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Two Sides of the Same Coin: ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ in the Gospel of Mark. Part One: The Immediacy and Power of the Kingdom

*Introduction: The Kingdom of God in Markan Perspective*¹

The emergence of the Kingdom of God (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ) is a prominent theme in the Gospel of Mark². In Mark's economy, the Kingdom is the in-breaking reign of God in the here-and-now that anticipates what will arrive decisively in the *eschaton* (cf. 1,15; 9,1; 11,10; 15,43). For Mark, the future has entered the present in the ministry of Jesus in a way that impacts the course of history. Consider the first occurrence of Kingdom language in Mark:

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, 15 and saying, «The time is fulfilled, and *the Kingdom of God* has come near; repent, and believe in the good news» (1,14-15, NRSV)³.

This is moment of critical importance. After being baptized by John (1,9-11) and tempted by Satan for forty days (1,12-13), Jesus returns victorious from the wilderness proclaiming that the Kingdom has arrived. While it has not been fully consummated, this Kingdom has drawn near in a decisive way in Jesus's triumph over Satan in the wilderness. His announcement «implies that the prophecies of scripture and the hopes of the people are in the process of being fulfilled».⁴

It is important to recognize that Mark's Gospel depicts a cosmic battle between God and Satan that is already underway on earth. In the opening scenes of the gospel, Jesus

¹ Some of the material in this article reproduces arguments and content from my forthcoming book, *Mark* (New Word Biblical Themes; Grand Rapids 2025). It is published here with permission.

² The term βασιλεία appears twenty times in Mark, fifteen of which are direct references to the Kingdom of God (1,15; 4,11, 26, 30; 6,23; 9,1, 47; 10,14, 15, 23, 24, 25; 12,34; 15,43).

³ Καὶ μετὰ τὸ παραδοθῆναι τὸν Ἰωάννην ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ λέγων ὅτι Πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ· μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεῦετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ.

⁴ A. Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, Minneapolis 2007, 154.

steps into that battle for the first time. Throughout the narrative, the battle will progress toward a climactic showdown in which Jesus – by the paradoxical means of death on a cross – will prevail once and for all. While the wilderness temptations are only the beginning of Jesus’s struggle in this cosmic battle, they nevertheless represent a real victory. Whereas the temptation and subsequent fall of Adam led to fear and anxiety within creation (cf. Gen 3,14-20), Jesus is described here as being «with the wild beasts» (1,13), a phrase that reflects a state like Adam’s peaceful relationship with all creation prior to the fall and the fulfillment of Israel’s messianic hopes (see Isa 11,6-9). Therefore, Jesus’s wilderness experience constitutes a reversal of Adam’s misfortunes and allows God’s Kingdom to “draw near,” in a way that will permit his reign to increase slowly and incipiently, not unlike the growth of a mustard seed (cf. Mark 4,30-32). This tension between the embryonic in-breaking of God’s reign on earth alongside the recognition that God’s reign has not been fully consummated has often been referred to as “inaugurated eschatology”⁵. We must keep this tension in mind as we read the gospel and reflect upon Mark’s specific presentation of the Kingdom.

In addition to those texts that depict the Kingdom as the in-breaking reign of God, we also encounter passages in Mark that refer to one *entering* the Kingdom (9,47; 10,15,23, 24, 25; 14,25). Against the backdrop of modern Christian theological ideas about the afterlife, this language has often been understood as referring to one’s entrance into “heaven.” However, such an understanding is anachronistic as the more developed doctrines of heaven and hell that attend contemporary Christian teaching did not emerge until much later. It is better to understand these texts as referring not to a physical or spatial *realm* but to a *reality* into which those who are faithful to God will soon enter. Thus, for Mark, God’s reign is an abiding reality that presents itself on earth in nascent forms in the ministry of Jesus, and which will be fully realized on earth as God rights the world once and for all in the approaching *eschaton*.

With all of this in mind, we can observe the Kingdom of God emerging in different ways throughout the Gospel of Mark. At certain turns, God’s reign bursts into the world decisively with immediacy and power. At others, God’s reign is shrouded in both mystery and secrecy, and surfaces in the most unexpected ways. I will discuss the former phenomenon here in this article and the latter in the second article of my two-part series. My guiding observation in this article and the next is that the Kingdom of God in Mark’s Gospel is multifaceted and unpredictable, and that it is present in more than just the preaching and parables in which it is explicitly mentioned. Therefore, we must pay careful attention to the various contours of Mark’s presentation of the Kingdom to gain a better understanding of Jesus’s ministry in the gospel as well as the mysterious nature of God’s presence in the world. In the remainder of this article we will examine Mark’s emphasis on the immediacy and power of God’s Kingdom. In the second article of this

⁵ Many Hellenistic Jewish and early Christian writings contain an eschatological dualism that contrasts the present evil age with the coming age in which God will right the world. This eschatological outlook has been labelled *futuristic eschatology*. Mark’s *inaugurated eschatology* sees the reign of God entering this present evil age in and through the ministry of Jesus, though it has not yet been fully consummated.

two-part series, we will examine the Kingdom's secretive and mysterious emergence in the world.

Markan Idiolect and the Kingdom of God

In order to appreciate Mark's narrative world – and specifically his presentation of the Kingdom of God within that world – we must familiarize ourselves with the ways in which he communicates. This means we must be aware of the rhetoric of the narrative (Mark's approach to storytelling) and the means by which he communicates this rhetoric (Mark's grammar and syntax). We begin with a consideration of the latter.

The Gospel of Mark is known for its rough style of Greek prose. Scholars have long recognized that Mark's prose lacks the elegance and sophistication of other, highly stylized NT texts⁶. By contrast, Mark's prose is simplistic and artless, particularly in his use of Greek prepositions⁷. Nearly sixty five percent of the sentences in Mark's Gospel begin with the word "and" (Greek: *καί*), a feature which contributes to a style of writing known as *parataxis*. A paratactic style is characterized by placing short phrases together without the use of subordinating conjunctions. Mark's use of parataxis creates a fast-paced narrative that jumps quickly from action to action and scene to scene. This style is also aided by the use of short phrases like *καί ἐγένετο* ("and it happened") which serves primarily to advance the action of the narrative⁸. Another phrase, *καί εὐθύς* ("and immediately"), is a virtually inescapable feature of Mark's idiolect. Overall, the term *εὐθύς* appears 41 times across the gospel and in all but three chapters, and the specific phrase *καί εὐθύς* appears 25 of those times⁹. This term is clearly meaningful for Mark, though there is scholarly debate as to what it signals. Both Greek grammarians and commentators have written a great deal about Mark's use of *εὐθύς*, and their conclusions are often at cross purposes.

Some specialists in Greek grammar have regarded *καί εὐθύς* as a remnant of Mark's lived experience as a Jewish speaker of Aramaic attempting to communicate in Greek¹⁰.

⁶ For example, Luke-Acts, Hebrews, and 1 Peter (among others) are known for having a much more highly stylized Greek.

⁷ When we compare how both Matthew and Luke make use of Mark's Gospel, one interesting observation is that both regularly change his Greek prepositions and often in the same texts. Hellenistic Greek had nearly two dozen prepositions from which to choose. By contrast, Hebrew and Aramaic had only four primary prepositions, each of which was used to express a range of ideas. Mark's limited use of prepositions is further evidence to support the observation that there is significant bilingual interference throughout the gospel.

⁸ Cf. 1,9; 2,23; 4,4, 10; 9,7 (twice), 26; 11,19. In the Septuagint, the phrase *καί ἐγένετο* often translates the Hebrew *וַיְהִי*, which is more properly a narrative marker and is not necessarily supposed to be translated. Mark appears to have inherited this storytelling convention from those who translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek.

⁹ *εὐθύς* appears in the following verses: 1,10, 12, 18, 20, 21, 23, 28, 29, 30, 42, 43; 2,8, 12; 3,6; 4,5, 15, 16, 17, 29, 5,2, 29, 30, 42; 6,25, 27, 45, 50, 54; 7,25; 8,10; 9,15, 20, 24; 10,52; 11,2, 3; 14,43, 45, 72; 15,1. The variant spelling, *εὐθέως* appears in 7,35. The expression is used in Mark more than all other New Testament texts combined.

¹⁰ On this, Paul Ellingworth notes that «the problem is not just a problem of style: it is also a problem of meaning. *Euthus* [sic] in Mark often does not mean 'immediately.' Indeed it may not even be an expression

In the case of Mark's Gospel, we refer to this phenomenon as Semitic interference, since various elements of Aramaic and Hebrew are present in Mark's Greek¹¹. Because the consistent use of καὶ εὐθύς creates an awkward syntax, some have dismissed it as an anomalous feature of Mark's prose that has no significance at the level of the narrative. While observations about Mark's awkward syntax are deserving of our attention, they should not be the final word on the subject. It is important to remember that multiple things can be true at the same time – a necessary reminder when we are seeking to disentangle some of the thorny issues in biblical interpretation. In other words, we can rightly regard the consistent use of καὶ εὐθύς as awkward at the level of Greek syntax and still acknowledge that it is an important element of Mark's storytelling technique.

In some instances, Mark's use of καὶ εὐθύς works at the discursive level and simply contributes to the pace of the narrative and the rapid shifting from scene to scene. In others, the term is related to the urgency of the story. Finally, there are instances in which we witness the reign of God breaking into the world with immediacy and power, and in these instances – often in the context of healing miracles and exorcisms – Mark's use of καὶ εὐθύς is a critical part of his presentation of the Kingdom of God. Let us consider the following examples.

1. Jesus is baptized (Mark 1,9-11)

9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 *And just as* [καὶ εὐθύς] he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. 11 And a voice came from heaven, «You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased» (NSRV)¹².

Here we have our first occurrence of the phrase καὶ εὐθύς in Mark, and there are few examples that better exemplify its use to signal the in-breaking reign of God in the world. As Jesus is baptized – which is the moment that prepares him for his public vocation – he *immediately* sees the skies torn apart and simultaneously experiences the voice of God and the descent of the Spirit. This passage prepares the reader for the next scene where Jesus is *immediately* driven by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by Satan (1,12), followed by the initial groups of disciples abandoning their nets to follow

of time at all. Perhaps in the Aramaic sources on which most of Mark's gospel is based, the word was the same one that other gospels translate by 'behold!' or 'look!'. It is probably no accident that Mark almost always uses *euthus* [sic] in narrative and 'behold!' in words spoken by someone in the gospel story» (*How Soon is 'Immediately' in Mark?*, Bible Translator 29 [1978], 414-19 [here 414]). For more on the peculiar features of Mark's Greek, see R.J. Decker, *Markan Idiolect in the Study of the Greek New Testament*, in S.E. Porter, A.W. Pitts (ed.), *The Language of the New Testament: Context, History, Development*, Leiden 2013, 43-66; and W.S. Vorster, *Bilingualism and the Greek of the New Testament: Semitic interference in the Gospel of Mark*, Neotestamentica 24/2, 1990, 215-28.

¹¹ On this subject, see the E.C. Maloney's important monograph: *Semitic Interference in Marcan Syntax*, Missoula, MT 1981.

¹² Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις ἦλθεν Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ Ναζαρέτ τῆς Γαλιλαίας καὶ ἐβαπτίσθη εἰς τὸν Ἰορδάνην ὑπὸ Ἰωάννου. καὶ εὐθύς ἀναβαίνων ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος εἶδεν σχιζομένους τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ τὸ πνεῦμαὸς περιστερὰν καταβαίνων εἰς αὐτόν· καὶ φωνὴ ἐγένετο ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν· Σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα.

Jesus *immediately* (1,18, 20), and further followed by the *immediate* healing of a leper who comes to Jesus for help (1,42). The phrase *καὶ εὐθύς* occurs at critical moments throughout Mark's first chapter and its literary and theological significance are signaled by its appearance in this foundational passage in 1,9-11. These initial scenes will prepare the reader for the *immediate* emergence of God's Kingdom and its urgency in various ways throughout the remainder of the gospel.

2. Jesus heals a paralytic (Mark 2,1-12)

1 When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. 2 So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. 3 Then some people came, bringing to him a paralysed man, carried by four of them. 4 And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.' 6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 7 'Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?' 8 *At once* [καὶ εὐθύς] Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, 'Why do you raise such questions in your hearts?' 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, «Your sins are forgiven», or to say, «Stand up and take your mat and walk»? 10 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins' – he said to the paralytic – 11 'I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home.' 12 And he stood up, *and immediately* [καὶ εὐθύς] took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, «We have never seen anything like this» (NRSV)¹³.

This is the first of several examples we will consider in this article where Jesus heals an individual in a brief and decisive moment. Twice in this passage Mark uses the phrase *καὶ εὐθύς* in order to depict the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God. A group brings a paralytic to Jesus with hopes that he can heal him. After Jesus announces to the paralytic that his sins are forgiven, some religious leaders who are present object to this language. Jesus is *immediately* aware that he is being criticized (v. 8), but not because he has heard the criticisms directly. Rather, to use Mark's language, he perceives this "in his spirit".

¹³ 1 Καὶ εἰσελθὼν ἄλλιν εἰς Καφαρναοῦμ δι' ἡμερῶν ἠκούσθη ὅτι ἐν οἴκῳ ἐστίν· 2 καὶ συνήχθησαν πολλοὶ ὥστε μῆκέτι χωρεῖν μῆδὲ τὰ πρὸς τὴν θύραν, καὶ ἐλάλει αὐτοῖς τὸν λόγον. 3 καὶ ἔρχονται φέροντες πρὸς αὐτὸν παραλυτικὸν αἰρόμενον ὑπὸ τεσσάρων. 4 καὶ μὴ δυνάμενοι προσενέγκαι αὐτῷ διὰ τὸν ὄχλον ἀπεστέγασαν τὴν στέγην ὅπου ἦν, καὶ ἐξορύξαντες χαλῶσι τὸν κρᾶβαττον ὅπου ὁ παραλυτικὸς κατέκειτο. 5 καὶ ἰδὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὴν πίστιν αὐτῶν λέγει τῷ παραλυτικῷ· Τέκνον, ἀφίενται σου αἱ ἁμαρτίαι. 6 ἦσαν δὲ τινες τῶν γραμματέων ἐκεῖ καθήμενοι καὶ διαλογιζόμενοι ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν· 7 Τί οὕτως οὕτως λαλεῖ; βλασφημεῖ· τίς δύναται ἀφίεναι ἁμαρτίας εἰ μὴ εἰς ὁ θεός; 8 καὶ εὐθύς ἐπιγνοὺς ὁ Ἰησοῦς τῷ πνεύματι αὐτοῦ ὅτι οὕτως διαλογίζονται ἐν ἐαυτοῖς λέγει αὐτοῖς· Τί ταῦτα διαλογίζεσθε ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν; 9 τί ἐστιν εὐκοπώτερον, εἰπεῖν τῷ παραλυτικῷ· Ἀφίενται σου αἱ ἁμαρτίαι, ἢ εἰπεῖν· Ἔγειρε καὶ ἄρον τὸν κρᾶβαττον σου καὶ περιπάτει; 10 ἵνα δὲ εἰδῆτε ὅτι ἐξουσίαν ἔχει ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἀφίεναι ἁμαρτίας - λέγει τῷ παραλυτικῷ 11 Σοὶ λέγω, ἔγειρε ἄρον τὸν κρᾶβαττον σου καὶ ὑπάγε εἰς τὸν οἶκόν σου. 12 καὶ ἠγέρθη καὶ εὐθύς ἄρας τὸν κρᾶβαττον ἐξῆλθεν ἔμπροσθεν πάντων, ὥστε ἐξίστασθαι πάντας καὶ δοξάζειν τὸν θεὸν λέγοντας ὅτι Οὕτως οὐδέποτε εἶδομεν.

Perhaps a better way to think of this is that these criticisms have been revealed to him by God. Then, in a climactic moment in which Jesus addresses the religious leaders on one side and the paralytic on the other, he commands the paralytic to take up his mat and walk, which he proceeds to do *immediately* (vv. 11-12). It is also important for us to recognize here that Jesus is able to accomplish this healing merely with a word. The ability to heal simply by speaking makes Jesus uncommon among the healers known to us from the ancient Jewish and Greco-Roman worlds¹⁴. This display of Jesus's authority over disease, disorder, and eventually death (see the discussion of 5,35-43 below), is the first of numerous such examples of the reign of God breaking into the world with both immediacy and power.

3. Jesus heals a haemorrhaging woman (Mark 5,25-34)

25 Now there was a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years. 26 She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. 27 She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, 28 for she said, 'If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.' 29 *Immediately* [καὶ εὐθὺς] her haemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. 30 *Immediately* [καὶ εὐθὺς] aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my clothes?' 31 And his disciples said to him, 'You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, «Who touched me?»' 32 He looked all round to see who had done it. 33 But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. 34 He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease' (NRSV)¹⁵.

As in the healing passage we just considered (2,1-12), there are again two instances of the phrase καὶ εὐθὺς in this text, both of which relate to the emergence of the Kingdom. The first reference points to the healing of a physical malady that had persisted for twelve years. With one touch, the woman is *immediately* healed (v. 29). It should be

¹⁴ Numerous healers, miracle workers, and magicians appear in various Greco-Roman and Jewish texts from around the time of Jesus. These include healers associated with the cult of Asclepius, and Jewish figures such as Honi the Circle Drawer, Eleazar, and Hanina ben Dosa, among others. Often, healings and exorcisms are accompanied by elaborate rituals, incantations, and the use of physical objects. The ability to heal sickness and cast out unclean spirits simply by speaking makes Jesus uncommon among the ancient healers about whom we have any substantive information. One possible counter example would be Greek Magical Papyri, which feature magical spells, hymns, and other ritualistic speech.

¹⁵ 25 καὶ γυνὴ οὖσα ἐν ῥύσει αἵματος δώδεκα ἔτη 26 καὶ πολλὰ παθοῦσα ὑπὸ πολλῶν ἰατρῶν καὶ δαπανήσασα τὰ παρ' αὐτῆς πάντα καὶ μηδὲν ὠφεληθεῖσα ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον εἰς τὸ γέρον ἐλθοῦσα, 27 ἀκούσασα περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, ἐλθοῦσα ἐν τῷ ὄχλῳ ὀπισθεν ἤψατο τοῦ ἱματίου αὐτοῦ· 28 ἔλεγεν γὰρ ὅτι Ἐὰν ἄψωμαι κἂν τῶν ἱματίων αὐτοῦ σωθήσομαι. 29 καὶ εὐθὺς ἐξηράνθη ἡ πηγὴ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτῆς, καὶ ἔγνω τῷ σώματι ὅτι ἴαται ἀπὸ τῆς μάστιγος. 30 καὶ εὐθὺς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐπιγνοὺς ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὴν ἐξ αὐτοῦ δύναμιν ἐξελθοῦσαν ἐπιστραφεὶς ἐν τῷ ὄχλῳ ἔλεγεν· Τίς μου ἤψατο τῶν ἱματίων; 31 καὶ ἔλεγον αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ· Βλέπεις τὸν ὄχλον συνθλίβοντά σε, καὶ λέγεις· Τίς μου ἤψατο; 32 καὶ περιεβλέπετο ἰδεῖν τὴν τοῦτο ποιήσασαν. 33 ἡ δὲ γυνὴ φοβηθεῖσα καὶ τρέμουσα, εἰδὺσα ὃ γέγονεν αὐτῇ, ἦλθεν καὶ προσέπεσεν αὐτῷ καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ πᾶσαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν. 34 ὃ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῇ· Θυγάτηρ, ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε· ὕπαγε εἰς εἰρήνην, καὶ ἴσθι ὑγιὴς ἀπὸ τῆς μάστιγός σου.

noted that unlike other instances of healing in Mark, the physical contact leading to this restoration is not initiated by Jesus but rather by the ailing woman. Even in a passive state, Mark's Jesus is an effective conduit for the emergence of God's Kingdom. As with the story of the paralytic considered above, the second use of *καὶ εὐθύς* alludes to Jesus's cognition at a supernatural level. He is *immediately* aware that power has gone forth from him (v. 30); again, we should regard this awareness as a revelation from God. Once again, in light of the developing narrative rhetoric, it is difficult to regard these uses of *καὶ εὐθύς* as something other than deliberate attempts to depict the immediacy and power of God's reign breaking into the world.

4. Jesus heals the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5,35-43)

35 While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, 'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?' 36 But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, 'Do not fear, only believe.' 37 He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. 38 When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. 39 When he had entered, he said to them, 'Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.' 40 And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. 41 He took her by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha cum', which means, 'Little girl, get up!' 42 *And immediately* [*καὶ εὐθύς*] the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. 43 He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat (NRSV)¹⁶.

This story of Jairus's daughter being raised from the dead is intimately connected to our previous passage in which the haemorrhaging woman is healed. Together, the stories of these two women constitute an intercalated passage or "sandwich" that is meant to draw connections between the experiences of both¹⁷. Within the broader context of the intercalated unit 5,21-43, Jesus is in the midst of a crowd when he is first approached by a synagogue official named Jairus with a request to heal his dying daughter (vv. 21-24).

¹⁶ 35 Ἐτι αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος ἔρχονται ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀρχισυναγώγου λέγοντες ὅτι Ἡ θυγάτηρ σου ἀπέθανεν· τί ἔτι σκύλλεις τὸν διδάσκαλον; 36 ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς παρακούσας τὸν λόγον λαλούμενον λέγει τῷ ἀρχισυναγώγῳ· Μὴ φοβοῦ, μόνον πίστευε. 37 καὶ οὐκ ἀφῆκεν οὐδένα μετ' αὐτοῦ συνακολουθῆσαι εἰ μὴ τὸν Πέτρον καὶ Ἰακώβον καὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν ἀδελφὸν Ἰακώβου. 38 καὶ ἔρχονται εἰς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ ἀρχισυναγώγου, καὶ θεωρεῖ θόρυβον καὶ κλαίοντας καὶ ἀλαλάζοντας πολλὰ, 39 καὶ εἰσελθὼν λέγει αὐτοῖς· Τί θορυβεῖσθε καὶ κλαίετε; τὸ παιδίον οὐκ ἀπέθανεν ἀλλὰ καθεύδει. 40 καὶ κατεγέλων αὐτοῦ· αὐτὸς δὲ ἐκβαλὼν πάντας παραλαμβάνει τὸν πατέρα τοῦ παιδίου καὶ τὴν μητέρα καὶ τοὺς μετ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ εἰσπορεύεται ὅπου ἦν τὸ παιδίον· 41 καὶ κρατήσας τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ παιδίου λέγει αὐτῇ· Ταλιθα κουμ, ὃ ἐστὶν μεθερμηνευόμενον· Τὸ κοράσιον, σοὶ λέγω, ἔγειρε. 42 καὶ εὐθύς ἀνέστη τὸ κοράσιον καὶ περιεπάτει, ἦν γὰρ ἑτῶν δώδεκα. καὶ ἐξέστησαν εὐθὺς ἐκστάσει μεγάλῃ. 43 καὶ διεστείλατο αὐτοῖς πολλὰ ἵνα μῆδεις γνοῖ τούτο, καὶ εἶπεν δοθῆναι αὐτῇ φαγεῖν.

¹⁷ For more on Markan intercalations, see J.R. Edwards, *Markan Sandwiches: The Significance of Markan Interpolations*, *Novum Testamentum* 31.3, 1989, 193-216; T. Shepherd, *Markan Sandwich Stories: Narration, Definition, and Function*, Berrien Spring, MI 1993; Id., *The Narrative Function of Markan Intercalation*, *New Testament Studies* 41.4, 1995, 522-40.

After the story focalizes around the healing of the haemorrhaging woman (vv. 25-34), the focus of the narrative returns to Jairus, who learns that his daughter has died. Exhorting him to believe, Jesus travels home with Jairus for the purposes of resurrecting the girl. Again, with a simple touch, this time accompanied by a command that Mark recounts in transliterated Aramaic (Ταλιθα κουμ) along with a translation (Τὸ κοράσιον, σοὶ λέγω, ἔγειρε), the girl's life is *immediately* restored (v. 42). The proof of this genuine resurrection is that the little girl instantly gets up and begins walking about to the astonishment of those who are present. There can hardly be a more powerful display of God's reign bursting forth into the world than the restoration of a human life from the dead.

5. Bartimaeus receives his sight (Mark 10,46-52)

46 They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' 48 Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' 49 Jesus stood still and said, 'Call him here.' 50 And they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take heart; get up, he is calling you.' 51 So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. 52 Then Jesus said to him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' The blind man said to him, 'My teacher, let me see again.' 52 Jesus said to him, 'Go; your faith has made you well.' Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way (NRSV)¹⁸.

As in the healing passages we have already considered, blind Bartimaeus approaches Jesus, despite the protestations of others, and begs for mercy (vv. 47-48). A brief conversation clarifies the type of "mercy" he seeks – he wants to have his vision restored (v. 51). As in 2,11, Jesus issues a simple verbal command which leads to the *immediate* restoration of Bartimaeus's sight (v. 52). At this, Bartimaeus begins to follow Jesus, which provides an ironic twist to the story's end. Jesus's command for him to "go" carries the sense of "depart from here" but his restoration leads him to begin following Jesus "on the way" (Greek: ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ) – a phrase associated with discipleship in Mark (see e.g., 6,8; 8,27; 9,33-34; 10,17, 32; 12,14).

Due to limitations of space, I have not considered every occurrence of the phrase καὶ εὐθύς in the gospel. However, if the foregoing examination has revealed anything, it is that when we encounter the term εὐθύς in the Gospel of Mark we must approach with care and read with nuance. There are times when the term simply contributes to

¹⁸ 46 Καὶ ἔρχονται εἰς Ἱερικό. καὶ ἐκπορευομένου αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ Ἱερικό καὶ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ καὶ ὄχλου ἱκανοῦ ὁ υἱὸς Τιμαίου Βαρτιμαῖος τυφλὸς προσαίτης ἐκάθητο παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν. 47 καὶ ἀκούσας ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζαρηθὸς ἔστιν ἤρξατο κράζειν καὶ λέγειν· Υἱὲ Δαυὶδ Ἰησοῦ, ἐλέησόν με. 48 καὶ ἐπετίμων αὐτῷ πολλοὶ ἵνα σιωπήσῃ· ὁ δὲ πολλῶ μᾶλλον ἔκραζεν· Υἱὲ Δαυίδ, ἐλέησόν με. 49 καὶ στάς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν· Φωνήσατε αὐτόν. καὶ φωνοῦσι τὸν τυφλὸν λέγοντες αὐτῷ· Θάρσει, ἔγειρε, φανεῖ σε. 50 ὁ δὲ ἀποβαλὼν τὸ ἱμάτιον αὐτοῦ ἀνασηδῆσας ἦλθεν πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν. 51 καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν· Τί σοι θέλεις ποιῆσω; ὁ δὲ τυφλὸς εἶπεν αὐτῷ· Ραββουνι, ἵνα ἀναβλέψω. 52 καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ· Ὑπάγε, ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε. καὶ εὐθύς ἀνεβλέψεν, καὶ ἠκολούθει αὐτῷ ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ.

the rapid pace of the narrative. In other instances, it helps paint a vivid picture of the circumstances surrounding Jesus's battle with satanic forces¹⁹. However, as we have also seen, those circumstances are met and matched by Jesus's response, which instantly ushers in a powerful manifestation of God's presence here on earth. In the above texts I have argued that we observe God's Kingdom arriving decisively and urgently each time in a context in which the phrase *καὶ εὐθύς* appears. Careful attention to this recurring phrase and the themes it evokes can teach us a great deal about Mark's vision of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus, Exorcisms, and the Kingdom of God

When we return to the idea of battle between God and Satan that provides the cosmological framework for this gospel, we find that another critical component of Mark's presentation of the immediacy and power of the Kingdom is Jesus's role as an exorcist. One of the most important and distinctive elements of Jesus's vocation in Mark is his practice of casting out unclean spirits. Exorcisms play such a foundational role in Jesus's public ministry that when he appoints the twelve disciples, they are commissioned for three specific things, one of which is to cast out demons (see 3,14-15).

As mentioned above, Jesus's initial victory over Satan in the wilderness constitutes a reversal of Adam's misfortunes in the garden. His preaching of the Kingdom begins in earnest after this reversal is narrated (cf. 1,14-15), and his ministry is characterized by actions that depict an ongoing battle with the forces of Satan. This battle is most clearly seen in the casting out of unclean spirits, which Graham Twelftree has helpfully characterized as "power-encounters" between God and Satan²⁰. These moments of direct contact between Jesus and satanic emissaries represent another manifestation of the Kingdom of God with both immediacy and power. On this, Twelftree notes, «Uniquely, Jesus appears to have taken his exorcisms not as signs or evidence of the *expected Kingdom of God but, along with other healings, as its realization*»²¹. Against this backdrop, we should not overlook the subtle connection between John's announcement of the coming of "the stronger one" (Greek: ὁ ἰσχυρότερος; 1,7), Jesus's triumph over Satan during his period of testing (1,12-13), and his later parabolic discussion of binding the "strong one" before plundering his house (Greek: ὁ ἰσχυρός; 3,22-27). Throughout the gospel Satan represents "the strong one," but Jesus will prove over and over again in their encounters to be "the stronger one" – a scenario resulting from Jesus's initial victory in the wilderness.

The Kingdom of God as envisioned by Mark is at least partially concerned with purity. This is likely one reason why he uses the terms *δαίμόνιον* and *πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον* synonymously throughout the gospel²². In other words, the Markan Jesus has a prob-

¹⁹ See, e.g., 1,23; 6,27; 14,43, 72; 15,1.

²⁰ G. Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism among Early Christians*, Grand Rapids 2020, 46.

²¹ G. Twelftree, "Exorcism", in *Oxford Bibliographies*, New York 2020, emphasis added.

²² The terms "demon" (Greek: δαίμόνιον) and "unclean spirit" (Greek: πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον) are used interchangeably by Mark. The term "demon" and its verbal cognate are used 15 times in Mark (1,32, 34

lem with impurity, and in order to be a conduit for ushering in the Kingdom, he must establish purity where impurity presently exists, which is a proleptic projection of the Kingdom's absolute purity in the *eschaton*. Sometimes Jesus accomplishes this by healing an infirmity or disease, as we saw in several of the passages considered in the previous section. Jesus routinely accomplishes this by casting out the source of impurity, and this is where his role as an exorcist becomes critical to Mark's presentation of the Kingdom²³. With one possible but debated exception, there appear to be no exorcisms in the Hebrew Bible²⁴. Therefore, it is worth pausing our discussion to consider when this practice developed within Judaism. This will help us better understand Mark's presentation of Jesus as an exorcist.

The practice of exorcism is attested in texts from Mesopotamia and throughout the ancient Near East. It can best be defined as seeking to cast out a demonic force or personified sickness through a ritual or incantation in the name of a deity that both the exorcist and afflicted recognize as authoritative. The first explicit reference to exorcism in any Jewish text is in Tobit 3,8; 6,7-9, and 8,1-3 (ca. 3rd cent.-2nd cent. BCE). Those texts picture what could be described as an informal exorcism where a woman named Sarah has been possessed by a demon named Asmodeus. Sarah's husband, Tobias, is instructed to place a fish liver and heart atop burning embers with the goal of using the resulting aroma to repulse the demon. Josephus (ca. 93-94 CE) also recounts a healer named Eleazar's attempts as casting out demons by drawing them out through the nostrils (*Antiquities of the Jews* 8.42-49). In addition to these texts, we also have several references to exorcism in the Dead Sea Scrolls (ca. 3rd cent. BCE-1st cent. CE)²⁵.

By the time of Jesus, the practice of exorcism was accepted within various expressions of Judaism²⁶. However, as an exorcist, the Markan Jesus appears to be distinctive in a number of respects. First, unlike other Jewish practitioners, Jesus does not use incantations, songs, or physical implements. He simply uses a verbal command. Second, the encounters between Jesus and the demonic all appear to be instantaneous and on-the-spot. Unlike other instances from Jewish literature, no advanced planning goes

[twice], 39; 3,15, 22 [twice]; 5,15, 16, 18; 6,13; 7,26, 29, 30; 9,38), while the phrase "unclean spirit" appears 11 times (1,23, 26, 27; 3,11, 30; 5,2, 8, 13; 6,7; 7,25; 9,25). It is generally held by Markan scholars that the two terms describe the same reality throughout the gospel.

²³ Purity was an important idea within ancient Judaism. On the distinction between moral impurity, which is generated by sin, and ritual impurity, which is generated by various bodily functions, see J. Klavans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism*, Oxford 2000. On the idea of Jesus recognizing and removing the sources of ritual impurity rather than opposing purity laws within Judaism, see M. Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death: The Gospels' Portrayal of Ritual Impurity within First-Century Judaism*, Grand Rapids 2021.

²⁴ Some regard the story of the harp-playing David soothing Saul – who is tormented by an evil spirit – as a type of exorcism; see 1 Sam 16,14-23.

²⁵ Four psalms found in the Dead Sea Scrolls make reference to exorcism, one of which is *Psalms* 91. The other three fragmentary texts – one attributed to Solomon and two attributed to David – were otherwise unknown before their discovery.

²⁶ Jewish texts that depict exorcism include Tobit (as mentioned above), the Qumran hymn 11Q5 (2:7-9), and two texts from Josephus: the *Antiquities* (8.45-49) and *Jewish Wars* (7.180-185).

into the event. Third, and most importantly for our present discussion, in each case, after Jesus's intervention, the wicked spirit departs immediately and without further incident.

In Mark, Jesus's role as an exorcist is mentioned in passing twice (1,32-34; 3,20-28) and depicted in detail different four times in the gospel (1,21-28; 5,1-20; 7,24-30; 9,14-29). Three of these longer exorcism stories follow a fairly predictable pattern: (1) there is a confrontation between Jesus and a demoniac accompanied by an acclamation or request, either from the demoniac or someone associated with it, (2) this is followed by a command from Jesus that results in the expulsion of the unclean spirit, and (3) the story ends with a report of the responses of those witnessing the event. For more on this, see the chart below.

Text	Confrontation/Request	Command/Expulsion	Responses of Witnesses
1,21-28	There was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. (1,23) "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." (1,24)	"Be quiet and come out of him!" (1,25) And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. (1,26)	"What is this? A new teaching – with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." (1,27)
5,1-20	And when he had stepped out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met him... When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and bowed down before him. (5,2-6) He shouted at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." (5,7)	For he had said to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." (5,8-12) And the unclean spirits came out and entered the swine, and the herd... stampeded down the steep bank into the sea and were drowned in the sea. (5,13)	Those who had seen what had happened to the man possessed by demons and to the swine reported it. Then they began to beg Jesus to leave their neighborhood. (5,16-17)
9,14-29	When the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. (9,20)	"You spirit that keeps this boy from speaking and hearing, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again!" (9,25) After crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse. (9,26)	Most of them said, "He is dead." (9,26) When he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" (9,28)

Tab. 1. - Exorcism Stories in Mark.

In each of the above accounts, Jesus easily overcomes the unclean spirit and vanquishes it immediately with a word of power. As before, we witness the decisive

in-breaking of God's Kingdom in these various power-encounters. The future has stepped into the present in the ministry of the Markan Jesus and his proleptic defeat of Satan is signaled by the ease with which he overcomes the demonic. This is the Kingdom of God arriving with immediacy and power.

The only remaining example of an exorcism we have yet to consider appears in Mark 7,24-30 and departs from the above pattern. Here, Jesus is approached by a Syro-Phoenician woman who, like Jairus in 5,21-43, has come to advocate for an ailing daughter:

24 From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, 25 but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. 26 Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27 He said to her, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' 28 But she answered him, 'Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' 29 Then he said to her, 'For saying that, you may go – the demon has left your daughter.' 30 So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone (7,24-30, NRSV)²⁷.

This passage departs from the pattern we have seen in other healings and exorcisms to this point in that Jesus has no direct contact with the afflicted individual. He does not touch, nor does he speak directly to the daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman. In fact, he never even meets her! This story is unique in a number of respects.

First, in seeking to dismiss the woman, Jesus utters a mini-parable about food, children, and dogs. But the woman responds by boldly entering into the world of that parable with an uncompromising retort that reiterates her petition. We do not regularly witness this sort of interaction between Jesus and others in Mark's Gospel. This response appears to surprise Jesus and it also moves him to acknowledge the woman's faith and grant her petition (vv. 29-30).

Second, the audience learns something new about Jesus's ability as an exorcist from this passage. It is not necessary for Jesus to touch or even speak directly to the demoniac for the exorcism to be effective. As in the healing stories in 2,1-12 and 10,46-52, Jesus is able to accomplish this exorcism with only a word. But unlike those stories, this exorcism is distinctive in that it takes place from a distance, and it happens instantaneously. Here we have yet one more example of the Kingdom of God emerging with immediacy and power.

²⁷ 24 Ἐκεῖθεν δὲ ἀναστὰς ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὰ ὄρια Τύρου. καὶ εἰσελθὼν εἰς οἰκίαν οὐδένα ἤθελεν γινῶναι, καὶ οὐκ ἠδυνήθη λαθεῖν· 25 ἀλλ' εὐθὺς ἀκούσασα γυνὴ περὶ αὐτοῦ, ἧς εἶχεν τὸ θυγάτριον αὐτῆς πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον, ἔλθοῦσα προσέπεσεν πρὸς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ· 26 ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἦν Ἑλληνίς, Συροφονικίσσα τῶ γένει· καὶ ἠρώτα αὐτὸν ἵνα τὸ δαιμόνιον ἐκβάλῃ ἐκ τῆς θυγατρὸς αὐτῆς. 27 καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτῇ· Ἄφες πρῶτον χορτασθῆναι τὰ τέκνα, οὐ γάρ καλὸν ἐστὶν λαβεῖν τὸν ἄρτον τῶν τέκνων καὶ τοῖς κυναρίοις βαλεῖν. 28 ἡ δὲ ἀπεκρίθη καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· Κύριε, καὶ τὰ κυνάρια ὑποκάτω τῆς τραπέζης ἐσθίουσιν ἀπὸ τῶν ψιχίων τῶν παιδίων. 29 καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ· Διὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ὕπαγε, ἐξελήλυθεν ἐκ τῆς θυγατρὸς σου τὸ δαιμόνιον. 30 καὶ ἀπελθοῦσα εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς εὗρεν τὸ παιδίον βεβλημένον ἐπὶ τὴν κλίνην καὶ τὸ δαιμόνιον ἐξεληλυθός.

Jesus's regular practice of casting out unclean spirits is an important element of Mark's overall presentation of the Kingdom. In addition to exorcising demons, Jesus is able to offer consolation, healing, restoration, and even new life. That he can accomplish all of this through a variety of means – a simple word, a touch, an up-close interaction, or a long-distance intervention – is further evidence of his distinctiveness as a healer and is instructive for our developing vision of God's reign in the Gospel of Mark.

The Transfiguration as the Kingdom Coming with Power

Before concluding this first article, we must briefly consider one final example of God's Kingdom appearing with power in the Gospel of Mark. This particular text, while often misunderstood throughout the history of interpretation, has the potential to contribute significantly to our understanding of the Kingdom in Mark. In 8,34-38, as Jesus is instructing both his disciples and a larger crowd about the costs of discipleship, he proclaims, «If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels» (8,38). While the chapter ends here, commentators widely acknowledge that the first verse of the next chapter serves as the conclusion to this mini discourse. There Jesus proclaims, «Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the Kingdom of God has come with power» (9,1). This one proclamation has a long and complicated history of interpretation that has often failed to take into account both the developing narrative rhetoric and where this particular pronouncement is situated in the gospel story.

A previous generation of scholarship attempted to use Jesus's pronouncement in 9,1 as a basis for insisting that the historical Jesus earnestly believed that the Kingdom of God would be fully realized on earth during his lifetime²⁸. Regardless of whether the historical Jesus held such a view – and we have no way of knowing with any certainty – we must recognize that such an argument misses the point of what is happening *at this particular point in the text*. This is a good place to pause briefly and remind ourselves that extracting a singular text out of a broader narrative in order to make a specific historical argument often raises unnecessary complications. While we want to take into account all historical information that will allow us to better understand the text and the world behind it, it is clear that Mark has a distinctive presentation of Jesus's life and ministry which often differs from other early Christian portraits. Thus, it makes better sense to approach such difficult passages by trying to understand first how they are functioning in their immediate and proximate contexts *within the narrative itself*. Against that backdrop, when we consider the pronouncement in 9,1 in this way, it is not difficult to conclude that it is intimately connected to, and in fact anticipates what comes after it – the story of Jesus's transfiguration in 9,2-8. There we read:

²⁸ Decades of scholarly reflection on this one saying have focused on a handful of questions including (1) whether or not this saying goes back to the historical Jesus, (2) whether or not the saying refers to the *parousia* (second coming) or possibly the *eschaton* or resurrection, and (3) how to understand Jesus's own view of the end of the world in light of the fact that he made such a promise that went unfulfilled.

2 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, 3 and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. 4 And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. 5 Then Peter said to Jesus, ‘Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ 6 He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. 7 Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!’ 8 Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus (NRSV)²⁹.

Let us briefly return to the immediate context of this pericope. In 9,1, Jesus proclaims that *some who are standing in his presence will not die before they see the Kingdom coming in power*. Then, six days later he takes three of his disciples (viz., *some of those who are standing in his presence in 9,1*) up onto a high mountain away from everyone else. These three disciples are privileged to experience multiple phenomena that we should regard as manifestations of the Kingdom coming with power – the very thing Jesus predicted at the end of the previous unit.

First, the three disciples see Jesus completely transfigured before them. Here Jesus undergoes a transformation in which his clothes become dazzlingly white beyond earthly abilities to brighten them. It is clear from Peter’s confused response in v. 5 that the disciples do not have the categories to understand or explain what they are experiencing.

Second, the disciples also see two figures of major importance to the religious life of Israel: Elijah and Moses. Some have argued that Elijah and Moses represent the “Law and the Prophets,” and that may well be the case, though one would typically expect Moses to be mentioned first if that construction were in view here. Inasmuch as Moses and Elijah each experienced theophanies on a mountain (cf. Exod 19,16-25; 1 Kgs 19,11-18), it seems likely that their presence in this text is confirming this as a moment of theophany for Peter, James, and John. Their experience of God’s otherworldly presence in this world is intended as part and parcel of the in-breaking of the Kingdom.

Third, and perhaps most significantly, a cloud descends, and the disciples hear the very voice of God. This cloud is most likely intended to evoke visions of the Exodus when a pillar of cloud led the wandering Israelites by day (cf. Exod 13,21, 22; 14,19, 24; 33,9, 10). Thus, the cloud is further representative of God’s presence, offering more evidence that this entire episode is intended as a theophany, and confirming our understanding of this event as an example of the coming of the Kingdom with power. This is

²⁹ Καὶ μετὰ ἡμέρας ἕξ παραλαμβάνει ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὸν Πέτρον καὶ τὸν Ἰάκωβον καὶ Ἰωάννην, καὶ ἀναφέρει αὐτοὺς εἰς ὄρος ὑψηλὸν κατ’ ἰδίαν μόνους. καὶ μετεμορφώθη ἔμπροσθεν αὐτῶν, καὶ τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο στίλβοντα λευκὰ λίαν οἷα γναφεὺς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς οὐ δύναται οὕτως λευκᾶναι. καὶ ὤφθη αὐτοῖς Ἥλιος σὺν Μωϋσεῖ, καὶ ἦσαν συλλαλοῦντες τῷ Ἰησοῦ. καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Πέτρος λέγει τῷ Ἰησοῦ· Ῥαββί, καλὸν ἐστὶν ἡμᾶς ὧδε εἶναι, καὶ ποιήσωμεν τρεῖς σκηνάς, σοὶ μίαν καὶ Μωϋσεῖ μίαν καὶ Ἥλιᾳ μίαν. οὐ γὰρ ᾔδει τί ἀποκριθῆ· ἔκφοβοι γὰρ ἐγένοντο. καὶ ἐγένετο νεφέλη ἐπισκιάζουσα αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἐγένετο φωνὴ ἐκ τῆς νεφέλης· Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ. καὶ ἐξάπινα περιβλεψάμενοι οὐκέτι οὐδένα εἶδον ἀλλὰ τὸν Ἰησοῦν μόνον μεθ’ ἑαυτῶν.

the second time the reader has heard the voice of God, but it is the first time anyone in the narrative other than Jesus has heard this voice. The first time God spoke was during Jesus's baptism in 1,11: «*You* [singular] are my Son, whom I love; with *you* [singular] I am well pleased». Notice that the voice of God addresses Jesus directly in this text, but there is no indication that others hear what is being said. However, when God speaks for a second time in 9,7, he addresses the disciples directly, «*This* is my son, whom I love. [You, plural] Listen to him».

While the specific phrase, «Kingdom of God» is not used in 9,2-8, it should not be ignored that in this enigmatic scene, Peter, James, and John witness the in-breaking reign of God, just as Jesus indicated in 9,1. The coming of the Kingdom in this passage may not look like the arrival of the *eschaton*, as many have supposed from Jesus's prediction in 9,1, but we must conclude that the appearance of Moses and Elijah, accompanied by a transfigured Jesus and the voice and presence of God provide us with a clear example the "Kingdom of God coming with power".

Conclusion

It is critical that our understanding of the Kingdom in Mark be formed by the narrative itself rather than by the preconceived ideas that we bring to the text. When we allow our imagination to be guided by Mark's distinctive presentation, his vision of the Kingdom of God emerges with greater clarity. As we might expect from a powerful God, there are numerous instances in Mark where the inbreaking reign of God emerges with immediacy and power. These moments are signaled by Mark's distinctive idiolect – and specifically his use of *καὶ εὐθὺς*. We also see the arrival of the Kingdom with immediacy and power in Jesus's healing and exorcisms. Having considered this first side of the coin here, the second article in this series will examine the related motifs of mystery and secrecy that also attend the gospel's presentation of the Kingdom of God. There we will look at Jesus's explicit preaching on the Kingdom and consider the ways in which the Kingdom, quite unpredictably, emerges slowly, incipiently and shrouded in mystery. After that examination, we will be in position to offer a synthesis of Mark's complex presentation of the Kingdom of God.

Riassunto

Il "Regno di Dio" costituisce un' enfasi significativa nella retorica narrativa complessiva del Vangelo di Marco. Questa enfasi si manifesta con riferimenti espliciti nella predicazione e nelle parabole di Gesù e in modi più sottili. Questo articolo è il primo di una serie di due parti in cui la presentazione del Regno da parte di Marco viene trattata come una moneta con due facce: da un lato c'è l'arrivo del Regno con immediatezza e potenza, dall'altro ci sono i misteri e un costante senso di segretezza. Considerando lo stile letterario caratteristico di Marco e i temi principali che compaiono nell'intera narrazione, siamo in grado di comprendere meglio la complessità dell'insegnamento di Marco sul Regno di Dio.

Résumé

Le « Royaume de Dieu » occupe une place importante dans la rhétorique narrative globale de l'Évangile de Marc. Cet accent se manifeste par des références explicites dans la prédication et

les paraboles de Jésus, ainsi que de manière plus subtile. Cet article est le premier d'une série en deux parties dans laquelle la présentation du Royaume par Marc est traitée comme une pièce de monnaie à deux faces : d'un côté, l'arrivée du Royaume avec immédiateté et puissance, et de l'autre, des mystères et un sentiment permanent de secret. En prenant en considération le style littéraire distinctif de Marc et les thèmes majeurs qui apparaissent dans l'ensemble du récit, nous sommes en mesure de mieux comprendre la complexité de l'enseignement de Marc sur le Royaume de Dieu.

Parole chiave: Regno, stile letterario, Vangelo di Marco, potere, regno di Dio.

Keywords: Kingdom, literary style, Gospel of Mark, power, kingdom of God.

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