

Samuel Song

Dr. Rob Reimer

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### **Markan Theology Paper**

Many signs and wonders by Jesus are found all throughout the Gospel of Mark. In this way, demonstration of Jesus' power and waging war against the forces of darkness can be identified as one of the central themes of the gospel. Through close examination, readers of Mark can discover that there are synthesizing principles in the account of power encounters by Jesus and his disciples. These principles are crucial for Jesus' ministry in power and they are as follows: the awareness of the kingdom of God and the opposition of the enemy, the need for divine guidance, expectant faith in the exercising of God's power, and the proper understanding of the great commission. By offering a storyline of Jesus' ministry centralized in his display of power, the author of Mark leaves the readers with two choices: pick up the cross and follow Christ into battle or remain in darkness.

As early as chapter one, several principles of the kingdom of God can be observed in the gospel of Mark. In Mark 1:21-27, Jesus performs his first miracle. He encounters a man who was possessed by an impure spirit at Capernaum. Upon coming across Jesus, the impure spirit cries out "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are- the Holy One of God!" (Mk 1:24). In response, Jesus tells the impure spirit to quiet and drives it out by declaring, "Come out of him!" (Mk. 1:25). From this encounter between Jesus and the impure spirit, two points can be observed. First, the enemy is in clear understanding of who Jesus is and vice versa. The impure spirit, noticing the presence of Jesus, cries out in fear

and acknowledges Jesus as the Holy One of God. Jesus, knowing that the impure spirit is of the enemy, drives him out of the demonized man. Second, Jesus is clearly shown to have authority over the forces of darkness. In his command to leave the man, the impure spirit is driven out without competition. Combining these two points, the author of Mark is shown to be unambiguously aware of the spiritual realm and the warfare between the two kingdoms.

People are also in awe after observing Jesus' power in driving out the impure spirit. Upon recognizing Jesus' new teaching and authority, they go about spreading the news of Jesus Christ and many ("the whole town..." Mk. 1:33) bring the diseased to Jesus. Through his demonstration of power, it is clearly evident that the kingdom of God is advanced. The news about Jesus, the good news, is quickly spread throughout the region and people gather to meet him and to receive healing.

Another principle of power encounter can be observed in the next passage. Jesus wakes up early in the morning after his confrontation with the impure spirit in Capernaum and healing many in the town. He wakes and leaves to a solitary place to pray. Jesus strategically chooses to spend time alone with God. When the disciples find him, they say that everyone is looking for him, implying that people want to see him and to be healed. They see what the crowd wants as ministry. However, instead of going to where people were looking for him, Jesus chooses to go where God directs him. He tells the disciples that he will go to the "nearby villages" because that is why he has come (Mk. 1:38). From this simple yet profound interaction between Jesus and his disciples, the author of Mark indicates that Jesus seeks divine guidance for his ministry. After a busy time of ministry healing and driving out demons, Jesus goes into a solitary place to spend time with God. In his time with the Father, Jesus is not only filled and empowered, but also directed. He is in clear understanding of the heavenly Father's will. Jesus is not directed by

people, but God. His ministry is done through communion with the Father and he only does what the Father directs him to do.

Even when Jesus commissions his disciples to preach and perform miracles in Mark 6, he directs them to have their basic provisions taken care of by the heavenly father. They are instructed to limit what they take as provisions, "... no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra shirt." (Mk 6:8-9). In doing this, Jesus teaches his disciples to recognize that God is the provider of all things. Not only does He give power to heal the sick and drive out demons, He provides them with the basic needs. Here, the author of Mark shows that those who have been appointed by the Lord and who does His will are provided with what is necessary to accomplish the assignment from God.

In several healing ministries by Jesus found in Mark, the author emphasizes the importance of expectant faith. In Mark 5:24-34, a woman who was "subject to bleeding for twelve years" has remarkable faith as she seeks healing from Jesus. She believes in the power of God that the simple act of touching the cloak of Jesus would heal her. Just as she believed, she was healed immediately upon touching the cloak of Jesus. Jesus goes out of his way to seek her and commend her for her faith, "Daughter, your faith has healed you." (Mk. 5:34).

In negative contrast, the succeeding passage also shows the importance of faith in healing. In Mark 5:23, Jairus finds Jesus to seek healing for his daughter. He believes that Jesus has power to heal his daughter, but the depth of his faith is challenged when people from his house report that his daughter is already dead. Here, Jesus commands two things: to not be afraid and hold firm to his faith, "Don't be afraid; just believe" (Mk. 5:36). Upon arriving at Jairus' house, the people who were mourning make fun of Jesus for stating that his daughter is not dead but asleep. It is an odd reaction as the mourners should celebrate the idea of hope. Instead, they

mock and squash hope by not displaying faith. Here, Jesus only allows Jarius, his wife, and the disciples to remain as he wakes the child up from her sleep. Jesus creates a space, an environment where hope-filled and expectant people are gathered around for healing.

Similar to the above passage, Jesus' healing ministry is reduced when people from his hometown do not display expectant faith. In Mark 6:1-6, Jesus goes to his hometown during the Sabbath. He teaches in the synagogue and people are amazed. However, their thoughts turn to disbelief and doubt as they identify Jesus only as a carpenter and the son of Mary and Joseph. Their disbelief goes as far as to feel "offense" at Jesus. In this faith-lacking environment, Jesus is recorded to not perform many miracles, except for healing a few people. Jesus is found to be amazed at their lack of faith. As such, expectant faith of the believer is marked as a crucial principle in the healing ministry by the author of Mark. Like seed sown on good soil, healing is manifested powerfully with those who have expectant faith. However, similar to seed sown along the path, rocky places, or among thorns, healing is diminished by their lack of faith.

In possibly the most exciting and powerful manifestation of God's power, Jesus rises from the dead and walks among his disciples. In Mark 6:15-18, Jesus gives the great commission to his disciples. He commands his disciples to go and preach the good news to all people and instructs them to power ministry: to deliver, heal, and do many signs and wonders. As Jesus stated in John 14:12, he directs that his followers have been endowed with the power to "do even greater things" than the power ministry manifested by Jesus. Clearly, he commands both his disciples and Christians to follow in his footsteps to lead people to salvation through manifestation of God's power.

The author of the gospel of Mark tells the story of who Jesus is and what he has come to do. Many principles of power ministry are displayed that guides the readers on how to

understand and perform power by examining many examples performed by Jesus. At the end, the readers are left with no choice but to respond in two ways: follow Christ in his ministry or remain asleep in darkness. As a reader of the Bible, we know the result of both responses are clearly reported in both the gospel and following Acts of the Apostles. For those who choose to remain in darkness face certain doom, whereas those who follow Christ's command exercise great power and win battles for His kingdom.

Closely examining Mark's discourse on the theology of power could not do any less than leave me in awe and wonder. By reading the book with the understanding that Jesus commanded us to do what he did, I found myself examining Jesus's power ministry more closely than ever before. As I read and revisited Jesus' ministry multiple times, I began to realize that there are principles in which Christ follows to fully manifest the power of God. One principle that stood out to me the most was how Jesus emphasizes the importance of faith. When he told Jarius to not be afraid and to continue to hold onto his faith, it felt as if Jesus was talking directly at me. In a few instances when I encountered the opportunity to participate in power ministries, I often retreated away to "comfort and safety." Growing up in a conservative background, I was often instructed that manifestations of power have ceased. Therefore, seeing and experiencing power was always something that went against my natural instinct. However, after close scrutiny and study of Mark's theology of power, I now understand that retreating to "comfort and safety" is, in fact, retreating into the darkness; into doom. I have no other choice, then, to be bold and to humbly seek the divine guidance of the Father and follow Christ into his footsteps. Praise the Lord for His never ending love and persistence for my soul. It is my prayer that He would empower me to do likewise for others.