

Markan Theology of Power Encounter

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Theo 720

October 6, 2020

Introduction:

Jesus throughout his life encountered the kingdom of darkness. When he encountered the kingdom of darkness, he brought the kingdom of light. This resulted in the clash of kingdoms or a power encounter.¹ This concept of power encounter presents itself often in the gospel of Mark. This will be the place of study. If Jesus is the model of life and ministry of the believer then an examination of how he lived and ministered to people, during power encounters is a must. The gospel of the kingdom was not only preaching but also a demonstration of power. Jesus's ministry is always backed up by some sort of action declaring the kingdom of light. This could come in healing, raising the dead, or even casting demons. Jesus did preach but his preaching proved more powerful because he had the authority to back up his preaching through mighty works. Therefore, Jesus' ministry example is that of word and deed.

Thesis:

This paper proposes that power encounters within the gospel of Mark are about who has the authority and the use of authority. Many issues will need to be covered concerning this proposal. In the following pages, it will cover issues surrounding who has the authority to 'cast out demons.' Is it only Jesus or do others have that authority as well? This paper seeks to explain how authority is used and how Jesus deals with his encounters with demons. Also in the following pages, there be a brief discussion who can be demonized. Finally, this paper will discuss what is the point of all this. So what does mean that Jesus cast demons? Is there an application for us today? Authority is at the heart of every word and deed Jesus did. Jesus did things out of authority because of who he was. Authority is shown through all of Mark and this

¹ This concept and definition is taken from Dr. Chuck Davis

paper will show that it is because of Jesus' authority he was able to do the things he did.

Authority is key and who has the right to it is key as well.

Who Can be demonized?

The question that often arises with the clash with the kingdom of darkness is who can be affected by demons. Mark seems to answer this question—everyone. In Mark, it did not matter if you were a synagogue goer or an Old Testament practitioner. Jesus's first encounter was in a synagogue among practicing Jews (Mark 1:21-28). The gospel writer says in Mark 1:39, "he went throughout all Galilee preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons." Demons afflicted those practicing covenant loyalty. Demons also afflicted those who were not apart of the covenant. The most famous story is the Syrophenician woman's daughter. The text makes a point to say she is a Greek (Mark 7:26). Demons can affect those who believe and those who do not believe in the one true God.

The other side of demons having the possibility to afflict everyone is there seems to be no discrimination based on gender or age. There are men affected (Mark 1:23), women (Mark 16:9)², boys (Mark 9:21), and girls (Mark 7:24). Demons do not seem to care about gender or age. They will afflict anyone that they can have access to.

How demons present themselves?

Jesus never goes looking for a battle. Jesus is usually ministering or traveling, and demons come to him or people bring the person to Jesus and then Jesus delivers them. From his first encounter in the Synagogue, where the demon shouts at him (Mark 1) and to the man in Gerasenes (who also shouted- Mark 5) the demons recognized the kingdom of light when Jesus

² Mark 16:9-20 does not have good evidence of being in the earliest manuscripts. I have included the reference here because other another gospel attests to Mary having demons (See Luke 8:1-3).

came around. The presence of Jesus exposed them. They knew that someone who had a greater authority had come because they address as Holy one of God or Son of God (Mark 1:24, Mark 5:7). The principal is to recognize demons do not need to be sought after but the presence of God exposes them.

Not only did demons present themselves when Jesus came but people recognize that freedom could be found in Jesus. Jesus ministered to demon afflicted people all the time (Mark 1:34; 1:39) who brought to him. Jesus did not turn away people who brought those with demons to him. The one time he delayed from doing the deliverance immediately because the person was Gentile, he still acted (Mark 7). The principal from Jesus responding to those who brought their need to them is that Jesus responds to our faith and desire for freedom.

Jesus and disciples use of authority:

Authority with encounters with darkness matters. This paper already established the demons knew that Jesus had authority because of his status as being sent from God. Jesus because of knowing whom he was had no trouble with demon presence. He commanded them and they left (Mark 1:26). He also controlled how they operated. He allowed them to speak or not to speak (Mark 3:11-12). He had them sometimes tell their name (Legion – Mark 5, deaf and mute -Mark 9). He was in complete control of the situation because he knew his authority. His authority even extended to a demonic storm where he told the wind and waves to cease and be calm (Mark 4:35-39) and it extended to over death (Mark 5:37-43). Jesus was not overwhelmed by anything that came into his life. Authority allows a person to be in control over the situation because of their identity and not to get overwhelmed by anything.

This authority was not for Jesus only. He gave this authority way to his disciples. Jesus sends them out to preach and to have authority to cast out demons (Mark 3:14-15). Jesus was giving his authority away for those who followed him. This is important because if Jesus was the only one to drive out demons, it would be mean deliverance would not be something we could not use the authority in today.

This issue of authority comes up again when Jesus delivers the boy in Mark 9. Jesus takes care of the demons and his disciples ask why they couldn't. He says that this kind only comes out by prayer (Mark 9:29). Jesus was reminding his disciples to get into the presence of God not to pray it out but so they could understand more of who they are and how to go about what they were called to do. Prayer is important because it is where a follower of God develops intimacy and grow in their knowledge of who God has created them to be. It allows God to speak to where he calls them.

The disciples also deal with authority and the right to wield power when they try to stop people from driving out demons in Jesus's name who weren't one of the twelve (Mark 9:38-41). Jesus says that whoever is not against them is for them and will be rewarded. Jesus was showing them and future believers who can do miracles such as casting out demons are not restricted to the original twelve. Jesus didn't limit authority to himself or even to the twelve. It was freely given to all those who will follow him.

Disciples used their authority in other places besides driving out demons. They also anointed the sick and they saw healing as Jesus did. Authority was for demonstrating that the kingdom of heaven overpowers and reverses what the kingdom of darkness has destroyed. The issue of authority is always at play when comes to demonstrating the kingdom. Jesus didn't leave anyone to preach or only demonstrate but he wanted his followers to have show and tell.

Not one or the other, but both are needed. Authority and knowing your authority is always the issue when you come into contact with the kingdom of darkness.

So What?

Jesus had a ministry of power. He did not shy away from demonstrating the kingdom of heaven's authority over the darkness of this world. His encounters with demons came in forms of men and women, young and old, Jew and Gentile, and even a storm. Yet, every time he used authority as one sent by God and took care of the demon. Demons recognized his authority. He didn't keep this authority but gave it away to every would follow him as their leader. Authority is at the core of every power encounter both in Mark and now.

Bill Johnson often says "We owe people an encounter with Jesus." The message of the kingdom of heaven is not powerless. It is not only for some time after we die. The good news of Jesus and the kingdom is there is freedom for this life as well. This freedom can found is freedom from sin which leads to death but also from sickness and evil spirits. Therefore, Jesus when he left did not leave us without authority. He gave us all authority to do what he did. Like, the disciples in Mark who preached the kingdom, anointed people to be healed and cast out demons, he has called us into the same wonderful ministry of demonstrating it.

Most people want to be free. They want to experience a level of freedom from the things that torment them in life (sin, disease, demons, etc.). We had a savior, named Jesus who did that. He brought freedom to the captives. Not only did he do that but command us to do that as well. Freedom needs to be a part of our ministry because a broken world is desperate for it. We must understand the authority given to us and use it to bring the kingdom of light into the kingdom of

darkness that is in this world. All authority was given to us by Jesus and because of that, we owe the world experience of freedom that we received in him.