴ Similarly, there are several straightforward acts of Jesus that point to his messiahship. For example, we can point to the Qumran community's thoughts about the messianic age. In 4Q521 (4QMessAp), the expectations of the Qumran community during the age of the Messiah involved the heavens and the earth to listen to the Lord's Messiah. This involved the resurrection of the dead, healing the critically wounded, and sending good news to the afflicted. See John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star* 117–23.

(1) “the Holy One of God,” a designation used for spiritually empowered people (1:23–28); (2) “Son of the Most High God,” a designation in keeping with Second Temple reference for a chosen king yet to come (5:1–20); and (3) the designation “Son of God” serves to summarize Mark’s presentation of Jesus as God’s chosen “Christ” (3:7–6a).

Finally, the high priest refers to Jesus as “Son of the Blessed One,” a title Jesus accepts due to his view of himself as an eschatological messianic figure who will execute judgment (14:53–65). As the narrative unfolds, these various designations for Jesus are explicit portrayals of Jesus to be “the Christ,” who has been empowered by God’s Spirit to carry out God’s mission. It seems doubtful, in light of the titles mentioned above that speak of Jesus as “the Christ,” that Mark’s use of “Son of God” should be interpreted to speak of Jesus’ deity. Thus to impose a Nicean definition on the title “Son of God” is not only anachronistic; it seems to hinder our ability to appreciate Mark’s narrative presentation of Jesus as *he intended*, which appears to be to present Jesus as “the Christ” who was empowered by God via his Spirit to teach and act with authority as God’s royal “Son.”

By the time Mark’s narrative ends, readers have observed and learned about this self-giving (serving) and self-sacrificing (suffering) divinely chosen “Christ” whose name is Jesus. At the baptism of Jesus, God proclaims him “my Son,” and at the cross, when all the mocking of Jesus as the king of the Jews was said and done (15:32), Mark’s Roman soldier, a Gentile, recognizes Jesus for who he was, God’s self-giving and self-sacrificing king. What irony! Whereas the disciples appear obtuse throughout the entire Gospel, wondering what kind of Christ Jesus is, the Roman centurion grasped it. Thus Mark’s explicit portrayal of Jesus through the synonymous titles “the Christ” and “the Son of God” is that Jesus is “the Christ.” He is not merely a wonder-working Christ as portrayed and misunderstood by his disciples (1:14–8:21 with Peter’s confession in 8:29), but rather he is a suffering Christ as understood by the Roman centurion as he stood by and watched Jesus suffering a torturous death on the cross (13:1–16:8 with the centurion’s confession in 15:39). The true meaning of Jesus as “the Christ” occurs at the foot of the cross. In both life and death, Jesus is “the Christ.” Thus the explicit and plain meaning of the phrase “Son of God” in Mark means first and foremost “the Christ.”

During the Second Temple period, it was thought that the restoration of a community involved suffering, and thereby this would be part of God’s way in which he would restore national Israel. They specifically believed a person or persons who suffered at the hands of the wicked, or the pagans, would suffice for bringing about the restoration of the kingdom (2 Macc 7:36–38; 2 Macc 6:27–29, 9:23–24, 17:20–22, 18:3–4). Jesus was that person (cf. 10:45). Thus “Mark tells the story of Jesus as the story of a Galilean prophet, announcing the kingdom of Israel’s God, summoning Israel to change her direction, that is, to repent (1:15, 6:4).”⁵⁵ Mark, however, takes the concept

⁵⁵ N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 395.

a step further and extends serving and suffering to all those who dare to follow Jesus. We do not follow King Jesus into his kingdom because he is a super miracle worker (8:28–29) nor because he can grant to us ruling authority (10:37). We follow because he calls us, appoints us, and sends us (1:16–20, 3:13–19, 6:7–13). If we choose to follow, we are to do so obediently, and we are to serve others as we go (9:35, 10:43–45). Like “the Christ” ὁ Χριστός), we who follow after Jesus are expected to suffer, and, if necessary, die like Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God (Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς θεοῦ; cf. 8:34, 10:39–40, 15:37).