

Chapter Two: The *exousía* of the Son of man

The connection between exorcism and casting out of the temple. It was Burton Mack, a scholar with whom I have little in common theologically, who first analyzed the role of Jesus' temple action "in terms of Mark's narrative designs."¹⁵ Mack showed that Mark has used an exorcism in order to present to us, for the first time, Jesus' *exousía* ("dominion," usually translated "authority," at times "power"). I have taken a foothold from this observation in order to launch a whole "soteriological Christology" of Mark.

Mark's above-stated presentation takes place in 1:21-27. The gospel has begun with a double-citation of Malachi and Deutero-Isaiah (although only the latter is mentioned by name). We are presented with the figure of John the Baptist, the Elijah of Mal 3 (Mal 4 in the LXX and in Protestant Bibles). This is at the end of the Prophets, and speaks of the forerunner of the Messiah (in the Jewish tradition), or of Yahweh. But more important—and that is why he is the only one named, this is Rikki Watts' thesis—is Dt-Isa, and the whole idea of the Second Exodus-New Creation to be found there. John the Baptist was in the desert (or wilderness) inspired by the same passage of Isaiah that was foundational for the Qumranites (the Essenes, or perhaps we are to think only of the more radical group within that movement): to prepare in the desert the way of the Lord. The Second Exodus announced by Dt-Isa around 540 B.C.E. had already taken place, materially speaking, but the geographical return to the Land had not brought the true end of "Exile," if we understand this as meaning the awaited salvation. Thus, a bit after the return of the exiles from Babylon, Zech 1:12 can ask when the "seventy years" of exile (= of Yahweh's anger) prophesied by Jer 25:11-12; 29:10 will end.¹⁶ They were already back in the Land, but conditions, especially socio-economic ones, did not allow one to say that the "change of fortunes" (another meaning of the Hebrew verb *šûv*, "return, make turn, free captives, turn the captivity, convert [by returning to Yahweh, repenting, hence

¹⁵ ROBERT J. MILLER, "The (A)Historicity of Jesus' Temple Demonstration," *SBL 1991 Seminar Papers* (ed. E.H. LOVERING; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1991), 246; BURTON L. MACK, *A Myth of Innocence* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 233-235.

¹⁶ King Cyrus' decree allowing the return of the exiled Jews is dated to 539-538; the date of Zech 1 is 520, some 18 years later.

t̄šûvah, “repentance”]), in other words, the New Exodus of Dt-Isa, had taken place.¹⁷ Centuries later, in the Maccabean period (around 165 B.C.E.), the “exile” Daniel has to ponder what Jeremiah meant to say when he predicted that the “exile” would last “seventy years,” Dan 9:2. The angel Gabriel, in the apocalyptic mode (of revelation, here by means of the *angelus interpres*, the helpful, interpreting angel), explains to him how Jeremiah must be read: the first word (in the Hebrew of the time, written with consonants only, no vowels), *šv’ym* (which normally, with what follows, *šannah*, means “seventy years”), must be vocalized in two ways, which must be combined: *šavû’im* (“weeks”) and *šîv’im* (“seventy”), so that, combined, what the prophet Jeremiah meant to say was that “seventy weeks of years,” that is, 490 years, would pass before the “Exile” came to an end. This brought the time quite close to that of Daniel (for example, 597 [the first deportation to Babylon] minus 490 = 107 B.C.E., a good estimate given the poor knowledge of Persian period dates that the Jews then had). One could also see in this number of years the seven-fold punishment threatened in Lev 26:18, 24, related to the Sabbatical years which the Land did not “pay” (better, “enjoyed”), Lev 26:34-35, 43; 2 Chr 36:21 thus saw it, at the end of the Jewish Bible. Interestingly, an important Qumran document, 11QMelchizedek, expects final redemption in the tenth Jubilee, that is, at the end of a period of 49 x 10 years (= 490 years). The great atonement of sins, the return to their land and family of those exiled or sold because of debt, the great liberation (in Hebrew, *d̄rôr*, at times translated “liberty, emancipation, manumission”) of the Jubilee would take place on “Yom Kippur,” the great Day of Atonement, Lev 25:8-17. The Qumran sect, in said text, joins the angelic figure of Melchizedek to that of the eschatological prophet, anointed (made “messiah”) by Yahweh to proclaim the “good news” (end of the Exile) to the humble, according to Isa 61:1-2. Now, this is the passage that Luke 4:16-21 has Jesus read in his inaugural speech in his hometown synagogue. Jesus, reading Isa 61:1, presents the “good news” (= end of the “Exile,” beginning of the era of salvation, of the Kingdom of God) as *d̄rôr*, the “liberty” of the Jubilee of which Isa 61:1 speaks, the “year or time” of grace and return from Exile (the meek Luke leaves out “day of vengeance of our God,” Isa 61:2; Luke 4:19).

¹⁷ See Zech 8:9-15 and Hag 1:6-11 for illustrations of the poor material circumstances of the returnees. Decades later things remain as dismal, Mal 1:6-14.

An important aspect of 11QMelchizedek is the definitive combat of the heavenly Melchizedek, seen as the “Prince of Light” and high priest who brings about atonement of sins, against Belial (the devil) and his evil and impure spirits.¹⁸ “The destruction of the powers of evil inaugurates the time of salvation.”¹⁹ The links between this Melchizedek-redemptive figure and the “eschatological priest” of the “Old Testament pseudepigraphical book” of *the Twelve Patriarchs*, Testament of Levi 18:12, have been noted: “And Beliar shall be bound by him [the new priest that the Lord will raise up, 18:2].” The footnote in the edition we quote from (as indicated in the footnote below) refers us to Isa 24:22-23, to Mark 3:27 and to Luke 11:14-22 and 10:19 (but see also Luke 10:18).²⁰

With this background, let us look at the beginning of Mark’s gospel. It announces the “beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ (the) Son of God,” followed by the quote from Exodus/Malachi and of Second Isaiah. John the Baptist is the Elijah-forerunner, be it of Yahweh or of the Messiah (Mal 3:23, LXX 4:5). John says that his baptism of conversion (or repentance) is with water only; the real purification will be with fire, or with Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8; but see the primitive source Q texts in Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16).²¹ Following the great late scholar Harmut Stegemann, I think that what John the Baptist was doing was to call Israel to “conversion,” that is, to “return” to Yahweh, each person repenting of their sins (on the other side of the Jordan, see John 1:28; 10:40), in order to then cross the Jordan and return to the Land as symbolic of entrance into the inheritance or divine promise, what we also call the “end of the Exile” and the “coming of salvation,” or “arrival of the Kingdom of God,” or “Good News” (see Luke 3:18).²² It

¹⁸ The evil spirits are unclean (impure) in Qumran document 4Q286 ii 4, presented and explained in PAUL J. KOBELSKI, *Melchizedek and Melchireša* (Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 10; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 1981), 43-46. As is known, the most common name for “demons” in the gospels is “unclean spirit,” e.g., in Mark 1:23, 39; 5:2; 6:13; 9:25; Luke 9:42, etc.

¹⁹ See MARINUS DE JONGE – A.S. VAN DER WOUDE, “11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament,” *New Testament Studies* 12 (1965-1966), 305. The variant “Beliar” is found in 2 Cor 6:15.

²⁰ *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Vol. 1, Apocalyptic Literature & Testaments* (James H. Charlesworth, ed.; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 795 (translation and introduction by Howard C. Kee).

²¹ Mark 9:49 says that “all must be salted with fire.” In Mark 10:38-39, Jesus speaks of a “cup” (of suffering) which he must drink, in parallelism with a “baptism” which he must undergo (as if it were a “baptism of blood;” cf. Luke 12:49-50).

²² See Stegemann’s remarkable book, *The Library of Qumran. On the Essenes, Qumran, John the Baptist, and Jesus* (English translation of the 1993 German edition; Leiden – New York – Köln: Brill; Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1998), especially chapters eight (on the Baptist) and nine (on Jesus).

is all the same thing: entrance into the “sphere of salvation” (or “justification”). “Righteousness,” the Hebrew *tsedeq* or *ts^edaqah*, is tantamount to “salvation;” that is, once one is declared “righteous” (*tsaddîq*, “innocent,” in a trial, or in the Last Judgment), that person is “safe” (or “saved”) from the divine punishment which the wicked will suffer.

Jesus, in what we can theologially call an act of humility, a “kenotic” act (of “self-emptying,” Phil 2:6-8), joins the penitent people who heed John’s call (Jesus may well have been a disciple of John for some time). We can here give substantial credit to what is narrated in Mark 1:10-11: Jesus had a revelation in which he 1) saw the heavens open; 2) felt the Spirit go down into him; 3) heard the voice of God declaring him to be his “beloved son” with whom he was well-pleased.

It is a very laden revelation. The open heavens indicate total access to the heavenly realm, the world of the divine council (in Hebrew, *sôd*).²³ This was the access that true prophets had; see Jer 23:18; Isa 6:1-11, with 40:1-11; cf. John 1:51. The Spirit would descend upon the “eschatological prophet” of Isa 61:1, anointed by the Spirit in order to announce the Good News to the humble (or afflicted, *anawîm*) and to proclaim the total remission of debts and sins of the final and definitive Jubilee, which would be celebrated on the eschatological Day of Atonement (Lev 25:8-17).²⁴ To be called “beloved son” refers one to Gen 22:2, 12, 16 (the LXX translate “beloved” where the Hebrew has “only”), the so-called “sacrifice of Isaac” (although Abraham [= the “Great Father”] goes no further than to put the wood on his back, Gen 22:6); cf. John 3:16. Finally, to be “well-pleased” with evokes Isa 42:1, the first verse of the first of the four “songs” (poems) of the Servant of Yahweh. Jesus receives a single “messianic commission package.” He is anointed with the Spirit of prophecy, but, as “son,” is also Messiah (see 2 Sam 7:14; Psa 2:7; Psa 89:27-28).²⁵ But he is also the “Suffering Servant”

²³ It is likewise said of the eschatological priest in Testament of Levi 18:6 that “The heavens will be opened, and from the temple of glory sanctification will come upon him, with a fatherly voice, as from Abraham to Isaac. And the glory of the Most High shall burst forth upon him and rest upon him [in the water].” What is in brackets is considered an interpolation based on Mark 1:9-11; *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Vol. 1*, 795. This work (minus the Christian interpolations) dates from the Maccabean period (around 165 B.C.E.); *ibid.*, 777-778.

²⁴ Cf. Luke 4:16-21; Acts 10:36-38; 3:17-24; Deut 18:15-19; John 6:14-15.

²⁵ James Sanders, a prominent scholar, has proposed that Phil 2 reflects the idea that Jesus was a member of the divine council (i.e., one of the “sons of God,” as in Job 1:6; Deut 32:8, according to the customary emendation; Psa 82:1, 6; cf. John 10:31-38; Wis 2:13, 18-20, cited in Matt 27:43). Pope Benedict XVI, in

of Dt-Isa, although in the first poem, Isa 42:1-4, he is only the “Chosen One” (there is as yet no intra-communitary conflict as reflected in the following poems, Isa 49:1-6; 50:4-9, and, especially, 52:13-53:12). Already by Jesus’ time, the first (“Ethiopic”) book of Enoch had combined the original distinct figures of the Messiah, the Son of man and the Chosen (or Elect) One into a single individual hidden from the creation of world, who would come to save in the End Time.²⁶

Jesus is Son of God, Son of man and “Suffering Servant” of Isaiah. He is also the Messiah (Mark 8:29-30; 10:47-52; 14:61-62). The combination Son of man/Chosen Servant of Dt-Isa/Messiah, as we stated, had already occurred in 1 Enoch. The designation “Son of God” could refer to: 1) divine beings, deities of the Ugaritic pantheon inferior to the high God ’El, who were later taken to be angels; 2) Israel, God’s firstborn son, Exod 4:22; Hos 11:1; Wis 18:13; 3) the Messiah, Psa 2:7; Psa 89:27-28; 2 Sam 7:14; and 4) the righteous one, Wis 2:13 (in Greek, *pais*), 18; Matt 27:40, 43. But in Mark, that Jesus is the Son of God is unknown until his death, when the centurion (a Gentile, by the way) makes this confession. Before that moment, only the narrator—or the one who gave the title to this gospel, Mark 1:1—the Father (Mark 1:11; 9:7), the Son (Mark 12:6; 14:62) and the demons (Mark 1:24?; 1:32; 3:11; 5:7; note the *crescendo* in what the demons are described as doing) know that Jesus is the Son of God. What Jesus can declare openly is that he is the Son of man and the Servant, who will give his life as a ransom for many, Mark 10:45. ((Pope Benedict XVI also considers Jesus’ divine Sonship as inseparable from the Cross, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 305.)

Now we go on to the first (and programmatic) of Jesus’ exorcisms, in Mark 1:21-28. Jesus *teaches*, it is a “new teaching,” with or “according to one who has” *exousía*. The scribes do not have this *exousía*. It is not mere “authority” to speak—one’s bearing or conviction or tone of voice or tailor-made suit and expensive haircut!— but rather the

his new book *Jesus of Nazareth*, disfavors the revelatory aspect of Jesus’ baptism, advocating a much greater (if not “total”) consciousness of divine sonship *ab initio*. The whole problem of the human versus the divine consciousness of Jesus is a theological one beyond the scope of this biblical analysis, but biblical scholars (many of whom the Pope is displeased with) tend to take seriously such passages as Luke 2:52 (Jesus progressed in wisdom) and 2:46 (Jesus listened to and asked questions of the teachers in the temple). Certainly Jesus’ human will had to struggle, Mark 14:35-36; cf. Heb 5:7-8.

²⁶ *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Vol. 1*, 9 (introduction by E. Isaac).

power of eschatological dominion, the dominion given to the Son of man according to Dan 7:14.

The content of Jesus' teaching is not stated. What kind of "teaching" is it? It seems to be defined, as Mack argues, in Mark 1:27, read literally (as it should be, only the correct way, not fundamentalistically): the "new teaching" consists in commanding unclean spirits such that they obey. This "new teaching" might be a new Torah (which means "teaching," especially by priests).²⁷ Jesus has the eschatological power to finish with evil (Mark 1:24), that is, he has come to destroy it (cf. 1 John 3:8). Otherwise stated, he is the Strong One who has come to bind Satan, Mark 3:22-30, as was expected of the eschatological priest in Testament of Levi 18:12.²⁸ The eschatological passage Zech 13:1-2 also looked forward to the day when there would no longer be unclean spirits. The expression "holy one of God" in Mark 1:24 was considered by Ernst Lohmeyer as a priestly term (see Psa 106:16; cf. John 6:69); this is very likely, given the importance of the figure of Melchizedek as eschatological priest who will make atonement in Qumran, and the use of Melchizedek in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Melchizedek comes into play in Mark by way of Psa 110, discussed by Jesus in Mark 12:35-37 and quoted in 14:62. Psa 110 is combined with Psa 2 in Heb 5:5-6; cf. Heb 1:5, 13. We will extend our Christological-soteriological exposition of Mark in order to include a discussion of Jesus' priesthood, so as to give a complete picture of who Jesus is, and of how he saves, in Mark. The priesthood of Christ would not seem to be a topic which jumps out at you when reading this gospel.

What is prominent in Mark is that the *exousía* that Jesus has as Son of man enables him to forgive sins, Mark 2:10, which Jesus manifests by making the paralytic stand up and walk.

²⁷ See the discussions on how a "new Torah" or "another Torah" could have existed or be understood in Judaism in W.D. DAVIES, *Torah in the Messianic Age and/or Age to Come* (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1952), esp. 70-74; see also the index in Davies' book, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism. Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (Mifflintown, PA: Sigler Press, 1948, 1955, 1980, 1998); DAVID DAUBE, "ἐξουσία in MARK I 22 and 27," *Journal of Theological Studies* XXXIX (1938), 52-59. See also Daube's book, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (Peabody: Hendrikson, 1956; 1998 printing), 212-216.

²⁸ See also the references to Jesus as the "strong one" in Mark 1:7; 5:4; 9:18 (these last two instances require looking at the Greek text, where the verb used denotes strength (as in the Spanish verb for "to be able to," *poder*, which is also the noun "power").