

## Jesus as Anointed and Healing Son of David in the Gospel of Matthew<sup>1</sup>

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In this paper I will examine Jesus' anointing and healing and their relation to his title Son of David in the Gospel of Matthew. As will be shown, these three aspects of Jesus' ministry are of special importance to Matthew and he emphasizes and relates them so as to represent Jesus as the uniquely anointed "Christ", the Son of David who has come to heal<sup>2</sup>.

### 1. *Anointing*

First, a general examination of anointing in Matthew. In his redaction of Mark <sup>3</sup>, Matthew has retained the story of Jesus' anointing at Bethany (Matt 26,6-13//Mark 14,3-9). He has indeed followed Mark's account closely<sup>4</sup>, agreeing with Mark that it is Jesus' head that is anointed<sup>5</sup>, retaining the more explicitly royal motif that is typical in Matthew<sup>6</sup>. Elsewhere in the Gospel, he has omitted the other two references to anointing in Mark (Mark 6,13; 16,1), but he has also added one of his own (Matt 6,17). What are the effects of Matthew's redaction? By his omission of Mark 6,13, "And they [the disciples] cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them"<sup>7</sup>, Matthew has removed any reference to the disciples' anointing anyone. In Matthew's Gospel, unlike Mark's, no one besides Jesus is ever anointed. In his redaction of Mark 16,1, Matthew has also omitted any reference to the women intending to anoint Jesus' body. Matthew 28,1 only states that they come to see Jesus'

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tomb: "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the sepulchre". In Matthew's story, even the characters themselves seem to know that Jesus has already been anointed and does not need to be so a second time<sup>8</sup>. These seemingly minor omissions result in Jesus' anointing being doubly unique in Matthew: only Jesus is anointed, and he is anointed only once.

But what of the reference to anointing that Matthew has added in the Sermon on the Mount, "...when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face" (Matt 6,17)? Because of his omissions, this is the only other reference to anointing in Matthew's Gospel. With this addition Matthew has given a further implication to Jesus' anointing at Bethany and has shown Jesus fulfilling his own commandment: his anointing is not only in preparation for his burial, but it is also in preparation for his fast that will follow the Passover meal (Matt 26,29 // Mark 14,25). Jesus had taught his followers to anoint themselves and "not be dismal looking" (Matt 6,16) when fasting, and he does the same, going to the cross and the grave anointed and without the outer signs of suffering. Further, the many ironies of the Passion narrative are accentuated with the detail of the anointing: acts such as anointing and washing that are usually preparatory to feasting and celebration are here made preparatory to fasting and death<sup>9</sup>. With the reader's privileged perspective of having read Matt 6,17, she knows, just as Jesus does, what the woman's actions indicate<sup>10</sup>.

## 2. Healing

Now let us look at Matthew's accounts of Jesus' healing activities. First, Matthew seems much more interested in presenting Jesus as healing in general, rather than in presenting him in the more specific role of exorcist<sup>11</sup>, which is much more typical of Mark's portrayal of Jesus<sup>12</sup>. There are nearly three times as many occurrences of the verbs *qerapeu/w* and *i)a/omai* in Matthew than in Mark, with Matthew showing a strong

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preference for the former<sup>13</sup>. More significant than quantity, however, is the way in which Matthew redacts Markan material to depict Jesus primarily as a healer<sup>14</sup>. Matthew redacts his Markan material in three ways: he minimizes the exorcistic elements in some stories, making them into more generalized healings; he turns accounts of Jesus' teaching into accounts of his healing; and he summarizes Jesus' ministry as one of "teaching and healing" rather than "teaching and casting out demons".

In two stories, Matthew has substantially curtailed the demonic and magical elements found in Mark. Instead of Mark's graphic story of the deaf mute (Mark 7,31-37), with its magical overtones in Jesus' use of saliva, Matthew has made a generalized summary of Jesus' healing ministry, "And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them" (Matt 15,30)<sup>15</sup>. In the healing of the epileptic boy (Mark 9,14-29 // Matt 17,14-21), Matthew has omitted almost all the details that make the story an exorcism, leaving out any reference to the "unclean spirit" or Jesus' words of command to it. Matthew's version reads simply, "And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was healed (e)qerapeu/qh instantly" (Matt 17,18)<sup>16</sup>.

Redacting exorcisms into healings, while it may be significant, is a relatively minor change, as the two types of stories are formally so similar. But Matthew also changes several of Mark's accounts of Jesus' teaching into accounts of his healing. The first of these seems the most logical in context, and therefore least indicative of Matthew's particular interests: both Matthew and Luke thought it a strange reaction that after Jesus "was moved with compassion" (e)splagxni/sqh) for the crowds, he would then proceed "to teach" them (Mark 6,34)<sup>17</sup>. Both redactors turn the story into one of general healing: "As he went ashore he saw a great throng; and he had compassion on them, and healed their sick" (Matt 14,14; cf. Luke 9,11). The second instance, however, seems a more deliberate substitution: instead of Mark's "... crowds gathered to him... and... he taught them" (Mark 10,1), Matthew has "... large crowds followed him, and he healed them" (Matt 19,2)<sup>18</sup>.

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Unlike the previous example, nothing in the context would seem to make healing more appropriate than teaching at this point. If anything, the fact that this is the introduction to a controversy story (Matt 19,3-12 // Mark 10,2-12) would seem to make Mark's context the more sensible. Third, and perhaps most importantly because of its placement, both Mark and Luke have Jesus teach in the temple after casting out the money-changers there (Mark 11,17 // Luke 19,47). Matthew, on the other hand, omits any reference to Jesus' teaching and instead says that "the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them" (Matt 21,14). It is the last time that Jesus heals in the Gospel<sup>19</sup>. Jesus' time in the temple has been transformed by Matthew into the climax of Jesus' healing ministry<sup>20</sup>.

Matthew shows the same interests and tendencies in his redactions of Mark's summaries. When Mark summarizes Jesus' ministry, he focuses on the two activities of preaching and exorcisms: "And he went

throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons" (Mark 1,39). These two activities are also what the disciples are empowered to do: "And he appointed twelve to be with him, and to be sent out to preach, and have authority to cast out demons" (Mark 3,14-15). For Mark, the ministry of Jesus and his disciples is best characterized by their preaching and exorcistic activities, though Mark is much more detailed in recounting the latter<sup>21</sup>. As for Matthew, he has obviously greatly expanded Jesus' teaching activities in his five large discourses or sermons<sup>22</sup>, and while he retains (with the modifications noted above) Mark's depiction of Jesus as an exorcist, when Matthew summarizes Jesus' activities, he adds or substitutes references to Jesus' more general healing activity, as in his parallel to Mark 1,39: "And he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people" (Matt 4,23). This is at the conclusion of the first narrative block in Matthew, and he concludes the second narrative block with an almost identical summary: "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity" (Matt 9,35)<sup>23</sup>. And in his summary of the disciples' activity, Matthew also refers to their healing activity: "And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every infirmity" (Matt 10,1).

In his redaction of Markan material, Matthew has consistently shown that he is more interested in depicting Jesus as a healer than is Mark: he has made some exorcisms into more generalized healings, he has depicted Jesus as healing rather than teaching several times, and he has summarized Jesus' ministry as one of "teaching and healing" rather than "teaching and casting out demons".

There is one final, but all-important observation to be made about Jesus' healing in Matthew. As observed above, Matthew omits Mark 6,13, thereby making Jesus the only person anointed in Matthew's Gospel. Just as importantly, however, this omission removes any reference to anyone other than Jesus healing in Matthew's Gospel<sup>24</sup>. Both Mark and Luke include some mention of the disciples' healing mission being (at least partially) successful: "[the disciples] anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them" (Mark 6,13), "they departed and went through the villages... healing everywhere" (Luke 9,6). In Matthew, Jesus is not only uniquely anointed, he is also uniquely capable of healing, or indeed of performing any powerful deed, since Matthew has also omitted the story of the strange (but successful) exorcist (Mark 9,38-41 // Luke 9,49-50). Through seemingly minor omissions, Matthew has made Jesus' status and power unique in several important ways.

### 3. *Son of David*

As for the title Son of David, its prominence in Matthew has often been noted, and the exact meaning he attaches to it has often been explored<sup>25</sup>. Both placement and frequency point to the title's importance for Matthew. He begins his Gospel with, "Jesus Christ, Son of David" (Matt 1,1), and the title occurs nine times in Matthew<sup>26</sup>, versus only three in Mark<sup>27</sup>. The most obvious implications of the title are those associated with David (and therefore his son) as king<sup>28</sup>. David was anointed king (1 Sam 16,1-13) and now Matthew presents Jesus as the "Christ", the anointed. Promises were made to David regarding his progeny (2 Sam 7,12-16), promises that Matthew sees fulfilled in David's (adopted) son Jesus<sup>29</sup>.

Jesus' status as "anointed", his royal lineage, and his fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy are all clearly implied by Matthew's use of the title Son of David at the beginning of his Gospel.

But the exact significance Matthew attaches to the term in the rest of his Gospel is much less clear. Every occurrence of the title outside of Matthew's first chapter is in the context of one of Jesus' healings: both sets of blind men and the Canaanite woman all call on Jesus as Son of David when they ask him for healing (Matt 9,27; 15,22; 20,30-31), the people ask if Jesus is the Son of David after he heals the blind and mute man (Matt 12,23), and Jesus is acclaimed by the crowds and the children as Son of David before and after he occupies the temple to conduct his healing there (Matt 21,9.15). Matthew clearly associates the title with Jesus as healer<sup>30</sup>, but why?<sup>31</sup>

A reference to David (or his son) could be used to evoke a number of different associations<sup>32</sup>: the greatest king of Israel, as noted above; a charismatic leader who has the authority to disregard established rules when they do not suit him (Matt 12,1-8); the humbled penitent of 2 Sam 12,1-25; the great poet of the Psalms, wherein he shows his passion for the Lord (cf. 2 Sam 6,14), but which also show him to be capable of predicting the future like a prophet (Matt 22,43)<sup>33</sup>. None of these, with the possible exception of the last, would carry any association with healing abilities<sup>34</sup>, but since David was associated with the prophets' predictive abilities and not with the miracle-working abilities of prophets like Elijah or Elisha, the necessary connection would not seem to be found there.

If Son of David refers to David's actual son Solomon, then this too would carry several different associations: the last great king of a united Israel; the great sage and patron of wisdom (Matt 12,42)<sup>35</sup>, a powerful exorcist and magician<sup>36</sup>. Again, only the last of these could carry any association with healing; but since we have seen that Matthew deliberately redacts his material to present Jesus more as a healer than as an exorcist, a connection with Solomon would also not seem to be the answer to why he is called Son of David in his capacity as healer.

The answer would seem to lie in Matthew's last two stories of Jesus as Son of David and in the Old Testament stories they evoke. As noted,

Jesus is twice acclaimed Son of David as he practices his final, climactic healing ministry within the temple<sup>37</sup>. In particular, he is said to heal "the blind and the lame" in the temple (Matt 21,14). When David conquered Jerusalem, he mockingly called his enemies "the lame and the blind": "David had said on that day, 'Whoever would strike down the Jebusites, let him get up the water shaft to attack the lame and the blind, those whom David hates'. Therefore it is said, 'The blind and the lame shall not come into the house'" (2 Sam 5,8). The Son of David as healer is contrasted, not compared, with his father David: David was a powerful warrior who killed the figuratively blind and lame and excluded them from his "house"; his son Jesus is a powerful healer who cures the literally blind and lame within his "house", the temple<sup>38</sup>.

Similarly, in the last pericope dealing with Jesus' status as Son of David (Matt 22,41-46)<sup>39</sup>, Jesus explains that the Christ is the Son of David, but that David calls him "Lord". David is made to acknowledge here what was already implied by having Jesus heal as the Son of David: David's son is greater than he. This would clearly seem to fit in Matthew's portrayal of Jesus as surpassing Davidic persons and institutions<sup>40</sup>: Jesus is also greater than the temple (Matt 12,6 – unique to Matthew) and greater than Solomon (Matt 12,42 // Luke 11,31). In Jesus' healings, he is shown to be greater than his father David, who could not heal in a similar situation that also included the motifs of fasting and anointing mentioned above: "David therefore pleaded with God for the child; David fasted, and went in and laid all night on the ground.... On the seventh day the child died" (2 Sam 12,16, 18)<sup>41</sup>. Jesus, the Son of David, can do what his father could not, save his dying children, both within and outside Israel<sup>42</sup>.

In all of this Matthew does not overturn or reject the title Son of David for Jesus: in light of the first verse of Matthew's Gospel, it would seem to be an incredible claim to say that he does<sup>43</sup>. Matthew embraces the title, then expands its implications to include the compassionate power shown in Jesus' healings. It is not that Matthew shows Jesus to be more than the Son of David, but instead that Matthew

shows Jesus to be the Son of David who is more than David. Matthew depicts Jesus as the Christ, the uniquely anointed Son of David, who is uniquely capable of healing.

David was the anointed king, but was not a healer: Jesus Christ, the Son of David, is now the final, climactic example of both.

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#### SUMMARY

Matthew handles his material in order to relate Jesus' anointing, healing, and his title "Son of David". Matthew does this in order to present Jesus as the uniquely anointed "Christ", the Son of David who has come to heal, and who is in that respect (and others), greater than his father David.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was originally read at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, March 12, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. D.C. DULING, "The Therapeutic Son of David: An Element in Matthew's Christological Apologetic", *NTS* 24 (1978) 392-410; for a more recent version of his work from a social scientific perspective and with up-to-date bibliography, see D.C. DULING, "Matthew's Plurisignificant 'Son of David' in Social Science Perspective: Kinship, Kingship, Magic, and Miracle", *BTB* 22 (1992) 99-116.

<sup>3</sup> I refer to the author of the first Gospel as Matthew throughout without implication or speculation as to his identity. I follow the same convention with regards to Mark and Luke. Throughout I also assume the two-source hypothesis, or Matthew's use of Mark and Q. For a recent defense of this in the case of Matthew, see W.D. DAVIES – D.C. ALLISON, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 3 vols., (Edinburgh 1988) I, 97-121.

<sup>4</sup> Sixty-five of the 109 words in Matt 26,6-13 are taken over from Mark 14,3-9 (60%). Cf. F.V. FILSON, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (London 1960) 333: "...their accounts agree on all important points"; F.W. BEARE, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (San Francisco 1981) 504: "Matthew keeps closely to the Markan form of the story, making only minor changes of wording".

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Luke 7,36-50; John 12,1-8.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Sam 10,1; 2 Kgs 9,6; see also DAVIES – ALLISON, *Matthew*, III, 442; D.J. HARRINGTON, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Sacra Pagina 1; Collegeville 1991) 362.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Matt 10,1; on the connection of anointing with healing, cf. also Luke 10,34; Jas 5,14.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. DAVIES – ALLISON, *Matthew*, III, 664: "Mark's explanation - to anoint Jesus (Mk 16.1) - is missing. Did our evangelist believe that 26.12 stood in tension with Mark's account?"

<sup>9</sup> The main irony in the plot at this point is the contrast between the treachery of the chief priests and Judas and the love of the unnamed woman: cf. E. SCHWEIZER, *The Good News according to Matthew* (Atlanta 1975) 487; R.H. GUNDRY, *Matthew. A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids 1982) 519-523. On the irony of Matt 6,17, see DAVIES – ALLISON, *Matthew*, I, 619.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. HARRINGTON, *Matthew*, 364: "From these many ironies associated with institutions and characters Jesus emerges as knowing what is happening and why it must happen. And the reader of Matthew's passion account is able to share Jesus' privileged perspective on the events of the passion".

<sup>11</sup> The two formal types, healing and exorcism, are clearly very similar, but seem distinguishable: see T.A. BURKILL, "The Notion of Miracle with Special Reference to St. Mark's Gospel", *ZNW* 50 (1959) 33-48, esp. 43-44; G. THEISSEN, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Edinburgh – Philadelphia 1983) 85-90; R. LATOURELLE, *The Miracles of Jesus and the Theology of Miracles* (New York 1988) 243-245.

<sup>12</sup> On Mark's focus on Jesus' exorcisms and power over the demons, see H. C. KEE, "Aretalogy and Gospel", *JBL* 92 (1973) 402-422, esp. 416-419. On Matthew's redaction of Mark in these pericopae, see DULING, "Therapeutic Son of David", 393-399.

<sup>13</sup> Matthew has *qerapeu/w* 16 times (Matt 4,23.24; 8,7.16; 9,35; 10,1.8; 12,10.15.22; 14,14; 15,30; 17,16.18; 19,2; 21,14), while Mark has it only 6 times (Mark 1,34; 3,2.10.15; 6,5.13); Matthew has *i)a/omai* four times (Matt 8,8.13; 13,15; 15,28), while Mark has it only once (Mark 5,29).

<sup>14</sup> The situation is, as usual, much harder to determine in relation to Q. Of the four "changes in Q" listed by DULING, "Therapeutic Son of David", 398, n. 6, one is really from Mark (Matt 17,18 // Mark 9,26-27); and in two *qerapeu/w* may be original to Q (Matt 8,7 // Luke 7,3; Matt 10,1 // Luke 10,1, but cf. Luke 9,1). In the Beelzebul controversy (Matt 12,22 // Luke 11,14), it does seem that Matthew has substituted his preferred term *qerapeu/w* for *e)kba/llw*.

<sup>15</sup> On Matthew's use of Mark here, see R. BULTMANN, *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (rev. ed.; Peabody, MA 1963) 213; GUNDRY, *Matthew*, 317-319; DAVIES – ALLISON, *Matthew*, II, 561-562.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. DULING, "Therapeutic Son of David", 402.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. GUNDRY, *Matthew*, 290-291; DAVIES – ALLISON, *Matthew*, II, 479. However, Luke does omit any reference to Jesus' emotions here, as usual in his Gospel: see K. PAFFENROTH, *Story of Jesus according to L* (JSNTSS 147; Sheffield 1997) 107, with references.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. GUNDRY, *Matthew*, 376; DAVIES – ALLISON, *Matthew*, III, 7.

<sup>19</sup> See DAVIES – ALLISON, *Matthew*, III, 140.

<sup>20</sup> See J.D. KINGSBURY, "The Title 'Son of David' in Matthew's Gospel", *JBL* 95 (1976) 591-602, esp. 598: "Matthew intends this scene (21:14-16), the final time in the Gospel that Jesus acts in his capacity as the Son of David, to 'sum up' in a climactic way his ministry of healing". (See below on Son of David.) Cf. DAVIES – ALLISON, *Matthew*, III, 140.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. DULING, "Therapeutic Son of David", 393: "It is possible from observing Mark's summaries to propose that the Second Evangelist has a twofold view of Jesus' activity: he preaches and he casts out demons".

<sup>22</sup> Matthew's chapters 5–7, 10, 13, 18, 23–25. For finer distinctions, see DAVIES – ALLISON, *Matthew*, I, 58-72.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. DULING, "Therapeutic Son of David", 394-395, who takes them as an *inclusio* around the discourse and narrative block of chapters 5–9.

<sup>24</sup> The omission is seldom noted, though cf. GUNDRY, *Matthew*, 190, who notes it not for the uniqueness of Jesus' healing, but for the focus on Jesus' teaching rather than on the disciples' obeying: "Matthew omits even a cursory comment of this sort and will never make up the omission. For him the actuality of the disciples' mission pales before Jesus' instructions".

<sup>25</sup> Besides the articles by DULING and KINGSBURY already cited, see e.g. J. M. GIBBS, "Purpose and Pattern in Matthew's Use of the Title 'Son of David'", *NTS* 10 (1964) 446-464; J. M. JONES, "Subverting the Textuality of Davidic Messianism: Matthew's Presentation of the Genealogy and the Davidic Title", *CBQ* 56 (1994) 256-272. For other titles in Matthew, see B. MALINA – J. NEYREY, *Calling Jesus Names. The Social Value of Labels in Matthew* (New Haven 1988).

<sup>26</sup> Matt 1,1.20; 9,27; 12,23; 15,22; 20,30-31; 21,9.15.

<sup>27</sup> Mark 10,47-48; 12,35.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. FILSON, *Matthew*, 52.

<sup>29</sup> On Jesus' adoption, see R.E. BROWN, *The Birth of the Messiah* (Philadelphia 1977) 138-143; JONES, "Genealogy and the Davidic Title", 259-261. The Davidic line is traced through Joseph, who is also referred to as a Son of David at Matt 1,20.

<sup>30</sup> But cf. B. CHILTON, "Jesus ben David: reflections on the *Davidsohnfrage*", *JSNT* 14 (1982) 88-112, who believes that Matthew's emphasis is genealogical throughout.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. D. HILL, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NCB; Grand Rapids – London 1981) 215: "...miraculous healing was not associated in Judaism with the Davidic Messiah".

<sup>32</sup> Cf. DULING, "Plurisignificant 'Son of David'", 109.

<sup>33</sup> See J.A. FITZMYER, "David, 'Being Therefore a Prophet...' (Acts 2:30)", *CBQ* 34 (1972) 332-339.

<sup>34</sup> Though in later tradition, based in part on Biblical traditions, the king would be associated with healing: see M. BLOCH, *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France* (London – Montreal 1973). (I have Dr. Abigail Firey to thank for this observation.)

<sup>35</sup> Probably the most prevalent association for him, and the one most important to Q: see K. PAFFENROTH, "The Testing of the Sage: 1 Kings 10:1-13 and Q 4:1-13", *The Expository Times* 107 (1996) 142-143.

<sup>36</sup> See D.C. DULING, "Solomon, Exorcism, and Son of David", *HTR* 68 (1975) 235-252; DAVIES – ALLISON, *Matthew*, I, 157.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. D. SENIOR, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Nashville 1997) 153.

<sup>38</sup> On Matthew's reference to 2 Sam 5,8 here, see J.C. FENTON, *Saint Matthew* (Pelican New Testament Commentaries; Baltimore 1963) 334; SCHWEIZER, *Matthew*, 408; GUNDRY, *Matthew*, 413; T.Y. MULLINS, "Jesus, the 'Son of David'", *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 29 (1991) 117-126; HARRINGTON, *Matthew*, 294; DAVIES – ALLISON, *Matthew*, III, 140. But cf. D. PATTE, *The Gospel according to Matthew: A Structural Commentary on Matthew's Faith* (Philadelphia 1987) 288-290, who argues that Matthew is indeed referring to the verse, but is not contrasting David and the Son of David.

<sup>39</sup> The title is not explicitly used this time.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. MULLINS, "Son of David", 124.

<sup>41</sup> David anoints himself after the ordeal (2 Sam 12,20).

<sup>42</sup> The story of the Canaanite woman (Matt 15,21-28) clearly makes the title universal, *pace* KINGSBURY, "Son of David", 598. Cf. also the pagan magi looking for the "king of the Jews" at the beginning of the Gospel (Matt 2,2).

<sup>43</sup> *Pace* GIBBS, "Son of David", 463; KINGSBURY, "Son of David", 593, 601; MULLINS, "Son of David", 125.