

Article

Exousia and Conflict in the Gospel of Mark

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Abstract: Interest in the Gospel of Mark has been steadily growing in the field of biblical studies for years. Although Mark's narrative had long been treated as less polished and thus theologically lacking compared to the other canonical gospels in the past, many scholars now recognize it as a complex narrative with various intertwining and intentionally employed plots and storylines. This study aims to contribute to this growing scholarship which takes the narrative skill of Mark's author seriously when it traces the term ἐξουσία (*exousia*) throughout the whole gospel. Special attention will be paid to the way ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is connected to conflict. Read through this lens, several interesting developments in the Markan presentation of Jesus, the disciples, and reader involvement will emerge. Finally, the question of why ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is totally absent from the Markan passion story will be answered. This study proposes to see Jesus' suffering and death on the cross as a consequence of his practice of ἐξουσία (*exousia*) for which readers are prepared from the beginning of Mark's narrative.

Keywords: Gospel of Mark; conflict; literary strategies; authority of Jesus

1. Introduction

The Greek term ἐξουσία (*exousia*)—usually translated into English as *power* or *authority*—is one of the key terms for understanding Mark's narrative. It is already used in the first chapter of Mark's gospel (cf. Mark 1:22) where it takes up important Christological questions posed in the verses before: Who is this Jesus? What does it mean that he is the Messiah?

Also, the second instance mentioning ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is positioned in a prominent place of Mark's narrative: in Mark 2:10, Jesus' authority is discussed in the context of a healing and the forgiveness of sins by Jesus. However, his deeds are not met with joy by all those present. Instead, even the suggestion of a forgiveness of sins by Jesus has been labeled blasphemy by the scribes a few verses earlier in Mark 2:7. Their collective inner monologue "He blasphemes!" (βλασφημεῖ *blasphēmei*) does not only add narrative depth to an otherwise overly triumphant scene but connects even Jesus' first actions in Galilee to his impending death outside Jerusalem. In Mark 14:64, it is the perceived blasphemy of Jesus that will tip the scales in the trial before the high priest. On this basis, Jesus is sentenced to death by the high council.

Already, these examples demonstrate the narrative importance of the term ἐξουσία (*exousia*) for Mark's gospel and illustrate its connection to conflict. This article aims to shed some more light on the way Mark uses ἐξουσία (*exousia*) in his narrative, especially where conflicts emerge and develop. One of the key questions will be why Mark 13:34 is the last verse to mention the term ἐξουσία (*exousia*), which does not appear at all in the Markan passion and resurrection story. This is all the more interesting because the term is so intricately connected to conflict in the chapters before.

To achieve this, the term ἐξουσία (*exousia*) itself will be discussed shortly before analyzing its use in Mark's gospel in depth. Finally, conclusions for the narrative agenda are drawn.



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2. Method and Perspective of the Following Analyses

This study conducts its analyses from a synchronous point of view and treats the gospel of Mark as a finished text that can be (and has been) read as a continuous and engaging narrative. From this main perspective on the text stems the methodology used: various tools of narratological exegesis will be employed, such as analyzing the spatial setting of the pericopae under consideration, looking closely at the characters, their motivations and relationships, and considering the flow of the Markan story at large.¹ The paper will largely concentrate on “a text-internal approach” as Jan Rüggeheimer and Elizabeth Shively have recently described one main trait of non-cognitive narratological criticism (Rüggeheimer and Shively 2021, p. 409). However, it does take into consideration how elements of the story work as “explicit and implicit textual cues” (Rüggeheimer and Shively 2021, p. 411) for (implied) readers of Mark’s gospel. Besides these narratological tools, this study will also use grammatical and semantic observations to answer its research question as the development of the term ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is tracked throughout Mark’s narrative.² The basis for all textual analyses of the gospel of Mark is the 28th edition of the *Novum Testamentum Graece*.

3. What Does ἐξουσία (*exousia*) Mean and How Is It Used in Antiquity?

The term ἐξουσία (*exousia*) generally holds a range of different aspects of meaning in ancient Greek (Beilner 1994, p. 570). Its most basic one is the possibility or freedom to act (Foerster 1990, p. 559; Betz 2014, p. 1184) in the sense of an action which is not hindered in any way by anything. In this way, it is employed, e.g., in Xenophon, *Mem.* 2.1.25 and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant.* 2.26.4. This aspect of ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is often connected to the idea of a higher power guaranteeing this possibility and right to act, e.g., through a delegation of ἐξουσία (*exousia*) (Betz 2014, p. 1185). The powers delegating or transmitting ἐξουσία (*exousia*) can be political, familial, or religious authorities (Foerster 1990, p. 559; for an example of being granted ἐξουσία (*exousia*) through law, see Plato, *Symp.* 182e). Martin Ebner points out that for Mark’s early readers and their contexts, the realities of the Roman Empire would have been of paramount importance and influenced their understanding of ἐξουσία (*exousia*) (Ebner 2013, p. 22). Taking this into account strengthens the political implications of ἐξουσία (*exousia*) as the legally guaranteed power of a person to act unhindered towards their goals (Scholtissek 1992, p. 50) and to select representatives to whom ἐξουσία (*exousia*) can be (partially) delegated (Ebner 2013, p. 22).

Differentiation between ἐξουσία (*exousia*) and δύναμις (*dynamis*) is not always easy, but δύναμις (*dynamis*) usually has a stronger sense of potential and capability with less interest in the underlying source of power (Woschitz 1994, p. 371; Luther 2010).

Regarding biblical literature, it can be said that the term ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is quite common; it is used almost 70 times in the LXX with most of the examples clustered in 1–4 Maccabees, Sirach, and Daniel.³ However, it is even more popular in New Testament texts where readers encounter it more than 100 times. In both parts of the Bible, ἐξουσία (*exousia*) can be held and granted by various powers (e.g., King Nebuchadnezzar in Dan 3:97 LXX, a military commander in Matt 8:9, or a potter in Rom 9:21), but an emphasis is made in most texts that eventually *God* is the one to hold all power, and consequentially, all authority is dependent on his (cf. e.g., Luke 12:5, where God has power and authority to cast into the Gehenna, or Acts 1:7, showing God as the one setting all time limits without the knowledge of anyone; see also Foerster 1990, p. 563).

4. Mark’s Use of ἐξουσία (*exousia*)

Let us now look more closely into how ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is used in the Gospel of Mark. The word appears a total of nine times in six pericopae. The corresponding verb ἐξουσιάζω (*exousiazō*), which is rare in NT vocabulary in general, is completely missing from Mark’s narrative, though there is one pericope in which having authority over others is discussed in which κατεξουσιάζω is used (cf. Mark 10:35–45).⁴

4.1. Mark 1:21–28: Jesus' ἐξουσία (*exousia*) Causes a Stir

As mentioned above, ἐξουσία (*exousia*) appears for the first time in Mark 1:22. After his baptism in the river Jordan, Jesus has spent 40 days in the wilderness before going to Galilee, proclaiming the nearness of God's royal rule, and calling his first disciples. Together, they then enter Capernaum on the Sabbath and immediately (εὐθύς *euthys* in Mark 1:21) Jesus starts teaching in the synagogue. His audience is thoroughly thrown off (imperfect of ἐκπλήσσω *ekplēssō*) "for he taught them as one holding authority (ἐξουσία *exousia*) and not as the scribes." (Mark 1:22b NRSVue modified).⁵

This scene is the very first in which Jesus teaches and acts in public apart from the "flourish of trumpets" (Schenke 2005, p. 45; transl. JK) proclaiming God's royal presence in Mark 1:15. The latter, however, holds a special status from a narratological perspective as it is somewhat detached from the rest of the narrative through the lack of an audience on the intradiegetic level, among other things (Schenke 2005, p. 68). In Mark 1:21–28, this is different: Jesus is teaching in the synagogue of Capernaum, a place with a specific localization and presumably an audience present. As it is the Sabbath, Mark's readers might not only populate the synagogue of their imagination with Jesus, his disciples, the man possessed by an unclean spirit (πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον *pneuma akatharton*) as well as, possibly, the scribes mentioned in Mark 1:22. They might also envision a larger group of synagogue attendees. In any case, Mark 1:27 describes the effect of Jesus' acts as shocking for everyone (ἅπαντες *hapantes*), resulting in a quick spreading of the news of his deeds (cf. Mark 1:28).

The first half of the pericope tells Mark's readers about Jesus' teaching. It is here that ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is mentioned for the first time, resulting in a close connection of Jesus' teaching and authority. The teaching shows Jesus' authority and shows it publicly. A closer look into the semantic details reveals the fact that Jesus *holds* authority (ἐξουσίαν ἔχων *exousian echōn* in Mark 1:22), implying its potential loss; if not for Jesus, then for those he is contrasted with, the scribes (γραμματεῖς *grammateis*). Just like the term ἐξουσία (*exousia*), they also appear for the first time in Mark 1:22 and bring with them the foreshadowing of conflict "that emerges between Jesus and the establishment, and in which the scribes are key players" (Dawson 2000, p. 128).

The contrasting parallelism in Mark 1:22 shows how different the ἐξουσία (*exousia*) Jesus holds is from the teaching of the scribes. The emphasis on this difference is strengthened by the fact that the Gospel of Mark never tells its readers exactly what it is that Jesus says to the synagogue attendees (Dawson 2000, p. 127). The contrast between Jesus and the scribes seems more important for the story than the content of Jesus' teaching. Where Jesus is individuated clearly, known from the start of Mark's gospel as Messiah and Son of God (if one follows the majority reading of Mark 1:1), closely connected to God's royal rule (cf. Mark 1:15), the scribes are faceless, generalized and appear to the readers as a monolithic group. Already in Mark 1:22, the story establishes them as Jesus' antagonists. Considering the way Mark's narrative often paints the world as black and white with God's royal rule threatened from the very beginning by unclean spirits even within the synagogue (Nicklas 2013, p. 51), one could go so far as to even place the scribes "on the side of Satan" (Marcus 2005, p. 192).

The second half of the pericope (vv. 23–28) brings a new character but also develops the subject of Jesus' ἐξουσία (*exousia*). Mark 1:23 talks about a man appearing in the synagogue. He is possessed by an unclean spirit. First, Jesus verbally spars with the spirit who seems to be talking not just for himself but for a bigger group of satanic forces (cf. the plural "... What have you to do with *us*, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy *us*?" in the spirit's direct speech in Mark 1:24). Then Jesus exorcises the spirit "[a]nd the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him." (Mark 1:26) This exorcism is then attributed to Jesus' new way of teaching with authority (διδαχῆ καὶ νῆ κατ' ἐξουσίαν *didachē kainē kat' exousian*) by those who are present in the synagogue.

The exorcism brings a new and important aspect to the understanding of ἐξουσία (*exousia*): until now readers could have thought the difference between the scribes and Jesus

was merely rhetorical or academic. The appearance of the unclean spirit signals the urgency of Jesus' teaching and acting with authority: human life and freedom are existentially endangered in a "battle between Jesus as God's heroic agent and the perverse demonic power of evil—a battle which is fought for humans" (Schenke 2005, p. 72; transl. JK).

What are the consequences for the way ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is perceived as it relates to the gospel's protagonist Jesus? Already in Mark 1, Jesus demonstrates God's power against demonic forces through Jesus' authoritative actions. Jesus' authority is not only contrasted with human authorities (i.e., the scribes) but proves superior also to otherworldly powers (van Iersel 1993, p. 108). Twice, ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is connected to teaching, and more specifically to a completely new teaching (cf. Mark 1:22,27). Anne Dawson points out that the text uses the adjective καινός (*kainos*) in Mark 1:27 instead of νέος (*neos*) and thus highlights not the temporal aspect of newness but the qualitative one (Dawson 2000, p. 133). This newness is not only mentioned explicitly, but it is also shown in the extremely emotional reactions in Mark 1:22 and 1:27. Those present in the synagogue are not only pleased (or displeased) by Jesus' actions, they are not mildly surprised but rather completely thrown off (ἐκπλήσσω *ekplēssō*) and shocked (θαμβέω *thambeō*). It remains unclear if Jesus' audience fully understands the implications of what they have witnessed. But what they have seen and heard they share and pass on to others: "At once his [i.e., Jesus'] fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee." (Mark 1:28).

4.2. Mark 2:1–12: ἐξουσία (*exousia*) and the Power to Forgive Sins

Readers encounter ἐξουσία (*exousia*) again in the second chapter of Mark's gospel in the story of the healing of a paralyzed man.

The pericope is placed between a series of healings and exorcisms (cf. Mark 1:23–1:45) and several scenes depicting conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees (cf. Mark 2:14–17: Jesus eats with tax collectors and sinners; Mark 2:18–22: Jesus' disciples do not fast; Mark 2:23–28: Jesus' disciples tear off ears of corn on the Sabbath).

Readers also meet characters again which had populated the first ἐξουσία (*exousia*)-scene in Mark 1, albeit in a slightly different way. Besides Jesus, we again find a larger group of people, so large in fact that the people do not fit into their narrated surroundings anymore: "So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door" (Mark 2:2a). Also present are the four people carrying the paralyzed man and the man himself—although the latter is only seen through the lens of his dis/ability and remains passive until the very end of the pericope despite the fact that he regains the ability to walk (Schiefer Ferrari 2014, p. 635; see Schiefer Ferrari also for a detailed critique of the story and its reception history from a dis/ability-critical perspective). Finally, we also find *some of the scribes* (τινες τῶν γραμματέων *tines tōn grammateōn*) present now for the first time in their (textual) flesh after having served as conceptual counterparts to Jesus in Mark 1:22 (Dawson 2000, p. 137 with reference to Mary Ann Tolbert, and Schenke 2005, p. 82).

In this well-known story, a healing and a dispute are interwoven. After the four helpers have lowered the paralyzed man into the middle of the room, Jesus says: "Child, your sins are forgiven." (Mark 2:5b) Instead of moving on to the healing, however, the narrator's attention shifts to the scribes. Their silent indignation culminates in Mark 2:7 in the phrase βλασφημεῖ (*blasphēmei*)—he blasphemes! Explicitly, the scribes interpret Jesus' assurance as a direct attack on God in their collective inner monologue. Only God can forgive sins in the scribes' religious worldview (Yarbro Collins 2007, p. 185). That this accusation is not a technicality will become clear during Jesus' trial before the high priest at the latest: it is "the offense for which in the end he [i.e., Jesus] is sentenced to death" (Asikainen 2018, p. 57).

What follows is the first interaction between Jesus and the scribes. It is initiated by Jesus, who addresses the scribes' unspoken outrage and asks if it is easier to tell the paralyzed man to stand up, take his bier, and walk away, or to tell him that his sins have been forgiven (cf. Mark 2:9). It is noteworthy that Jesus is the one to initiate this (rather

one-sided) dispute while reading the scribes' minds, or rather, hearts (cf. Mark 2:6.8). Traditionally, to read hearts is a skill attributed to God in the Hebrew bible (Focant 2012, p. 95; Gnika 2015, part 1, p. 100, who reference 1 Kgs 8:39, 1 Sam 16:7, and Ps 7:10, among others). Jesus' actions and abilities in this pericope further develop the overall presentation of Jesus in Mark's story so far: he is depicted as the gospel's protagonist who demonstrates superior knowledge (Hartvigsen 2012, p. 148), agency, and authority even where it is called into question. "In other words, the narrator has established Jesus as a man of authority who cannot easily be bypassed by the reader either" (van Iersel 1988, p. 60).

But what about ἐξουσία (*exousia*) in this pericope? It is mentioned in Mark 2:10 after Jesus asks about the easier task (healing vs. forgiving sins). Usually interpreted to also belong to Jesus' direct speech (see, e.g., Moloney 2002, p. 62; Yarbrow Collins 2007, p. 186; Focant 2012, p. 96), verses 10–11 read as follows: "But so that you may know that the Son of Man holds authority (ἐξουσία *exousia*) on earth to forgive sins'—he said to the paralyzed man—"I say to you, stand up, take your mat, and go to your home.'" (NRSVue modified).

Thus, authority is more specifically authority to forgive sins in this pericope. As in the first reference to ἐξουσία (*exousia*) in Mark 1, there are signs of ἐξουσία (*exousia*) here, too, a visible effect of the authority at work. In the case of Mark 2:1–12, it is the healing of the paralyzed man who then gets up from his bier and walks for the crowd to see (cf. Mark 2:12).

The key point of conflict, however, is not the healing but the question of the forgiveness of sins. It is the main theologically controversial point as traditionally (and reflected in the scribes' indignation) no one can forgive sins but God (see, e.g., Focant 2012, p. 93 with reference to Exod 34:6–7 and Isa 43:25; 44:22).

It is also noteworthy that in Mark 2:1–12, ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is again closely connected to the spoken word. In Mark 1, Jesus had taught in the synagogue. Despite the absence of any διδάχῃ/διδάσκω (*didachē/didaskō*)-terminology in Mark 2:1–12, there is nevertheless also a focus on Jesus speaking (Moloney 2002, p. 61; cf. Mark 2:2.5.7.8.9.10.11) which merits interpretation as a scene of teaching.

For the second time, ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is presented as something that can be held. In Mark 2:10, it is the *Son of Man* who holds it. Together with a small detail from Mark 2:5b, this reference to the Son of Man intertextually suggests an additional important point: God has transferred ἐξουσία (*exousia*) to the Son of Man, whom readers might identify with Jesus, whom they already know as *Son of God* (Chronis 2005, pp. 464–65). Similarities between Mark 2:10 and Dan 7:14 LXX bring the figure of *One like a Son of a Man* who arrives before God and *is given* ἐξουσία (*exousia*) (cf. Dan 7:14 LXX) to the minds of those of Mark's readers who are familiar with the scriptures of Israel. The agent who transfers ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is not only alluded to intertextually through the connection to Dan 7:14, however, but also visible through a closer look into Mark 2:5b. There, Jesus had said: "Child, your sins are forgiven." It seems important to note that Jesus has not said: "I forgive your sins," but formulates the sentence in a passive voice, which through the *passivum divinum* ultimately "points to God as the actor" (Boring 2006, p. 76). The attentive reader therefore should understand that the scribes' accusation is unnecessary because Jesus acts as God's representative, drawing his authority from him. As Gudrun Guttenberger puts it: "God and Jesus cooperate. They do not compete with each other as the scribes have assumed" (Guttenberger 2017, p. 63; transl. JK).

Finally, a third connecting line can be drawn between Mark 1:21–28 and Mark 2:1–12: in both pericopae, the crowd reacts to Jesus' actions with intense emotions. The people witnessing the forgiving of sins and healing are *beside themselves* (ἐξίστημι *existēmi*) (cf. Mark 2:12). While ἐξίστημι (*existēmi*) can describe positive or negative emotions in NT texts (for a more negative connotation, cf. e.g., Mark 3:21 or 2 Cor 5:13), in Mark 2:12 it is clearly positive as the crowd is not only beside itself but also praises God (cf. Mark 2:12b). The crowd, at least, has understood who is really responsible and to whom praise should be given (Marcus 2005, pp. 223–24).

Where are the scribes in all this? Do they belong to the πάντα (*panta*, i.e., everyone) who are praising God? The text does not definitively say. But, given the fact that the scribes have been presented in a negative light in Mark's narrative for the second time now, readers might be inclined to *not* include the scribes in the ecstatic crowd praising God for Jesus' acts.

In any case, it becomes clear that the characters of Mark's narrated world do not remain indifferent where it comes to ἐξουσία (*exousia*) showing itself. On the contrary, ἐξουσία (*exousia*) provokes intense emotions ranging from joyful praise (cf. Mark 2:12) to outrage (Mark 2:7).

4.3. Mark 3:13–19: ἐξουσία (*exousia*) That Looks to the Future

The term ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is mentioned again in Mark 3 in close narrative proximity with conflict. As outlined above, the second chapter of Mark's gospel primarily narrates disputes and conflict between Jesus and the scribes, sometimes in conjunction with healing stories which "show[...] that the opposition to Jesus is mounting" (Dawson 2000, p. 149). Mark 3 continues this pattern and starts with a healing story (cf. Mark 3:1–5). Because the healing takes place on the Sabbath, a conflict unfolds with religious authorities.⁶ At its end, readers hear a first clear foreshadowing of Jesus' death: "The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him [i.e., Jesus], how to destroy him." (Mark 3:6) Together with the various earlier smaller conflicts with religious authorities, and the cryptic prophecy of days in which the bridegroom would be taken away (cf. Mark 2:20), "a mosaic emerges in which the crucifixion of Jesus in Jerusalem is discernible in outline, already in the first chapters [of Mark's gospel; JK]" (Nicklas 2012, p. 357). Only a few verses after this sinister prediction of Jesus' death, ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is mentioned for the fourth time in Mark's story.

In this pericope, Jesus climbs a mountain, calls those he himself wants (to call) and "made twelve to be with him and to be sent out to preach and to have authority (ἐξουσία *exousia*) to cast out demons." (Mark 3:14–15 NRSVue modified)

The audience of this ἐξουσία (*exousia*)-scene is remarkably different than it was. Jesus is on a mountain, presumably removed from the crowds pressing on him before. Into this solitude he calls people, possibly more than the twelve who will form his 'inner circle' from here on and who are listed in Mark 3:16–19: Simon (Peter), James (son of Zebedee), his brother John, Andrew, Philipp, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James (son of Alphaeus), Thaddeus, Simon the Cananean, and Judas (Ischariot) (Marcus 2005, p. 266). Of course, it is highly evocative of the twelve tribes of Israel that Jesus forms this new group of twelve men. The specific phrasing that Jesus *made* (aorist of ποιέω *poieō*) the twelve could even allude to Gen 1 and give the whole scene an eschatological undertone (Marcus 2005, p. 267; Watts Henderson 2006, p. 84).

Again, ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is presented as something that can be held (ἔχω *echō*). But a new idea is added to a concept that is familiar to readers by now: ἐξουσία (*exousia*) has not only been transmitted to Jesus by God. Jesus is also apparently able to transmit it to others (Ebner 2013, p. 26): he sends the twelve to hold ἐξουσία (*exousia*) (cf. Mark 3:15). After (implicitly) God and (explicitly) Jesus, the twelve are the third party to have and hold ἐξουσία (*exousia*). This not only gives the newly established group an authority not visible before. It also contours the relationship of the twelve with Jesus. Just like Jesus is closely connected to God who guarantees Jesus' power to teach, to heal, and to exorcise, the twelve should be closely connected to Jesus. This is the prerequisite for being sent away to proclaim and cast out unclean spirits (cf. Mark 3:14–15) (Marcus 2005, p. 267; Watts Henderson 2006, p. 89) and to "share in the ἐξουσία of Jesus" (Dawson 2000, p. 151).

The transmission of ἐξουσία (*exousia*) not only helps in characterizing the twelve but also adds to the image of Jesus in Mark's gospel. Mark 3:13–19 portrays Jesus as someone who acts with agency and autonomy without losing his connection to God. The ability to choose freely whomever he wants to call (cf. Mark 3:13) reminds readers of the power of God to choose—predominantly to choose Israel: "For you are a people holy to the LORD

your God; the LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession" (Deut 7:6) (see [Marcus 2005](#), p. 266).

Differently from the first two pericopae featuring ἐξουσία (*exousia*), in Mark 3:13–19, readers do not attain a visible confirmation of the transmission of authority. Even though it is clearly stated that the twelve hold authority specifically to cast out demons, the next scenes do not show the twelve exorcising at all. Before they will start exercising ἐξουσία (*exousia*), the story needs a second commissioning (cf. Mark 6:7–11). It is, of course, theoretically possible to attribute this to poor narrative construction on the side of the story's author. However, those who acknowledge Mark's storytelling skills will consider the outlook orientated towards the future which a transmission of ἐξουσία (*exousia*) without immediate confirmation and illustration provides. The twelve *will* be sent and they *will* exorcise unclean spirits. This is both a prediction and a promise.

But is there conflict in this pericope? Compared to Mark 1:21–28 and 2:1–12, the events of Mark 3:13–19 appear peaceful and harmonious. However, it is important to remember that they do so because they are surrounded in Mark's narrative by smaller and bigger instances of conflict. Additionally, even in Mark 3:13–19, a small but significant detail taints the peaceful picture of the intimate scene on the mountain: Judas, whom readers encounter in Mark 3:19 for the first time, is not only Judas Iscariot. He is also the one "who handed him [i.e., Jesus; JK] over" (Mark 3:19b). Thus, also in Mark 3:19, Jesus' death is foreshadowed ([Yarbro Collins 2007](#), p. 223).

4.4. Mark 6:7–13: Sending the Twelve and Transmitting the ἐξουσία (*exousia*)

The next pericope talking about ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is closely connected to Mark 3:13–19 through the main motif of the commissioning and sending of the twelve. In the three chapters between both pericopae, the disciples have seen Jesus teach both with and without using parables (cf. Mark 3:22–30; 4:1–34; 6:1–6), argue with his family (cf. Mark 3:31–35), calm a storm (cf. Mark 4:35–41), exorcise a legion of demons (cf. Mark 5:1–17), heal a hemorrhaging woman, and resurrect a 12-year-old girl (cf. Mark 5:21–43). Both Jesus and his disciples experience in those three chapters between both commission scenes also the ambiguity of how people react to Jesus. Joy and enthusiasm are now sometimes mixed with less positive emotions (cf. e.g., Mark 3:21; 5:15–17; 6:3).

Besides the connecting key theme, there are additional similarities between Mark 3:13–19 and Mark 6:7–13: in the second commission scene, too, there seems to be no crowd present and the narrator talks about ἐξουσία (*exousia*).

Thematically, the eight verses of our pericope circle back to the promise made by Jesus in Mark 3:14–15 ([Huebenthal 2014](#), p. 376). Jesus calls the twelve to him, sends them, and gives them instructions for their journey (cf. Mark 6:7–11). The following verses tell the audience of Mark's gospel about the success of this (second) commission: "So they went out and proclaimed that all should change their way of thinking. They cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them." (Mark 6:12–13 NRSVue modified)

Several things are noteworthy here:

After three instances of someone holding ἐξουσία (*exousia*) (cf. Mark 1:22; 2:10; 3:15) and after Mark 3:15 had implied the delegation of ἐξουσία (*exousia*), Mark 6:7 finally depicts Jesus *giving* (δίδωμι *didōmi*) it to the twelve. Jesus, as someone holding ἐξουσία (*exousia*), can also pass it on.

Also, when ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is given in Mark 6:7, it is given for a very specific reason. This reason points back to Mark 3:15. Both verses state the ability of the twelve to exorcise as a goal of the transmission of ἐξουσία (*exousia*). Mark 6:13 confirms this: the twelve are now capable of 'throwing out' demons and do so in large numbers.

This is not only a quite specific task the twelve are given, but it is also a reminder of a conflict that has been connected to ἐξουσία (*exousia*) in Mark's gospel before. When Mark speaks of casting out demons or unclean spirits, this is not only a therapeutic act directed to the good of the people who are freed of the presence of demon/spirit. It is also a clear

indication that Jesus' actions are part of a cosmic conflict. As Adela Yarbro Collins aptly puts it: "Jesus' exorcisms signify his struggle with Satan, which prefigures and anticipates the reestablishment of the rule of God on earth." (Yarbro Collins 2007, p. 297)

But what about conflict? At first glance, Mark 6:7–13 again seems to be free of conflict. However, like the first commission scene, it is sandwiched between several conflict-heavy scenes which emphasize the more subtle suggestions of conflict in the pericope itself. In Mark 6:1–6, directly before the commissioning scene discussed here, Mark tells his readers about an unpleasant incident in Jesus' hometown. Instead of praise and wonder, he is met with contempt and disbelief and cannot (!) do deeds of power (save a few healings). The verses following our pericope tell Mark's readers about the death of John the Baptist (cf. Mark 6:14–29), which again "foreshadows the crucifixion of Jesus" (Marcus 2005, p. 391; see also Yarbro Collins 2007, p. 303).

Additionally, several allusions to lines of conflict previously developed in the Gospel of Mark reveal themselves to the careful reader of Mark 6:7–13. One has already been mentioned above: the cosmic conflict between Jesus and the demonic forces of which the twelve have now become a part with their exorcising activities (Huebenthal 2014, p. 276). The second one points to an earthlier reality: the text foresees a situation where people will not be pleased to see the twelve. Jesus gives instructions on what to do "[i]f any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you" (Mark 6:11a). Slowly but surely, the anticipated reactions of crowds and bystanders to Jesus' message begin to change in the Gospel of Mark: from praising God's actions (cf. 2:12) to not even welcoming his emissaries.

4.5. Mark 11:27–33: Seeing ἐξουσία (*exousia*) in Action?

Several chapters follow which do not mention ἐξουσία (*exousia*) at all. Readers only encounter it again in chapter 11—but in what a tense situation! Jesus and his disciples have come from Galilee to Jerusalem by now. On the third day Jesus spends in Jerusalem, he is confronted by high priests, scribes, and elders together (cf. Mark 11:27), "conveying to the reader the hostility that Jesus encountered from the highest authorities" (Dawson 2000, p. 173). This hostility is not unexpected. After the somewhat anticlimactic first arrival in the temple in Mark 11:11, Mark's audience has witnessed some quite tumultuous scenes, illustrating the conflict between Jesus and the authorities connected to the temple. Mark 11:15–17 had shown Jesus flipping tables in the temple with a dangerous reaction from both high priests and scribes: "And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him" (Mark 11:18a).

After the last two pericopae talking about ἐξουσία (*exousia*) had featured Jesus and the smaller circle of the twelve, Mark 11:27–33 now presents a public controversy again. Jesus' disciples are implied if not explicitly mentioned when Mark 11:27a states "[a]gain they came to Jerusalem" (Focant 2012, p. 465). There might even be a larger crowd present to watch the argument—Mark 11:32 mentions that the antagonistic alliance is afraid of the crowd (ὄχλος *ochlos*) and will postpone detaining Jesus because of this fear a few verses later (cf. Mark 12:12).

Both the group of antagonists and Jesus talk about ἐξουσία (*exousia*) in what Ira Brent Driggers calls "perhaps the most dramatic and theologically charged confrontation of the narrative" (Driggers 2007, p. 243), and the term ἐξουσία (*exousia*) appears right at the beginning of the pericope: "As he was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to him and said, 'By what authority (ἐξουσία *exousia*) are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority (ἐξουσία *exousia*) to do them?'" (Mark 11:27b–28). Jesus does not give an answer to this question right away but responds with a question of his own: "Jesus said to them, 'I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority (ἐξουσία *exousia*) I do these things. Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or from humans? Answer me.'" (Mark 11:29–30 NRSVue modified) As the high priests, scribes, and elders cannot (or will not) answer Jesus, he refuses them the answer to their initial question (cf. Mark 11:33). Without doubt, ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is the central motif of the scene and a highly contentious issue in this pericope.

While the exchange between Jesus and his opponents itself is heavy with conflict and dispute over the origin of Jesus' ἐξουσία (*exousia*), also the characters present in the scene connect the pericope to Jesus' suffering and death: readers will encounter the triad of high priests, scribes, and elders (cf. Mark 11:27) again when Jesus is arrested (cf. Mark 14:43) and when he is brought before the high priest for his trial (cf. Mark 14:53).

Not only is the pericope itself thus dominated by the conflict between Jesus and Jewish religious authorities, two references to the potentially deadly end of the conflict emerge also in the immediate surroundings of the scene. Just as the third day in Jerusalem begins with Jesus being confronted by high priests, scribes, and elders in Mark 11:27, the second day in Jerusalem had ended with a dark foreshadowing: Mark 11:18 tells its readers that high priests and scribes look for a way to destroy Jesus. Also, the scene following Mark 11:27–33 can be read as a veiled reference to Jesus' death (Schenke 2005, p. 272; Guttenberger 2017, pp. 269, 274). In Mark 12:1–9, Jesus talks in parabolic speech about the owner of a vineyard and his son. The latter is violently killed by the vineyard's farmers (cf. Mark 12:8).

It is also noteworthy that Mark 11:27–33 asks even more explicitly than earlier pericopae about the *origin* of Jesus' ἐξουσία (*exousia*). Twice the question arises 'with/in *what* authority' (ἐν ποίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ ἐν ποίᾳ *exousia*) Jesus acts. The debate focuses on the details: How exactly is it that Jesus holds ἐξουσία (*exousia*)? Who gave it to him? And what kind of ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is it? On the narrative surface, the questions remain open because the high priests, scribes, and elders are not able (or willing) to answer Jesus' question about John's baptism. Neither Jesus nor the narrator gives a clear answer. Mark's readers should, of course, be able to answer the question regardless. They have all the information necessary available since Mark 1:22.27 (Schenke 2005, p. 271)! Nevertheless, the open question leads to an activation of the audience of Mark's story (Whitenton 2023, p. 6). When the answer is missing from the text, readers must answer the high priests', scribes', and elders' question themselves—and they are expected to answer it differently than Jesus' opponents do. The reference to John's baptism points to the direction of an answer: Jesus' ἐξουσία (*exousia*) not only comes "from heaven" (ἐξ οὐρανοῦ *ex ouranou*) as does John's baptism (cf. Mark 11:30). Mark's audience might also be reminded of the special connection between God and Jesus illustrated in Mark 1:10–11: he is the beloved son into whom the Spirit has descended (Moloney 2002, p. 231; Whitenton 2023, p. 6).

In Mark 11:27–33, another dimension of ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is emphasized which had been important in Mark's gospel before: ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is connected to action. Three of the four instances where ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is referenced in this pericope ask in what kind of authority Jesus is *acting* (ποιέω *poieō*). In the pericope we have analyzed in Mark's narrative before chapter 11, ἐξουσία (*exousia*) has been connected to different actions: teaching (cf. Mark 1:22.27), exorcising (cf. Mark 1:26; 3:15; 6:7.13), forgiving sins (cf. Mark 2:5.10), and healing (cf. Mark 2:11–12; 6:13). However, even though in Mark 11:27–33 the question of actions taken *in* ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is explicitly raised, the actions themselves remain undefined. This is true for the opponents' speech as well as for Jesus' words. A look into the activities described in the rest of the pericope is also only marginally helpful. The only thing Jesus *does* in Mark 11:27 before the high priests, scribes, and elders confront him is to walk around (περιπατέω *peripatedō*) (Focant 2012, p. 465). It has been suggested that the act of returning to the scene of heated events (especially the scandal of Jesus overthrowing the tables in the temple—cf. Mark 11:15–18) of the day before is the reason for the high priests, scribes, and elders confronting Jesus (Marcus 2009, p. 799). However, because of the vagueness of the opponents' question ("these things"—ταῦτα *tauta* in Mark 11:28), it seems more likely that Jesus' actions, in general, are called into question (Gnilka 2015, part 2, p. 138). What Jesus does demonstrate in the verses following the opponents' question is his capability to teach when he answers their question without falling into their trap. Adela Yarbro Collins concludes her analysis of the pericope with the fitting observation: "The audience of Mark must surely have enjoyed hearing about this battle of wits and especially about Jesus' victory over his opponents." (Yarbro Collins 2007, p. 540).

4.6. Mark 13:32–37: ἐξουσία (*exousia*) in a Time without the Lord

For the last time in Mark's gospel, ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is mentioned in chapter 13 (vv. 32–37). Since readers have last heard the word, Jesus has told the parable of the vineyard (cf. Mark 12:1–9), spoken about the rejected cornerstone (cf. Mark 12:10–12), argued with Pharisees and Herodians (cf. Mark 12:13–17), Sadducees (cf. Mark 12:18–27), and a surprisingly friendly scribe (cf. Mark 12:28–34). He has taught in the temple (cf. Mark 12:35–44) and started to teach his disciples about the end of times (cf. Mark 13:3–31). The verses referencing ἐξουσία (*exousia*) “conclude the apocalyptic discourse” (Yarbro Collins 2022, p. 33) and facilitate the transition of the story towards the passion of Jesus (Dawson 2000, p. 193).

The tension is palpable now. Not much is left of the initial astonishment and praise meeting Jesus in Galilee at the beginning of Mark's narrative. Only a few scenes separate Mark 13:32–37 from Jesus' arrest.

The way in which ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is mentioned is discernibly different from the previous instances because it is now a part of parabolic speech. Jesus is the one talking about it to Peter, James, John, and Andrew (cf. Mark 13:3). Possibly other disciples are present, too (cf. Mark 13:1).

The dominating motif is the call to be vigilant in the face of unknown fractions of time. Interestingly, the borders between parabolic speech and less parabolic dialogue between Jesus and his disciples are considerably blurred (du Toit 2006, p. 114). In Mark 13:34, Jesus speaks: “It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves his house and gives his slaves authority (ἐξουσία *exousia*), each his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be awake.” (NRSVue modified) He then addresses the disciples directly, calling them to stay awake (cf. Mark 13:35a), because “you do not know when the lord of the house will come [...] or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly” (Mark 13:35b–36 NRSVue modified).

As in Mark 6:7, ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is given, transmitted from someone higher up in the social hierarchy to his subordinates. Those subordinates are changed through this act. They gain the authority and thus the freedom to act (Dawson 2000, p. 192), and everyone receives their own work (ἔργον *ergon*). Only the doorkeeper's task is specified: he is supposed to stay awake (γρηγορέω *grēgoreō*).

What are readers supposed to do with this small pericope at the end of Mark's apocalyptic discourse? How does it fit into the broader context of the conflict-filled presentation of ἐξουσία (*exousia*) in Mark's gospel?

First of all, it is noteworthy that a familiar motif is taken up again. As mentioned before both explicitly and implicitly in Mark's narrative, ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is transmitted from someone to someone (cf. Mark 13:34). However, this time the delegation of ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is not connected to a specific task (such as, e.g., exorcising). This has consequences for reader engagement. After Mark 11:27–33 had left open the question of where Jesus' ἐξουσία (*exousia*) comes from for readers to answer, Mark 13:32–37 now involves them again through a gap in the story. What are the other tasks the lord of the house assigns the slaves in Jesus' parable? In what other ways do they hold ἐξουσία (*exousia*) besides keeping watch of the door? The use of parabolic speech further strengthens this activation of Mark's readers. With their general openness for interpretation, parables increase readers' involvement in the constitution of the sense(s) of the narrative. As Mayra Rivera puts it: parables “invite the listeners to participate in the process of meaning making, which is always open-ended.” (Rivera 2015, p. 63) But Mark 13:32–37 does not stop there. In vv. 35–37, Jesus also addresses his disciples directly. Through the numerous imperatives used repeatedly in Mark 13:32–37, Jesus' speech has a direct effect on readers, too (Focant 2012, pp. 554–55). They, too, are tasked with staying awake and vigilant. And finally, the thematic point of the absence of the lord functions as a point of identification for Mark's readers. They, too, are waiting for the lord to return (Schenke 2005, p. 300).

The absence of the lord (κύριος *kyrios* in Mark 13:35) is the biggest point of conflict in Mark 13:32–37 in the sense that it points to the anticipated absence of Jesus (du Toit 2006, p. 256). As noted above, Mark 13:32–37 is situated at a turning point in the gospel.

Jesus' passion awaits its readers, readers who have been prepared for what is to come by frequent allusions and foreshadowing. The end of the Markan apocalyptic discourse and the imperatives directed at disciples and readers alike "call[. . .] attention not only to the signs of the times in Mark's day but also to the last act of the eschatological drama of Jesus' life, which is about to unfold in the gripping conclusion of the Gospel." (Marcus 2009, p. 923) Attentive readers will, moreover, not only connect the motif of absence to Jesus' death but may also find additional elements of a connection between Mark 13:32–37 and the story of Jesus' passion and death:

Peter, James, John, and Andrew are the ones mentioned by name as listening to Jesus in Mark 13 (cf. Mark 13:3). Three of those four, who were very clearly told to stay awake in Mark 13:35, will be the disciples who disappoint Jesus when he takes them with him away from the other disciples in his prayer to Getsemane (cf. Mark 14:33; Dowd and Malbon 2006, p. 291). He even repeats his call from Mark 13:35 (cf. Mark 14:34: *μείνατε ὄδε καὶ γρηγορεῖτε meinate hōde kai grēgoreite*). Nevertheless, they fall asleep (cf. Mark 14:37.40).

A similar intratextual connection can be found between Mark 13:32–37 and important moments of the following narrative. Mark 13:35 lists four specific times as possible moments for the lord of the house to return: *ὄψέ (opse)*, i.e., late in the evening; *μεσονύκτιον (mesonyktion)*, i.e., in the middle of the night; *ἀλεκτοροφωνία (alektorophōnia)*, i.e., when the rooster crows; and *πρωί (prōi)*, i.e., very early in the morning. All of those points in time will play an important role in the story of Jesus' passion and death (Dowd and Malbon 2006, p. 291): Peter will deny that he knows Jesus three times *before a rooster crows* the second time (cf. Mark 14:66–72, i.e., v. 72b: *ἀλέκτωρ ἐφώνησεν alektōr ephōnēsen*). Before Jesus dies, darkness falls over the earth (as if it were the middle of the night; cf. Mark 33—no verbal concordance with Mark 13:35). Josef of Arimathea will come *late in the evening* (cf. Mark 15:42: *ἡδὴ ὄψιας γενομένης ēdē opsias genomēnēs*) to ask Pilate for Jesus' body. The women will go to Jesus' tomb *very early in the morning* (cf. Mark 16:2: *πρωί prōi*).

Finally, David du Toit points out an additional conflict alluded to in Mark 13:32–37. The one task assigned to the slaves that Jesus mentions explicitly is that of the doorkeeper (cf. Mark 13:34). To have a doorkeeper is, however, only necessary if a threat to the household is probable and danger must be averted (du Toit 2006, pp. 135–36).

5. The Term *ἐξουσία (exousia)* in Mark's Gospel: Charting Changes and Tracking Developments over the Course of the Narrative

After having analyzed all pericopae of Mark's gospel in which *ἐξουσία (exousia)* is explicitly mentioned, it is now possible to chart developments and to answer the first part of the research question of this paper: in what way(s) does the Gospel of Mark present and use the term *ἐξουσία (exousia)*?

5.1. *ἐξουσία (exousia)* as the Possibility to Act

Especially in the beginning of the narrative, readers encounter *ἐξουσία (exousia)* in line with the common Greek usage of the word, i.e., as the possibility or freedom to act (Foerster 1990, p. 559; Betz 2014, p. 1184; see also Dawson 2000, p. 11). In holding *ἐξουσία (exousia)*, Jesus is depicted as one who is acting without impediments. The most striking example is Mark 3:13: Jesus calls those into his service *he* wants to call (*προσκαλεῖται οὓς ἠθέληεν αὐτός proskaleitai hous ētelen autos*). And they do come.

5.2. The Apocalyptic Context of *ἐξουσία (exousia)*

From the very beginning of Mark's gospel onward, the possibility to act is also contextualized in an apocalyptic drama. Jesus' *ἐξουσία (exousia)* is not just the power to do what he wants: it "is particularly associated with God's reassertion of his royal authority in the end-time" (Marcus 2005, p. 191). That Jesus acts in the context of the end of time is shown through his exorcising already in Mark 1:21–28 and will be developed in the following chapters. Already in the beginning of the narrative, *ἐξουσία (exousia)* is important in the cosmic struggle of good and evil, a struggle that is fought for the good of humans. After

the exorcism of Mark 1:23–26, this line is continued in Mark 2:1–12: Jesus exorcises, he forgives sins, and he heals. In Mark 6:7–13, the motif is taken up again, but modified: Now, the disciples are integrated into this cosmic struggle. They are tasked with exorcising and do so successfully, having “become full participants in their teacher’s own eschatological agenda” (Watts Henderson 2006, p. 148).

5.3. Intertwining Words and Actions

Acting freely with ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is also frequently connected to *speaking* in Mark’s gospel. Insofar it is true for Markan usage, too, that ἐξουσία (*exousia*) can be understood as a “Macht, die zu sagen hat” (Foerster 1990, p. 560; “authority which has a say” transl. JK). Tracking this aspect through the pericopae analyzed, it is visible already in Mark 1:21–28 in the connection of ἐξουσία (*exousia*) and Jesus’ teaching (Watts Henderson 2006, p. 67). In Mark 2:1–12, both healing and forgiveness of sins are facilitated through Jesus’ efficacious words. In Mark 3:13, Jesus *calls* (προσκαλέω *proskaleō*) the twelve, some of whom also receive new names (cf. Mark 3:16–17). Mark 6:12–13 tells readers about the actions of those sent out, but not before Jesus has instructed them carefully about what to do and what not to do (cf. Mark 6:7–11). Finally, the complete potential of conflict unfolds in Mark 11:27–33 in a verbal confrontation between Jesus and the high priests, scribes, and elders. Thus, ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is more than flashy actions without a deeper sense and more than empty words without substance in the Gospel of Mark. Authoritative words and actions are inseparably connected to each other.

5.4. A New Kind of ἐξουσία (*exousia*)

An additional important aspect of ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is visible in Mark 1:21–28: the way that Jesus holds ἐξουσία (*exousia*), and the way it shows itself in his words and actions, is new and completely unheard of. Besides the explicit reference to the “new teaching” (cf. Mark 1:27), there is also the reaction of the audience of Jesus’ teaching as an indication of this new and unheard-of teaching. Those who experience Jesus’ ἐξουσία (*exousia*) are completely thrown off (ἐκπλήσσω *ekplēssō* in Mark 1:22) and shocked (θαμβέω *thambeō* in Mark 1:27). This is more than polite applause. The reactions to Jesus’ actions are even more extreme in Mark 2:1–12: the scribes accuse him of blasphemy (cf. Mark 2:7), but the crowd is beside itself (ἐξίστημι *existēmi*) and praises God (δοξάζω *doxazō*; both in Mark 2:12). And rightly so: Jesus is not teaching and exorcising as he had been in Mark 1:21–28. Instead, he appears to be able to forgive sins. Something unparalleled and new indeed.⁷

5.5. Who Is Affected by ἐξουσία (*exousia*)?

It is also worthwhile to extend further attention to the addressees of the Markan presentation of ἐξουσία (*exousia*) within the narrative. Who is present when ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is mentioned? What kinds of relationships are constructed with reference to ἐξουσία (*exousia*)? Who is affected by it?

The development in the analyzed pericopae can be seen as a gradual widening of recipients even though the actual audience of Jesus’ acts and speech changes from public to rather intimate to public and intimate again over the course of the pericopae analyzed (see Table 1).

Mark 1:21–28 starts with ἐξουσία (*exousia*) being revealed to those present in the synagogue of Capernaum on the Sabbath. Those who are confronted with Jesus’ new way of teaching in Capernaum not only react with extreme emotions. They also appear to talk about it afterward, bringing a bigger circle of ‘secondary’ audience into the frame of the pericope when Mark 1:28 states that Jesus’ “[...] fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.”

Table 1. Developments in the audience of Jesus’ acts and teaching.

Mark 1:21–28	Mark 2:1–12	Mark 3:13–19
disciples, people in synagogue, unclean spirit	disciples, big crowd, scribes	the twelve (and possibly additional disciples)
↓ scribes (as point of comparison) and people of Galilee (hear of Jesus’ deeds)		↓ recipients of preaching and exorcising (implied)
Mark 6:7–13	Mark 11:27–33	Mark 13:32–37
the twelve	disciples, high priests, scribes, elders (and possibly other people in the temple)	Peter, James, John, Andrew (and possibly other disciples)
↓ “many demons” and “many” healed (recipients of disciples’ actions)	↓ crowd (implied in the fear of Jesus’ opponents)	↓ “all” (as recipients of Jesus’ warning)

Obviously, this spreading of Jesus’ fame is successful, as Mark 2:1–12 shows us a much-extended audience. Now people specifically come in order to listen to Jesus. They crowd the house Jesus is in, so much so that the helpers bringing the paralyzed man to Jesus are not able to reach him at first. The scribes become an actual part of the scene’s characters after having served as a point of comparison in Mark 1:22. In both the first and second pericopae mentioning ἐξουσία (*exousia*), Jesus connects to his audience through both his words and his actions, specifically actions that effect the well-being of people. He exorcises, forgives sins, and heals.

The third pericope makes the question of an audience a bit tricky. It is not completely clear how many people join Jesus on the mountain (Watts Henderson 2006, p. 80 n. 54; Marcus 2005, p. 266; Guttenberger 2017, p. 85). The twelve are mentioned explicitly, although additional disciples could have been called by Jesus in Mark 3:13. In any case, the scene is more intimate (Marcus 2005, p. 266) and lacks a wider audience in comparison to the previous pericopae talking about ἐξουσία (*exousia*). However, potential recipients of ἐξουσία (*exousia*) beyond the twelve are implicit: when the twelve are finally sent out, it will be to preach and to exorcise.

This implied wider audience is even more visible in Mark 6:7–13: here, Jesus not only constitutes the group of the twelve but actually sends them out. The people who are affected by these acts had been in the pericope’s focus already in Mark 6:10–11 when Jesus gives instructions on how the disciples should act when they come into contact with human settlements. In the next verses, the nameless but numerous recipients are explicitly mentioned, too: “So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.” (Mark 6:12–13).

Mark 11:27–33 switches back to a more public setting in the temple where high priests, scribes, and elders are mentioned explicitly and Jesus’ disciples as well as possibly a wider audience in the temple are implied. In the verses following the pericope, the opponents’ fear of “the crowd” is explicitly mentioned (cf. Mark 12:12). In this high-strung scene, the conflict is palpable, and tensions are not relieved—in part because Jesus never answers his opponents’ question about the origin of his ἐξουσία (*exousia*).

A more intense involvement of Mark’s readers is visible towards the end of the ἐξουσία (*exousia*) storyline, and it is most obvious in Mark 13:32–37. While on the surface ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is mentioned again in a more intimate setting, Jesus factually opens the scope of ἐξουσία (*exousia*) radically when he calls “all” (cf. Mark 13:37) to stay awake in the face of the absence of the lord.

6. Main Lines of Conflict Connected to ἐξουσία (*exousia*) in Mark's Narrative

It has been shown in the analyses above that conflict surrounds ἐξουσία (*exousia*) from the moment it is first mentioned in Mark's gospel. In the pericope that first references ἐξουσία (*exousia*), the scribes are not even explicitly present as acting characters. Nevertheless, they are already contrasted with Jesus and his authoritative teaching as well as put forward as opposition to Jesus. Through generalization and depersonalization, they are associated with the demonic forces of evil in Mark's binary view of the cosmos (Marcus 2005, p. 192).

This conflict increases in the second pericope mentioning ἐξουσία (*exousia*), in which the scribes now appear on the stage of action (Gnilka 2015, p. 102). Their accusation of blasphemy starts a narrative development which will culminate in the high priest tearing his garments in Mark 14:64 and end in Jesus' crucifixion. The final accusation spoken by the high priest will echo the scribes' thoughts of Mark 2:7 (Schenke 2005, p. 88). This connection is quite important because it is another example of how the Markan Jesus cannot be fully understood without the dimension of cross and suffering. The impressive display of Jesus forgiving sins, healing a paralyzed man, and of the crowds bursting out in amazement is directly connected to Jesus' violent death in the sphere of influence of others, seeming utterly powerless.

Neither Mark 3:13–19 nor Mark 6:7–13 mentions the scribes (or indeed any of the other groups opposing Jesus in Mark's gospel). Nevertheless, conflict is visible beneath the surface of both scenes. In both pericopae, exorcisms are explicitly mentioned as (one of) the activities the twelve, who now hold ἐξουσία (*exousia*), are supposed to perform. Thus, the bigger apocalyptic setting and general conflict between good and evil in Mark's worldview do play a role also in these two pericopae. Additionally, we find a small but significant half-sentence in Mark 3:19. In the process of renaming the twelve, the text talks about "[. . .] Judas Iscariot, who handed him [i.e., Jesus] over." This means that even the scene that shows the formation of the twelve continues the foreshadowing of Jesus' death begun in Mark 2:7.

Mark 11:27–33 shows an open conflict again. There are clear demarcation lines between Jesus and his opponents, and the tension is palpable. Readers know that, at the time of this confrontation between Jesus and the high priests, scribes, and elders, Jesus' opponents have already decided upon his murder (cf. Mark 3:6). More than that: they are even now looking for a way to put their decision into action (cf. Mark 11:18). The fact that Jesus' opposition is now closing ranks indicates that the escalation of the conflict is close at hand. It is probably not a coincidence that the list of opponents mentioned in Mark 11:27 is identical to those who sentence Jesus to be brought to Pilate in Mark 15:1a, merely expanded by the reference to the Synedrion: "[T]he *high priests* held a consultation with the *elders* and *scribes* and the whole Synedrion" (NRSVue modified). Again, ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is connected to Mark's passion story (Gnilka 2015, part 2, p. 138).

Mark 13:32–37 marks the preliminary climax of this connection. Even the most cautious reader is now expected to draw the lines from the parable of the doorkeeper to Jesus' death and absence. However, a different aspect deserves attention, too: Mark 13:32–37 not only alludes to the conflict leading to Jesus' death, but it also shows the result of this conflict. Disciples and readers alike are supposed to realize that there will be a time in which the lord is indeed absent.

7. Why Conflict? And Why Is ἐξουσία (*exousia*) Absent in Mark's Passion Story?

But one might ask, why this intricate construction of conflict connected to the ἐξουσία (*exousia*)? And, if ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is supposedly so intricately connected to conflict in Mark's narrative, why does it not appear again after Mark 13:34? After all, the culmination of conflict in Mark's narrative is surely Jesus' death on the cross.

The question of why ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is narrated with close ties to conflict is answered here from a narrative point of view. Other answers are, of course, possible but less relevant for the study conducted here.

7.1. Possible Answers from the Narrative Metalevel

Despite skepticism in earlier years, current scholarship on Mark has demonstrated that Mark is indeed very capable of constructing a story with finesse and skill (e.g., [Schenke 2005](#); [Watts Henderson 2006](#); [Nicklas 2012](#); [Shively 2019](#); [Alkie 2020](#); [König 2023](#)). In this light, also the development of conflict(s) in connection with ἐξουσία (*exousia*) can be seen as a deliberate tool of storytelling. Simply put: developing and increasing conflict helps build a good story. Thus, Bas van Iersel states regarding the first section of Mark's gospel (ending in his opinion with Mark 3:35): "what contributes to the development of the story far more than anything else is the fact that a complication arises" ([van Iersel 1988](#), p. 63).

Sandra Huebenthal's book *Das Markusevangelium als kollektives Gedächtnis* (recently translated into English as *Reading Mark's Gospel as a Text from Collective Memory*) adds another aspect: not only does conflict help to build tension, but it can lead to crises. Huebenthal proposes to see the countless smaller crises and their resolutions narrated in the first part of Mark's story as opportunities for readers to practice their crisis management ([Huebenthal 2014](#), esp. pp. 221–22). This helps prepare readers for the key crisis readers need to navigate in the gospel: the passion and death of Jesus ([Huebenthal 2014](#), p. 221).

However, if the smaller crises lead to and prepare for the bigger catastrophe of Jesus' death, why is it that ἐξουσία (*exousia*), as one of the key terms to characterize Jesus and his mission, is so notably absent from the Markan passion account?

7.2. Considering Markan Christology: Klaus Scholtissek's Classical Answer

Klaus Scholtissek's classical treatment of this question answers it as follows: both the passion predictions and the passion story of Mark's gospel are strongly characterized by the motif of ἐξουσία (*exousia*), even though the word itself is absent from it ([Scholtissek 1992](#), pp. 246–48). For Scholtissek, Jesus is presented as the one who is acting independently and whose means of action are not limited. He is the "souveräne und situationsüberlegene Handlungsträger" ([Scholtissek 1992](#), p. 249). Jesus knows what will happen before it does. He predicts Judas' betrayal and his disciples' flight in detail up to the fact that Peter will denounce Jesus three times ([Scholtissek 1992](#), p. 249). That Jesus holds ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is demonstrated in Scholtissek's eyes by the fact that Jesus willingly goes to and stays on the cross ([Scholtissek 1992](#), p. 252). He is portrayed as an "obedient Messiah, who lets himself be handed over into the hands of humans [...] according to God's will" ([Scholtissek 1992](#), p. 249; transl. JK).

The suffering Jesus and Jesus holding ἐξουσία (*exousia*) are not incompatible with each other. Instead, they are mutually dependent and influence each other, one enriching the other in a theologically very productive way ([Scholtissek 1992](#), p. 227).

Scholtissek argues that this productive connection of suffering and authoritative Messiah in the Gospel of Mark is the result of two things:

First, he highlights that Jesus' pro-existence is a way to connect suffering and ἐξουσία (*exousia*) in the Gospel of Mark as it shows that Jesus chooses his death freely as a soteriological act for humankind ([Scholtissek 1992](#), p. 227). Both Mark 10:45 and Mark 14:22–24 play an important role in this line of Scholtissek's argument as they both explore the notion of Jesus (resp. the Son of Man) dying for others. For Scholtissek, Mark 10:45 shows Jesus' ἐξουσία (*exousia*) not as an act of violent domination over others but as a willingness to serve others. The extreme form of this willingness to serve is to give one's own life for the good of others ([Scholtissek 1992](#), p. 235; for Mark 10:35–45, see also endnote 4). Jesus shows ἐξουσία (*exousia*) not only in his choosing this path but also in the fact that his death—as his life before—effects salvation for humans ([Scholtissek 1992](#), p. 237). Following this line of argumentation, Scholtissek sees Mark 14:22–25 as a "vollmächtige Zeichenhandlung" ([Scholtissek 1992](#), p. 239) and an act of representation: Jesus anticipates giving his life for the good of others, and anticipates celebrating the salvation thus achieved, in his breaking and sharing bread (and wine) with the twelve ([Scholtissek 1992](#), p. 239).

Secondly, Scholtissek argues that the Gospel of Mark builds the connection between suffering and ἐξουσία (*exousia*) through more specifically connecting the (suffering) Son of

Man with the ἐξουσία (*exousia*) motif (Scholtissek 1992, p. 245). Drawing on the analyses by H. E. Tödt, Scholtissek points to Mark 8:31; 9:31, and 10:34, which grammatically emphasize the active participation of the Son of Man in the process of his resurrection. He sees this as an indication that Jesus' freedom to act is not restricted through his suffering, but rather that it stands the test of suffering (Scholtissek 1992, pp. 246–47). Scholtissek further points to the fact that the passion predictions themselves point to Jesus holding ἐξουσία (*exousia*). While Mark 8:31 and 9:31 explicitly mention Jesus in an authoritative position of teaching, the other passion predictions, too, are indicative of Jesus' authority insofar as they are not only generally predictions of future events but more specifically predictions made by Jesus (Scholtissek 1992, pp. 247–48). Jesus demonstrates his knowledge of future events, and he speaks about them with παρρησία (*parrēsia*), i.e., with bold and open words, which further stress Jesus' portrayal as holding ἐξουσία (*exousia*) (Scholtissek 1992, p. 248 with reference to Rudolf Pesch; for a recent discussion of παρρησία [*parrēsia*], see Tops 2022).

Scholtissek then moves on to the Markan passion story itself to show how Jesus acting with ἐξουσία (*exousia*) can be seen there. In many instances, Jesus predicts future events (cf. e.g., the anointing at Bethany, the preparation of the Pesach meal, Judas' betrayal, the flight of the disciples, Peter's denial, the resurrection, and meeting the disciples in Galilee). As with the passion predictions, Scholtissek interprets Jesus' prescience here, too, as indicative of his ἐξουσία (*exousia*) (Scholtissek 1992, p. 249). In the trial before the Synhedrion, Scholtissek sees an exemplary display of ἐξουσία (*exousia*) when Jesus voices his Messiahship, "unveiling the true balance of powers" (Scholtissek 1992, p. 250; transl. JK). Scholtissek even interprets Jesus' silence in the face of the Synhedrion, Pilate, the soldiers, and the bystanders of the crucifixion as a "sovereign silence" (Scholtissek 1992, p. 250; transl. JK) which symbolizes Jesus' obedience. Finally, Scholtissek also thematizes the way the Gospel of Mark plays with royal titles and symbolism in its passion story from the trial before Pilate onward (Scholtissek 1992, pp. 251–53). Despite being mocked, provoked, and ironically presented with royal insignia, Jesus is portrayed as graceful in the face of brutality and incomprehension (Scholtissek 1992, p. 252). "In der vordergründigen, bis zur Karikatur gesteigerten Hilflosigkeit des Königs der Juden [...] erkennt der Gläubige [...] die hintergründige Weisheit der messianischen Sendung Jesu: Jesu Vollmacht erweist sich gerade darin, daß er in ungebrochener Treue zu seiner messianischen Sendung dem Heilswillen und der Heilsmacht Gottes Raum gibt." (Scholtissek 1992, p. 253).⁸

Scholtissek's observations and his explanation of why the term ἐξουσία (*exousia*) disappears from Mark's narrative after chapter 13 certainly have their merits. They demonstrate a high sensitivity to Markan theology overall. Scholtissek's answer also goes well with the ambivalent character of ἐξουσία (*exousia*) as the possibility/freedom to act, on the one side, and as something that is given, transferred, and thus ultimately linked back to God on the other.

However, in my opinion, Scholtissek overemphasizes the aspects of control and agency in the characterization of Jesus in the Markan passion story. It is true that readers have been prepared for Jesus' fate through the passion predictions and that this influences the way readers will see Jesus at the end of the narrative. They will surely remember the predictions and perceive him as prescient and realize that he does not resist the path in front of him. Nevertheless, I do not see Jesus' (in)actions as "vordergründige [...] Hilflosigkeit", i.e., ostensible, or superficial helplessness (Scholtissek 1992, p. 253). The Markan passion story poses a real challenge for its readers precisely because they know Jesus to be the beloved Son of God, the Messiah, and Son of Man *and* because, at the same time, the Gospel of Mark portrays Jesus as not exercising his ἐξουσία (*exousia*). He is arrested and deserted by his (not so faithful) followers (cf. Mark 14:50). Even those whom he had given ἐξουσία (*exousia*) to earlier are now frightful, and they, too, flee and deny him (cf. Mark 14:66–72). Immediately after identifying himself as the Messiah and Son of God, he is taken, choked, and beaten (cf. Mark 14:65). After Mark 14:42, Jesus does not choose where he goes anymore but instead is taken (cf. Mark 14:53; 15:1.15.16.20.22). In the end, he does not die with a noble acceptance of death as in Luke and John but with a cry for God who has left him alone and who remains silent until Jesus has died (cf. Mark 15:34.37).

7.3. Rearranging Scholtissek's Argument: Foreshadowed Death from the Very Beginning

Therefore, I suggest that there is reason to consider a different answer to the question of why the term ἐξουσία (*exousia*) disappears from Mark's gospel after Mark 13:34 which takes the challenging Markan passion story very seriously. This different answer builds upon Scholtissek's argument, but it adds to it and partly rearranges its elements: I agree with Scholtissek insofar as I also think that readers do not need the term ἐξουσία (*exousia*) to pose important Christological questions during Jesus' passion and death revolving around the question of Jesus' authority. However, while the ἐξουσία (*exousia*) motif may be present in the passion story (although its extent is debatable, and I do not see it as strongly as Scholtissek does), in my opinion, it is even clearer that the motif of Jesus' suffering and death is very much present in the ἐξουσία (*exousia*) storyline long before Mark 14–15. Therefore, ἐξουσία (*exousia*) as a term might not be absent from the Markan passion account because it is apparent anyway in Jesus' suffering and death. Instead, I propose that it is not mentioned anymore because readers see the passion and death of Jesus as a direct consequence of his exercising ἐξουσία (*exousia*).

Scholtissek apparently sees this aspect, too. In his summary of how the Gospel of Mark presents Jesus' ἐξουσία (*exousia*), he writes:

“Diese Konstellation, daß sich an Jesu Vollmachtsanspruch der gewaltsame Widerstand jüdischer Führungskreise entzündet, kennzeichnet also nicht nur die unmittelbar der Passion vorausgehenden Ereignisse in Jerusalem [. . .], sondern Jesu gesamtes öffentliches Wirken von Beginn an.” (Scholtissek 1992, p. 225)⁹

However, this observation does not seem to play a major role in Scholtissek's concluding argument later on. This is a shame because there are several quite clear indications that both Jesus' death on the cross in the sphere of power of others and his ἐξουσία (*exousia*) are connected in Mark's gospel from very early on. Taken individually, these textual observations might seem insignificant. Considered together, they form interconnected elements of a slowly emerging storyline in which Jesus' death is foreshadowed ever more clearly:

Already in Mark 1:22, the narrative puts Jesus' ἐξουσία (*exousia*) into stark contrast with the scribes' ἐξουσία (*exousia*). This means that from the very beginning, from the first time Mark's audience even hears about ἐξουσία (*exousia*), there is a negative comparison with the scribes. How significant this is becomes more apparent with the next pericope containing the key term ἐξουσία (*exousia*). In Mark 2:6–7, the scribes reappear, stabilizing the antagonistic connection between them and Jesus' ἐξουσία (*exousia*) in Mark's audience. Now they are not only used by the narrator to differentiate between them and Jesus, but they appear on the stage as a group seriously opposing Jesus in his display of ἐξουσία (*exousia*). Not only are they distinctly different in their reaction to Jesus from the huge crowd gathered around Jesus. They also voice a concrete accusation: “It is blasphemy! [. . .]” (Mark 2:7b), foreshadowing the high priest's cry during Jesus' trial in Mark 14:63a: “You have heard his blasphemy!”

The third and fourth pericopae to mention ἐξουσία (*exousia*) (Mark 3:13–19 and Mark 6:7–13) change this pattern. Neither scribes nor Pharisees appear in either pericope, although the Pharisees had—only a few verses prior to Mark 3:13–19—made the threat to Jesus' life from the side of the religious authorities explicit. In Mark 3:6, after Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the Pharisees, “went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.” As Jesus is now portrayed in a more intimate setting with his disciples in Mark 3:13–19 and 6:7–13, the outer opposition against Jesus—ever present in the scenes before—is almost completely removed. For the most part, the pericopae therefore focus on other things, such as the relationship between Jesus and the disciples and the question of transmission of ἐξουσία (*exousia*). Attentive readers nevertheless encounter two additional puzzle pieces pointing to Jesus' death: In Mark 3:13–19, the list of the twelve is concluded with Judas, “who handed him over” (Mark 3:19b). Mark 6:7–13, on the other hand, hints at the changes in people's reactions to Jesus. While those reactions had been more than positive at the start of the narrative, disapproval

and rejection grow as the story progresses. In the sequence of ἐξουσία (*exousia*) passages, this becomes apparent through Jesus warning the twelve that not everyone will happily accept them as his emissaries, despite their healing and exorcising (cf. Mark 6:11).

Only two pericopae remain which contain the key term ἐξουσία (*exousia*). Both intensify allusions to Jesus' death and, at the same time, take up the two main settings of ἐξουσία (*exousia*)-pericopae in the previous narrative: public and intimate.

Mark 11:27–33 can almost be called a showdown. Jesus faces the exact constellation of antagonists he will face at his arrest and at his trial before the high priest: high priests, scribes, and elders (cf. Mark 11:27; Mark 14:43; Mark 14:53¹⁰). Readers are moreover involved more visibly than before in the ἐξουσία (*exousia*) storyline—a trend which will continue to Mark 13:32–37. In Mark 11:27–33, this involvement works through the open question at the center of the pericope: “[...] By what authority (ἐξουσία *exousia*) are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority (ἐξουσία *exousia*) to do them?” (Mark 11:28) Precisely this question is at the heart of the conflict that brings Jesus to the cross in Mark's narrative. The wheels are already in motion.

Mark 13:32–37 finally connects both the question of how Jesus' ἐξουσία (*exousia*) relates to his disciples and allusions to Jesus' impending death. More clearly than in Mark 3:13–19 and Mark 6:7–13, the violent escalation of conflict is palpable in Mark 13:32–37 in the suggestion that the absence of the lord of the house in the parable points to the absence of Jesus after his death. As Sharyn Dowd and Elizabeth Struthers Malbon have pointed out, an additional close connection between Mark 13:32–37 and the Markan passion story form the four points in time suggested as possible times of return of the lord of the house: late in the evening, the middle of the night, when the rooster crows, and very early in the morning. They all will appear in the passion story between the Denial of Peter and the women returning to Jesus' grave (Dowd and Malbon 2006, p. 291).

If one considers all these foreshadowings of decisive moments, important characters, and key events of the Markan passion story, it becomes clear why ἐξουσία (*exousia*) does not appear after chapter 13 in Mark's narrative. Readers who follow Mark's story closely, who track its lines of conflict and follow the motif of ἐξουσία (*exousia*), do not need the verbal reference to the term ἐξουσία (*exousia*) in the passion story.

They see the passion and death of Jesus as a direct consequence of his exercising ἐξουσία (*exousia*). It is a consequence that has been casting its shadows ahead since the very beginning of Mark's narrative.

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Notes

- ¹ The paper draws in this regard upon the wealth of narratological studies conducted by literary theorists and biblical scholars alike in the last decades. Especially important for my approach are the works of Ute Eva Eisen (Eisen 2006), Sönke Finnern (Finnern 2010), Albrecht Koschorke (Koschorke 2012), and Bärbel Bosenius (Bosenius 2014).
- ² The fact that the term ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is tracked in the scope of this paper and that the following analyzes will concentrate on those pericopae in which the term appears, do not mean, of course, that Jesus' authority is shown in Mark only where ἐξουσία (*exousia*) is mentioned explicitly. However, the word ἐξουσία (*exousia*) does function as a marker, bringing the theme of Jesus' authority to the forefront of readers attention where it appears. Therefore, it is suitable for a first analysis of the ἐξουσία (*exousia*)-motif which fits the scope of an article such as this.
- ³ All textual searches were conducted with the help of Accordance (© OakTree Software, Inc.) version 14.0.5 on the basis of Rahlfs LXX and the 28th edition of the *Novum Testamentum Graece*.
- ⁴ In this pericope Jesus and his disciples are on his way to Jerusalem. Jesus gathers the twelve to him once more to prepare them for his impending fate in the city. However, instead of reacting to these predictions with compassion, fear, or shock, James and John seem to focus on the last part of Jesus prediction, stating he will rise (cf. Mark 10:34), and want to discuss their share of power (cf. Mark 10: 35–37). Jesus doubts their ability to follow in his footsteps and widens the circle of listeners as he tells his disciples about different modes of having authorities over others. He contrasts the group of his listeners (“you[r]” is used three times in Mark 10:43 and thus emphasized) with the “nations” (ἔθνη *ethnē*). While “among the nations those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them (κατακυριεύω *katakuriēuō*), and their great ones exercise authority over them (κατεξουσιάζω

katexousiazō)” (Mark 10:42b NRSVue modified), Jesus’ listeners are supposed to look differently at authority. Instead of lording their power over others, those who lead the group of Jesus’ listeners are supposed to be servants, even slaves to the rest of the group (cf. Mark 10:43–44).

- 5 All English quotes of biblical texts follow the *New Revised Standard Version* (updated edition) with changes by the author indicated where applicable in the following way: NRSVue (modified).
- 6 Mark 3:1–6 is not completely clear about who Jesus’ adversaries are in this pericope. Mark 3:1 is clearly marked as the beginning of a new scene through the change in location. Jesus enters the synagogue of Capernaum again after walking through the grain fields. But the first verses of the pericope remain vague with regard to the characters of the scene. There are people present in the synagogue who are ill-disposed towards Jesus (cf. Mark 3:2) but the text does not state who they are, just that they are watching him (παρετήρουν *paretēroun*). Later in Mark 3:6 the Pharisees are mentioned explicitly.
- 7 The discussion of parallel texts of Jewish origins which speak of someone other than God forgiving sins is complex and sometimes conducted rather heatedly. Joel Marcus, who lists important contributions to the discussion, points out that Dan 7 and 1 Enoch (which are frequently used in the gospel of Mark as hypotexts) both depict the Son of Man figure as a judging sinners but not as forgiving sins (Marcus 2005, p. 223). The only serious contender for a text from a Jewish context and of similar concept as Mark 2:5 with regard to a forgiveness of sins through someone other than God is the *Prayer of Nabonidus* (4QPrNab ar on scroll 4Q242). The translation of the first part of Nabonidus’ prayer (1–4a) by Tigchelaar and García Martínez reads as follows (text in square brackets indicates reconstructed text; square brackets in original): “Words of the pr[ay]er which Nabonidus, king of [the] la[nd] of Baby[lon], the [great] king, prayed [when he was afflicted] by a malignant inflammation, by decree of the G[od Most Hi]gh, in Teiman. [I, Nabonidus,] was afflicted [by a malignant inflammation] for seven years, an was banished far [from men, until I prayed to the God Most High] and an exorcist forgave my sin. He was a Je[w] fr[om the exiles]” (García Martínez and Tigchelaar 2000, p. 487).
- 8 “The faithful one recognizes the profound truth of Jesus’ Messianic sending in the ostensible helplessness of the king of the Jews, which is increased to the point of being a caricature. Jesus’ authority shows itself in the fact that he makes room for God’s power and willingness of salvation while being true to his Messianic sending.” (transl. JK)
- 9 „The constellation that Jesus’ claim of authority leads to a violent opposition of Jewish leaders is not only characteristic of the events in Jerusalem immediately preceding Jesus’ passion. This constellation also characterizes the whole of Jesus’ public acts from the very beginning on.” (transl. JK).
- 10 In Mark 14:53 the order of appearance is reversed: while Mark 11:27 and Mark 14:43 speak of οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι (*archiereis kai hoi grammateis kai hoi presbyteroi*) resp. παρὰ τῶν ἀρχιερέων καὶ τῶν γραμματέων καὶ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων (*para tōn archiereōn kai tōn grammateōn kai tōn presbyterōn*), Mark 14:53 puts the scribes at the end of the list (οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς—*hoi archiereis kai hoi presbyteroi kai hoi grammateis*).

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