

## Article

# Who Do You Say That I Am? (Matt 16:15; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20): Christology in the Synoptic Gospels

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**Abstract:** This article investigates Jesus’s identity in the Synoptic Gospels by examining the Gospels’ literary features. I take a narrative approach to determine how the evangelists, in unique and shared ways, reveal to their audiences who Jesus is. Certain literary features in the evangelists’ texts provide an answer to Jesus’s question, “Who do you say that I am?” (Matt 16:15; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20). For Mark, Jesus is “Christ” and “Son of God” (Mark 1:1); as the plot unfolds, these terms become guideposts suggesting that characters in the Gospel (and by extension the audience, too) come to a deeper understanding of who Jesus is. For Matthew, the good news of Jesus commences with the relationship between Jesus and Israel’s past through figures like David and Abraham. By observing how Matthew characterizes Jesus in the Gospel, the audience learns that Jesus stands in continuity with Israel. Finally, Luke starts his account with a focus not on figures from Israel’s history, but rather on its institutions, like the temple and the priesthood (see Luke 1:5, 9). Luke’s audience learns who Jesus is by paying attention to Luke’s use of settings and themes. Thus, the particular literary artistry of each synoptic evangelist provides a way for a contemporary audience to know Jesus.

**Keywords:** Christ; narrative; literary features; plot; characterization; setting; theme; genealogy; messianic secret; son of god; son of man



Academic Editor: Corné J. Bekker

Received: 4 October 2024

Revised: 29 January 2025

Accepted: 29 January 2025

Published: 2 February 2025

**Citation:** Meldrum, Brian. 2025. Who Do You Say That I Am? (Matt 16:15; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20): Christology in the Synoptic Gospels. *Religions* 16: 170. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16020170>

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The four Gospels exist as literary works written to introduce readers to Jesus of Nazareth and to foster belief in him. The fourfold Gospel invites the audience to approach the question of who Jesus is from different perspectives, making a close reading of the texts from the different evangelists a rich literary experience. John, for instance, in his conclusion is clear about the scope, limit, and purpose of his Gospel: “Thus Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book, but these are written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:30).<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Luke sets out to tell the story in an “orderly way” so that his audience “might know with certainty” what they “have been taught” (Luke 1:3). By contrast, Matthew and Mark do not indicate an explicit purpose as Gospel writers.<sup>2</sup> Rather, Mark and Matthew’s audiences have to look for clues from the Gospel’s narratives as to the author’s purposes and Jesus’s identity.

In this article, by utilizing a narrative critical approach to the Synoptic Gospels, I investigate how the evangelists, in unique and shared ways, reveal to their audiences who Jesus is.<sup>3</sup> How do the synoptic evangelists provide answers to the question posed by Jesus: “Who do you say that I am?” (Matt 16:15; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20)? With a close reading of each Gospel’s literary features, and through a consideration the “distinctive claims regarding Christ” from each evangelist, a Christology of the Synoptic Gospels emerges.<sup>4</sup>

Literary dependence can be observed among the Synoptic Gospels, with most scholars accepting the solution that Mark wrote first, and then Mark’s text was somehow employed

by Matthew and Luke.<sup>5</sup> Matthew and Luke also share Gospel content (the “Double Tradition”) and sometimes agree with each other against Mark, which led scholars to propose that a collection of Jesus’s sayings might have existed: the hypothetical Q (German for *quelle*, or “source”) document.<sup>6</sup> Narrative criticism, however, is concerned with the final form of the text (a synchronic approach), and not the complex and speculative literary relationships (a diachronic approach) of Matthew, Mark, and Luke that make up the “Synoptic problem.”<sup>7</sup> Additionally, narrative criticism upholds “the aim of reading the text as the author intended,” thus, my paper will investigate what the evangelists intended to teach their audiences about who Jesus is by means of distinct literary features in their Gospels.<sup>8</sup> Each section of this paper will discuss one of the Synoptic evangelists; I propose a literary feature (or set of features) for each Gospel that becomes my interpretative key for considering how each evangelist tells their audience who Jesus is (e.g., plot for Mark, characterization for Matthew, and setting and theme for Luke).

Mark, known for his stark brevity, offers a glimpse into who Jesus is in his opening verse: “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1). For Mark, Jesus is both Christ and Son of God, but these terms will be unpacked by the evangelist as the plot progresses. “Christ” and “Son of God” will appear at prominent places throughout Mark’s narrative, most especially at the Gospel’s midpoint (Mark 8) and climax (Mark 15). The terms become guideposts suggesting that characters in the Gospel (and by extension the audience, too) come to a deeper understanding of who Jesus is while the *plot* unfolds.

Matthew has his own introductory material to begin his Gospel: “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt 1:1). For Matthew, the good news of Jesus commences with the relationship of Jesus to Israel’s past through figures like David and Abraham. By observing how Matthew characterizes Jesus in the Gospel, the audience learns that Jesus stands in continuity with Israel. *Characterization* is one way to appreciate Matthew’s Christology.

Luke starts his account with a focus not on figures from Israel’s history, but rather on its institutions, like the temple and the priesthood (see Luke 1:5, 9). As the audience learns who Jesus is through Luke’s account, paying attention to *settings* and *themes* can help one understand Luke’s Christology.

In the first section, I will discuss passages in Mark of Christological significance along with their parallels in Matthew and Luke. Then, in separate sections for each, I will discuss passages that are unique to either Matthew or Luke.

## 1. Mark’s Christology: The Plot Progresses

The opening verse of Mark’s Gospel provides a key for the audience to know who Jesus is: “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1).<sup>9</sup> Mark’s opening verse foreshadows two professions of faith in Jesus that appear at the midpoint and conclusion of the Gospel. Mark 1:1 names Jesus as “Christ” (Χριστοῦ), a title that reappears halfway through the plot when Peter answers Jesus’s question, “But who do you say that I am?” (Mark 8:29) with “You are the Christ” (σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστός) (Mark 8:29). Secondly, Mark 1:1 depicts Jesus as “Son of God” (υἱοῦ θεοῦ), a designation that echoes in the baptism (Mark 1:11) and transfiguration accounts, and resounds near the end of the plot in the centurion’s proclamation: “Truly this man was [a] Son of God (υἱὸς θεοῦ)” (Mark 15:39).<sup>10</sup> In Mark, Jesus is Christ and Son of God, as both Jew and gentile will attest as the Gospel’s plot unfolds.

The second of Jesus’s identifications in Mark 1:1, “Son of God,” is the first that the Gospel develops at Jesus’s baptism in Mark 1:9–11 (see also Matt 3:13–17; Luke 3:21–22). Mark records: “And immediately, coming up from the water, he saw the heavens torn

and the spirit like a dove descending upon him, and there was a voice from the heavens, ‘You are my beloved son (υἱός), in you I am well pleased’ (Mark 1:10–11). What Mark’s audience learns of Jesus’s identity in Mark 1:1 “is now confirmed by the events at Jesus’ baptism, but none of the characters in the Gospel share in the secret. Indeed, much of the plot of Mark revolves around how the secret of Jesus’ identity comes to be known.”<sup>11</sup> Mark and Luke have the Father speak personally to the Son, “You (σὺ) are my beloved son” (Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22), while Matthew directs the message of Jesus’s identity to others, although Matthew does not report if the crowds on Jordan’s bank hear these words: “This (οὗτός) is my beloved son” (Matt 3:17). For the benefit of the crowd or for Jesus himself, the Father reveals in the synoptic account Jesus’s identity as son. The Trinity is active in the baptism account (the Father speaking, the Son seeing, and the Spirit descending). The Spirit continues to propel the narrative forward by “driving out” (ἐκβάλλει) (Mark 1:12) Jesus into the desert to face temptation.<sup>12</sup> Strengthened by the Father’s spoken witness and the Spirit’s guiding presence, Jesus the beloved Son triumphs over the tempter (Matt 4:1; Mark 1:12; Luke 4:1).

Mark then presents the beginning of Jesus’s ministry in Galilee. Jesus, the Son of God (Mark 1:1), proclaims the Gospel of God, saying, “The time is fulfilled, near is the kingdom of God: Repent, and believe in the good news” (Mark 1:15). After calling his first disciples from pairs of brothers—Simon and Andrew, James and John—Jesus shows his authority as a teacher in the synagogue of Capernaum. The reaction from Jesus’s audience is astonishment, “for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Mark 1:22). His authoritative words are backed by powerful actions when he commands an unclean spirit out of a man (Mark 1:23; Luke 4:35). The demon acknowledges who Jesus is: “I know who you are, the holy one of God” (Mark 1:24).<sup>13</sup> As Mark’s plot unfolds, the evangelist himself (1:1), the Father (1:11), and an unclean spirit tell the audience who Jesus is, though Jesus is quick to silence the demonic proclamation (Mark 1:25; see also Mark 1:34). The people note that Jesus teaches with authority and how unclean spirits are subject to him and “obey him” (Mark 1:27). The good news that Jesus proclaims in Mark 1 is the good news of the kingdom of God: that the beloved Son of the Father (Mark 1:11) is the “holy one” (Mark 1:24) who has come to conquer the doomed kingdom of evil (see Mark 1:13, 24–27, 34).

As Jesus’s healing ministry expands, he expects the reports of his miracles and his identity to stay quiet. Jesus’s desire for secrecy began with his silencing demons “because they knew him” (Mark 1:34) and later includes a cleansed leper (“See that you tell no one”) in Mark 1:44 (see also Matt 8:4; Luke 5:14), who “began to proclaim (κηρύσσειν) everything and share the matter” broadly, so that Jesus could barely enter a town without being recognized (Mark 1:45). Jesus’s concern for secrecy in Mark has become known as the “Messianic secret.” The narrative plot of Mark suggests that the reason for Jesus’s call for discretion is the potential (and profound) misunderstandings that will ensue from any Messianic claims made by him or about him.<sup>14</sup>

The plot of Mark presents Jesus as the Son of God and a healer throughout chapter 1, but with the healing of a paralytic in Mark 2, another key aspect of who Jesus is emerges: Son of Man. The term comes from the book of Daniel, where an apocalyptic figure (Dan 7:13–14) “prophesies a totally new kingdom, a kingdom of ‘humanity,’ characterized by the real power that comes from God himself.”<sup>15</sup> As “Son of Man”, Jesus displays divine power and authority. In Mark 2, moved by the faith of those who bring a paralytic to him, Jesus resolves to heal the one paralyzed, saying, “Child, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5; see also Matt 9:2ff; Luke 5:20ff). The scribes question (in their hearts!) the divine claim that Jesus can forgive sins. Jesus phrases the claim as a divine passive (“your sins are forgiven,” implying “by God”), and yet “the scribes recognize the authority implied in his

statement.”<sup>16</sup> Then, Jesus answers their unspoken objection by responding, “but so that you might know that the Son of Man has authority (ἐξουσίαν) to forgive sins upon earth” (Mark 2:10) and telling the paralytic, “Rise, pick up your mat and go home” (Mark 2:11). Jesus identifies himself as the figure from the visions in Daniel 7, the “son of man” who receives from the Ancient of Days “authority” (ἐξουσία) (Dan 7:14 LXX). In Mark 2, Jesus exercises God’s authority to forgive sins, read hearts, and restore health (Mark 2:5–11).<sup>17</sup>

The question of Jesus’s identity in Mark comes at the plot’s midpoint in a dialog between Jesus and Peter.<sup>18</sup> In Mark 8, Jesus asks his disciples, “Who do the people (οἱ ἄνθρωποι) say that I am?” (Mark 8:27). The disciples reply that the people regard Jesus as John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the prophets (Mark 8:28). Jesus poses the question to his disciples “on the way” which suggests movement in Mark’s plot.<sup>19</sup> The indication “on the way” means that Jesus and the plot are advancing toward Jerusalem, “to the center of salvation history, to the place where Jesus’ destiny would be fulfilled in the Cross and the Resurrection.”<sup>20</sup> Rather than leave the thoughts on his identity to false speculations, Jesus changes his approach: “But who do you (ὁ μὲν) say that I am?” Here, Peter speaks for all: “You (σὺ) are the Christ” (Mark 8:29). Peter’s confession in Mark 8:29 serves as a midpoint to the Gospel and forms an inclusio with the evangelist’s opening statement: “The good news of Jesus Christ (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), the Son of God” (Mark 1:1).<sup>21</sup> Eight chapters into Mark’s plot, the audience knows what Peter knows: Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah, one anointed by God to bring good news (Mark 1:1, 14–15; see also Luke 4:18).

Mark 8 reveals a potential reason for the secrecy motif in the Gospel’s first half: a tendency to misunderstand the Messiah’s mission. Mark 8:31–33 is the first of three of Jesus’s passion predictions: “And he began to teach them that it is necessary for the Son of Man to suffer many things and to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and to be killed, and after three days to rise” (Mark 8:31). The impersonal verb “it is necessary” suggests “an overtone of apocalyptic determinism” and “divine agency as God’s plan unfolds in Jesus’s Passion” through Mark’s plot.<sup>22</sup> Peter, having soared to the heights of heavenly revelation by his acknowledging Jesus as the Christ, now reenters the earthly realm by rebuking Jesus for identifying himself as a suffering Messiah (Mark 8:32).<sup>23</sup> Next, the one who rebukes is rebuked by Jesus: “And, having turned and having looked at his disciples, [Jesus] rebuked Peter and says: ‘Get behind me, Satan, for you are not thinking the things of God, but rather, the things of human beings’” (Mark 8:33). Peter sees that Jesus is the Messiah, but he fails to see why the Messiah must suffer. Jesus then instructs the crowd about discipleship in relation to his messianic mission: Only by denying oneself and by taking up the cross can one follow Jesus as a disciple; only by losing one’s life “for my sake and for the Gospel’s sake,” says Jesus, will one save it (Mark 8:34–35; Matt 16:24–25; Luke 9:23–24).<sup>24</sup> Jesus, the one who has made divine claims throughout the first half of Mark’s Gospel (see above), now makes demands of his disciples that they follow him and prepare to lose their lives for his sake and the Gospel’s sake, as only God could do.

After Mark 8, as Mark’s plot proceeds to its climax, the audience can expect the revelation of who Jesus is in the second phrase of Mark’s first verse: Jesus as “the Son of God.” In Mark 9, on a high mountain with Peter, James, and John, Jesus “was transfigured before them and his clothes became radiant, exceedingly white” (Mark 9:2–3; Matt 17:2; Luke 9:29). As at the baptism scene where the Father spoke to Jesus, “You are my beloved son” (σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός) (Mark 1:11), at the transfiguration scene, the Father’s voice is heard by Peter, James, and John: “This is my beloved son” (οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός) (Mark 9:7; see also Matt 17:5; Luke 9:35).<sup>25</sup> Not only should Mark’s audience listen to the Father’s voice, it is instructed to heed the voice of the Son, too: “Listen to him” (Mark 9:7).

After the transfiguration account, Jesus's identity as Son of the Father will take on a new meaning as the suffering Son of Man. In a second passion prediction, Jesus tells his disciples what being Son of the Father and Son of Man entails: "The Son of Man (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) is to be delivered into the hands of men (εἰς χεῖρας ἀνθρώπων) and they will kill him (ἀποκτενοῦσιν), and having been killed (ἀποκτανθείς), after three days he will rise (ἀναστήσεται)" (Mark 9:31; see also Matt 17:22–23; Luke 9:44).<sup>26</sup> Jesus's prediction that he will be "delivered" (παράδοται) over to death recalls the suffering servant in Isaiah who would "deliver himself to death" (παρεδόθη εἰς θάνατον ἢ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ) (Isa 53:12 LXX).<sup>27</sup> The literary artistry of Jesus's second passion prediction is striking: Jesus, identifying himself as "Son of Man," is willingly given over into the "hands of men"; the repetition of the verb "kill" (ἀποκτείνω) makes Jesus's death seem definitive, and yet, the prediction ends with the promise of "resurrection" (ἀνίστημι).

The third passion prediction (Mark 10; Matthew 20; Luke 18) is the most explicit of all, preparing the "audience for the passion narrative that follows, building suspense but also focusing their attention and alerting them as to what to expect."<sup>28</sup> Jesus tells his disciples all that will occur in Jerusalem at the hands of Jews and gentiles: "For behold, we are going up (ἀναβαίνουμεν) to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered (παράδοθήσεται) to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; and they will deliver (παράδωσουσιν) him to the gentiles, and they will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him, but after three days he will rise (ἀναστήσεται)" (Mark 10:33–34; see also Matt 20:18–19; Luke 18:31–33). The litany of what the Son of Man's sufferings will be (mocking, spitting, scourging, and killing) adds to the dramatic quality of the last prediction. Just as Jesus is "going up" (ἀναβαίνω) to Jerusalem before his passion and death, so after his death, Jesus will rise up (ἀναστήσεται) victorious (Mark 10:33–34). On the way to Jerusalem, Mark notes that Jesus, in his role as teacher, "goes ahead" (προάγων) of his disciples who follow him (Mark 10:32). The introduction to the third passion prediction connects verbally with Jesus's assurance to his disciples that after he is raised, he will "go before" (προάξω; προάγει) his disciples into Galilee (see Mark 14:28 and 16:7).<sup>29</sup>

Mark's passion narrative brings the Gospel's plot to its conclusion. At Jesus's trial he is asked by the high priest, "Are you the Christ, the son of the Blessed One?" (Mark 14:61). Mark's audience already knows from Mark 1:1 that Jesus is Christ and Son of God, but when Jesus answers the high priest in the affirmative, "I am" (ἐγώ εἰμι), the chief priests and the leaders of the Sanhedrin (see Mark 14:55) hear Jesus acknowledge his divinity plainly, by calling to mind the divine name "I am who am" (Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν) (Exodus 3:14 LXX).<sup>30</sup> Jesus continues, having affirmed that he is "the son of the Blessed One" (Mark 14:61), by further identifying himself as the "Son of Man," the one "seated at the right hand of the power and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark 16:62; Dan 7:13 LXX; see also Ps 110:1). In Mark 14:61, Jesus's first passion prediction is about to come true (Mark 8:31): He will be "rejected" by the leaders. His divine claim and "affirmation is a preview of his exaltation and return as Son of Man."<sup>31</sup>

Dying on the cross, Jesus utters a loud cry and breathes his last (Mark 15:37), while the veil of the sanctuary "was torn" by an unseen hand (Mark 15:38).<sup>32</sup> The centurion, one of the number of "gentiles" whom Jesus predicted would "kill" him in Mark 10:33–34, looks upon him and declares: "Truly, this man (ὁ ἄνθρωπος) was a Son of God (υἱὸς θεοῦ)" (Mark 15:39; see also Matt 27:54; Luke 23:47).<sup>33</sup> The audience now knows that this man, Jesus, is not only "Son of Man" (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου), but truly, "Son of God" (υἱὸς θεοῦ).<sup>34</sup> What Mark set out to proclaim in the Gospel's first line, "The good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," is confirmed by one of the Gospel's last lines (Mark 15:39). The centurion's declaration that Jesus is truly "Son of God" forms an inclusio with the

evangelist's proclamation about the "good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1) and "constitutes the climax of the gospel."<sup>35</sup>

At the beginning of Mark's plot, Jesus heals a leper (Mark 1:40–43) whom he warns, see that "you say nothing to anyone" (μηδενι μηδεν ειπηγς) (Mark 1:44); however, the man heralds ("κηρυσσειν") the good news of Jesus. By contrast, in Mark's resurrection account at the Gospel's conclusion, the women are told that Jesus "has been raised" and "he is not here" (Mark 16:6). Next, they are told to "go, tell" (υπαγετε ειπατε) the good news of Jesus's resurrection to his disciples. Indeed, they go, but they flee and "say nothing" (ουδενι ουδεν ειπαν) because they are afraid (Mark 16:8) and "struck with awe at the extraordinary events."<sup>36</sup> The Gospel's abrupt conclusion poses a question for the audience: If we believe what Mark tells us in the Gospel's first line, that this is "the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," how can we keep this message to ourselves, even in the face of fear? If those first witnesses to the resurrection in Mark 16:8 do not tell the "good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1), then perhaps the evangelist is tasking the audience with this duty. Like the cleansed leper in Mark 1:45, members of Mark's audience are to become heralds of the good news.

By paying attention to plot as one literary feature that the second evangelist uses as the Gospel unfolds, Mark's readers today gain new insights into who Jesus is: From the initial proclamation at the Gospel's outset (Mark 1:1), to Peter's confession at its midpoint (Mark 8:29), to the declaration of the centurion at the crucifixion (Mark 15:39), Mark's readers see again and again that Jesus is Christ and Son of God. The insight into who Jesus as the Gospel's plot progresses mirrors a story that Mark relates right before the Gospel's midpoint. In Mark 8:22–26, Jesus restores sight to a blind man in two stages. First, the man sees obscurely, observing "people as trees walking" (Mark 8:28), then later sees clearly (8:25). Mark's readers, like the blind man in chapter 8, come to see clearly who Jesus is, but only as the Gospel's plot progresses in stages.<sup>37</sup>

## 2. Matthew's Christology: Characterization as Key

Matthew's Gospel begins with Jesus's genealogy characterizing him as one in continuity with ancient Israel, especially its great king and first patriarch: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham" (Matt 1:1). By connecting Jesus to David and Abraham, Matthew demonstrates how proper names are "a way of generating authority and linking an individual with history itself."<sup>38</sup> Although the focus in Matthew's version of the genealogy is on Israel, the mention of biblical heroines outside the twelve tribes, namely Rahab and Ruth (Matt 1:5), hints at Jesus's universal mission to save all humanity, not only the "lost sheep of the house of Israel," (Matt 10:6; 15:24).<sup>39</sup> The mission to the gentiles, however, is only implied at the outset of Matthew's Gospel; it will be fully realized in Jesus's commission to his disciples to "make disciples of all nations" at the Gospel's conclusion (Matt 28:19–20).

Another portion of Matthew's introductory material that brings out an aspect of Jesus's character is the name given to Jesus by an angel before his birth and the identification of Jesus with "Emmanuel."<sup>40</sup> Initially, an angel reveals to Joseph in a dream that Mary "will bear a son, and you will call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21). Here, the child "Jesus" (Ιησοϋς) (Matt 1:21) shares a name (and etymology "Yhwh saves" = יהושע with the OT hero "Joshua" (Ιησοϋς) (Josh 1:10 LXX), the successor of Moses who led the people into the land (Josh 1:2). Jesus's mission "to an Israel that is lost or has gone astray is signified in his name, for he will save sinners" (see Matt 10:22; 16:25; 24:13).<sup>41</sup> Next, the evangelist notes that Jesus's impending birth will fulfill Isaiah's prophecy that a virgin will "bear a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel," which is translated 'God is with us (μεθ' ημων)'" (Matt 1:23; see Isa 7:14 LXX). Only at the Gospel's

conclusion will the significance of characterizing Jesus as “God with us, Emmanuel” be fully revealed when he promises to remain with his disciples who continue his saving ministry: “I am with you (μεθ’ ὑμῶν) always until the end of the age” (Matt 28:19).

After recalling Jesus’s baptism, Matthew gives the audience a detailed look into Jesus’s character with the temptation account. Twice Jesus’s identity is questioned by the tempter—“If you are the Son of God” (Matt 4:3, 6)—while the final temptation is to lure Jesus into false worship: “All these [kingdoms of the world], I will give to you, if having fallen down, you worship me.” Jesus, however, secure in his identity as the beloved son, the words that the Father’s voice confirmed of him at his baptism, sends the tempter off with Moses’s words to Israel: “The Lord, your God, you will worship and him alone will you serve” (Matt 4:10; Deut 6:13). The devil’s tactic is to question “the identity and power of Jesus. What was declared in public by the Father (3:17: “This is my beloved Son”) is now tested in private by the enemy.”<sup>42</sup> With his identity confirmed and the tempter defeated, Jesus inaugurates his teaching ministry during which Matthew characterizes Jesus as a new Moses: “And, having seen the crowd, he ascended the mountain, and having sat down, his disciples came to him. And, having opened his mouth, he taught them” (Matt 5:1–2; see also Exodus 19:3).<sup>43</sup> Matthew’s genealogy showed Jesus in continuity with Israel’s religious and royal past: Abraham and the patriarchs were the founders of Israel’s faith, while David and Solomon ruled the people as shepherd and sage. Now, in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), Jesus stands in continuity with Moses, Israel’s leader and lawgiver.<sup>44</sup> In the Gospel’s initial chapters, the evangelist characterizes Jesus as the heir to Israel’s promises by casting him in the role of a new Abraham, a new David, and a new Moses.

Jesus’s teaching ministry continues even after he emulates Moses in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 21, Jesus tells of two sons asked by their father to work in the vineyard: The first replies that he will not go, but later changes his mind and agrees to the task; the second initially responds that he will go, but later changes his mind and does not. Jesus affirms that the one who initially refused the father’s request, but ultimately completed it, does the father’s will (Matt 21:28–32). Jesus’s parable suggests that there are two responses to the Father’s will, regardless of the initial reaction to it: whether to do God’s will or to do one’s own. The parable is addressed to the chief priests and elders of the people (Matt 21:23) and implies that their fault “is not simply the inconsistency of their behavior but their failure to fulfill their God-given role as leaders of Israel.”<sup>45</sup> Then, in another parable found only in Matthew, Jesus reveals that when the Son of Man comes in glory and the nations assemble before him, each will be separated one from another, like sheep and goats. Those who have done righteous deeds (feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, etc.) (Matt 25:35–36) will inherit eternal life, while those who refused to perform various acts of charity (Matt 25:42–43) will “depart for eternal punishment” (Matt 25:46).<sup>46</sup> In these Matthean parables, the evangelist characterizes Jesus as a sage, a new Solomon, in the Wisdom tradition of Israel. Jesus instructs his disciples that there are two ways upon which each person can embark: God’s path or their own.<sup>47</sup>

Even otherwise unassuming characters in Matthew’s Gospel help the audience recognize Jesus’s true character. In the passion narrative, Matthew records the detail of Pilate’s wife’s dream about Jesus, whom she calls “righteous” (Matt 27:19). Matthew’s characterization of Jesus as “righteous” via her dream recalls the designation of Joseph as “righteous” (Matt 1:19) in Matthew’s infancy narrative. Pilate’s wife, a gentile, recognizes Jesus’s righteousness and acts as a foil to the religious leaders of Israel who condemn him as guilty.<sup>48</sup> Her appearance in the narrative concerning Jesus’s death echoes the inclusion of gentile women (Ruth and Rahab) in the account of Jesus’s birth (Matt 1:5).

In the resurrection account, an angel tells the women early in the morning not to be afraid, but to see the place where Jesus once lay, and to take the message of his resurrection

to the disciples (Matt 28:6–7). The women heed the message, going quickly from the tomb, still fearful, yet overjoyed (Matt 28:8). When they met the risen Jesus on the way, “they held his feet, and they worshipped him” (Matt 28:9). In their combination of fear and joy, they recognize Jesus’s divine identity, and they are moved to do him homage, for “joy is what turns fear to worship.”<sup>49</sup> Jesus then reiterates to the women not to be afraid, but to continue on their way to tell his “brothers that they should go into Galilee, and there they will see me” (Matt 28:10). The message of the women is the message entrusted to all who read Matthew’s Gospel today: Do not be afraid! Jesus has risen from the dead and saves his people from their sins. Go, then, and make this proclamation to all nations (Matt 28:19).

By paying attention to characterization as one literary feature that the first evangelist uses as the Gospel unfolds, Matthew’s readers today gain new insights into who Jesus is: The Gospel’s opening verse situates Jesus in the context of Israel as “son of David, and son of Abraham” (Matt 1:1); however, the Gospel’s readers learn that Jesus is not only characterized as one in a long line of descendants knowing God’s promises to his people Israel. Jesus is divine, “God with us,” the one who will save his people from their sins (Matt 1:21) and who will remain “with” the people as Emmanuel, “God with us” (Matt 1:23), until the end of the age (see Matt 28:20). Matthew’s readers come to know Jesus, God with them, by encountering Jesus’s presence and character in the Gospel’s text.

### 3. Luke’s Christology: Setting the Stage for the Savior

A narrative approach to Luke’s Gospel also provides its audience with a sense that Jesus’s identity is in continuity with practices and institutions from Israel’s past. Literary features such as settings and themes can help the audience discern Luke’s Christology. Luke’s infancy narrative begins in the temple, which suggests that worship, sacrifice, and the priesthood might play important roles in discovering who Jesus is. Luke’s inclusion of hymns (recalling OT canticles and psalms) in the infancy narrative brings the theme of worshipping Israel’s God to the forefront, while the fact that the Gospel comes full circle and ends with a reference to the disciples in the temple (Luke 24:53) makes the cultic setting an important key to Jesus’s identity in the Gospel.

In Luke’s account of the annunciation to Mary, the angel tasks her with naming the child “Jesus” (Luke 1:31), in contrast to Matthew, who assigns this role to Joseph (Matt 1:21). Luke does not connect the name “Jesus” to “Joshua” as Matthew did etymologically, as one who will “save” his people from sin (see Matt 1:21); rather, Luke records the angel Gabriel’s assertion that the child will be “called son of the Most High,” and given the throne of “David, his father” (Luke 1:32). Jesus will be heir to David’s throne, the one who “will be king over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom, there will be no end” (Luke 1:33). Verses 32 and 33 recall for Luke’s audience, by means of a “scriptural anthology,” Nathan’s prophecy to David that God will establish the kingdom and royal throne of David’s descendent forever (2 Sam 7:12–13).<sup>50</sup> Gabriel notes that, although a royal descendent of “David, his father,” (Luke 1:32), Mary’s child is in actuality “the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

Luke, calling Jesus the heir to David’s throne, continues throughout the infancy narrative to call Jesus by titles associated with Israel’s hope that God would visit his people with “salvation” (see Luke 1:68, 69, 71, 77). During Mary’s visit to her relative Elizabeth, the child is called “Lord”: “And how is this for me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (Luke 1:43). Later, the angels announce to the shepherds that “there is born for you today a savior, who is Christ and Lord, in the city of David” (Luke 2:11). At the presentation in the temple, the evangelist notes that Simeon had received a revelation from the Holy Spirit that he would not “see death until he might see the Christ of the Lord” (Luke 2:26).<sup>51</sup> Simeon sees God’s “salvation” when he sees the Christ child (Luke 2:30). Luke’s infancy



narrative relies heavily on titles for Jesus that bring rejoicing for those in Israel, who like Simeon, were awaiting consolation (Luke 2:25), such as David's heir, Messiah, Lord, and savior. Yet, Simeon's canticle reminds Luke's audience that this salvation is both a light for revelation to gentiles and glory for Israel (Luke 2:32).

Luke's genealogy, which unlike Matthew's does not appear at the outset of the Gospel but rather in chapter 3, differs from Matthew's version in its ordering: Matthew's genealogy ends with Jesus (Matt 1:16), while Luke's begins with him (Luke 3:23). Luke traces the lineage of Jesus even beyond Abraham (where Matt 1:1 begins), all the way to Adam, "the Son of God" (Luke 3:38). Luke's identification of Jesus with Adam and the human race's origins make the universal aspects of who Jesus implicit in Matthew's version of the genealogy explicit. By ending Jesus's genealogy with a reference to "the Son of God," Luke depicts Jesus as "one whose identity and work have their origin in God."<sup>52</sup> Luke diverges from Matthew's sequence after the mention of David by tracing Jesus's ancestry through Nathan, a prophetic line (Luke 3:31; see 2 Sam 5:14; 7:2), as opposed to Matthew, who follows Solomon, a royal line (Matt 1:6–7).<sup>53</sup> Matthew may have been attempting to characterize Jesus alongside figures from Israel's history (patriarchs and kings), while Luke's focus perhaps was on identifying Jesus with institutions in Israel (the temple and prophecy).

Luke's emphasis on the theme of prophecy (signified by Nathan in Jesus's genealogy) helps the audience understand Luke 4, where Jesus, reading from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth, fulfills these words: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he anointed me to share the good news with the poor" (Luke 4:18; Isa 61:1). Jesus is "anointed" (ἔχρισέν) (Luke 4:18) by the spirit of the Lord as Christ, who will bring about an acceptable (δεκτόν) time for God's people (Luke 4:19). The timing of Jesus's ministry is considered acceptable "in relation to the divine will and purpose, here a divine will to salvation."<sup>54</sup> However, Jesus notes that his prophetic ministry will not be "accepted" (δεκτός) by all, especially those closest to him: "Amen, I say to you that no prophet is accepted (δεκτός) in his homeland" (Luke 4:24). The different responses to who Jesus is and what his prophetic teaching will mean continue to unfold as Luke's Gospel does, too.

When Jesus testifies in the synagogue that Isaiah 61 has been "fulfilled" (Luke 4:21) it foreshadows for Luke's audience the theme of all Scripture finding fulfillment in Jesus, which he asserts when he "interpreted for [the disciples on the road to Emmaus] that which in all the writings was about him" (Luke 24:27; see also 24:44). In Luke, Jesus expounds upon the theme that his disciples must understand how Israel's Scriptures find their culmination in him by a parable in chapter 16. When the rich man realizes that his life of sumptuous dining (Luke 16:19) and careless neglect for Lazarus has brought him to the netherworld (Luke 16:23–24), he pleads with Father Abraham to send Lazarus to his five brothers "lest even they might come into this place of torment" (Luke 16:28). Abraham assures the rich man that his brothers "have Moses and the prophets: let them listen to them" (Luke 16:29). If someone were to rise from the dead, the rich man asserts, then his brothers might truly repent of their wicked ways; yet, in Jesus's parable, Abraham remarks that those who fail to listen to Moses and the prophets will likewise remain unconvinced should someone rise from the dead (Luke 16:31). Jesus tells those who heed the parable's message that the true significance of his dying and rising will be known by the disciple who believes all that Moses and the prophets revealed about Jesus. Jesus's parable teaches that "Scripture is the greatest authority and carries (or should carry) the greatest conviction," and yet, "[i]f one is deaf to God's words, one will scarcely be able to hear the words of another."<sup>55</sup>

Jesus also develops the theme of seeking the lost in Luke. Whereas Jesus tells his disciples on mission to go "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 10:5; see also

Matt 15:24), in well-known parables (Luke 15) and a narrative concerning a public sinner, Zacchaeus (Luke 19), Jesus prioritizes seeking the lost as a theme of his messianic mission. In chapter 15, three Lukan parables (the lost sheep, the coin, and the son) can be summarized in Jesus's interpretation given to the first: "I tell you . . . there will be joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous ones who have no need of repentance" (Luke 15:7). Similarly, after encountering Jesus, Zacchaeus vows to make recompense to anyone he has wronged (Luke 19:8). Jesus sums up the meeting with Zacchaeus with the proclamation that "salvation (σωτηρία) has come to this house" (Luke 19:10). Not just an earthly means of "salvation" (σωτηρία) (see Luke 1:69, 71, 77) or "tender mercy" has come to "visit" (see Luke 1:78) Zacchaeus, but salvation itself in the person of Jesus. Later, in Luke 19:10, Jesus identifies himself with the Son of Man who came "to seek and to save (σῶσαι) what was lost," reminding Luke's audience of the "lost and found" parables in chapter 15.<sup>56</sup>

In Luke's passion narrative, the evangelist expounds on the themes of Jesus as savior and Messiah, and also as king, albeit one who reigns from the cross. First, Jesus is reviled by those who look upon him suffering: "Others he saved (ἔσωσεν), let him save (σωσάτω) himself if he is the Christ (ὁ χριστός) of God, the chosen one" (Luke 23:35). The soldiers taunt, "If you are the king of the Jews, save (σῶσον) yourself" (Luke 23:37). Even the charge above the cross of Jesus reads, "This is the king of the Jews" (Luke 23:38) in a "contemptuous tone."<sup>57</sup> The task of the Christ and the king according to the people and the soldiers is "to save." Jesus embodies the role of savior and theme of salvation in a dialog that Luke records regarding the two criminals crucified with Jesus. The first criminal from his cross echoes the chorus of the crowd below: "Are you not the Christ (ὁ χριστός)? Save (σῶσον) yourself and us!" (Luke 23:39). The second criminal asserts Jesus's innocence and affirms his own guilt (Luke 23:40–41). Then, he professes faith in the crucified king at his side: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42). Jesus responds to his faith and last request: "Amen, I say to you: today with me you will be in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Jesus, from the cross, "is preaching salvation, just as he had done since his first sermon" (see Luke 4:18–19).<sup>58</sup> Jesus, as savior and king, who shares the faithful criminal's fate, utters these words of promise and hope. Jesus does not respond to petitions for displays of power from the crowds, but rather to pleas of faith and trust from those most in need of salvation. Jesus is the savior and king who assures a place in paradise to those who humbly seek him in faith.

In a resurrection account unique to Luke, the risen Jesus walks with two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Jesus calls his two companions "slow of heart" for not believing the prophets and for not knowing that "it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and enter into his glory" (Luke 24:26). Here, Jesus begins to teach the disciples that the prophets, Moses, and "all the Scriptures" of Israel "concern him" (Luke 24:27). After the disciples recognize Jesus "in the breaking of the bread" (Luke 24:30), they immediately return to Jerusalem and tell those gathered in the city what they experienced "on the way" (24:35). Jesus then appears to the larger group of disciples saying, "These are my words that I spoke to you when I was with you, that it was necessary for everything written to be fulfilled in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms concerning me" (Luke 24:44). Jesus reveals himself to be the hidden word in the three parts of Israel's Scriptures (*torah*, prophets, and psalms/writings) and the fulfillment of what has been written.<sup>59</sup> He opens the disciples' minds to the truth of Scripture just as he had done for the two on the way (Luke 24:45; see also 24:32, 35).

In the final verses of Luke's Gospel, the evangelist artfully ties the notices of Jesus's ascension and return to the Father to the accounts of Jesus's annunciation and birth in Bethlehem. In Luke's infancy narrative, Gabriel told Mary that her son would be conceived

by the “power (δύναμις) of the Most High (ὑψίστου)” overshadowing her (Luke 1:35) and “will be called the Son of the Most High (ὑψίστου)” (Luke 1:32). Later, in Luke’s ascension narrative, Jesus promises to clothe his disciples with “power from on high (ἐξ ὕψους δύναμιν)” (Luke 24:49). Jesus calls his disciples “witnesses” who will make known the message of the Messiah’s suffering, death, resurrection, and the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:46–47), not unlike the Bethlehem shepherds who heard the angels announce Jesus’s birth and go to see what was made known to them (Luke 2:15). After Jesus’s ascension, the disciples return to Jerusalem with “great joy” (χαρᾶς μεγάλης) (Luke 24:52), just as the shepherds who receive the news of Jesus’s birth with “great joy” (χαρὰν μεγάλην) (Luke 2:15). The disciples at the Gospel’s conclusion are in the temple where the Gospel began, a “literary circularity” that “provides a sense of completion.”<sup>60</sup> There in the temple, the disciples are continually “blessing God” (εὐλογοῦντες τὸν θεόν) (Luke 24:53), as Zechariah ministering in the temple and Simeon holding the Christ child in the temple “blessed God” (εὐλογῶν τὸν θεόν; εὐλόγησεν τὸν θεόν) (Luke 1:64, 2:28). Luke frames his story within the temple, where the priests, prophets, and kings of Israel’s past would have encountered God. Luke’s use of the temple as a framing device “provides a fitting setting for the thematic praise, worship, and job that attends the resurrection community (24:52–53).”<sup>61</sup>

By paying attention to setting and theme as literary features that the third evangelist uses as the Gospel unfolds, Luke’s readers today gain new insights into who Jesus is: Jesus is the like the temple, the point of contact and place of encounter for believers to experience God’s presence; additionally, Jesus fulfills the thematic roles of those that Israel once looked to for leadership, like priests, prophets, and (shepherd) kings. Luke’s audience is invited to join Jesus’s disciples in continually praising God (Luke 24:53) for the person of Jesus, the savior, Messiah, shepherd, and king of Israel (see Luke 1:32).

#### 4. Conclusions

Taking a narrative approach to the Synoptic Gospels and applying literary features such as plot, characterization, setting, and theme give the evangelists’ contemporary audiences a glimpse into Jesus’s identity. From beginning to end, Matthew reveals Jesus’s character by showing how Jesus’s identity recalls figures from Israel’s past: kings, prophets, and patriarchs. In the infancy narrative, an angel appears to Joseph, called “son of David” (Matt 1:20), in a dream telling him not to be afraid to take Mary into his home and to name the child Jesus (or Joshua), “because he will save his people from their sins” (Matt 1:20–23). As Mark’s Gospel unfolds, the significance of the evangelist’s designation in the initial verse that Jesus is both Christ and Son of God becomes clear to the audience as these titles are echoed by Peter (Mark 8) and the centurion (Mark 15) as the plot advances. Luke setting his Gospel in the context of the temple calls to mind the themes of priesthood, worship, salvation, and shepherding for the audience today. Each evangelist then in particular ways and for particular purposes shares the good news with a particular audience who is seeking to answer the question posed by Jesus that has echoed through the ages: “Who do you say that I am?” (Matt 16:15; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20).

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Data Availability Statement:** No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

## Notes

- 1 All Scripture translations in this paper are my own unless otherwise noted. The Greek text of the New Testament is from *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Aland et al. 2018).
- 2 For recent treatments of the purposes of the four evangelists in composing written works, see Keith (2020) and Elders (2024).
- 3 For a review of narrative Christology as an attempt “to understand the person of Jesus through special attention to the narratives we have about him” (p. 2), see Dinkler (2017, pp. 1–11, especially pp. 1–4).
- 4 Gunn (1992, p. 979).
- 5 For a detailed explanation on the Gospels’ relationships, see Marcus (2000, pp. 40–56).
- 6 For an interesting discussion of Matthew and Luke’s editorial use of Mark that also raises the question about the necessity of Q, see Goodacre (1998, pp. 45–58).
- 7 See Kloppenborg (2023). For recent treatments on questions of authorship, dating, audience, and purpose for the Synoptic Gospels, see Barton and Brewer (2023).
- 8 Resseguie (2005, p. 39).
- 9 The Greek genitive “the good news of Jesus Christ” (εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) is ambiguous and can be understood in one way to mean that Jesus is the object of the good news (i.e., Mark is going to relate a story to his audience *about* Jesus which is good news) or that Jesus is the subject of the good news (i.e., Mark is going to relate to his audience a story *in which* the good news comes from Jesus). See Brown (2020, p. 168).
- 10 Beavis (2011, p. 33).
- 11 Culpepper (2007, p. 49). The term “Messianic secret” in NT studies originates in the 19th century with W. Wrede’s *The Messianic Secret*. Mark 9:9 provides the key to the secret: “And, having come down from the mountain, he ordered them so that they might tell no one what they saw, except when the Son of Man rises from the dead.” Wrede argued “that this time limit was intended to apply to all the elements of secrecy in Mark: the period prior to Easter was one of secrecy, but after the resurrection full revelation occurred.” See Tucket (1992, p. 798).
- 12 Lit., “the Spirit threw him out into the wilderness” (τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτὸν ἐκβάλλει εἰς τὴν ἔρημον).
- 13 The term “holy one” can be used for God and for those who serve God as priests and prophets. See Healy (2008, p. 45). See also Num 16:5–7; 1 Sam 2:2; 2 Kgs 4:9; Ps 106:16; and Hos 11:9.
- 14 Mark’s audience is told about the misunderstandings that Jesus wants to avoid in the discussion about his identity that takes place with his disciples in Mark 8. For additional references to Jesus’s secrecy in Mark see 3:12; 7:36; and 8:26. By contrast, for an example where secrecy is not commanded, see Mark 5:19–20, after the healing of the Gerasene demoniac.
- 15 Ratzinger (2007, p. 326).
- 16 Culpepper (2007, p. 79).
- 17 “Although in the narrative context of the Gospel of Mark as a whole, the epithet ‘Son of Man’ in 2:10 is ambiguous, especially for the unformed members of the audience, it acclaims Jesus as the figure of Daniel 7, as interpreted by the followers of Jesus, for informed members of the audience.” See Collins (2007, p. 189).
- 18 From a narrative perspective, the dialog between Jesus and Peter at Caesarea Philippi continues to follow a narrative thread from Mark 6 when Herod, having executed John the Baptist, becomes aware of Jesus, whom he believes to be John “raised from the dead,” or Elijah, or one of the prophets (Mark 6:14–15; see also Matt 14:2; Luke 9:7–8).
- 19 The phrase “on the way” occurs in the narratives of all three passion predictions in Mark. See also 9:33–34 and 10:32.
- 20 Ratzinger (2007, p. 290).
- 21 Codex Sinaiticus (4th Century) adds “the son of God” to Mark 8:29, making the inclusio with Mark 1:1 explicit. Codex Washintonianus (5th Century) adds ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος to Peter’s confession so that Mark 8:29 reads the same as Matt 16:16, “You are the Christ, the son of the living God.” Matthew’s account of Peter’s confession similarly reminds the audience of an aspect of Jesus’s identity noted near the beginning of the Gospel: divine sonship. Matthew 16 has Peter proclaiming that Jesus is the Christ and adding “the Son (ὁ υἱὸς) of the living God” (Matt 16:16), which recalls Matt 2:15 in which Jesus is the “son” (υἱόν) that God calls out of Egypt and “the son” (ὁ υἱός) announced by the Father at Jesus’s baptism (Matt 3:17). Luke simply records Peter’s answer to Jesus’s identity question as, “The Christ of God” (Luke 9:20).
- 22 Donahue and Harrington (2002, p. 261).
- 23 Matthew records the rebuke: “God forbid [or: far be it from you], Lord! This will not ever happen to you!” (Matt 16:22).
- 24 Luke adds that Jesus’s disciples must take up the cross “daily” (Luke 9:23).
- 25 Matthew’s record of the Father’s voice at the transfiguration (Matt 17:5) is identical to that of the baptism account (Matt 3:17), “This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased” with the addition of “listen to him” (ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ) at the transfiguration. In Luke, the Father calls Jesus “beloved Son” and charges the hearers to “listen to him,” but also adds that Jesus is the Father’s “chosen” (ὁ ἐκλελεγμένος) (Luke 9:25).

- 26 Luke's version of the second passion prediction in 9:44 contains the reference to Jesus's being "delivered into the hands of men," but curiously lacks any reference to Jesus's death and resurrection.
- 27 Healy (2008, p. 183).
- 28 Collins (2007, p. 486).
- 29 Culpepper (2007, p. 342).
- 30 In Matthew, the high priest's question is: "I adjure you by God that you tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God" (Matt 26:63). Jesus's response in Matthew, however, initially seems less definite ("You have said"), although he still includes in his answer the reference to the "Son of Man" from Daniel 7. In Luke's version, Jesus appears ready to reveal his identity as a Messiah, but notes that he does not expect the leaders to believe him (Luke 22:67). He then pre-empts their further questioning and identifies himself as "Son of Man" by quoting Daniel 7 (without the reference to "coming with the clouds") (Luke 22:69). Then, when asked by all if he is the "Son of God," he replies in a way that essentially combines Matthew and Mark's accounts: "You say that I am (ἐγώ εἶμι)" (Luke 22:70).
- 31 Collins (2007, p. 705).
- 32 Mark uses a divine passive ("was torn") possibly to indicate that God is the actor who rends the veil, while the narrative detail "from top to bottom" seems to confirm divine, not human, agency in the tearing (Mark 15:38; see also Matt 27:51). "Was torn" (ἐσχίσθη) in the crucifixion passage (Mark 15:38) connects verbally with the baptism scene (Mark 1:10) when the heavens "were torn" (σχιζομένου).
- 33 Luke records that the centurion declared that "this man was righteous (δικαιος) indeed" (Luke 23:47).
- 34 For Mark's "Son of Man" sayings, see Mark 2:10, 28; 8:31; 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45, 46; 13:26; and 14:21, 41, 62.
- 35 Donahue and Harrington (2002, p. 449).
- 36 Collins (2007, p. 800).
- 37 See Malbon (2008, p. 54).
- 38 Resseguie (2005, p. 128).
- 39 Mitch and Sri (2010, p. 39).
- 40 Matthew's infancy narrative (Matthew 1–2) focuses primarily on the figure of Joseph, in contrast to Luke's infancy narrative (Luke 1–2), wherein Mary is the main protagonist.
- 41 Witherington (2006, p. 46).
- 42 Mitch and Sri (2010, p. 74).
- 43 Luz (1989, p. 224).
- 44 A structural element that begins in Matthew 5–7 and continues through Matthew 26 divides the text into five discourses that may echo the five books of Moses, Israel's *torah*. The key indication that the discourse is ending is Matthew's use of variations on the phrase "And it happened when Jesus finished these words. . ." (Matt 7:28; see also 11:1, 13:53; 19:1; 26:1).
- 45 France (2007, p. 803).
- 46 Matthew 25 is a parable that depicts "the final separation of saints and sinners." An OT text in the background of Matthew 25 may be Dan 12:2. Mitch and Sri (2010, p. 328).
- 47 See Ps 1:1–2a.
- 48 Luz (2005, p. 498).
- 49 Powell (2005, p. 75).
- 50 Bovon (2002, p. 51).
- 51 "The focus of worship regarding salvation that includes all people, even the gentiles, is not the temple, the preeminent place for Jewish worship, but the person of Jesus." See Heil (2018, p. 11).
- 52 Carrol (2012, p. 99).
- 53 Luke avoids "the royal line from Solomon to Jeconiah" perhaps "because of the oracles in Jer 22:28–30 and 36:30–31 about the coming extinction of the Davidic dynasty." See Fitzmyer (1981, p. 501).
- 54 Noland (1989, pp. 197–98).
- 55 Evans (1990, p. 250). Compare Luke 16:31 with Jesus's claim to the Jews in John's Gospel that if they indeed "believed Moses, you would believe me, for about me that one [Moses] wrote" (John 5:45).
- 56 Johnson (1991, p. 286).
- 57 Martin (2011, p. 638).
- 58 Vinson (2008, p. 730).
- 59 "[T]he link between the meaning of Jesus' messianic vocation and the Scriptures has become truly comprehensive." See Carrol (2012, p. 492).
- 60 Parsons (2015, p. 355).
- 61 Brown (2020, p. 62).

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