MARK
8:27–16:20

Mark 8:27–16:8
James W. Voelz

Mark 16:9–20
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In the understanding of this commentary (see the seventh textual note on 9:1), the transfiguration is the primary referent of 9:1, where it is said that select followers will see “that the reign and rule of God is already come/here in power.” In Mark’s narrative, the transfiguration is situated midway between Jesus’ Baptism and his cross, and just as these two “bookend” incidents do (1:11; 15:39), it provides a declaration of Jesus as the Son of God (“this is my beloved Son,” 9:7). This incident is rich theologically and has “resurrection” characteristics. Linguistically, its tense structure approximates main verb tense pattern 1,¹ but without a concluding imperfect indicative verb form.

**Text**

9 ἐξετάσσετε ἡμέρας ἕξεν παραλαμβάνει ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὸν Πέτρον καὶ τὸν Ἰάκωβον καὶ τὸν Ἰωάννην καὶ ἀναφέρει αὐτούς εἰς ὕψηλον κατ᾽ ἱδίαν μόνους, καὶ μετεμορφώθη ἐμπροσθεν αὐτῶν, καὶ τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο στίλβοντα λευκὰ λίαν, οἷα γναφεὺς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς οὐ δύναται οὕτως λευκᾶναι. καὶ ὤφθη αὐτοῖς Ἡλίας σὺν Μωυσεί καὶ ἦσαν συλλαλοῦντες τῷ Ἰησοῦ. καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Πέτρος λέγει τῷ Ἰησοῦ· ῥαββί, καλόν ἐστιν ἡμᾶς ὑδείναι, καὶ ποιήσωμεν τρεῖς σκηνάς, σοὶ μίαν καὶ Μωυσεί μίαν καὶ Ἡλίᾳ μίαν; οὐ γὰρ ἐκφοβοὶ γὰρ ἔγένοντο. καὶ ἐγένετο νεφέλη ἐπισκιάζουσα αὐτούς, καὶ ἐγένετο φωνὴ ἐκ τῆς νεφέλης· οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ. καὶ ἐξαπίνα περιβλεψάμενοι οὐκέτι ἑδύνατο εἰδον οὐδένα εἰ μὴ τὸν Ἰησοῦν μόνον μεθʼ εαυτῶν.

**Translation**²

9 And after six days Jesus TAKES Peter and James and John ALONG, and he TAKES them UP into a high mountain by themselves, alone. And he changed before them. And his clothing became gleaming, exceedingly white, such as a fuller on earth is not able so to whiten (them). And Elijah, with Moses, appeared to them, and they were openly discussing with Jesus. And in response Peter PROCEEDS TO SAY to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good/favorable for us to be here. And/But shall we make three booths, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah?” You know/γάρ he really did not know what he should respond, for they had become utterly scared. And a cloud came on the scene, overshadowing them, and a voice came from the cloud, “This is my beloved Son; hear him!” And suddenly, upon looking around with personal interest, they no longer saw anyone except Jesus alone with themselves.

¹ See pages 18–19 in “Linguistic Features of Mark’s Gospel” in the introduction.
² See “The Translation” in “Linguistic Features of Mark’s Gospel” in the introduction (especially p. 27) for the font coding of the translation.
Linguistic Essentials in This Pericope

Grammar Basics\(^3\)

- 9:2: μετεμορφώθη: passive voice/active intransitive meaning
- 9:3: στίλβοντα: participle use: periphrastic (with ἐγένετο)
- 9:4: ὤφθη: passive voice/active intransitive meaning
- 9:4: συλλαλοῦντες: participle use: periphrastic (with οὖν)
- 9:5: λέγει: present indicative/verbal aspect
- 9:5: σοὶ … Μωϋσεῖ … Ἑλίᾳ: word order for emphasis
- 9:7: ἐπισκιάζουσα: participle use: attendant circumstance
- 9:7: ἀκούετε: present imperative/verbal aspect
- 9:8: περιβλεψάμενοι: middle voice
- 9:8: οὐδένα: word order for emphasis

Marcan Usage\(^4\)

- καί as the basic conjunction: 9:2 (three times), 3, 4 (twice), 5 (twice), 7 (twice), 8
- “historical present” indicative: παραλαμβάνει, ἀναφέρει, 9:2; λέγει, 9:5
- V-S syntax: 9:2, 4, 7 (twice)
- O-V syntax: 9:8
- asyndeton: 9:5, 7
- γάρ as an aside, 9:6
- S-V syntax: 9:3 (twice)
- redundant ἀποκριθείς: 9:5

Features for Literary Effect\(^5\)

- “historical present” indicatives to foreground a section beginning and discourse

Textual Notes

9:2 μετὰ ἡμέρας ἕξ—“After six days” constitutes an unusually precise (for Mark) time indicator (cf. 2:1, 23; 4:35)

eἰς δόρος—“Into a mountain” is the standard NT expression (cf., e.g., Mt 4:8 and Jn 6:3), which may reflect the visual of going “into” a pass\(^6\) as one ascends a mountain.

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\(^3\) See the translation, above, as well as excursus 1, “Grammatical Review” (pp. 28–36). These items deserve particular attention and help to explain decisions taken in the translation.

\(^4\) See “Basic Characteristics of Mark’s Greek” in “Linguistic Features of Mark’s Gospel” in the introduction (pp. 2–9). Items are presented here in the order in which they appear in “Basic Characteristics.”

\(^5\) See “Elements of Linguistic Usage for Literary Effect” in “Linguistic Features of Mark’s Gospel” in the introduction (pp. 15–22). Items are presented here in the order in which they appear in “Elements of Linguistic Usage.” Details for the items in this section are generally given in the two sections immediately above, “Grammar Basics” and “Marcan Usage.”

\(^6\) More technically, this could be called a “couloir,” which refers to a passage, gulley, or gorge on the side of a mountain that can be used for ascent and descent.
Jesus’ Transfiguration

κατ’ ἵδιον μόνον—These words provide a double expression of privacy, which is emphatic. Compare the single descriptor μόνον in 9:8.

μετεμορφώθη—Note that this aorist indicative passive is probably best taken intransitively, i.e., “he changed” (the translation), not “he was changed.” Cf. ὤφθη in 9:4.

9:3 τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο—This represents a classical construction, with a neuter plural subject taking a singular verb.

ἐγένετο στίλβοντα—A participle with the verb γίνομαι, as here, is a periphrastic construction (“became gleaming”) similar to ἦν plus a present/first principal part participle.

λευκά—This adjective (“white”) is in apposition to στίλβοντα, again providing emphasis. Note the use of the same adjective (λευκός), also modifying clothing (of the young man at the tomb on Easter morning) in 16:5, the only two uses of it in the Gospel of Mark.

οἷα—Grammatically, this is a relative pronoun conveying type or sort, referring to λευκά, “white.”

γναφεὺς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς οὐ δύναται οὕτως λευκᾶναι—For a discussion of the fuller’s craft, see the first textual note on 2:21 concerning ῥάκους ἄγναφον, “unshrunk cloth.” A fuller worked with lye and pressure, as well as the sun, to cleanse and bleach clothing. The form λευκᾶναι is an aorist active infinitive from the verb λευκαίνω.8

9:4 ὤφθη—Again, this aorist passive is to be understood as conveying an intransitive active meaning. See also μετεμορφώθη in the fourth textual note on 9:2.

συλλαλοῦντες—Generally, the verb λαλέω denotes public discourse (see 1:34; 2:7; 14:9 [cf. 2 Cor 4:13; 7:14]), if it does not denote “chatter” versus articulate speech (see LSJM, λαλέω II).9 This compound means the three disciples present should have heard its content.

9:5 ραββί—This Semitic noun, rabbi (transliterateing נ GOODMAN), and also ραββοῦνι (Mk 10:51; Jn 20:16), means, literally, “my great one,” and in all uses in Mark (see also 10:51; 11:21; 14:45), Jesus is portrayed as special. Note that Mark does not translate this foreign word, as he does so many others (see, e.g., εφθανε, in 7:34 and ελώι ελώι λέμα σαβαχθανι, in 15:34). Marcus observes that later the term became a common appellation for “teacher” but that it is questionable whether that development had taken place at Jesus’ time.10 (Hillel and Shammai were not addressed by the title,11 yet in 11:21 especially [see also 14:45], the word may well denote “teacher” [see also Mt 23:7–8; Jn 1:38; 3:2; 20:16].) Perhaps its use in the Gospel of Mark is evidence that it was understood to convey the meaning “teacher” already in the first century AD.

7 See pages 31–32 in excursus 1, “Grammatical Review.”
8 See FGG, chapter 27, for a discussion of the morphology of “liquid” verbs such as this.
9 Otherwise, a note of authority seems to be conveyed. See, e.g., Lk 1:19 and Acts 9:6.
10 Marcus, Mark 8–16, 633.
11 Marcus, Mark 8–16, 633. Marcus notes that ραββί is rather consistently used in direct address in early sources, which suggests that it is an honorific.
καλόν ἐστιν ἡμᾶς ὑδε εἶναι—The adjective καλός generally denotes something either “beautiful” or of “fine” quality, but regarding circumstances (as here) it denotes “favorable” or “advantageous” (see LSJM, καλός II). The personal pronoun ἡμᾶς is in the accusative case because it is the subject of the infinitive εἶναι and is not the subject of the main verb, ἐστίν.

ποιήσωμεν—This aorist subjunctive active first person plural verb appears to be a deliberative subjunctive, “shall we make?” though it may be hortatory, “let us make.”

σκηνάς—This noun may simply mean “tents,” and it, with ποιήσωμεν, may simply denote “pitching tents.” But it probably denotes something much richer theologically, related to the Feast of Booths. See the commentary on 9:5.

σοὶ μίαν καὶ Μωϋσεϊ μίαν καὶ Ηλίᾳ μίαν—Note the emphatic position (preceding the numeral) of the pronoun and of each man’s name.

9:6 οὕτως ἠδει τί ἀποκριθη—This sentence, with the characteristic Marcan γὰρ (“you know”), contains two important verb forms. The first, ἠδει, is the pluperfect of οἶδα and is the equivalent of an imperfect indicative: “he really did not know.” Second, the subjunctive ἀποκριθη, “he should respond,” represents a deliberative subjunctive, ἀποκριθῶ, “what shall I answer?” which is now placed into an indirect discourse construction.

NB: The text of ms. Ψ, an important ally of ms. B, begins in this verse in the Gospel of Mark.

ἐγένοντο—Note the pluperfect translation of the aorist in English, given the logic of the scene, namely, they “had become” scared before the speaking took place. Greek does not normally use the pluperfect indicative for action prior to another past act (its pluperfect conveys a state resulting from a prior past act; see, e.g., 15:26). Instead, Greek employs the aorist indicative and allows context to determine the exact time relationship.

9:7 ἐγένετο—This verb (the first occurrence of ἐγένετο) is best translated as “came on the scene” in this context. Note that each of the three occurrences of the aorist indicative of γίνομαι in this and the previous verse conveys a slightly different meaning (“had become … came on the scene … came”).

ἐπισκιάζουσα—This participle does not have the same syntactical relationship to the main verb, ἐγένετο (see the preceding note), as does the participle and the same verb form in 9:3 (ἐγένετο στίλβοντα); here the participle is attendant circumstance. Context, as always, determines meaning.

οὕτως ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἐγαπητὸς—This verbiage is similar to that found in 1:11, with the earlier occurrence using the second person singular (σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου

12 Relatedly, καλός when used of sacrifices means “auspicious” (Xenophon, Anabasis, 2.2.3).
13 See FGG, chapter 28, for a discussion of several usages of subjunctive mood verbs when they are in an independent (i.e., main) clause.
14 See Josephus, Antiquities, 3.79: τὸ χωρίον οὗ τὰς σκηνὰς ἠσσόν πεποιημένοι, “the place where they had pitched the(ir) tents.”
15 While deliberative and hortatory subjunctives are normally first person plural, it is possible for each also to be first person singular. See Smyth, § 1805 a.
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ὁ ἡγαγητής rather than the third person singular, as in this scene, indicating who the addressee is.

[o]ἀγαπητός]—While most commentators draw a parallel between these words and the verbiage of LXX Deut 18:15, in fact, the two passages are not identical (the latter reads ἀγαπητός ἀκούουσιν, with a future middle indicative). A much more exact parallel occurs in 1 Macc 2:65, ἀγαπητός ἀκούετα. See further the commentary on 9:7. Note the Classical Greek use of the genitive to express the object of a verb of hearing, regarding which, see further the commentary on 9:7.

9:8 οὐκέτι οὐδένα—With one specific (and somewhat rare) syntactical exception, negatives in Greek do not cancel each other out, but heap up, increasing the negativity, as here (literally, “no longer no one”). See the translation.

{εἰ μὴ} τὸν Ἰησοῦν μόνον μεθ᾽ ἑαυτῶν—The reading at the end of 9:8 is contested. Generally, ms. B and its allies testify to εἰ μη, “except,” which we follow. The Majority manuscripts have ὁλλά. The placement of the final two words is, however, a further issue. Mss. B 33 579 alone place μεθ᾽ ἑαυτῶν before εἰ μη. Mss. K, Ψ, and D, plus all manuscripts that read ἀλλά (including ms. B allies L, Δ, 565, and C), place μεθ᾽ ἑαυτῶν at the conclusion of the sentence. The parallel in the Gospel of Matthew, in Mt 17:8 (εἰ μὴ αὐτὸν Ἰησοῦν μόνον), ends the verse with μόνον and does not contain the prepositional phrase μεθ᾽ ἑαυτῶν.

Commentary

9:2 μετὰ ἡμέρας ἐξ, “after six days”: This expression evokes several parallels:

1. Moses ascends Mount Sinai after six days; see Ex 24:16–18.
2. Creation is accomplished in six days, and on the seventh day God rested; see Gen 2:2–3.17

16 Ms. B reads, in fact, μετὰ ἐκατότων, retaining hiatus between the two words.
17 Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 BC–AD 50), in his study of the creation account in On the Creation of the World, sees the seventh day of creation (which he calls the “birthday” [γενέθλιον] of the world, 89) as exceedingly special. It is so in large measure because of the number seven = ἕβδομα itself, whose “nature” (φύσις, 90) as a number he extols for thirty-nine sections (On the Creation of the World, 90–128), with reference to both the visible and the invisible world. “Seventh” (ἑβδομα) is special chiefly because “it exhibits that which does not move and does not experience” (τὸ ἀκίνητον καὶ ἀπαθὲς ἐπιδείκνυται, 101), and because of this it is the “image” (εἰκὼν) of “the Elder Beginning and Ruler” (ὁ πρεσβύτερος ἄρχων καὶ ἡγεμών), who alone does not move nor is moved (οὔτε κινοῦν οὔτε κινούμενον, 100). For support, Philo cites one Philolaus, who “says” (φησίν, 100): “He is … Ruler and Beginning of all things, one God, always being stable, unmoving, himself similar to himself, [and] other than the other things” (ἔστι … ἡγεμών καὶ ἀρχὴν ἀπάντων, θεὸς εἷς, ἀκίνητος, ἀὑτὸς ἀὑτῷ ὄμοιος, ἐπερος τῶν ἄλλων).

By contrast, for Philo the first six days of creation, while wonderful, deal with objects of perception, which have a beginning and are subject to change (On the Creation of the World, 12, 100). He asserts that the “creation” (κόσμος) is neither “ungenerated” (ἀγένητος) nor “eternal” (αἰώνιος), as is God, who is greater than it in this way (171).

For someone familiar with the work of Philo, the implying of a seventh day in Mk 9:2–8 would likely have engendered notions of eternity and permanency and of a reflection of God. But there is also more! See the next footnote.
3. The resurrection of Jesus, the beginning of the new creation, occurs on the seventh day of the week, see Mk 16:1–2, especially the discussion of timing in the commentary on these verses.

The timing of the transfiguration seems to relate best to the third option, i.e., the beginning of the new creation (see further below). If so, this is the first indication that the transfiguration of Jesus is a foretaste of his resurrection and his concomitant participation in a new reality.

τὸν Πέτρον καὶ τὸν Ἰάκωβον καὶ τὸν Ἰωάννην, “Peter and James and John”: These three primary disciples seem to constitute the τινες ὧδε τῶν ἑστηκότων, “some of those who are standing here,” of 9:1, immediately before this pericope.

eἰς ὄρος ὑψηλόν, “into a high mountain”: In the Scriptures, mountains are places of revelation and encounters with God. See especially the experiences of Elijah and Moses (both at Mount Horeb/Sinai) in 1 Kings 19 and Exodus 19–24, respectively. Hence, a divine revelation should not be a surprise given this introductory statement.

μετεμορφώθη, “he changed”: A different understanding of the proleptic coming of the reign and rule of God is revealed in this verse and in this pericope. Whereas elsewhere in the Gospel of Mark (and in the Synoptics generally), the image is a “foretaste,” an “in principle” coming ahead of time of that gracious reign and rule (see the discussion in the textual notes and the commentary on 1:14–15), now a “hidden reality” model is employed. Now the message conveyed is that the eschatological reign and rule of God is here, but hiddenly. It is here not incipiently but fully and completely, but human eyes cannot see its

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18 Philo also explores what God did on the seventh day when it is said in Genesis that he rested (Gen 2:2). Philo says in his allegorical interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3 (Allegorical Interpretation, 1.5):

First, then, on the seventh day, having ceased the putting together of the mortal things, he makes a beginning of the full and perfect shaping of other more divine things. For God never ceases doing, but, just as it is characteristic of fire to engage in burning and of snow in making cold, so also it is characteristic of God to engage in doing.

πρῶτον οὖν ἑβδόμῃ ἡμέρᾳ καταπαύσας τὴν τῶν θνητῶν σύστασιν ἀρχεται ἑτέρων θειοτέρων διατύπωσεσθαί, παῦεται γὰρ οὐδέποτε ποιῶν ὁ θεὸς, ἀλλ’ ὡσπερ ἰδιόν τὸ κατείχει πυρὸς καὶ χιόνας τὸ ψύχειν, οὕτως καὶ θεοῦ τὸ ποιεῖν.

Further, he avers (Allegorical Interpretation, 1.16):

“Then he ceased on the seventh day from all his works that he had done” [Gen 2:2]. This is such sort [an idea]: the mortal types of things God ceases forming/molding when he proceeds to begin to make the things that are divine and conformable to the nature of seven.

“κατέπαυσεν οὖν τὴν ἡμέραν τῇ ἑβδόμῃ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἐργῶν αὐτοῦ ὃν ἐποίησε.” τοῦτο δ’ ἐστι τοιούτῳ τῇ θυμία γενέσθαι παύεται πάλαι τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅταν ἀρχηγοὶ ποιεῖν τῇ θείᾳ καὶ ἐβδομάδος φῶσεν οἰκείᾳ.

Again, for someone familiar with Philo, the inference to be drawn concerning action on a seventh day would move strongly in the direction of divine action—indeed, creation by God of things that are not “mortal” (θνητό) but “divine” (θεῖον). The difference between Philo and Jesus (and between Philo and Mark) is that Philo, as a Platonist, does not relate God’s creative action on the seventh day to the visible, material, created order of this world.
presence. The parousia/second coming of our Lord will provide that full sight, as glory is revealed, including the full revelation of the sons of God (Rom 8:18–19). This is the standard Johannine viewpoint; see, e.g., Jn 5:24, in which Jesus speaks of a believer as having already passed (μεταβέβηκεν) from death to life, and Jn 11:26, where he says that the one who lives and believes in him shall never die (οὐ μὴ ὀψωθόνῃ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα). See the detailed discussion in WDTM, addendum 11-B.

9:3 τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ, “his clothing”: Joel Marcus observes that both Matthew and Luke say that Jesus’ face also changed (Mt 17:2; Lk 9:29), which would draw a close parallel between Jesus and Moses (cf. Ex 34:29). Mark does not want to focus upon Moses in this pericope; Elijah is more important. This is the probable reason for the absence of the facial detail.

λευκά, “white”: For the parallel drawn to 16:5 and the clothing of the young man at the tomb on Easter morning, see the third textual note on 9:3. White clothing seems to signify and to be part of a new dimension of existence within a fully implemented and revealed reign and rule of God. Therefore, it is not difficult to see this event as an anticipation of the resurrection and the new state Jesus will occupy at that time in the new creation. See Phil 3:21, a parallel Pauline analysis, which speaks of the contrast between our lowly bodies and our Lord’s glorious body.

γναφεύς, “a fuller”: For the fuller and his work in this context, see Mal 3:2. Note that Malachi uses the simile to express spiritual cleansing, i.e., the fuller’s work produces a condition appropriate for the visitation of God himself. Furthermore, in Malachi, this work is done by the “Messenger” himself (τυρι…ιαλ…γιαλ, who is “the Lord” (יהוה, Mal 3:1). Thus, the cleansed condition evidenced by Jesus’ garments should be seen as evidence of divine presence and action, indeed, divine eschatological presence and activity.

9:4 The appearance of Elijah and Moses together may portray them as key figures from the revelation of the OT, namely, Elijah as the quintessential prophet (though it must be noted that Elijah was not a writing prophet, having authored none of the OT’s prophetic books) and Moses as the chief giver of the Law. Both OT figures underwent mysterious ends, with Elijah being taken up to heaven in a whirlwind without dying (2 Ki 2:11) and Moses dying and being buried under circumstances unknown (Deut 34:1–6). And there is a statement for each that he will “appear again,” as it were: with Elijah that he will be sent before the great and terrible Day of the Lord (Mal 3:23 [ET 4:5])—note the eschatological context—and with Moses that a prophet like him will arise (Deut 18:15). It is, perhaps, not entirely surprising, then, to see these two men on the scene once again. Note, however, that neither of them was ever transfigured on a mountain, though both are associated with a mountain (Mount Horeb/Sinai).
and with a revelation of the Lord there (1 Kings 19 and Exodus 19–24, respectively). It is important to observe that Elijah is mentioned before Moses in this account. As we have noted on several other occasions (regarding, e.g., 1:2, 5), Jesus not only takes on the role of Yahweh (1:3), the Son of God (1:11), the Son of Man (2:10), the King/Messiah (8:29), the Suffering Servant (8:31), and the people of God (1:11), but he is also a prophetic figure in the Gospel of Mark, calling people to repentance, before the imminent arrival of the reign and rule of God (1:15). As such, he parallels Elijah more than he does Moses, especially if Moses is understood principally as the giver of the Law. Note that Peter’s statement in 9:5 does not reflect Mark’s ordering but is more conventional, placing Moses before Elijah.

What the two figures were speaking openly (συλλαλοῦντες) with Jesus about is not apparent. Luke says that they were discussing his “exodus [ἐξοδός], which he was going to fulfill in Jerusalem” (Lk 9:31), but that is not part of Mark’s narrative here. Perhaps Mark’s description is intended to signify that the two men are not apparitions and that all three were “on the same page” as far as their viewpoints and understandings are concerned.

**9:5 ῥαββί, “Rabbi”:** As detailed in the first textual note on 9:5, “Rabbi” was an honorific title (“my great one”), not a name for a teacher in the first century AD when Mark wrote, though eventually it did become so. In the Gospel of Mark, the two concepts are, however, connected and related. See especially 1:27, where Jesus’ miraculous exorcism of the man with the unclean spirit is characterized as “a new teaching” (see the commentary on 1:27). See also 6:34, where Jesus teaches the crowds before the feeding of the five thousand men. From Mark’s perspective, this honorific is an appropriate appellation in part 4 (8:27–10:52) of his Gospel, where Jesus turns to focus upon the Twelve and instructs them in detail.

καλόν ἐστιν ἡμᾶς ἦδη εἶναι, “it is good/favorable for us to be here”: Clearly the disciples realize that they are present at a momentous event. They do not realize, however, just how momentous it actually is.

ποιήσωμεν τρεῖς σκηνάς … ; “shall we make three booths … ?”: As mentioned in the textual notes, while this question may denote simply pitching tents, it is likely, given the entire context, that something more is afoot. An immediate association is the Feast of Booths or Sukkoth (Lev 23:34–36, 39–43; Num 29:12–38; Deut 16:13–15), a seven-day harvest festival (Lev 23:39) in which people, celebrating with branches and boughs of trees (Lev 23:40) and numerous sacrifices (Num 29:12–38), dwelled in booths (Lev 23:42) to commemorate their sojourning under God’s hand from Egypt to Canaan (Lev 23:43).22

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21 See also 6:15 and 8:28, where Jesus is identified with Elijah, as well as 15:35, where he is thought to be calling Elijah. See also the discussion in the commentary on 9:12.

22 See Daniel K. Falk, “Festivals and Holy Days: Booths or Tabernacles (Sukkot),” *EDEJ*, 639–40, for a discussion of the festive use of four different kinds of branches, the building of
Pertinent to the transfiguration scene are two factors related to the celebration of the Feast of Booths (Sukkoth) since the second century BC: (1) the use of psalms in celebration, especially Psalms 113–118, which are songs of ascent to Jerusalem; (2) the reading of Zech 14:16–19, which describes the pilgrimage of all people to Zion specifically to celebrate Sukkoth. The former contains admonitions to tremble at the presence of the Lord (Ps 114:7), \(^\text{23}\) and the latter “is the basis of a motif associating Sukkot with eschatological redemption.”\(^\text{24}\) The association of eschatological redemption would be easy for Peter to infer, seeing Jesus’ transformation, especially against the background of his Lord’s mighty works. Note Peter’s proposal, however. Note only does he place Moses before Elijah, but he also places Jesus on a par with the two OT figures! The voice’s message in Mk 9:7, then, may be a direct response to Peter’s entire discourse.

9:6 ἔκφοβοι, “utterly scared”: As noted in the commentary on 4:41, fear is a telltale sign of divine activity in the Gospel of Mark; it is never simply an element in the story. This will also be an important element in the interpretation of the resurrection scene in chapter 16, especially the final verse, 16:8.

9:7 The cloud coming on the scene has great significance. From the OT, three sets of passages are evoked:

1. Ex 19:9–13; 24:15–18; 34:1–5: Moses ascending into the cloud at Mount Horeb/Sinai
3. 1 Ki 8:10–11; 2 Chr 5:13–14: the cloud filling the temple/house of the Lord after the bringing of the ark of the covenant into the Holy of Holies

While the first option may be in play, the latter two are more promising for Mark’s presentation of the transfiguration (cf. the lack of a strong attempt at a Mosaic parallel [see the commentary on 9:4]). Indeed, in this context ἐπισκιάζοντος, “overshadowing,” most likely means “covering” those on the mountain (see Ex 40:35 and Lk 1:35). Such a covering may be for either protection (LXX Ps 90:4 [MT/ET 91:4]) or hiding (Sophocles, Trachiniae, 914), but it is best to see a parallel to Ex 40:34 and to 1 Ki 8:10–11 || 2 Chr 5:13–14, where the glory of the Lord is present in, or in association with, the cloud.\(^\text{25}\) Here, as in Exodus 40, the cloud brings with it God’s special presence, even as the Lord was present at the OT tabernacle and in the OT temple in a special way.

\(^\text{23}\) Also in use was Psalm 29 (Falk, “Festivals and Holy Days,” EDEJ, 640), which focuses upon the voice of the Lord, but in Mk 9:2–8 God’s voice does not appear on the scene until after the suggestion to make booths.

\(^\text{24}\) Falk, “Festivals and Holy Days,” EDEJ, 641.

\(^\text{25}\) Cf. Is 6:1–4 and the personal presence of the Lord associated with smoke in the temple. See also Ex 14:24, which says that “Yahweh looked down upon the host of the Egyptians, being in the pillar of fire and cloud,” showing that Yahweh was truly present in the pillar.
The acclamation of Jesus as the beloved Son of God at this time recalls Mk 1:11, where the voice addresses Jesus directly with, effectively, the same acclamation, but here the three disciples are the addressees. **This is a direct affirmation of who Jesus truly is—the bringer of the very presence of God himself—and, therefore, an affirmation that in Jesus and in his ministry the reign and rule of God is truly come in power** (see the commentary on 9:1).

But the command to “hear him” (ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ) is equally important and that for two reasons:

1. Given the parallel verbally to 1 Macc 2:65 (αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε; see the fourth textual note on 9:7), the statement represents a *transfer of allegiance* for those who see and hear. Just as in 1 Maccabees old Mattathias commands his sons to hear and obey Simeon from now on, so the voice from the cloud, using these same words (in a similar setting) commands the three disciples to hear and obey Jesus from now on—and not (the) two major figures representing the old covenant. **For this reason the two figures disappear after the voice utters the command to hear.** They are no longer the people to be heeded; Jesus is. Otherwise expressed, the due time (καιρός) is at hand (1:15); new cloth (2:21) and new wine (2:22) are here. The old must finally disappear. Thus, the use of the genitive (αὐτοῦ, “him”) after the verb of hearing (ἀκούετε, “hear”) is appropriate; it may well indicate the sensation of sound (see Acts 9:7). It is not simply that one should heed Jesus’ words, all the while listening to other voices. No, one must listen to him and not to other voices.

2. Given Peter’s statements in 9:5, which assert both that it is favorable for the three to be on the mountain of transfiguration and that three booths might be constructed to celebrate the eschatological redemption (see commentary on 9:5), the voice commands the three disciples truly to hear Jesus, i.e., to listen to the message with which he has been trying to give instruction, namely, that the Son of Man—Jesus—must endure the cross (8:31), even as his followers are subject to that cross (8:34; cf. 15:21), because suffering precedes glory and cannot be escaped. **This provides affirmation that the destiny of Jesus as the Suffering Servant** (as described in 8:31) **is part of the reign and rule of God come in power** (9:1), that it is not an accident or detour. On the contrary, it is he who is (the Son of) God himself, the Son of Man, and the Anointed One, coming to bring his people the eschatological visitation in which he gives his life as “an atonement [λύτρον] for the sake of many/multitudes” (10:45), who is in their midst.

9:8 Note the similarity between this pericope and the short resurrection scene of 16:1–8. Both contain a white-robed figure (9:3; 16:5), a voice that tells something crucial about Jesus (9:7; 16:6), fear that prevents appropriate speaking (9:6; 16:8), and Jesus manifesting the presence of the eschatological reign and rule of God (9:2; 16:6). **The transfiguration can be seen, therefore, to provide a preview and foretaste of the resurrection of our Lord.**

Indeed, there is quite probably much more. If the connection between this incident and the resurrection pericope is correct, then *for the hearer/reader the*
transfiguration can and very well may function as a “resurrection appearance,” as it were, with Jesus’ glorious (rather than “lowly”) body on full display. Cf. Phil 3:21: “the body of glory … the body of lowliness” (τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης … τῷ σώμα τῆς ταπεινωσεως). See also 1 Cor 15:42–49 and Paul’s discussion of the resurrection body as possessing “incorruption” (ἀφθαρσία, 1 Cor 15:42) and “glory” (δόξα, 1 Cor 15:43), as well as his assertion that the “second man” is from heaven (ὁ δεύτερος ἄνθρωπος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ, 1 Cor 15:47) and that we will bear the image of the heavenly man (φορέσομεν καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ ἐπουρανίου, 1 Cor 15:49). Otherwise expressed, if the features of the two pericopes are parallel, a connection can and likely will be drawn between them in the reverse direction, i.e., from the resurrection to the transfiguration, when the hearer/reader reaches the conclusion of Mark’s narrative at 16:8—especially if there has been a rehearing/rereading of that narrative, which this commentary does assume. And if this is so, then the storyline of Mark’s Gospel can never be seen to end at 16:8 in a mood of darkness and despair.

Finally, we note that there is, again, a similarity between Mark’s narrative and Homer’s Odyssey, with both depicting the central character transformed, both in person and in clothing (with washing also referenced), and both declared to be divine (see Odyssey, 16.172–82). Once again, Jesus surpasses Odysseus, who declares himself not to be a god (Odyssey, 16.187: οὔ τίς τοι θεός εἰμι).

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26 Note that it is not being contended that the transfiguration presented here is a “misplaced resurrection appearance” and that the transfiguration is a fiction. The transfiguration is a historical event separate from and prior to the resurrection of Jesus.


28 See Louden, Homer’s Odyssey and the Near East, 264–66, and MacDonald, The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark, 178–79. In the Odyssey (16.172–74), Athena touches Odysseus with her golden wand and gives him a “well-washed mantle and tunic” (φᾶρος … ἐὕπλυνες ἥδε χιτῶνα). Telemachus, Odysseus’ son, says (16.183) that his father is τις θεός, “a/some god,” after Athena has transformed both his appearance and his clothing. See also 16.194–200 for further assertions of divinity by Telemachus. Louden (Homer’s Odyssey and the Near East, 264) also observes that “supernatural beings” accompany the two heroes, namely, Athena in the case of Odysseus and God’s voice (plus Elijah and Moses) in the case of Jesus. He also notes that the verb μεταμορφώω is used to describe Jesus’ transformation in Mk 9:2 though Jesus does not undergo the transformation from old to young, as did Odysseus (266).
Regardless of which meaning one chooses, either one—and thus the meaning of the verse—has seemed inappropriate within the context of Mark’s entire Gospel to many readers. Ransom? From what bondage? Atonement? For sin/iniquity? Jesus has said, and will say, very little explicitly about sin and iniquity in his ministry in the Gospel of Mark, except for 2:5–10, the healing of the paralytic (though he does call people to repentance [1:15; see also the mission of the Twelve [6:12]])—unlike Matthew’s Gospel, which actually focuses upon the forgiveness of sins: it is in the description of Jesus’ mission in the first chapter of Matthew, namely, “he will save his people from their sins” (ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν, Mt 1:21), and it is part of the description of the purpose of his blood in the Last Supper in Matthew, namely, “my blood … about to be poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Mt 26:28). (Mark’s Gospel contains neither of these statements.) Indeed, how does either of these meanings of λύτρον—“ransom” or “atonement”—fit the immediate context, which discusses humility and servanthood?

First, a preliminary observation: The fact that Mk 10:45 does not seem to fit smoothly into its preceding context concerning glory and servanthood is not particularly problematic; in fact, it is actually not surprising. Jesus’ discourses are sometimes structured in precisely this way, with the final statement seeming to be in some tension with what precedes. In the present Gospel itself, this appears earlier in chapter 10. After Peter says that he and the others have left all to follow their teacher (10:28), Jesus responds by describing the persecutions they will undergo and the new family that they will have (10:30), after which he concludes with a statement that moves the topic forward and presents an additional thought: “but many will be first who are last, and many will be last who are first” (πολλοὶ δὲ ἐσονται πρῶτοι ἐσχατοὶ καὶ ἐσχατοὶ πρῶτοι, 10:31). (See also 3:27, which follows three direct responses to the charge that Jesus is in league with Satan with a further point that details why he has actually come.) It is, perhaps, more apparent in the Gospel of Luke in Lk 5:39, which provides an interesting conclusion to the discussion of old and new wines and old and new wineskins, including the assertion that new wine ought to be put into different wineskins: “And no one, upon drinking the old, desires the new, for he says, ‘The old is good’ ” ([καί] οὐδεὶς πιὸν παλαιὸν θέλει νέον· λέγει γάρ· ὁ παλαιὸς χρηστός ἐστιν). There is, thus, no great necessity to fit Jesus’ final statement in Mk 10:45 into his statements in the two verses immediately prior; indeed, Jesus is very probably going on to a new—though related—thought.

But, if so, precisely what is that new thought? Simply put, it is Jesus as λύτρον, which moves the discussion from attitude to mission, from example to purpose. Most specifically, it moves the discussion from power relations to Jesus giving his life—anτί—in the place of—many/multitudes (which is the most natural meaning of ἀντί, also in

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43 See, by contrast, the explicit focus upon sin in the ministry of John the Baptizer (Mk 1:4).
44 This phenomenon is congruent with OT and NT literary usage generally, in which the final element of a series represents a change from the main pattern of that series, which then brings the series to an end. See WDTM, chapter 5, section 3 c i (B), and addendum 5-A, section 1 a ii (B).
this context; see the next textual note). But what is the nature of that giving, that gift of Jesus? Otherwise expressed, what is the exact meaning of λύτρον in this verse? Still otherwise expressed, is Jesus essentially a ransom, or is he essentially an atonement? The answer to these questions becomes apparent when we notice that in 10:45 Jesus has resumed using the phrase “the Son of Man” as his self-designation. This phraseology draws our attention back to the three passion and resurrection predictions of 8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34, in each of which Jesus (once again) makes use of the phrase “the Son of Man” as a self-designation; the phrase was introduced in chapter 2 but lay dormant for over six chapters. In these three programmatic texts, which are so crucial to this central section of Mark’s Gospel, Jesus gives fairly detailed descriptions of his fate. Now, in 10:45 Jesus describes the purpose of his mission. It is reasonable to suppose that these are congruent thoughts—the description of Jesus’ fate and the description of his mission—especially given the identical appellation that Jesus uses for himself in these two sets of descriptions. This should mean that each can and will illuminate the other—in this case, that the nature of Jesus’ thrice-described fate provides clarity and specificity for the purpose of his mission, which is here described.

How, then, are we to understand Jesus’ fate? The answer to that is found in the OT background of the passion and resurrection predictions themselves. That background is not actually a passage or set of passages concerning the person/persons designated “the Son of Man” (always without the definite article in either Hebrew or Greek in the OT)—whether a single mortal human being such as Ezekiel (e.g., Ezek 2:1) or humanity as described in Psalm 8 and as represented by Jesus with the definite article, namely, the Son of Man, or the people of God as described in Daniel 7 and again as represented by Jesus with the definite article, the Son of Man. (See details in the discussion in exegesis 8, “The Son of Man,” following the commentary on 2:1–12.) The contours of the characteristics of any of these Son of Man figures do not correspond to the characteristics of the Son of Man in the passion and resurrection predictions.

Better, as we have said (especially in the detailed textual note on 10:38b–39, concerning ποτήριον, “cup”), is to look toward the Suffering Servant of Is 52:13–53:12. In the passion and resurrection predictions, Jesus introduces actions that correspond to the key features of the Suffering Servant’s mission, namely, being handed over, being humiliated, being physically abused, being killed, and finally regaining life. In fact, the generalized correspondence of Jesus’ passion and resurrection predictions to Isaiah’s detailed description of the Servant’s fate is confirmed by the details of the passion and resurrection of our Lord later in the Gospel. With these correspondences and especially with Jesus ascribing them to himself and embracing them, we see and understand that the nature of Jesus’ fate can be found in the role of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah.

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45 This understanding of the use of the phrase “the Son of Man” is supported by Jack Dean Kingsbury’s extensive study “The Christology of Mark and the Son of Man,” especially 69–70.
46 The first prediction, in 8:31, occurs immediately after our Lord’s turn toward his disciples, away from the crowds and from his enemies.
47 See details in the commentary on 10:33–34, as well as Mitchell, Our Suffering Savior.
If this is so, then Jesus, the Son of Man, as the Suffering Servant—and this is what is particularly relevant to our present discussion—comes in order to be (= purpose) “wounded for our transgressions” and “crushed for our iniquities” (Is 53:5); he comes in order to “bear the sin of many/multitudes” (Is 53:12) because on him will be laid “the iniquity of us all” (Is 53:6). This is the purpose of Jesus’ mission, and this is what it means for our Lord to be ὁ λύτρον in place of many/multitudes. Such an understanding pushes us strongly in the direction of “atonement” as the denotation of the Greek word λύτρον in this text. It also confirms, as we have argued above (see also the next textual note), that the preposition ἀντί following is to be taken in its most natural sense, namely, “in the stead of, in the place of,”48 which is what the Suffering Servant’s actions entail.

But there is more. If as λύτρον Jesus stands in when God’s judgment on sin comes, an action that involves his actually dying, then there is another OT background to λύτρον besides the Suffering Servant of Isaiah. That is the Passover of Exodus 12. In the Passover, the lamb was killed—sacrificed—in the stead of the firstborn of the people of Israel, ensuring that the Destroyer would “pass over” (Ex 12:12–13) the people of God when the lamb’s blood was spread upon the lintel and the doorposts of their houses (Ex 12:7)49—and in being sacrificed, taking upon itself, as it were, the judgment of that divine Destroyer, even as Christ would pour out his blood on behalf of many/multitudes, as he himself asserts (Mk 14:24), as he endured the smiting and striking by God (also) on behalf of many/multitudes (Is 53:4, 12). Thus, it is completely appropriate that St. Paul asserts in 1 Cor 5:7: “our Passover has been sacrificed, Christ” (τὸ πάσχα ἡμῶν ἐτύθη Χριστός).

ἀντί—As observed in the textual note immediately above, it is best to take this preposition in its normal sense of “in place of.” See, e.g., Homer, Odyssey, 20.307–8: ἀντὶ γάμοιο πατὴρ τάφον ἐμφεπονεῖτό ἐνθάδε, “in place of a marriage, (your) father would busy himself with a funeral/burial there.” See also Herodotus, Histories, 7.37.2, concerning the disappearance of the sun: ἀντὶ ἡμέρης τε νύξ ἐγένετο, “and in the place of day, it became night.”

πολλῶν—While there is the potential for controversy on the denotation of πολλῶν here, the context strongly suggests the Semitic meaning “all (comprising many),” instead of “many, but not all.” Hebrew does not have a word for “all” as a plural that means “sum of all.” (הל, by contrast, denotes “all” in the sense of “totality, whole” and implies “a certain determination.”)50 See the equivalence of “many” in Is 53:12, ἀνθρώπων ἡμῶν, and “all” in Is 53:6, ἐθνῶν ἐθνῶν, and “all” in Gen 17:5 with “many” (LXX: πολλῶν ἐθνῶν) and the one in Gen 12:3 with “all” (LXX: πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς). That Mark uses “many” in the sense of “all” can be seen in 1:34, which says that Jesus healed “many” (πολλούς) who were in a bad way with variegated diseases, about whom it is said two verses prior (1:32) that they brought to him “all” (πάντας) those in a bad way. (It seems highly unlikely that he left

48 See the next textual note on this verse.
49 Ex 12:13: “and I will see the blood and I will pass over you.”
50 See Joüon, §§ 125 h; 139 e; 146 j; see also Joüon, § 150 o.
some unhealed.) Clear Pauline usage in this sense occurs in Rom 5:12–19, where οἱ πολλοί/πολλοί is interchangeable with πάντες (see especially Rom 5:12, 15, 16, 18, 19, and most especially the phrase ἐκ πολλῶν παραπτωμάτων in Rom 5:16, which cannot mean “the trespasses of many but not all”). Note that the issue raised here also arises in Mk 14:24, which speaks of Jesus’ blood, τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν, “which is going to be poured out on behalf of many,” i.e., “all.” Note that it is to address this issue that we have chosen to translate πολλῶν here (and in other references to this verse [as well as elsewhere in Scripture]) with “many/multitudes,” following the helpful verbal suggestion of colleague Paul R. Raabe. This helps to maintain a focus on the vast numbers involved and does not imply any notion of “some but not all.”

Commentary

As noted in the introduction to this pericope, taking all eleven verses together allows one to see the “stepping-stone” pattern (A-B-A’-B’) of topics:51 honor—mission—honor—mission under the eschatological reign and rule of God. These comprise A: 10:35–38a; B: 10:38b–40; A’: 10:41–44; B’: 10:45. As in 10:17–31, which also displays this pattern,52 the second and fourth elements are key. The second is the center of a “standard” intercalation (A-B-A’), which is, in turn, highlighted or confirmed in its importance by the presence of B’. Here, the discussion of Jesus’ cup and baptism (10:38b–40), which reference his enduring the wrath of God’s judgment on sin unto death, is key, and it is confirmed in its importance by element B’, the discussion regarding λύτρον, “atonement,” as discussed extensively in the third textual note on 10:45. Understanding this ordering of materials (“structure,” in traditional analysis) helps one to see the true importance of both 10:38b–40 and 10:45 and also does two further things. First, it removes the discussion of λύτρον in 10:45 from consideration purely within the context of a discussion of humility and servant-hood, and second, it elevates the importance of 10:45, preventing it from being an “outlier” in the theology of the Gospel according to Mark.

10:35 James and John, the “sons of thunder” (3:17), are early disciples (1:19–20) and part of the “inner group” (see 9:2 and 14:33 [also 13:3]). As such, they become signal examples, as has been Peter (8:29, 33). Thus, as with Peter (cf. 14:29–31), their activity implicates the rest of the Twelve (10:41).

διδάσκαλε, “teacher”: This is the key description of Jesus in many ways, also in the Gospel of Mark; see 1:21, 27; 6:34; 10:1.

θέλομεν ἵνα ὅ ἐὰν αἰτήσωμεν σε ποιήσῃς ἡμῖν, “we desire that whatever we ask you, you do for us”: While this sounds very self-aggrandizing, it should be recognized that Jesus does talk elsewhere in the Gospels in ways that encourage such a request. See, e.g., Mt 7:7–8, 11:


52 See the previous footnote.
αἰτεῖτε καὶ δοθήσεται ὑμῖν, ζητεῖτε καὶ εὑρήσετε, κρούετε καὶ ἀνοιγήσεται ὑμῖν· πάς γὰρ ὁ αἰτῶν λαμβάνει καὶ ὁ ζητῶν εὑρίσκει καὶ τὸ κρύοντι ἀνοιγήσεται. … πόσῳ μάλλον ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς δώσει ἄγγαθά τοῖς αἰτοῦσιν αὐτῶν;

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks gets, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. … How much more will your Father in the heavens give good things to the ones who ask him?

An instantiation of this theme also occurs later in the Gospel of Mark with this statement: “All things, as many as you pray for and request, truly believe that you have you have gotten them, and it will be so for you” (πάντα ὧσα προσεύχεσθε καὶ αἰτεῖσθε, πιστεύετε ὅτι ἐλάβετε, καὶ ἔσται ὑμῖν, 11:24).53 But see 14:36, which seems to provide some restrictions on an overly simple understanding of open-ended request assertions; see also the commentary on 10:37.

10:37 As discussed in the commentary on 10:36, Mark can provide a kind of limitation on an open-ended understanding of requests to their God. Note that Jesus here does not say something such as δώσω δὴ ὑμῖν ὃ ἂν θέλητε, “I will, indeed, give to you whatever you desire.”

ἵνα εἷς σου ἐκ δεξιῶν καὶ εἷς εξ ἀριστερῶν καθίσωμεν, “that we sit one on your right and one on your left”: The right and left hands are traditionally seen as places of honor. The right hand is certainly special; see LXX Ps 109:1 (MT/ET 110:1): εἴπεν ὁ κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου· κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου, “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand.’”54 But both sides are important in various official contexts. Josephus, in telling the story of David and Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20, says in Antiquities, 6.235: “The king [Saul] came to the meal, and after his son Jonathan on his right side and Abner, the chief of the soldiers, on the other had taken seats beside him, … he fell silent” (ὁ βασιλεὺς ἧκεν ἐπὶ τὸ δεῖπνον, καὶ παρακαθισθεντῶν συντοῦ τοῦ μὲν παιδὸς Ἰωνάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν Ἀβενήρου δὲ τοῦ ἀρχιστρατήγου ἐκ τῶν ἐτέρων, … ἡσύχασεν).55 The rabbis also saw such positions as key. According to the Mishnah (Yoma 3:56), on the Day of Atonement the high priest “came to the east, to the north of the Altar, with the Prefect57 on his right and the chief of the father’s house58 on his left.” And Billerbeck records that, according to rabbinic tradition, if three

53 See also the textual notes on 11:24.
54 MT Ps 110:1: יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּ֔ם יִשְׁתַּבֵּֽ֖הּ יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִшָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽנָּם יִשָּׁבֵֽn
55 Josephus differs somewhat from the LXX of 1 Kingdoms (MT/ET 1 Samuel) 20:25 in this description.
56 Danby, The Mishnah, 165.
57 He was the second in rank to the high priest and the chief officer of the temple (Danby, The Mishnah, 165, note 10).
58 This was the subdivision of the order of priests doing the temple service for the day (see Danby, The Mishnah, 165, note 11).
travel with one another, the teacher should go in the middle, the elder of the other two on the right and the younger on the left, even as did the angels who came to Abraham (cf. Gen 18:2): Michael in the middle, Gabriel on the right, Raphael on the left.\(^5^9\) As will be seen later in this Gospel (see the commentary on 15:27), the idea of “sitting” will be seen to have some significance.

\(\textit{ἐν τῇ δόξῃ σου}, “in your glory”: Building upon the sixth textual note on 10:37 regarding “glory” (δόξα), we may say that the two disciples imagine that something similar to the magnificent coming of the Son of Man, referred to by Jesus in 8:38 (and again in 13:26), is on the horizon, namely, a saving divine act in full and apparent triumph. They are correct about God’s saving activity being what makes him “impressive and demands recognition,”\(^6^0\) but the nature of that saving action is still beyond their ken, despite the three passion and resurrection predictions of Jesus (8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34). In effect, their question aligns them with Peter’s rebuke of Jesus in 8:32, after the first such prediction (in 8:31), which details that humiliation, suffering, and the cross is, in fact, the “program” of salvation. This provides further evidence that Jesus’ instruction of the disciples in this central section of the Gospel of Mark (8:27–10:52) has had remarkably little positive effect. Though characterized by Jesus as “children” (τέκνα) in 10:24, i.e., as ones who have received the eschatological reign and rule of God in him, these men continue to be devoted to issues of status and power, as has been apparent in their discourses concerning ability (9:28), greatness (9:34), inner-circle status (9:38), and importance (10:13, 28). They are still quite blind, as it were (see the commentary on 8:26), a theme that will be addressed specifically, if not “directly,” in the next pericope, 10:46–52.

10:38b–39 The analysis concerning Jesus’ “cup” presented in the textual note on 10:38b–39 is confirmed, as it were, by what we have said about the three passion and resurrection predictions (8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34). In these three programmatic texts, Jesus gives a detailed description of his fate. This fate, as we have argued (see especially the commentary on 8:31 and on 10:33–34), although predicated of the Son of Man, is congruent with the fate of the Servant of Yahweh, who appears in the latter chapters of Isaiah and who provides a template for describing and understanding the person of Jesus and his mission in the Gospel of Mark, not only generally,\(^6^1\) but also and especially in his role as the Suffering Servant of Is 52:13–53:12. Otherwise expressed, in the passion and resurrection predictions, Jesus describes actions concerning himself that are about to take place that correspond to the features of the Suffering Servant

\(^5^9\) Str-B 1:835.

\(^6^0\) Von Rad, “δόξα,” \textit{TDNT} 2:238.

\(^6^1\) In 1:10 Jesus receives the Spirit in connection with his Baptism, even as does the Servant of Isaiah 61: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me …” (Is 61:1; cf. Is 42:1), and both Jesus and the Servant are such recipients as Yahweh’s representative, with the purpose of proclaiming Good News (Is 61:1; Mk 1:14), of calling out an acceptable year of the Lord (Is 61:2; cf. Mk 1:15), and of comforting all who mourn (Is 61:2; cf. Mk 6:34). Jesus has come, then, as the Servant of Isaiah and has assumed that Servant’s role.
and to his mission, especially what happens before he regains life, namely, his being handed over, humiliated, physically abused, and killed and in that suffering, standing in for his people, as he is “wounded for our transgressions” and “crushed for our iniquities” (Is 53:5) and as he bears “the sin of many/multitudes” (Is 53:12). That description of being crushed for iniquities and bearing people’s sin is strikingly similar to the notion of Jesus bearing God’s judgment upon sin suggested by the metaphor of the “cup” and his drinking of it.\(^{62}\)

This interpretation also helps us to understand the incident in the garden of Gethsemane in which Jesus begins to be deeply alarmed (ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι) and disturbed (ἀδημονεῖν) (14:33), then says, quoting Ps 42:6, 12 (ET 42:5, 11): “My soul is deeply grieved unto death” (περίλυπός ἐστιν ἡ ψυχή μου ἕως θανάτου, 14:34), then prays that, if possible, the hour pass from him (14:35), and then actually proceeds to say: “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Take this cup from me!” (αββα ὁ πατήρ, πάντα δυνατά σοι· παρένεγκε τὸ ποτήριον τὸ τοῦτο ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ, 14:36). Jesus’ cup seems to be God’s judgment upon sin/iniquity, a judgment that is the cup, as it were, of Isaiah’s Suffering Servant, and a cup that is terrifying.

In addition, the notion of baptism adds to the understanding of Jesus drinking the cup of God’s judgment. Such drinking will actually involve his dying—not simply being smitten or bearing sin, as Isaiah says of the Suffering Servant. No, he will be cut off from the land of the living (Is 53:8) and will pour out his soul to death (Is 53:12). Further, Jesus’ enquiry regarding the two disciples’ ability to drink his cup and be baptized with his baptism demonstrates, as Robert Gundry has seen, that Jesus is not some sort of helpless victim, but someone who “foreknows” both his fate and his endurance of it.\(^{63}\) Not only does Jesus predict his drinking and being baptized; he clearly embraces it.

δυνάμεθα, “we are able”: The disciples’ high self-confidence never seems to waver; see also 14:31, as well as the commentary on 10:37. In fairness, though, it should be remembered that they are devoted to their Lord and have come under the eschatological reign and rule of God in him.

\(^{62}\) In fact, the connection between “the cup” in 10:38 and the fate of the Suffering Servant helps to focus our attention within Is 52:13–53:12 and to see that the Servant is not simply suffering in being derided by his enemies and despised (Is 53:3, 6, 7–8) or even (simply) in being smitten by God and afflicted (Is 53:4), perhaps as was Job. Indeed, it is not wrong to conclude that God taking “the cup of his wrath” (Is 51:17) away from his people (Is 51:22) is made possible, or is accomplished, by the Servant drinking that cup in their place in his suffering and death.

\(^{63}\) Gundry, Mark, 577.
sons of Zebedee that Jesus’ “glory” (10:37), i.e., the saving work (of God) that makes him “impressive and demands recognition,”" is his death on the cross, which provides salvation for sinners from the wrathful judgment of God (see the discussion of the “cup” in the textual note on 10:38b–39). In that “glory,” two men will be positioned on either side of Jesus, one on his right (ἐκ δεξιῶν) and one on his left (ἐξ εὐωνύμων, 10:40). And, indeed, it actually happens precisely in this way: “one on his right and one on his left” (ἦνα ἐκ δεξιῶν καὶ ἑνα ἐξ εὐωνύμων αὐτοῦ, 15:27). These two bandits are the ones “for whom it is already prepared” (οἷς ητοίμασται, 10:40). To express this thought in the reverse way, as it were, Jesus’ statement, understood against the disciples’ question in 10:37, “tells” us that Jesus’ cross is, in fact, his “glory,” which means that it is his saving work, even as Yahweh’s glory is his saving work in the OT (see the sixth textual note on 10:37). There should be no mistake here, in thinking, e.g., that Jesus’ death in the Gospel of Mark is some sort of tragedy or that it is a demonstration of the inevitable outworking of power versus humility in this world. Mark is clear from what he says in this text: on the cross, Jesus drinks the cup of God’s wrathful judgment against sin, and, as has been discussed in the third textual note on 10:45, Jesus has done so in the place of all. This is Jesus’ glory.

Finally, note Jesus’ obedience to the will of the Father here, when he says that the positions are not his to give. This theme will reappear powerfully in the garden of Gethsemane scene several chapters hence (14:36).

10:41–44 Point A’ in the “stepping-stone” construction of this pericope now arrives with the return of the theme of honor and the problem of the disciples’ attitudes and outlook (see the introductory paragraph to the commentary on this pericope). With the discussion of the great one being a servant (10:43) and of the one who is first being a slave (10:44), Jesus returns to a prior theme of a near pericope, 10:31b, namely, many being last who are first. This section shows clearly that James and John (and, by extension, Peter [10:28]) truly are representative of the rest of the Twelve. The attitudes of the latter are no different. See 14:31b, with the protestations of all to be faithful in following Jesus, after Peter’s profession that he will die rather than deny his Lord (14:31a).

10:43 οὐχ οὕτως δέ ἐστιν ἐν ὑμῖν, “it is not so among you”: As discussed in the second textual note on 10:43, it is important to realize the nuance of the present tense of the verb form ἐστίν here. The Twelve actually are different than the Gentiles. They do evince inclusion under the eschatological reign and rule of God come proleptically in Jesus, as manifested by their following their teacher diligently, and, more important, by Jesus addressing them as “children” (τέκνα) in 10:24 (see the fifth textual note on 10:24 and “General Overview and Major Points” at the beginning of the commentary on 10:17–31), which is the characterization of those who have received that divine reign and rule (see

64 Von Rad, “δόξα,” TDNT 2:238.
10:15). With these words in 10:43, the “teacher” (10:35) attempts to give proper orientation to the attitudes of his followers, even as he does by addressing them as “children” in 10:24.

ἔσται, “[he] will be”: As discussed in the fifth textual note on 10:43—which also applies to the ἔσται in 10:44—this future indicative form should be treated as a future tense form, describing conditions in the future consummation of the eschatological reign and rule of God. It is certainly possible that Jesus intends his words in this verse and the next (10:44) as a double entendre, i.e., that they also convey how people under the proleptic manifestation of that reign and rule will (logically) act, if they truly want to be great or to be first—but it is difficult to find any other place where Jesus extols “wanting to be great” or “wanting to be first” for his followers. A desire to be great/first is at odds with being children and receiving God’s gracious reign and rule (see 10:15).

10:45 δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν, “to give his life as an atonement for the sake of/in the stead of many/multitudes”: As noted in the introductory paragraph of the commentary on this pericope, with this verse, section B’ of the “stepping-stone” structure occurs (compare the commentary on 10:41–44). This reinforces section B, 10:38b–40, which, using the images of cup and baptism, is the first discussion of the mission of Jesus in this series and the central focus of the initial A-B-A’ ordering of thought. Jesus’ death as an “atonement” for sin confirms that in his death (cf. “baptism”), he endures God’s wrathful judgment (cf. “cup”).

But it is important to say more concerning Jesus’ life as an atonement for many/multitudes. If the analysis of the third textual note on 10:45 concerning the noun λύτρον, meaning “atonement,” is proper, an important inference follows, namely, that Jesus’ sacrifice as a λύτρον for sin also procures—issues in—and enables liberation of his people. Just as the people of Israel were saved from the divine Destroyer and in the process were set free from their captivity to the Egyptians and liberated to be God’s people (Exodus 12), just so those who are our Lord’s disciples (14:14; 16:7) are saved from divine judgment and, in the process, are set free from their bondage and freed to become the people of God. (Note well that the argumentation is not that λύτρον also means “ransom”; the contention is that the atonement accomplished also issues in liberation.)

But bondage to what? Carrying through completely the Exodus 12 analogy that was introduced in the third textual note on 10:45, the death of the λύτρον would issue in freedom from the bondage to political oppression. (Note that if this political view is taken, it cannot be that Jesus himself is going to conquer the Roman overlords, even with God’s help, since he knows that he is going to

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65 In the first century context, “political” would also comprise military, social, and economic oppression.
But there is no indication in the narrative of the Gospel of Mark that Jesus is politically oriented. This is true in two respects:

First is the matter of speech. In considering what Jesus says/teaches/preaches, there is no substantial political orientation, especially as related to his death.

1. In the Parable of the Wicked Tenants of the Vineyard (12:1–12), the overlords of the vineyard are overthrown, but those in question are not Roman leaders but Jewish leaders, as even those listening understood (see the third textual note on 12:12).

2. In his admonition to render to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s (12:13–17), the Roman overlords are viewed, at worst, benignly.

3. The contents of chapter 13 of Mark, which speak of war and mayhem (see especially 13:7–8, 19) are not oriented to political freedom through Jesus’ death.
   a. The structure to be destroyed is not the Antonia Fortress, which housed the Roman soldiers, but the temple (13:2–3; cf. “this mountain” in 11:23).
   b. Key events in focus concern the Gospel, not political conquest: its spread (13:10), witness to it (13:11), and persecution for it (13:12).
   c. Actions surrounding warfare do not concern fighting (to say nothing of conquering) but fleeing (13:14–18). Indeed, if the days were not shortened, no one would be saved (13:20).
   d. In fact, as opposed to conquest and victory, there will be deception regarding such things (13:7–8), even fake “Christs” will arise so as to deceive many (13:5–6, 21–23).
   e. The coming in glory of the Son of Man (13:24–27) is not easily taken to be the current coming of Jesus as the Son of Man (though Jesus’ current coming may be seen as related to it prophetically [see the commentary on 13:24–27]), but is, rather, a future coming of an event separate from our Lord’s death as λύτρον.

4. At his death, Jesus gives no utterance to suggest that by his dying as an atonement (λύτρον) in place of many/multitudes, God would overthrow the Roman overlords. On the contrary, his cry of dereliction (15:34) testifies to quite the opposite: Why would he complain of being forsaken by God if by his death as an atonement (λύτρον) political salvation would be achieved? Indeed, such an atonement would by definition (have to) be forsaken for freedom to be achieved! (Note also that, in the Gospel of Mark, at Jesus’ arrest there is no talk of legions of angels [cf. Mt 26:53] or at his trial of secular power and authority [cf. Jn 19:10–11] at all.)

5. All talk regarding enemies and their conquest is left quite undeveloped. See, e.g., the bare reference to the Lord God putting the enemies of David’s Lord under his feet (Mk 12:36), and even that the coming in glory of the Son of Man focuses on gathering the elect and not upon conquest/judgment (13:27). On the contrary, Jesus’

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66 Indeed, Jesus’ coming to Jerusalem on a donkey rather than on a horse (11:4–7) and his passive actions in the garden, including no appeal to his followers to take up arms in his cause (14:48–49), support not seeing Jesus as a political conqueror through his own aggression versus the Roman authorities.

67 The Gospel of John disavows a political interpretation completely, as Jesus says to Pilate that his kingdom is not of this world (Jn 18:36) and that he has come to bear witness to the truth (Jn 18:37).
message is one of not lording it over others (10:41–44), and, in the present verse, 10:45, of his own coming as one who is to serve and not to be served.

6. Why is there a promise by Jesus to unite with his disciples in Galilee after his resurrection (14:28)? Galilee was not a center of political power in the first century AD. Such a center lay in Caesarea Maritima and in Jerusalem; that is where one would go for conquest. Note that, according to Josephus, in the rebellion against Rome in AD 66–70, the rebel John of Gishala and the Romans moved from Galilee to Jerusalem, not in the reverse direction.68

Second, Jesus’ actions belie a political orientation as related to his death. This is seen in his focus upon the temple, not the Antonia Fortress of the Roman garrison.

1. After his entry into Jerusalem, Jesus proceeds directly to the temple (11:11), not to the Antonia. He returns to the temple again the next day (11:15–19).

2. In his discussion with his disciples concerning the coming destruction and the coming of the Son of Man, Jesus sits opposite the temple, not the Antonia, and directs his attention to it. (Note that the place of the presence of “the abomination of desolation” [τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ερημώσεως, 13:14] is almost surely, according to context, the temple.)

3. The cursing of the fig tree is done in connection with Jesus’ visit to the temple and, literally, is part of a complex “stepping-stone” pattern (A-B-A’-B’) between the two entities: A: 11:11; B: 11:12–14; A’: 11:15–19; B’: 11:20–25; see the introduction to 11:1–25. No Roman involvement is apparent.

4. At Jesus’ death, the veil of the temple tears in two (15:38); the Antonia Fortress does not crumble or suffer other harm.

But if Jesus’ death as “atonement” (λύτρον) in place of many/multitudes does not issue in political liberation of God’s people, then what liberation does it involve? There is one explicit passage dealing with people under a dominating authority being freed by Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, and that is the parabolic statement regarding the binding of “the strong man” (τὸν ἰσχυρόν) in 3:27. This verse depicts Satan as the strong man, as the immediately prior context comprising three statements regarding the impossibility of Satan casting out Satan (3:23–26) strongly suggests. As argued in the textual note and the commentary on 3:27, Jesus’ ministry bound Satan, so that he could not exercise dominion through demons possessing people as their vessels. (Note that the name Beelzebul, used in the discussion about Satan in 3:22, probably means “lord of the abode/dwelling”; see the second textual note on 3:22.) Furthermore, the reference to Satan as “the strong man” in 3:27 takes up once again a theme of the latter portion of Isaiah, in this case, Is 49:24–26. In this passage, the captives of the strong one (LXX: γίγας and a participle of ἰσχύω; MT: יִבְלָץ and יִנָּפָּל) shall be delivered by Yahweh (Is 49:25).69 These words concern, in the

68 Josephus, Jewish War, 4.121–27.
69 The verbiage of LXX Is 49:25 is much closer to Jesus’ saying in Mk 3:27 than is the Hebrew of the MT. The first clause of Is 49:25 in the LXX is οὕτως λέγει κύριος ἡ τις αἰχμαλωστεύση
first instance, historical nations and the historical captivity and deliverance of the people of God in BC times. But the spiritual dimension of existence is at the root of the physical world, including—especially?—the governing powers (see, e.g., Mt 4:8–9 and Lk 4:5–7),\(^{70}\) which means that the ultimate fulfillment of the Isaianic vision lies in the subjugation of controlling spiritual forces—a saving act accomplished in the ministry of Jesus.\(^{71}\) This subjugation is described in parabolic form in 3:27. The discussion of \(\lambdaύτρον\) in 10:45, then, strongly suggests that by the death of Jesus, the “many/multitudes” are set free from their bondage to Satan and to hostile spiritual forces under his control, so that—again following Exodus analogically—not only are the many/multitudes not under the dominion of Satanic power because the exercise of that power is bound, but also in Jesus’ vicarious death they are, indeed, set free from that power—liberated to be the people of God. Note that this understanding builds upon seeing that in the Gospel of Mark

the ultimate issues for human beings lie in the spiritual dimension. The relationship between God’s people and God (see 2:5) and between his people and the forces of evil (see 3:15) is foundational to everything that concerns them—first, their relationship with their Creator, and then their relationship with forces that seek to control their lives.\(^{72}\)

This is the most basic and foundational level on which Jesus’ death as “atonement” (\(\lambdaύτρον\)) provides freedom from bondage.

But there is a second, and in many ways equally important, level on which Jesus’ death provides liberation. This is suggested by the reappearance of Satan in Mark’s narrative in 8:33, when Peter is designated “Satan” by Jesus for his response (8:32) to his Lord’s first passion and resurrection prediction (8:31), as Peter thinks “the things of men/people” (\(τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων\), 8:33). Thinking these human things entails seeking to avoid humiliation and suffering, yes (see 8:31), but much more, as can be seen by our Lord’s first comment after the incident, in 8:34: “If someone desires to really follow after me, let him deny himself, and let him take up his cross, and let him proceed to follow me” (εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἀκολουθεῖν, ἀπαρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκολουθείτω μοι). Thinking “the things of men” is all about self-centeredness, focus upon self (= not denying oneself): in dogmatics terms, \(\textit{incurvatus in se}\), “curved in on oneself,” the essential human sin, making oneself one’s own god. Indeed, what “thinking the things of men” entails, what it looks like in real-world life, can be seen in the verses and chapters following 8:33, when the Twelve think “the things of men” as they do the following:

\[\text{ἐγιγαντα, λήμπεται σκῦλα. “Thus says the Lord: ‘If someone imprisons a giant/mighty one, he will take his spoils.’ ”}\]


\(^{71}\) See the commentary on 3:27.

\(^{72}\) This quotation is from the commentary on 3:27 (Voelz, \textit{Mark 1:1–8:26}, 262).
• Discuss among themselves who is the greatest (9:33–36)
• Worry about someone working in Jesus’ name who is not part of their inner group (9:39–40)
• Despise simple followers such as children (10:13–16)
• Desire positions of glory in their Lord’s kingdom (10:35–40)
• Seek to save their lives and not lose them for the sake of Jesus and of the Gospel (14:27, 50 [see also 14:66–68])

It is from this bondage, too, that Jesus saves—on the one hand, by, mutatis mutandis, “binding the strong man” of “thinking the things of men” as he rebukes the Twelve after each of their self-centered self-expressions and as he gives them his own example: “for even the Son of Man has not come to be served but to serve…” (10:45), and, on the other hand and, more significantly, by freeing them from such Satanic-inspired human thinking and desires as he gives his life as an “atonement” (λύτρον) in place of many/multitudes (10:45). This is the second level on which Jesus’ death (also) provides freedom from bondage.

But how is this freedom from bondage to Satan and to satanically inspired “thinking the things of men” to be understood? What does it entail? Mark does not describe that in detail, most probably because the events related in his Gospel occur almost entirely before Jesus’ death and resurrection, i.e., before Jesus actually gives his life as an “atonement” (λύτρον) in place of many/multitudes (plus what follows from it according to Jesus own predictions concerning his denouement [8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34]—his resurrection from the dead). So the freedom of many/multitudes has in a very real sense, throughout the vast majority of this Gospel’s narrative, not actually been achieved (though foretastes of it are present).

But there are hints in Mark’s Gospel of a much deeper understanding of these matters. The use by Jesus of the metaphor of baptism for his death and the death shared by his followers (10:38–39) can only bring to mind, for readers/hearers of this Gospel, Christian Baptism, which, as Mark’s mentor Paul develops so vividly in Romans 6, involves union with Christ. In Rom 6:5, Paul says that we have become and now are (γεγόναμεν) congenital (σύμφυτοι) with Christ in the likeness of his death, which means that in Baptism each Christian is united with Christ, united with him in his death (see also Rom 6:4).

Two things follow from this. On the one hand, union in that death reveals how we are finally freed from Satan: “the one who has died stands justified from sin” (Rom 6:7). The verb here is δεδικαίωται, perfect passive. When someone is dead, he is no longer a sinner: he stands justified from sin because the punishment has been meted out. Indeed, when he is dead, the Law is no longer in force, as Paul argues directly in the next chapter (Rom 7:1–3), and therefore no longer accuses, which means that that person no longer needs to

73 In Gal 3:27, Paul puts it this way: “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”
be justified. Therefore, Satan can no longer level valid accusations.74 Paul states as much in Rom 8:1: “there is, therefore, now no condemnation [κατάκριμα] for those in Christ Jesus.” For this reason we are no longer under Satan’s dominion or part of his domain, and this is why, as Paul indicates to the Romans, God will in the future trample Satan under their feet (Rom 16:20).

On the other hand, such a union with Christ in his death also reveals how we are freed from bondage to the self-centered and, therefore, sinful self. Again following the thought of Paul in Romans 6 (6:6), the old man/old Adam—that which thinks “the things of men” (Mk 8:33)—has been crucified (and buried) with Christ “in order that” (ἵνα the body of sin (= the old man/old Adam) might be destroyed (καταργήθῃ), for the purpose and with the result (τοῦ plus an infinitive)75 that we no longer do slave service on a constant basis (δουλεύειν: first principal part/present infinitive) to sin. We are no longer slaves to “thinking the things of men” because our own self has died (Rom 6:7). Mark hints at this changed condition when Jesus says to the Twelve concerning lording it over one another: “It is [ἐστιν] not so among you” (see the second textual note and the commentary on 10:43). This condition that depends upon Jesus giving himself as an “atonement” (λύτρον) in place of many/multitudes (10:45) is already present as a foretaste of what will fully come to pass at the full restoration of creation (Rom 8:20–24a).76

74 Cf. Rev 12:10, which gives Satan the appellation “the accuser” (ὁ κατήγωρ) and describes him as “the one who accuses” (ὁ κατηγορῶν) our brothers in the faith before God. Note that in the next verse (Rev 12:11), the brothers are described as conquering “on account of the blood of the Lamb” (διὰ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ ἀρνίου).

75 See a similar use of τοῦ plus the infinitive in Rom 7:3.

76 Much the same may be said regarding the other side of the coin, so to speak—the liberation not just from but also for, namely, the liberation of the many/multitudes to be the people of God. Mark treats this in a most basic way, even as does Jesus, describing disciples’ attitudes and actions largely negatively, as it were: Jesus admonishes the Twelve when their actions do not exemplify and incarnate the attitudes and actions of the liberated people of God by telling them what actually should be the case (e.g., 10:41–44, as well as 9:39; 10:14–15). But, again, the cross and the empty tomb have not yet occurred.

But in Baptism, we as Christians have become and now are (γεγόναμεν) congenital (σύμφυτοι) with Christ in the likeness of his resurrection (Rom 6:5), as well as in his death. Indeed, Paul says only three verses later (Rom 6:8): “If we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him,” and the form of this conditional sentence (εἰ) assumes that the “if” clause (the protasis) is true. Finally, we will be raised to live with him. But we have a foretaste of that new life now as we walk in newness of life in accordance with Christ’s resurrection (Rom 6:4). This is the liberated life, the freedom “for” we have spoken about. Otherwise expressed, the life the Christian lives he lives to God, says Paul in Rom 6:10, and so do we live our lives now already, before the resurrection, to God—which is how we should regard ourselves, i.e., “alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom 6:11). In the words of Rom 6:18: “Having been freed from sin, you have become slaves to righteousness.” In Marcan terms, then, we are no longer bound to “thinking … the things of men”; rather, we are alive to God, “thinking the things of God” (Mk 8:33).

How this new life works, its inner dynamic, is also hinted at by Mark, and it is related to John the Baptist’s baptism. The promise of washing in Ezekiel 36, of which John’s baptism was a literal expression, as I have argued above (see the textual note on 10:38b–39), has entwined with it both the promise of God’s Spirit—which John does also explicitly promise as a gift of
It is, finally, critical to conclude the discussion of 10:45 with the reminder that the proleptic coming of the eschatological reign and rule of God in Jesus finds as its focus—has as its mission—the central issue of the relationship between God and man, including as its chief component the taking care of sin. This focus on the God-man relationship and on sin is established early in Mark’s Gospel, as Jesus’ initial act is to call to repentance (1:15), and as an early key pericope (note the use of historical present verb forms77) portrays Jesus forgiving the sins of a paralytic (2:5, 7, 9, 10). It is worth repeating one of the comments on 2:10 in this regard:

That the forgiveness of sins … is the focus of this central pericope testifies to the fact that the spiritual is foundational to the physical, that a relationship with God is foundational to the wholeness of creation, and that there is no restoration of creation apart from the saving action of the incarnate God himself.78

What Jesus says in 10:45 confirms this assessment.

the “stronger one” who is coming after him (1:7–8)—and the promise of the accompanying new heart, which enables God’s people to do his will. Listen to Ezek 36:26–27, which occurs immediately after the verse we cited in connection with God’s washing of his people:

LXX Ezek 36:26–27: καὶ δῶσω ὑμῖν καρδίαν καινὴν καὶ πνεῦμα καινὸν δώσω ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ ὀψελα τὴν καρδίαν τὴν λείπην ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς ὑμῶν καὶ δῶσω ὑμῖν καρδίαν σαρκίην, καὶ τὸ πνεῦμά μου δῶσω ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ ποιήσω ἵνα ἐν τοῖς δικαιώμασίν μου πορεύσῃ καὶ τὰ κρίματά μου φυλάξῃ καὶ ποιήσῃ.

And I will give you a new/different [καινὴν] heart, and a new/different [καινὸν] Spirit will I give within you, and I will take away the stone heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a fleshly heart. And I will give/put my Spirit [τὸ πνεῦμά μου] within you, and I will make it that you truly go [πορεύησθε] in my righteous requirements and that you keep and do my judgments.

This will be—and is—how the new life “in Christ” (ἐν Χριστῷ) is motivated and carried through. Once again, St. Paul’s thought develops in this direction, especially in Romans 8, in which he asserts that the Spirit is life (Rom 8:10). More fully, Rom 8:11: “And if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Jesus from the dead will make alive also your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who dwells within you” (εἰ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἐγείραντος τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ νεκρῶν οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν, ὁ ἐγέρσας Χριστὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀποκάτατηκε καὶ τὰ θητής σώματα ὑμῶν διὰ τοῦ ἐνοικοῦντος αὐτοῦ πνεύματος ἐν ὑμῖν). For this reason, Paul can say in Rom 8:14: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God” (ὅσοι γὰρ πνεύματι θεοῦ ἀγονται, οὗτοι οἱ θεοῦ εἰσιν). Again, in Marcan terms, in this way, the “many/multitudes” (10:45) are truly liberated to be people of God.

77 See the discussion on page 15 in “Linguistic Features of Mark’s Gospel” in the introduction. See also “Marcan Usage” in the pericope Mark 2:1–12.

78 This quotation is from the commentary on 2:10 (Voelz, Mark 1:1–8:26, 196).