The Qumran Melchizedek Scroll and the Gospel of Mark: Coherence and Contrast in Soteriology.

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Abstract
The text from Cave 11 of Qumran known as the ‘Melchizedek Scroll’ and the canonical Gospel of Mark have some noteworthy features in common. This article surveys the two documents from the soteriological aspect, noting areas of comparison and also of difference. The most noteworthy aspect of comparison consists in the fact that both see divinely appointed agents of liberation – Melchizedek and Jesus, respectively – as addressing a pre-existing human situation of captivity to the demonic, a captivity brought about through sin. Both documents likewise portray the redemptive figures as effecting liberation from this condition through an act of expiation that amounts to a culminating and final instance of the high priest’s action on the yearly Day of Atonement.

Key Words
Melchizedek, Qumran Melchizedek Scroll (11Q13), Gospel of Mark, soteriology, demonic.
A highly fragmentary text from Cave 11 of Qumran, subsequently known at the ‘Melchizedek Scroll’ (11QMelch [11Q13]), came to light in a preliminary publication in 1965.¹ Officially published in Discoveries in the Judean Desert XXIII in 1998,² the recoverable content of the text is largely confined to 25 lines of a single column (column 2). Dated by wide consent to the mid-1st century BCE, the text such as we have it is best described as a ‘thematic pesher’ or ‘thematic midrash’, rather than a commentary on a single biblical text – as, for example, the wellknown Habakkuk Commentary from Cave 1 (1QpHab).³ 11QMelchizedek alludes to and cites a number of scriptural texts in order to highlight the saving activity of a redemptive figure, Melchizedek, in the eschatological era (the ‘end of days’) in which the Qumran community believed itself to be living.

Lending unity to the commentary is the motif of the ‘jubilee’ (yovel) derived from Leviticus 25, cited in several places (2:2, 6, 25).⁴


² F. García Martinez; E. J. C. Tigchelaar; A. S. van der Woude, Qumran Cave 11.II (11Q2–18, 11Q20–31) DJD XXIII (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 221–40 [Henceforth cited simply as DJD XXIII]


Aligned with this is the sense of release from debt in the sabbatical year of remission (shmitah) in Deuteronomy 15 (cited 2:3–4) and the allusion to the jubilee release from slavery in a metaphorical sense in Isa 61:1–2.\(^5\)

While not the subject of explicit commentary in 11QMelchizedek, this Isaiah text hovers in the background throughout, as shown by multiple allusions to its vocabulary (11Q13 2:4, 6, 9, 13). It would also seem to be responsible, on the basis of having a ‘tell good news’ (\textit{mbsr}) motif in common, for drawing in a further Isaianic text, Isa 52:7, which is the subject of explicit commentary in the latter lines of the column (2:15–16, 1971), 245–67 (orig. Journal of Biblical Literature 86 [1967], 25–41), p. 251; J. T. Milik, ‘Milki\textashy{s}\textashy{edeq et Milki\textashy{res\textashy{a}}} dan les anciens écrits juifs et chrétiens’, Journal of Jewish Studies 23 (1972), 95–144, esp. 100-01; Michael Bartos and Bernard M. Levinson, “‘This is the Manner of the Remission’: Implicit Legal Exegesis in 11QMelchizedek as a Response to the Formation of the Torah’, Journal of Biblical Literature 132/2 (2013), 351–71, see pp. 357–358, n. 35.

\(^5\) In this connection it is interesting that, while the MT uses different words to express the sense of liberation common to Leviticus 25, Deuteronomy 15 and Isa 61:2, the LXX uses \textit{aphesis} throughout, showing a basically unified understanding of liberation across the three scriptural passages; see van der Woude, ‘Melchisedek als himmlische Erlösergestalt’, 363; Zimmermann, Messianische Texte, 396; Garcia Martinez, etc., DJD XXIII, 230. Bartos and Levinson, “‘This is the Manner of the Remission’”, 352, warn, however, against simply assuming the Hebrew author of 11QMelchizedek shared the leveling of meaning seen in the LXX.
All told, the Melchizedek text gathers together a number of biblical texts proclaiming liberation from oppression of various kinds and indicates a figure called Melchizedek as the primary agent of that liberation in the eschatological era.

The relevance of this thematic midrash to several New Testament texts has been apparent since it first came to light. It has provoked so much study and comment of a comparative nature that leading Qumran scholar Florentino García Martinez in 2007 aired the view that the text ‘has been studied so intensively’ since its first publication in 1965 ‘that it is practically impossible to say anything new about it’. For obvious reasons most comment upon 11QMelchizedek in relation to the New Testament has focussed upon comparisons with the presentation of Melchizedek as a foil for Jesus Christ in the Letter to the Hebrews. The

In an early study of the text, ‘The Function of Isa 61:1–2 in 11Q Melchizedek’, Journal of Biblical Literature 88 (1969), 467–69, Merrill P. Miller argued that Isa 61:1–2 was the controlling scriptural text throughout. While most later commentators ascribe that role to Leviticus 25, Miller’s careful study usefully served to highlight the prominence of the Isaiah passage behind the text as a whole.


allusions in the text to Isa 61:1–2 have also led to comparisons with Jesus’ citation of the same passage when inaugurating his public ministry in the synagogue of Nazareth according to Luke 4:16–21. Particularly in connection with Hebrews, most discussion of the figure of Melchizedek in the scroll has focussed upon the nature of the personage portrayed – the ‘christology’, if that expression be allowed. Is Melchizedek a human messianic figure, albeit an instrument of divine salvation and judgment?  


10 So the early commentator on 11QMelchizedek, J. Carmignac, ‘Le Document de Qumrân sur Melkisédq’, Revue de Qumran 27/7 (1970), 343–78, esp. 363–69; later along similar lines, Paul Rainbow, ‘Melchizedek as a Messiah at Qumran’, Bulletin for Biblical Research 7 (1997), 179–94. In a recent work, Joseph Fitzmyer speaks approvingly of Rainbow’s rejection of interpretations of Melchizedek in 11QMelchizedek as an angel and specifically the archangel Michael, stating ‘here he becomes a heavenly figure, and probably a messianic figure such as Dan 9:25 envisaged, but not necessarily “the Davidic Messiah”’
At the opposite extreme, is Melchizedek a divine hypostasis, as an early interpreter, J. T. Milik held?\(^{11}\) The fact that the text presents Melchizedek as destined to carry out the vengeance of God’s judgments and places him in contrastive parallel with the evil angelic leader Belial suggests that he too is a figure of angelic rather than divine or human status.\(^{12}\) The majority view, then, is to agree with the original editor, A. S. van der Woude,\(^{13}\) and see in Melchizedek a heavenly figure, the chief of all the angels and the instrument of divine judgment in the warfare against Belial and the evil angels of his lot.\(^ {14}\)

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\(^{11}\) ‘Milki\(\Delta\)\(\-\)s\(\Delta\)\(\-\)\(\-\)eq et Milki\(\Delta\)\(\-\)res\(\-\)\(\-\)˚a>’ (n. 4 above), 125. See also Manzi, Melchisedek e l’angelogia, 51–94, 101–03; along similar lines, Rick van der Water, ‘Michael or Yhwh? Toward Identifying Melchizedek in 11Q13’, Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha 16/1 (2006), 75–86, arguing that Melchizedek is both YHWH and a second ‘power in heaven’, God’s intermediary.


\(^{13}\) ‘Melchisedek als himmlische Erlösergestalt’, 367–68.

Melchizedek may be a heavenly figure but the whole concern of the text is to assert the salvific ramifications on earth of the victorious outcome of the contest in heaven. It is with this soteriological aspect, rather than the personal status of Melchizedek himself, that I am concerned in this present study. My intention is to draw 11QMelchizedek in this respect into particular comparison with the soteriology of the Gospel of Mark, especially in regard to Mark’s pervasive presentation of Jesus as liberator of human beings from the grip of the demonic. Other motifs in common include appeal to the ‘tell good news’ (mbsr) motif derived from Isaiah 52:7 and 61:1 (see also 40:9), the onset of the ‘reign of God’, and release from captivity to evil spiritual forces through the working of atonement. In the Qumran text Melchizedek is to perform this

Qumran Texts and the Epistle to the Hebrews’, Journal for the Study of Judaism 2 (1971), 115–35, esp. 133–35 (Postscript); Claudio Gianotto Melchisedek e la sua tipologia (Brescia: Paideia, 1984), 70–73; Zimmermann, Messianische Texte, 403; Joseph L. Angel, Other Worldly and Eschatological Priesthood in the Dead Sea Scrolls (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 86; Leiden/Boston: Brill Academic, 2010), 146–67, esp. 149–51. From the start (see van der Woude, ‘Melchisedek als himmlische Erlösergestalt’, 369–70) almost all those who see Melchizedek in the text as an angelic figure go on to identify him with the archangel Michael, who is the adversary of Belial in the War Scroll.

I am not aware of a sustained comparative study of 11QMelchizedek and the Gospel of Mark – though brief reflections on this score have been offered by Adela Yarbro Collins in her Hermeneia commentary, Mark: A Commentary (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 154–55, and also by Rikki E. Watts, Isaiah’s New Exodus in Mark (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1997), 147–48.
atonement on a final, culminating Day of Atonement, in a way that, as I shall argue, has significant affinities with Mark’s presentation of Jesus’ death in 15:37–39.

**Part A: The Soteriology of 11QMelchizedek**

In the Melchizedek scroll as we have it in 11Q13 (column 2) the unifying idea, as already noted, is that of the liberation associated with the Jubilee year as prescribed in Leviticus 25. The thought seems to unfold in three sections:

1. The proclamation of the eschatological Jubilee (lines 1–8)
2. The judgment rendered by Melchizedek in the heavenly court (lines 9–14).
3. The announcement, by the ‘announcer of good news’ (mbrš) of Isa 52:7, of the liberating events described in the first two sections, in which Melchizedek is the protagonist (lines 15–25).16

1. The proclamation of the eschatological Jubilee

The extant text begins.17

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16 I am following here the division proposed by Gianotto, *Melchisek e la sua tipologia*, 68.

17 The translation is basically that provided in *DJD XXIII* 229–30, with references to Scripture added.
(2:2) And as for what he said, ‘In [this] year of jubilee [each of you shall return to his property’ (Lev 25:13), concerning it he said: ‘And this] (2:3) is the [manner of the remission:] every creditor shall remit what he has lent [his neighbour. He shall not press his neighbour or his brother for there has been proclaimed] a remission (shmitah) of Go[d] (Deut 15:2).

The application (pesher) of this (amalgamated) prescription, drawing together both the year of jubilee (Leviticus 25) and the sabbatical year of release (from slavery)(Deuteronomy 15), then follows:

(2:4) [Its interpretation] for the final days concerns the captives, just as [Isaiah said: ‘To proclaim liberty (dor) to the captives’ (Isa 61:1)…] and (2:5) …18 and from the inheritance of Melchizedek, f[or …] and they are the inheritan[ce of Melchize]dek, who (2:6) will return them to them. And liberty (dor) shall be proclaimed to them, to free them from [the debt of] all their iniquities.

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18 The remainder of line 4 and the beginning of line 5 are wanting or indecipherable.
An allusion to Isa 61:1 – and likely citation of this text in the lacuna across lines 4–5\(^{19}\) – is clear from the reference to ‘captives’ and the later mention (line 6) of the proclamation of the jubilee release (see Isa 61:1) from the ‘debt’ or ‘burden’ of iniquities.\(^{20}\) The reason that those who are the object of the jubilee release are in captivity is because of their sin.\(^{21}\) On the basis of a term, dror (‘liberty’), in common, Isa 61:1 is adduced (as in Luke 4:18d) to express the release from the captivity due to this burden or debt

\(^{19}\) The quotation from Isa 61:1 is supplied by García Martinez in his translation in The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 139.


of sin. Melchizedek will make the ‘exiles’ return to their true ‘homeland’ and liberty will be proclaimed to them (line 6). The ‘return’ picks up the sense of ‘return to one’s own property as in the original legislation of Lev 25:13 (cited 11Q13 2:2). Here it is a return to the ‘lot’ or ‘inheritance of the elect, which is to share a heavenly destiny with ‘the sons of heaven’

22 Early editors filled in a lacuna in line 6 with a reference to ‘atonement’, a motif that is certainly present later in the text. See van der Woude, ‘Melchizedek als himmlische Erlösergestalt’, 359 (‘and to atone for their sins’); also M. de Jonge, M. and A. S. van der Woude, ‘11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament’, 301–26, p. 303, 306; Fitzmyer, ‘Further Light on Melchizedek’, 249. The more recent view is to read ‘burden’ or ‘debt’, a reconstruction based on Neh 5:10, which also provides a link with the biblical instruction concerning the remission of debt in Deut 15:2, cited in line 3; see DJD XXIII, p. 231; Zimmermann, Messianische Texte, 397–98.

23 It is perhaps odd that the ‘proclamation of liberty’ follows this return. However, the commentary may not be listing the saving events in strict chronological sequence. The fact that later, in the third section of the text (lines 15–20), a clear distinction appears to be made between the ‘anointed one who proclaims good news’ (Isa 52:7; 61:1) and Melchizedek favours regarding the subject of the phrase as indefinite with the passive translation, ‘liberty shall be proclaimed to them’, rather than seeing Melchizedek as the one who makes the proclamation; see DJD XXIII, 229 (translation), 231 (note).
(angels) and Melchizedek, from whom they have been separated on account of their sins.\textsuperscript{24}

The epoch at which proclamation of release is to take place is said (line 6 [end] – line 7) to be in the first week of the jubilee period that follows ni[ne j]ubilee periods.\textsuperscript{25} The Melchizedek text seems to envisage the proclamation of the release as taking place in the first week of the tenth jubilee, though the actual atonement that will bring about the release is relegated to the end of this period:

\begin{quote}
(2:7) … And the D[ay of Atone]ment is the e[n d of ]
the tenth [ju]bilee period, (2:8) when atonement shall be made for all the sons of [light and for] the peopl[e of the] lot of Mel[chi]zedek.\textsuperscript{26}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{25} Present here is the idea of ‘weeks of years’ derived from Lev 25:8 and developed in Dan 9:24–27 to extend Jeremiah’s prophecy of seventy years before the restoration after exile (25:11–12; 29:10) to a much longer period (four hundred and ninety years). For the same motif see also T. Levi 16:1—18:4; I Enoch 93:1–10; also 91:12–17; 4QAgesCreat (4Q181) 2:3; see DJD XXIII, p. 231.

\textsuperscript{26} On the sequence of events in the context of the overall eschatology emerging from the text, see the lucid exposition of Émile Puech, \textit{La Croyance des Esseniens en la vie future: Immortalité, Résurrection, Vie Éternelle? Histoire}
It is not clear whether the subject of the atonement is God or Melchizedek. However, when the text proceeds, echoing Isa 61:2a (see also Luke 4:19),

For (2:9) it is the time for the year of grace (shnat-haratson) of Melchiz[edek] and of [his] arm[ies, together] with the holy ones of God,

it is highly likely that the grace or favour of God that comes upon ‘the sons of light and the people of the lot of Melchizedek (that is, the members of the community) is associated with or enacted in an atonement effected by Melchizedek functioning as High Priest on a culminating Day of Atonement. Nowhere in the text is it said explicitly that Melchizedek is a priest. It is almost certain that the text conceives him as such, granted the references to the Day of Atonement and in the light of the fact that he is certainly a priest in the only two references to him in the biblical record (Gen 14:18 and Ps 110:4).27

2. Judgment rendered in the heavenly court

So far the text has been concerned with the benefits brought by the agency of Melchizedek to the elect human community on earth (‘the sons of


27 See Puech, La Croyance des Esseniens, 2.551–53; Angel, Other Worldly and Eschatological Priesthood, 152–53.
light’/‘those of the lot of Melchizedek’). The commentary takes a more negative tone as it turns to focus upon the judgment to be rendered by Melchizedek in his capacity of presiding over the heavenly court:

(2:9) …of the administration of judgment, as it is written
(2:10) about him in the songs of David, who said ‘Elohim shall [st]and in the divine ass[embly]; in the midst of the gods (‘elim) he shall judge’ (Psalm 82:1). And about him he s[aid: ‘And] above [it,] (2:11) to the heights, return;
God (‘el) shall judge the nations’ (Psalm 7:7–8). And as for what he s[aid, ‘How long will you] judge unjustly, and be par[tial] to the wick[e]d? [Se]lah’ (Psalm 82:2).

Linking the first Psalm references is the common theme of divine judgment. In the first quotation, taken from Ps 82:1, I have left the Hebrew ‘Elohim’ stand because in the context it applies, not to God, but to Melchizedek, according him an exalted god-like status, though not

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28 ‘Sons of light’ is a characteristic self-designation of the community responsible for the scrolls: 1QS 2:16; 3:13, 24, 25; 1QM 1:1, 3, 9, 11, 13; 4Q280 fr 2:1; 4Q496 fr 3:9; 4Q510 fr 1:7; 4Q543 14:1. Those of ‘the lot of Melchizedek’ suggests those chosen or predestined by God to be saved by the action of Melchizedek to share his eternal destiny; note the closely parallel Qumran phrase ‘men of the lot of God’: 1QS 2:2; 1QM 13:5; 17:7; see Fitzmyer, ‘Further Light on Melchizedek’, 260.
equality with God as such. The application to Belial and ‘the spirits of his lot’ then follows:

(2:12) the interpretation of it concerns Belial and the spirits of his lot, wh[o…], in [the]ir tur[ning] away from God’s commandments to [commit evil]. (2:13) And Melchizedek will carry out the vengeance of Go[d’s] judgments. [and on that day he will f]r[ee them from the hand of] Belial, and from the hand of all the s[pirits of his lot.] (2:14) And all the gods [of justice] are to his help (Isa 61:3). 30

The interpretation describes the effect of the judgment rendered by Melchizedek upon Belial and the evil spirits associated with him. The effect is the liberation of the elect (‘the sons of light’/‘the people of the lot

29 If the reference is not to Melchizedek there would be no point in adducing this quotation from Psalm 82 at all; see van der Woude, ‘Melchisedek als himmlische Erlösgestalt’, 364; Fitzmyer, ‘Further Light on Melchizedek’, 261–62; M. Delcor, ‘Melchizedek from Genesis to the Qumran Texts and the Epistle to the Hebrews’, 115–35, see Excursus pp. 133–35; DJD XXIII, 231.

30 A reference to Isa 61:3e (‘oaks of righteousness’) is possible but very conjectural; see DJD XXIII, 232.
of Melchizedek’) from the evil spiritual powers into whose grasp their sins had delivered them.31

3. The Announcement of the Good News of Liberation (Isa 52:7)

The third section of the extant text identifies the liberating (for the elect) occasion of heavenly judgment effected by Melchizedek with the the ‘good news’ of salvation proclaimed by the prophetic herald in Isa 52:7:

This [ ] (2:15) is the day of [peace32 ab]out which he said […] through Isai]ah the prophet [concerning the end of days33.] who said, ['How] beautiful (2:16) upon the mountains are the feet [of ] the messen[ger who an]nounces peace, the mes[senger of good who announces salvati]on, [sa]ying to Zion, “Your Elohim [is king]”’ (Isa 52:7).]

31 ‘Die unter der Herrschaft Belials eingekerkerten Menschen werden aus der Gewalt dessen, der sie zu sündigem Tun verführt, befreit und somit aus ihren Schuldverfallenheit erlöst’ (Zimmermann, Messianische Texte, 399).

32 ‘Peace’ is conjectural, but the word shalom fits the spacing better than alternative suggestions (e.g., ‘of salvation’); see DJD XXIII, 228. ‘Peace’ also occurs in the quotation from Isa 52:7 in line 16.

33 For this completion of the lacuna, see van der Woude, ‘Melchisedek als himmlische Erlösergestalt’, 358, 365–66; Fitzmyer, ‘Further Light on Melchizedek’, 264.
Appeal to and citation of Isa 52:7, which, despite a few lacunae, appears to be quoted in full, associates the motifs of ‘announce good news’, (‘salvation’), ‘peace’ and the ‘reign of God’ with the liberation brought by Melchizedek. In view of the earlier designation of Melchizedek as Elohim in the citation from Ps 82:1 in line 10, it is likely that the last assertion in the quotation is a reference to the achieved supremacy of Melchizedek over the hostile spiritual powers rather than to ‘the reign of God’ in the sense familiar from the gospels. However, the distinction need not be pressed too rigorously: throughout the text, Melchizedek is entirely the agent and instrument of the divine reclamation of the world in the final age.\(^{35}\)

The following line (17) in a somewhat obscure way identifies ‘the mountains’ in Isa 52:7a with the prophets. More striking is the subsequent identification of the ‘good news messenger’ of Isa 52:7:

(2:18) And ‘the messenger’ is the anointed of the spir[it,] as Dan[iel] said [about him: ‘Until an anointed, a prince, it is seven weeks’ (Dan. 9:26). And ‘the messenger of] (2:19) good news, who announ[ces salvation’] is the one about whom it is written, [ ]
(2:20) ‘to comfo[rt the afflicted’] (Isa 61:2).

\(^{34}\) See Fitzmyer, ‘Further Light on Melchizedek’, 252.

\(^{35}\) See Zimmermann, Messianische Texte, 399.
‘Anointed of the Spirit’ (mshiakh-haruakh) is almost certainly an echo of the self-designation of the prophet in Isa 61:1, forging a link between the two Isaianic ‘good news’ texts: Isa 52:7, which has just been cited in full, and Isa 61:1–2, which, as we have seen, seems to stand behind the document as a whole. In other words, the liberation which it is the task of the anointed prophet of Isa 61:1 to proclaim is further identified with the ‘work’ of Melchizedek: his making atonement and his victorious judgment over Belial and the spirits of his lot, leading to the release of ‘the captives’ and their return to the predestined lot marked out for them by God.37

The next words in line 18 may identify this anointed prophet with the ‘anointed prince’ mentioned in Dan 9:25–26. More significantly, the following lines (19–20) forge a second identification of the proclaimer of good news of Isa 52:7 with the prophet anointed with the Spirit of Isa 61:1–2.39 Likewise, although the text becomes very fragmentary at this

36 This suggestion by an early commentator, Y. Yadin (‘A Note on Melchizedek and Qumran’, Israel Exploration Journal 15 [1965], 152–54) has been accepted by the first editor (van der Woude, ‘11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament’, 306) and followed universally.

37 It is unhelpful to refer to ‘the anointed of the Spirit’ here as ‘the Messiah’ even though he may be conceived of as a ‘messianic figure’. The singular form may more likely refer to the eschatological prophet referred to in 1QS 9:2 and 4QTest (4Q175) 5–8; see DJD XXIII, 232; see also John 1:21, 25; 6:14; 7:40.

38 The reference to Dan 9:24–26, suggested by Fitzmyer, ‘Further Light on Melchizedek’, 265–66, has been widely accepted.

39 The text is highly fragmentary but ‘comfo[rt]’ at the beginning of line 20 is clearly a quotation of the final phrase in Isa 61:2.
point (lines 21–23), there is a further reference (at the end of line 23) to the reign of ‘your Elohim’ cited from Isa 52:7, yet another allusion to Melchizedek’s victory in the heavenly court, liberating the elect from the power of Belial. The proclaimer of good news announces on earth what Melchizedek is achieving in heaven: liberation for the sons of light; defeat and condemnation for Belial and the spirits associated with him.40

The recoverable part of 11QMelchizedek as we have it concludes (line 25) with a very partial quotation of Lev 25:9: (‘And you shall blow the ho[rn in] the all the [l]and…’). This quotation, in inclusive fashion, brings back the reference to the proclamation of the jubilee liberation, which, as noted above, appears to be the ruling subject of comment throughout the thematic pesher.41

Conclusion: The Soteriology of 11QMelchizedek
Partial and fragmentary as we have it 11QMelchizedek brings together a remarkable series of texts to express the hopes of the elect community for the messianic age. It interprets and applies these texts to the liberation

40 See Robert D. Rowe, God’s Kingdom and God’s Son: The Background to Mark’s Christology from Concepts of Kingship in the Psalms (Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums 50; Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2002), 184.

41 ‘Transposées sur le plan spirituel et eschatologique ces prescriptions mosaïques se réfèrent aux hommes, esclaves des forces du mal, libérés pour rentrer dans leur patrimoine céleste, la félicité ultime prévue par Dieu dès avant la création, mais compromise entre temps par la faute du genre humain et par l’activité des mauvais esprits’ (Milik, ‘Milki∆-s’edeq et Milki∆res’a>’, 124).
wrought by the heavenly figure Melchizedek for the benefit of the ‘sons of light’, the elect community, on earth, culminating in their entrance into joys of the final age. As has long been noted, the biblical texts and the pattern of associated themes and motifs that emerge have significant resonances with a number of New Testament documents. My aim here is to bring them into comparison with the Gospel of Mark. Before doing so, it may help to draw together in summary form the cluster of motifs and themes that emerge from 11QMelchizedek as so reconstructed and interpreted.

The presupposition is that human beings – or more specifically those belonging to the predestined ‘lot of Melchizedek’ – have fallen into the power of malign spirits, led by their prince Belial, who holds them captive. They have fallen into such captivity because of the accumulated debt burden of their sins. The Melchizedek document appeals to a cluster of biblical texts that originally referred to various forms of release from

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43 For a similar, though slightly divergent summary see Zimmermann, Messianische Texte, 412.

44 See Anderson, ‘From Israel’s Burden’, 17.
social burdens to point to the proclamation of a coming release from this captivity. The key features of this we can list as follows:

1. The proclamation of the release from captivity will take place at the beginning of the tenth jubilee.

2. The proclamation will enact the prophecy contained in Isa 52:7, thereby associating the proclamation of release from sin with the motifs of ‘tell good news’ (‘gospel’), ‘(messianic) peace’, ‘salvation’, and the ‘reign of God’.

3. The one who makes the proclamation is subsequently identified with the prophetic figure self-described in Isa 61:1–2 as anointed with the Spirit to proclaim the good news of liberty to captives, and a year of the Lord’s favour.

4. The content of the proclamation is the release from the captivity brought about by sin and the restoration of those released to their rightful inheritance, a restoration to be effected by Melchizedek at the close of the tenth jubilee.45

45 Thus there is a time-gap between the proclamation of the release and its coming into effect. This means that the figure who makes the proclamation and Melchizedek cannot be one and the same (so Anderson, ‘From Israel’s Burden’, 15; against this see Horton, The Melchizedek Tradition, 78; Kobelski, Melchizedek and Melchires’a>, 61–62; Collins, ‘A Herald of Good Tidings’, 230).
5. Melchizedek will bring about this release from captivity by making atonement for sin, performing the function of High Priest at a climactic final Day of Atonement.\(^46\)

6. In tandem with this liberation effected on earth, as its heavenly ‘face’, so to speak, judgment will be rendered in heaven by Melchizedek over Belial and the spirits of his lot.\(^47\)

7. This victory will fulfil the statement, ‘Your God reigns’ of Isa 52:7, equating the ‘reign’ of Melchizedek with that of God.

8. Whether Melchizedek should be thought of in messianic terms is more complex. If ‘messianic’ is understood in a fairly general sense applicable to any figure performing a redemptive role in the eschatological era, then Melchizedek in 11QMelchizedek could be described in messianic terms.\(^48\) If the term ‘messiah’ is taken more strictly to refer to one ‘anointed’ (by the Spirit)\(^49\) – as in the case of the self-description of prophetic figure who proclaims the good

\(^{46}\) See Gianotto: ‘Quello cui si far riferimento non è un giubileo qualsiasi, uno dei tanti che si sono succedute periodicamente (ogni 49 anni) nel corso della storia, bensi l’ultimo, ed è per questo che diventa teatro di avvenimenti particolarmente significativi’ (Melchisek e la sua tipologia, 67).

\(^{47}\) ‘This reign is a heavenly reign to be sure (cf. line 11), but it is presumably also an earthly reign’ (Horton, The Melchizedek Tradition, 80).

\(^{48}\) This appears to be the sense in which Garcia Martinez describes Melchizedek as a messianic figure, ‘The Traditions about Melchizedek’, 101–02.

\(^{49}\) See Fitzmyer, The One Who Is To Come, 1-7, who argues that, in the context of pre-Christian Judaism, ‘messiah’ should be restricted to ‘an awaited or future anointed agent of God’ (p. 6, italics mine).
news in Isa 61:1 – then Melchizedek should not be described as Messiah since the Qumran text appears to distinguish him from the figure who makes that proclamation, fulfilling Isa 52:7 and Isa 61:1–2.\textsuperscript{50}

**Part B. Jesus as Liberator from the Demonic in the Gospel of Mark**

I once heard Ernst Käsemann in a seminar describe Mark’s Gospel as an ‘Exorcism from beginning to end’. This assertion from one of the greatest exegetes of the last century has stimulated my thought on the gospel ever since. There is no question that, compared to Matthew and Luke, exorcisms play a disproportionately prominent role in the short Gospel of Mark.\textsuperscript{51} There are four accounts of exorcisms, each told at length and with characteristic Markan wealth of detail: the exorcism in the synagogue at Capernaum: 1:21–28; the Gerasene demoniac: 5:1–20; the daughter of the Syrophoenician woman: 7:24–30; the boy possessed by a spirit: 9:14–29. The first has a parallel in Luke only (4:31–37); the third a parallel in Matthew only (15:21–18); the second and fourth have parallels in both Matthew and Luke (Matt 8:28–34; 17:14–21; Luke 8:26–39; 9:37–43a), though only the Lukan account of the second approaches to any degree the


\textsuperscript{51} Exorcisms are of course absent from the Fourth Gospel.
wealth of detail in Mark. Besides these four accounts, exorcistic action features prominently in Markan summaries of Jesus’ activity: 1:32–24; 1:39; 3:11. In 3:15; 6:7, 13 authority (exousia) over demons is conferred upon the disciples as the specific accompaniment of the proclamation (kēryssēn) of the Kingdom (see 1:14–15). In 1:39 Jesus’ casting out of demons is paired with his preaching ‘in their synagogues’, forming an inclusion with 1:21–28. In 6:5 Jesus’ ‘inability’ to perform any ‘work of power’ in his hometown of Nazareth because of the prevailing lack of faith provides negative evidence that expulsion of demons is the central counterpart to his proclamation of the Kingdom.

1. Exorcisms in the Ministry of Jesus

The pervasiveness of conflict with the demonic in Mark’s presentation of Jesus’ ministry is inescapably signalled by the fact that the very first public act described at length in the gospel is an exorcism: 1:21–28. Moreover, the crowd in the synagogue is as impressed by the authority (exousia) of Jesus’ teaching as they are by the authority with which he drives out the demon. The ‘sandwiching’ of the exorcism within the teaching and the double mention of the response of the crowd conveys the distinct impression of a strong continuity, if not identity between the teaching and the expulsion of demons. Both are in some sense exorcistic, a manifestation of the liberation of human beings from the captivity to the demonic.53 This may partly at least explain why Mark is so much at pains

to present Jesus as teacher (besides 1:21–28, see 2:13; 4:1–2; 6:2, 6, 34; 8:31; 9:31; 10:1; 11:17, 18; 12:14, 35, 38; 14:39), yet so little concerned – in contrast, notably, to Matthew – to describe at any length the content of the teaching.

Paradigmatic for his entire contest with the demonic according to the gospel is the final image Jesus appeals to in the Beelzebul controversy in Mark 3:27:

But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered (NRSV).

In the Prologue to the gospel John the Baptist had pointed to the coming of ‘the Stronger One’ (ho ischyroteros), who, in contrast to his own water baptism, ‘will baptize … with the Holy Spirit’ (1:7–8). The image in 3:27 portrays Jesus as this ‘Stronger one’ who has sufficient power to bind up the ‘the Strong Man’ (Satan, Beelzebul) and so be in a position to enter his house (the world under the dominion of demonic powers) and ‘plunder his property’ (= liberate those held captive by those powers). In the final pericope of the episode (vv. 28–30) Jesus confronts head on the charge that provoked the entire controversy: that he was expelling demons by (the power of) Beelzebul, the prince of demons himself. The charge involves an ‘unforgivable’ blasphemy, according to Jesus, because the power (exousia) by which he liberates human beings from the demonic is the power conferred upon him immediately following his emergence from the
water of baptism: the power of the Spirit (1:10), by which, as John had 
foretold (1:8) he would ‘baptize’.  

What is most significant for our purposes is the implication in the 
image that Satan has a kingdom opposed to the Rule of God. Those, 
then, who are the object of Jesus’ proclamation and enactment of God’s 
rule – in the first place Israel, then the human world as a whole – are in a 
situation of captivity to the demonic, with the alienation from God that 
such captivity connotes. This is the key presupposition of the Markan 
Gospel, as it is also the presupposition of the liberation proclaimed in 
11QMelchizedek.  

The second exorcism story in Mark, that of the Gerasene 
Demoniac, 5:1–20, continues significant themes from the ‘Strong Man’ 
image of 3:27. The opening description of the demoniac’s condition 
makes much of the fact that people found it impossible to ‘bind’ him: 

54 See Joel Marcus, Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and 
Commentary (AB 27: New York: Doubleday, 2000), 283. See also 1:12, where 
the Spirit ‘drives’ Jesus into the wilderness there to begin an initial personal 
confrontation with Satan.  

55 See Collins, Mark, 232; Craig A. Evans, ‘Inaugurating the Kingdom of God 
and Defeating the Kingdom of Satan’, Bulletin for Biblical Research 15/1 (2005), 
49–75, esp. 66–67.  

56 On the likely echo of Isa 49:24–25 in the ‘Strong Man’ image of Mark 3:27, 
see Watts, Isaiah’s New Exodus, 148–51.
3 He lived among the tombs; and no one could restrain him any more, even with a chain; 4 for he had often been restrained with shackles and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the shackles he broke in pieces; and no one had the strength to subdue him. 5 Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always howling and bruising himself with stones (NRSV).

Jesus is confronted here with a radically de-humanized person of super-human strength and destructiveness. In the face of complete human helplessness to ‘bind’ the multitude of demons possessing this man (see v. 9, vv. 11–13), Jesus by contrast is so successful that what the townsfolk see when they come to investigate is ‘the (erstwhile) demoniac sitting there, clothed and in his right mind’ (v. 15), the very image of humanity regained. 57

Where the liberation of the possessed man in the synagogue at Capernaum offered an opening paradigm of Jesus’ exorcistic ministry in a purely Jewish context, the fact that Jesus liberates this man after crossing the sea into Gentile territory suggests that this exorcism likewise offers a paradigm instance of liberation from demonic control, one now extended to a wider world. This explains why Jesus does not allow the liberated

man to get into the boat and be ‘with him’ like the other disciples. No, he must go and proclaim what has been done to him amongst his own people, which he proceeds to do ‘in the Decapolis’ (vv. 18–20). Though set in the context of Jesus’ own ministry, the scene is obviously intended to foreshadow the situation of the post-Easter church confronting the demonic in its mission to the wider world.58

Mark’s third exorcism story, the liberation of the daughter of a Syrophoenician woman, 7:24–30, explicitly takes place in a Gentile (Tyrian) locale and for the benefit of a non-Jewish family. The fact that Jesus does not confront the demon in person but simply tells the woman to go on her way (v. 29) since the demon has left her daughter, also suggests that the situation of the later church is in view. Post-Easter generations of believers cannot access Jesus physically but through faith they can access the liberating power of his word.

The fourth exorcism story, the healing of a boy possessed by a spirit, 9:14–29, marks the end of Jesus’ explicitly exorcistic activity in the gospel. The fact that it is the last exorcism despite its location at what is more or less the midpoint of the narrative could suggest that Jesus’ conflict with the demonic is something restricted to the first half of the

58 The appearance of the Latin military term ‘legion’ in the name Jesus extracts from the demon (v. 9) could imply an identification of the demonic here with the Roman occupation of Palestine in Jesus’ day or, more widely, the Roman imperium as such; see further, Ched Myers, Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark’s Story of Jesus (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), 191–94; Marcus, Mark 1–8, 351–52; Byrne, Costly Freedom, 96, n. 16.
gospel. Against this, one can point to the very different ‘agenda’ that Jesus is about to pursue at this point. Immediately after the exorcism, he sets out on the long journey to Jerusalem that dominates the second half of the gospel up to the events of the last days of his life. This is not a time for public proclamation of the word. On the contrary, we are told:

9:30b He did not want anyone to know it; 31 for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, ‘The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.’ 32 But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

In other words, the main agenda of Jesus’ ministry as he journeys to Jerusalem is his instruction of the disciples on the true nature of his messianic mission and the outwardly shameful and painful way in which it will be accomplished. The instructions on the proper exercise of authority (9:33–37; 10:13–16; 10:35–45); on the avoidance of scandal to ‘little ones’ (9:42–48); on the exclusion of divorce (10:1–12); on indifference to riches (10:17–31): all serve to illustrate the cost involved in taking up Jesus’ cross and following, in discipleship, the true pattern of his messianic mission.

The resistance he encounters from the disciples to his more explicit warnings of the passion (9:32; 10:32–34) stands in continuity with the protest he received from Simon Peter at the first Passion prediction (8:31–
32). His counter rebuke, ‘Get behind me, Satan’ (8:33) is open to several shades of meaning, the most basic of which is that of a stumbling block standing in his way. 59 Beyond this, the wider context of the gospel suggests that the rebuke identifies Peter as allied in his thinking at this point with the rule or kingdom of Satan, which it is Jesus mission to displace. 60 ‘From Mark’s point of view, Peter’s objection to Jesus’ prophecy, natural though it may be, represents a fall from grace into the realm of demonic delusion’. 61 The terms of the rebuke suggest that the subsequent misunderstanding and holding-back of the disciples as they trudge behind Jesus on the way to Jerusalem (9:32; 10:32) display a collective captivity to a similar way of thinking initially and representatively displayed by Peter. Such misunderstanding of the true nature of Jesus’ mission comes to a climax in the request of the sons of Zebedee in 10:35–37.

In sum, Jesus’ ‘education’ of his disciples as he makes his ‘way’ to Jerusalem is no less representative of his continuing conflict with the rule of Satan than the more overt manifestation of this contest shown in the exorcisms. In fact, the location of the final exorcism immediately before

60 ‘The Markan Jesus addresses Peter as Satan’s representative, representing the opposition in the clash of kingdoms (3:22–27), on the side of God’s opponent who takes away the word Jesus sows (4:15), putting Jesus to the test as had Satan in 1:13’ (Boring, Mark, 242).
61 Marcus, Mark 8–16, 614.
the beginning of the ‘educative’ journey may well represent a 
paradigmatic illustration of the contest that is still under way though in 
this new, more subtle form. It plays in this sense the same narrative role in 
regard to the second half of the narrative as the opening exorcism in the 
synagogue at Capernaum (1:21–28). A key feature of the episode, 
however, is the stress upon faith, displayed above all by the interaction 
between Jesus and the father of the afflicted boy (9:23–24; cf. v. 19).
When the disciples, later in the house, ask Jesus why they were unable to 
cast out the demon, he responds that it was because demons of this kind 
could only be driven out through prayer (9:28–29). The explanation is at 
first sight surprising; more understandable would be a further insistence 
upon faith. A later instruction (11:22–24), however, shows that for Jesus 
prayer involves a radical expression of faith, faith in a God who can 
achieve the impossible: the uprooting and relocation of a mountain into 
the sea. Such faith is the faith required to withstand and displace the rule 
of Satan in the world (Recall the impotence caused through lack of faith at 
Nazareth [6:1-6]).

2. Jesus’ Action in the Temple
Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem ends with his staged entrance into the city 
(11:1–10) and a preliminary reconnoitre of the Temple precinct (11:11).
The next day he undertakes a prophetic action in the building, expelling

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62 ‘Like all Mark’s exorcism stories, this pericope points beyond the incident of 
healing of an individual afflicted child in Galilee to God’s overcoming of cosmic 
evil in the Christ event’ (Boring, Mark, 272).
those doing business and upending the tables of the moneychangers and
the seats of those selling the doves (11:15). The Greek verb used to
describe the expulsion, ekballein, is virtually a technical term in Mark for
the driving out of demons (1:12, 34, 39; 3:15, 22, 23; 6:13; 7:26; 9:18, 38
[16:17]). This lends an exorcistic tone to the action even if it cannot be
formally classified as an exorcism.\textsuperscript{63} The first part of the scriptural
justification for his action that Jesus appeals to in his ‘teaching’ (‘my
house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’ [v. 17]) comes
from Isa 56:7, the climax of a sequence in which the prophet forbids the
separation from God’s people of ‘the foreigners who join themselves to
the Lord’ (56:6). The second part comes from Jer 7:1–15, a far more
negative sequence that spells out the incompatibility between the presence
of God in the Temple and various forms of social injustice and idolatry
practiced by the people. Such abuses threaten the destruction of the house,
which has become a ‘den of bandits’ (7:11). Jesus’ prophetic action, as
described by Mark, so targets the activities required for the maintenance of
the Temple sacrifices with the necessary degree of ritual purity as to in
effect bring about or at least foreshadow the destruction of the present
Temple as the locus of God’s presence, covenant renewal and
reconciliation.\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{63} See Marcus, Mark 8–16, 782; Edwin K. Broadhead, Teaching with Authority:
Miracles and Christology in the Gospel of Mark (JSNTSup 74; Sheffield:
Sheffield Academic, 1992), 171.

\textsuperscript{64} See Moloney, Gospel of Mark, 222–24; Boring, Mark, 322; Byrne, Costly
Freedom, 178–79; Marcus, Mark 8–16, 793. The ‘sandwiching’ of the Temple
The charge later brought against Jesus at his trial before the high priest – his alleged claim, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands’ (14:57–58) – though characterized as false at the time, in effect contains an ironic truth. While his action in the Temple has amounted to its symbolic destruction, following his resurrection ‘on the third day’ there will arise a new temple: not a material temple built by human hands but one consisting of a community of believers, from both the Jewish and Gentile world, which, in accordance with Isaiah’s prophecy, will indeed, have become ‘a house of prayer for all the nations’ (Isa 56:7; Mark 11:17).65 Jesus’ action in the Temple, then, while not strictly an exorcism so called, is a key aspect of his expulsion of the demonic from the human milieu, the radical reclaiming of the institutions of Israel for the rule of God and the expansion of that rule into the wider human world.

One final aspect to note is the reference to teaching. The evangelist introduces Jesus’ citation of Scripture with the words, ‘He was teaching (edidasken) and saying, …’. The episode closes (v. 18) with the action between Jesus’ prophetic cursing of the fig tree and the notice of its withering (11:12–14; 11:21–25) supports the sense of destruction rather than simply reform of the Temple system. See further, Craig A. Evans, ‘Jesus’ Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction’, Catholic Biblical Quarterly 51 (1989), 237–70.

explanation that the authorities, while determined to kill Jesus, were afraid to do so ‘because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching (exeplēsseto tēi didachēi autou). The ‘inclusion’ of the scriptural justification within a double reference to ‘teaching’ and the astonished reaction of the crowd closely recall the exorcism in the synagogue at Capernaum, 1:21–28, which marked the beginning Jesus’ public ministry and from which emerged, as we have noted, a remarkable continuity between Jesus’ teaching and his exorcistic action. Taken together the two episodes, one in a synagogue, the other in the Temple, place a teaching/exorcistic framework around the public ministry of Jesus, suggesting that it amounts to nothing less than a sustained campaign to expel the demonic from the human world to reclaim it for the kingdom or rule of God.

3. Reconciliation with God

A key function of the Temple was the annual covenant renewal and reconciliation with God enacted by the high priest in the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). The need for reconciliation with God is a basic presupposition of the ministry of Jesus according to Mark as announced in the inaugural words of proclamation:

1:14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, 15 and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news’
Along with faith, repentance is the essential response to the good news (‘gospel’) of the imminence of the Kingdom. One ‘escapes’ from the captivity to the demonic into the freedom proclaimed in the good news of the kingdom through repentance and faith.

Repentance and explicit instances of the forgiveness of sin are not frequent motifs in the Gospel of Mark. This does not mean, however, that, as in the Melchizedek text, removal of sin not play an essential role in the liberation of human beings from captivity to the demonic. We are presumably meant to understand the inaugural formulation of Jesus’ preaching (1:14–15) as the essence of his ‘teaching’, which, as we have noted, is so frequently mentioned but rarely spelled out. One significantly placed episode, however, does seem to play a paradigmatic role in this respect. In the first of the catena of controversy stories making up Mark 2:1–3:6a, the forgiveness and healing of a paralyzed man let down through the roof (2:1–12), Jesus is ‘speaking the word to them’ (v. 2c). His opening words to the paralyzed man, on ‘seeing the faith’ of his helpers, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven’ (v. 5c), presumably represent a particular instance of the general summary in 1:15. When the scribes sitting around protest that this pronouncement amounts to blasphemy since forgiveness is a prerogative of God alone (vv. 6–7), Jesus demonstrates that forgiveness has actually taken place by commanding the paralyzed man to rise up, take up his pallet and go on his way (vv. 9–12a). He makes the observable

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66 As in 2:17, it is assumed that to be human is to be enmeshed in objective guilt, that every human being as such is in need of God’s forgiveness’ (Boring, Mark, 76).
outward miracle an unmistakable sign of his authority as Son of Man to declare ‘on earth’ the inner reality – the forgiveness of sin.\textsuperscript{67}

There is no suggestion in this episode that the declaration of the forgiveness of sin has any connection with any atoning work on the part of Jesus. As Son of Man he simply has authority on earth to forgive sin (v. 10). A suggestion that some such atonement on his part is involved in forgiveness – or at least liberation from the captivity brought about by sin – does appear in two later contexts in Mark: the ‘ransom’ saying that marks the climax of Jesus’ response to the request of the sons of Zebedee (10: 45) and the pronouncement over the cup at the institution of the Eucharist at the Supper (14:24): ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many’.\textsuperscript{68}

a) The ‘Ransom’ Saying: 10:45

\textsuperscript{67} For this interpretation of the episode where a miracle story ‘encloses’ a pronouncement story for mutual illumination, see further Byrne, \textit{A Costly Freedom}, 56–58.

\textsuperscript{68} This is to directly contest the thesis of Sharyn Dowd and Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, ‘The Significance of Jesus’ Death in Mark: Narrative Context and Authorial Audience’, \textit{Journal of Biblical Literature} 125/2 (2006), 271–97, who argue that the problem overcome by Jesus’ ‘giving his life’ was captivity or slavery rather than guilt. My point is that the slavery/captivity (to the demonic) is directly due to human sin; hence the need for expiation in order that freedom occur. On the expiatory aspect of Jesus’ death in Mark, see Collins, \textit{Mark}, 80–84 (‘The Death of Jesus’), esp. 81–83.
Jesus completes his instruction on the proper exercise of authority in the messianic community (10:41–45) by pointing to the example offered by his own redemptive mission: ‘For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many (\textit{lytron anti pollon})’ (v. 45). The meaning of this final phrase and, in particular, whether or not it contains echoes of the closing lines of the Fourth Song of the Servant, Isa 53:10–12 have long been matters of controversy. There are affinities of thought with the Servant Song: notably, the vicarious death of an individual effecting the liberation of others. Linguistic echoes, however, are minimal.\textsuperscript{69} It is best to concentrate on the resonances raised by the word \textit{lytron} by itself. The term (for the most part appearing in the plural) has the sense of a ransom paid to secure the freedom of prisoners of war or the release from bondage of slaves. The associated cognate word group (that is, including the verb \textit{lytroo} and the noun \textit{lytrosis}) appears frequently in the LXX of the Pentateuch with reference to the release of slaves or the repossessing of animals or property through paying a price in exchange for

\textsuperscript{69} The word \textit{lytron} does not appear in the LXX translation of the passage. It never translates the underlying Hebrew word ‘\textit{asham}, which has the quite different meaning of ‘sin offering’ (LXX \textit{peri hamartias}; see Rom 8:4). A linguistic link to the Servant Song is more or less confined to the reference to ‘many’, a term which occurs three times in Isa 53:11–12. For a strong defence of an allusion to Isa 53:10–12, see Watts, \textit{Isaiah’s New Exodus}, 269–87; see also Marcus, \textit{Mark} 8–16, 750; 756; see, however, Morna D. Hooker, \textit{The Gospel according to Saint Mark} (BNTC; London: Black, 1991; repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005) 248–51; Moloney, \textit{Gospel of Mark}, 214; Boring, \textit{Mark}, 303–04.
their freedom (see, e.g., Lev 25:47–55). The essential note behind the term lytron is that of deliverance by purchase. The word group, however, is also frequently used in the LXX with reference to God’s saving activity on behalf of Israel without any sense of a price being paid. In this case the essential note is more simply that of liberation out of a state of slavery or captivity. Though no price is paid, the sense remains that those set free are precious to the liberator, who would be willing to pay a cost if such were required or appropriate – which, of course, in connection with divine activity is not the case.

In the later Jewish tradition the notion of representative suffering appears in the books of Maccabees (2 Macc 7:37–38; 4 Macc 6:28–29; 17:20–22), where the death of the martyrs functions as an atoning sacrifice

70 On the LXX usage of lytron/a see the extended survey provided by Collins, Mark, 500–02. She points out that the legislation in contexts such as Num 34:31–34 and Exod 30:11–16, suggests a close connection between the notion of ‘ransom’ and that of the expiation of guilt or propitiation of (divine) wrath. She concludes: ‘The usage of lytron in the LXX makes it probable that Mark and his audiences understood the ‘ransom’ (lytron) constituted by Jesus’ giving of his life as an expiation accomplished ‘in behalf of’ or ‘in place of’ (anti) many’ (see p. 502).


for the sins of the nation. Although in 4 Macc 6:29 and 17:21 the notion of ‘ransom’ is expressed by the term antipsychon rather than lytron, there is the sense that the deaths of the martyrs, functioning as an expiatory sacrifice for the nation’s sin, have brought about the liberation of their people from the oppression (subjection to the Seleucid Greek dynasty of Antioch) that God visited upon them because of their sin. It is likely that a similar idea lies behind the description of Christ’s douleuein on behalf of ‘many’ in Mark 10:45. A key difference, however, is the sense in Mark (as also Paul in Rom 3:24–25) of divine initiative propelling the mission of Christ. In the person of the Son, God is working the liberating expiation.

b) Jesus’ Words over the Cup at the Last Supper: 14:24

The second soteriological qualification of the death of Christ in Mark’s Gospel occurs in Jesus’ comment following common participation in the cup of wine at the Last Supper: ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many’ (14: 24). ‘Blood of the covenant’ alludes to the ritual act in Exod 24:4–8 when Moses sealed the Sinai covenant by sprinkling the blood of sacrificial animals on the Israelites. The implication is that in partaking of the cup the disciples – and subsequent

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73 ‘20 These, then, … are honored … by the fact that because of them our enemies did not rule over our nation, 21 the tyrant was punished, and the homeland purified – they having become, as it were, a ransom (antipsychon) for the sin of our nation. 22 And through the blood of those devout ones and their death as an atoning sacrifice, divine Providence preserved Israel that previously had been mistreated’ (4 Macc 17:20–22 [NRSV]).
generations of believers – enter a new covenant to be sealed by Jesus’ blood ‘poured out’ (ekchynomenon) in death on Calvary.\(^7\)

On the model of the liberation of Israel from slavery in Egypt, at a reconfigured Passover they become the nucleus of a covenant people set free by this divine saving act.\(^5\)

As in Mark 10:45, the beneficiaries of the shedding of Jesus’ blood are designated as ‘many’ (hyper pollōn). The phrase may echo the triple allusions to ‘many’ in Isa 53:11–12. But, again, the more evident connection lies not so much in the language but in the thought: the sense of an individual’s death having beneficial effect for others. In contrast to the Matthean parallel (26:28), the words over the cup in Mark do not specify the benefit to be won by the pouring out of Jesus’ blood as ‘for the remission of sins’. The question then is whether such remission is implicit in the Markan liberation or whether the liberation is simply meant as the victory over the demonic world and the forces opposed to the Kingdom.\(^6\)

In favour of such an implication of forgiveness is the fact that ‘repentance’ (from sin) is an essential aspect of the response to the Kingdom (1:15; also

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\(^7\) The ‘pouring out’ of blood is a standard biblical metaphor for death; see Boring, Mark, 391. Mark, along with Matthew (26:28), does not specify the covenant as ‘new’ (contrast Paul [1 Cor 11:23–25] and Luke [22:20]). The motif of ‘new’ or ‘renewed covenant’ (see Jer 31:33) is implicit in the fresh sprinkling of blood (that of Christ on Calvary), which has a similar function (covenant sealing) to the sprinkling performed by Moses. See further Collins, Mark, 656.

\(^5\) See Byrne, Costly Freedom, 220.

\(^6\) So especially Dowd and Malbon, ‘Significance of Jesus’ Death’, 292–94.
As in 11QMelchizedek, it is sin that has caused human bondage to Satan and the demonic in general. Jesus’ death sets human beings free from that bondage by functioning as an expiatory sacrifice for sin.

**Mark’s Description of Jesus’ Death**

The order of events in Mark’s description of Jesus’ death and its aftermath is intriguing.\(^78\)

15:37 Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.

38 And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

39 Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, ‘Truly this man was God’s Son!’

The final statement (v. 39) makes clear that the centurion reacts to the way Jesus breathed his last\(^79\) not to the rending of the Temple curtain, an event

\(^{77}\) See Collins, *Mark*, 656.

communicated to the readers by the narrator but not necessarily known to the participants in the drama. Why, then, is the detail about the curtain placed between the description of Jesus’ death and the reaction of the centurion?

It is generally understood that the rending of the curtain – like the rending of the heavens following Jesus’ baptism (1:10) – is the act of God, a divine act that has both negative and positive aspects. Negatively, the rending would appear to be a proleptic anticipation of the destruction of the Temple ‘made by hands’ (14:58) – though in effect the rendering of the Temple cult otiose happens at this point and does not have to wait till 70 CE. Positively, the rending of the curtain, again like the rending of

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79 The centurion responds to the manner of Jesus’ death in that, in a way totally unprecedented in a death by crucifixion, a loud cry preceded it; see Moloney, *Gospel of Mark*, 330.

80 Whether the curtain in question is the outer one before the Holy Place or the inner one screening the latter from the Holy of Holies is not I think a matter of great moment; the latter view is preferable; for a full discussion see Collins, *Mark*, 759–60; Moloney, *Gospel of Mark*, 329.

81 The other synoptic evangelists (Matt 27:47–53; Luke 23:45–46) have seen the ‘order problem’ and ‘fixed it up’ each in their own way; see further Byrne, ‘Paul and Mark before the Cross’, 219.

82 For the interpretation seeing a combination of both negative and positive aspects of the rending of the curtain, see Boring, *Mark*, 431–32; Moloney, *Gospel of Mark*, 329, n. 279 and the further references cited there.

the heavens following Jesus’ baptism, breaks down the barrier between the divine and human spheres. In the old dispensation, now giving way, the curtain was penetrated only once during the year, by the high priest on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). The priest sprinkled blood on the mercy seat (hilastērion) to enact the forgiveness and covenant renewal that God was pouring out on that day upon Israel (Lev 16:11–16). I would argue that the rending of the curtain at Jesus’ death signals that the shedding of Jesus’ blood is to be seen as a divine enactment of a final, culminating Day of Atonement, celebrated for the reconciliation not simply of Israel but for the benefit of the nations of the world. The Gentile centurion, as he makes his act of faith acknowledging Jesus’ true status, becomes the first beneficiary of that saving act. He stands in for all subsequent believers who, hearing the good news of the onset of the Kingdom, will respond with repentance and faith. The utterly godless place of Calvary, the place where Rome stood supreme, has become through the shedding of Jesus’ blood, the locus of God’s overwhelming power and grace. There is no further need for the cultus of the Jerusalem Temple. In the community of believers, the new Temple ‘not made by human hands’, the nations of the

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84 See Boring, Mark, 432. For Collins the rending of the veil is not a divine judgment against the Jerusalem Temple in itself but against its current leadership; it is a call for renewal; see Mark, 761–62. This would appear to be a rather forced attempt to shield the author of Mark from supersessionist views that arose in the early Church.

85 I have argued all this in greater detail in ‘Paul and Mark before the Cross’, 221–24, 227–29.
world can access through faith the once and for all time divine act that expiates human sin and so effects their ‘ransom’ (λυτρόν [10:45]) from the captivity in which their sin has placed them.

As noted above, we are at this culminating stage of Mark’s narrative a long way past the last explicit instance of exorcism in the gospel. We have, however, noted the ‘exorcistic’ aura attaching to Jesus’ action in the Temple (11:15–17). A final hint – perhaps far more than a hint – of exorcism may be given in the ‘loud cry’ (φόνη μεγάλη) uttered by Jesus immediately before his expiry – the cry of the crucified that in fact provoked the centurion’s wonder. The phrase ‘loud cry’ appears four times in the gospel: once as an accompaniment of the exit of the demon in the the opening exorcism in the synagogue at Capernaum (1:26); once on the lips of the Gerasene demoniac as he sees Jesus approaching (5:7). The remaining two instances are both uttered by Jesus just before he dies on the cross: once before the cry of dereliction (15:34), provoking the belief that he was calling upon Elijah, and once the cry immediately before expiry (15:37). The fact that the phrase occurs only in the two great exorcisms and the moment of Jesus’ death contains more than a hint that what is taking place in that obedient shedding of his blood in death is in fact the ‘exorcism of the world’, the radical ‘plundering’ of the ‘Strong Man’s’ house in order to liberate those held captive because of sin.

11QMelchizedek and Mark: Comparisons and Contrasts
We are now in a position to draw together in a comparative way the soteriological patterns emerging from both 11QMelchizedek and the Gospel of Mark.

1. Presupposed in both documents is the sense that human beings – more specifically, Israel – exist in a state of captivity to evil spirits/the demonic world.

2. This captivity, the prevailing ‘rule of Belial/Satan’ in the world, is due to human sin.

3. Both documents announce a coming liberation from this situation in that the rule of Belial/Satan will be ousted by the advent of the rule of God.

4. Both documents understand this coming liberation and advent of God’s rule as the enactment of the prophecy proclaimed by an announcer of ‘good news’ according to Isa 52:7. Whereas 11QMelchizedek retains the announcement in its participial form, Mark, presumably under influence from the Greek-speaking milieu of the early Christian movement, can speak of ‘the Gospel’ (euaggelion) in this regard (1:1, 14-15), without specific citation of Isa 52:7, though wholly within a (Deutero-) Isaianic framework established at the start (Mark 1:1–5).

5. Presumably under the influence of Daniel, 11QMelchizedek is at pains to locate precisely the time for the intervention according to a schema of ‘jubilees’ (‘weeks of years’) based upon a reprising of the legislation for the Sabbatical and Jubilee years in Leviticus 25 and for the (seventh) year of Release from debt and slavery in
Deuteronomy 15:1–18. In Mark there is no computation of eras but simply the announcement: ‘The time (kairos) has come’ (1:15).

6. In both documents the liberation is effected by a central figure: Melchizedek and Jesus, respectively. In 11QMelchizedek the one who makes the proclamation of the good news, fulfilling Isa 52:7, appears to be distinct from Melchizedek himself. Allusions in the document to the other Isaianic ‘good news’ text, Isa 61:1, suggests that the proclaimer is a prophetic figure, anointed by the Spirit to make the proclamation announcing the coming soteriological work and rule of Melchizedek. In Mark the two roles are ‘collapsed’ upon Jesus: he is the ‘anointed’ by the Spirit (1:10) to proclaim the liberation (1:14–15) and he also actually effects it in word (teaching) and action (exorcisms and miracles), culminating in his atoning death upon the cross.86

7. Both documents see the liberation brought about by atoning work on the part of the central figure – Melchizedek and Jesus, respectively – who removes thereby the sin-burden of the human beings destined to be redeemed.

8. 11QMelchizedek seems to envisage Melchizedek performing this atonement acting in the guise of high priest in the heavenly

86 The announcement of the ‘good news’ by Jesus in Mark is, it is true, preceded by the proclamation (kêryssein) of John (1:4, 7). But John, while certainly given a role in the Isaianic schema (Isa 40:3; see Mark 1:2–3), is not precisely a proclaimer of the ‘good news’ but one who ‘prepares the way’ for the Proclaimer: Jesus (1:14–15).
sanctuary on a culminating Day of Atonement. Mark does not present Jesus as high priest but describes his death in such a way (the placement of the rending of the Temple curtain) as to suggest that he is performing on the cross a culminating act of atonement for human sin – an act that renders overtaken and obsolete the expiatory function of the high priest on the yearly Day of Atonement.

9. The atonement performed by Melchizedek for the benefit of those of his ‘lot’ takes place in heaven, involving the condemnation and overthrow of the hostile spiritual forces led by Belial. Its effects, however, are felt ‘on earth’: the liberation of the elect and the opening up of their destiny to return to their allotted place among the angels of God. In Mark’s Gospel the atonement takes place in a highly concrete historical setting, the death of Jesus on Calvary. Nonetheless, the divine rending of the Temple curtain symbolizes and proclaims that what is taking place is ‘transparently’ divine, just as at other occasions in the gospel – the baptism of Jesus (1:9-11), his walking on the sea of Galilee (6:47–52), the transfiguration (9:2–8) – the barrier between heaven and earth falls away to reveal that ‘Heaven’ (the Father) is unceasingly involved in the activity of Jesus.

10. Whereas in 11QMelchizedek all is seen to be proceeding according to a carefully foreseen ‘program’ of events one after another, Mark’s Gospel depicts the liberation effected by Jesus upon the cross as retrojected back into his public mission and ministry. He is
the Son of Man who will come with great power and glory (9:1; 13:26; 14:62), but equally as Son of Man he already has authority to declare forgiveness of sin (2:10), he is already ‘lord’ of the Sabbath (2:28). In this sense, the gospel portrays the activity of Jesus that takes place before his death very much in the light of that event and of faith in what it has achieved for human beings.

11. Finally, although we have concentrated upon the soteriology of the documents, rather than the status of the central figure in each, we can see in the semi-divine, ‘hyper-angelic’ figure of Melchizedek some precedent in a purely Jewish context for the status of Jesus in the gospel as, on the one hand, wholly human, while, on the other hand, displaying attributes that are uniquely divine: walking on the water, transfigured as God’s Son, declaring forgiveness simply on personal authority.\(^{87}\) The ambiguity surrounding the ‘ messianic’ status of Melchizedek in the scroll is matched by a similar ambiguity in regard to the same question in Mark: Jesus is the Messiah. Yes. But he is a Messiah who from the start both fulfils and escapes conventional categories of messianic expectation as the transcendent divine Son.
