In my previous post I began to discuss the understanding of Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah, in the Gospel of Mark (this is a thread within a thread within a thread – but it doesn’t matter. Each of these posts makes sense on their own). I am trying to show that Mark portrayed Jesus as the Son of God (meaning: the one who was in a particularly close relationship with God who was chosen by God to mediate his will on earth) and the messiah. But he was the Son of God/Messiah whom no one understood. Even his disciples.

What though would it mean for first century Jews to think of someone as the messiah?

Some serious background is necessary. As I pointed out in my previous post, the word Messiah is a Hebrew term (the Greek equivalent is “Christ”) which meant “anointed one.” Why would you call someone the anointed one?

In Jewish circles the term goes back to a kind of royal ideology (i.e., understandings of the kingship) from centuries before Jesus. In the Old Testament, it was first and foremost the king of Israel who was thought to be the “anointed one.” That’s because at the king’s coronation ceremony, he had, as part of the ritual, oil poured on his head to show that he was the one who stood under God’s special favor. He was thus the messiah, the anointed one.

In one of our early narratives about kingship, we are told ...

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