

I think I've gone on about Aslan's Zealot long enough. Maybe more than long enough, many of you may think. My plan is to make this the last post. Let me reiterate that I think it is an exceptionally well-written, engaging book, and we can all be thankful to Aslan for bringing important historical issues about Jesus to the public attention. I may think that he's wrong about his central thesis, and I may recognize a lot of errors in his book (about history, about the NT, about early Christianity). But I appreciate very much that he has gotten people talking about Jesus from a historical perspective - something that I think is of utmost importance, especially in our American context where Jesus typically is only spoken of by believers who do not appreciate the importance of history for knowing, well, about the past!

In this final post I want to speak about a couple of threads, loose traditions that are sometimes used to argue that Jesus was most likely a zealot, someone who was so zealous for the law, and the land, that he believed that the Romans should be driven out so that Israel could have what was hers as prescribed in the law of Moses. I'll just deal with both of these traditions briefly, since I don't want to belabor the point. In my estimation both traditions actually say the *opposite* of what they are said to say by those who support the idea that Jesus was a zealot. The first tradition is that he had a follower called Simon the Zealot, and the second tradition is that his disciples were armed when Jesus was arrested and that they put up a fight for him (what were they doing with swords if they were not in favor of violent opposition to the Roman invaders?). I will argue that the first may be accurate, or not, but in either event it shows that Jesus himself was not a zealot; and that the second is not a historical datum.

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