

THE SOVEREIGN CHRIST

A Commentary on
Mark 4:35-5:43



SCOTT W. MATSON

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Author contact: scott.w.matson@gmail.com

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Introduction

This brief commentary covers **Mark 4:35-5:43** and approaches the different narratives of this section of Scripture in the way Mark's original readers would have read and heard them: as one continuous story. As we will see, Mark grouped these events together to make important theological points about the identity of Jesus and the nature of His kingdom.

For context, immediately preceding Mark 4:35, Jesus had been preaching to a large crowd of people near the Sea of Galilee. He taught the multitudes using parables in order to fulfill the prophet Isaiah's words in **Isaiah 6:9-10**. In that passage, God told Isaiah that his prophetic preaching would cause the hard-hearted Israelites to grow even more stubborn and rebellious. This was both a fact as well as God's judgment upon His people for their unfaithfulness to Him and the covenant He had made with them.

The same would happen in Jesus' ministry. He, the eternal and divine Son of God, encountered increasing opposition from Israel's religious leaders as His ministry progressed. However, the poor and those not in positions of religious leadership—the "common people" as Mark later called them (12:37)—heard Him gladly; as did the Gentiles, making Jesus' ministry truly unique in the Jewish world.

After Jesus preached the well-known *parable of the sower* to a large crowd, He gathered His twelve apostles and a small number of others (4:10) and explained the parable to them. He then taught other parables related to His kingdom, revealing the way it would grow and develop. His use of imagery—scattered seeds growing into a great harvest (4:26-29) and mustard seeds growing into giant trees (4:30-32)—echoed Nebuchadnezzar's dream in which a rock from Heaven crushed all human kingdoms and grew into a mountain which filled the earth (Daniel 2:31-45). This dream, given by God to Nebuchadnezzar, symbolized the arrival and growth of God's kingdom which would crush all human kingdoms and fill the whole world. This happened when Jesus came, as His coming was the fulfillment of the dream. Today, His kingdom continues to grow and will one day be the only kingdom in all the universe, showing that the dream continues to be fulfilled and will be completed when Jesus returns to establish His eternal reign.

And in these narratives, Mark not only shows his readers that Jesus brought the kingdom. He also shows them what Jesus' kingdom looks like. He does this by recounting four miracles which our Lord performed; these miracles signify what life under His reign is like and will one day be in its fullness. As Jesus taught about the coming kingdom, He demonstrated His divine authority and sovereignty over the various realms of creation: the natural, the spiritual, and over "the last enemy to be destroyed,"¹ death itself. Mark shows us in stunning fashion that Jesus truly is the King of kings and Lord of lords, the one true God who reigns over all.

And it is with this background in mind that we now turn to the passage at hand.

Quick note: This commentary will best be understood if you read it while having a Bible next to you so you can read the verses which are referenced in each section. This will help you keep the biblical text fresh in your mind as you read.

¹ 1 Corinthians 15:26, ESV.

Mark 4:35-41: Jesus' Sovereignty Over Nature

Introduction

The first of the three accounts linked together sees Jesus in a boat with His disciples, making the journey across the Sea of Galilee. This body of water is infamous for violent storms which arise seemingly out of nowhere and whip across its surface with astonishing speed. And while our tendency may be to read this as simply a phenomenon of nature, Mark wants his readers to attach a spiritual significance to the turbulence.

Just as Jesus will cast out demons in the very next narrative, so He “casts out” the violent storm here. He demonstrates His authority over nature by His speech-act, displaying to all that He is the Creator. “The sovereign Lord spoke, and His creation immediately responded.”²

The calming of the storm on the Lake of Galilee is a classic example of a nature miracle. Miracles of this kind seem to present the greatest problem to contemporary man. **The NT, however, makes clear that Jesus Christ is not only Lord over His church but also Lord of all creation.** “For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him” (Colossians 1:16). The Creator-Lord also controls what He has created. “He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:17). It is completely inadequate to explain this miracle of the sovereign Lord by coincidence or to relegate it to myth or imagination.³ (emphasis mine)

Commentary

4:35-36

After a long day of teaching many, Jesus directs His disciples to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. He had been teaching while seated in a boat, a little way out from the shore. The water acted as a natural amplifier, allowing His voice to be easily heard by all assembled. Because He was already in one of the boats, the disciples climbed aboard and began to make their way to the other side.

4:37-38

One must wonder at Jesus' ways. He used this instance to test the apostles and build their faith. Not only that, but He also used the occasion to plainly demonstrate His deity and sovereign authority over the created order.

A violent storm arose suddenly, and the apostles were understandably afraid, fearing for their very lives as the calm water gave way to a chaotic tempest. They still did not understand exactly who Jesus was, and thus were afraid of the natural elements. Indeed, most of them would not fully grasp His identity until after His resurrection.

Notice Mark's language in verse 37: “A great windstorm arose...” For the ancient Jews, the seas/oceans represented the realm of chaos, disorder, death, and the demonic. They no doubt would have believed this to be some sort of demonic uprising against them. We see this all the way back in Genesis 1. The earth was without form and void, and darkness covered the surface of the watery depths. This language speaks of chaos, disorder, and death to the ancient mind—somewhere no human would ever want to go! They clearly believed Jesus could do *something* because they cried out

² Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 655.

³ *Ibid.*, 654.

to Him to save them. But they were not expecting Him to exercise the same divine power seen in Genesis 1—that by His word He could bring order to the chaos. So, what did they do? They woke Jesus up. And what He did went far beyond their expectations.

4:39

There are several references to God’s power from the Old Testament in this one verse. We’ll briefly go through them here.

Jesus displays, without any doubt, His absolute and complete authority over and control of the realm of nature. He simply spoke the word and it was done. *This should immediately call our minds back to Genesis 1.* There, at the first moments of creation, God simply speaks, and creation comes into existence. Mark is trying to get us to see that Jesus’ power is the same divine power seen in Genesis 1! This is a display and proclamation of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, as the apostles were Jewish and intimately familiar with the Old Testament, when Jesus calmed the waters, they would have immediately thought back to Psalm 106 and 107. Psalm 106:9 says, “He (God) rebuked the Red Sea, and it dried up...” In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), the word used for “rebuke,” *epitimaō*, is the same Greek word used here in Mark 4 when it says Jesus “rebuked” the wind. In other words, just as God spoke to the Red Sea and it obeyed Him, so Jesus spoke to the Sea of Galilee, and it obeyed Him. And Psalm 107:29 says, “He (God) stilled the storm to a whisper, and the waves of the sea were hushed.” He did this by simply speaking.

Now this is significant, because in the ancient world, the various creation myths show the gods having to fight great battles to defeat the forces of chaos at creation. But the God of the Bible, the true God, simply speaks and it is done. And here, as at the beginning, Jesus simply speaks, and it is done.

You get the idea. Mark is clearly showing his readers that Jesus is the God of the Old Testament, the sovereign Creator.

4:40-41

Jesus’ rebuke of the apostles for their lack of faith stems from the fact that they had seen Him do several miracles already (recorded in the other Gospels) and should have known that He would see them safely to the other side of the sea. His question demonstrates that there was no good reason they should have been so terrified of the waves. After all, He had already healed many people of incurable diseases and cast demons out of others. One can imagine their amazement at the sight of those miracles.

Now, the explanation I gave of 4:39 above is the key to understanding verse 41 here. Why were the apostles terrified *after* Jesus stilled the sea and its waves? Because they knew Psalm 106 and 107—they knew, on some level, that their Rabbi was none other than God Himself, the sovereign Lord of all. The God of Israel was standing in their midst. When people in the Old Testament realized they had seen God, their response was fear and trembling (see Exodus 20:18-21; Judges 13:21-22; Isaiah 6:1-5). And there is something so right about that. *We should* fear the Lord—He is the Holy One who inhabits eternity, a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:28-29).

Rightly so, then, did our Lord’s apostles tremble in fear in His presence. This is the God who sent the plagues on Egypt, parted the Red Sea, thundered from Mt. Sinai, and defeated vast armies. This is the One who created all things by the word of His power. “In Jewish tradition, the one who ruled the winds and the sea was God Himself (Psalm 107:29; Jonah 1:15). The disciples’ surprise at Jesus’ power is thus easy to understand.”⁴

⁴ Craig Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 146.

Analysis

For ancient peoples, nature was something to be feared and kept at a healthy distance. They did not have either modern, scientific understandings of its processes or the technology to harness it as we do today. To them, as to us (although perhaps less so), nature was wild, untamed, and not to be trifled with. It's no wonder, then, that Jesus exercised His authority over the natural realm. He was showing His apostles that He is Lord of all, the Creator God.

Additionally, there is a verse penned by Isaiah the prophet which says, “The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like cattle, but the serpent’s food will be dust! They will not do what is evil or destroy on My entire holy mountain, says the LORD.”⁵ This verse was spoken by the prophet to foretell God’s future kingdom. It speaks of God’s rule over creation and how His reign brings peace between man and man, man and beast, and among all the animals in the animal kingdom. In other words, when God’s kingdom comes in all its fullness, all creation will function together in the way He intended, in joyous harmony. The curse of the ground (Genesis 3:17) will be fully reversed.

Mark gives us a foretaste of that glorious kingdom by showing how Jesus was bringing creation back into its intended order. In other words, Jesus brought, preached, and inaugurated the kingdom of God—God’s reign—on earth. His demonstrations of power over the natural realm are “sneak peaks” of the coming day when He will return and fully establish His eternal kingdom. This story should cause us to look forward, with great hope, to Jesus’ ultimate reign. Jesus inaugurated His kingdom at His first coming and He will consummate it and establish it forever at His second coming.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

⁵ Isaiah 65:25, CSB.

Mark 5:1-20: Jesus' Sovereignty Over the Spirit-Realm

Introduction

While we have chapter and verse divisions in our Bible translations, those weren't added until much later. In Mark's original document, these narratives flowed together seamlessly. We need to read this account of exorcism along with the previous account of Jesus calming the stormy sea; as we do, a clear theme emerges: *Jesus brings order out of chaos*. This is what happened in Genesis 1, Psalm 106 and 107, and throughout our Lord's ministry.

Jesus has just calmed a violent storm at sea (4:35–41); He now meets a man with an equally violent storm inside him. **In both cases the power of Jesus prevails over chaos and destruction.** The purpose of the healing of the Gerasene demoniac, as with the stilling of the storm on the lake, is not simply to leave readers awestruck at Jesus' power, however, but to prompt them to consider "how much the *Lord* has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you" (5:19). Once again Jesus is connoted with God, for the *Lord* who has healed the demoniac is none other than *Jesus* (v. 20).⁶ (emphasis mine)

Commentary

5:1-5:5

The town in which this miracle takes place is most likely a village located on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Thus, this man was geographically distant from Jerusalem where God's temple was located, just as he was also spiritually distant from God. He was tormented by evil spirits, so much so that he dwelt alone among the dead. This man was in a terrible state, but Jesus' mercy is the bright contrast to the darkness in which he dwelt.

Mark paints a vivid picture of this man's sad condition, both spiritually and physically. He was constantly crying out, mutilating his own body (an act of pagan worship in much of the ancient world), and dwelt alone in the abode of the dead.

5:6-8

In these verses, it seems the actions of the man—running to Jesus and falling down before Him in submission—were the actions of the demons. In other words, just as the apostles recognized Jesus' deity and authority when He calmed the storm, so these demons immediately recognize Jesus as God, the sovereign Lord who created them. Original readers of Mark's gospel likely would have viewed the actions of the demons here as a challenge to Jesus, as these kinds of accounts of spiritual confrontations were common in other writings. And perhaps Mark intentionally framed it that way; if so, he wanted to show his readers that this was, in fact, no battle at all. The demons *immediately* recognized Jesus' authority and begged Him for mercy. There was no actual clash of powers here, as Jesus is the very God who created these beings in the first place. They can do nothing but fall before Him in submission. The narrative tension Mark may have wanted his readers to feel in verses 6 and 7, with the demons running toward Jesus and confronting Him, was immediately relieved in verses 8-10 when Jesus simply spoke, and they obeyed. Such is the power and authority of Jesus!

How ironic that the demons beg Jesus not to torment them, and yet they'd been tormenting this poor man for quite some time. The demons recognize that they are completely at Jesus' mercy

⁶ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 153.

and under His sovereign authority. Just as nature obeys the word of its Creator, so every person and spirit is subject to His command. Mark intentionally put these stories back-to-back in order to show Jesus' power over the spiritual realm just as He has power over the natural realm.

Notice in verse 8 how, once again, Jesus merely speaks the word, and it is done. That is a theme we see in these verses time and time again. It highlights Jesus's deity and omnipotence.

The discovery of Greek magical papyri in Egypt informs us of the long and convoluted formulas, spells, conjurations, and catchwords that ancient exorcists employed as they sparred with demonic opponents to gain advantage over them...But with Jesus there is no elaborate protocol, nor is the effectiveness of the exorcism dependent on the words He utters. **The power to prevail over the demonic resides within Jesus Himself.** He speaks and the demons are expelled; His word is deed.⁷ (emphasis mine)

Take note that this is the third exorcism which Mark has recounted thus far in his gospel narrative. He wanted his readers to understand, on a deep level, Jesus' power and authority over the spiritual realm. Jesus truly is the sovereign God who reigns over all.

5:9-10

Why did Mark include the conversation between Jesus and the demons? No doubt in part to show us that the number of evil spirits possessing the man had no effect on Jesus' ability to drive them out. A legion was anywhere from 4,000 to 6,000.⁸ And yet Jesus drove them out without effort.

And in this, Mark is again making a powerful theological point: whether it's healing an incurable disease, raising someone from the dead, casting out one evil spirit or many, or creating everything from nothing, God's power is not limited. He is *omnipotent*.

5:11-13

For Jewish readers, many aspects of this story contain elements of ritual *uncleanness*; the tombs, the demon-possessed man, the pigs, etc. No self-respecting Jewish person would have been caught dead (no pun intended) in this region. Had he been, he too would have become ritually unclean. "Only Gentiles (or very non-observant Jews) raised pigs, and Jewish readers would think of pigs as among the most unclean animals and rightful hosts of evil spirits."⁹ This begs the question, then, of why Jesus was there with His disciples.

In short, He was in this wretched place because that was precisely why He had come (see Luke 19:10). He came in order that He might find and save those who were lost in sin, darkness, and death. What good news for this man, and for you and me!

And in this narrative, we see another remarkable truth: when Jesus encountered ritual impurity and uncleanness (things in the Torah which made a person temporarily unable to enter God's presence), the defilements did not transfer to Him and make Him unclean, as they would anyone else in ancient Israel (see Leviticus 5, Leviticus 11, and Numbers 19). Rather, His holiness and purity drove the uncleanness away and brought total purity! We see this same principle at work in Isaiah 6, when God cleansed Isaiah's uncleanness through a burning coal. The coal was not defiled by Isaiah's

⁷ Ibid., 156-157.

⁸ Keener, 147.

⁹ Ibid, 147.

uncleanness, but rather Isaiah's uncleanness was atoned for, and he was cleansed by God's holiness in the piece of coal.

Now, why did Jesus allow the demons to enter the pigs? Neither Mark, nor Matthew, nor Luke tell us, and thus we cannot be fully certain. Likely, it emphasized the uncleanness of the demons. They *wanted* to enter unclean animals. Remember that in the Law of Moses, pigs were forbidden by God for His people; they were considered ritually impure and unclean.¹⁰ Notice the demons made no effort to repent and truly humble themselves before Jesus. They are unclean spirits and have chosen to persist in their evil.

5:14-17

Look at the language with which Mark describes the people: "and they were afraid" (verse 15). This parallels the previous passage where the apostles were afraid after seeing Jesus' power. The people of this town were afraid when they saw what Jesus could do. When human beings encountered the unfathomable, divine power of Jesus, they were *terrified*. But in contrast to the apostles, who humbled themselves and followed Jesus faithfully unto death in spite of their fear, these people instead begged Him *to leave*. Their response has much more in common with that of the demons than with the apostles.

And in this is a sobering, valuable lesson. I believe Mark is asking his readers: "How will *you* respond to Jesus?" May our response echo that of the apostles.

5:18-20

In the final verses of this account, we again see a contrast. Whereas the demons begged Jesus to be allowed to flee from His presence and enter unclean animals, this man now begs Jesus to be allowed to *stay with Him*. He wants nothing more than to remain with the One who has saved him. His is a life that has truly been born again.

Jesus, however, does not permit him to remain with Him. Rather, He sends the man back to his home region to testify to Jesus' work in his life. This man is one of the first evangelists.

Jesus also identifies Himself as *the Lord* (v.19), again proclaiming Himself to be God. As we've seen, His claim is proven time and time again as He exercises the power and authority only God could have.

Analysis

I believe there is an important lesson here regarding discipleship to Jesus. Notice how Jesus let the demons have their request. But with this man whom He'd saved, He did not allow that. This should remind all of us who are followers of Jesus that we are, first and foremost, *disciples*. And a disciple is one who has surrendered his or her life to the lordship of Jesus Christ. A disciple is one

¹⁰ The point of classifying certain animals as ritually impure and unclean in the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) was not to say that they were bad or evil in and of themselves. After all, God created all of them! Rather, the dietary (as well as geographical and sartorial) restrictions for God's old covenant people were dealing with making distinctions between what the Jews could and could not consume/wear/plant and still remain in a condition where they could enter God's presence.

This can be difficult for us to get our minds around, but we have to understand these important truths: pigs are not evil. It is not evil to wear a garment made of different fabrics. Rather, those regulations dealt, temporarily, with explicit distinctions God wanted His people to make. For these distinctions symbolized the kind of purity (as *distinct* from impurity) required for one to enter God's holy presence, and God wanted them to be reminded at every turn that they were a distinct people, set apart from the rest of the nations. These things were abrogated by Jesus' death and resurrection, as He has made His people forever pure and clean and able to enter the Holy of Holies (Hebrews 10:19-22).

who says to Jesus, “Not my will but Thine be done.” **This man exemplified true discipleship in both his desire to be with Jesus and his submission to Jesus’ will.**

The life of a disciple of Christ is, after all, a life of contrast. We are called to be “in the world but not of it.” We live in the tension of *the now and the not yet*. God’s kingdom has come and is growing, but it has not yet been ushered in in all its fullness as it will be when Jesus returns for His own. Until that day comes, may you and I be found faithful. May we be men and women who walk humbly with our risen, sovereign Lord, in obedience to His will and faithfulness to His word.

Mark 5:21-43: Jesus' Sovereignty Over Sickness, Disease, and Death

Introduction

In the final of the three miraculous accounts in this literary section of his Gospel, Mark relates to us Jesus' ultimate authority over those things which afflict every human body: sickness, disease, and death. Because of sin, we are all subject to futility (Romans 8:20) and thus experience sickness and disease, and ultimately death. However, Jesus has absolute authority over these things because: 1) He is God, the Author of life, and 2) He bore our sicknesses in His body on the cross (Isaiah 53:4) and "He has destroyed [death] by enduring it."¹¹

In these verses, we have the story of a desperate father, Jairus, scared because his precious **twelve-year-old** daughter is dying. He runs to Jesus and asks for a miracle. To his great delight, Jesus agrees. And they hurry off. There's no time to lose! This little girl is close to death. But then something unexpected happens; to Jairus' horror, Jesus gets interrupted. A woman who has had a menstrual hemorrhage **for twelve years** touches Jesus in order to be healed, *and He stops and talks to her*. This was not part of the plan. At least not Jairus' plan. But it was all part of God's plan.

The middle story of the hemorrhaging woman provides the key to understanding the combined stories...Mark signifies the relationship between the two stories by several common elements. **Both stories are of females healed by the touch of Jesus; both are called "daughter" by Jesus; and the woman's illness and the girl's age are both given as twelve years.** In both stories Jesus is met by rebukes (vv. 31, 40), and both stories bring Jesus into contact with uncleanness (the menstrual hemorrhage of the woman and the corpse of the child). The aspect of uncleanness connects the present narrative with the previous story (5:1–20). **All three characters in Mark 5 transfer their uncleanness to Jesus, and to each Jesus bestows the cleansing wholeness of God.**¹² (emphases mine)

Commentary

5:21-24

In this narrative, we see several contrasts. These are intentional, as Mark, and ultimately the Holy Spirit, wants us to see that Jesus' mission was for *everyone*. Jairus was an important leader in the local synagogue, a respected religious leader in Israel. He would no doubt have been very concerned with Torah-observance and ritual purity. And we can reasonably speculate that he was aware of the opposition to Jesus which was growing among his fellow religious leaders. But in this narrative, he exemplifies the kind of faith which pleases Jesus; faith that takes Him at His word. Also of note is that Jairus' daughter, due to both her age and gender, "had virtually no social status. One would fall at the feet of someone of much greater status (like a king) or prostrate oneself before God; for this prominent man to humble himself in this way before Jesus was thus to recognize Jesus' power in a serious way."¹³ Great was Jairus' faith.

Mark paints a picture of immediacy and urgency. Jairus' daughter is at the point of death. Jairus urges Jesus to *hurry*, because he is afraid that she won't live long enough to be healed. Also, the crowd

¹¹ Quote from St. John Chrysostom, 4th-century Church Father and one of the greatest preachers the Church has ever known.

¹² Edwards, 160–161.

¹³ Keener, 148.

is large, and it would have been difficult to move quickly through all the people surrounding Jesus. It is with this picture in mind that Mark now introduces the next major character in this account: the woman with a chronic flow of blood.

5:25-29

In contrast to the Gerasene villagers who begged Jesus to leave, Jairus begged Jesus to heal his daughter, believing Jesus could do just that. And while this poor woman wanted to remain anonymous, she too believed Jesus had the power to heal her of her incurable condition. Both people: a man and a woman, a respected religious leader and a shunned outsider, exercised great faith in Jesus.

This woman was suffering from some form of chronic menstruation, a condition which would have made her ritually unclean, and therefore unable to enter the worshipping community in the synagogues and the temple. She was ostracized and excluded from the religious life of Israel. Being unclean, anything or anyone she touched would have also been made unclean, and thus she was avoided like the plague. Mark wants his readers to *feel* the hopelessness of this woman's plight. But she had one thing going for her—she believed Jesus could heal her. And as we'll see, that's all she needed.

Now, you may be wondering why she attached such significance to touching Jesus' *robe*. What in her thinking led her to believe that this particular garment contained healing power? As we've seen in Mark's narrative thus far, Jesus simply speaks the word, and it is done. This woman does not *need* to touch His clothing. Most scholars believe she was intentionally seeking to touch the *tzitzit*, the knotted threads at the hem of a rabbi's robe which symbolized his authority. She had enough faith to believe that she could be healed by simply touching Jesus' robe, and she believed that by specifically acknowledging His authority His healing power would flow out to her. And she was right. The moment she touched Him, she was healed.

This is not to say that there was something miraculous about Jesus' clothing. Rather, this woman's understanding led her to take a step of faith, and God met her where she was. The point is that she exercised great faith.

5:30-31

There was something qualitatively different about this woman's pursuit to encounter Jesus' healing power. As the apostles said, He was being pressed by the crowds. There were many people touching Him. And yet our Lord knew that His healing power had been exercised. This miracle is unique in that it was not one which Jesus initiated. Yet this woman's faith was such that she believed she could be healed of her incurable illness, and she was. And in another surprising twist, by highlighting her great faith, Mark contrasts her with Jesus' own 12 disciples (who would later become His apostles) who continually doubted and showed a lack of faith.¹⁴

In a practical way, this speaks to Mark's readers of the importance and effectiveness of our faith in Christ. As James wrote, our fervent prayers are effectual (James 5:16). This woman's faith is the kind of faith which pleases our Lord, as it demonstrates true trust in Him. It was faith put into action, which is the only authentic sort of faith (James 2).

On a pastoral note, this passage is not teaching us that if we just have enough faith, we'll get whatever we desire from the Lord. This is not a prosperity-gospel, health and wealth doctrine. Rather, God is highlighting the necessity of faith in Him and the importance of putting that faith into action. He is also showing us that He is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). He will save, heal, love, and deliver any and all who turn to Him in repentance and faith, calling upon His name (Romans 10:13).

¹⁴ Ibid., 148-149.

5:32-34

Why was the woman afraid? Likely because of her knowledge of the Levitical principle of cleanness/uncleanness. Whatever or whoever she touched would become ritually unclean due to her uncleanness. It seems she was afraid that both Jesus and the crowds would be angry, as her touch *should* have made both Him, and everyone else she touched, ritually impure, and thus unable to enter the worshipping community for the prescribed amount of time (see Leviticus 15:19). But it didn't. In fact, just the opposite occurred; Jesus' purity and holiness were transferred to her, healing her of her affliction, restoring her to a state of ritual cleanness, and bringing her fully into His covenant family. This is remarkable, and yet is something we see throughout the ministry of Jesus. He alone can touch the unclean and remain perfectly holy.

And notice the tenderness in His address. He called her *daughter*. What love and affection! This would have warmed her heart and likely have been the first time in many years she'd been addressed with such kindness. This is the grace of our Lord.

5:35

One can imagine Jairus' disappointment and anger toward the woman. Because of her having delayed Jesus, his daughter was now dead. But Jairus was about to encounter a truth about our Lord which Mark will exemplify just a short time later in chapter six: Jesus' generosity is not a zero-sum game.¹⁵ There is no limit to His power, love, and ability to perform miracles. Not even the unforeseen delay *or his daughter's own death* could stop Jairus from receiving Jesus' power. The only condition Jesus puts on Jairus is that of faith. As we'll see in the very next verse, He tells Jairus to "only believe."

5:36-37

Jesus immediately addressed the thoughts racing through Jairus' head, telling him to not be afraid, *but only believe*. Faith is a big deal to our Lord. The author of Hebrews wrote that without faith, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). In His interactions with the various crowds and people throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus was constantly calling forth and calling for faith.

As Jesus told the woman, "Your faith has saved you," so we see that He is calling for faith from Jairus. He asked the apostles why they didn't have faith when the storm raged. He commended the woman's faith, *exemplified by her pursuit of Jesus*, and here exhorts Jairus to simply believe. Jesus wants our faith and trust. And He has proven Himself trustworthy on innumerable occasions.

5:38-43

In these final verses, Jesus performs the miracle of all miracles: He brings a person back from the dead! In this, Mark is showing us, once again, the definitive proof that Jesus truly is God and Lord—He has authority over life and death.

But human despair was God's opportunity. Jesus had already been shown as Lord of nature; it was necessary that He here be shown as Lord of life and death. This was an important proof of Godhead, for it was supremely fitting that He, who had created life even before sin and death entered the world, should show Himself Master of death and the grave. More, this was an important piece of preliminary evidence for His own resurrection: He who had already conquered death for others would one day burst its bonds Himself. **The central miracle of the**

¹⁵ In other words, Jesus' power and grace are not in limited supply. A zero-sum game is where people compete for finite resources. In this case, it would be like saying that because Jesus healed the woman, there wouldn't be enough of His power to go around to heal Jairus' daughter. But Jesus' power is infinite, for He is the eternal God who is all-powerful.

Bible is therefore the resurrection of Jesus, because it is the central fact of all Christian experience, here and now as well as later.¹⁶ (emphasis mine)

Notice again that Mark points out Jesus' way of performing these miracles: He simply speaks the word, and it is done. By His sovereign word He calms the storm, casts out numerous demons, and brings a girl back from the dead. As we've seen throughout these narratives, "His word is deed."¹⁷

Mark makes an interesting note in verse 40. He says Jesus put the mocking, laughing crowd "outside" before He raised Jairus' daughter from the dead. He did not allow unbelief to remain in the room with Him. Jesus places a high premium on our faith and our trusting in Him. Indeed, all of life's trials serve to test and prove the genuineness of our faith (1 Peter 1:6-7), even as trials served an important function in His earthly life and ministry (Hebrews 2:10).

Finally, why did Jesus strictly command them to tell no one about this astonishing miracle? He did this at other points in His ministry as well. The reason has to do with timing. There was a specific time-table for Him to be revealed to Israel and ultimately go to the cross. And the miracles He did attracted the attention of the people and escalated the hostility of the religious leaders against Him. He did not want word getting out, at this point, that He had raised someone from the dead. This is why here and in other places in the gospels, Jesus commands people in the Jewish regions to stay silent about the miracles He performed.

Analysis

Many have asked throughout the millennia why we are so certain that Jesus is the only Way, Truth, and Life. How can we know for sure that He is the One way to the Father? The answer is before us in this text. Jesus proves, through His words and miracles, that He is truly God, the sovereign Lord with all authority and power. The ultimate proof of this is His own resurrection, for who could rise from the dead but the Author of life? He is exactly who He claimed to be: God and Lord.

And not only is Jesus the Almighty Lord and God, but He is also the Great Shepherd of the sheep who cares so deeply for His own. To our Lord, the dying daughter of an important Jewish religious leader was of the utmost importance. And so was a ritually impure woman who had long been ostracized from the worshipping community. Mark wants us to understand that Jesus' power and compassion go hand in hand.

¹⁶ R. Alan Cole, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 2, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 166.

¹⁷ Edwards, 157.

Conclusion

To ancient readers of the New Testament, Mark's narrative would have been unlike anything they'd ever read. Here is the story of a carpenter-turned-rabbi who proclaimed Himself to be God, performed astonishing miracles, and ultimately rose from death! This was not the kind of story that Mark—or any faithful Jewish person—would have made up. Had these things not happened, there is no way Mark or the other Gospel writers would have written them. The Gospel is a *truth claim*, and it is true!

And as we consider the impact Mark's gospel would have had on his original readers in the first century, we should ask ourselves if it's having the same impact on us in the 21st century. How do we understand these chapters? Do we leave our time of reading and study thinking, "What an interesting bit of story"? Or are we astonished at this Rabbi, being drawn to worship Him and stand in awe of His majesty? The latter is both the goal of Mark's writing and the purpose of the entire Bible. God's word was given to us to reveal *Him* and lead us to know and worship Him as His redeemed, covenant people.

My prayer is that this brief commentary has had that effect on you. May you know Jesus the Christ, this One who is God and Lord, and you may you be prompted to give Him all the praise and glory of which He alone is worthy.

Soli Deo Gloria

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