

## JESUS' REFUSAL TO PRODUCE A 'SIGN' (MK 8.11-13)

Jeffrey Gibson

7423 N. Sheridan Road 2A  
Chicago, IL 60626, USA

The Pharisees came out and began to dispute with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven, testing him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, 'Why does this generation seek a sign? Amen, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation!' And he left them, and getting into the boat again he departed to the other side.

In Mk 8.11-13 Jesus is portrayed as solemnly and adamantly refusing to accede to a demand made of him by the Pharisees. The demand for a σημεῖον, a 'sign',<sup>1</sup> is specifically for a 'token' of trustworthiness', a 'means of confirmation' to authenticate Jesus' claims that God stands behind all his words and works.<sup>2</sup> But why does Jesus say 'no' so categorically to this demand? Why, according to Mark, does he not grant what is asked of him?

The critical consensus in this regard is that Jesus refuses the Pharisees' demand because, in Mark's portrayal of things, Jesus feels his ministry is by its very nature self-authenticating, needing no external or additional proof of its validity. To offer such proof would not only be a concession to unbelief, but would make unlikely, if not impossible, the response of radical faith which Jesus demands from all who are confronted by what he says and does.<sup>3</sup>

Now, there is much to be said for this. After all, according to Mark, it is those who are 'outside', those who have willfully 'blinded' themselves to seeing and recognizing God's activity when it is in their midst, who make the demand.<sup>4</sup> And it is true that later on in his Gospel, within his story of the crucifixion (i.e. in Mk 15.28-32), Mark portrays Jesus as tacitly refusing to use a 'sign' to engender belief in

the truth of his mission and ministry even when he could have done so.<sup>5</sup> I wish to argue, however, that despite this the supposition is untenable. Something other than a blanket opposition to offering proof of the validity of his ministry and message must account for the Marcan Jesus' refusal to comply with the Pharisees' demand. In support of this claim I shall attempt to show that in Mk 2.1-12, the story of the healing of the paralytic, Mark portrays Jesus as actually producing a 'sign' to prove that his proclamation is 'of God' when the truth of that proclamation and its divine origin are questioned.

## I

Does Mark's story of the healing of the paralytic present Jesus as producing without compunction an open proof of the validity of his message and ministry? At first glance, the answer might seem to be 'no'. For none of Jesus' actions in Mk 2.1-12 is specifically labeled a 'sign'. Nor does the word σημεῖον appear within those verses. But this is not decisive. The issue is hardly whether Mark has applied a given designation to the actions that he there has Jesus undertake. Rather, it is whether Mark has cast the basic features of those actions—their overall pattern, the circumstances prompting them, the intention behind them—in terms of the features characteristic of the phenomenon of 'signs'.<sup>6</sup>

In this, then, the case? This depends, of course, on the answer we give to another question, namely, What are the features characteristic of the phenomenon of 'signs'? These are to be uncovered by examining the references to 'signs' in the Hebrew Scriptures and the literature dependent on it.

### *Characteristics of the 'Signs' Phenomenon*

When these background texts<sup>8</sup> are examined with regard to what they reveal concerning the significant features of the phenomenon, five things stand out:

First, a 'sign' is always a public event. Its occurrence is meant to be seen or perceived, as well as publicly acknowledged as having happened.

Second, a 'sign' happens—or is anticipated as happening—not accidentally or fortuitously, but on command. It is something that can be sought, promised, worked, or produced.

Third, a 'sign' is sought, promised, worked or produced for one of two reasons: either to certify the truth of a distrusted prophecy, or to

establish the validity of a disputed claim that a certain course of action and the person initiating it are 'of God'. The narrative and thematic context of such activity is typically as follows:

1. A claimant to divine authority or insight into the mind of God engages in an activity, or utters a prophecy or doctrinal statement, that in his eyes bears God's approval.
2. Observers are struck by the fact that the action or the utterance is either (a) strange and surprising, or (b) contrary to common sense, conventional wisdom or practical considerations, or, worse, (c) a direct contravention of Mosaic Law. Given this, they conclude that the truth of the action or utterance and its divine origin are not immediately apparent.
3. The claimant, wishing to secure acceptance of what he said or done, responds to the skepticism with which his action or utterances is greeted by proposing (or agreeing to submit to) a kind of test. He selects (or accedes to a demand for) some phenomenon and promises to have it come to pass. He does this with the understanding that should the phenomenon occur both as and when he says it will, the skepticism surrounding his action or utterance will then vanish.

When, for instance, Ahaz doubts Isaiah's prophecy that 'within sixty-five years Ephraim shall be broken', Isaiah offers to produce a 'sign' (cf. Isa. 7.8ff.). When Isaiah wants to prove to Hezekiah that, contrary to all available evidence, Hezekiah is not to die, Isaiah proposes to work a 'sign', letting Hezekiah himself choose between two such phenomena, one that is difficult or one that is 'easier' (LXX κούφωv) to produce (2 Kgs 20.1-10; cf. Isa. 38.1-20). Jonathan and his armor bearer expect to receive a 'sign' to let them know that, as promised, they will receive divine protection when they go up into battle against the Philistines (1 Sam. 14.10, cf. v. 16). Theudas and other so-called 'Sign Prophets'<sup>9</sup> promise to work specific 'signs' expressly to substantiate their respective claims that they were anointed by God and divinely commissioned to the sacred purpose of delivering the Jewish nation from the yoke of Roman oppression (cf. Josephus, *Bell.* 2.259, 261-63; *Ant.* 20.97-99, 167-68, 188). A 'sign' is demanded of Jesus when he claims that divine authority stands behind his 'cleansing' of the Temple (Jn 2.18, cf. 2.13-18, esp. v. 16), and, later, when he teaches that he is sent from God (cf. Jn 6.29-30).

A 'sign', therefore, is an event that was thought of as having the power to certify or confirm something that could otherwise be doubted and dismissed.

The fourth thing that stands out about 'signs' in texts referring to them is that the function peculiar to a 'sign'—i.e., its ability to prove the truth of a distrusted utterance or the legitimacy of a claim that a person and his actions are 'of God'—is grounded in the public experience of a coincidence between a prior prophecy (what is designated as the 'sign') and a subsequent event (its actual manifestation). For instance, in the story of Jonathan and his armor bearer (1 Sam. 14.6-15) Jonathan is initially skeptical of the idea, placed in his mind by God, that if he but tries, he will be able to conquer a garrison of Philistines on his own. It is only when the requested authenticating 'sign' actually occurs that he believes God and engages the Philistines in combat. Indeed, Jonathan himself admits that if the 'sign' had not come to pass, he would not have risked the undertaking, which, on purely practical grounds, was extremely foolhardy (cf. vv. 9-10). Accordingly, a 'sign' does its work when it is effectuated in exact conformity with its predicted or previously stipulated 'shape'.

The fifth and last thing that stands out in references to 'signs' is that as either promised or manifested, a 'sign' does not need to have a spectacular content in order to stand as a token of trustworthiness. As the Isaiah/Ahaz story shows, 'signs' whose content is ordinary<sup>10</sup> are offered or accepted as 'proof' as readily as those which are stupendous or extraordinarily miraculous (e.g. the 'signs' offered by Theudas and the other 'Sign Prophets').<sup>11</sup> The important thing about a 'sign's' 'shape' is not whether it is in itself miraculous or ordinary, but whether, once manifested, it then appears in complete correspondence with its own terms, whatever they have been stated to be.

#### *Jesus and 'Signs' in Mk 2.1-12*

With all of this in mind, let us now turn to Mark's story of the healing of the paralytic. The story opens with Jesus besieged in a house in Capernaum by a crowd which is eager to hear his word (Mk 2.1). It then goes on to narrate the attempt of four men to bring a paralytic to Jesus so that Jesus might heal him. When the men find that the press of bodies denies them normal access to Jesus, they go up to the roof of the house, break open the part of the ceiling directly above Jesus, and lower the paralytic down to him (Mk 2.3-4). Jesus, the story notes, is impressed with the obvious lengths to which they

were willing to go to bring the paralytic into contact with his healing power. But he does not at this point act to fulfill their desires. Instead, he makes a formal statement that the paralytic's sins are forgiven (Mk 2.5). At this point particular members of the crowd, religious authorities whom Mark calls Scribes, having heard Jesus' declaration, realize that Jesus has in effect made a claim to be in possession of, and authorized to use, a power that they believed was reserved to God alone. The claim is all too much for them, and privately they refuse to accept it (Mk 2.6-7). But Jesus becomes aware of what is going on in their minds (Mk 2.8a), and in response to their musings he does two things. First, he openly expresses disappointment with the Scribes for doubting his word and the claim implicit within it (Mk 2.8b). Second, he proposes a test whereby the Scribes may see for themselves that their doubt is groundless (Mk 2.9), and then goes ahead and publicly submits himself to it (Mk 2.10-11). The story then ends with a notice that Jesus passes the test successfully (Mk 2.11), and that he is roundly acknowledged as having done so (Mk 2.12).

When the story is set against what I have said regarding 'signs', it is readily apparent that Jesus is there portrayed as offering and producing a 'sign'.

For in the first place, the type of conflict that here prompts Jesus to cure the paralytic is the same as that which, according to the biblical model, would prompt a 'sign' worker to produce a 'sign', namely, the rejection of a claim—in this case over both Jesus' possession of authority to forgive sins and whether or not his proclamation in v. 5 effectuates what it proclaims—that at a given time, one is speaking or acting on God's behalf with divine approval.

Second, the response that Jesus secures from the Scribes by healing the paralytic is identical with that which the biblical model shows us was won by 'sign'-workers from their interlocutors when they effectuated the 'signs' they had added to their disputed words or deeds. The Scribes accept the truth of the utterance or the implications of the action for which the subsidiary prophecy stands as proof.<sup>12</sup>

Third, the activity that Jesus immediately resorts to after the Scribes' initial rejection of his words, and all they imply, is formally the same as that which Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian 'sign' workers engage in when the truth of their words or deeds is challenged. Like those 'sign' workers, Jesus responds to the gauntlet thrown down against the validity and the import of his statement,

not by initiating a discussion or argument, but by offering to make something happen. Given its context, in function this is nothing less than offering a 'sign'.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Jesus says that his reason for undertaking the cure of the paralytic is precisely to prove the claim that he has made in Mk 2.5. He explicitly declares at Mk 2.10 that he performs the healing so that those who have expressed doubt over the truth and the import of this claim may 'know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins' (ἵνα δὲ εἰδῆτε ὅτι ἐξουσίαν ἔχει ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀφιέναι ἁμαρτίας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς v. 10).<sup>14</sup> In other words, Jesus himself here identifies his cure of the paralytic as a 'sign'.

Given all of this, I think I am justified in claiming that, despite the absence in Mk 2.1-12 of the word σημεῖον or the explicit labeling of any of Jesus' actions as a 'sign', Mark's story of the healing of a paralytic presents Jesus as validating his actions or utterances by means of a 'sign'. Indeed, to my mind, the story actually makes clear that in Mark's eyes, Jesus was quite ready ordinarily not only to produce 'signs' but to offer to do so when he or others felt they were needed. To argue that it says otherwise<sup>15</sup> is, I think, to refuse to allow both the story and Mark to speak on their own terms.<sup>16</sup>

This being the case, we may then dismiss as wholly untenable the conventional position on the reason why Mark has Jesus refuse to produce a 'sign' at Mk 8.11-13. In light of the evidence of Mk 2.1-12, it does not seem possible to assert that the Marcan Jesus held principled reservations against involving himself in any of the activities associated with the phenomenon of 'signs'.<sup>17</sup>

## II

But why, then, if Jesus in Mark is not in principle opposed to the enterprise of producing, or giving in to the demand for, 'signs', does he refuse to engage in this activity when, as Mark recounts, the Pharisees demand that he do so?

The answer lies in focusing attention on the 'sign' that the Pharisees ask for, and assuming that it is of a peculiar type, a type which the Marcan Jesus would find offensive. Three observations serve to justify this assumption: in Mk 8.11-13 the 'sign' demanded of Jesus is (1) designated by a specific name; (2) associated with one expected by 'this generation'; and (3) identified as one which is 'given'.

### 1. *The name of the 'sign' demanded of Jesus*

At Mk 8.11 Mark calls the 'sign' by a specific name. It is, he says, one which is ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. Now, it is often thought that this phrase means nothing more than 'from God', and therefore what Mark is doing in using it here is making a statement concerning not the content but the 'author' of the 'sign' demanded of Jesus.<sup>18</sup> But this cannot be the case, for the following reasons.

In the first place, Mark had no need to specify who ultimately stood behind the 'sign'. It was of the very nature of 'signs' to be 'from God', otherwise they would never have been taken, as we have seen they were, as evidence of trustworthiness. A phrase meaning 'from God' would here be superfluous and redundant. So if Mark had merely intended that the Pharisees should be seen as content to receive any 'sign' so long as it had God as its author, he would have written only '... seeking from him a "sign"' (... ζητοῦντες παρ' αὐτοῦ σημεῖον, κτλ.) and not, as he does, 'seeking from him a "sign from heaven"' (ζητοῦντες παρ' αὐτοῦ σημεῖον ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, κτλ.).<sup>19</sup> In the second place, when Mark does want to designate something as having divine origin, and uses a circumlocution to do so, the phrase he employs is ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν (ἐξ οὐρανοῦ), not ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, Mark's calling the 'sign' demanded of Jesus ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ must have another purpose. And that must be to specify not the source of the 'sign', but its 'shape'.

The phrase is an appellative, and as such it indicates that the 'sign' demanded of Jesus is one of a peculiar type, in a class all of its own, distinct in its content from any or all other 'signs' that the Pharisees might have requested.<sup>21</sup> But in Mark's eyes then, what content did a 'sign' ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ have? Could he have thought it to be, as some have suggested,<sup>22</sup> a celestial portent? οὐρανος does sometimes mean 'sky' in Mark's Gospel (e.g. at 1.10; 4.32; 13.25). But that, according to Mark, the 'sign' demanded of Jesus was a 'sign out of the sky'—as this understanding of οὐρανοῦ would render the phrase—seems unlikely. For in the first place, 'sky' as the meaning of οὐρανοῖ is hardly normal for Mark. In the twelve other instances in his Gospel (excluding Mk 8.11) in which he employs οὐρανοῖ, it does not bear this sense.<sup>23</sup> And in two out of the three instances in which it does mean 'sky' the word is part of an Old Testament quotation.<sup>24</sup> In the second place, in biblical literature the phrase ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, when used as it is here—with an object, seems to have had a specific, technical meaning. This becomes apparent when we consider the following:

When the LXX uses ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ as Mark does in Mk 8.11—that is, in apposition (9 times out of 12 instances)—it is an appellative for:

- (1) the rain that God has used to rid the earth of sinful humanity (Gen. 8.2);
- (2) the celestial phenomenon which the sun- and moon-worshipping heathen regard as portents of their gods (Jer. 10.2);
- (3) a figure called a 'watcher' (εἶρ who pronounces and then brings doom on King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon for not acknowledging Yahweh as the Supreme God (Dan. 4.10, 20, 28, Theodotion);
- (4) God's all-powerful word (ὁ παντοδύναμός σου λόγος) which, in the form of a 'stern warrior carrying a sharp sword' who 'stood and filled all things with death', was unleashed against the Egyptian first-born on the first Passover (Wis. 18.15);
- (5) the particular but unspecified phenomenon which Judas Maccabaeus and his men knew to have been the decisive factor in destroying a Galatian army that set itself against God and his power (2 Macc. 8.20);<sup>25</sup>
- (6) the aid which, in the form of a spectacularly armored warrior angel, accompanies the Maccabean army and helps to bring defeat to Lysias, the commander of Greek forces besieging Jerusalem (2 Macc. 11.10);
- (7) the divine intervention that had given victory to a hopelessly outnumbered Maccabean army (2 Macc. 15.8).

When in the New Testament the phrase is so used (6 times out of 9 instances, excluding Mk 8.11), it appears as an appellative for:

- (1) the type of fire that Jesus' disciples want God to rain down on certain Samaritan villages as punishment for their inhabitants' refusal to receive Jesus (Lk. 9.54, cf. vv. 51-56);
- (2) the fiery phenomena that the Lucan Jesus says will be manifested on the day that the son of Man comes to judge men for their iniquities (Lk. 17.29, cf. 11.30);
- (3) the terrors and great signs (σημεῖα!) that will herald the arrival of the 'day of retribution' (Lk. 21.11, cf. v. 22);

- (4) an angel which appears to Jesus during his ordeal in Gethsemane (Lk. 22.23);
- (5) the particular appearance of Jesus which, according to Paul, will signal the arrival of the Day of the Lord (2 Thess. 2.17);
- (6) the wrath of God, the revelation of which betokens the decisive unveiling of the righteousness of God in judgment against the unrighteousness of men (Rom. 1.18).

In other words, in Greek biblical literature objects which are ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ are (with the exception of Jer. 10.2) apocalyptic phenomena which embody or signal the onset of aid and comfort for God's elect and/or the wrath that God was expected to let loose against his enemies and those who threaten his people.

This being the case, then a 'sign' which was ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ is most likely a phenomenon which embodied 'Salvation'.<sup>26</sup>

## 2. *The association of the 'sign' with 'this generation'*

In Mk 8.12b—a castigation by Jesus of the Pharisees' demand<sup>27</sup>—Mark has Jesus state that the 'sign' demanded of him is of a certain type. It is one of those 'signs' that 'this generation' expected it would be shown should one claiming to be 'of God' wish to ensure that it ('this generation') would put its trust in him. But in Mark's view of things, what type of 'sign' was this? For this information I turn to Mk 15.28-32.

And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. [29] And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads, and saying, 'Aha! You who would destroy the Temple and build it in three days, [30] save yourself and come down from the cross!' [31] So also the Chief Priests mocked him to one another with the Scribes, saying, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. [32] Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe'. Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.

As even a casual glance at these verses shows, this is a story in which Jesus is asked to prove certain claims he is believed to have made by making something happen. In other words, it is a story in which Jesus is faced with a demand for a 'sign'. Three things need to be noted here:

The first thing is that according to Mark those who demand a 'sign' from Jesus are members of 'this generation'.<sup>28</sup>

Second, the claim that Jesus is here called upon to prove by means of a 'sign' is that he is, as he has or is thought to have said, Lord of the Temple,<sup>29</sup> Saviour, and the King of Israel (cf. vv. 29b, 31b, 32a). In other words, the issue in dispute, especially in light of Jesus' present ignoble circumstances, is whether or not he himself is 'of God'.

Third, here the members of 'this generation' not only demand that Jesus make something happen before they accept his claims. They dictate to him what he must make happen before they will 'see and believe' (cf. v. 32). They do not leave it up to him to decide the terms of the 'sign' they will accept from him. This fact is significant. It implies that the particular 'sign' here demanded of Jesus is the *only* type of 'sign' that would be taken by 'this generation' as proof for the truth of the claims that are now under dispute.

There is, then, according to Mark, a strong formal connection between the 'sign' demanded of Jesus by the Chief Priests and others at Jesus' crucifixion and that demanded of Jesus by the Pharisees at Mk 8.11-13. The respective 'signs' are similar, if not identical, in 'shape'. Accordingly, once we determine the 'shape' of the 'sign' demanded of Jesus in Mk 15.28-32, we will also have determined the 'shape' of the 'sign' that Jesus is asked to produce in Mk 8.11-13.

What, then, is this 'sign'? Mark notes that it is Jesus 'saving' himself by 'coming down from his cross' (σῶσον σεαυτὸν καταβάς ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ, v. 30; καταβάτω νῦν ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ, v. 32). In other words, the 'sign' demanded from Jesus is a phenomenon that effects 'deliverance'. But deliverance of whom, and from what? Certainly at the very least it is rescue of an individual from personal tragedy, since the call to 'save yourself' and 'come down from the cross' goes out to a broken man who is embroiled in a life-threatening situation. But it is much more than this. For, in the first place, in Mark's Gospel to 'save oneself' by 'coming down from the cross' represents blatant self-aggrandisement and not simply self-preservation. This is clear from the fact that Mark has had Jesus define 'saving one's self' through a willful rejection of 'cross bearing' as tantamount both to asserting oneself over others at their expense<sup>30</sup> and to the attempt—on the part of both individuals and nations—to gain and use worldly power to conquer and dominate their enemies.<sup>31</sup> In the second place, according to Mark, the appeal to Jesus to 'save himself' is addressed to him not just as an individual, but as the supreme Jewish national figure—'the King of Israel' (and therefore, the embodiment of the people of God)—who has been reduced to his

present fate (the cross) in this identity by conquerors of Israel.<sup>32</sup> So, according to Mark, the deliverance attested to by the 'sign' of Jesus 'coming down from the cross' is the deliverance, through conquest and not suffering-service, of Israel from national oppression.<sup>33</sup>

In light of this it is clear that according to Mark the type of 'sign' that 'this generation' typically sought and desired was a phenomenon that was associated with (and indeed intimated) Israel's liberation from, and conquest of, its enemies. Accordingly, the 'sign' demanded of Jesus at Mk 8.11-13 must also be a phenomenon of this sort, since it, too, is labeled as a 'sign' sought by 'this generation'.<sup>34</sup>

### 3. *The 'sign' as one which is to be 'given'*

In Mk 8.12c Mark has Jesus define the 'sign' demanded of him as one which is to be 'given' (δοθήσεται). Significantly, this is a signal characteristic of the 'signs' which, according to Jesus in Mk 13.22, will be offered by certain 'sign' workers to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea during a time of grave national crisis (cf. Mk 13.14ff.). These 'signs' are also ones that are to be 'given' (δώσουσιν σημεῖα κτλ.).<sup>35</sup> It seems clear, then, because of this, that in Mark's eyes the type of 'sign' that is demanded of Jesus at Mk 8.11 is cut from the same cloth as those which the 'sign' workers of Mk 13.22 are wont to produce. But what type of 'sign' are they? How does Mark envision their content? He lets us know this in three ways:

- (a) by giving specific information concerning the identity of the men who work these 'signs';
- (b) by calling these 'signs' σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα and,
- (c) by noting the effect that these 'signs' might have upon those who see them.

a. *The identity of the 'sign' workers of Mk 13.22.* Mark, through Jesus, characterizes the men who produce the 'signs' referred to in Mk 13.22 in three different ways. The first way is as 'false christ' (ψευδόχριστοι, 13.22), Now, for Mark, Jesus is the Christ (cf. Mk 1.1), and since Mark takes great pains to show that Jesus' identity as the Christ is grounded in suffering and service, and stands solidly against triumphalism, chauvinism, and domineering imperialism (cf. esp. Mk 8.27-37; 9.31-37; 10.32-45), then Mark's designation through Jesus of the 'sign' workers of Mk 13.22 as 'false Christs' means one thing. They are Messianic pretenders who hold that their identity as Messiah brings engagement in violence, conquest, and war.<sup>36</sup>

They are also referred to as 'false prophets' (ψευδοπροφήται, 13.22). For Mark, a prophet is primarily one who calls Israel to become the people that God would have them be.<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, a 'False Prophet' is someone who leads Israel towards national behavior that is the antithesis of what God has ordained for her. Now, in Mark's Gospel Jesus is, among other things, a prophet.<sup>38</sup> And it is as a prophet that he warns Israel against taking its status as the chosen people as a pretext or justification for becoming involved in any form of exclusivistic nationalism.<sup>39</sup> He calls Israel to see that its national identity as the People of God is bound up with being a servant to, and not a lord of, other nations.<sup>40</sup> By implication then, for Mark, 'false prophets' are men who advocate for Israel behaviour that is despotic in character and is set upon achieving worldly domination.

Finally, the 'sign' workers of Mk 13.22 are identified by Mark as identical with the 'many' spoken of in Mk 13.5-6.<sup>41</sup> Now, according to Mark, the 'many' "come in my name" (ἐλεύσονται ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου, and 'proclaim "I am"' (λέγοντες ὅτι Ἐγώ εἰμι). What do these actions signify? Many scholars have taken the view that since, on the one hand, the phrase 'to come in my name' generally means 'appealing to me as their authority', 'claiming to be sent by me'<sup>42</sup> and in this case probably 'usurping my identity',<sup>43</sup> and, on the other, that the personal pronoun in this phrase (μου) can only refer to the speaker, Jesus (cf. 13.3),<sup>44</sup> this action signifies the laying of a claim on the part of people within the Christian community to be speaking to other Christians on Jesus' behalf<sup>45</sup> or even to be Jesus himself returned from on high.<sup>46</sup> But this cannot be the case. In the first place, there is nothing in the text that would indicate that Mark intended the audience of the 'many' to be seen as the Christian community.<sup>47</sup> Certainly, Christians will hear them (cf. v. 5), but that seems to be only by accident. For in 13.5-7, the people that the 'many' target and win over with their proclamations are specifically distinguished from the disciples and other followers of Jesus: they have never been privy, as the disciples and other followers of Jesus have (cf. v. 5), to Jesus' warnings about the ill effects of the proclamations of the 'many'.<sup>48</sup> Secondly, in 13.5-7 Mark, through Jesus, designates the 'many' who 'come in my name' as originating outside of the circle of Jesus' followers. He does this by having Jesus speak of the 'many' in the third and not the second person. Had Mark wanted the 'many' to be seen as Christians, he would have had Jesus say something like 'many of you will come in my name. . .'.<sup>49</sup>

And finally, the referent of the phrase ὀνόματί μου cannot be the name 'Jesus'. For a number of reasons, it must be a title that Jesus alone has the right to bear, namely the title 'Messiah':<sup>50</sup> (1) One cannot construe the phrase 'coming in my name' as a claim either to stand in for 'Jesus' (i.e., the man from Nazareth) or to be him without rendering that sentence in which it appears contradictory. As W. Weiffenbach long ago observed, 'He who legitimizes himself through the *onoma* of Jesus cannot at the same time claim the same ὄνομα'.<sup>51</sup> (2) If Mark meant the 'many' to be seen as claiming to be standing in for Jesus or to be him, it is difficult to see why at v. 6 he did not write simply πολλοὶ ἐλεύσονται.<sup>52</sup> (3) Matthew understood the claim made by the 'many' in Mk 13.6 to be a claim to be the Messiah (cf. Mt. 24.5). (4) Most importantly elsewhere in Mark's Gospel, when the phrase 'in (on) my name' appears on the lips of Jesus, the 'name' referred to is not the personal name 'Jesus' but the title *Christos*.<sup>53</sup> The phrase 'coming in my name', then, in this context means claiming to be God's Anointed, his Deliverer,<sup>54</sup> attempting to rival Jesus for recognition as the figure empowered by God to bring salvation to Israel.<sup>55</sup>

Since, as D. Daube has shown,<sup>56</sup> the phrase ἐγὼ εἰμι was associated in Mark's time primarily with Yahweh's presence, especially as that presence was made known during the time of the Exodus, to proclaim 'I am' is therefore tantamount to announcing the dawning of the time in which Israel would be liberated from her enemies. So according to Mark, the 'sign' workers of Mk 13.22 are to be seen as men who not only claim to be elected by God to be his instrument in bringing about his deliverance, but who also announce that the time of deliverance is now at hand.<sup>57</sup>

Now it should be pointed out that these characteristics are exactly those of the so-called 'Sign-Prophets'—Theudas, the unnamed *Goetes*, the 'Egyptian'—who were active in Judea in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the Jewish Revolt against Rome<sup>58</sup> and who were known to both Mark and his readers. They, too, claimed that they were expressly sent by God to fulfill a divine plan of liberation and worldly exaltation of Israel which involved the violent overthrow of Israel's enemies,<sup>59</sup> and, announcing that the time of salvation had arrived, they gathered followers and encouraged them to rise up against their oppressors.<sup>60</sup> So not only is there a correspondence in Mark's Gospel between the 'sign' workers of Mk 13.22 and the historical 'Sign-Prophets' mentioned in Josephus and other sources,<sup>61</sup> there is a correspondence so exact that it cannot be

anything but intentionally drawn. Accordingly, in describing and characterizing the 'sign' workers of Mk 13.22 in the particular ways he does, Mark was clearly identifying them with Theudas and his ilk.

Given this, it is extremely important to note that the 'signs' offered by these 'Sign-Prophets' were phenomena copying the substance of one or another of the events of the time of the Exodus and Conquest which were instrumental in securing freedom from subjugation and dominance for the people of God. The 'sign' that Theudas offered on his own behalf—and which, notably, was intended to grant safe passage for any who would march into Jerusalem against the Romans—was a re-enactment of Moses' division of the Reed Sea and/or Joshua's division of the Jordan.<sup>62</sup> The 'signs' offered by the unnamed *Goetes* active during the procuratorship of Antonius Felix were embodiments of the plagues which foreshadowed and brought about the liberation of God's people from their Egyptian bondage or re-runs of the events wrought by Moses when he confronted Pharaoh's court magicians that indicated the eventual subjugation of Pharaoh to God.<sup>63</sup> The 'signs' promised by the *Goēs* who was active during Porcius Festus' procuratorship were to intimate the relief from slavery that the Israelites experienced when Yahweh vanquished Pharaoh.<sup>64</sup> And the 'sign' that the 'Egyptian' sought to work—a 'sign' which, he thought, would in its manifestation specifically serve to overthrow the Roman garrison in Jerusalem—was the act of judgment performed by Joshua against Jericho.<sup>65</sup>

The ultimate effect, then, of Mark's characterization of the 'sign' workers referred to in Mk 13.22 as 'false christs', 'false prophets' and identical with the 'many' of Mk 13.6 is not only to identify these 'sign' workers with the historical 'Sign-Prophets' mentioned in Josephus and other sources. It is to specify the type of 'sign' that, according to Mark, these 'sign' workers were wont to offer. Since Mark intended the 'sign' workers of Mk 13.22 to be seen as identical with the likes of Theudas, the 'Egyptian', and the *Goetes*, then he also meant the 'signs' that the former group are said to offer to be taken as identical in type with those proffered by the latter. They, too, are 'signs of salvation', 'signs of freedom', phenomena betokening Israel's impending deliverance from national oppression.

b. *The name given to the 'signs' of Mk 13.22.* Through Jesus, Mark calls these 'signs' σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα (13.22). This phrase is sometimes found in ancient literature with the sense of 'miracle',<sup>66</sup> so

Mark's calling the 'signs' offered by the 'sign' workers of Mk 13.22 by this name could be an indication more of character than of content. However, S.V. McCasland has demonstrated that in the LXX the phrase σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα was a *terminus technicus* for the 'mighty deeds', the acts of deliverance which God gave to Israel through to Moses, Aaron, and Joshua in connection with the Exodus and Conquest.<sup>67</sup> As McCasland notes:

Miraculous deeds are found in other places [in the Old Testament], such as Judges and Kings, especially in the careers of Elijah and Elisha, but these events are never referred to as signs and wonders in the characteristic passages in which the idiom occurs. It is evident that although the Hebrews believed in the continuous activity of God as the sovereign of history, who manifested his personal interest and power in all the great experiences of the Hebrew people, it was his intention to deliver them from Egypt and lead them into Canaan which became the unique revelation of Yahweh's true character. The story was normative for the idea of God as far as signs and wonders were concerned.<sup>68</sup>

Now this is certainly the sense the phrase bears in Mk 13.22. For, in the first place, as McCasland also notes,<sup>69</sup> 'the mighty deeds by which God liberated Israel from Egypt' is the primary meaning which the phrase had in the New Testament as well, particularly in its writings or sections of writings that, like Mark 13, are apocalyptic in nature or tone. Secondly, Mark is careful always to use only the word δύναμις when he wants to designate a deed or an event a 'miracle'.<sup>70</sup> Thirdly, there is a specific allusion in Mk 13.22 to Deut. 13.2-3 ('If a prophet arises among you . . . and gives to you a sign or a wonder, and if the sign or the wonder comes to pass, and if he says, "Let us go after other gods," which you have not known, "and let us serve them", you shall not listen to the words of that prophet . . . for the Lord is testing you. . .') where the expression 'sign or wonder' (σημεῖον ἢ τέρας) is a direct reference to the God's wonders in the days of Moses.<sup>71</sup>

So we may conclude that in calling the 'signs' of the 'sign' workers of Mk 13.22 σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα, Mark was identifying these 'signs' specifically with the liberating works carried out by God during the Exodus.

c. *The effect of seeing the 'signs' of Mk 13.22.* According to Mark, the 'signs' referred to in 13.22 are of a type that, once seen, threaten to 'lead astray' (πρὸς τὸ ἀποπλανᾶν) the people of Jerusalem and

Judea,<sup>72</sup> even though these people have witnessed the appearance of the 'abomination of desolation standing where he ought not' (cf. v. 14). Now, for Mark, the abomination is an act of sacrilege so appalling that tribulation is certain to follow in its wake.<sup>73</sup> Its appearance signals two things: first, that the destruction of the Temple and its environs is both inevitable and near;<sup>74</sup> and, second, that for the people of God flight from Jerusalem and Judea is both imperative for survival as well as divinely mandated.<sup>75</sup> So in Mark's eyes, then, to be 'led astray' means to be made to think that all of this is not the case.

Accordingly, 'signs' that threaten to 'lead astray' are those which tempt one to believe, despite clear evidence and divine warnings to the contrary, that for the Temple and the people of Jerusalem and Judea, deliverance, not destruction, was at hand.

But what kind of 'signs' would serve to convince a people whose survival and faithfulness depends upon fleeing their circumstances, that flight is not only unnecessary, but actually a form of unbelief? What, if anything, was the 'shape' of these signs?

To answer this we turn to Josephus, specifically his description in Book 6 of *The Jewish War* of an event in the last stages of the revolt of the Jews against Rome which in substance is an exact parallel (if not the actual historical referent) of that envisioned in Mk 13.22.<sup>76</sup> The event occurred when Titus' soldiers breached the Temple Gates and began to mount the attack which ended in their setting fire to the Holy of Holies. Josephus tells us that just prior to this, the Jews of Jerusalem, ignoring clear and repeated warnings from God that the city was doomed and would be destroyed by the encroaching Roman forces (cf. 6.288-315), and oblivious to an abominating sacrilege committed in their midst by one of their number (cf. 6.201-219), had gathered in the inner sanctuary of Herod's Temple. There, they thought, they would be safe and could continue their rebellion undaunted, for they had convinced themselves that the Temple was still impregnable and the inner courts inviolable. So the breach of the gates sounded the death knell to Jewish hopes for the success of the revolt. It was the final and unmistakable signal that Jerusalem had met its end, and it made flight from the city imperative for those who wished to escape the Roman sword. Yet despite this, one man (whom, notably, Josephus labels a *ψευδοπροφήτης*, 6.288) was still able to induce 'thousands',<sup>77</sup> who were on the verge of fleeing the Sanctuary and saving themselves, not only to stay their ground, but to go out into the outer courts of the Temple to face the army that was waiting

there to cut them down (6.288). He did this, Josephus notes, by promising to effectuate specific 'signs', namely 'signs of salvation' (σημεῖα τῆς σωτηρίας, 6.288). Now, the expression 'signs of salvation' is another one of Josephus' equivalents for the actions of God during the Exodus which decimated the enemies of his people and led to the liberation of Israel from national subjugation.<sup>78</sup> It is clear, then, that the type of 'sign' that could and would serve to forestall and make light of necessary flight—the type of 'sign' which Mark, through Jesus, says the 'sign' workers of Mk 13.22 were wont to offer—was that which, in content, embodied 'the mighty hand' and 'the outstretched arm' of Yahweh and recapitulated one of the 'great and terrible deeds' which God wrought on Israel's behalf at the time of the Exodus.

From all of this, it is abundantly clear that according to Mark 'signs' that are 'given' are 'signs' that embody and betoken the deliverance from bondage that Israel experienced at the Exodus. And since, as we have seen above, the 'sign' demanded of Jesus at Mk 8.11 is designated in the following verse as one such 'sign', then it, too, in Mark's view, is a phenomenon of this sort.

### **Conclusions**

The facts, then, that the 'sign' demanded of Jesus in 8.11 is designated by Mark as ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, is associated with one expected by 'this generation', and is specified as one which is 'given', justify my assumption that this 'sign' is of a peculiar type. From all that is implied by these facts, it is clear that according to Mark the 'sign' is a phenomenon whose content is apocalyptic in tone, triumphalistic in character, and the embodiment of one of the 'mighty deeds of deliverance' that God had worked on Israel's behalf in rescuing it from slavery.

### III

In drawing this conclusion, it is important to note that in Mark's time these particular 'signs' seem to have been perceived in a particular way. They were viewed as a 'means of confirmation' accrediting as 'of God' those in whose behalf they were to be worked; it appears that they were also thought of as something that, once manifested, would prompt a rerun of the saving action God undertook on Israel's behalf during the period of the Exodus and

Conquest. That this was indeed the case is the implication of the following facts:

First, that the 'Sign Prophet' Theudas was certain that after his 'sign' was effectuated he could walk, as he planned, into Jerusalem unmolested by the Roman forces stationed there despite his knowledge of the fact that these forces would certainly take his 'sign' as a challenge to their authority and act accordingly (on this, see Josephus, *Ant.* 20.97-99).

Second, that Theudas could gather followers who were willing to accompany him to the banks of the Jordan (where, as we have seen above, his 'sign' was to be manifested) despite the known risk that in response to doing so, Roman troops would be sent out against them (cf. Josephus, *Bell.* 20.99).

Third, that the 'Egyptian' could claim that immediately upon actuating his 'sign', the Roman garrison stationed in Jerusalem would be overcome and he would be set up as Ruler of Israel (cf. *Ant.* 20.169; *Bell.* 2.261; Acts 21.38).

Fourth, that the mere promise from the 'Egyptian' of his 'sign' roused 'thousands' to go on a march from the wilderness into Judea in spite of the knowledge that the Roman authorities there would, viewing such a march as a prelude to rebellion, take repressive action against it (cf. *Ant.* 20.169; *Bell.* 2.261).

Fifth, that anti-Roman sentiment stiffened among the Jews after the Roman procurator Felix prevented the Egyptian and his forces from getting near Jerusalem (cf. *Ant.* 20.169).

Finally, that, as already noted, a great multitude of Jews, who during the death throes of the Judean revolt against Rome had been promised 'signs of salvation', were willing to rush into the outer courts of the Temple where these 'signs' were to be seen, even though they knew the soldiers of Titus, having breached the Temple's defences, were waiting there to cut them down (cf. *Bell.* 6.284-86).

In any case, Mark certainly shared this view. This is clear from the fact that, as we have seen, in his portrayal of the 'sign' workers of 13.22, Mark notes that the offering of such 'signs' would give confidence to those both working and seeing them that, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, they would be saved from the imminent and certain destruction that was about to befall them.

Once we realize this—that for Mark 'signs' of the type which Jesus is asked by the Pharisees to produce were, given their content, 'levers' by which the hand of God could be activated, indeed, even

forced, into bringing about the destruction of Israel's enemies<sup>79</sup>—then the reason why Jesus is portrayed at Mk 8.11-13 as refusing to accede to a demand for such a 'sign' becomes clear. Mark has Jesus refuse this demand because for Jesus to do otherwise would be nothing less than to advocate, initiate, and engage in triumphalism—a type of activity that, according to Mark, was forbidden to Jesus if he wished to remain faithful to the exigencies of his divine commission.<sup>80</sup>

In support of this contention, I offer three considerations. The first is Mark's designation of the Pharisees' demand as something which causes Jesus to experience *peirasmos* (8.11).<sup>81</sup> Elsewhere in Mark's Gospel, when Jesus is portrayed as subjected to *peirasmos*, he is always faced with an open choice between obedience to or abandonment of the constraint laid upon him by God to fulfill his role as Messiah by eschewing violence and triumphalism.<sup>82</sup> Is it not, then, unlikely that Mark would also designate the Pharisees' demand for a 'sign' as something in which Jesus encounters *peirasmos* unless he saw it as embodying the sort of challenge that, given my conclusion regarding the nature of the demand, I have argued it contains?

The second consideration arises from what is implied by the manner in which Jesus, according to Mark, refuses to comply with the Pharisees' demand. Jesus' refusal is couched within the phrase εἰ δοθήσεται τῇ γενεῇ ταύτῃ σημεῖον (lit., 'if a sign shall be given to this generation'). This phrase is a literal rendering of an adapted form of a peculiar Hebraic oath of self-imprecation: May I die (or some great evil befall me) if such-and-such is done.<sup>83</sup> This oath not only said 'no' forcefully to a suggested course of action, but made plain how imperative was the need to avoid it.<sup>84</sup> That Jesus uses this particular asseveration to refuse the demand implies that its challenge cuts him to the quick and represents a powerful threat to his integrity. Since, as we have seen, a call to produce a 'sign' is in itself not objectionable to Jesus, would not the demand in Mk 8.11 have to be interpreted along the lines I have set out to do exactly this?

Finally, there is the consideration that, according to Mark, when the Pharisees' demand for a 'sign' is first made, it prompts Jesus to 'sigh (or groan) deeply' (ἀναστενάξας τῷ πνεύματι αὐτοῦ, 8.12a). As I have shown elsewhere,<sup>85</sup> in the ancient world, to give vent to this outburst was to express dismay at finding oneself in a situation which might prove one's readiness to obey a given divine decree either foolish or wanting. Accordingly, Jesus' 'sighing deeply' in response to

the demand indicates that the demand is meant to be seen as challenging Jesus' faithfulness. But how could the demand do this unless inherent within it was the invitation that I have argued must be seen there?

It would seem, then, that the reason the Marcan Jesus refuses to produce a 'sign' when the Pharisees demand one of him is not because he is, according to Mark, opposed to the enterprise of producing 'signs'. Rather, given Mark's assumptions concerning the type of 'sign' demanded in this instance and what this 'sign' would activate once manifested, it is because in producing such a 'sign' Jesus would involve himself in the sort of triumphalistic, imperious activities that throughout Mark's Gospel he condemns and sets himself against.

#### NOTES

1. Here and throughout this article the English equivalent for *sēmeion* is placed in inverted commas to distinguish it as a technical term and to make clear that as such it has a meaning that is different from other senses that σημεῖον bore in the ancient world.

2. On this, see K.H. Rengstorf, 'σημεῖον', *TDNT* VII (1971), pp. 200-61 esp. pp. 234-36; and especially O. Linton, 'The Demand for a Sign from Heaven (Mark 8.11-12 and par.)', *Studia Theologica* 19 (1965), pp. 112-29.

3. Among the many commentators who hold this view are E.P. Gould (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1896], p. 145); Alan Menzies (*The Earliest Gospel* [London: Macmillan, 1901], p. 163); H.B. Swete (*The Gospel According to St. Mark* [London: Macmillan, 1905], p. 168); A.W.F. Blunt (*The Gospel According to Saint Mark* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1929], p. 193); A.E.J. Rawlinson (*St. Mark* [London: Methuen, 1931], p. 257); B.H. Branscomb (*The Gospel of Mark* [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1937], p. 138); C.E.B. Cranfield (*The Gospel According to St. Mark* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959], pp. 257-58); G. Delling ('Botschaft und Wunder im Wirken Jesu', in *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus*, ed. H. Rostow and K. Matthiae [Berlin, 1960], pp. 389-402); V. Taylor (*The Gospel according to St. Mark* [London: Macmillan, 1961], p. 361); K. Rengstorf ('σημεῖον', p. 235); D.E. Nineham (*St. Mark* [Baltimore: Pelican, 1963], pp. 210-12); C.F.D. Moule (*The Gospel According to Mark* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965], pp. 60-61); K. Tagawa (*Miracles et évangile. La pensée personnelle de l'évangéliste Marc* [Paris, 1966], pp. 75-80); E.J. Mally ('The Gospel According to Mark' in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. R.E. Brown, J.A. Fitzmyer, R.E. Murphy [Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1968], p. 39); E. Schweizer (*The Good News According*

to Mark [London: SPCK, 1971], p. 159; R.P. Martin (*Mark: Evangelist and Theologian* [Exeter: Paternoster, 1972], pp. 172-74); W.H. Kelber (*The Kingdom in Mark* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974], p. 61); W.L. Lane (*The Gospel According to Mark* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974], pp. 277-78); W. Barclay (*The Gospel of Mark* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975], pp. 175-76); H. Anderson (*The Gospel of Mark* [London: Oliphants, 1976], p. 91); W. Harrington (*Mark* [Dublin: Veritas, 1979], p. 111); L. Williamson, Jr (*Mark* [Atlanta: John Knox, 1983], p. 143).

4. On the Pharisees as among 'those outside', see J. Coutts, "Those Outside" (Mark 4,10-12), *StEv* II (TU, 87; Berlin, 1964), pp. 155-57. On 'blindness', i.e., willful refusal to acknowledge the presence of God, as an identifying characteristic of 'those outside', see Mk 4.12 and E.E. Lemcio, 'External Evidence for the Structure and Function of Mark iv. 1-20, vii. 13-23, and viii. 14-21', *JTS* 29 (1978), p. 335. See also R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, Teil 2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1977), p. 223 and M. Boucher, *The Mysterious Parable: A Literary Study* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 1977), pp. 60, 84.

5. Cf. Mk 15.27-32.

6. The nature and extent of Mark's redactional and/or compositional contribution to the present form of 2.1-12 is still a matter of debate. Some commentators, such as R. Pesch (*Das Markusevangelium*, Teil 1 [Freiburg: Herder, 1976], pp. 151-62), J. Gnilka (*Das Evangelium nach Markus*) (Mk 1-8, 26) [Zurich: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978], pp. 95-98), and G.H. Boobyer ('Mark II, 10a and the Interpretation of the Healing of the Paralytic', *HTR* 47 [1954], pp. 115-20) see it as a matter only of Mark slightly modifying, or adding to, the wording of a completely unified, traditional pre-Markan story. Others, such as R. Bultmann (*The History of the Synoptic Tradition* [2nd edn; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968], p. 15) following W. Wrede (*Zur Heilung des Gelähmten* (Mc 2,1 ff.)), *ZNW* 5 [1904], pp. 454-58), M. Dibelius (*From Tradition to Gospel* [London, 1934], pp. 66-68), V. Taylor (*Mark*, pp. 191-92), and H. Tödt (*The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition* [London: SCM, 1963], pp. 118-21) see Mark as having inserted vv. 5b-10, a section of a traditional, originally longer 'saying' (apophthegm), into a traditional healing narrative in which v. 11 originally followed v. 5a, thus giving the material now in Mk 2.1-12 a shape it never had before it came to Mark. Still others, such as A.E.J. Rawlinson (*Mark*, p. 25) and Joanna Dewey ('The Literary Structure of the Controversy Stories in Mark 2.1-3.6', *JBL* 92 [1973], pp. 394-401) argue that a large portion, if not all, of the story is wholly a Markan composition. That Mk 2.1-12 was in some way shaped by Mark's hand is, however, never doubted.

7. For the substance of the following material I am indebted to the comprehensive discussion of 'signs' carried out by O. Linton in his article 'The Demand for a Sign' referred to in note 2 above.

8. References to 'signs', 'tokens of trustworthiness' in biblical literature

are many and various. They are mentioned in the Pentateuch (Gen. 4.15; Exod. 3.12; 4.8-9; Num. 14.11, 22; Deut. 13.1-12), the Writings (Judg. 6.17; 1 Sam. 2.4; 10.1; 14.10; 1 Kgs 13.3; 2 Kgs 19.29; 20.8, 9; 2 Chron. 32.24; Neh. 9.10), the Prophets (Isa. 7.10, 14; 37.30; 38.7, 22), and the Wisdom Literature (Pss. 78 [77].43; 105 [104].27; 135 [134].9) of the Old Testament, in the Pseudepigrapha (4 *Ezra* 4.51; 6.11, 20; 7.25, 8.63), in Josephus (*Bell.* 2.258; 6.258, 288; *Ant.* 8.347; 10.28; 20.99-97, 168), in the Dead Sea Scrolls (1Q27 1 cols. 1, 5) in the Mishnah (*Baba Mesiah* 59b), in the Babylonian Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 89b, 98a, 98b), in the Midrash (*Exodus Rabbah* 5, 13) and in the New Testament (Mk 13.4; 13.22; [16.17, 20]; Mt. 12.39; 16.4; 24.3,4; Lk. 2.12; 11.16, 29; 21.7; Jn 2.18; 6.30; Acts 4.16; 8.16; 14.3; 1 Cor. 1.22; 2 Thess. 2.9; Rev. 13.13-14).

9. On this as the proper or appropriate designation for Theudas and figures like him, see P.W. Barnett, 'The Jewish Sign Prophets—AD 40-70—Their Intentions and Origin', *NTS* 27 (1981), pp. 679-97. The activities and aims of these men are discussed in more detail below.

10. The 'sign' that Isaiah here offers to Ahaz is that a young woman whom Isaiah had no reason to know was pregnant would shortly be found to be so and would give birth to a boy (on this, see J.L. McKenzie, 'Behold the Virgin', in his *The New Testament without Illusion* [New York: Crossroad, 1982], pp. 103-13, esp. pp. 105-106).

11. On the exact 'shape' of these 'signs', see below.

12. We must take seriously the fact that Mark does not exclude the Scribes from those who marvel at what Jesus does in his healing of the Paralytic. It is, Mark notes at Mk 2.12, specifically 'all' (πάντας) who were present on this occasion who 'were astounded and gave glory to God' (ὥστε ἐξίστασθαι πάντας καὶ δοξάζειν τὸν Θεόν). To say, with T.A. Burkill, that in Mk 2.1-12 'The impression produced [by the healing] on the hostile Scribes finds no mention, for they would hardly be included among those who glorify God in verse 12, and we are perhaps meant to take it for granted that they are temporarily put to silence' (*Mysterious Revelation* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963], p. 127) is to engage in special pleading.

13. See, M.D. Hooker, *The Son of Man in Mark* (London: SPCK, 1967), p. 88. In support of this, it is important to note that Mark has cast Jesus' offer to make something happen in such a way as to call to mind the similar offer on the part of Isaiah in the 'sign' story of the healing of Hezekiah in 2 Kgs 20.1-11. According to Mark, Jesus, like Isaiah, points up two courses of action that he is willing to take to meet the skepticism that he has encountered (cp. Mk 2.9 with 2 Kgs 20.9). Also, as does Isaiah, Jesus allows the decision as to which course of action he is to take to be made for him. Finally, note the verbal resemblance between Jesus' question in Mk 2.9, 'Which is easier. . .' (τί ἐστὶν εὐκοπώτερον, κτλ.) and Hezekiah's remark in the LXX of 2 Kgs 20.10, 'It is easy. . .' (καὶ εἶπεν Ἐζεκιᾶς, κοῦφον, κτλ.).

14. J. Duplacy, following a suggestion first made by D.S. Sharp in *ExpT* 38

(1927), p. 428, contends that here *iva* with the subjunctive *εἴδετε* expresses a command and therefore this verse should be translated 'Know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins' ('Marc II, 10, note de syntaxe', in *Mélanges A. Robert* [Paris, 1957], pp. 424-26); see also C.J. Cadoux, 'The Imperative Use of *hina* in the New Testament', *JTS* 42 (1944), pp. 165-73; H.G. Meecham, 'The Imperative Use of *iva* in the New Testament', *JTS* 43 (1942), p. 179; and the summary of the evidence by C.F.D. Moule in his *An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek* (2nd edn; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), p. 144. If this is the case, then Jesus' intention to prove his authority is all the more pronounced.

It has, however, frequently been suggested that Mark did not mean 2.10a to be seen as a statement of Jesus to the Scribes. Rather it is a parenthetical remark addressed by the evangelist to the Christian readers of the Gospel to explain the significance of the closing phase of the healing for them (cf. M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, p. 67; G.H. Boobyer, 'Mark II, 10a', pp. 115-20; C.P. Ceroke, 'Is Mk 2, 10a Saying of Jesus?' *CBQ* 22 (1960), pp. 369-90; Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 100; J. Murphy-O'Connor, 'Péché et communauté dans le Nouveau Testament', *RB* 74 [1967], pp. 181-85; L.S. Hay, 'The Son of Man in Mk 2.10 and 2.28', *JBL* 89 [1970], pp. 71-73; N. Perrin, 'The Christology of Mark: A Study in Methodology', in *A Modern Pilgrimage in New Testament Christology* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974], pp. 112, 116 n. 24; Lane, *Mark*, p. 98; and R.M. Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes* [Chico: Scholars Press, 1981], pp. 161-62). I do not find this conjecture convincing; it is based primarily on a questionable assumption, namely that the title 'Son of Man' is here a designation of transcendent dignity which Mark would not have Jesus publicly apply to himself so early in his ministry. For trenchant criticisms of this assumption, see M. Hooker, *The Son of Man in Mark*, pp. 84-85; C. Tuckett 'The Present Son of Man', *JSTNT* 14 (1982), pp. 58-81 and J.D. Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), pp. 83-84.

15. As does, for instance, Anderson, *Mark*, p. 101.

16. 'The stated purpose of the healing was a demonstration that Jesus had the power to forgive sins. There is no escaping the language and intention of the text' (Walter Wink, 'Mark 2.1-12', *Interpretation* 38 [1984], p. 61).

17. It should be noted that both Mk 1.21-28 and 3.1-6 also provide evidence for this conclusion. In 1.21-28 Mark presents Jesus as healing a demoniac to demonstrate, in the face of mild skepticism to the contrary (cf. v. 22), that he is in rightful possession of the authority with which he speaks (cf. D. Hill, 'Jesus and Josephus' "messianic" prophets', in *Text and Interpretation: Studies in the New Testament Presented to Matthew Black*, ed. E. Best & R.McL. Wilson [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979], p. 150). In 3.1-6 Mark has Jesus propose, and then carry out, a healing of a man with a withered hand in order to show that, contrary to the opinion of Pharisees and Herodians (cf. v. 6, v. 2), his actions of 'doing good' and

'saving life' prior to this occasion (i.e., the actions described in 1.16-2.27) are authorized by God even though they sometimes fly in the face of the Mosaic Law.

18. See, for instance, Rengstorff, 'σημειόν', p. 235, Lane, *Mark*, p. 275 n. 18; F. Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology* (London: Lutterworth, 1969), p. 378; J. Gnllka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, vol. I, p. 306; J. Sweetnam, 'No Sign of Jonah', *Biblica* 66 (1985), p. 126.

19. Cf. Mt. 12.38 where a group of Pharisees (and Scribes) is portrayed in exactly this way and their demand is only Διδάσκαλε, θέλομεν ἀπὸ σοῦ σημεῖον ἰδεῖν.

20. Cf. Mk 1.11; 11.30, 31.

21. See H. Traub, 'οὐρανοῦ', *TDNT* V (1967), p. 509. On ἀπό with the genitive as an appellative, see F. Blass, A. Debrunner & R.W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, §209 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 113.

22. E.g., Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 258; G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1986), p. 254.

23. Cf. Mk 1.11; 6.41; 7.34; 10.21; 11.25, 26, 30, 31; 12.25; 13.27, 31; 14.62.

24. Mk 4.32 = Dan. 4.12; Mk 13.25 = Isa. 34.4.

25. For the historical event referred to in this verse, see J. Goldstein, *II Maccabees* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), pp. 331-34.

26. In support of this, it is important to note that in two of the three times in the LXX (the exception being Job 7.9) and in each of the four times in the New Testament where ἀπό τοῦ οὐρανοῦ is used adverbially the phrase is also linked with events or phenomena embodying some aspect of salvation. In Wis. 16.20 it is recalled that Israel was saved from perishing in the wilderness by bread sent by God ἀπὸ οὐρανοῦ (καὶ ἔτοιμον ἄρτον αὐτοῖς ἀπὸ οὐρανοῦ ἐπέμψας). According to Sir. 46.17 the phenomenon that destroyed the Philistines and Tyrians besetting Samuel was God's thundering ἀπὸ οὐρανοῦ (καὶ ἐβρόντεσεν ἀπὸ οὐρανοῦ Κύριος). The author of Hebrews states that the Israelites who were punished for disobedience were those who were being warned ἀπὸ οὐρανῶν of the loss of their salvation (οἱ τῶν ἀπὸ οὐρανοῦ ἀποστρεφόμενοι, Heb. 12.25). It was, according to 1 Pet. 1.12, the phenomenon of the Holy Spirit being sent ἀπὸ οὐρανοῦ (ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ ἀποσταλέντι ἀπὸ οὐρανοῦ) that stood behind the experience of salvation (σωτηρίας, cf. v. 10) kindled in the readers of the epistle by the words of the early Christian evangelists. In 1 Thess. 4.16 it is the event of Jesus' coming ἀπὸ οὐρανοῦ (ὁ Κύριος... καταβήσεται ἀπὸ οὐρανοῦ) that heralds the resurrection of the saints. And in Mt. 24.29 the arrival of the Son of Man for judgment is accompanied by stars that fall ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ (καὶ οἱ ἀστέρες πεσοῦνται ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ).

27. On this, see M. Meinertz, 'Dieses Geschlecht im Neuen Testament', *BZ* 1 (1957), pp. 283-89.

28. This is sufficiently clear from the fact that Mark has these particular people—passers-by, chief priests, and Scribes—mock Jesus and hurl insults at him. But Mark underscores this point in several other ways. First, he portrays those here demanding a 'sign' specifically in terms of the wicked who in Pss. 22, 109, Wis. 2, and Lam. 2 heap derision on God's elect (on this, see Lane, *Mark*, p. 569; Taylor, *Mark*, pp. 591-92). Second, at 15.32 Mark has the mockers contemptuously appeal to Jesus for help in 'seeing' when they obviously have no intention to do so. In this, Mark recalls Jesus' declaration at 4.11-12 that the behavior especially characteristic of 'this generation' is a refusal to engage in the 'seeing' that would lead to belief (On the emphasis in 15.32 on 'seeing' in order to believe as a reference to 4.12, see F.J. Matera, *The Kingship of Jesus* [Chico: Scholars Press, 1982], p. 28). And finally, at 15.29 Mark identifies the mockery engaged in by those who here demand a 'sign' as blasphemy, i.e. willful and perverse rejection of the revelation of God. According to Mark, blaspheming is an identifying mark of 'this generation' (cf. Mk 3.28-30; 7.6-9).

29. This is the implication of the mocking charge '... You who would destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days...' (Mk 15.29b). See D. Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1984), p. 119; F.J. Matera, *Passion Narratives and Gospel Theologies* (Mahwah: Paulist Press), p. 44.

30. Cf. Mk 8.34-38.

31. Cf. Mk 10.42-45. That Mark intended to have these verses seen as a continuation of Jesus' teaching at 8.34-38 on the nature of 'cross bearing' seems abundantly clear if only from the fact that, as with 8.34-38, Mark has prefaced 10.42 with a 'passion prediction' of Jesus and a story of the disciples failing or refusing to understand this prediction (cf. 8.31-33; cp. 10.32-41).

32. Cf. Mk 15.24-25.

33. Cf. Matera, *Passion Narratives*, p. 44; Senior, *Passion of Jesus*, pp. 119-21; J. Blackwell, *The Passion as Story: The Plot of Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), pp. 72-73.

34. It should be pointed out that in the New Testament this connection between 'this generation' and 'signs' of this type is not Mark's alone. Paul also knows it to be the case, as is apparent from 1 Cor. 1.22 where he attributes the rejection of a crucified Christ by Jews who are among 'the foolish' and 'those who are perishing' (Pauline equivalents for 'this generation') to a desire for 'signs' (σημεῖα). The author of the Gospel of John makes reference to it when he has Jesus complain that belief does not arise in his contemporaries unless they 'see signs and wonders' (ἐὰν μὴ σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα ἴδῃτε, οὐ μὴ πιστεύσητε, Jn 4.48). On this, see R.E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John I-XII* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 195-96. On the meaning of the term σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα, see below.

35. D Θ §13 the Diatessaron a (Origen) Victor of Antioch and certain other witnesses describe these σημεῖα as those which will be 'shown' or

'performed' (ποιεω), rather than 'given' (διδωμι). On δοσοῦσιν σημεῖα, κτλ. rather than ποιήσουσιν σημεῖα, κτλ. as the preferred reading for Mk 13.22, see C.H. Turner, 'Western Readings in the Second Half of St. Mark's Gospel', *JTS* (1928), pp. 9-10; Taylor, *Mark*, p. 516; B.M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York: UBS, 1971), p. 112.

36. See Lane, *Mark*, p. 473; G.R. Beasley-Murray, *A Commentary on Mark Thirteen* (London: Macmillan, 1957), p. 83).

37. Cf. Mk 1.2-8, where John the Baptizer, who is, according to Mark, the embodiment of the prophet Elijah, does precisely this.

38. He is not only called this by others at Mk 6.15 and 8.28, but, according to Mark, he refers to himself as such at 6.4. Moreover, Mark underscores the idea of Jesus as prophet by portraying Jesus as following in the footsteps of John the Baptizer. The idea of Jesus as prophet is also possibly intimated in Mark's designation of Jesus as ὁ ἐρχόμενος (on this, see Hahn, *Titles*, p. 380).

39. This is the import of such stories as the Calling of Levi (Mk 2.13-17) and the Healing of the Syro-Phoenician Woman's Daughter (Mk 7.24-30) as well as of Jesus' teaching on the tradition of the elders (Mk 7.1-23).

40. This is most apparent in Jesus' teaching to the Twelve (i.e., the New Israel) in Mk 9.33-36 and 10.42-45. But it is also the special import of Jesus' prophetic-symbolic act of 'cleansing' the Temple (11.15-19, cf. esp. v. 17). On this, see D. Hill, 'Jesus and Josephus' "Messianic" Prophets', p. 150; G.W. Buchanan, 'Mark 11, 15-19: Brigands in the Temple', *HUCA* 30 (1959), pp. 169-77; C. Roth, 'The Cleansing of the Temple and Zechariah 14.21', *Nov Test* 4 (1960), pp. 174-81; W.W. Waty, 'Jesus and the Temple—Cleansing or Cursing?', *ExpT* 93 (1981-82), pp. 235-39.

41. This is clear from the fact that Mark describes both groups in identical terms. They both 'lead astray' (cf. Mk 13.22; cp. vv. 5, 6).

42. Cf. H. Bientenhard, 'ὄνομα', *TDNT*, V (1967), p. 271; Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 359.

43. Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 359; W. Heitmüller, 'Im Namen Jesu' (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1903), p. 63; G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Mark Thirteen*, pp. 32-33; M. Hooker, 'Trial and Tribulation in Mark XIII', *BjRL* 64 (1982), p. 85.

44. Cf. E. Klostermann, *Das Markusevangelium* (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1950), pp. 133.

45. Cf. J.V. Bartlet, *St. Mark* (Edinburgh, 1922), p. 352; C.H. Turner, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (London, 1928), p. 63; W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1965), p. 263; T.J. Weeden, *Mark—Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), pp. 88-89; W.H. Kelber, *The Kingdom in Mark: A New Time and a New Place* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), p. 115.

46. This is, at least at first glance, a plausible position to take in this regard

since the pronoun μου must refer to the speaker of the phrase ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι μου, who is in this case Jesus (cf. Mk 13.5). But whether or not it is actually the case turns on knowing what persona it is in which here Mark has Jesus speaking. Is it as the carpenter from Nazareth, the son of Mary, or is it more officially as God's anointed? On this, see below.

47. Contra J. Wellhausen, *Das Evangelium Marci* (Berlin: George Reimer, 1909), p. 101; W. Manson, 'EGO EIMI of the Messianic Presence in the New Testament', *JTS* 48 (1947), p. 139, and all of the authors cited above in note 45.

48. Indeed, this is why they are seduced by the 'many'. See Hooker, 'Trial and Tribulation', p. 85.

49. Cf. E. Best, *Mark: The Gospel as Story* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1983), p. 48; Beasley-Murray, *Mark Thirteen*, p. 31; Hooker, 'Trial and Tribulation', p. 85. In line with this, we should also note that there is no independent evidence (Acts 20.29 and 1 Jn 2.18 notwithstanding) of the existence of such Christians in the Early Church.

50. E.P. Gould, *Mark*, p. 243; Swete, *Mark*, p. 298; Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 395; Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, p. 325; J. Schniewind, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1944), p. 167; R. Pesch, *Naherwartungen: Tradition und Redaktion in Mk 13* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1968), p. 111.

51. *Der Weiderkunftsgedanke Jesu* (Leipzig, 1873), p. 169.

52. Cf. E. Klostermann, *Das Markusevangelium*, p. 133; Beasley-Murray, *Mark Thirteen*, p. 32.

53. Cf. Mk 9.37, 39, 40.

54. Blunt, *Mark*, p. 239; Hooker, 'Trial and Tribulation', p. 85; Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, p. 325.

55. Gould, *Mark*, p. 243; Swete, *Mark*, p. 243; Branscomb, *Mark*, p. 235; Rawlinson, *St. Mark*, p. 184; Blunt, *Mark*, p. 239; Klostermann, *Markusevangelium*, p. 133; Beasley-Murray, *Mark Thirteen*, p. 31; *idem*, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, p. 325; Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 395; Lane, *Mark*, pp. 454-57; M.J. Lagrange, *Évangile selon Saint Marc* (Paris: Gabalda, 1929), p. 336; H. Conzelmann, 'Geschichte und Eschaton nach Mc xiii', *ZNW* 50 (1959), p. 218; S.E. Johnson, *The Gospel According to St Mark* (London: A. & C. Black, 1960), p. 213; C.S. Mann, *Mark* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1986), p. 524.

56. 'The "I AM" of the Messianic Presence', in *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Athlone, 1956), pp. 325-29.

57. Cf. Klostermann, *Markusevangelium*, p. 136; Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, pp. 325-26; Pesch, *Naherwartungen*, pp. 110-11. Notably, this is exactly how Luke understands this phrase. He renders it not as a statement of identity or a claim to dignity, but as the specific announcement ὁ καιρὸς ἤγγικεν (Lk. 21.8).

58. Theudas appeared during the procuratorship of Cuspius Fadus (44-48

CE), the 'Egyptian' and a group of *Goetes* when Antonius Felix was procurator (52–60 CE), and an unnamed *Goes* when Porcius Festus ruled (60–62 CE).

59. The claim of Theudas in this regard is inherent in his declaring himself to be προφητής (*Ant.* 20.97), that is, one like Moses (cf. R. Meyer, 'προφητής', *TDNT*, VI [1968], pp. 812–28, esp. p. 826; J. Jeremias, 'Μωϋσης', *TDNT*, IV [1967], pp. 848–73, esp. p. 862) and Joshua *redivivus* (cf. *Ant.* 20.97), and in that, as Gamaliel is recorded as noting in Acts 5.36, he 'gave himself out to be somebody' (λέγων εἶναι τινα ἑαυτόν, that is, God's instrument for salvation (on this, see O. Betz, 'Miracles in the Writings of Josephus', in *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*, ed. L.H. Feldman and G. Hata [Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987], pp. 212–35, esp. p. 229). It also stands behind the fact that Cuspius Fadus felt constrained to send his troops against Theudas when Theudas' claim became known. In the case of the 'Egyptian', this is clear from the fact that he, too, used the title ὁ προφητής and presented himself as a new Joshua (*Ant.* 20.169–70) and that he proclaimed himself destined not only to overthrow the Roman garrison in Jerusalem but to be τοῦ δήμου τυράννειν (the King of the People, *Bell.* 2.262). It also is implied by the fact that the Roman governor of Judea arrested him as a rebel against Rome (*Bell.* 2.262). The claim to this commission on the part of the *Goetes* active during Felix's procuratorship is implied by the fact that they presented themselves as capable of securing the blessings that Moses had from God for Israel (cf. *Ant.* 20.167–68; cp. 2.327) and in that, as Josephus reports things, they declared their activities to be 'in accord with God's plan of salvation' (κατὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ προνοίαν γινόμενα). It is also implied by the fact that Felix regarded their posturing and promises as tantamount to an encouraging revolt (*Bell.* 2.261). In the case of the unnamed *goes*, this is clear from the fact that he declared that he was capable of bringing to Israel 'salvation' (σωτηρίας) and 'rest from troubles' (παύλαν κάκων, *Ant.* 20.188). On all of this, see Hill, 'Jesus and Josephus' "Messianic Prophets"', pp. 147–48; Jeremias, 'Μωϋσης', p. 862; Betz, 'Miracles', pp. 226–31.

60. Cf. *Ant.* 20.99–97, 167–68, 169, 188; *Bell.* 2.258–59, 261; 6.284–86.

61. Besides the passages from Josephus and Acts that I have already noted, references to the Judean 'Sign-Prophets' can also be found in Acts 21.38; Eusebius, *History of the Church* 2.21; b. *Sanhedrin* 67a, and possibly Mt. 24.11–12, 24–26.

62. Cf. Meyer, 'προφητής', p. 826; Jeremias, 'Μωϋσης', p. 862; Barnett, 'Jewish Sign Prophets', p. 681; Betz, 'Miracles', p. 228.

63. According to Josephus, the first of these 'signs' were 'signs of freedom' (σημεῖα ἐλευθερίας). Notably, this is a term which Josephus employs in his Exodus narrative for the plagues that foreshadowed the coming 'liberation' of God's people (cf. *Ant.* 2.327, τὸν . . . τὴν ἐλευθερίαν αὐτοῖς σημεῖον). The second of these were 'wonders and signs' (τέρατα καὶ σημεῖα) which were to 'accord with God's plan' (κατὰ τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ προνοίαν γινόμενα). This is a

term which Josephus specifically applied to the σημεῖα wrought by Moses when he confronted Pharaoh's court magicians (cf. *Ant.* 2.286). On this, see Rengstorff, 'σημεῖον', p. 225.

64. On this, see Barnett, 'Jewish Sign Prophets', p. 685.

65. He promised that upon his command (ὡς κελεύσαντος αὐτοῦ) the walls of Jerusalem would collapse (*Ant.* 20.169). On the correspondence in the mind of the 'Egyptian' between Jerusalem and Jericho, see Barnett, 'Jewish Sign Prophets', p. 683; Betz, 'Miracles', p. 229.

66. Cf. Rengstorff, 'σημεῖον', pp. 206-207; M. Whittaker, "'Signs and Wonders": The Pagan Background', *Studia Evangelica* 5 (1965), pp. 155-58.

67. 'Signs and Wonders', *JBL* 76 (1957), pp. 149-52.

68. 'Signs and Wonders', p. 150.

69. 'Signs and Wonders', p. 151; see Rengstorff, 'σημεῖον', p. 241.

70. Cf. V.K. Robbins, 'Dynamis and Semeia in Mark', *Biblical Research* 18 (1973), pp. 5-20, esp. pp. 17-20.

71. Cf. Rengstorff, 'σημεῖον', p. 221. That Mark is alluding in Mk 13.22 to Deut. 13.1-3, see Swete, *Mark*, p. 310; Beasley-Murray, *Mark Thirteen*, pp. 83-84; Lane, *Mark*, p. 473.

72. Cf. Mk 13.14-21.

73. On this see, Lane, *Mark*, pp. 466-72.

74. Cf. Lane, *Mark*, p. 466; D. Daube, 'The Abomination of Desolation', in *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, pp. 418-37; B. Rigaux, ΒΔΕΛΥΤΜΑ ΤΗΣ ΕΠΗΜΩΣΕΩΣ (Mc 13, 14; Mt 24, 15)', 40 (1959), pp. 675-83.

75. Cf. Mk 13.14a-19. On this, see Daube, 'Abomination', pp. 422-23; Beasley-Murray, *Mark Thirteen*, pp. 57-58.

76. That Mark is here referring to this event is, of course, denied by the scholars cited in notes 45 and 47 above. Notably, however, the truth of my argument here does not rest upon Mark having the event recorded by Josephus in view at Mk 13.22, though in my mind he does.

77. Josephus gives the total number as 6000, including the women children, and the elderly who had accompanied the last remnants of the Jewish army into the Temple.

78. Cf. Rengstorff, 'σημεῖον', pp. 223-25; Barnett, 'Jewish Sign Prophets', 686; Betz, 'Miracles', p. 227.

79. Cf. Barnett, 'Jewish Sign Prophets', p. 688; Betz, 'Miracles', pp. 227-31.

80. This is especially clear in Mk 8.27-9.1 (cf. e.g. J.L. Mays, 'An Exposition of Mk 8.27-9.1', *Interpretation* 30 [1976], pp. 174-78), but it is a theme which permeates Mark's Gospel.

81. Mk 8.11. The participle *πειράζοντες* should, I think, be taken as an editorial comment concerning what the Pharisees' demand does to Jesus rather than an unveiling of the Pharisees' intentions in making the demand.

On this, see C.G. Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels*, I (London: Macmillan, 1927), p. 174.

82. Cf. R.P. Martin, *Mark: Evangelist and Theologian*, pp. 168-69. Mk 10.2 may seem at first glance to be an exception to this. I hope to show elsewhere that this is not the case.

83. Cf. F.C. Burkitt, 'Mark viii. 12 and *ei* in Hellenistic Greek', *JTS* 28 (1926-27), pp. 274-76; R.E. Edwards, *The Sign of Jonah* (London: SCM, 1971), p. 75; Lane, *Mark*, p. 276. On the Hebrew oath, see E. Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (1910), p. 471 and G.W. Buchanan, 'Some Vow and Oath Formulas in the New Testament', *HTR* 58 (1965), pp. 319-26, esp. pp. 324-25.

84. Cf. Edwards, *Sign of Jonah*, p. 75; Taylor, *Mark*, pp. 362-63; Lane, *Mark*, p. 278; Buchanan, 'Some Vow and Oath Formulas', pp. 324-25.

85. J.B. Gibson, 'Mk 8.12a. Why Does Jesus "Sigh Deeply"?', *Technical Papers for the Bible Translator* 38 (1987), pp. 122-25.



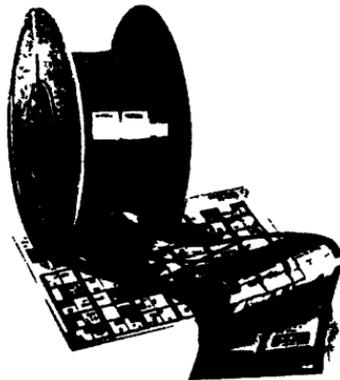
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