

LIDIJA NOVAKOVIC

Messiah,  
the Healer of the Sick

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen  
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

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**Mohr Siebeck**

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170





Lidija Novakovic

# Messiah, the Healer of the Sick

A Study of Jesus  
as the Son of David in the Gospel of Matthew

Mohr Siebeck

LIDIJA NOVAKOVIĆ, born 1955; 2002 Ph.D. in Biblical Studies (New Testament) from Princeton Theological Seminary; currently Assistant Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies at Bethel College, St. Paul.

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## Preface

This book represents a revision of my doctoral dissertation “Messiah, the Healer of the Sick: A Study of the Origins of Matthew’s Portrayal of Jesus as the Son of David,” submitted to the Faculty of Princeton Theological Seminary and defended in November of 2001. In this project, I examine the background of the Matthean link between Jesus’ messianic identity and his healing ministry. I explore Scriptural quotations and allusions that have informed Matthew’s understanding of Jesus’ messiahship, as well as various passages from the early Jewish writings, such as the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Josephus. My conclusion is that Matthew’s understanding of Jesus as the healing Davidic Messiah should be seen as an outcome of Christian midrashic interpretation of Scripture in light of the conviction that Jesus is the Messiah. This study is intended to advance the discussion focused on the development of early Christology and to offer a reconstruction of the exegetical methods used by Jewish believers in Jesus’ messiahship.

My research received assistance and encouragement from many scholars. First of all, I am deeply indebted to Professor Donald Juel for his enthusiastic and proficient supervision of the writing of this thesis. His Ph.D. seminar on the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament inspired me to undertake this project. His insightful comments, helpful suggestions, and continuous encouragement made the writing of the dissertation the most rewarding and enjoyable scholarly experience. He received the news that my work was accepted for publication in the WUNT 2. Series with great joy, but unfortunately did not live long enough to see it in a published form. His premature death in February of 2003 will remain an immense loss for me personally and professionally.

I want to offer special thanks to Professor James H. Charlesworth who opened to me the world of Early Judaism and introduced me to its literature and history. His scholarly expertise and enthusiasm became invaluable resources for the completion of this project. Working under his supervision in the PTS Dead Sea Scrolls Project offered me the first-hand experience with the Qumran writings, and I am deeply grateful for his professional guidance and support.

I wish to extend thanks to the entire faculty in Biblical Studies at Princeton Theological Seminary for creating such a stimulating academic environment for study and research. Besides the doctoral seminars I had with Professors Juel and Charlesworth, those with Professors Ulrich W. Mauser, Beverly

Roberts Gaventa, A. K. M. Adam, Brian K. Blount, and Patrick D. Miller proved to be especially helpful. In addition, I am indebted to many of my friends and colleagues from the PTS Dead Sea Scrolls Project, with whom I was able to share my ideas and discuss my findings. Among them are Michael T. Davis, Professor Casey D. Elledge, John B. F. Miller, Cory P. Hall, and Professor Henry W. Rietz. I also remember with appreciation my former teachers at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Rüslikon, Switzerland, who stimulated my interest in New Testament studies and supported my academic pursuits. I am especially grateful to Dr. Günter Wagner for instigating my love for the Gospel of Matthew, and Dr. Samuel Byrskog for calling my attention to the intriguing relationship between the Son of David and Jesus' miracles of healing.

I also wish to express appreciation to Professor Dr. Carsten Claussen, a visiting scholar at Princeton Theological Seminary, for his initial interest in my work, and to Professor Dr. Jörg Frey from the Evangelisch-Theologische Fakultät, University of Munich, who accepted it for publication and offered various helpful suggestions for revision. A special thanks is extended to Ms. Sarah Jacobson from Bethel College, St. Paul, who has read and edited the final version of the manuscript.

Finally, I wish to thank my husband Ivo, and my children Andreja and Matthew for their love and encouragement during the writing of this book. Numerous thought-provoking discussions with my husband enabled me to complete this project in the first place. I dedicate this work to him.

# Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Preface .....   | V  |
| Abbreviations .....   | X  |
| <b>Chapter 1</b>  |    |
| <i>Introduction</i> .....   | 1  |
| 1.1 The Problem .....   | 1  |
| 1.2 A Review of Previous Research .....                                     | 2  |
| 1.3 The Thesis .....  | 5  |
| 1.4 Methodology .....   | 8  |
| <b>Chapter 2</b>  |    |
| <i>Jesus and Davidic Messianism</i> .....                                   | 11 |
| 2.1 Introduction .....  | 11 |
| 2.2 God's Promises to David and the Davidic Messiah .....                   | 12 |
| 2.2.1 The Davidic Descent .....   | 13 |
| 2.2.1.1 Biblical Writings .....   | 13 |
| 2.2.1.2 Early Jewish Writings .....   | 15 |
| 2.2.1.3 New Testament Writings .....  | 19 |
| 2.2.2 The Father-Son Relationship with God .....                            | 20 |
| 2.2.2.1 Biblical Writings .....   | 20 |
| 2.2.2.2 Early Jewish Writings .....   | 21 |
| 2.2.2.3 New Testament Writings .....  | 25 |
| 2.2.3 The Perpetuity of the Davidic Dynasty .....                           | 27 |
| 2.2.3.1 Biblical Writings .....   | 27 |
| 2.2.3.2 Early Jewish Writings .....   | 30 |
| 2.3 The Origin of Jesus, the Son of David .....                             | 34 |
| 2.3.1 Jesus' Genealogy (Matthew 1) .....                                    | 34 |
| 2.3.1.1 The Structure of the Matthean Infancy Narrative .....               | 34 |
| 2.3.1.2 Jesus' Davidic Lineage .....  | 37 |
| 2.3.1.3 The Engrafting of Jesus into the Davidic Line .....                 | 43 |
| 2.3.1.4 The Divine Sonship of Jesus .....                                   | 46 |
| 2.3.2 The Question About David's Son .....                                  | 50 |
| 2.3.2.1 The Question About David's Son in Mark 12:35–37 .....               | 50 |
| 2.3.2.2 The Argumentative Structure of Matt 22:41–46 .....                  | 54 |
| 2.3.2.3 The Resolution of the Conflicting Statements in Matt 22:41–46 ..... | 59 |



|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 2.3.3 Conclusions .....  | 62  |
| 2.4 The Task of Jesus, the Son of David .....                              | 63  |
| 2.4.1 Jesus' Task According to Matt 1:21 .....                             | 63  |
| 2.4.2 The Davidic Messiah and Salvation from Sins .....                    | 69  |
| 2.4.3 The Programmatic Significance of Matt 1:21 .....                     | 73  |
| 2.4.4 Conclusions .....  | 75  |
| <br>   |     |
| Chapter 3  |     |
| <i>Healing the Sick as a Messianic Activity</i> .....                      | 77  |
| 3.1 Introduction .....   | 77  |
| 3.2 The Son of David Passages in Matthew's Narrative .....                 | 79  |
| 3.2.1 The Healing of the Two Blind Men .....                               | 79  |
| 3.2.2 The Healing of the Blind and Dumb Demoniac .....                     | 81  |
| 3.2.3 The Healing of the Daughter of the Canaanite Woman .....             | 83  |
| 3.2.4 The Healing of Two Other Blind Men .....                             | 84  |
| 3.2.5 The Triumphant Entry and Healing the Sick in the Temple .....        | 85  |
| 3.2.6 The Summary of Results .....   | 88  |
| 3.3 The Relevance of Jesus' Miracles for His Messianic Identity .....      | 91  |
| 3.3.1 The Ambiguity of Jesus' Miracles .....                               | 91  |
| 3.3.2 The Hindrances of the Proper Understanding of Jesus' Miracles .....  | 92  |
| 3.3.3 Search for the Proper Context of Jesus' Miracles .....               | 95  |
| 3.4 Solomon as Exorcist .....  | 96  |
| 3.4.1 Introduction .....   | 96  |
| 3.4.2 Solomon as Exorcist in Jewish Literature .....                       | 97  |
| 3.4.3 Solomon as Exorcist and the Gospel of Matthew .....                  | 103 |
| 3.5 The Eschatological Prophet .....                                       | 109 |
| 3.5.1 Introduction .....   | 109 |
| 3.5.2 The Eschatological Prophet in Jewish Literature .....                | 110 |
| 3.5.3 The Eschatological Prophet and the Gospel of Matthew .....           | 112 |
| 3.5.4 Sign as a validation of a prophetic claim .....                      | 113 |
| 3.6 Jesus' Healings in Light of the Summaries of His Public Activity ..... | 118 |
| 3.6.1 Introduction .....   | 118 |
| 3.6.2 Summarizing Accounts of Jesus' Ministry .....                        | 118 |
| 3.6.3 Conclusions .....  | 122 |
| <br>   |     |
| Chapter 4  |     |
| <i>Scriptural Basis of Jesus' Messianic Healings</i> .....                 | 124 |
| 4.1 Introduction .....   | 124 |
| 4.2 Jesus' Healings as the Explicit Fulfillment of Scripture .....         | 125 |
| 4.2.1 The Use of Isa 53:4a in Matt 8:16–17 .....                           | 125 |
| 4.2.2 The Use of Isa 42:1–4 in Matt 12:15–21 .....                         | 133 |
| 4.2.2.1 The Secrecy Motif .....  | 134 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 4.2.2.2 The Relatedness of the Quotation to the Context .....      | 136 |
| 4.3 Jesus' Healings as the Messianic Deeds .....                   | 152 |
| 4.3.1 Jesus' Dialogue with the Disciples of John the Baptist ..... | 152 |
| 4.3.2 The Question (Matt 11:3) .....                               | 153 |
| 4.3.3 The Answer (Matt 11:5–6) .....                               | 159 |
| 4.3.3.1 The Temporal Aspect of the Answer .....                    | 163 |
| 4.3.3.2 A Messianic Apocalypse (4Q521) .....                       | 169 |
| 4.3.3.3 The Personal Aspect of the Answer .....                    | 179 |
| 4.3.4 Conclusions .....  | 183 |
| <br>Chapter 5  |     |
| <i>A Summary of Conclusions</i> .....                              | 185 |
| <br>Bibliography of Works Cited .....                              | 191 |
| <br>Reference Index .....  | 209 |
| <br>Author Index .....   | 222 |
| <br>Subject Index .....  | 226 |

## Abbreviations

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| AB            | Anchor Bible   |
| ABD           | <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>   |
| ABRL          | Anchor Bible Reference Library   |
| AGJU          | Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums   |
| ALGHJ         | Arbeiten zur Literatur und Geschichte des hellenistischen Judentums  |
| AnBib         | Analecta biblica   |
| ANRW          | <i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> |
| ANTJ          | Arbeiten zum Neuen Testament und Judentum  |
| ArBib         | The Aramaic Bible  |
| ArOr          | <i>Archiv Orientalní</i>   |
| ASNU          | Acta seminarii neotestamentici upsaliensis   |
| ATA           | Alttestamentliche Abhandlungen   |
| BAR           | <i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>   |
| BETL          | Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium  |
| BEvT          | Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie   |
| BFCT          | Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie  |
| Bib           | <i>Biblica</i>   |
| BIOSCS        | <i>Bulletin of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies</i>                           |
| BIS           | Biblical Interpretation Series   |
| <i>BJRL</i>   | <i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>   |
| <i>BRev</i>   | <i>Bible Review</i>  |
| <i>BTB</i>    | <i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>  |
| BThSt         | Biblich-theologische Studien   |
| BWANT         | Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament  |
| <i>BZ</i>     | <i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>   |
| BZNW          | Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft  |
| <i>CBQ</i>    | <i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>   |
| CBQMS         | Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series   |
| CCWJCW        | Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World   |
| CJAS          | Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity Series   |
| CNT           | Commentaire du Nouveau Testament   |
| ConBNT        | Coniectanea neotestamentica or<br>Coniectanea biblica: New Testament Series                                    |
| DJD           | Discoveries in the Judaean Desert  |
| <i>DSD</i>    | <i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>  |
| EHS.T         | Europäische Hochschulschriften. Reihe 23: Theologie  |
| EtB           | Études Bibliques   |
| EtB.NS        | Études Bibliques; nouvelle série   |
| <i>ExpTim</i> | <i>Expository Times</i>  |
| FAT           | Forschungen zum Alten Testament  |
| FB            | Forschung zur Bibel  |
| FRLANT        | Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments  |

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| <i>HAR</i>   | <i>Hebrew Annual Review</i>                                     |
| HBS          | Herders Biblische Studien                                       |
| HDR          | Harvard Dissertations in Religion                               |
| HNT          | Handbuch zum Neuen Testament                                    |
| HSM          | Harvard Semitic Monographs                                      |
| HSS          | Harvard Semitic Studies   |
| <i>HTR</i>   | <i>Harvard Theological Review</i>                               |
| ICC          | International Critical Commentary                               |
| <i>IEJ</i>   | <i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>                               |
| <i>Imm</i>   | <i>Immanuel</i>   |
| <i>Int</i>   | <i>Interpretation</i>   |
| <i>JAOS</i>  | <i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>                 |
| <i>JBL</i>   | <i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>                           |
| <i>JJS</i>   | <i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>                                |
| <i>JQR</i>   | <i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>                                  |
| <i>JSNT</i>  | <i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>               |
| JSNTSup      | Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series   |
| <i>JSP</i>   | <i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>              |
| JSPSup       | Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha: Supplement Series  |
| KomNT        | Kommentar zum Neuen Testament                                   |
| LCL          | Loeb Classical Library  |
| <i>MTZ</i>   | <i>Münchener theologische Zeitschrift</i>                       |
| NCB          | New Century Bible   |
| <i>Neot</i>  | <i>Neotestamentica</i>  |
| <i>NovT</i>  | <i>Novum Testamentum</i>  |
| NovTSup      | Novum Testamentum Supplements                                   |
| <i>NRTh</i>  | <i>La nouvelle revue théologique</i>                            |
| NTAbh        | Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen                                  |
| NTD          | Das Neue Testament Deutsch                                      |
| NTL          | New Testament Library   |
| NTOA         | Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus                             |
| <i>NTS</i>   | <i>New Testament Studies</i>                                    |
| OBO          | Orbis biblicus et orientalis                                    |
| <i>OTP</i>   | <i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i>                             |
| OTS          | Old Testament Studies   |
| <i>OTS</i>   | <i>Oudtestamentische Studien</i>                                |
| <i>RB</i>    | <i>Revue biblique</i>   |
| <i>RevQ</i>  | <i>Revue de Qumran</i>  |
| <i>RGG</i>   | <i>Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i>                     |
| SANT         | Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testaments                          |
| SBEC         | Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity                     |
| SBLDS        | Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series              |
| SBLEJL       | Society of Biblical Literature Early Judaism and Its Literature |
| SBLMS        | Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series                 |
| SBLSCS       | Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies   |
| SBT          | Studies in Biblical Theology                                    |
| <i>ScEs</i>  | <i>Science et esprit</i>  |
| SDSSRL       | Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature          |
| <i>SEÅ</i>   | <i>Svensk exegetisk årsbok</i>                                  |
| <i>SEAJT</i> | <i>South East Asia Journal of Theology</i>                      |
| <i>Sem</i>   | <i>Semitica</i>   |
| SNTSMS       | Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series              |

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| SSN           | Studia semitica neerlandica  |
| SSS           | Semitic Study Series   |
| <i>ST</i>     | <i>Studia theologica</i>   |
| STDJ          | Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah  |
| SUNT          | Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments  |
| <i>TDNT</i>   | <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>   |
| <i>ThViat</i> | <i>Theologia viatorum</i>  |
| TS            | Texts and Studies  |
| <i>TS</i>     | <i>Theological Studies</i>   |
| TSAJ          | Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum   |
| TUGAL         | Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur                      |
| <i>TZ</i>     | <i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>  |
| UNT           | Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament   |
| <i>VT</i>     | <i>Vetus Testamentum</i>   |
| VTSup         | Supplements to Vetus Testamentum   |
| WBC           | World Biblical Commentary  |
| WMANT         | Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament                               |
| WUNT          | Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament                                       |
| YJS           | Yale Judaica Series  |
| <i>ZAW</i>    | <i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>                                  |
| <i>ZDMG</i>   | <i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>                             |
| <i>ZNW</i>    | <i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i> |
| <i>ZTK</i>    | <i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>  |

Abbreviations for biblical books and other primary sources follow the guidelines set forth in *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*, ed. P. H. Alexander *et al.* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999).

## Chapter 1

# Introduction

### 1.1 The Problem

To those even slightly familiar with Jewish messianic expectations, the title of this book might sound odd. It is a well-known axiom accepted by every reputable scholar that the Messiah was neither expected to do miracles nor to be a healer. The subtitle of my project, however, immediately clarifies that I am dealing with the Gospel of Matthew and the portrayal of Jesus as the Son of David presented there. It does not require much research to see that the Matthean Jesus is addressed with the messianic title “Son of David” almost exclusively within the context of his healing activity. Thus the title of my project expresses a unique phenomenon that characterizes Matthew’s Gospel only. To say this, however, does not explain anything. It merely circumscribes a tangible fact, but it does not make it any more intelligible for the modern reader.

My initial interest in this topic was born out of the conviction that this strange link between the Davidic Messiah and the activity of healing made sense for Matthew and the audience for which he wrote. This is not something that can be directly proven but represents an assumption based on what we know about the first-century world in general and Matthew’s Gospel in particular. There was more logic in the way early Jewish and Christian interpreters presented certain phenomena than we today are ready to give them credit for. They did not arbitrarily associate unrelated concepts. Jewish and Christian interpretative traditions were primarily intellectual activities, which presupposed a recognizable shared hermeneutical framework. Moreover, the Gospel of Matthew is well known for its high organization of traditional material, redaction, and profound theology. If so, it is to be expected that behind the portrayal of Jesus as the healing Messiah lies a discoverable purpose and method. All of this led me to believe that it is worth trying to find a link between two disparate traditions, messianic expectations and attitudes towards healing, which inform the Matthean narrative about the Son of David who heals the sick.

## 1.2 A Review of Previous Research

There is no doubt that Matthew takes pains to present Jesus as the Son of David who acts as a healer. Apart from the infancy narrative in Matt 1 and the dialogue about Davidic sonship in Matt 22:41–46, all other occurrences of the title “Son of David” appear almost exclusively in the healing contexts (the only exception is Matt 21:1–11). Most of them are individual healings (9:27–31; 12:22–24; 15:21–28; 20:29–34), with the climax being the healing of the blind and the lame in the Temple (21:14–17), a scene that is described only in Matthew. In spite of this phenomenon, however, no comprehensive treatment of Matthew’s combination of the “Son of David” title and Jesus’ healing ministry has been offered so far.

In some important works on Matthew’s portrayal of Jesus as the Son of David, the link between the title “Son of David” and Jesus’ healings has not been treated at all. Thus, in his article “Purpose and Pattern in Matthew’s Use of the Title ‘Son of David,’”<sup>1</sup> James M. Gibbs argued that Matthew used this title with the purpose of delineating a development in the crowd’s recognition of Jesus as the royal, messianic Son of David. In his view, this development begins in chapter 9 and culminates in chapter 21. The crowd would have come to accept Jesus completely if the perverse Pharisees and other Jewish leaders had not influenced them. The title itself, as understood by Matthew, is inadequate in comparison with the recognition of Jesus as the Son of God.

In an article published a few years later,<sup>2</sup> Alfred Suhl disagreed with Gibbs’ proposal and argued that the title “Son of David” is an inadequate response to Jesus by the crowd. The presence of the definite article in the crowd’s use of the title indicates that they use it falsely, in contrast to the devoted individuals who by this title claim his help on the basis of his sending.

According to Brian M. Nolan’s study of Matthew’s Christology in the first two chapters of his Gospel,<sup>3</sup> the first-century Davidic mystique determined Matthew’s presentation of Jesus. The private persona of David, the prophesying who became a model of piety and fidelity in first-century Judaism, gave sensitivity and language to the title “Son of David,” which enabled it to assimilate the motif of the Son of God. In Nolan’s view, the royal, Davidic motifs pervade the Matthean narrative from the beginning to the end and integrate all other titles and roles of Jesus into a unified whole.

---

<sup>1</sup>J. M. Gibbs, “Purpose and Pattern in Matthew’s Use of the Title ‘Son of David,’” *NTS* 10 (1963/64): 446–464.

<sup>2</sup>A. Suhl, “Der Davidsson in Matthäus-Evangelium,” *ZNW* 59 (1968): 57–81.

<sup>3</sup>B. M. Nolan, *The Royal Son of God*, OBO 23 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979).

Jack D. Kingsbury developed his view on the title “Son of David” in Matthew in his book *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom*<sup>4</sup> and his subsequent article “The Title ‘Son of David’ in Matthew’s Gospel.”<sup>5</sup> In his view, Matthew used this title theologically (to affirm that Jesus is the expected Jewish Messiah) and apologetically (to emphasize the guilt of Israel). He contrasts the use of this title on the lips of no-accounts in Jewish society with Israel’s blindness. However, despite Kingsbury’s affirmation that Matthew uses this title positively, he argued that its scope is limited and its significance subordinated to Jesus’ divine sonship. Furthermore, he believed that the Matthean community has “outgrown” this title, because “Son of David no longer adequately captures these Christians’ understanding of the person of Jesus.”<sup>6</sup>

In an article published several years later,<sup>7</sup> William R. G. Loader further elaborated Kingsbury’s idea concerning Israel’s guilt in rejecting Jesus. In his view, the title “Son of David” is developed primarily within the motives that are concerned with Israel’s unbelief. Loader’s conclusion is that this title “is the appropriate term of response to the Messiah of Israel rather than a term designated to allude to the healing function of Jesus.”<sup>8</sup>

To this series of short studies on the Son of David in Matthew, which were not primarily interested in the relationship between this title and Jesus’ healing ministry, we can add two articles by Donald J. Versepunt. In “The Role and Meaning of the ‘Son of God’ Title in Matthew’s Gospel,”<sup>9</sup> he stressed the importance of the title “Son of David” for Matthew. In his view, the evangelist shows that Jesus is indeed the Messiah who was hoped for by Israel and defends this Davidic claim against all those who want to deny it. After investigating Jesus’ divine sonship, Versepunt reconsidered Jesus’ Davidic messiahship, bringing the two into an “inextricable relation,” which offers, in his view, “the ultimate explanation of the ‘unmessianic’ messianic mission” of Jesus.<sup>10</sup> In his SBL 1995 paper,<sup>11</sup> Versepunt argued that the presentation of the Davidic Messiah in Matthew’s Gospel was not detached from its Jewish

<sup>4</sup>J. D. Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975).

<sup>5</sup>J. D. Kingsbury, “The Title ‘Son of David’ in Matthew’s Gospel,” *JBL* 95 (1976): 591–602.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 592.

<sup>7</sup>W. R. G. Loader, “Son of David, Blindness, Possession, and Duality in Matthew,” *CBQ* 44 (1982): 570–585.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 585.

<sup>9</sup>D. J. Versepunt, “The Role and Meaning of the ‘Son of God’ Title in Matthew’s Gospel,” *NTS* 33 (1987): 532–556.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 544.

<sup>11</sup>D. J. Versepunt, “Davidic Messiah and Matthew’s Jewish Christianity,” in *SBL 1995 Seminar Papers*, ed. E. Lovering, Jr., SBL Seminar Papers Series 34 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 102–116.



origins. Rather, it incorporates a sufficient number of traditional themes that were typical for Matthew's Jewish compatriots. They were, in Versepūt's view, related to the hope that God's people will be "restored from the affliction of divine retribution imposed since the time of the exile."<sup>12</sup>

The most important *traditionsgeschichtliche* study of Davidic messiahship in the New Testament in general, and the Gospel of Matthew in particular, can be found in Christoph Burger's dissertation *Jesus als Davidssohn*.<sup>13</sup> Burger was the first to call attention to the Matthean connection of the title "Son of David" and Jesus' healings. According to his reconstruction, Matthew's Gospel shows an independent development of this title. This happened because Mark before Matthew added the title "Son of David" to the episode about the healing of the blind Bartimaeus, just before Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Mark did it because he wanted to prepare his readers for the acclamation of Jesus as the Davidic Messiah by the crowd, and not because he made a conscious link between the title and the act of healing. Matthew, in turn, found this connection already established in his *Vorlage* and developed it further with the purpose of expressing the healing function of the Son of David. In Burger's view, the Matthean presentation of Jesus as the Son of David represents a distinctive Christian development that is far removed from any early Jewish concept of the Davidic Messiah.

In the early 1970s, several authors explored a possible link between the Matthean Son of David and the traditions about Solomon who acts as an exorcist found in certain fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls Psalms, Pseudo-Philo, Josephus, the *Testament of Solomon*, and the Aramaic incantation bowls.<sup>14</sup> The most recent contribution to this discussion is the essay "Solomon and Jesus: The Son of David in Ante-Markan Traditions (Mark 10:47)" by James H. Charlesworth,<sup>15</sup> who argued that the title "Son of David" in Mark is not messianic. Thus, when the blind Bartimaeus addressed Jesus as the Son of

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 115.

<sup>13</sup>C. Burger, *Jesus als Davidssohn: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, FRLANT 98 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970).

<sup>14</sup>L. R. Fisher, "Can This Be the Son of David?" in *Jesus and the Historian*, ed. F. T. Trotter, FS E. C. Colwell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), 82–97; E. Lövestam, "Jésus Fils de David chez les Synoptiques," *ST* 28 (1974): 97–109 [Swedish original: "David-son-kristologin hos synoptikerna," *SEÅ* 15 (1972): 198–210]; K. Berger, "Die königlichen Messiastraditionen des Neuen Testaments," *NTS* 20 (1973/74): 1–44; D. C. Duling, "Solomon, Exorcism, and the Son of David," *HTR* 68 (1975): 235–252; idem, "The Therapeutic Son of David: An Element in Matthew's Christological Apologetic," *NTS* 24 (1977–78): 392–410.

<sup>15</sup>J. H. Charlesworth, "Solomon and Jesus: The Son of David in Ante-Markan Traditions (Mark 10:47)," in *Biblical and Humane*, ed. L. B. Elder, D. L. Barr, and E. S. Malbon, FS J. F. Priest (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 125–151.

David, he “was certainly thinking of Jesus as a healer, after the order of Solomon.”<sup>16</sup>

In view of the brevity of various treatments of the Matthean link between the Son of David and the miracles of healing, it is not surprising that this topic did not receive sufficient attention so far. Apart from the interest in the connection with the traditions about Solomon who acts as an exorcist, Jewish roots of Matthew’s portrayal of Jesus as the Son of David have been largely neglected. The view that Matthew’s characterization of the Son of David as a healing Messiah is a distinctive Christian development that is far removed from any early Jewish concept of the Davidic Messiah cannot be justified in view of Matthew’s obvious tendency to demonstrate that the whole of Jesus’ life represents the fulfillment of Scriptures. Similarly to other early Christian exegetes, Matthew had to solve the problem of how to present Jesus’ life and death in light of the conviction that he is indeed the expected Davidic Messiah.

### 1.3 The Thesis

The concluding statement of the previous paragraph needs to be explicated with greater precision because it contains the working hypothesis concerning the development of early Christology adopted in this study. Following the original proposal of Nils A. Dahl,<sup>17</sup> endorsed and further developed by Donald Juel,<sup>18</sup> I presume that the confession of Jesus as the Messiah is the presupposition of New Testament Christology, not its content. Several studies have convincingly demonstrated that within a relatively short period after Jesus’ resurrection, his followers expressed his significance by confessing him as *χριστός*.<sup>19</sup> It is outside of the scope of this study to examine the origins of

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 147.

<sup>17</sup>N. A. Dahl, *The Crucified Messiah and Other Essays* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1974).

<sup>18</sup>D. Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1992).

<sup>19</sup>N. A. Dahl (*The Crucified Messiah*, 25) notes that in the Greek-speaking Christianity “within a few years of the crucifixion, the name Christ as applied to Jesus must have been firmly established. This presupposes that Jesus was already designated ‘the Messiah’ and ‘Jesus the Messiah’ in the Aramaic-speaking regions. To this extent the Christology of the primitive community from the very first must have been a Messiah-Christology.” M. Hengel (“Jesus, the Messiah of Israel,” in *Studies in Early Christology* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995], 10) also claims that “the striking pre-eminence of the Christ name (or title) in the letters, that is, outside the gospels, in which the linguistic usage of the earthly Jesus has left more trace than is commonly recognized, can only be explained if from the beginning – indeed, especially at the beginning [emphasis his] – it was fundamental for the post-Easter community.” Similarly, D. Juel (*Messianic Exegesis*, 2) contends that “what stands at the beginning of that [Christian] reflection and provides a focus and a direction for scriptural exegesis is the confession of Jesus as Messiah.”

this startling declaration, given the fact there is no evidence that any version of early Jewish messianic hopes contained a notion of a suffering Messiah or a human being who would achieve messianic status through resurrection.<sup>20</sup> Regardless of whether we can discover the basis of this declaration in Jesus' own self-understanding or in other versions of Jewish messianic expectations triggered by Jesus' words and deeds,<sup>21</sup> all four Gospels agree that he was crucified as the messianic pretender, i.e. as the "King of the Jews."<sup>22</sup> The early Christian confession of Jesus' messiahship cannot be separated from this historical background.

Equally important for our understanding of the development of early Christology is the traditional material found in 1 Cor 15:3–4, which declares that Christ (χριστός)<sup>23</sup> died and was raised "according to the Scriptures" (κατὰ τὰς γραφάς). This pre-Pauline formula demonstrates that Jesus' messiahship was from the very beginning inseparable from a dialogue with Israel's Scripture. The crucified Messiah, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles (1 Cor 1:23), had to be explained and vindicated in light of scriptural evidence. The order of these two processes, however, should not be reversed. Scriptural study cannot explain the origin of the confession of Jesus' messiahship. Rather, to use Dahl's formulation, "the messiahship of the crucified Jesus is . . . the presupposition that lies at the root of all the scriptural evidence *de Christo*."<sup>24</sup> Consequently, I presume that reflecting upon and deepening one's faith, rather than wining new converts, was the primary purpose of this exegetical activity.<sup>25</sup>

Such an endeavor enabled early Christian interpreters to further explicate Jesus' significance with the help of other titles and imageries, which went far beyond the initial messianic conceptions. Thus the confession of Jesus' messiahship has not only chronological but also exegetical and logical priority. One of the tasks of this study is to demonstrate the likelihood of this hypothesis. By the time the Gospel of Matthew was written, several decades of

<sup>20</sup>Cf. Dahl, *The Crucified Messiah*, 25; Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, 13; Hengel, "Jesus, the Messiah of Israel," 12.

<sup>21</sup>M. Hengel ("Jesus, the Messiah of Israel," 14) rightly insists that "if Jesus never possessed a messianic claim of divine mission, rather sternly rejected every third-hand question in this regard, if he neither spoke of the coming, or present 'Son of Man', nor was executed as a messianic pretender and alleged king of the Jews – as is maintained with astonishing certainty by radical criticism unencumbered by historical arguments – then the emergence of christology, indeed, the entire early history of primitive Christianity, is completely baffling, nay, incomprehensible."

<sup>22</sup>For a defense of the historicity of this charge, see Dahl, *The Crucified Messiah*, 23–24, and Hengel, "Jesus, the Messiah of Israel," 41–58.

<sup>23</sup>The term χριστός, which here appears without a definite article, probably functions as a name, but its messianic connotations are unmistakable; cf. Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, 8–9.

<sup>24</sup>Dahl, *The Crucified Messiah*, 28.

<sup>25</sup>Cf. Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, 1–29.

intensive exegetical efforts had passed. The evangelist himself applies various titles to Jesus, which stand in a very complex relationship. Yet, this is the first Christian writing, which tries to present Jesus' healings as the messianic deeds performed in his capacity as the Davidic Messiah.

This study will try to demonstrate that despite the fact that none of the various messianic figures in Judaism were expected to perform healing miracles, Matthew's portrayal of Jesus as the Son of David is nevertheless firmly anchored in the messianic traditions of the Second Temple period. My main argument, however, is not that Jewish traditions contain certain antecedents of a healing Messiah, but rather that they offered to early Christian communities a sufficient number of interpretative possibilities for constructing such a figure. I will try to show that Matthew fulfilled this task by quoting or alluding to the scriptural passages which had the potential for a messianic interpretation within the parameters found in various Jewish messianic texts preceding or contemporary with Matthew's Gospel. Although I am fully aware that the history of ideas cannot offer a complete explanation of the origins of Matthew's Christology, I am convinced that an examination of Matthew's employment of traditional imagery drawn from Scripture along the lines of early Jewish interpretations found in the post-biblical literature can offer a good starting point for an assessment of Matthew's presentation of Jesus as the healing Davidic Messiah.

One should be aware, however, that the terms "Messiah" and "messianic" possess a certain degree of ambiguity that remains even when the most rigorous scrutiny is applied. In the past, scholars had a tendency to read every eschatological text as "messianic," without regard to whether a savior figure that can be properly called "the Messiah" is mentioned.<sup>26</sup> However, there are end-time visions which do not include any eschatological deliverer at all, or if they do, such a figure can be a prophet, priest, king, or God himself. Moreover, even when the term משיח (ה) (Greek [ὁ] χριστός) appears, it does not have to refer to the future messianic deliverer. This word can be translated as "an anointed one" (without a definite article), "the Anointed One," "the Anointed One of" (if in construct), or "the Messiah." Generally, the latter should be reserved for an anointed eschatological redeemer who is actually called "the Messiah" in the original text. The application of this criterion, however, should not be mechanical. Pre-Christian documents are quite diverse and contain various designations for a future deliverer. Such a figure can still be regarded as "messianic" if we possess the evidence that the actual designation has been associated with the term "Messiah." The messianic redeemer is

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<sup>26</sup>See the critique by M. de Jonge, "The Use of the Word 'Anointed' in the Time of Jesus," *NovT* 8 (1966): 132–133.

mentioned for the first time in post-biblical literature,<sup>27</sup> but his specific characteristics vary considerably from document to document.

The term “Christian” will be used in this study for the sake of convenience, even though it can be occasionally misleading and anachronistic. This designation is, I believe, broad enough to encompass various forms of the Palestinian Jesus Movement, from the first believers who claimed that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah to more institutionalized groups to which the Matthean community probably belongs.

## 1.4 Methodology

Because of my interest in the origins of Matthew’s portrayal of Jesus as the Son of David, I will predominantly use a tradition-history approach. The main task of this method, as it has been developed by Gerhard von Rad, is to trace the history of a particular tradition and demonstrate how it has been adapted and reformulated in subsequent changing historical situations. The objective is to detect both the points of continuity and discontinuity in this process. My goal, however, is not only to trace the development of the traditions related to the Davidic Messiah, but also to explain them in light of the present state of research regarding Jewish scriptural interpretations and Christological interpretations of the Old Testament in early Christian communities.

On the other hand, my interest in the way Matthew portrays Jesus as the Davidic Messiah within his narrative requires the application of a narrative-critical approach as developed within literary theory. This method has proved to be useful in the analysis of Matthew’s narrative.<sup>28</sup> However, in order to discover Matthew’s *Tendenzen*, which characterize him not only as an author but also as an interpreter of the received tradition, I will also pay attention to

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<sup>27</sup>Cf. A. S. van der Woude, “Messias,” in *Biblich-Historisches Handwörterbuch: Landeskunde, Geschichte, Religion, Kultur, Literatur*, ed. B. R. Reicke and L. Rost, vol. 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), cols. 1197–1198; J. H. Charlesworth, “Messianology in the Biblical Pseudepigrapha,” in *Qumran-Messianism: Studies on the Messianic Expectations in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth, H. Lichtenberger, and G. S. Oegema (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 21–23.

<sup>28</sup>The conventional literary categories can be found in S. Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1978); M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 6th ed. (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1993). Some major works on Matthew that apply narrative criticism are: R. A. Edwards, *Matthew’s Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); J. D. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986); W. G. Thompson, *Matthew’s Story: Good News for Uncertain Times* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989); D. B. Howell, *Matthew’s Inclusive Story: A Study in the Narrative Rhetoric of the First Gospel*, JSNTSup 42 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990).

his modifications and adaptation of the material which he had at his disposal.<sup>29</sup> Yet, in contrast to the traditional redaction-critical approach, I will disregard a great number of changes that could be ascribed to Matthew the redactor and mention only those that are relevant for the subject matter of this study.

Narrative criticism is based on the theoretical model of the narrative that differentiates between real author, implied author, real reader, and implied reader.<sup>30</sup> The real author is the historical author of the text.<sup>31</sup> The implied author is a theoretical construct of a “creative intellect at work in the narrative.”<sup>32</sup> One real author can produce several literary works, each having a different image of the implied author.<sup>33</sup> When we read Matthew’s Gospel, we meet only the implied author, whom we infer from the narrative. The nature of Matthew’s Gospel, however, leads to the supposition that there is no reason to assume that the real author is different from the implied author. Even if on certain occasions Matthew might have been aware that he was creating fiction,<sup>34</sup> his story world contains a diachronical aspect intended to be read as a historical dimension of the story. It is therefore hard to imagine that under the presupposition that the sources available to him were the same, the real author of Matthew’s Gospel would have produced another, different narrative of Jesus’ life. This is the reason that the name Matthew will be used here to refer to the real, as well to the implied author, though this does not mean that on the theoretical level the distinction between them has been dissolved.

The real reader is any actual reader of the narrative. The implied reader is a literary construct, the reader “created by the text”<sup>35</sup> and as such presupposed by the text. The real reader is to be differentiated from the implied reader because the specific historical context in which s/he lives significantly impacts the reading process. Even the first readers/hearers of Matthew’s Gospel should not be identified with the implied reader. Since, however, Matthew obviously had his fellow believers in mind when he was writing, we can assume that they come very close to the image of the implied reader. Consequently, the term “Matthew’s reader” will be used here to designate both the implied reader and the real reader/hearer in Matthew’s community, though the theoretical difference between them will not be dismissed.

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<sup>29</sup>This study is based on the premises of the Two-Document hypothesis.

<sup>30</sup>The full diagram of this model can be found in Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 267.

<sup>31</sup>The identity of the real author of Matthew’s Gospel is irrelevant for the purpose of this study.

<sup>32</sup>R. A. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*, New Testament Foundations and Facets (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 16.

<sup>33</sup>Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 148.

<sup>34</sup>Cf. U. Luz, “Fiktivität und Traditionstreue im Matthäusevangelium im Lichte griechischer Literatur,” *ZNW* 84 (1993): 153–177.

<sup>35</sup>Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 205.

The book consists of three major chapters, each being defined through the structural categories of Matthew's narrative. Chapter 2 deals with the framework of the segment of the plotted story in which Jesus is addressed as the Son of David. Since this title does not appear in the passion narrative, its last occurrence in Jesus' dispute with the Pharisees in the Temple marks the end of that part of the story in which Matthew applies this designation to Jesus. I will try to show that in the framing portions of this section Matthew wants to demonstrate that Jesus possesses the required prerequisites for a Davidic Messiah as they are defined in Nathan's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7. Chapter 3 will be focused on the content of the segment of Matthew's narrative in which various characters address him with the Davidic messianic title either in the expectation of a healing or on the basis of the healing that he has just performed. In search for an explanation of this phenomenon, I will explore Matthew's indebtedness to the Solomonic traditions, as well as the traditions about the eschatological prophet like Moses. At the end of this chapter, I will create the basis for the approach that I will adopt in chapter 4, which will examine the scriptural basis of Matthew's portrayal of the Davidic Messiah who heals the sick. The results of the entire investigation will be summarized in the final summary of conclusions.

## Reference Index

*Contents:* 1. Old Testament; 2. New Testament; 3. Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha; 4. Dead Sea Scrolls; 5. Philo and Josephus; 6. Rabbinic and Other Jewish Texts; 7. Early Christian Writings; 8. Greek Texts.

### I. Old Testament

#### *Genesis*

|          |        |
|----------|--------|
| 5        | 40     |
| 11:10–26 | 40     |
| 14:18    | 182    |
| 17:17    | 47     |
| 18:11–14 | 47     |
| 21:1–7   | 47     |
| 22       | 147    |
| 22:2     | 147    |
| 22:12    | 147    |
| 22:16    | 147    |
| 22:18    | 45     |
| 22:20–24 | 42     |
| 25:1–6   | 42     |
| 25:21    | 47     |
| 35:22–26 | 42     |
| 49:10    | 16, 33 |

#### *Exodus*

|          |     |
|----------|-----|
| 4:22     | 61  |
| 10:1–2   | 114 |
| 12:7     | 139 |
| 16:4     | 142 |
| 22:22    | 139 |
| 26:35    | 139 |
| 28:41    | 176 |
| 29:7     | 176 |
| 29:12    | 139 |
| 30:30–31 | 176 |
| 40:14–15 | 176 |

#### *Leviticus*

|      |     |
|------|-----|
| 4:3  | 176 |
| 4:5  | 176 |
| 4:16 | 176 |
| 7:36 | 176 |
| 8:12 | 176 |

|       |     |
|-------|-----|
| 21:10 | 176 |
|-------|-----|

#### *Numbers*

|          |                 |
|----------|-----------------|
| 3:3      | 176             |
| 11:25    | 139             |
| 11:29    | 139             |
| 24:15–17 | 111             |
| 24:17    | 13, 14, 30, 111 |
| 25:13    | 181             |
| 35:25    | 176             |

#### *Deuteronomy*

|          |             |
|----------|-------------|
| 13:1–5   | 109, 117    |
| 13:1–2   | 114         |
| 15:2     | 181         |
| 18:9–22  | 109         |
| 18:9–14  | 117         |
| 18:15    | 90, 109–110 |
| 18:18–19 | 111         |
| 18:18    | 109–111     |
| 29:1–4   | 93          |
| 29:1     | 93          |
| 29:3     | 93          |
| 32:1     | 171         |
| 32:39    | 173         |
| 34:10–12 | 109         |
| 34:10–11 | 114         |

#### *Judges*

|       |     |
|-------|-----|
| 11:34 | 147 |
| 16:7  | 126 |
| 16:11 | 126 |
| 16:17 | 126 |

#### *Ruth*

|         |    |
|---------|----|
| 4:18–22 | 38 |
| 4:19    | 38 |



|                 |   |                     |   |
|-----------------|---|---------------------|---|
| <i>1 Samuel</i> |   | 24:6                | 39  |
| 10              | 113   | 24:17               | 39  |
| 16:13           | 31  |                     |   |
| <i>2 Samuel</i> |   | <i>1 Chronicles</i> |   |
| 2:26            | 141   | 2:1–15              | 38  |
| 5:2             | 66, 132   | 2:54–55             | 42  |
| 6:21            | 13  | 2:3–4               | 42  |
| 7               | 10–11, 14, 16, 19, 21–22,<br>25, 27–29, 47, 49–50, 63,<br>69, 186–187 | 2:9–10              | 38  |
| 7:5–16          | 21  | 2:18–20             | 42  |
| 7:11–16         | 31  | 2:46–47             | 42  |
| 7:11            | 100   | 3:10–15             | 39  |
| 7:12–16         | 12, 13, 16–17, 21, 29,<br>186   | 3:17–19             | 39  |
| 7:12–14         | 30, 54, 63, 70  | 7:24                | 42  |
| 7:12            | 13–17, 22, 30, 53, 54   | 17:11               | 15  |
| 7:13–14         | 17  | 17:13–14            | 29  |
| 7:13            | 13, 16  | 17:13               | 21, 23  |
| 7:14–16         | 27  | 17:14               | 15  |
| 7:14            | 13, 16, 20–25, 29, 53   | <i>2 Chronicles</i> |   |
| 7:15            | 28  | 6:16                | 30, 142   |
| 7:16            | 13, 15, 16  | 7:17–18             | 30  |
| 12:1–15         | 29  | 22:3–4              | 39  |
| 21:17           | 13  | 22:7–9              | 39  |
| 23:1            | 13  | 23:14               | 141   |
| 23:2–7          | 13  | 24:22               | 39  |
| 23:5            | 13  | 25:14               | 39  |
| <i>1 Kings</i>  |   | 25:16               | 39  |
| 2:1–4           | 31  | 26:1                | 39  |
| 2:4             | 29  | 29:5                | 141   |
| 5:9–14          | 98  | 29:16               | 141   |
| 8:25            | 29, 30  | 32:6                | 139   |
| 9:4–9           | 31  | <i>Ezra</i>         |   |
| 9:4–5           | 29  | 10:3                | 141   |
| 11:13           | 13  | <i>Psalms</i>       |   |
| 11:32           | 13  | 2                   | 21–22, 24–25, 27, 45                              |
| 11:36           | 13  | 2:1–2               | 22  |
| 11:39           | 28  | 2:2                 | 21, 23  |
| 15:4            | 13  | 2:7                 | 21, 23–25, 47, 49, 53,<br>60–61, 63, 107, 147–148 |
| 19:16           | 176   | 2:8                 | 45  |
| <i>2 Kings</i>  |   | 2:9                 | 66  |
| 6:26            | 139   | 7:8–9               |   |
| 8:3             | 139   | 8:3                 | 88, 94  |
| 8:5             | 139   | 8:7                 | 55  |
| 15:1            | 38  | 17:43               | 140   |
| 23:30           | 39  | 18:51               | 4   |
| 23:34           | 39  | 25:22               | 66  |
|                 |   | 40                  | 67  |
|                 |   | 45:1                | 147   |

|                 |               |                     |  |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------------|--|
| 58:11           | 142           | <i>Ecclesiastes</i> |  |
| 60:5            | 147           | 1:1                 | 98                                       |
| 67:12           | 147           | 1:12                | 98                                       |
| 72              | 106, 144–145  | 1:16–18             | 98                                       |
| 72:2            | 144           |                     |  |
| 72:4            | 144–145       | <i>Canticles</i>    |  |
| 72:12–14        | 145           | 1:1                 | 98                                       |
| 74:9            | 110           |                     |  |
| 82:1–2          | 181           | <i>Isaiah</i>       |  |
| 84:1            | 147           | 1:2                 | 171                                      |
| 85              | 67            | 5:1                 | 147                                      |
| 89              | 14, 27–28     | 6:9–10              | 132, 161                                 |
| 89:4            | 14            | 6:9                 | 93                                       |
| 89:5            | 28            | 7:10–16             | 114                                      |
| 89:25           | 13            | 7:14                | 47–48, 64, 72                            |
| 89:27–28        | 21            | 11                  | 18, 129                                  |
| 89:27           | 21            | 11:1–9              | 107                                      |
| 89:29           | 28            | 11:1–2              | 148                                      |
| 89:30–33        | 28            | 11:1                | 14                                       |
| 89:30           | 14            | 11:2–3              | 121                                      |
| 89:34           | 28            | 11:2                | 180                                      |
| 89:37           | 14, 28        | 11:3                | 121                                      |
| 89:38           | 28            | 11:6–9              | 165                                      |
| 89:39–40        | 130           | 11:10               | 14, 20, 150                              |
| 89:46–51        | 30            | 15:3                | 140                                      |
| 90              | 67            | 25:8                | 141                                      |
| 91              | 100           | 26:17               | 147                                      |
| 108:6           | 147           | 26:19               | 119, 160–162, 173                        |
| 110:1           | 53, 55–58, 61 | 29:18               | 119, 160–162, 179–180                    |
| 110:3           | 56            | 35:4                | 180                                      |
| 110:4           | 182           | 35:5–6              | 119–120, 161–162, 178                    |
| 118:26          | 153           | 35:5                | 160, 179–180                             |
| 119:165         | 142           | 35:6                | 160, 180                                 |
| 127:2           | 147           | 40:10               | 153                                      |
| 130:7           | 67            | 40:24               | 126                                      |
| 130:8           | 64–65, 70, 72 | 41:5                | 142                                      |
| 132:11–12       | 14            | 41:16               | 126                                      |
| 132:11          | 14, 100       | 42:1–4              | 119, 130, 133–151, 181,<br>183, 188, 189 |
| 132:12          | 14, 16, 29    | 42:1–2              | 148                                      |
| 132:13–16       | 29            | 42:1                | 61, 128, 138, 146–148,<br>150            |
| 132:17–18       | 29            | 42:2                | 149                                      |
| 132:17          | 13, 14        | 42:3–4              | 140, 144                                 |
| 146:5–8         | 172           | 42:3                | 140–141                                  |
| 146:6           | 173           | 42:4                | 140–141                                  |
| 146:7–8         | 172–173       | 42:7                | 161, 181                                 |
| 146:7           | 173           | 42:18               | 161                                      |
|                 |               | 48:20               | 139                                      |
| <i>Proverbs</i> |               | 49:6                | 128                                      |
| 1:1             | 98            | 52:7                | 181–182                                  |

|                     |  |                  |                                |
|---------------------|--|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 52:13               | 61   | 36:25            | 70                             |
| 52:15               | 128  | 36:28            | 70                             |
| 53                  | 127, 129   | 36:29–30         | 70                             |
| 53:4                | 119, 125–132, 146, 184,<br>188–189                       | 36:29            | 70                             |
| 53:11               | 126  | 36:33–35         | 70                             |
| 53:12               | 129  | 36:33            | 70                             |
| 55:3                | 28   | 37:23–24         | 70                             |
| 57:13               | 126  | 37:23            | 70                             |
| 60:22               | 157  |                  |                                |
| 61:1–3              | 162, 181   | <i>Daniel</i>    |                                |
| 61:1–2              | 175, 180   | 7                | 56                             |
| 61:1                | 119, 160–162, 171, 173,<br>175–178, 179–183, 184,<br>190 | 7:9–14           | 56                             |
| 62:11               | 87   | 7:13             | 61, 129                        |
|                     |  | 8:27             | 126                            |
|                     |  | 9:1–27           | 40                             |
|                     |  | 9:25             | 175, 181–182                   |
|                     |  | 11–12            | 129                            |
| <i>Jeremiah</i>     |  |                  |                                |
| 3:5                 | 141  | <i>Hosea</i>     |                                |
| 6:26                | 147  | 11:1             | 46                             |
| 23:5                | 14   | 11:6             | 126                            |
| 23:6                | 69   |                  |                                |
| 31:20               | 147  | <i>Amos</i>      |                                |
| 31:31–33            | 29   | 1:11             | 141                            |
| 33:14–26            | 14, 18   | 8:7              | 141                            |
| 33:14–25            | 28   | 8:10             | 147                            |
| 33:14               | 14   | 9:11             | 18, 30, 70                     |
| 33:15               | 28   |                  |                                |
| 33:16               | 69   | <i>Micah</i>     |                                |
| 33:17               | 16, 28, 33   | 5:1              | 132                            |
| 33:19–22            | 28   |                  |                                |
| 33:21               | 14, 16   | <i>Habakkuk</i>  |                                |
| 33:22               | 14   | 1:4              | 140–141                        |
| 33:25–26            | 28   | 2:3              | 124, 153–159, 179, 183,<br>189 |
|                     |  |                  |                                |
| <i>Lamentations</i> |  | <i>Haggai</i>    |                                |
| 5:20                | 141  | 2:23             | 138                            |
|                     |  |                  |                                |
| <i>Ezekiel</i>      |  | <i>Zechariah</i> |                                |
| 7:19                | 140  | 3:8              | 14, 130                        |
| 26:11               | 140  | 6:12             | 14                             |
| 28:23               | 140  | 9:9              | 86–87                          |
| 29:21               | 13   | 10:2             | 131                            |
| 34                  | 131, 189   | 12:10            | 147                            |
| 34:2–4              | 131  | 14:5             | 153                            |
| 34:4                | 126, 131–132   |                  |                                |
| 34:11               | 72   | <i>Malachi</i>   |                                |
| 34:13               | 72   | 3:1–2            | 153                            |
| 34:23–24            | 131–132  | 3:1              | 110                            |
| 34:23               | 72, 131  | 4:5              | 110                            |
| 36–37               | 70   |                  |                                |

## 2. New Testament

*Matthew*

|         |                                   |           |                                     |
|---------|-----------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| 1-2     | 34-36                             | 3:11-17   | 153                                 |
| 1       | 41, 45, 62, 77                    | 3:11      | 127, 153                            |
| 1:1-25  | 11                                | 3:13-17   | 108                                 |
| 1:1-17  | 37-42, 151                        | 3:16      | 107, 148, 180                       |
| 1:1     | 36, 45, 48-49                     | 3:17      | 138                                 |
| 1:2-17  | 11                                | 4:12-18   | 135                                 |
| 1:2-6   | 38                                | 4:13      | 152                                 |
| 1:2     | 38                                | 4:14      | 47                                  |
| 1:3     | 38                                | 4:15      | 151                                 |
| 1:5     | 42                                | 4:16      | 36                                  |
| 1:6     | 42, 69                            | 4:23-24   | 127                                 |
| 1:6-11  | 39                                | 4:23      | 104-105, 118, 120, 127, 143         |
| 1:11    | 69                                | 4:24      | 105, 118, 127                       |
| 1:12-16 | 39                                | 5-9       | 118, 143, 152                       |
| 1:12    | 39, 69                            | 5-7       | 79                                  |
| 1:15    | 39                                | 5:3-12    | 180                                 |
| 1:16    | 36, 39, 43, 46                    | 5:3-4     | 180                                 |
| 1:17    | 41-42, 189                        | 5:40      | 127                                 |
| 1:18-25 | 11, 35-36, 43-45                  | 7:23      | 65                                  |
| 1:18    | 36, 44, 46, 49                    | 7:28      | 90                                  |
| 1:20    | 36, 42, 45-46, 106                | 8-9       | 79-81, 118, 125, 131, 152           |
| 1:21    | 12, 36, 63-69, 70, 72, 73-75, 186 | 8:1-4     | 152                                 |
| 1:22-23 | 47                                | 8:2-17    | 79                                  |
| 1:22    | 47, 64, 72                        | 8:4       | 134                                 |
| 1:23    | 47, 72                            | 8:5-13    | 89, 151                             |
| 1:24-25 | 44                                | 8:5       | 80                                  |
| 1:24    | 36                                | 8:7       | 105                                 |
| 1:25    | 36                                | 8:8       | 80                                  |
| 2       | 46                                | 8:10-12   | 45                                  |
| 2:1-23  | 35                                | 8:14-17   | 80                                  |
| 2:1-12  | 35, 151                           | 8:16-17   | 119-120, 124, 125-132, 183, 188     |
| 2:1     | 36                                | 8:16      | 119, 125                            |
| 2:6     | 66, 132                           | 8:17      | 47, 119, 125-127, 129-131, 146, 188 |
| 2:12-15 | 135                               | 8:18-9:17 | 79                                  |
| 2:12    | 36                                | 8:18-22   | 79                                  |
| 2:13-23 | 35                                | 8:18      | 80                                  |
| 2:13    | 36                                | 8:23      | 80                                  |
| 2:15    | 46-47                             | 8:25      | 67                                  |
| 2:17    | 47                                | 8:28-34   | 105                                 |
| 2:19    | 36                                | 8:28      | 80                                  |
| 2:21    | 36                                | 9         | 2, 85                               |
| 2:22-23 | 64, 135                           | 9:1       | 80                                  |
| 2:22    | 36                                | 9:2-8     | 67, 72-73, 81, 152                  |
| 2:23    | 47                                | 9:2       | 81                                  |
| 3:1     | 36                                | 9:3       | 72                                  |
| 3:2     | 74                                | 9:6       | 81                                  |
| 3:7-10  | 45                                | 9:8       | 72, 81, 90                          |

|             |   |          |   |
|-------------|---|----------|---|
| 9:9-13      | 79  | 12:8     | 150                                     |
| 9:12        | 132   | 12:9-14  | 81                                      |
| 9:14-17     | 79  | 12:15-21 | 81, 119-120, 124, 133-151, 183, 188-189 |
| 9:18-31     | 79  | 12:15-16 | 135                                     |
| 9:18-26     | 81, 152                                     | 12:15    | 133, 143, 145                           |
| 9:21        | 67  | 12:16    | 133-134, 136, 145                       |
| 9:22        | 67  | 12:17-21 | 108, 130                                |
| 9:25        | 81  | 12:17    | 47, 142                                 |
| 9:27-31     | 2, 79-81, 84, 89, 152                       | 12:18-21 | 133, 136-151                            |
| 9:27        | 80-81, 89                                   | 12:18-20 | 141                                     |
| 9:28        | 89  | 12:18    | 135, 137-138, 142, 144, 146-150         |
| 9:30        | 134   | 12:19-20 | 142                                     |
| 9:32-34     | 79, 81-82, 105, 152                         | 12:19    | 133, 135, 139-140, 145-146              |
| 9:32-33     | 89  | 12:20-21 | 142                                     |
| 9:33        | 90-91                                       | 12:20    | 140, 142-145, 146                       |
| 9:34        | 89, 92                                      | 12:21    | 135, 141-142, 149, 150-151              |
| 9:35        | 104-105, 118-120, 127, 132, 143             | 12:22-50 | 81                                      |
| 9:36        | 119, 132, 143                               | 12:22-37 | 81                                      |
| 10:1        | 104-105, 127                                | 12:22-27 | 81                                      |
| 10:5-6      | 151   | 12:22-24 | 2, 81-82, 89, 96, 104-105, 135, 149     |
| 10:6        | 132   | 12:22    | 104-105                                 |
| 10:8        | 127   | 12:23    | 90-91, 104, 107-108, 112, 150           |
| 10:15       | 150   | 12:24-28 | 145                                     |
| 10:22       | 67  | 12:24    | 90, 92, 107                             |
| 10:26       | 95  | 12:25-27 | 107                                     |
| 11          | 81  | 12:25    | 149                                     |
| 11:2-27     | 81  | 12:27-28 | 108                                     |
| 11:2-6      | 119-120, 124, 152, 177, 189                 | 12:27    | 107-108                                 |
| 11:2        | 91, 94                                      | 12:28-45 | 81                                      |
| 11:3        | 153-159                                     | 12:28    | 107-108, 148                            |
| 11:4        | 91, 95, 152                                 | 12:31-32 | 108                                     |
| 11:5-6      | 159-183                                     | 12:36-37 | 149                                     |
| 11:5        | 119, 145, 160-163, 169, 179-180, 190        | 12:36    | 144                                     |
| 11:6        | 178   | 12:38-45 | 81                                      |
| 11:19       | 94  | 12:38-39 | 117                                     |
| 11:20-24    | 94  | 12:40    | 150                                     |
| 11:20       | 95  | 12:41-42 | 149, 151                                |
| 11:22       | 150   | 12:41    | 150                                     |
| 11:24       | 150   | 12:42    | 108-109, 150                            |
| 11:25-27    | 95  | 12:46-50 | 81, 146, 149                            |
| 11:25       | 94, 95                                      | 13       | 92                                      |
| 11:27       | 95  | 13:10-17 | 93                                      |
| 11:28-12:21 | 81  | 13:11    | 112                                     |
| 12          | 81, 90, 104, 108, 133-134, 144-145, 148-150 | 13:13    | 92, 112, 161                            |
| 12:1-21     | 81  | 13:14-15 | 132                                     |
| 12:1-8      | 81  |          |   |
| 12:6        | 150   |          |   |

|             |   |          |                                  |
|-------------|---|----------|----------------------------------|
| 13:16       | 93                                      | 21       | 2, 90                            |
| 13:35       | 47                                      | 21:1-17  | 85-88                            |
| 13:41       | 65                                      | 21:1-11  | 2, 85-88                         |
| 13:51       | 94                                      | 21:1-7   | 86                               |
| 13:53-16:20 | 83                                      | 21:4-5   | 86                               |
| 14:12-14    | 135                                     | 21:4     | 47                               |
| 14:13-14    | 119, 143                                | 21:8-11  | 86                               |
| 14:14       | 105, 119, 143                           | 21:8-9   | 112                              |
| 14:30       | 67                                      | 21:8     | 87                               |
| 15:1-20     | 83                                      | 21:9-11  | 112                              |
| 15:21-28    | 2, 43, 83-84, 89, 104-<br>105, 135, 151 | 21:9     | 86-87, 153                       |
| 15:22       | 83, 89, 104                             | 21:10-11 | 86                               |
| 15:24       | 65, 132                                 | 21:11    | 87                               |
| 15:26       | 127                                     | 21:14-17 | 2, 89, 94                        |
| 15:28       | 104                                     | 21:14-16 | 87-88                            |
| 15:29-31    | 119-120                                 | 21:14    | 105                              |
| 15:30       | 105                                     | 21:15    | 86, 90, 92                       |
| 15:31       | 90                                      | 21:16    | 94-95                            |
| 15:32       | 144                                     | 21:43    | 66                               |
| 16:1-4      | 117                                     | 22:1-14  | 66                               |
| 16:13-20    | 112                                     | 22:29-33 | 45                               |
| 16:13-14    | 112                                     | 22:33    | 90                               |
| 16:16-17    | 94                                      | 22:41-46 | 2, 11, 50, 53, 54-63, 77,<br>186 |
| 16:16       | 50, 95, 135                             | 22:42-45 | 62                               |
| 16:17-19    | 72                                      | 22:43    | 55, 57-58                        |
| 16:18       | 66                                      | 22:45    | 58                               |
| 16:20       | 135-136                                 | 23       | 93                               |
| 16:21       | 135                                     | 23:16    | 93                               |
| 17:13       | 110                                     | 23:17    | 93                               |
| 17:14-21    | 105                                     | 23:19    | 93                               |
| 17:15       | 89                                      | 23:24    | 93                               |
| 17:16       | 105                                     | 23:28    | 65                               |
| 17:18       | 105                                     | 23:39    | 153                              |
| 17:19       | 136                                     | 24:12    | 65                               |
| 18:1-4      | 95                                      | 24:13    | 67                               |
| 18:21-34    | 144                                     | 24:15    | 118                              |
| 19-20       | 84                                      | 24:22    | 67                               |
| 19:1-2      | 120                                     | 24:24    | 117                              |
| 19:1        | 84                                      | 25       | 73                               |
| 19:2        | 105, 143                                | 25:31-46 | 149                              |
| 19:14       | 95                                      | 25:36    | 127                              |
| 19:25       | 67                                      | 25:39    | 127                              |
| 20:17       | 84                                      | 26:26-29 | 74                               |
| 20:18       | 84                                      | 26:28    | 74                               |
| 20:21       | 66                                      | 26:55    | 91                               |
| 20:29-34    | 2, 80, 84-85, 88-89                     | 26:63-65 | 61                               |
| 20:29       | 84-85                                   | 26:63    | 50                               |
| 20:30       | 84-85, 89                               | 27:9     | 47                               |
| 20:31       | 89                                      | 27:20-23 | 91                               |
| 20:34       | 143                                     | 27:40    | 67                               |

|             |                |             |               |
|-------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|
| 27:41–43    | 74             | 12:35–37    | 50–54, 57     |
| 27:42       | 67             | 12:35       | 61            |
| 27:49       | 67             | 12:37       | 54, 61        |
| 28:19       | 45             | 13:14       | 118           |
| 28:16–20    | 60, 89, 151    | 14:61–63    | 61            |
| 28:20       | 73             | 14:61       | 50            |
| <i>Mark</i> |                | <i>Luke</i> |               |
| 1:4         | 74             | 1:32–35     | 24            |
| 1:11        | 147            | 1:32        | 25            |
| 1:21–28     | 118            | 1:35        | 24            |
| 1:23–3:12   | 81             | 1:60–63     | 44            |
| 1:32–34     | 118, 125       | 1:77        | 65, 73–74     |
| 1:39        | 104, 119       | 3:3         | 74            |
| 1:43–44     | 134            | 3:23–38     | 37, 47        |
| 2:7         | 72             | 3:23        | 39            |
| 3:7–12      | 133            | 3:24        | 39            |
| 3:22–35     | 81             | 3:31–34     | 38            |
| 3:22–30     | 82             | 3:33        | 38            |
| 3:22        | 82             | 4:16–21     | 180           |
| 3:30        | 108            | 4:18        | 161           |
| 3:33        | 50             | 5:21        | 72            |
| 5:43        | 134            | 6:20–23     | 180           |
| 6:1–8:30    | 83             | 6:43–45     | 81            |
| 6:34        | 119, 143       | 7:18–23     | 124, 152, 177 |
| 7:24–31     | 83             | 7:18        | 91            |
| 7:25        | 104            | 7:22        | 152, 169      |
| 7:26        | 83             | 7:23        | 178           |
| 7:29        | 104            | 9:20        | 50            |
| 7:30        | 104            | 11:14–23    | 82            |
| 7:36        | 134            | 11:14–15    | 81–82         |
| 8:11–12     | 81             | 11:14       | 82            |
| 8:11        | 117            | 11:19–23    | 81            |
| 8:26        | 134            | 11:29–36    | 109           |
| 8:29        | 50             | 11:29–32    | 81            |
| 8:30        | 135            | 11:28       | 143           |
| 9:9–13      | 110            | 12:10       | 108           |
| 10:1        | 143            | 18:38       | 89            |
| 10:46–52    | 80, 84         | 18:39       | 89            |
| 10:47       | 80, 85, 89, 97 | 19:30       | 86            |
| 10:48       | 89             | 19:33       | 86            |
| 10:52       | 85             | 19:35       | 86            |
| 11:2        | 86             | 19:37       | 87            |
| 11:4        | 86             | 20:9–19     | 66            |
| 11:5        | 86             | 20:41–44    | 53, 57        |
| 11:7        | 86             | 22:67–71    | 61            |
| 11:8–9      | 112            | 22:67       | 50            |
| 11:8        | 87             | 24:47       | 74            |
| 11:10       | 87             |             |               |
| 12:1–12     | 66             | <i>John</i> |               |
| 12:12–14    | 85             | 6:14–15     | 112           |

|                      |              |  |          |
|----------------------|--------------|--|----------|
| 6:69                 | 50           | 1:20                                   | 56       |
| 7:40                 | 112          |  |          |
| 7:42                 | 20           | <i>Colossians</i>                      |          |
| 12:14–15             | 86           | 1:14                                   | 74       |
| <i>Acts</i>          |              | 1:18                                   | 26       |
| 2:29–36              | 20           | 3:1                                    | 56       |
| 2:29–35              | 53, 57       |  |          |
| 2:29                 | 75           | <i>2 Timothy</i>                       |          |
| 2:30–31              | 75           | 2:8                                    | 20       |
| 2:32–36              | 60           |  |          |
| 2:33–36              | 56           | <i>Hebrews</i>                         |          |
| 2:34                 | 57           | 1:3                                    | 56       |
| 2:38                 | 74           | 1:5–13                                 | 53, 61   |
| 3:22                 | 27           | 1:5                                    | 25       |
| 3:26                 | 27           | 1:13                                   | 56, 57   |
| 5:31                 | 74           | 2:8                                    | 55       |
| 7:55–56              | 56           | 7:14                                   | 20       |
| 10:43                | 74           | 10:18                                  | 74       |
| 13:23–39             | 53           | 12:2                                   | 56       |
| 13:23                | 20           |  |          |
| 13:32–37             | 20           | <i>James</i>                           |          |
| 13:33–34             | 26–27        | 5:15                                   | 73       |
| 13:33                | 26–27, 60    | 5:20                                   | 73       |
| 13:34–35             | 75           |  |          |
| 13:36–37             | 75           | <i>1 Peter</i>                         |          |
| 13:38                | 74           | 3:22                                   | 55–56    |
| 26:18                | 74           |  |          |
| <i>Romans</i>        |              | <i>Revelation</i>                      |          |
| 1:3–4                | 19–20, 25–27 | 1:5                                    | 26       |
| 1:3                  | 51           | 13:18                                  | 40       |
| 1:4                  | 25           |  |          |
| 8:32                 | 147          | <b>3. Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha</b> |          |
| 8:34                 | 56           | <i>2 Baruch</i>                        |          |
| 15:12                | 20, 150      | 14:1                                   | 159      |
|                      |              | 20:6                                   | 159      |
| <i>1 Corinthians</i> |              | 21:25                                  | 158      |
| 1:23                 | 6            | 29                                     | 177      |
| 15:3–4               | 6            | 29:3                                   | 166–168  |
| 15:20                | 26           | 29:6–7                                 | 166–168  |
| 15:23                | 26           | 30:1                                   | 166–168  |
| 15:25–27             | 55           | 30:2                                   | 175      |
| 15:25                | 56           | 53–74                                  | 41       |
| 15:54                | 141          | 54:13–19                               | 32       |
|                      |              | 70:10                                  | 130      |
| <i>Galatians</i>     |              | 73:1–3                                 | 165, 167 |
| 3:13–22              | 147          | 73:6–7                                 | 165, 167 |
|                      |              |  |          |
| <i>Ephesians</i>     |              | <i>1 Enoch</i>                         |          |
| 1:20–22              | 55           | 5:8                                    | 164      |
|                      |              | 7–9                                    | 99       |



- |                 |               |                          |   |
|-----------------|---------------|--------------------------|---|
| 10:20–22        | 70            |                          |   |
| 25:5–7          | 164           |                          |   |
| 45:3            | 56            |                          |   |
| 48:2            | 158           |                          |   |
| 48:4            | 66            |                          |   |
| 48:6            | 71, 158       |                          |   |
| 48:7            | 71            |                          |   |
| 48:10           | 66, 71, 158   |                          |   |
| 51:3            | 56            |                          |   |
| 53:6            | 158           |                          |   |
| 55:4            | 56            |                          |   |
| 61:8            | 56            |                          |   |
| 62:7            | 158–159       |                          |   |
| 69:29           | 56            |                          |   |
| 91:12–17        | 40, 41        |                          |   |
| 93:1–10         | 40, 41        |                          |   |
| 93:3            | 41            |                          |   |
| 95:4            | 164           |                          |   |
| 96:3            | 164           |                          |   |
| <i>4 Ezra</i>   |               |                          |   |
| 4:33–34         | 158           |                          |   |
| 4:39            | 158           |                          |   |
| 4:40–42         | 158           |                          |   |
| 7               | 24, 177       |                          |   |
| 7:26–29         | 166–167       |                          |   |
| 7:28–29         | 158           |                          |   |
| 7:29–32         | 175           |                          |   |
| 7:29            | 24            |                          |   |
| 7:31            | 49            |                          |   |
| 7:113–114       | 32            |                          |   |
| 7:120–126       | 164–165       |                          |   |
| 7:27            | 177           |                          |   |
| 11–12           | 18            |                          |   |
| 11:1            | 18            |                          |   |
| 12:3            | 18            |                          |   |
| 12:31–32        | 18, 41        |                          |   |
| 12:32           | 157, 157, 159 |                          |   |
| 12:34           | 70            |                          |   |
| 13–14           | 24            |                          |   |
| 13              | 24            |                          |   |
| 13:3–14:9       | 158           |                          |   |
| 13:26–27        | 157           |                          |   |
| 13:26           | 41, 70        |                          |   |
| 13:27           | 159           |                          |   |
| 13:32           | 158           |                          |   |
| 13:52           | 158           |                          |   |
| <i>Jubilees</i> |               |                          |   |
| 23:26–30        | 163–164, 167  |                          |   |
| 41:1            | 43            |                          |   |
|                 |               | <i>1 Maccabees</i>       |   |
|                 |               | 4:46                     | 110   |
|                 |               | 14:41                    | 110   |
|                 |               | <i>Psalms of Solomon</i> |   |
|                 |               | 9:6–7                    | 71  |
|                 |               | 11:1                     | 172   |
|                 |               | 17–18                    | 69, 71, 75, 167, 177                                  |
|                 |               | 17                       | 15, 16, 18, 34, 54, 66, 69,<br>72–73                  |
|                 |               | 17:4                     | 15, 16, 33, 68  |
|                 |               | 17:5                     | 32, 68  |
|                 |               | 17:20                    | 33, 68  |
|                 |               | 17:21                    | 15, 16, 27, 30, 41, 54, 57,<br>71, 106, 128, 150, 167 |
|                 |               | 17:22–25                 | 70  |
|                 |               | 17:22                    | 71, 150   |
|                 |               | 17:23–27                 | 21  |
|                 |               | 17:25                    | 66  |
|                 |               | 17:30                    | 71, 150   |
|                 |               | 17:31                    | 151   |
|                 |               | 17:32                    | 57, 66, 71, 150                                       |
|                 |               | 17:34                    | 71, 151   |
|                 |               | 17:36                    | 33  |
|                 |               | 17:38–40                 | 131   |
|                 |               | 17:38                    | 131   |
|                 |               | 17:40                    | 131   |
|                 |               | 17:42                    | 71  |
|                 |               | 17:43                    | 172   |
|                 |               | 17:44                    | 167, 177, 177   |
|                 |               | 17:45                    | 151   |
|                 |               | 17:46                    | 71  |
|                 |               | 18                       | 15, 16  |
|                 |               | 18:4                     | 71  |
|                 |               | 18:5                     | 71, 151, 167  |
|                 |               | 18:6                     | 167, 177  |
|                 |               | 18:9                     | 151   |
|                 |               | <i>Pseudo-Philo</i>      |   |
|                 |               | 9:7                      | 114   |
|                 |               | 9.10                     | 114   |
|                 |               | 60.3                     | 100–101, 103, 106                                     |
|                 |               | <i>Sibylline Oracles</i> |   |
|                 |               | 1:324–330                |   |
|                 |               | <i>Sirach</i>            |   |
|                 |               | 8:2                      | 139   |
|                 |               | 11:12–13                 | 128   |
|                 |               | 45:3                     | 114   |
|                 |               | 45:15                    | 176   |

|  |         |                        |              |
|--|---------|------------------------|--------------|
| 48:3                                       | 171     | <i>IQH<sup>a</sup></i> |              |
| 48:9–10                                    | 128     | 12.25                  | 141          |
| 49:4–5                                     | 31      | 23.14–15               | 181          |
| <i>Testament of Job</i>                    |         | <i>IQM</i>             |              |
| 33:3                                       | 56      | 9.6–9                  | 176          |
|  |         | 11.1–3                 | 72           |
|  |         | 11.7                   | 156, 175–176 |
| <i>Testament of Solomon</i>                |         | <i>IQpHab</i>          |              |
| 1:1  | 101     | 7.5–14                 | 154–155      |
| 1:7  | 101     | 7.5–6                  | 154          |
| 11:1                                       | 101     | 7.5                    | 154          |
| 12:1                                       | 101     | 7.6                    | 154          |
| 12:3                                       | 101     | 7.7–8                  | 154          |
| 13:12                                      | 101     | 7.7                    | 154, 156     |
| 15:10–12                                   | 101     | 7.9–10                 | 154          |
| 18   | 105     | 7.10–14                | 154          |
| 20:1                                       | 101–102 | 7.10                   | 155          |
|  |         | 7.12                   | 155          |
| <i>Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs</i> |         | 7.13–14                | 155          |
| – <i>Testament of Judah</i>                |         | 7.13                   | 156, 159     |
| 10:1                                       | 43      | <i>IQS</i>             |              |
| – <i>Testament of Levi</i>                 |         | 9.11                   | 111, 176     |
| 17   | 40      | <i>IQSa</i>            |              |
| 18:9                                       | 70      | 2.11–15                | 47           |
| 18:12                                      | 100     | 2.11–12                | 22           |
|  |         | 2.11                   | 47           |
| <i>Wisdom of Solomon</i>                   |         | <i>4Q174</i>           |              |
| 2  | 129     | 1–2,21 1.1–13          | 17           |
| 2:13                                       | 128     | 1–2,21 1.10            | 17, 18, 22   |
| 5  | 129     | 1–2,21 1.10–11         | 22           |
| 7:16–20                                    | 98      | 1–2,21 1.11–12         | 30           |
| 8:10–11                                    | 98      | 1–2,21 1.11            | 18, 22, 111  |
| 9:7–8                                      | 98      | 1–2,21 1.12–13         | 30           |
| 9:12                                       | 98      | 1–2,21 1.12            | 17, 18, 30   |
|  |         | 1–2,21 1.13            | 69, 71       |
|  |         | 1–3,21 1.14–2.6        | 17           |
| <b>4. Dead Sea Scrolls</b>                 |         | <i>4Q175</i>           |              |
| <i>CD MS A</i>                             |         | lines 5–8              | 111          |
| 2.12                                       | 175–176 | <i>4Q242</i>           | 99           |
| 6.1  | 175–176 | <i>4Q246</i>           |              |
| 6.7  | 111     | 1.4–6                  | 24           |
| 7.15–16                                    | 30      | 1.7–2.1                | 24           |
| 7.17–21                                    | 30      | 2.1–3                  | 24           |
| 7.18                                       | 111     |                        |              |
| <i>IQapGen</i>                             |         |                        |              |
| 20.16–21                                   | 99      |                        |              |
| 20.28–29                                   | 99      |                        |              |

2.1 23–24  
2.4–9 24  
2.4 23

4Q252  
5.1–5 33  
5.1–2 16  
5.1 33  
5.2 33  
5.3–4 16  
5.4–5 33  
5.4 17, 33

4Q375  
2.9 176

4Q376  
1.1 176

4Q521  
2.2.1–15 169–179, 182  
2.2.1–9 173  
2.2.1–3 173  
2.2.1–2 172–173, 176  
2.2.1 171, 174  
2.2.2–3 172  
2.2.2 171  
2.2.3 173, 179  
2.2.4 179  
2.2.5–8 172  
2.2.5 172  
2.2.6 171  
2.2.9 176  
2.2.10 178–179  
2.2.11–13 172  
2.2.11 173, 177  
2.2.12–13 173  
2.2.12 173, 175  
2.3.6 174  
f. 8 line 9 171  
f. 9 line 3 171

11Q5  
27.10 99

11Q11 99–100

11Q13  
2.6–8 70  
2.15–16 182  
2.18 175, 182

## 5. Philo and Josephus

### Philo

– *Abr.* 1 49  
– *Aet.* 19 49  
– *Contempl.* 1.1 99  
– *Post.* 127 49  
– *Virt.* 220–222 43

### Josephus

#### – *Antiquities*

1.20.2 114  
2.12.3 114  
2.12.4 114  
2.13.2–3 114  
3.4.2 135  
5.9.4 31  
6.8.1 31  
7.4.4 31  
7.14.8 31  
7.15.1 31  
8.4.6 31  
8.2.5 97–99, 105  
10.8.4 31  
18.4.1 115  
20.5.1 115  
20.8.6 115–116

#### – *Jewish War*

2.8.6 99  
6.5.2 115–116

## 6. Rabbinic and Other Jewish Texts

### *Palestinian Talmud*

y. *Erub.* 10:26c 100  
y. *Ket.* 12:3 175  
y. *Qid.* 4:1 175  
y. *Šabb.* 6:2 100  
y. *Ta'an.* 1:1 157  
y. *Ta'an.* 68d 121

### *Babylonian Talmud*

b. *Git.* 68a 102  
b. *Sanh.* 38b 56  
b. *Sanh.* 93b 120–121  
b. *Sanh.* 97a–97b 157  
b. *Sanh.* 97a 156  
b. *Sanh.* 97b–99a 15

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| <i>b. Sanh.</i> 97b                      | 156–157      |
| <i>b. Sanh.</i> 98a                      | 116, 157     |
| <i>b. Soṭah</i> 14a                      | 129          |
| <i>b. Sukkah</i> 52a                     | 25           |
| <i>b. Šeb.</i> 15b                       | 100          |
| <br>                                     |              |
| <i>Midr. Ruth</i><br>4:12 (137a)         | 47           |
| <br>                                     |              |
| <i>Midr. Ps.</i><br>2:9 (14b)<br>18 (29) | 25, 61<br>56 |
| <br>                                     |              |
| <i>Gen. Rab.</i><br>47 (29c)<br>63 (39c) | 47<br>47     |
| <br>                                     |              |
| <i>Pesiq. Rab</i> 34                     | 157          |
| <br>                                     |              |
| <i>Mek. Pisha</i> 4                      | 52           |
| <br>                                     |              |
| <i>Sipre Num</i> 58                      | 52           |
| <br>                                     |              |
| <i>Targums</i>                           |              |
| Tg. Ps 2:7                               | 147          |
| Tg. Isa 42:1–4                           | 137          |
| Tg. Isa 42:3                             | 145          |
| Tg. Isa 52:13–<br>53:12                  | 129          |

|              |          |
|--------------|----------|
| Tg. Isa 53:4 | 126, 129 |
|--------------|----------|

*Aramaic Incantation Bowls*

|               |     |
|---------------|-----|
| Isbell No. 47 | 102 |
| Isbell No. 48 | 102 |
| Isbell No. 50 | 103 |
| Mont. No. 34  | 102 |

## 7. Early Christian Writings

*Justin*

|                     |    |
|---------------------|----|
| <i>1 Apol.</i> 33.7 | 64 |
| <i>2 Apol.</i> 6    | 64 |

*Eusebius*

|                      |    |
|----------------------|----|
| <i>Dem. ev.</i> 4.10 | 64 |
| <i>Dem. ev.</i> 4.17 | 64 |

*Epiphanius*

|                   |    |
|-------------------|----|
| <i>Haer.</i> 29.4 | 64 |
|-------------------|----|

*Tertullian*

|                      |     |
|----------------------|-----|
| <i>Adv. Marc.</i> 18 | 153 |
|----------------------|-----|

## 8. Greek Texts

*Greek Magical Papers*

|                |     |
|----------------|-----|
| Papyrus No. IV | 102 |
|----------------|-----|

## Author Index

- Abrams, M. H. 8  
Allegro, J. M. 16, 64  
Allen, L. C. 25, 67  
Allen, W. C. 139  
Allison, D. C. 64, 66, 75, 80–82, 84, 89,  
92, 95, 108–109, 112, 117–118, 149,  
153, 161–162  
Attridge, H. W. 31  
Ådna, J. 129  
Bacon, B. W. 141  
Barrera, J. T. 111  
Barth, G. 133, 136, 140, 143, 145  
Barthélemy, D. 22–23, 55  
Bauckham, R. 42–43  
Bauer, W. 86  
Beare, F. W. 108  
Becker, J. 13, 163  
Becker, M. 116, 169, 171, 178  
Berger, K. 4, 97, 100–103, 106, 117  
Bergmeier, R. 168–169, 171–173  
Betz, O. 114, 173–174  
Beuken, W. A. M. 181  
Billierbeck, P. 41–42, 121, 163–164  
Bittner, W. J. 93, 113–114, 116, 120–121,  
163  
Blass, F. 58, 82, 85  
Boer, P. A. H. de. 139  
Bonnard, P. 145  
Bornkamm, G. 51, 60  
Box, G. H. 40, 44,  
Braun, H. 64  
Breech, E. 158  
Brierre–Narbonne, J.–J. 157  
Bright, J. 29  
Broer, I. 59  
Brooke, G. J. 16, 177  
Brown, R. E. 21, 35, 42–44, 46–49  
Brown, S. 151  
Brownlee, W. H. 154  
Buchanan, G. W. 63  
Bultmann, R. 35, 51  
Burger, C. 4, 37, 39, 51, 77, 79–80, 82, 87  
Byrskog, S. 83, 89  
Cadbury, H. J. 128  
Callan, T. 56  
Carmignac, J. 17  
Charles, R. H. 99  
Charlesworth, J. H. 4–5, 8, 12, 16–17, 19,  
22, 69, 71–72, 77, 97, 103, 105, 107,  
155, 158  
Chatman, S. 8–9  
Clark, K. 78  
Collins, J. J. 12, 19, 22–24, 66, 109, 168–  
169, 171, 173–178, 181–182  
Comber, J. A. 105  
Conzelmann, H. 37–38  
Cope, O. L. 146, 148–149  
Cranfield, C. E. B. 20, 25–26  
Cross, F. M. 14, 22, 74  
Cullmann, O. 47, 50–51, 145  
Culpepper, R. A. 9  
Dahl, N. A. 5–6, 52, 59, 147  
Daly–Denton, M. 21, 55  
Daube, D. 51–52, 60  
Davenport, G. L. 66  
Davies, W. D. 46, 48–49, 64, 66, 75, 80–  
82, 84, 89, 92, 95, 108, 149, 153, 161–  
162  
Davis, C. T. 35  
Deissmann, G. A. 126  
Dewes, B. F. 79  
Dexinger, F. 110  
Dodd, C. H. 128, 130, 136  
Duling, D. C. 4, 12–14, 16, 19–20, 26, 28,  
59, 97–103, 105–106, 108–109, 120  
Dunn, J. D. G. 20, 25–27, 47  
Dupont, J. 180  
Edwards, R. A. 8  
Ehrman, B. D. 78  
Eisenman, R. H. 168, 173  
Eissfeldt, O. 28  
Elliger, K. 181  
Elliott, N. 135–136  
Ellis, P. F. 81  
Evans, C. A. 22–23, 25, 47, 162  
Evans, G. 88

- Farmer, W. R. 127–128  
 Fisher, L. R. 4, 96, 103–104, 106, 108  
 Fitzmyer, J. A. 13, 15, 22–26, 52  
 Flusser, D. 23, 99, 181  
 Fohrer, G. 65  
 France, R. T. 133, 151  
 François, F. 96  
 Frankemölle, H. 64–65, 72, 78, 178  
 Frankfurter, D. M. 110  
 Frenz, A. 86  
 Fuller, R. H. 15, 19, 46–47, 49  
 Furlani, G. 99  
 Gagg, R. 50  
 García Martínez, F. 23, 111, 141, 171, 174  
 Gärtner, B. 139  
 Gaston, L. 151  
 Geist, H. 59  
 Gerhardsson, B. 79, 92, 113, 117, 119, 145  
 Gibbs, J. M. 2, 77, 90, 95  
 Good, D. 135–136  
 Gordon, C. H. 102–103  
 Gourgues, M. 56  
 Grimm, W. 160, 161  
 Grindel, J. 140–141  
 Grundmann, W. 145  
 Gundry, R. H. 47, 58, 65–66, 81, 86–87,  
 125–127, 130, 138–140, 142, 147, 149,  
 151, 179–180  
 Hagner, D. A. 66, 74, 163  
 Hahn, F. 37, 47, 51, 55, 59, 77, 88, 144  
 Hanson, P. 181  
 Hare, D. R. A. 151  
 Harrington, D. J. 100–101, 151  
 Hay, D. M. 55–57, 62  
 Hayes, J. H. 25  
 Hegermann, H. 126, 129  
 Heitmüller, W. 38  
 Held, H. J. 79  
 Hengel, M. 5–6, 56–57, 78, 86, 114, 129,  
 180  
 Hill, D. 40, 42, 127, 136, 143, 144  
 Hogan, L. P. 99–100  
 Hooker, M. 127–129, 145, 147  
 Horbury, W. 56  
 Horgan, M. P. 154–155  
 Horsley, R. A. 110  
 Howell, D. B. 8  
 Hubbard, B. J. 151  
 Hummel, R. 65, 82  
 Isbell, C. D. 102, 103  
 James, M. R. 100  
 Jastrow, M. 100, 156–157  
 Jeremias, J. 38, 42–43, 52, 60, 110, 146  
 Johnson, M. D. 38–40, 42  
 Jones, J. M. 11, 44  
 Jonge, M. de. 7, 71, 15  
 Juel, D. 5–6, 19, 23, 38, 45, 53–57, 107,  
 121–122, 128–130, 147  
 Kilpatrick, G. D. 35, 64–65, 141  
 Kingsbury, J. D. 3, 8, 59, 62, 74, 79–80,  
 88–91, 95, 112  
 Klausner, J. 100  
 Kloppenborg, J. S. 179  
 Klostermann, E. 42  
 Knox, W. L. 35  
 Kobelski, P. J. 181–182  
 Kuhn, H.–W. 23, 155  
 Kuhn, G. 39  
 Kühner, R. 59  
 Kvalbein, H. 163–167, 169, 175  
 Lagrange, M. J. 41  
 Leske, A. M. 78  
 Levenson, J. D. 34  
 Levine, A.–J. 42  
 Levison, J. R. 32  
 Lewis, A. S. 43  
 Lindars, B. 57, 86, 125, 127, 130, 133, 136,  
 138–141, 146  
 Linton, O. 117  
 Loader, W. R. G. 3, 56, 82, 95, 133  
 Lohfink, N. 87  
 Lohmeyer, E. 35, 43, 50, 87, 143  
 Lövestam, E. 4, 20, 25, 27, 53–54; 57, 61,  
 97  
 Luomanen, P. 67, 73–74  
 Luz, U. 9, 36, 39, 45, 55, 60, 65, 78–82, 87,  
 90, 94, 133, 163  
 Lyons, J. 96  
 Martin, F. 131–132  
 McCasland, S. V. 86  
 McCown, C. C. 99–100  
 McKenzie, J. L. 14  
 McNeile, A. H. 42, 149  
 Meadors, E. P. 162  
 Meeks, W. A. 111–112  
 Meier, J. P. 86, 151  
 Metzger, B. M. 18, 85  
 Michaelis, W. 37  
 Michel, D. 181  
 Michl, J. 64

- Milik, J. T. 181–182  
 Miller, M. P. 175, 182  
 Milton, H. 35  
 Moiser, J. 79  
 Montgomery, J. A. 102  
 Morgenstern, J. 139  
 Mowinkel, S. 14  
 Mullen, E. T. 27  
 Neiryneck, F. 177, 180  
 Nestle, E. 139  
 Neusner, J. 175  
 Neyrey, J. H. 135, 143, 145–146, 149–150  
 Nickelsburg, G. E. W. 32, 66  
 Niebuhr, K.–W. 168–169, 172, 176  
 Nineham, D. E. 11  
 Nolan, B. 2, 30, 36–37, 43, 46, 62, 64  
 Nolland, J. 48–49  
 Pesch, R. 47  
 Philonenko, M. 100  
 Plastaras, J. 28–29  
 Ploeg, J. P. M. van der. 99–100  
 Pomykala, K. E. 12, 18–19, 31, 33, 66, 69  
 Porter, J. R. 29  
 Powell, M. A. 64  
 Preisendanz, K. 102  
 Puech, É. 23, 141, 168–174, 176, 182  
 Qimron, E. 154  
 Rad, G. von. 8, 34  
 Rahlfs, A. 140–141  
 Ratzaby, Y. 154  
 Richardson, A. 163  
 Riesner, R. 173–174  
 Riessler, P. 100  
 Roberts, J. J. M. 12  
 Robinson, H. W. 67  
 Robinson, J. M. 179  
 Rose, M. 88  
 Rothfuchs, W. 47–48, 127, 137–139, 142  
 Sakenfeld, K. D. 67  
 Sanders, E. P. 158, 163  
 Sanders, J. A. 99–100, 181–182  
 Sarna, N. 14, 27  
 Satterthwaite, P. E. 27  
 Sayler, G. B. 32  
 Schaberg, J. 46  
 Schaper, J. 56  
 Schäfer, P. 121  
 Schlatter, A. 61–62, 127  
 Schmidt, W. H. 67  
 Schneider, G. 50, 52  
 Schniewind, J. 35, 79, 163  
 Schoeps, H. J. 52  
 Schweizer, E. 49  
 Seidelin, P. 129  
 Sigal, P. 47  
 Sjöberg, E. 159  
 Smith, M. 47  
 Skehan, P. W. 22, 55  
 Soares Prabhu, G. M. 35, 47–48  
 Starcky, J. 168  
 Stegemann, H. 42–43, 172  
 Stendahl, K. 11, 35–37, 46–47, 64–65, 72, 86, 88, 125, 127, 136–140, 145, 147–148, 161, 179  
 Steudel, A. 17  
 Stone, M. E. 18, 24, 32, 69, 158  
 Strack, H. L. 41–42, 121, 163–164  
 Strecker, G. 35, 43, 47, 59–60, 62, 78, 82, 145  
 Strobel, A. 153–156, 159, 161–162, 179, 189  
 Stuckenbruck, L. T. 22  
 Stuhlmacher, P. 19–20, 25–27, 78, 127–130, 174, 182  
 Suhl, A. 2, 51, 82, 90, 95, 112  
 Sukenik, E. L. 141  
 Tabor, J. D. 173–174, 177  
 Talmon, S. 154–155  
 Tatum, W. B. 36  
 Taylor, V. 88, 127  
 Teeple, H. M. 109  
 Theissen, G. 105  
 Thompson, W. G. 8, 79–80  
 Tiede, D. L. 109, 111, 117–118  
 Tigchelaar, J.C. 141  
 Tillborg, S. van. 78  
 Tov, E. 168  
 Tödt, H. E. 20  
 Trafton, J. L. 16  
 Trilling, W. 78, 143, 145, 151  
 Tromp, J. 68  
 Trunk, D. 105, 107, 145  
 Tuckett, C. M. 179–180  
 Veijola, T. 27  
 Vermes, G. 147, 168  
 Verseput, D. J. 3–4, 22, 61, 63–64, 74, 81–82, 95, 134, 136, 138–140, 143–145, 149–150  
 Vögtle, A. 35, 47  
 Waard, J. de. 141

- Waetjen, H. C. 11, 40, 43, 46, 48  
Wainwright, E. M. 42  
Walker, R. 62, 133  
Westermann, C. 181  
Wieder, N. 111  
Wieser, F. E. 44  
Wise, M. O. 168, 173–174, 177  
Woude, A. S. van der. 8, 111, 181  
Wrede, W. 37–38, 54, 134, 145  
Wright, R. B. 15, 68  
Yadin, Y. 17  
Yamauchi, E. M. 102  
Zahn, T. 35, 40, 82, 145  
Zakowitch, Y. 42–43  
Ziegler, J. 142  
Zimmermann, J. 17–19, 22–24, 168–169,  
171–172, 174–176, 179



## Subject Index

- Abraham 32, 38, 40–41, 44–45, 99, 147  
Adam 32, 40, 163  
Adoption  
– divine 21, 24, 51, 63  
– human 44–45, 49–50, 62–63, 186  
Adoptionist Christology 27  
Agent of God  
– Holy Spirit 49  
– Messiah 71, 173–174, 176–177  
– eschatological prophet 3, 31, 42, 57, 136, 178, 185  
Amazement 82, 90, 91  
Angel(s) 36, 44, 53, 57, 61, 63, 70, 99, 103, 114, 172  
Anointed 7, 21, 24, 45, 63, 66, 147, 162, 165–167, 171–176, 180, 182–183, 189  
Anti-Christ 23  
Antiochus IV Epiphanes 23  
Aquila 125, 126, 137, 140–141, 154, 189  
Aramaic incantation bowls 4, 96, 102–103, 106  
Atonement 127, 147  
Atoning death 74–75, 127, 188  
Babes 94  
Bar Kokhba 37, 121  
Bartimaeus 4, 84, 97  
Bat Qol 146–147  
Beelzebul 81–82, 90, 107–108, 135, 148–149  
Belial 182  
Beloved son 146–147, 189  
Birth of Jesus 20, 42–44, 46–47, 49, 62  
Blind 2, 4, 77, 79–82, 84–85, 87, 89–90, 92, 104, 107, 119–120, 131, 134, 144–145, 152, 161, 168, 170, 172, 178, 180, 183  
Blindness  
– physical 95, 132  
– spiritual 3, 59, 93, 95, 132  
Booth of David 18, 30  
Botanical knowledge of plants 99  
Branch of David 14, 16–18, 22, 33, 69, 72, 111  
Branch of righteousness 28, 69  
Canaanite woman 43, 80, 83–84, 89, 119, 132, 135  
Chief priests 66, 87, 90, 92, 94–95  
Children 47, 84, 86–87, 90, 92, 94–95, 102, 163  
Christ 5, 6, 26, 42, 46, 53, 56, 62, 79, 128, 184, 189  
Christological titles 88, 150, 188  
Christology 2, 5–7, 27, 46–47, 49, 51, 60, 63, 73, 79, 109, 133, 162  
Church 48, 50–51, 57, 66, 94, 136, 153  
Cleansing  
– from sins 70  
– from apostasies 70  
– from other nations 71, 150  
– of the Temple 85, 87  
– of the lepers 80, 119, 134, 152, 161  
– of Israel 167  
Compassion 77, 84, 119–120, 143–144, 151, 162  
Comprehension  
– of Jesus' identity 91, 94, 122, 124  
– of a visual experience 93  
Conditional clauses 54, 58, 107  
– protasis 54, 58–59, 107  
– apodosis 58  
Conflict between  
– Jesus and the Jewish leaders 11, 50, 82, 87, 92–93, 135  
– Solomonic and royal messianic traditions 97  
– current and previous generation 149  
Contradictions in Scripture 52–54, 57–61, 157, 186  
Cross 11, 73–75, 136  
Crowd 24, 82, 85–87, 89–93, 96, 104, 107–108, 112–113, 115, 119–120, 134, 143, 187  
Crucifixion 5, 57, 67–68, 74, 101  
David 2, 10–22, 25, 27–31, 33, 38–40, 44–45, 50, 52–55, 58, 61–62, 68–70, 75, 87, 100, 132, 187  
David's descendant(s) 14, 16, 20, 22, 28, 30, 39, 42, 53, 57–58, 62, 75, 100, 150

- David's offspring 13–16, 20–21, 27–28, 47, 54, 63
- David's seed 13–14, 16–18, 21–22, 33, 44–45, 68, 186
- David's son 31, 39, 50, 53, 57–61, 175, 186
- Davidic descent 13–14, 18–20, 22, 25, 37, 45, 53, 58, 62–63, 75, 186
- Davidic covenant 13, 16, 21, 28–30, 33
- Davidic dynasty 11, 13, 18, 27, 28, 30, 31, 33, 69, 75, 186
- Day of judgment 149–150
- Deaf 119, 145, 152, 161
- Death 5, 29, 39, 53, 57, 73–75, 101, 115, 127, 135, 164–165, 175, 188
- Delay
- of justice 68
  - of Jesus' response 80
  - of the end-time 124, 153–156, 158–159, 178, 189, 190
  - of the coming of the Messiah 124, 156–157, 159, 189
  - of the fruit of a good work 170, 178
- Demon(s) 82–84, 90, 92, 96–108, 119, 122, 123, 125, 134, 145, 149, 187
- Demoniac 79, 81–82, 89–90, 92, 104–105, 107, 118, 135
- Demonological aetiologies of illness 105
- Deuteronomistic history 13, 29, 31
- Disciples
- of Jesus 45, 73, 84–85, 87, 89–90, 93–94, 110, 112, 116–117, 119, 132, 151
  - of John 79, 152–153, 178–179, 189
- Discipline 68, 71
- Divine begetting 21, 27, 47–49
- Divine sonship 3, 20, 24–27, 46–47, 49–50, 60–63, 95, 107, 147, 186
- Dumb 79, 81–82, 89, 90, 92, 104, 107, 119–120, 135
- Election 30, 44, 68, 138
- Elijah 110, 128, 130, 171, 175–176
- Elisha 176, 180
- Emmanuel 47, 72–73
- Enthronement 21, 25, 27, 49, 56
- Epileptics 118
- Eschatological
- age 41
  - authority 176
  - banquet 45
  - blessings 124, 173, 177, 179, 182, 190
  - Branch of David 22
  - coming of God 153
  - events 179, 187
  - expectations 19, 169
  - figure 17, 109, 158
  - function 111
  - harmony 172
  - High Priest 129
  - hope 76, 186
  - ideas 169
  - midrash 17
  - promises 45, 172
  - prophecy 111
  - prophet 10, 90, 109–113, 123, 174–175, 187
  - psalm 168
  - recompense 178
  - redeemer 7
  - salvation 73
  - scenario 182
  - significance 41, 73, 190
  - signs 178
  - speech 67, 117
  - text 7
  - time 154
  - warrior 56
  - wonders 167
- Etymology of Jesus' name 64–65
- Exaltation 25–26, 53, 57–58, 60, 74, 129
- Exegesis / interpretation 5–6, 17–18, 22, 30, 52, 47, 74–75, 92, 122, 128–130, 155–156, 181–182, 185
- Jewish 7, 8, 185
  - halakic 52
  - rabbinic 56
  - Christian 53, 77, 145, 185
  - Christological 8
  - atomistic 128–130, 188
  - contextual 52, 92, 123, 188
  - midrashic 30, 38, 40, 42, 48, 79, 86, 122, 162, 179, 183–184, 190
  - messianic 7, 24–25, 30, 45, 56–57, 100, 129–130, 154–156, 162, 181, 184
  - spiritualized 125
  - collective 137
- Exegetical distinction 52, 59, 186
- Exodus 93, 166
- Exorcising demons 96, 98, 100, 104, 107–108, 122, 187
- Exorcism 82–83, 96–99, 102–108, 123–125, 149, 152, 187
- Exorcist 4–5, 78, 96–97, 99, 101–103, 105, 109, 118
- Exorcistic techniques 99, 103, 105–106

- Experience  
 – visual 93, 95  
 – acoustic 93, 95  
 – of the delay of eschatological blessings  
   153, 156, 178  
 – of pain 164  
 – of lostness 143  
 – of deliverance 68  
 – of blessings 70  
 – of Jesus' presence 73  
 – of healing 81  
 – of human transience 88  
 – of incongruity between reality and  
   Scripture 34  
 Faith 6, 79–80, 83–85, 89, 91, 104, 113,  
   155  
 Father-son relationship with God 11, 13,  
   20, 21, 22, 47  
 Fulfillment  
 – of the promise(s) 20, 27–28, 30, 32–34,  
   45, 49, 53, 58, 75  
 – of Scripture 5, 36, 46, 48, 57, 60, 77, 93,  
   108, 120, 124–125, 129, 142, 162, 183,  
   188  
 – of prophecy 133, 135, 183  
 Forgiveness of sins 64–68, 70–76  
 Formula quotations 47, 124–125, 188  
 Galilee 84, 91, 120, 135, 151, 187  
 Garden of Eden 70  
 Gematria 40–41  
 Genealogy 11, 34–44, 46, 62, 69, 75, 151,  
   186  
 Gentiles 6, 20, 24, 43, 45, 66, 71, 78, 80,  
   86, 89, 133, 149–151  
 God's commandments 29–31, 75, 163, 172  
 God's steadfast love 27–30, 67  
 Grace  
 – of God 20, 30, 68, 167, 170, 151  
 – of the Davidic Messiah 70, 77, 80, 83,  
   85, 89, 144, 150–151  
 – of Jesus 80, 81, 83–85, 89, 104, 144  
 Haggadha 51–52  
 Hasmoneans 12, 15, 33  
 Healer  
 – in general 105  
 – messianic 1–2, 95–96, 118, 163, 183  
 – Solomonic 5, 97, 105  
 – as a description of Jesus 74, 81, 127, 183,  
   188  
 Healing art(s) 97–99  
 Healings  
 – of Jesus 1–4, 7, 10, 68, 73–75, 77, 79,  
   81–85, 87, 89, 90, 92, 95, 104–105,  
   107–108, 118–120, 122, 124–125, 129–  
   132, 134–135, 142–143, 145–146, 151–  
   152, 183, 185, 187–188, 190  
 – of the Davidic Messiah 1, 4–5, 7, 77–79,  
   96, 108–109, 118, 122, 124, 132, 152,  
   163, 183–185, 187–188  
 – of Solomon 78, 97–99, 104, 106  
 – of a prophet like Moses 78  
 – eschatological 163–168, 190  
 – metaphorical 131, 164  
 Herald / messenger 162, 173, 178, 181–183  
 High Priest 50, 61, 129, 176  
 Hostility 91, 119, 135, 146, 189  
 House of Israel 28, 84, 132, 151  
 Illness 73–74, 97, 101, 105, 120, 125, 127,  
   163–165, 167, 188  
 Infancy narrative 2, 34–35, 49  
 Interpreter of the Law 111  
 Israel 3, 6, 13, 15, 18–19, 21–23, 27–32,  
   38, 42–43, 60, 64–67, 69–72, 75, 84,  
   89, 103, 107, 110–111, 114, 118, 128–  
   132, 137, 151, 157, 162–163, 167, 176–  
   177  
 Jacob 28, 39, 45, 114, 128, 137  
 Jerusalem 4, 15, 18, 71, 80, 84–87, 90–91,  
   94, 101, 112–113, 115–116, 135, 150,  
   172, 187  
 Jesus' baptism 49, 51, 107–108, 138, 146–  
   148, 150, 180, 189  
 Jesus' Davidic ancestry 20, 25, 37–38, 42–  
   43, 45–46, 51, 62, 186  
 Jesus' family tree 37–38, 43  
 Jesus' identity 12, 26, 45, 50, 59, 63–64,  
   68, 77–78, 87–88, 90–92, 94–96, 109,  
   112, 118, 122–124, 131, 134–136, 145,  
   148–150, 152–153, 166, 176, 178, 189–  
   190  
 Jesus' non-messianic career 122, 185  
 Jesus' teaching 90, 105, 118–120, 132, 143  
 Jewish leaders 2, 11, 90–91, 93, 107, 135,  
   145  
 Jews 6, 19, 43, 47, 51, 55, 66, 78, 80, 103,  
   115, 121, 149, 151, 163, 167, 184, 186  
 John the Baptist 45, 65, 73–74, 79, 91, 110,  
   119, 124, 135–136, 152–154, 159, 161–  
   162, 177–179, 183–184, 189–190  
 Joseph 36, 39, 42–46, 49, 62–63, 135, 186  
 Jubilation 87, 90, 94  
 Judea 84, 91, 120  
 Judging  
 – sons of the Kingdom 45

- the poor 144
- as the function of the Messiah 18, 121
- Justice 31, 68, 102, 144–145, 149, 157
- King of the Jews 6, 19
- Kingdom
  - of God 66, 24, 107–108
  - of Jesus 66
  - of David 13, 17, 31, 68, 87
  - of Israel 27
  - of heaven 95
  - gospel of the Kingdom 105, 118
  - messianic Kingdom 66, 69, 162, 165
  - eternal Kingdom 170, 172
  - sons of the Kingdom 45
- Lack of understanding 90, 92–95, 112–113
- Lame 2, 87, 90, 119–120, 145, 152, 161
- Last supper 74
- Leading people astray 92, 114, 117
- Legal
  - ancestry 42
  - descendant 45
  - paternity 43–44
- Lepers 119, 145, 161
- Life of abundance 70, 164
- Lord
  - as a reference to God 170, 172–173, 177–180, 187
  - as a reference to the Messiah 55–57, 61
  - as a reference to someone superior to David 58–59, 61, 186
  - as a reference to Jesus 79, 83–86
- Lord of the Spirits 72, 158
- Lordship
  - of Jesus 27
  - of the Messiah 52–54, 58, 60
- Maimed 119–120
- Marginal status in society 39, 95
- Marvel(s) 92, 115, 165–168, 177
- Mary 36, 42–45, 63, 65
- Mary's pregnancy 44, 48
- Matthew's redaction 1, 65, 80, 82–83, 88, 90, 105, 112, 119, 143, 178, 184
- Melchizedek 56, 70, 182
- Messiah 1, 3, 4–8, 11, 15–16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 33–34, 36, 38, 41, 47, 50, 53–58, 61, 69–72, 75, 88, 104, 111, 117–118, 121, 124, 129, 148, 151–153, 155–159, 162–163, 165–171, 173–174, 176–180, 182, 186, 189, 190
  - Davidic 1, 3–5, 7–8, 10, 12, 15–16, 17–19, 23–24, 30, 32, 34, 42, 53–54, 62, 69, 73–79, 96, 100, 104–106, 108, 112–113, 118, 131–132, 142, 150–151, 153, 157, 167, 173–175, 183–188
- healing 1, 5, 7, 122, 184
- priestly 111, 174, 176
- prophetic 78, 174–175
- royal 2, 11–12, 14, 19, 21–22, 74–75, 96–97, 100–111, 113, 118, 146–148, 153, 169, 173–174, 183–185
- suffering 6, 122
- terminus technicus 15, 180
- of the Deed 79
- of the Word 79
- Messiahship of Jesus 3, 4, 6, 19, 20, 26–27, 45, 50, 53, 57–58, 78, 94–95, 97, 107, 112, 121–124, 130, 135–136, 145–147, 149–151, 153, 162, 174, 183, 185, 187–189
- Messianic claim 6, 120–121, 123, 153
- Messianic deeds 7, 91, 94, 106, 124, 145, 152, 178, 180, 190
- Messianic expectations 1, 6, 12, 18–19, 26, 34, 69, 74, 106, 109–110, 122, 142, 155, 162, 185–188
- Messianic secret 134–136
- Messianic time 49, 124, 151, 159, 161, 162, 166–167, 169, 178–179, 184, 190
- Midrash 17, 22, 42, 181
- Miracles
  - of Jesus 67–68, 73, 77, 80–84, 90–95, 104–105, 109, 113, 117–120, 122–125, 130–131, 149, 152–153, 162, 178, 188, 190
  - messianic 1, 5, 7, 73, 77, 89, 91–92, 96, 124, 152–153, 162, 178
  - prophetic 78, 109, 113–114, 116–118, 123, 188
  - Solomonic 78, 104, 106
  - eschatological 163–169, 190
- Miracle worker 77–79, 106, 123, 153, 178, 187
- Moses 10, 78, 93, 109, 110–112, 114, 117–118, 123, 129–130, 187
- Nathan 10, 12–13, 15, 19–21, 31, 34, 39, 49, 62, 186, 187
- Nations 24, 44–45, 66, 70, 89, 146, 149–151
- New creation 49
- No-accounts 3, 91
- Noah 32, 40
- Obedience
  - of the king 27, 29–31, 33, 75
  - to the Law 29, 30, 33, 75, 172

- Parallelismus membrorum 19, 78, 86, 172, 176
- Paternity 43–44, 62
- Permanency of Davidic dynasty  
– unconditional promise 27–30, 33, 75  
– conditional promise 27, 29–31, 33, 76, 186
- Pesher 17, 86, 154–155, 159, 182
- Peter 20, 50, 53, 57, 94–95, 112, 80, 135–136
- Peter's confession 50, 61, 94–95, 112, 135
- Pharisees 2, 10–11, 45, 50, 52, 54, 58–59, 66, 78, 82–83, 89–90, 92–93, 107–108, 133, 135, 146, 149
- Plea / cry for help 67, 80, 83–85, 89, 96, 102, 104, 151
- Possessed by demons 84, 97–98, 104–105, 119, 125
- Preaching good news to the poor 119, 145, 161–162, 168, 170, 172–173, 177–178, 181–183, 190
- Pre-Pauline confessions 6, 19–20, 25–26
- Priority  
– chronological 6, 12, 63, 146–147  
– exegetical 6  
– logical 6, 12
- Promises to David 11–22, 25, 27–29, 33, 53, 54, 62, 68, 75, 100, 132, 187
- Prophecy 12–13, 30, 34, 86, 93, 111, 117, 127, 133, 135, 154, 156, 162, 181, 188
- Prophet like Moses 10, 78, 109–111, 117–118, 123, 187
- Prophetic anointing 175–176, 183
- Prophetic perpetuation formula 28
- Public  
– place 83  
– acclamation of Jesus 88  
– application of the “Son of David” title to Jesus 90  
– activity of Jesus 118  
– recognition of Jesus 135, 189  
– speculation about Jesus 135  
– confession of Jesus 136  
– introduction of Jesus 138
- Purification  
– from wickedness 70  
– from sins 70–71, 76  
– from defilement 70  
– of Israel 71  
– ritual 83
- Rabbinic Judaism 178, 185
- Raising the dead 119, 145, 152, 161, 170, 172, 174, 177, 190
- Ransom 67, 74
- Rejection of Jesus 3, 6, 81, 149
- Request for secrecy 80, 119, 133–136, 142, 145–146, 189
- Restoration  
– of Israel 18  
– of the Davidic dynasty 18  
– of the nation 70
- Resurrection 5, 6, 19–20, 25–27, 45, 53, 57–58, 60, 117, 164–166, 168, 174–175, 177, 190
- Righteous sufferer 56, 68
- Righteous teacher 154, 181–182
- Salvation 12, 32, 51, 64, 66–70, 72–76, 102, 155, 159, 161, 163–164, 167–168, 177–179, 184, 186, 190
- Salvation oracles 161, 178–179, 184, 190
- Samaritan Taheb 110
- Scepter 13, 30, 174
- Scribes 72, 87, 90, 92, 94–95
- Seal-ring 98, 101–104, 123, 187
- Servant 24, 28, 70, 124, 127–133, 137, 139–140, 142, 146–150, 167, 181, 183, 188–189
- Sheep 72, 84, 131–132, 143, 151
- Shepherd as a metaphor for  
– God 72  
– David 131–132  
– Son of David 131–132  
– ideal Davidic king 131–132, 183, 189  
– a leader of the people 131–132, 143  
– Jesus 132
- Signs  
– of forgiveness 71  
– messianic 113, 153  
– prophetic 110, 113–118, 123  
– of the messianic time 124, 162, 166, 169, 178–179
- Sinaitic covenant 28–30
- Sin-consequence scheme 187
- Sinlessness of the Messiah 33
- Sinners 66, 68, 70–71, 164
- Sin(s) 32–34, 44, 63–64, 66–76, 108, 122, 127, 129, 158, 182, 186, 187
- Son of David 1–5, 7–8, 10–12, 15–16, 30, 33–34, 37, 42, 44–45, 54, 59, 62–63, 68, 70–71, 73, 77–79, 81–83, 85, 87–90, 92, 94–97, 101–104, 106–109, 112, 116, 118, 120, 122–123, 131–132, 134–135, 144, 149–151, 156, 167, 184–188  
– titular usage 16, 54, 106, 123, 103, 187

- non-titular usage 16, 54, 106
- Son of God 2-3, 19, 21-25, 27, 46, 49-50, 53, 60-63, 134, 150, 158, 166
- Son of the Most High 23
- Solomon 29, 39, 41, 97-98, 100-102, 104, 106-108, 187
- Solomon as Exorcist 4-5, 10, 78, 96-109, 118, 122, 187
- Spirit 121, 108, 139, 148-149, 170, 180
  - Spirit of God 107-108, 181
  - Spirit of the Lord 162, 180, 182-183
  - Spirit of holiness 19
  - Holy Spirit 44, 48-49, 63, 108
  - spirit of prophecy 183
  - evil spirit 100
  - unclean spirit 104, 108-109, 118
- Spirits 98-100, 125
  - evil spirits 98-99
  - spirits of lies and deception 92
  - unclean spirits 103, 133
- Star 14, 30, 111
- Substitutionary suffering 127
- Suffering 31-32, 35, 68, 75, 127-130, 135, 139, 143-145, 164, 183, 188
- Suffering Servant 128, 188
- Symmachus 125-126, 137-138, 140, 161
- Synoptics 34, 53, 61, 73, 87, 113, 125, 178
- Temporary chastisement of Davidic kings 13, 27-29, 69, 75
- Temple 2, 7, 10, 32, 85-87, 90, 92, 94, 101
- Termination of the Davidic dynasty 30-31
- Tetragrammaton 55, 169
- Theodicy 32, 68-69
- Theodotion 137-138, 140
- Two-stage Christology 27, 51, 60
- Unbelief 3, 32, 80-81, 117, 149
- Universal dominion of Jesus 27
- Vegetative metaphors 13
- Virgin birth 47, 49
- Virginal conception 46-49
- Waiting for the Messiah 152-154, 156-157, 159, 179
  - hiddenness / concealment of the Messiah 158
  - revelation of the Messiah 166-168, 177
  - appearance of the Messiah 156-159, 166-167, 178
- Weak 95, 131-132, 143-144, 171-172
- Withdrawal of Jesus 119, 133, 135-136, 145-146
- Women in Jesus' genealogy 42-43, 151
- Wonder(s) 109, 114, 116-117, 152, 166-167, 173, 175, 177



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