

Michael Vicko Zolondek, *We Have Found the Messiah. How the Disciples Help Us Answer the Davidic Messianic Question* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016). Pp. 156 + xviii. \$22.00. Paper. ISBN 978-1-4982-8226-0

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Michael Vicko Zolondek teaches Religious Studies at Florida International University in Miami. He earned his PhD in New Testament Language, Literature, and Theology from the University of Edinburgh. In his book he discusses the question of Jesus's Davidic messiahship, the subject, which as he says was addressed so far only in shorter articles or as a part of larger general studies concerning messianism (p. xii). He is right in this regard. Other scholars have also noticed this deficiency. Therefore two other studies on this topic were published at the same time: "Matthew's new David at the end of exile" by Nicholas G. Piotrowski and "Matthew's Presentation of the Son of David" by Daniel H. Zacharias. However, unlike Piotrowski and Zacharias, Zolondek does not examine the text and traditions that stand behind it but wants to reach historical Jesus. For this purpose, he takes into account only those fragments of the gospel that do not raise doubts as to their historical plausibility. Two undeniable facts are the starting points of his research. Namely that Jesus is believed to be the Davidic Messiah in the post-Easter period, and Jesus is crucified with Davidic Messianic *titulus*: "the king of the Jews" (p. xvii). The question that arises is where the conviction about such a role of Jesus came from?

Although Zolondek focuses exclusively on the Davidic aspect of Jesus' messiahship, he emphasizes that Jesus still had many other messianic roles such as the prophet, the Son of man, the Son of God etc. As he points out, this is not a book about "life" of the historical Jesus. (p. xviii). We could rather call it a methodological study. The reader will not find there exegetical analyses nor detailed theological comments on selected fragments of the gospel. In return, we get a broad status questionis regarding Davidic messianic question, arguments for the historical probability of some elements of the gospel's narratives and a new sociological approach that better justifies the typology of Jesus – David and its historical plausibility.

Zolondek devotes most of his work to a critical evaluation of foregoing methodology. He notes three trends that stand out the studies on Jesus's Davidic mes-

siahship: treating Jesus as individualistic personality, paying attention to the fact that Jesus does not call himself the Messiah and emphasizing his lack of military ambitions. Zolondek proves that such criteria are insufficient and, as a result, do not give a satisfactory answer to whether Jesus really acted as a Davidic Messiah. According to the title of the book, he proposes to look at Jesus through the prism of his relationship with disciples. Therefore he examines whether Jesus acted in a way suggesting that he is a Davidic Messiah and then - whether he was perceived this way by his disciples. It turns out that such a sociological approach is a great contribution to the current researches.

In chapter 1, Zolondek analyzes the works of fourteen authors who take up the issue of Davidic messianism. He notes that each of them approaches Jesus as an individual figure, independent of the influence of the group in which he lives. Secondly, most of them note that Jesus never called himself Messiah, and the fragments in which others call him that title are often considered as historically doubtful. Some scholars are inclined to question the Davidic messiahship of historical Jesus as a result of such observations (Geza Vermes, E. P. Sanders, Marcus J. Borg, Jürgen Becker). However, others say that Jesus did not have to be called Messiah because his messiahship is more confirmed by his deeds than by words (James H. Charlesworth). The third trend is to study the lack of Jesus's military ambitions. Scholars point out that Davidic messiah presented in the Old Testament is an earthly military leader whereas Jesus does not play such a role (Otfried Hofius, John J. Collins, John P. Meier, J. D. G. Dunn). Others seem to ignore this topic (Martin Hengel, Anna Maria Schwemer) or acknowledge that Jesus has redefined the concept of Davidic Messiah (James D. G. Dunn). There are also scholars who argue that this excessive attachment to the political and military aspect of the messiah's activity was shaped during the Roman occupation of Judea (Fitzmyer, Chester). It becomes clear that on the basis of the same premises scholars draw completely different conclusions. Thus Zolondek proves that the foregoing methodology is insufficient.

In Chapter 2, Zolondek presents the weaknesses of the three above-mentioned research trends. He refers to the discussion between Bruce J. Malina, David G. Horrel and Louise G. Lawrence on collectivist culture as a specific element of Mediterranean communities to show that when examining messianic identity, one can not consider only Jesus' individual characteristics. Based on biblical stories of the first kings of Israel Saul and David, he reminds that their choice was confirmed by the assembly, both of them had a royal appearance and attributes and both behaved as kings undertaking the expected war expeditions against Israel's enemies. In the same way Zolondek presents messianic figures in the second temple period. Quoting Josephus, he gives examples such as: Simon Bar Giora, Menachem, Athronges, Simon of Perea, Simon Ben Kosiba. Each of them had visible physical attributes that made them fit for the royal role. They took

actions specific to the king and thus were perceived by their communities. Therefore it is necessary to analyze the relationship between Jesus and the disciples as we look into the messianic question.

Similarly, Zolondek describes another trend, namely the necessity of self-exaltation of a messiah. According to him, such an action is contrary to biblical and Jewish extra-biblical literature. He gives examples from 1 Sam, Ps, Jer, Ezek, Psalms of Solomon and 4 Ezra proving that in messianic texts a messiah never exalts himself but the only one to be exalted is God himself. Similarly in the descriptions of Flavius, who despite his aversion to messianic figures never mentions that they exalted themselves but that others called them kings. The synoptic gospels neither present Jesus in this way. Only in Mar 16:62 Jesus confirms to the high priest to be Messiah but he continues to speak of himself using the term “Son of Man”. The self-exaltation, as Zolondek proves is not a feature of the Davidic messiah and cannot be considered as a criterion.

Commenting on the last trend, Zolondek notes that the military aspect of messiah’s activity was very popular in Jesus’ time. On the other hand, the messiah was expected not only as a king but also as a priest and a prophet. That is why the figure of David is associated with the temple in many psalms and prophets. Also, the historical messianic figures tried to show their connections with the temple, e.g. appearing there in royal robes like Menachem or minting coins with an image of the temple like Simon Ben Kosiba. In addition to the royal throne and links with the temple Davidic messiah, like a real prophet, enjoys the authority given by God and is a righteous leader who cares for the poor and the oppressed. The eschatological scenarios overlap all this. Quoting biblical texts and extra-biblical literature Zolondek tries to show that there is no precise definition of a messiah in Jesus’ time but there is a mix of different messianic traits and behaviors. On this account, it is fully acceptable that messiah has no earthly military ambitions, as a fight with enemy will involve heavenly rather than earthly means.

In the second part of the book, Zolondek presents his own approach to the question of Jesus’s Davidic messiahship. However, before he does it, he criticizes the criteria for reaching historical Jesus in the entire chapter 4, entitled “Methodological Issues”. He states that “there are no data whose presence allows one to yield certain and objective historical conclusions” (p. 94). Therefore, he often emphasizes that Jesus’ behavior is “potential Davidic messianic behavior” or that it is “historically probable” that Jesus was a Davidic messianic figure.

After 100 pages of his 143 page book, chapter 5 begins, in which the author proceeds to answer the question from the subtitle: “How the Disciples Help Us to Answer the Davidic Messianic Question”. He proves that Jesus, through his words and deeds suggested to his disciples that he was David’s Messiah and they treated him that way. According to him such a belief occurred to the disciples during Jesus’ public activity and not as some say along with his death (Zolondek

argues here with the views of Nils A. Dahl). He gives arguments for the historicity of the choice of the Twelve and then the arguments for the historical character of the passages in which the disciples refer to Jesus as the Davidic Messiah. The first evoked situation is Peter's confession in Caesarea Philippi (Mar 8:27-30). Peter calls Jesus "Christ", which according to Zolondek is a synonymous with Davidic messiah. He argues that at the same time Peter does not agree with Jesus' announcement that he has to suffer and die on the cross, because such a scenario does not match Peter's image of the royal messiah. In a similar way, Zolondek interprets the confession of James and John (Mar 10:35-40), when they are talking about joining Jesus in "glory" or in the "kingdom" (Mat 20:21). Also Jesus's solemn entry to Jerusalem when he is proclaimed Davidic Messiah is a clear indication of the royal identity. These beliefs and expectations expressed during Jesus's public activity are confirmed by accounts from the post-Easter period. The disciples going to Emmaus say that they expected Jesus to "set Israel free" (Luk 24:21), and before the Ascension the apostles ask "whether he would restore the kingdom of Israel" (Act 1:6).

Having established the above-mentioned historical data concerning the interplay between Jesus and his disciples, Zolondek verifies in chapter 6 whether Jesus's behavior was indeed in accordance with the role of David's Messiah. Since it is theoretically possible that disciples misunderstood the nature of Jesus' mission, some other unquestionable royal activities may confirm the Davidic role. Zolondek enumerates preaching the kingdom of God and the appointment of the 12 apostles. The latter he calls "one of Jesus' clearest Davidic messianic acts". The establishment of 12 apostles as subordinate leaders and the promise concerning 12 thrones of judgment (Q 22:28-30) fit very well to the role of the royal messiah. Another Davidic act is the incident known as "cleansing of the temple" which shows the close connection between Davidic Messiah and the temple and finally Jesus' solemn entry into Jerusalem on an ass which provoked royal acclamations. According to Zolondek this manner of entering the city had royal qualities both in the Jewish and Roman context.

Zolondek summarizes his findings in the short chapter 7. He states that with great historical probability Jesus was Davidic Messiah because he suggested it to his disciples, they treat him like He was the one and it was consistent with the role of Davidic messiah. However, the disciples could misread the identity of Jesus and recognized him as a Davidic Messiah, while he was a prophet, an eschatological movement founder or a charismatic Jewish leader. Such a competitive narrative is, according to Zolondek, much less likely and provokes many questions, including why Jesus did not correct the disciples misconceptions about himself. On the contrary, the narrative of Davidic Messiah is characterized by simplicity and compatibility with historical accounts of kings and messianic figures from the time of Jesus, as well as with anthropological and sociological

discoveries. The royal identity of Jesus is well explained by the fact that Romans finally eliminated him as another pretender to the throne and by the fact that he was believed to be Davidic Messiah in the post-Easter period.

Zolondek's work is based on the still insufficiently examined theological typology Jesus – David. The author anticipates detailed theological analyzes of this subject and shows that this is not only a theological concept but the truth about historical Jesus. He convincingly justifies that Jesus behaved in line with the role of Davidic Messiah and was treated this way by his disciples. However, he devotes the vast majority of his book to critical approach to the existing methodology and criteria for the historical character of the text before he comes to this point. These analyses of status quo shows how fresh and important for the study of Davidic messianism is Zolondek's approach. Not only does Jesus himself reveal to us the truth about himself, but also those who he has chosen and who testify in the Gospels: "we have found the Messiah".

