

SALVATION IN MARK

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1 INTRODUCTION

It is interesting that the terms σωτήρ and σωτηρία (except in Mark 16:21) are not used in Mark. Although the terms "salvation" and "saviour" are absent from Mark, the role of "saviour" is not. The verb σώζω occurs in 3:4; 5:23,28,34; 6:56; 8:35; 10:26,52; 13:13,20; 15:30-31 (and 16:16). It is also generally accepted that the passion of Jesus plays a very important role in this Gospel, and Kähler (1969, 60) even referred to the Gospels as "Passionsgeschichten mit ausführlichen Einleitung". It is often said that Mark 10:45 and 14:24 are the only references to the salvific meaning of the death of Jesus in Mark, and that these references were influenced by the early Christian tradition (Barth 1992, 13). Does this mean that salvation is not that prominent in the Gospel of Mark?

To determine the soteriology, one could begin by investigating the Christology of Mark. It is noteworthy that the Gospel of Mark starts by mentioning the titles "Jesus", "Christ" and "Son of God". Best is of the opinion that it is not the Christology that requires explanation, as He is already Christ at the outset of the Gospel, but rather the soteriology (1990, xxiiiif). What needs explanation is the meaning of the different titles being ascribed to Jesus, and especially its relation to the meaning of the life of Jesus as a whole. It remains striking that in the New Testament as a whole the term σωτήρ is used so seldom, even though the function of Saviour is quite obvious in the New Testament and in Mark. This may be because the term was ideologically loaded very heavily in New Testament times. It is interesting to note that Oscar Cullmann refers to the title σωτήρ as relatively late and one that could not have functioned as a title for Jesus in Palestine "da man ja den Eigennamen 'Jesus' einfach hätte wiederholen müssen: dem 'Jesus Soter' würde ja ein 'Jeschua Jeschua' entsprechen" (1963, 252). Ferdinand Hahn also ignores the title and the function of saviour, although he admits that it deserves investigation (1966, 45). It is then significant that Matera states that the "Christology of Mark's Gospel is in the story it tells" (1999, 24) and that Mark would define Messiahship in terms of Jesus and not Jesus in terms of Messiahship (see also Kingsbury 1983).

Narrative criticism has also broadened the interpretation of the Gospels (Powell, M A 1990), and the different titles associated with Jesus acquire their content from the narrative as a whole. "Nur wenn er [der Leser HJBC] den 'Plot' der im Evangelium erzählten Gesamthandlung verfolgt, erschliesst sich ihm das Persongeheimnis Jesu, damit – als dessen Konsequenz – das Kreuz und so am ende sein eigenes 'Heil'" (Backhaus 1995, 93). The various Christological titles of Jesus are not inherently Christological, and also not unambiguous. They obtain their meaning in and through the narrative as such. It must be kept in mind that the role of the titles must first and foremost be seen in the context of the characterisation in the narrative. This means that we do not have a systematic Christology in the Gospel, but a narrative presentation (Broadhead 1999, 26.29).

According to Schildgen the Gospel of Mark can be seen as a "popular and contemporary form of a 'sacred' narrative using the resources of Hebraic history, fiction, apocalypse and biography. Mark aligns his genre choice with his ideological intentions. In his version of Jesus, he presents a wonderworking wandering teacher, who violates contemporary social, religious, and political habits and behavior, until his death when order is restored" (1998, 57). While letters are appropriate to correct and persuade readers with a view to many issues, narratives are ill-suited to such purposes, and one has to infer the correct position from the actions and reactions of various characters. Narratives further invite readers to identify with the hero and to develop empathy with his or her position and fate (cf. Tolbert 1999, 53).

It must also be acknowledged that the issue of salvation can be communicated through metaphors (cf. Van Deventer 1986). In the case of Paul, for example, a large number of metaphors are used, drawn from four different spheres: social interaction, biological and physiological interaction, the cultic and ritual realm, as well as from the technical sphere of life. When attention is given to motifs and soteriological *topoi*, it is also important to keep in mind that according to some our interest in terms and metaphors is basically in the effect or the end result (Marrow 1990, 278f).

We take then as point of departure the Gospel of Mark as a narrative (cf. Best 1983; Breytenbach 1985; Kingsbury 1983, 45). This text is to be interpreted in its socio-cultural and literary context, taking into account the narratorial and social dimensions of the text (cf. Robbins 1992b). This implies taking into consideration the worldviews and mindsets of the world in which Mark originated. We shall endeavour to deduce from the narrative as a whole how this narrative communicates the salvific intervention of God in and through Jesus. The way in which for example the emphasis on the opposition to Jesus receives greater attention to the end of the narrative has always been noted. This already implies careful attention to the so-called middle section of Mark. Actually, the texture of the narrative as a whole has to be taken into consideration.

Part of a socio-rhetorical interpretation is to recognise that various types of discourses can be seen to be part of the rich texture of the Gospel of Mark. One can discern prophetic, miracle, wisdom, apocalyptic, and suffering-death discourse in Mark. These different types of discourse or "rhetorolects" developed amongst early Christians in the rhetorical environment of Mediterranean discourse (Robbins 2002, 16). In trying to understand the way salvation plays a role in Mark as narrative, the contribution of these different discourses can also play a role.

2 TERMINOLOGY AND NARRATIVE ROLES

2.1 Wonder-worker

As has been pointed out, the verb σφύζω occurs thirteen times in Mark, whereas the term σωτήρ is absent in Mark. It occurs six times in the context of healings by Jesus, while the

other occurrences are related to losing or saving one's life. Van Deventer highlighted the following basic semantic components of salvation as event:

- a) Someone finds himself in a *distressful situation* (this is of course an implicational component).
- b) A *change* in this situation is effected by the *intervention* of someone else (this is the core component of this meaning).
- c) Negatively the *distress is relieved*, and positively the person *is brought into a blissful position* (this may be regarded as an inferential component) (Van Deventer 1986, 87f).

This will in all probability also be true of salvation in Mark. These facts are, however, to be put in the broader perspective of a narratological approach to Mark. Davidsen's (1993) semiotic reading of Mark as narrative helps us a great deal in this respect. This also enables us to see that the narrative theme salvation in Mark is more prevalent than can be deduced from the occurrence of the word group σῶζω alone. This does not mean, however, that it is not worthwhile to take serious note of the lexeme σῶζω and related concepts as a point of departure.

Davidsen (1993, 61f) distinguishes four abstract narrative genres and narrative roles:

	BEING	NON-BEING
CHANGE	Progression genre Role: Progressor (subject) – Beneficiary (object)	Degression genre Role: Degressor (subject) – Victim (object)
PRESER- VATION	Protection genre Role: Polemic: Degressor (subject) - Victim (object) Core: Beneficiary (object) – Protector (subject)	Repression genre Role: Polemic: Progressor (subject) – Beneficiary (object) Core: Victim (object) – Repressor (subject)

The narrative Jesus appears basically in three roles: as wonder worker, as proclaimer and as saviour. For our purpose, the first and third roles are especially important. The discursive actor roles are the semantically concrete articulation of narrative actant roles.

In investigating the role of wonder worker, Davidsen deals with different roles constituting the thematic role of protector: the healer, the exorcist and the shepherd. The role σωτήρ (in connection with healing) is an abstract role, and is almost identical with the protector role. The verb σῶζειν basically signifies to preserve, to protect, to deliver, to free from danger, to save from something threatening. Although its main use is medical, it can also designate the rescue from any danger, even mortal danger. Salvation is the opposite of ἀπώλεια, destruction. According to Davidsen (1993, 71)

"[I]t is the thematic, although rather abstract, role σωτήρ that is most nearly identical with the narrative role of protector: to save is to save (protection/protector) someone (victim/beneficiary) from something that threatens (degression/degressor). Pragmatically,

the wonder narrative defines Jesus as σωτήρ, savior. Conversely, the protector role gives the term salvation its pregnant content."

Implied in the role of the protector is the beneficiary or the victim of the degressor. The thematic victim roles are then the sick, the possessed and the flock (14:72). Mark 2:17 is a central saying in this respect: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" NIV.

The thematic victim-role can then be defined as a person in distress

χρείαν ἔχων̄ χρείαν ἔχω̄ χρείαν ἔχουσιν

It is also important to see that the basic contrast between being the victim and the beneficiary is the contrast between death and life, to kill/lose a life or to save a life (8:35). The counterpart to the role of the protector, the σωτήρ, is the

ἀπολλύμενος ἀπόλλυμαι ἀπώλεια

Daidsen sees in the wonder narrative the narrative genre of Protection, which according to his scheme includes the constitutive narrative roles:

Degressor – Victim/Beneficiary – Protector (1993, 84)

The wonder narrative's narrative roles or actants are articulated in the gospel narrative and specified in thematic roles which, at a superior level of generalization, include the following roles:

ἀπόλλυων ἀπολλύμενος σωζόμενος σωτήρ

The role ἀπόλλυων is realised by the actor Satan, the role σωτήρ by the actor Jesus. The role ἀπολλύμενος /σωζόμενος is realised by various actors like the man with the unclean spirit, the little daughter, the women with haemorrhage, the blind man etc (Daidsen 1993, 84).

2.2 Saviour

The other narrative role to be considered is the role of saviour. Although the designation σωτήρ is absent in Mark, it has been shown already that the narrative role σωτήρ is most nearly identical with the narrative role of protector.

Reference has already been made to 8:35ff and the contrast between ἀπόλλυμι and σώζω, between life and death, salvation and damnation. The role of saviour is to save someone who is a victim of a threatening or on-going process of degression. "He may appear as savior in a narrow sense (e.g. as healer) or in a broader sense (as the one who saves his people from sin); but the roles of the narrative genre remain the same" (Daidsen 1993, 223).

The content of salvation can be differentiated as provisional and definite salvation. The healings of Jesus have a provisional salvific significance in themselves in redressing the physical need, but they also point beyond themselves as signs of the coming of the kingdom of God. Even in the case of the reversal of death of the daughter of Jairus by Jesus (5:35, 42), the salvation is only provisional. There are, nevertheless, in this provisional salvation as rescue from death links to Jesus' own resurrection – cf. in (5:41, 42) the ἔγειρε and ἀνέστη (Marcus 2000, 372).

A number of issues are implied here, such as the fact that Jesus saved others, but not himself (Mark 15:31), and the implication thereof for his mission of saving others. The role of God in the process of salvation is also relevant, as is underlined by the resurrection of Jesus. These issues will receive attention below.

3 THE BEGINNING OF SALVATION

In the light of what has been said so far, it is important to look at the beginning of the narrative as the topic of salvation is immediately present here. The beginning of the Gospel is a reconfiguration of prophetic discourse. Hos 1:2 LXX ἀρχὴ λόγου κυρίου is reconfigured in Mark 1:1 as Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ which also reminds one of the beginning of Genesis (cf. Marcus 2000, 145). This means that the rest of the narrative is seen in line with the story of salvation going back to the Old Testament prophets. Verse 1 can then be taken as an indication of the content of the book as a whole and not only the first pericope (Gnilka 1978, 42f). This single sentence (1:1-3) at the outset of the narrative supplies the reader with privileged information from the very beginning, while the characters in the narrative have to struggle to gain this insight (cf. Guelich 1989, 6-8; Matera 1999, 7f).

In Mark 1:2-3 we find the conflation of three passages from Exod 23:20; Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3 but being introduced as a quotation of Isaiah the prophet. The fact that this conflated citation, starting with Exod 23:20 and Mal 3:1 and highlighting the preparation of the way of the Lord is ascribed to Isaiah, has special significance. If the εὐαγγέλιον of the coming of the Lord in Isa 40:9-10 is kept in mind, it becomes clear why this quotation in Mark 1:2-3 with its link to Isaiah can be seen as giving more content to what the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ entails (cf. Marcus 1992, 17-20).

The first quotation in Mark is from God Himself speaking of the messenger who has to prepare the way for Jesus. This announcement by Mark about the good news about Jesus may be understood to refer to Isaiah's vision of a saving holy war. This entails a theocentric reading of the "way of the Lord" in 1:3, referring to "the triumphant march of the holy warrior, Yahweh, leading his people through the wilderness to their true homeland in a mighty demonstration of saving power" (Marcus 1992, 29.31). For Mark the fulfilment of this prophecy will take place in a paradoxical way. Because the way of the Lord is Jesus' way, it is not the revolutionary struggle against Rome he refers to, but rather Jesus' path of suffering and death in Jerusalem which is the true fulfilment of the triumphant return of Yahweh to Zion according to Isaiah (Marcus 2000, 149).

In the light of what has been said so far, it is illuminating to compare the beginning of Mark to the beginning of Luke. After the Lukan prologue (1:1-4) the narrator describes Zechariah and Elizabeth and then the action shifts to the Jerusalem temple from Luke 1:8 onwards. The narration continues with the experience of Zechariah when the angel Gabriel appears to him with a message in the temple. Gabriel's speech can be seen as prophetic miracle discourse, as it "prophesies the miraculous effect of

God's power in the bodies of Zechariah and Elizabeth, with the result that Elizabeth will bear the body of a special son" (Robbins 2003, 5).

In Mark there is a different flow of events. Here the discourse does not start with the angel Gabriel, but with the Word of God in the form of oral-scribal recitation of Biblical discourse. According to Robbins we have here an example of prophetic discourse (2002, 17):

Rule: 2 "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way;
3 the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'"

Case: 4-6 John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness

Result: 7 And he preached saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I...

8 I have baptized with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

In prophetic discourse the basic *Rule* underlying the argumentation is that God chooses certain people to be responsible for the righteousness in his kingdom. The *Cases* are the individuals or people chosen by God and the *Results* are blessings on those who live up to their calling and woes on those who don't. Here the oral-scribal recitation of Biblical discourse functions as the Rule for John, even as the Case and the baptism of the people by John is the Result.

This prophetic discourse immediately focuses on Yahweh as King and the responsibility of leaders of His kingdom. This is followed by the proclamation of John the Baptist in 1:4-8. He is already acting out his role as the forerunner who will be preparing the intervention of God in Jesus. He immediately proclaims the coming of ὁ ἰσχυρότερός who will baptise with the Holy Spirit (1:7-8). The announcement of the stronger one forms the turning point in the pericope and in the prologue as a whole. But as the forerunner of this mightier one he starts preaching repentance of sins and inviting people to be baptised. The depiction of John the Baptist as well as the typical topics associated with Elijah and Elisha (cf. 1 Kgs 17:3; 19:3-18; 2 Kgs 2:4-14) in 1:5-6 has strong eschatological overtones. "The reader is left with the impression that a powerful action of God is taking place, one that expresses itself both in the baptism of myriads of people and in their being moved to confess their sins, which epitomizes their repentance" (Marcus 2000, 156). This baptism was for Mark only a proleptic cleansing from sins since the true remission from sins would only result from the death of Jesus as a ransom for many (10:45). It is also important to see that according to Isa 40:5 the Glory of the Lord will be revealed, the Lord will come with might, his arm rules (Isa 40:10), and He will feed his flock like a shepherd (Isa 40:11).

As the reader already knows that Jesus has been announced as "the stronger one" (1:7), Mark 1:9-11 and 1:12-13 again provides information that is important with a view to the process of salvation in Mark. The opening of the heavens is usually taken as a clear indication of the apocalyptic nature of this section (Lohmeyer 1963, 22). And although the splitting of the heavens clearly points in this direction, Robbins calls attention to the restraint in Mark in the narration about heavenly things which is uncharacteristic of apocalyptic discourse (2002, 19). He sees here another example of the merging of

prophetic (descent of the Spirit) and apocalyptic discourse similar to *T. Levi* 18:6 where reference is made to a new priest who will function in a special way in the end time.

It is also noteworthy that Mark 1:11 is the first of only three occasions in Mark where direct communication takes place between God and Jesus: 1:11; 14:36 and 15:34. God addresses Jesus only in 1:11, while in 14:36 and 15:34 it is Jesus addressing God. In 9:7 we find the only interaction of God with the disciples with the important statement: "This is my beloved Son, listen to Him". The address to Jesus in 1:11 is formulated in biblical language echoing Ps 2:7 (LXX), Isa 42:1 with a possible allusion to Gen 22:2, 12, 16. With a view to the task of Jesus, the enabling presence of the Spirit on Jesus and His acclamation as Son of God by God is of great importance. But there are no detailed statements here commissioning Jesus to carry out his task.

"God is pleased with Jesus (Mark 1:11), God sanctions his activity (Mark 9:7), and God determines the final outcome of his activity. But God does not instruct him at every point like he does Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. Jesus knows what to do as a teacher who says and does the gospel of God....In Mark, Jesus' knowledge of the gospel of God allow him to take over Yahweh's role of calling, teaching, and commissioning." (Robbins 1992b, 118.119).

Even though the reader knows from the beginning that Jesus is the Son of God, something that the centurion will only discover and confess at the end, yet "not even the reader fully comprehends what divine sonship fully entails in Mark's narrative universe" (Matera 1999, 9). What does become clear already in the light of the use of Ps 2 is the fact that the kingship of Jesus as the Christ is congruent with that of God and the opposition of the evil rulers is against both of their kingships (Marcus 1992, 76; Marcus 2000, 166). The temptation in Mark 1:12-13 therefore forms a logical sequence to what has been narrated already.

4 JESUS' ENCOUNTER WITH SATAN

In Mark 1:12-13 Jesus is tested by Satan in the wilderness. Although one may here see a link to the Elijah-Elisha tradition in 1 Kgs 18:12; 2 Kgs 2:16, the primary biblical model is probably Adam who before the Fall was at peace with the animals (Marcus 2000, 169). There are probably other Old Testament echoes in the background of this account. It is remarkable that Mark does not here in clear words state the outcome of the contest, though it is immediately afterwards implied in the proclamation of the coming of the kingdom by Jesus in 1:14f, as well as in the rest of the narrative in exorcisms like those in 1:21-18.

Best has shown that if the connectivity of Mark as narrative is taken seriously, 1:12f must be seen as the basis for the statement in 3:27 about the binding of the strong man. A rhetorical analysis shows that 3:27 is the rhetorical centre of 3:20-35. The change from Beelzebul in 3:22 to Satan in 3:23 also confirms the link with 1:12f. Best states that:

"The conception of the binding of evil spirits is common in the apocalyptic writings. It presumably takes its Jewish origin [the idea also existed in Persian circles] in Isa. xxiv. 21 f. and becomes more explicit in Tob. viii.3; I Enoch x.4 f., 11 f.; xviii.12-xix.2; xxi.1-6; liv.4 f.; Test. Levi xviii.12; Jub. xlvi.15. It reappears in the New Testament in Rev.

xx.2, where it is explicitly said that it is Satan who is bound... Christ has already bound Satan according to Mark iii.27; δῆσῃ, aorist subjunctive, would suggest one definite act, and this must be the trial of strength which he had with Satan in the desert – the Temptation." (Best 1990, 12-13).

Robbins describes how prophetic discourse (where evil in the world is a result of human disobedience) is moved along through miracle discourse and is combined with apocalyptic discourse where evil spirits have corrupted the good creation of God. "Part of the Markan achievement is to intertwine exorcisms with apocalyptic *topoi* in a manner that moves the casting out of unclean spirits/demons beyond the worldviews of basic Mediterranean miracle discourse or biblical prophetic discourse into apocalyptic discourse" (2002, 24). The statement in 3:27 forms part of Jesus' response to the accusation of the scribes that He is possessed by Beelzebul, Satan, and casting out demons by the prince of the demons. Jesus' response is an apocalyptic argument interweaving prophetic discourse (correcting the reasoning of those accusing Him) and wisdom discourse (making use of parables, enthymemes and contraries) in which three reasons are given for the assertion in verse 23 that Satan cannot cast out Satan. The first two reasons in 3:24-25 are wisdom reasoning on the basis of a kingdom and a house. The third and conclusive reason in verse 26 is an apocalyptic argument from the contrary about Satan rising against himself and coming to an end. "The argument from the contrary, then, continues with a counter-argument from analogy (*parabole*). By analogy, the strong man is Satan, and the one who enters the strong man's house is Jesus" (Robbins 2002, 26).

This could imply that the need for salvation in Mark is strongly bound to the presence of the Satan. While in Luke Satan remains active up to the final stages of the passion with a view to Judas Iscariot and Peter (Luke 22:3, 31), it appears that in Mark the activity of Satan effectively disappears after Mark 1:12f. The tendency to see the whole of Mark as governed by a struggle between Jesus and Satan is not as prevalent any more as it used to be (Best 1990, xxiii). The only place where one gets the impression of Satan directly opposing or testing Jesus is in 8:33. But Jesus' use of "Satan" in addressing Peter here probably has to be seen as a figure of speech with the implication: "Get behind me, you who oppose me!" (Evans 2001, 19). The rest of the verse corroborates this when Jesus says that Peter is thinking human thoughts and not the things of God (or of Satan!). This is important for the theme of salvation because it means that Mark's readers did not see Satan as the sole source of evil. Evil can be present in demon-possessed men (3:27) or in the world of nature (4:37f) and in sickness (1:43). But nowhere does Mark attribute moral evil, sin, to demon possession. The origin of sin is within man where evil thoughts have their origin (7:21-3). In this respect Best concludes that "we may say that for Mark evil may originate with Satan or in the human heart, thought not necessarily in the heart of the person who is subject to the temptation" (Best 1990, 43f). And while Satan is effectively written out of the story because Mark has in fact transferred the defeat of Satan and the cosmic powers to the temptation in 1:11f, there still must be a final defeat in the End-time when all things will be made subject to God (Best 1990, xxiii).

5 THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM

When Jesus starts his ministry by announcing the coming of the kingdom of God in Mark 1:15, this can be seen as part of a traditional though redefined story of the Jewish people, of the expectation of the vindication of Israel by a saving covenant God. This implies that Israel would return from exile, that evil would be defeated, and that Yahweh would visit his people. This was no timeless message but actually a shocking claim (Wright 1996, 227).

We have already dealt with the proclamation of John the Baptist in 1:4-8. He is already acting out his role as the forerunner who will be preparing the intervention of God in Jesus. He immediately proclaims the coming of ὁ ἰσχυρότερος who will baptise with the Holy Spirit (1:7-8). But as the forerunner of this mightier one he starts preaching repentance of sins and inviting people to be baptised.

The Deutero-Isaiah motif of an eschatological manifestation in the wilderness must also be put in the context of the expectations in Palestine and the Jewish revolt against Rome in 66-74. But Mark gives his own content to it. The way through the wilderness should be understood as the way the Lord will create for Himself and only secondarily as denoting the human walk along that way. This can be linked to the important role of ὁδός in the central section of Mark 8:22-10:52. This means that the disciples are called to follow Jesus in his embodying of the coming of the kingdom (Marcus 1992, 31f). It is also important to see that according to Isa 40:5 the glory of the Lord will be revealed, the Lord comes with might, his arm rules for him (Isa 40:10), and He tends his flock like a shepherd (40:11).

The coming of the kingdom has also to be seen in the context of eschatology and theology. This means that the Gospel of Mark will be dealing in its narrative with the claim of the rule of God on the totality of the lives of those who are willing to follow Jesus on His way. This means that Mark begins with prophetic discourse focusing on Yahweh as King and the responsibility of leaders of His kingdom. This can be seen in the injunction to prepare the way of the Lord, and this will be fleshed out more fully later in Mark.

When Jesus proclaims the good news of the intervention of God, He is also challenging his audience to repentance and faith. In the context of the proclamation of the coming of the Lord in the desert, this is an appeal for a changed praxis, that Israel must conduct herself in a certain manner. According to Wright the call to repent and believe is to be understood in the light of a passage in Josephus *Life* 110 (LCL) to abandon their revolutionary zeal and to be loyal to Josephus. This is then an eschatological and political call and not simply an individualistic moral turning away from private sin (Wright 1996, 250). This is a radical challenge to Israel give up their way of being Israel and trust Jesus for his way. They are not expected to go and sacrifice, but to abandon their whole way of life, and to trust Him for a new way of life (Wright 1996, 257).

The appeal to faith in the Old Testament is very often characteristic of a call to Israel in the hour of her distress (cf. Isa 7:9; 28:16; 30:15; Hab 2:4). In Post-Biblical Jewish writings a lack of faith is typical of those who are no longer members of Israel. By way of contrast, the true Israel has faith. Thus faith is a mark of the true Israel before Lord; it is characteristic of Israel restored after the exile and is not just simply a reference to a religious interiority (Wright 1996, 261).

The process of the spreading of the message about the intervention of God in this manner is continued through Mark 1 with the calling of the first four disciples and the narrative programme Jesus sets for Himself of making them fishers of men (1:17). After that His teaching and healing ministry commences and we hear in 1:38 that Jesus really came to preach, while the reader already knows that the content of this preaching is the kingdom of God. Mark 1 closes with the cleansing of the leper who cannot remain silent about the intervention of God in his life and starts spreading the good news (1:45). At this stage it is clear that the preaching of the kingdom has transformative implications transcending boundaries of geography and ethnicity (Blount 1998, 98).

These themes at the beginning of Mark embody a whole range of issues. The kingdom connotes the rule of God, but also the present realm of blessings. The Kingdom also entails the gift of life and salvation. It is a comprehensive term for all that salvation includes. This can also be seen from Mark 10:17, 23-24, 30. When this is read together with 9:43, 45, 47; it can be concluded that eternal life, kingdom, and salvation function as synonyms in Mark (cf. Backhaus 1995, 106).

6 JESUS AS AUTHORITATIVE TEACHER

It has been mentioned already (2.2) that Jesus appears basically in three roles in the narrative, as wonder worker, proclaimer and saviour, with a close relationship between the first and third roles. His role as proclaimer is articulated in an important manner in the role of Jesus the disciple-gathering teacher that plays a very central role in Mark. It is interesting to realize that the progression from Jesus' prophetic discourse in 1:14-15 to the casting out of the unclean spirit and the miracle discourse in 1:21-28 is a conventional progression in biblical literature. A close parallel can be found in Elijah's prophetic announcement in 1 Kgs 17:1 followed by miracle discourse in 1 Kgs 17:8-24 climaxing in the widow's statement of 1 Kgs 17:24 that she now knows that the word of the Lord from his mouth is true. Yet the movement from the prophetic discourse directly to the calling of the four fishermen as disciple-companions in Mark 1:16-20 is unusual for biblical literature, although acceptable in the development of Mark's narrative.

It is important that in the initial phase of the ministry of Jesus his social identity is established as a teacher gathering disciples and involving them as willing disciples and companions in his programme. Robbins has highlighted that neither the Hebrew Bible nor the LXX contains the teacher/disciple pattern, but that in varying manner this pattern plays a role in the writings of Philo and Josephus (1992b, 100f). The teacher/disciple tradition in Mark can be seen as an independent adaptation of aspects of biblical and Greek traditions, but also not entirely parallel to the rabbinic tradition or Philostratus's

Vita Apollonii (Robbins 1992b, 107). The heavenly sanction for the activity of Jesus has a strong Jewish background. But there are also important deviations underlining the autonomous nature of Jesus' activity as proclaimer and teacher. In contrast to the prophet, the teacher speaks the wisdom of God. Jesus preaches the kingdom of God without introducing it with "thus says the Lord". It is clear that He teaches with authority (1:22) and that his miracle is seen as confirming his new and authoritative teaching (1:27).

"Therefore, a basic dimension of the 'messianic' nature of Jesus' activity in Mark arises from the adaptation of the autonomous stature of the teacher in Greco-Roman tradition and the subsequent importation of this emphasis on autonomy into Jewish tradition where God has been the dominant autonomous figure" (Robbins 1992b, 119).

This identity of Jesus as autonomous teacher is relevant to his role as Saviour in Mark, as the authority of his prophetic discourse moving into the miracle discourse is closely related to other aspects of his salvific identity.

It is significant that after calling the first disciples, Jesus enters the synagogue in Capernaum, the heart of the provincial Jewish social order. This first miracle functions in Mark in the same manner as the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7, the Nazareth sermon in Luke 4, and the wedding feast at Cana in John 2:1-11. The encounter with the man with the unclean spirit (1:23-26) is framed by the reference to the διδαχὴ and the ἐξουσία of Jesus in 1:22 and 27. What is emphasized here is Jesus' conflict on the Sabbath with the scribes, the religious authorities. There is a symbolic meaning involved in the exorcism. "This 'spirit' personifies scribal power, which holds sway over the hearts and minds of the people. Only after breaking the influence of this spirit is Jesus free to begin his compassionate ministry to the masses (1:29ff)" (Myers et al. 1996, 14). It must also be remembered that the victory was already won in essence in the temptation account in 1:13f. Reference has been made already to the contrast between ἀπόλλυμι and σώζω, between life and death, salvation and damnation. The demon realizes that Jesus has power over life and death and by his question whether He has come to destroy them (1:24) witnesses in this oblique manner to the saving power of Jesus. The irony is that it is the actor Satan who fills the role of ἀπόλλυων while Jesus as actor fulfils the role of σωτήρ. This is then further attested to by the healings, first in the private sphere of the home (1:29-31) and the public healings and exorcisms (1:32-34).

Marcus sees the exorcism as the inauguration of an eschatological holy war against demonic foes (2000, 195). When one takes into account that the decisive victory has been won in the desert already (1:13), the continuing conflict is not less real, but one can also see the social and cultural dimensions in it (Myers 1996, 143).

7 FORGIVENESS OF SINS, FELLOWSHIP WITH SINNERS AND HEALINGS

After the programmatic exorcism in 1:21-28 and the following healings, the healing of a paralytic in Mark 2:1-12 also deals with Jesus as saviour in a narrower sense as healer as well as in a broader sense as the one who saves from sin. This pericope is the beginning of a section in which the conflict between the Jewish religious leaders and Jesus is being intensified. This conflict was already hinted at in the narrative about the man with the unclean spirit in the synagogue.

Two motifs are combined here, the healing of the paralytic and Jesus' authority as Son of man to forgive sins. The way in which Jesus links the forgiveness of sins (2:6) and the healing (2:11) underlines the fact that Jesus wants to bring wholeness to the person and not just the healing of a physical illness. The elements of forgiveness and healing are both integral to the ministry of Jesus and are evidence of the fact that God's salvation or wholeness had come (1:14-15) (cf. Gnllka 1978, 102; Guelich 1989, 95).

As only God can forgive sins (2:7), Jesus' claim to do that (2:5) is seen as blasphemy. Forgiveness of sins is part of the blessings of the Messianic age (cf. Isa 33:24; Mi 7:18-20; Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 18:31; 36:22-28; Zech 13:1). The forgiveness promised by John the Baptist in 1:4 is now being realised by Jesus in the healing of the paralytic and the pronouncement that his sins are forgiven. This is relevant to the issue of salvation in the broader sense too. Forgiveness of sins is another way of saying 'return from exile' (cf. Jer 33:4-11; Ezek 36:24-6, 33; 37:21-3; Isa 40:1-2; 53:5-6, 11-12. This can be a private blessing, but it is not just a gift to an individual person (Wright 1996, 268).

"The point is that Jesus was offering the return from exile, the renewed covenant, the eschatological 'forgiveness of sins' - in other words, the kingdom of god. And he was offering this final eschatological blessing outside the official structures, to all the wrong people, and on his own authority. That was his real offence" (Wright 1996, 272 his italics).

This means that the paralytic was experiencing his own "return" from exile in the healing of his paralysis and forgiveness of his sins. It was to this scandalous redefinition of the kingdom itself that the Jewish religious leaders objected. But there is another reaction in this pericope that correlates with 1:22 and 27, that of the response of wonder and amazement as they experience the intervention of God and the breaking in of kingdom of God. This response in wonder is not in faith and repentance (Dwyer 1996, 143). This amazement was often linked to confessions or questions concerning Jesus' identity and mission as in 1:27; 2:12.

This offer of forgiveness of sins is now embodied in Mark 2:13-17 in the call of Levi, the tax collector and Jesus' eating with sinners and toll collectors. In the same manner that Jesus' healing went much further than only the relief of bodily illness, his table fellowship with sinners embodied the forgiveness given in 2:5 to the paralytic. Each of these actions "depicted the gospel of God's activity in calling together a new people of the Kingdom, the promise of wholeness of the age of salvation and the forgiving reconciliation of God with his alienated people" (Guelich 1989, 106). This must be seen as a challenge to the existing familial and national symbolism by Jesus' defining of a new family of table-fellowship that is open to all. This is taken up again in 3:31. This word in 2:17 οὐκ ἦλθον καλέσαι δικαίους ἀλλὰ ἁμαρτωλούς is one of two in Mark (cf. 10:45) specifically dealing with the mission of Jesus. The remark concerning the "righteous" must be understood in an ironic fashion. Instead of propagating the separation from sin that was the strategy of the Pharisees, Jesus is here depicted in the image of God as the only true Healer (cf. Exod 15:26 "I am Yahweh your healer") often encountered in the Old Testament and Judaism. In taking on the mission of salvation for sinners and true healing, Jesus is again taking on the role of Yahweh.

For this reason it is also important to note the relation between the miracles of Jesus and his works of power and salvation. This can be seen in the sandwich account of the healing of Jairus' daughter who is ill to the point of death and Jairus asks Jesus ἐπιθῆς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῇ ἵνα σωθῆ καὶ ζήσῃ (5:23, cf. 5:28), and in Jesus' proclamation to the woman suffering from a flow of blood ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε ὕπαγε· εἰς εἰρήνην καὶ ἴσθι ὑγιῆς (5:34). This is the same announcement Jesus makes to the blind Bartimaeus, Ὑπαγε, ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε in 10:52.

This relationship underlines that the miracles of healing are important, but that they are not be seen as an end in itself. The miracles function to restore healed people not only as individuals but also as members of the community, of Israel (cf. Ps 44:1-8; Isa 43:11; Hos 14:3). This can be seen as the fulfilment of Isa 35:1-2,5-6,10.

"1 The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, 2 it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God.

5 Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. 6 Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.

9 But only the redeemed will walk there, 10 and the ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away." (NIV)

In this way the healings become signs of the restoration of creation. The mighty works of Jesus were not only socially and religiously subversive. "They spoke, in the way that symbols can, of return and restoration, of the coming of YHWH to save and heal his people" (Wright 1996, 429). What should not be overlooked is the fact that Mark through his emphasis on ἔγειρε and ἀνέστη in 5:41f wants his readers to link the rescue from death of the girl with the resurrection of Jesus. This passage is a remarkable demonstration of the power and authority of Jesus as well as the extent of what salvation can entail.

8 SUFFERING, DEATH AND SALVATION

8.1 Saving or losing one's life

The link between salvation and life was already emphasized in 5:23, and is underlined again in 8:35-36. Salvation is the opposite of being lost, to die, to lose one's life. In 9:42-48 the contrast is drawn between entering life over against entering Gehenna. We are dealing here with a basic contrast between the victim and the beneficiary, the contrast between death and life, to kill/lose a life or to save a life (8:35). This contrast includes the following roles: ἀπόλλυων ἀπολλύμενος / σωζόμενος σωτήρ. And the counterpart to the role of the protector, the σωτήρ, is ἀπολλύμενος ἀπόλλυμαι ἀπώλεια. In discussing the wonder narratives, it was also seen that the role of ἀπόλλυων is realised by the actor Satan, and the role of the σωτήρ by the actor Jesus.

These verses are situated in the important central section of the Gospel (8:27-10:52) where suffering-death discourse becomes the overarching mode of discourse. The theme of discipleship plays a central role in this section that is framed by two healings of blind men (8:22-26; 10:46-52). The disciples follow Jesus on the way to Jerusalem, yet they are unable to comprehend his repeated teaching on suffering and death. "It is an irony of events that Jesus demonstrates his power to make the blind see, yet he cannot get his closest followers, the Twelve, to 'see' what the journey to Jerusalem means for him or them. The frame material therefore reinforces the irony of faithfulness and failure" (Feagin 1997). The difficulties involved in living as disciples of Jesus are clearly seen in the life of the Twelve, and the readers of Mark are given clear instructions of what being a disciple entails. In 8:34-9:1 discipleship, following Jesus, and salvation are also linked in the context of suffering-death discourse. The interesting thing is that the link between salvation or losing one's life and discipleship is taken up again in 10:26-27 where miracle discourse is being used (all things are possible with God 10:27) when the disciples ask in wonder "Then who can be saved?" Καὶ τίς δύναται σωθῆναι (10:26).

In the pericope 8:34-9:1 suffering-death discourse is introduced argumentatively in public, not only with Jesus' disciples but also with the crowds (8:34). Vernon Robbins has indicated that verses 36-37 present in an unusual manner two *Rules*, the one addressing the desire to save life (in the first part of the *Case*) and the other addressing the loss of life (in the second part of the *Case*). This means that

"the Confirmation in Mark 8:36-37 proceeds according to an argument 'from the parts.' Mark 8:36 presents a Rule that attempting to secure one's life by accumulating possessions results in throwing one's life away. Mark 8:37 presents a Rule that implies that a person has to give life over to a great cause, because it is impossible to buy it with anything" (Robbins 2002, 33).

When the argument is taken as a whole, its sequence can be reconstructed in the following manner: It begins with an inductive-deductive syllogism characteristic of early Christian wisdom discourse, consisting of a *Result/Case* followed by a *Rule/Rule*. This is then followed by an enthymematic argument with a conclusion. In an uncharacteristic manner the argument shifts from that which is characteristic of wisdom discourse to argumentation characteristic of apocalyptic discourse. In the context of the disciple being confronted with the possibility of losing or saving one's life, the pericope closes in 9:1 with the

Conclusion/Exhortation by Apocalyptic Rule: And he said to them, "Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power." (NRSV)

[*Unstated Case:* Those who honour the Son of Man/

Result: will be saved by the power of the kingdom;

Case: those who are ashamed of the Son of Man/

Result: will experience negative consequences from the power of the kingdom]

(Robbins 2002, 33).

Jesus' call to discipleship and taking up the cross in following Him is therefore intimately bound with the motivation from the opposite consequences of saving one's life by losing it for the sake of Jesus and the gospel. Here the reference in 8:35 to the gospel,

the good news, recalls the beginning of the gospel and Mark 1:14-15 with the background of Second Isaiah. The kingdom of God, the time of salvation is at hand, and the salvation of humanity is bound up with this good news and following Jesus. The rationale for taking up the cross and following Jesus is the motivation from the opposites in 8:35 which is further confirmed in the paradox of the two Rules dealing with the desire to save one's life and the loss of life in 8:36-37. In the final conclusion salvation is intimately bound to reaction to the honour/shame response to Jesus as the Son of man.

8.2 Interpreting the death of Jesus

It is often said that the idea of the significance of the death of Jesus can be found in Mark only in 10:45 and 14:24. We have tried to trace the manner in which salvation is present in the narrative from the very beginning of Mark. But especially in the last part of the narrative, starting from 8:27, it is important to pay close attention to the suffering and death of Jesus and its meaning as it increasingly occupies the centre of the stage. There are different ways in which the suffering and death of Jesus could have been interpreted in the light of the Old Testament, Jewish world and wider Hellenistic world. It should also be kept in mind that Mark presupposed a certain amount of knowledge that his readers already possessed. One could say that Mark actually offered his hearers a commentary on what they already knew.

From 8:27 on it is clear that Jesus gives himself voluntarily over into death (8:31; 9:31; 10:32-24). His death is also necessary and determined by God, 8:31 (δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πολλὰ παθεῖν); it is also written in the Old Testament (9:12; 14:27b). In 8:31 and 14:21 these two lines coincide and can even be seen to be in tension in 14:35f. There are a number of texts where Jesus is depicted in terms of the Suffering Servant of the Lord from Isaiah, 9:12: he should suffer, (treated with contempt cf. Isa 53:3); 10:34: spit upon him (shame and spitting cf. Isa 50:6); 10:45: ransom for many (cf. offering for sin Isa 53:10ff); 14:24: my blood of the covenant, make many righteous (cf. Isa 53:11f); 14:61: He was silent, made no answer (cf. as a sheep is silent Isa 53:7); 14:65: spitting and slapping (cf. Isa 50:6); 15:27: crucified with him two robbers (cf. numbered with transgressors Isa 53:12). It should be noted that according to Kee, Mark gives no explanation for the suffering and death of Jesus, there are no sure quotations from Isa 53, none of the distinctive language of the Suffering Servant can be detected and no explicit doctrine of atonement can be found (1975, 182-183).

8.3 Mark 10:45

As it is possible that Jesus may have seen himself in one or more of the roles of Righteous Sufferer, Son of God or Servant of the Lord, it is also possible that not only the death of Jesus but also his life as a whole was seen to be of salvific significance for the community of believers. Especially in the teaching of the disciples in 8:27-10:45 Jesus could be seen as a model for the disciples, yet the striking differences should also be acknowledged. Jesus fulfils a unique position and certain things happen only to Him. His death must also be seen as completely different from that of any believer. This is emphasized by the strategically placed position of the important λύτρον saying in 10:45,

the last saying of Jesus before entering Jerusalem and the commencement of the actual passion narrative (Best 1990, 1.liv). Our concern is here not whether this logion can be traced to the historical Jesus (cf. Best 1990, liv; Combrink 1968), but with the way it functions in Mark's narrative. In Mark 10:35-45 the ransom saying is the climactic word in the context of Jesus' teaching on service, but now with a particular slant to the content of the service by Jesus. But it is precisely the presence of 10:45b, the λύτρον word, which prevents us from interpreting the saying about Jesus' service as being only exemplary. In the past the discussion has often centred on the issue whether the background to this saying is to be found in the Suffering Servant of Isa 53. Although the arguments of Barrett (1959) and Hooker (1959) against a direct link to Isa 53 are on the whole acknowledged, it is difficult to deny an indirect influence of Isa 53 and Hooker admits that "the theology of Isaiah 40-55 as a whole is certainly an important part of its background" (1991:249). It is true that the word "ransom" (λύτρον) has no direct relation to Isa 53. It has the meaning of "means of liberation", "death on cross as ransom", and can be compared with ἀντίλυτρον in 1 Tim 2:6 (Louw & Nida 1989, 37.130). It is located in the semantic domain dealing with "release, set free". It implies the thematic role λυτρωτής – λυτροῦμαι – λύτρωσις as deliverer, redeemer, cf. Luke 24:21; 1:68; 2:38; Heb 9:12; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet 1:18. According to Davidsen it is hyposynonymous with the role λυτήρ – λύω – λύσις as releaser, liberator, cf. Matt 16:19; 18:18; Rev 1:5 and λύσις as release, liberation, payment of debt, release from guilt. The closely related term ἀντάλλαγμα in Mark 8:37 is parasynonymous with ἀντίλυτρον, ἄλλαγμα (LXX Isa 43:3) and with λύτρον (Davidsen 1993, 313). The important thing is here the means of exchange, what one receives or gives in return, as a ransom. The background of the Maccabean martyrs can also be important, as can also be illustrated by the close verbal links with for example ἀντίψυχον αὐτῶν λαβὲ τὴν ἐμὴν ψυχὴν in 4 Macc 6:29.

It can be shown that there is an apocalyptic eschatology growing from the experience of martyrdom. In the Psalms of the Righteous Sufferer someone is suffering in spite of his righteousness and he calls on God to vindicate him in his life. But in apocalyptic texts the martyr suffers as result of righteousness but will be glorified at the eschaton (Ruppert 1972, 23-24). This is also the case in postbiblical Judaism, as well as in Qumran literature. Therefore another option is to view Jesus' death as that of a martyr who could inspire believers with determination and love when facing death. But this is surely not the only significance of the death of Jesus in Mark. Did Jesus die as a Jewish martyr like the Maccabeans? They died for the cause of their group. When the noble death of Eleazar in 2 Macc 6:31 is compared with the deaths of his brothers, Seeley states that the death of his brothers are not vicarious, as was the case with Eleazar. His death is of benefit to all of his contemporary fellow-citizens, and it benefits even the reading audience. In 2 Maccabees the elements of vicariousness, obedience, a military context, overcoming physical vulnerability constitute what can be termed a noble death (Seeley 1990, 89ff). In 4 Maccabees the same four aspects just mentioned are present, but much more explicit than in 2 Maccabees. Now the military context is much harsher and more savage. But the mode of being vicarious is still fundamentally mimetic as is the case in 2 Maccabees. The author uses the vicariousness of the deaths of the martyrs as examples to be followed by the audience (Seeley 1990, 147).

But there may also be a link between Mark 10:45 and Isa 43:3-4 where the idea of God as "Saviour" is present as well as the idea of "ransom", "in exchange for" and "life" (cf. Evans 2001, 122f).

ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεός σου ὁ ἅγιος Ἰσραηλ ὁ σώζων σε ἐποίησά σου ἄλλαγμα ὑπὲρ σοῦ καὶ δώσω ἀνθρώπους πολλοὺς ὑπὲρ σοῦ.

Although there are doubts about whether the links between Mark 10:45 and Isa 43:3-4 can really be made, Isa 43 may nevertheless also be part of the background from which the formulation of the mission, message, and understanding of Jesus could have stemmed (Evans 2001, 123). It is significant that Best emphasizes that the idea that God gave up Christ for the atonement of our sins was part of the understanding of the death of Jesus from a period much earlier than Mark and can be assumed to part of the heritage of the early Christians. Whether the idea originated from Isa 53, Isa 43, or the Maccabean martyrs, whether the views on the atoning death of Jesus was to be traced to the Palestinian or the Hellenistic church, is not the issue. "What is important is that Mark and his readers will have been able to understand Jesus' death as one that atoned, i.e. dealt with sin" (Best, lvii). Yet, there are differences between Jesus and the figure of the Righteous Sufferer. Jesus died alone, without support, probably as a religious revolutionary, and not as a martyr. His teaching on discipleship in 8:27-10:46 is also not related to martyrdom. The Righteous Sufferer does not give his life as ransom (cf. 10:45), he does not pour out his blood for many (cf. 14:24), he does not return in judgment (cf. 14:62), but he dies trusting in God in contrast to Jesus in 15:34 (Best 1990, xlix).

With reference to the atoning value of the suffering and death of Jesus, the cup of suffering that Jesus has to drink (10:38; 14:36) must be interpreted in the light of the Old Testament and Jewish background as a cup of judgment (cf. Ps 75:9; Isa 52:17-23; Jer 25:15-29; Ezek 23:31-34; Pss. Sol. 8:14; 1QpHab 11:10-15). This cup can be taken to be vicarious (Gnilka 1979, 101f). This can be seen from the context in 10:38 (cf. 10:45) and 14:36 with reference to 14:24. It is noteworthy that both the explicit soteriological references (10:45 and 14:24) can be found in contextual and motive-wise proximity to the metaphor of the cup of suffering. It is, therefore, not necessary to interpret the final words of 10.45 "as alien to the context (or to the rest of Mark's gospel) as is often argued, and that there is an inner logic which holds together the ideas of the Son of man, service, the giving of one's life, and a ransom" (Hooker 1991, 251).

8.4 Mark 14:24, 27

Jesus' symbolic action in the upper room in Mark 14:22-25 is to be seen as some kind of Passover meal. It signifies that Yahweh returns to redeem his people and to grant them forgiveness of sins. But this take place in and through Jesus Himself. Jesus distinguishes the Last Supper from the Passover. It also gains in meaning in the light of his action in the temple in Mark 11. Jesus as the Messiah acts in a symbolic manner like certain Old Testament prophets (Jeremiah, Ezekiel) to symbolize the new exodus, the arrival of the kingdom through his death (Wright 1996, 558f). But Jesus adds words to his symbolic action. He identifies the bread with his body, and the cup (not the "wine" as could be expected) with his blood. The phrase "my blood of the covenant" echoes Exod 24:1-8,

especially verse 8, and defines Jesus' death on the cross as a covenantal death. It is an event that is framed by the exchange structure of the covenant when Jesus dies in obedience to the Lord of the covenant, cf. 8:33 (Davidsen 1993, 245). But the blood of covenant also recalls Zech 9:9-11.

"As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you,
I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit" (Zech 9:11 NIV).

There are actually a number of allusions to Zech 9-14 in Mark 14:24-28, the most obvious of which is the quotation from Zech 13:7 in Mark 14:27. There are also echoes of Zech 9:9-10 in Mark 11:1-11, again underlining the links between Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and his actions in the temple, and the last supper (Marcus 1992, 157).

More links can be pointed out as *καινὸν* in 14:25 reminds one of the new covenant of Jer 31 (LXX 38):31 which also anticipates the restoration of fallen Israel. The language of *τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν* also recalls the language of sacrificial atonement in Isa 53:12. "The pouring out of his blood takes on sacrificial and atoning connotations, which Jesus has linked to the covenant of the kingdom" (Evans 2001, 394).

As far as these allusions to Zech 9-14 in Mark 14:22-28 are concerned, Joel Marcus has made a strong case that they could have been read in a contrasting manner to the expectation of the Jewish revolutionaries in the time of the origin of the Gospel of Mark. In a paradoxical way the Messiah was seen not as entering Jerusalem in a triumphant fashion, but being delivered to his enemies on the Mount of Olives, being killed by the Gentiles in Jerusalem and his death being accompanied by a proleptic destruction of the Temple (15:38) (Marcus 1992, 160f).

8.5 The crucifixion and death of Jesus

The background of the Righteous Sufferer of the Psalms has been mentioned already. A number of these allusions are found in Mark's passion narrative in Mark 14-16, and are concentrated in the crucifixion account of Mark 15. Such allusions can be found in the dividing of the garments 15:24 (Ps 22:18 [LXX 21:19]); the mocking and shaking of heads 15:29 (Ps 22:7); the demand that Jesus save Himself 15:30-32 (Ps 22:8); the derision in 15:32 (Ps 22:6); the cry of dereliction in 15:34 (Ps 22:1); the vinegar to drink 15:36 (Ps 69:21); the women at a distance in 15:40 (Ps 38:11) (cf. Marcus 1992, 174f). Marcus makes the following important remark in this respect: "It is fair to say, then, that Ps 22 and other Psalms of the Righteous Sufferer are often interpreted in the postbiblical period as references to eschatological events, and we would present it as a working hypothesis that these psalms bring a similar eschatological context along with them in Mark" (1992, 179). Marcus argues that Old Testament quotations in Mark often imply the larger context of the Old Testament texts (1992, 180). Gese is of the opinion that not only is the innocent suffering of the righteous important, but that vindication is also implied. This is then relevant in the way in which Ps 22 is used in the account of the crucifixion of Jesus (1974, 192-196). It is also important that the idea of the kingship of Yahweh is framing Ps 22 (21 LXX) in verse 3 and 29, *τοῦ κυρίου ἡ βασιλεία*. It also implies the resurrection of the dead in Ps 22:29. "Understood against this background, the psalm is used in the passion narratives not only to provide Old Testament background for Jesus'

suffering but also to hint at a deliverance from death that is the revelation of the kingdom of God to all, including the Gentiles" (Marcus 1992, 180). It is also noteworthy that references from Ps 22 in Mark 15:24, 29, 34 are interwoven with references to Jesus as the King of the Jews in Mark 15:18, 26, 32 and the royal title Son of God in 15:39.

There is also an interweaving of allusions to the Righteous Sufferer from the Psalms and the Suffering Servant from Isaiah in Mark 14-15. The Suffering Servant adds to the picture of the Righteous Sufferer where in the Psalms the order is first suffering as result of the enemies and then victory through the power of God. "Although this sequence is not totally absent from Isa 52:13-53:12 (see, e.g., 52:13; 53:10-12), it is mixed in with the idea that *already in his suffering* the Servant accomplishes a salvific purpose and thus wins an eschatological victory" (Marcus 1992, 194). This modifies the pattern of the Psalms of divine victory as defeat of the nations. In Isaiah the triumph of the Servant is his dying on behalf of the nations as well as his own people.

Attention has already been given to the role of Ps 22 in the context of discussing the role of the Righteous Sufferer. In the narrative of the crucifixion another interesting aspect of the background of suffering and death is the way in which the reconfiguration of Ps 22 in Mark 15 is being reconfigured also by the cultural intertexture of the humiliated, righteous king. Firstly recontextualisation (with no indication that these words can be found elsewhere in a text) is found in Mark 15:24 where Ps 22:18 (LXX 21:19) about the dividing of his garments and the casting of the lot is being recontextualised. The second example is the language from Ps 22:6-8 found in Mark 15:25-32 in an expanded *chreia* and applied to the context of the taunting of Jesus. Here the words in Ps 22:7 and 8 about the mocking and shaking of heads and the taunt to save are recontextualised in Mark 15:29-30, with 15:31 elaborating on the taunt about not saving himself. In 15:32 the despising (ὠνειδίζον) of Ps 22:6 (LXX 21:7) (ὄνειδος) is picked up too. Finally Ps 22:1 (*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani*) is recontextualised as speech of Jesus himself in Mark 15:34. The remarkable thing is that the Markan account presents the material from Ps 22 in reverse order from that in Ps 22, cf. 15:24 (Ps 22:28); 15:30-31 (Ps 22:6-8); 15:34 (Ps 22:1). In this way the rhetoric of the Psalm is reversed (Robbins, 1992a, 1178-1181). In the beginning of Ps 22 the sufferer cries out in alienation, then experiences the mockery and humiliation of nakedness while at the end of Ps 22 confidence in God is expressed. In Mark 15:24 the humiliation of Jesus' nakedness is recounted, this is followed by the taunting in 15:30-32 and it ends with Jesus' cry of dereliction and alienation in 15:34. "Language in a psalm that moved from alienation through agony to an expression of confidence has been reconfigured into a crucifixion account that moves from agony to alienation to death" (Robbins 1996).

This recontextualisation of Ps 22 must also be interpreted in the context of the broader cultural intertexture where the echoes of other traditions may also be relevant. Robbins draws attention to the important implications of the role of Jesus as teacher in Mark. Attention has already been given to the role of the tradition of Righteous Sufferer (cf. Nickelsburg 1980). Just as important is the tradition of the rejected prophet (Kee 1977, 117f). But here in Mark 15:26, 32 the concept of kingship emerges again in a significant manner (cf. Matera 1982). To interpret the full picture of Jesus as teacher,

prophet, Righteous Sufferer, suffering king, Robbins reminds us of the Greco-Roman tradition of the suffering and dying king who voluntarily dies for the benefit of his own people (1992b, 187f). He then points out the close relation between the crucifixion scene in Mark and the description in Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 4.67.69, where the Persian ritual in the Sacian festival consists of the humiliation of a prisoner by first mockingly honouring him as king and then stripping, scourging and hanging him. The remarkable thing is that in this example of cultural intertexture Mark 15 follows the sequence of the text of Dio Chrysostom that follows an inverse order of the scenes in Ps 22. In this manner the cultural intertexture actually reconfigures the Jewish and Hellenistic-Roman tradition. "This Markan discourse is a distinctive formulation that challenges other Mediterranean portrayals of a personage who lives an exemplary life and dies a exemplary death for the benefit of humans" (Robbins 1996, 62).

The taunting to Jesus to "save yourself" is full of irony and in a sense comes very close to containing the heart of the message of Mark. The logic of the mockers is clear: if Jesus claims such power over the temple, must be able to save his own life. But this leaves Mark 8:35 out of consideration. Jesus is able to save others precisely because He dies (Feagin 1997, 130). This is the culmination of irony in the narrative that the enemies of Jesus ignorantly speak the core truth of the gospel (Hurtado 1989, 267). Jesus is King, not in spite of, but because He loses his life for others.

The reality of the salvation by the death of Jesus is then testified to by the rending of the curtain in the temple and the confession by the centurion that Jesus was truly the Son of God (15:38-39). Mark does not interpret these events. Yet, in the light of the criticism of the temple earlier in the narrative (11:12-21) as well as 13:2; 14:58 and 15:29, it can be assumed that the rending of the curtain is to be seen as a sign of the future destruction of the temple and the temple cult (Hooker 199, 377f). According to Hamerton-Kelly the message is: "the holy of holies has been exposed to public view, its mystery has been removed; the system has been demystified and so deprived of the efficacy that depended on its operating behind a veil" (1994, 57). The positive side of this is that the way is now open for others to enter into the community of God's people. Now even Gentiles can enter. This is illustrated by the next verse where the Gentile centurion confesses that not the Caesar, but Jesus is the Son of God. This links again to the beginning of the narrative (1:11) where God Himself declared at Jesus' baptism that He is his beloved Son.

9 CONCLUSION

9.1 Salvation as event

Throughout this contribution the emphasis has been on the fact that the topic of salvation is present in the narrative of Mark in its entirety, and not just where the terms σώζω, σωτήρ or σωτηρία are used. The basic semantic components of salvation as event can be formulated as follows: a person intervenes in a situation where someone else is in a distressful situation with the result that the distress is relieved.

Mark begins by relating Jesus' way of salvation as the way of Yahweh with his people, but this is a path of suffering and death and not a victorious way through the wilderness. Salvation is also defined as the coming of the kingdom of God which implies that Israel would return from exile, that evil would be defeated, and that Yahweh would visit his people. This means that Mark begins his gospel with prophetic discourse focusing on Yahweh as King and the responsibility of leaders of His kingdom. Very early in the narrative (1:12f) Jesus encounters Satan in the wilderness and an important victory is implied by 3:27. The cleansing of the leper in 1:40-45 implies that salvation as healing has transformative implications that transcend the boundaries of geography and ethnicity. This implies a redrawing of the boundaries and Israel's maps of purity. In 7:19 Jesus overturns dietary regulations as a whole and declared all foods clean (deSilva 2000, 282). The healing of a paralytic in Mark 2:1-12 also defines salvation in a narrower sense as healing as well as in a broader sense as salvation from sin. The forgiveness of sins is further made concrete in the call of Levi, the tax collector and Jesus' eating with sinners and toll collectors in Mark 2:13-17.

From 8:27 the suffering-death discourse becomes dominant. Despite the claim that the salvific significance of the suffering and death of Jesus can only be deduced from 10:45 and 14:24, the Old Testament, Jewish, and Greco-Roman oral-scribal and cultural intertexture which is richly present in the extended passion narrative shows that Jesus is able to save others precisely because He dies. Jesus is King, not in spite of, but because He loses his life for others.

The social and cultural implications of the manner of Jesus' death are also important. The claim of a crucified Messiah would be shameful and repulsive to Jewish ears. Yet the reader of Mark understands the death of Jesus as a noble death despite the ignorance of so many and their inability to accept it as such, but also as a sacrifice (deSilva 2000, 53.307). This means that the Gospel of Mark narrates salvation as an event of healing, liberation from sickness and sin, the transcending of various kinds of boundaries and the constituting of new relationships. This entails a process of progression but in an overarching manner the protection of life from the threat of death (cf. Davidsen 1993, 62).

9.2 Agent of salvation

The narrative Jesus appears basically in the roles of wonder worker, proclaimer and saviour. The manner in which the Gospel of Mark begins with a series of Old Testament quotations sheds a remarkable light on the role of Jesus in Mark. In a theocentric reading of Mark 1:3f, Marcus identifies the triumphant return of Yahweh returning to the holy land in an act of saving power with Jesus' way and his journey to his death and resurrection in Jerusalem (1992, 29.31.46f). This means that Jesus' adult life and death is the continuation of a redemptive story that began during the time of the prophets. Mark therefore begins with the good news that Yahweh Himself is the agent of salvation. In terms of common social and cultural topics this means that He is depicted as Benefactor who has kept faith with Israel (deSilva 2000, 128).

In fulfilling his calling (cf. 1:11) Jesus in the healings takes on the role of σωτήρ, as wonderworker. This is related to the narrative role of protector who saves someone from something that threatens. Jesus also acts as the mediator and broker of God's favour (2:7). The role of protector implies a beneficiary or a victim. The thematic victim roles are then the sick, the possessed and the flock (14:72), cf. Mark 2:17: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners". In the role as Saviour Jesus provides salvation in a narrower sense as healing as well as in a broader sense as salvation from sin.

Underlining his role as teacher can shed some light on the narrative role of Jesus as proclaimer. The social identity of Jesus is established as a teacher by his gathering disciples and involving them as willing disciples and companions in his programme. There is a strong Jewish background for Jesus as proclaimer. But there are also important deviations due to the Greco-Roman cultural intertexture, especially with reference to the autonomous nature of Jesus' activity as proclaimer and teacher. He acts with authority and his miracles are seen as confirming his authoritative teaching.

9.3 Need for salvation

We have seen that the σωτήρ as protector has a counterpart, which can be seen in the narrative role of ἀπολλύμενος ἀπόλλυμαι ἀπώλεια. This is implied in various ways in the course of the narrative. One can begin by looking at the religious authorities functioning as single character in the narrative and as opponent of Jesus. The conflict with the Jewish leaders often provides dramatic irony when the readers recognise the presence of the kingdom of God in Jesus but the Jewish leaders in their blindness reject Jesus and ascribe his actions to Satan (Feagin 1997, 203). When Jesus brings salvation, it is also salvation from power structures imposing their authority by "sacred violence" and scapegoats. The sandwich structure of the cleansing of the temple (11:15-19) framed by the cursing of the fig tree (11:12-14) and the withered fig tree (11:20f) underlines that the sacrificial system is like a barren fig tree and is coming to an end (Hamerton-Kelly 1994, 17). The abuses of the temple by the priests lead to Jesus symbolic announcement and eventually to the rending of the curtain in the holy place as the desacralisation of space in preparation for its destruction (deSilva 2000, 291f).

In discussing the first miracle, the encounter with the man with the unclean spirit (1:23-26), the symbolic meaning involved in the exorcism was underlined. We saw that the "spirit" personifies scribal power over the hearts and minds of the people, and that Jesus could only continue his salvific activity after breaking the influence of this spirit. But in 3:27 it is implied that the victory was in essence already won in the confrontation of Jesus and Satan in the temptation account in 1:13f (Best 1990, xviii; Robbins 2002, 26f). It is Satan who fills the role of ἀπόλλων while Jesus as actor fulfils the role of σωτήρ. Best underlines that Mark's primary concern and the greater achievement of Jesus is the redemption of men from sin, rather than the cosmic defeat of Satan (1990, 189).

9.4 Result of salvation

The result of salvation, of the distress relieved, can take a positive or negative form. The positive form of salvation can also be distinguished in provisional and definite salvation. Provisional salvation is a factual change in the body (cf. 5:34; 10:52) and consists in a change or preservation of being. It consists in healing, the neutralising of an ongoing destruction process. One can ask whether Jairus' daughter is given eternal life, or whether the destruction of the body is only delayed? The healing by Jesus entails salvation within the framework of fatal death. "Death can be resisted, but it is far from being overcome: the salvation is *provisional*" (Davidsen 1993, 224).

Definitive salvation is salvation to eternal life. This form of salvation implies a transitive act, a doing by someone else than he who is saved, which changes and/or preserves a state of being. The transitive aspect is evident in 10:45 and 14:24, also in 15:29,31 "ἄλλους ἔσωσεν, ἑαυτὸν οὐ δύναται σῶσαι. When the resurrection is seen as salvation by God, Jesus is saved by God and not by Himself. Jesus cannot save Himself, as He cannot raise Himself (cf. Davidsen 1993, 226). Yet, by dying willingly on the cross He plays a role in the process leading to his resurrection.

The question of the rich man "What must I do to inherit eternal life" (10:17) is basically the question of 10:26 "Then who can be saved?" This discussion leads to the statement that although it is impossible with men, all things are possible with God 10:27. This is the language of miracle discourse. But a disciple must also take up his cross and follow Jesus 8:34. That means she must follow Jesus unto death and drink the cup and being baptized with his baptism 10:38.

The basic result of salvation can be seen as a process of progression but in an overarching manner it is the protection of life from the threat of death. This becomes evident in the way in which the disciples follow Jesus on his way to the cross and ironically time and again fail to understand his teaching. And yet, the incomprehension of disciples is not final. This is suggested by the open ending of Mark in 16:7. The main section of Mark 8-10 is also framed by two healings of blind men suggesting that true discipleship will eventually entail the ability to see. The centurion (15:39) then becomes a prototype of someone who can see and then confesses.

The salvation is also a challenge to the existing familial and national symbolism. By his words and deeds Jesus is defining a new family that is open to all. This is seen in the open table-fellowship of Mark 2:13-17. But the new community of Mark also knows the reality of opposition for the sake of 13:12f. Despite the reality of dishonour, rejection and shame by outsiders they can be assured of salvation 13:20. Despite the shame and censure by enemies and outsiders, they can be assured of being honoured by the Son of man in the kingdom of God (8:34-9:1). The real honour (10:37) can only be obtained in serving (10:43-45). This is also part of the fitting response of a beneficiary to his Benefactor (deSilva 2000, 141).

Finally, it is interesting to note the manner in which different kinds of early Christian discourses also embody what has been pointed out already, be it from a different perspective. Mark begins his Gospel with a reconfiguration of prophetic

discourse. In prophetic discourse the primary Rule would reflect the decisions of God as agent of salvation to select certain people to do his will in the human realm, in other words the story of God's people. The Case are the individuals chosen (John the Baptist, Jesus) to enact this, and the Result would be the baptism of the people as a preparation for Him who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. In 1:1-20 Mark also introduces apocalyptic *topoi* evoking the expectations of the activity of God at the end time (Robbins 2002, 16.20). But instead of apocalyptic discourse becoming the dominant discourse in Mark, we find an interweaving of apocalyptic, wisdom, miracle, prophetic and suffering-death discourse in Mark which helps the reader to appreciate the varied manner in which the process of salvation is narrated in this Gospel.

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