

# Jesus the Deliverer: Christ's Power and the Power of the Gospel

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With very few exceptions,<sup>1</sup> New Testament scholars acknowledge that Jesus was a remarkable deliverance practitioner (or to use their terminology, an “exorcist”),<sup>2</sup> one who regularly set people free from demonic influence or oppression.<sup>3</sup> As James Dunn notes, “Jesus’ reputation as a highly successful exorcist must surely be regarded as part of the base-rock historical data concerning Jesus.”<sup>4</sup> However, while a majority of scholars agree that deliverance played a significant role in the ministry of Jesus, most have not considered *how* significant this aspect of Jesus’ ministry really was, nor have they examined carefully enough the frequency with which Jesus performed deliverance according to the evidence found in the

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<sup>1</sup> One notable exception is Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 137.

<sup>2</sup> I have chosen to use the term “deliverance” rather than “exorcism” in order to avoid certain connotations that are associated with the latter term. In my view “exorcism” simply brings with it too much baggage and so hinders one’s understanding of deliverance from demonic influence as it is presented in the gospels. In general, however, it is fair to say that the term “deliverance” has been preferred by many practitioners, particularly in the Protestant tradition, while “exorcism” has been favored among biblical scholars. Roman Catholics usually make a distinction between “solemn exorcism” and “private (or simple) exorcism”, which is also called “deliverance”. See Robert T. Sears, “A Roman Catholic View of Exorcism and Deliverance,” in *Essays on Spiritual Bondage and Deliverance*, ed. Willard M. Swartley (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1988), 100-114.

<sup>3</sup> The second terminological issue relates to the Greek terms and phrases most commonly rendered “demon-possessed”. For a cogent argument against this translation, see Clinton E. Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 73-141 (esp. 78-81).

<sup>4</sup> James D. G. Dunn, “Matthew 12:28/Luke 11:20—A Word of Jesus?” in *Eschatology and the New Testament*, ed. W. Hulitt Gloer (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 31-32. See also E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 149: “The sheer volume of evidence makes it extremely likely that Jesus actually had a reputation as an exorcist.”; cf. Paul W. Hollenbach, “Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities: A Socio-Historical Study,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 49 (1981), 568: “When one begins by taking the evidence in the Gospels at face value, it is to be noted in the first place that, quantitatively, exorcisms played a large role in Jesus’ career”, and John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 646. Even Jesus Seminar members such as Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan are convinced that Jesus was an “exorcist”, though their interpretations of this aspect of Jesus’ ministry typically varies from more traditional perspectives; see also Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus: A New Vision* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 61: “...on historical grounds it is virtually indisputable that Jesus was a healer and exorcist”, and John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (New York: Harper, 1992), 332.

Synoptic Gospels.<sup>5</sup> For the most part this deficiency has stemmed from their approach to the data, which has focused more on the individual deliverance accounts than on the summary statements and other important data regarding Jesus' ministry found in the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>6</sup> In this chapter I will argue that an analysis of the summary statements and their place in the Synoptic narratives points strongly to the conclusion that Jesus engaged in the ministry of deliverance far more frequently than most modern treatments allow, and that this higher frequency brings up a number of significant questions regarding the nature of demonization and the ministry of deliverance as they are represented in the Synoptic Gospels.

### The Critical Importance of the Synoptic Summaries

The Synoptic Gospels contain five types of data that relate to Jesus' practice of deliverance:

- a) The four major deliverance accounts;
- b) The shorter references to individual deliverances;
- c) The summaries of Jesus' ministry;

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<sup>5</sup> While there are certainly differences of emphasis in the Synoptic Gospels regarding demonization and deliverance, the overall picture that emerges from a careful study of the three narratives is similar. For this reason the three narratives provide a clear and consistent understanding of the place of deliverance in Jesus' ministry, though one must also allow for slightly different emphases in their presentations of Jesus' ministry.

<sup>6</sup> These methodological issues are evident in two important studies of deliverance in the New Testament. First, a bias toward the deliverance accounts as opposed to the summaries can be observed in Sydney H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), who devotes a mere 3 pages (pp. 166-168) to a discussion of the summaries in the Synoptic gospels in his 44-page discussion of "Jesus' Mastery of the Demons" (pp. 137-181). Second, Graham H. Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), in his discussion of the evidence found in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts (pp. 79-173), utilizes a rigorously redaction critical approach—attempting to discern each Evangelist's distinct message to his particular Christian community based on the redactional activity detected in his particular gospel—with the result that he fails to give sufficient consideration to the gospel writers' representations of the historical development of Jesus' ministry, and the common picture that emerges from the data. It is interesting to note that Twelftree devotes only 2 out of 228 pages to a discussion of "The Brief Summary Reports" in an earlier treatment of this topic; see Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 128-129.

- d) Jesus' own comments that relate to his practice of deliverance;
- e) The references to others' comments and actions that relate to Jesus' ministry of deliverance.<sup>7</sup>

All of this data contributes in one way or another to the formation of an accurate portrait of Jesus' ministry. However, certain types of data are more revealing than others for understanding particular features of Jesus' ministry, including deliverance. For example, the four major deliverance accounts and the shorter references to individual deliverances tell us very little about the overall frequency of this aspect of Jesus' ministry. In addition, the references to others' comments and actions that relate to Jesus' ministry of deliverance, whether in the Synoptic Gospels or in non-canonical sources, only confirm Jesus' reputation as an exorcist.<sup>8</sup>

The case is very different, however, when we turn to the summaries of Jesus' ministry,<sup>9</sup> particularly when they are interpreted in light of the account of Jesus' typical day in Capernaum (Mk 1//Lk 4) and his response to the Pharisees' warning in Lk 13. In fact, this data demonstrates a frequency of involvement in the ministry of deliverance that is much higher than one might gather based on other evidence.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> In addition, various comments regarding Jesus' ministry found in non-canonical writings are relevant to this topic.

<sup>8</sup> This data points to a somewhat higher frequency than was suggested by the major deliverance accounts and the shorter reports of the deliverance of individuals; beyond that, however, it tells us little regarding how frequently Jesus performed the ministry of deliverance.

<sup>9</sup> Robert H. Stein, *Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 171, observes correctly, "The importance Mark attaches to the exorcising of demons is seen in the summaries and seams where this is emphasized...". This observation is true as well for Matthew and Luke.

<sup>10</sup> See Charles W. Hedrick, "The Role of 'Summary Statements' in the Composition of the Gospel of Mark: A Dialog with Karl Schmidt and Norman Perrin," *Novum Testamentum* 26 (1984), 289-311, for a detailed analysis of the function of "summary statements" in the gospels. He writes correctly that 1) "the summary statements describe the activities of Jesus on a broader and more general scale", 2) "the summary statements show a preference for the Greek imperfect tense, a verbal form expressing continuous, repeated or customary action in the past", and 3) that "one finds in the summary statements the use of certain turns of expression that invite the assumption that Jesus's ministry was far more extensive than the narrating of the individual episodes by themselves would imply" (pp. 292-293). Cf. Graham H Twelftree, "ΕΙ ΔΕ . . . ΕΓΩ ΕΚΒΑΛΛΩ ΤΑ ΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΑ. . .," in *Gospel*

Still, in order to interpret the summaries accurately, it is important to recognize that most of them are not comprehensive in nature, and thus do not mention all aspects of Jesus' ministry. In fact, the only summary that is comprehensive in nature is Mt 4:23-24:

Jesus went throughout Galilee, *teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness* among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, *the demon-possessed*, those having seizures.

If we gather together the information from each of the summaries, it is clear that Jesus was regularly engaged in the following ministries: 1) preaching , 2) teaching, 3) healing the sick, and 4) casting out demons. However, any particular summary may mention only one, two or three of these elements, giving a partial listing in order to represent the whole of Jesus' ministry.<sup>11</sup> The data is summarized below (highlighting data directly related to the ministry of deliverance):

Summaries describing Jesus' ministry on specific occasions	Summaries describing Jesus' ministry generally or throughout his time in a particular region
<i>All four aspects of Jesus' ministry</i> No data	<b><i>All four aspects of Jesus' ministry</i></b> Mt 4:23-24
<i>Teaching, preaching and healing</i>	Teaching, preaching and healing

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*Perspectives: The Miracles of Jesus* (vol. 6), ed. David Wenham and Craig Blomberg (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 365, "These brief reports are particularly important not simply in indicating that Jesus was an exorcist but that exorcism was a key feature of his ministry." It is neglecting to consider carefully the implications of these summaries that leads John Christopher Thomas, *The Devil, Disease and Deliverance* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 130, to make the following statement: "... in truth, illnesses attributed to demonic origins are rare in Mark and Matthew, occurring much more frequently in Luke-Acts" (though see p. 164 on Mt 4:23-25). In fact, the summaries in the first two gospels point to a very different conclusion.

<sup>11</sup> This was noted correctly by Ezra P. Gould, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Mark* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1896), 29-30, who wrote on the mention of deliverance in Mk 1:39: "Here it is mentioned by itself without the rest [of Jesus' miracles] in such a way as to represent them."

No data	Mt 9:35
<b>Teaching, healing and deliverance</b> Lk 6:17-19	Teaching, healing and deliverance No data
<i>Preaching, healing and deliverance</i> No data	<b>Preaching, healing and deliverance</b> Mt 10:1,7 (referring to the Twelve); Mk 6:12-13 (referring to the Twelve) Lk 9:1-2, 6: (referring to the Twelve) Lk 10:1, 9, 17: (referring to the Seventy)
<i>Teaching and preaching</i> Lk 20:1	Teaching and preaching Mt 11:1
<i>Teaching and healing</i> Lk 5:17	Teaching and healing <sup>12</sup> Lk 5:15
<i>Teaching and deliverance</i> No data	<b>Teaching and deliverance</b> Mk 1:27-28
<i>Preaching and healing</i> Lk 9:11b	Preaching and healing No data
<i>Preaching and deliverance</i> No data	<b>Preaching and deliverance</b> Mk 1:39; 3:14-15 (referring to the Twelve)
<b>Healing and deliverance</b> Mt 8:16-17; Mk 1:32-34; 3:10-12; Lk 4:40-41; 7:21-22	Healing and deliverance No data
<i>Teaching only</i> Mt 13:54 <sup>13</sup> ; Mk 2:13; 4:1-2, 33-34; 6:2, 32-34; Lk 4:31; 5:1; 13:10	Teaching only Mk 6:6b; Mk 10:1; Lk 4:15; 13:22
<i>Preaching only</i> Mk 2:1-2	Preaching only Mt 4:17; Mk 1:14-15; Lk 4:42-44; 8:1
<i>Healing only</i> Mt 14:14, 34-36; 15:29-31; 19:1-2; Mk 6:5; 12:15-16	Healing only Mk 6:53-56

While the evidence provided by the summary statements is significant on its own,<sup>14</sup>

it is the correlation of this data with other features of the gospel narratives—

<sup>12</sup> In Lk 5:15, 17 one can certainly say that the summaries include the ministry of healing, but this does not exclude the possibility that Luke meant to include the ministry of deliverance as well. As I point out below (p. 55), Luke frequently uses “healing” terminology to refer to both miracles of healing and healing through deliverance. This point also applies to summaries that mention “preaching and healing” and “healing only”.

<sup>13</sup> The ministries of healing and deliverance are not mentioned explicitly in Mt 13:54, but are probably implied in the reference to “miraculous signs”.

especially the account of Jesus' typical day of ministry in Capernaum (Mk 1/Lk 4) and Jesus' statement to the Pharisees in Lk 13:31-33—that strengthens the case for the high frequency of deliverance in Jesus' ministry. For this reason, the following discussion will focus on: 1) Jesus' typical day of ministry in Capernaum (Mk 1/Lk 4), 2) the expansion of Jesus' ministry based on the summary statements as interpreted in the overall context of the Synoptic narratives, and 3) the continuity of Jesus' ministry as demonstrated in his reply to the Pharisees' warning in Lk 13:31-33. Due to constraints on the length of this paper, I will focus primarily on Mark's presentation of Jesus' ministry in sections one and two, and introduce data from Luke's gospel as needed only in the third part of the paper.

### A Day of Ministry in Capernaum

The various aspects of Jesus' work mentioned above are highlighted in Mark's first account of his public ministry in Capernaum (Mk 1:21-34), which presents to the reader what one writer has referred to as “a typical day in the ministry of Jesus”.<sup>15</sup> R. T. France's comments are appropriate at this point:

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<sup>14</sup> The observation of Thomas, 164, regarding the summary of Mt 4:23-25 also applies to the summaries in Mark and Luke: “This first of many summaries puts the reader on notice that such events are typical for Jesus.”

<sup>15</sup> Page, *Powers of Evil*, 139; cf. W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew* (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 43; William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 70, who writes, “Ch. 1:21-34 appear to be intended by Mark to represent the activity of a single day, or of two days if judged by the Jewish perspective that a new day begins with sunset”; B.D. Chilton, “Exorcism and History: Mark 1:21-28,” in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 6, 255; Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 57, “this narrative, embracing as it does so many of Mark's themes and being placed first in the public ministry of Jesus, is paradigmatic and programmatic for his story of Jesus”; John P. Meier, 648, who calls this passage “a paradigmatic scene: the first full day of Jesus' ministry in Capernaum”, and Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 97: “...the Evangelist presents a portrait of a day in the life of Jesus...”. M. Eugene Boring, *Mark: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 61, is of the opinion that “Mark seems to have created this model day as an example of Jesus' work as such”; similarly Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 149. Cf. Edwin K. Broadhead, *Teaching with Authority* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992),

This 'day in Capernaum' combines within it all the main features of Jesus' Galilean ministry, teaching (vv. 21-22, 27), exorcism (vv. 23-26, 32, 34, 39), healing (vv. 30-31, 32-34), and proclamation (vv. 38-39). It thus forms a graphic overview of the general character of that ministry, as is also indicated by the presence within it of more general statements relating to the wider scene..."<sup>16</sup>

That Mark is presenting deliverance as one of the four major features of Jesus' Galilean ministry is evident from the fact that Mk 1:21-39 opens with a reference to a single deliverance at the synagogue in Capernaum (1:23), which leads to an evening of ministry in which Jesus "healed many who had various diseases" and "drove out many demons" (Mk 1:34).<sup>17</sup> No doubt the sick and demonized were brought to Jesus in significant numbers.<sup>18</sup> The next day, after a time of prayer, Jesus leaves Capernaum and makes a circuit "throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons" (1:39).<sup>19</sup> One ministry of deliverance leads to

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56, who refers to Mk 1:21-39 as "A Paradigmatic Sabbath at Capernaum"; *contra* Robert H. Gundry, *Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 78, who suggests that "'typical' or 'ideal' may read too much into the format."

<sup>16</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 99. Cf. Paul J. Achtemeier, "He Taught Them Many Things": Reflections on Marcan Christology," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 42 (1980), 465-481, argues that this first "miracle-story" in Mark must be given "considerable weight", and that Mark framed the miracle story by introducing vv. 21-22 and v. 27, showing that "the power inherent in Jesus' teaching is precisely the power that enabled him to overcome demonic forces".

<sup>17</sup> Stein, *Mark*, 95, observes: "In effect, Mark is telling his readers that the exorcism and healing just mentioned (1:21-31) are but two examples of the many people Jesus healed. This probably assumes a greater knowledge of Jesus' healing activity by Mark's readers than simply the public exorcism miracle of 1:21-28 and the private healing miracle of 1:29-31. As a Markan summary, it reflects upon all the ministry of Jesus, with the two just mentioned serving as examples of this." Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark*, second edition (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966), 180, argues that 1:32-34 is not a summary since it is tied to a particular occasion. While this observation is true in a formal sense, it misses the paradigmatic function, not only of 1:32-24, but also of the entire day of ministry in Capernaum (1:21-34).

<sup>18</sup> As France, *Mark*, 25, points out, "...Jesus quickly becomes the talk of the town, and beyond...", which led to many additional requests for healing and deliverance; cf. Myers, 144: "From the very beginning Jesus the healer experiences the incessant press of needy masses...". According to Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 71, the use of the imperfect ἔφερον in v. 32 "implies a constant stream of sufferers". See also the discussion on the use of ἔφερον in Taylor, 180.

<sup>19</sup> Witherington, *Mark*, 102, notes correctly that preaching and deliverance "...were the two main thrusts of his attack on the powers of darkness". One should not suppose, however, that the focus on

“many” in the town of Capernaum,<sup>20</sup> which then results in Jesus’ “driving out demons” throughout the region of Galilee.<sup>21</sup>

Mark introduces Jesus’ public ministry by recounting his ministry of teaching, proclamation, healing and deliverance in the town of Capernaum. This account provides insight into the main features of Jesus’ ministry by recounting his activities on a “typical day”. In addition, it suggests that Mark regarded healing and deliverance as major facets of Jesus’ ministry, with “many” people receiving both healing for various diseases and deliverance from the influence of evil spirits. Highlighting these ministries in the opening account of Jesus’ ministry leads the readers of Mark to anticipate their importance in the following chapters, and in this they are not disappointed.

#### Jesus’ Growing Reputation—and the Expansion of his Ministry

So far in this study I have argued that Mark’s account of Jesus’ ministry in Capernaum signals to the reader that teaching, preaching, healing and deliverance play a major role in his narrative of Jesus’ life and ministry. In this section, however,

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these two aspects of Jesus’ ministry was intended to suggest that Jesus was not also teaching in the synagogues and healing those who had illnesses that were not the result of direct demonic influence.

<sup>20</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, 88, comments, “...the forward position of the direct object δαίμονια πολλὰ, ‘many demons,’ in v 34b emphasizes the large number of the ‘all’”. Boring, 67, observes correctly, “The semitizing use of ‘many’ (πολλὰ) is here not exclusive (many-not-all) but inclusive (many-not-few), as in 10:45—all were brought, he healed them, and there were many of them.” The occurrence of “many” (πολλὰ) is not surprising since “the whole town” (ὅλη ἡ πόλις) turned out that evening, bringing to Jesus “all the sick and demon-possessed” (πάντας τοὺς κακῶς ἔχοντας καὶ τοὺς δαιμονιζομένους).

<sup>21</sup> James A. Brooks, *Mark* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991), 52, notes, “This Markan summary indicates that there were many other healings and exorcisms that are not described in detail.” Similarly, see James A. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 103. Mk 1:28 gives the impression that news of Jesus’ authority had already spread through “the whole region of Galilee”, in which case one would expect a large turnout at his arrival in a particular village. On the scope of the words “the whole region of Galilee” (ὅλην τὴν περίχωρον τῆς Γαλιλαίας), see C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel according to St Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 81.

I will take the argument a step further. Not only do these activities continue to be the focus of Jesus' ministry, but as we read through Mark's narrative it also becomes clear that he ministered in these ways to ever-increasing numbers of people. Many of these folks traveled great distances to hear his preaching and teaching, to receive his healing touch, and to be set free from bondage to evil spirits.

All three of the Synoptic Gospels present Jesus' ministry as growing and expanding over time, though Matthew achieves this effect in a different way than Mark and Luke. In Mark's account, the rapid expansion of Jesus' ministry is presented in a straightforward manner. As mentioned above, after a day of ministry at Capernaum, Jesus set out to preach in "the nearby villages" (Mk 1:38), though Mark summarizes what actually happened as follows: "So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons" (1:39).<sup>22</sup> Clearly Jesus' ministry of the word was linked to his demonstration of the power of God in setting free many Galileans from bondage to Satan's power.

The expansion of Jesus' ministry from the town of Capernaum to much of Galilee is fleshed out in Mk 1:40-3:6 through the insertion of various accounts—including some healings (1:40-45; 2:1-12; 3:1-6)—into a context that emphasizes Jesus' response to the growing opposition of the Jewish leaders (2:6-11, 16-17, 23-

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<sup>22</sup> See Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 205, "...Jesus fulfills and even surpasses the plan he has enunciated in 1:38 by extending his ministry not only to the surrounding towns but to 'the whole region of Galilee' (1:39). Thus there is an escalation beyond the previous passages: not merely a whole Galilean city (cf. 1:33) but the whole region now experiences Jesus' power in word and deed, and Galileans who had previously heard about him secondhand (cf. 1:28) now experience the miracle of his personal presence."

28; 3:3:1-6).<sup>23</sup> At the same time, Mark emphasizes repeatedly the enthusiasm of the crowds and Jesus' increased popularity with the people. So many people are coming to Jesus that he could no longer enter a town openly (1:45),<sup>24</sup> and when Jesus returned to Capernaum, the house was so full that "there was no room left, not even outside the door" (2:2). In the end, the paralyzed man that was brought for healing had to be lowered to Jesus through a hole in the roof.

This fleshing out of Jesus' ministry "throughout Galilee" is followed by an additional summary in 3:7-12:

Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. When they heard all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." But he gave them strict orders not to tell who he was.

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<sup>23</sup> This is particularly evident in the contrast between the negative reaction of the Pharisees and Herodians in 3:6 and the summary statement in 3:7-12, in which people are said to have flocked to Jesus from every Jewish territory; see Hooker, 110.

<sup>24</sup> See Gundry, Mark, 98, "The imperfect tense of ἤρχοντο, 'kept coming,' heightens the effect of the statement that even though Jesus stays outside the cities, people are still coming to him (cf. 2:13)." The growth of the crowds is linked to the testimony of the man who was cleansed of leprosy (1:41-42). As noted by Michael P. Knowles, "Mark, Matthew and Mission: Faith, Failure, and the Fidelity of Jesus," in *Christian Mission*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Cynthia Long Westfall (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010), 69, this is one of three specific examples in Mark in which a healing or deliverance leads to the spreading of the news about Jesus, his message and his ministry (besides 1:45, see 5:20 and 7:36). Grant R. Osborne, "Structure and Christology in Mark 1:21-45," in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ*, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 163, writes, "As a result of his 'authority in word and deed,' Jesus' fame grows geometrically. The people's amazement (vv 22, 27) leads to his popularity spreading throughout Galilee (v 28). First the whole city of Capernaum gathers (v 33), then 'everyone is searching' for him (v 37) and he begins preaching in synagogues throughout Galilee (v 39). Finally, he becomes so famous that he can no longer even enter cities but has to go to 'the country' to receive those who flock 'from every quarter' (v 45)"; cf. Stein, *Mark*, 104, "The present account serves as a climax to what has preceded in 1:21-39, and Jesus' fame reaches a crescendo, so that he can no longer publicly enter the cities of Galilee. What had happened in Capernaum (1:33, 37) is now true for all of Galilee (1:45)."

Once again the summary mentions explicitly Jesus' ministry of healing "many", and while deliverance is not mentioned explicitly, it is certainly implied since Jesus gave the demons "strict orders not to tell who he was" (Mk 3:12). In the deliverance accounts when Jesus silences a demon, he also casts it out, so it is clear that the Markan summary statement is pointing to Jesus' continued involvement in the ministry of deliverance.<sup>25</sup> However, while this evidence is significant, the most important contribution of this particular summary is found in its emphasis on the increasing scope of Jesus' ministry. Not only was he engaged in an itinerant ministry that exposed him to the needs of an ever-changing crowd of people, but as his reputation spread people also began coming to him from virtually all of Israel and the surrounding regions.<sup>26</sup> In fact, people were traveling considerable distances to hear him and to seek healing and deliverance.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> France, *Mark*, 155. Obviously, demonized people were present among the crowd, and it is reasonable to assume that they were brought to Jesus in hope that they would be delivered of the spirits that were tormenting them.

<sup>26</sup> See Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*, second edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 157, "... this report of people flocking to Jesus from many regions indicates that his reputation is spreading by word of mouth. The gossip network is effective." Most Western interpreters find it difficult to appreciate how effective these oral networks of communication were (and are today) in collectivistic cultures. In the case of Jesus' ministry of healing and deliverance, this cultural dimension was enhanced by the lack of availability of effective medical care, particularly in the rural areas of the Mediterranean and, in the towns, among those who were disadvantaged economically.

<sup>27</sup> See Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26* (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 146, who states that the crowds were coming to Jesus from most of Palestine; cf. Stein, *Mark*, 162. Hooker, 110, notes a parallel between John the Baptist and Jesus in respect to the response of the people: "Just as all Judea and all Jerusalem responded to John the Baptist in 1.5, so now an even larger crowd representing every Jewish territory flocks to Jesus." Boring, 98, points out the significance of this gathering in Mark's narrative: "Since the Mediterranean borders Galilee on the west, no crowds could be pictured as coming from that direction. Otherwise, the four points of the compass are represented, and this is clearly Mark's intent: a very large crowd, from diverse and distant locations, gathers around Jesus in Galilee." Edwards, *Mark*, 103, notes as well the social and cultural impact of Jesus' ministry: "A large crowd' gathers from extensive geographical regions, not only from Galilee but from Judea (including Jerusalem), from Idumea 120 miles due south, from points east of the Jordan, and from Tyre and Sidon fifty miles to the north. Equally remarkable is the ethnic diversity of the crowd. Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem were principally Jewish territories; Idumea and Transjordan were mixed Jewish-

After the summary in 3:7-12, Mark continues to document the growing number of people who were coming to Jesus to hear his teaching and to receive healing and deliverance.<sup>28</sup> The crowd that gathered is mentioned again in Mk 3:20,<sup>29</sup> and by 4:1 it is so large that Jesus is forced to teach from a boat.<sup>30</sup> After leaving the crowd and crossing the lake (4:35-36), Jesus again encounters a “large crowd” when he returns to the west side of the lake, perhaps to Capernaum (5:21). At that point Jairus pleads with Jesus to help his daughter (5:22-23), and Jesus responds by going with him. On the way Mark writes that “a large crowd followed and pressed around him” (5:24b), at which point a woman who was subject to bleeding touches Jesus’ cloak and is instantly healed (5:25-29). When Jesus realizes that power had gone out from him he asked, “Who touched my clothes?” (5:30), which is clearly a ridiculous question to the disciples “because the whole crowd has

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Gentile regions (see Luke 6:17; Matt 11:21-22). The fame of Jesus is far reaching and all encompassing, which is all the more remarkable given the social cleavages of the day.”

<sup>28</sup> See Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2007), 213: “The whole scene in 3:7-12 is analogous to that in 1:32-34, but intensified. In chap. 1, the scene is calmer, and the audience infers that only the sick of Capernaum are brought to Jesus.”

<sup>29</sup> The fact that the number of people seeking ministry was such that Jesus and his disciples “were not even able to eat” suggests that the number of requests for ministry was increasing; see France, *Mark*, 165, who observes that the crowd is “so persistently intrusive as to interfere with the group’s meal (cf. 6:31)”. At the same time the juxtaposition of the statement in 3:20 with the accusation of 3:22 (that Jesus was casting out demons by the power of Beelzebul) also points to the conclusion that a significant portion of Jesus’ busyness was due to his continued ministry of deliverance (cf. also the use of the present tense ἐκβάλλει in 3:22, which is consistent with an ongoing pattern of ministry).

<sup>30</sup> Witherington, *Mark*, 143, explains, “In fact, 4:1, 34-35 suggest that Jesus used this technique not merely to get away from the press of the crowd but so that he could concentrate on preaching and teaching...” No doubt it required determined effort for Jesus to carve out sufficient time for his vital ministry of preaching and teaching even as he was confronted by countless people who were in need of healing and deliverance.

been brushing, touching, pressing against him all along”.<sup>31</sup> Evidently the press of needy humanity was obvious to everyone who was present.

He then goes to Nazareth (6:1-6a)<sup>32</sup> before traveling around from village to village (6:6b), while at the same time sending out the Twelve and giving them “authority over impure spirits” (6:7). As they went out their preaching (6:12) was accompanied by deliverance and healing: “They drove out [ἐξέβαλλον] many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them [έθεράπευον]” (6:13). The summary of the disciples’ ministry in 6:12-13 thus “echoes the summary of Jesus’ activities in 1:34 and 3:10f.”,<sup>33</sup> which suggests that the disciples’ words and miraculous deeds served as an “extension of Jesus’ ministry”.<sup>34</sup>

Given the fact that the disciples’ amazing success in ministry paralleled that of Jesus himself—they drove out “many demons” and “anointed many sick people and healed them”—it is not surprising that, after their return, the growth of the crowds reached a climax in 6:31-34:<sup>35</sup>

Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got

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<sup>31</sup> Stein, *Mark*, 270; cf. Lane, 193. The use of the imperfect συνέθλιβον in v. 24 and the present participle συνθλιβοντά in v. 31 is consistent with Stein’s description, which suggests that people were pressing around Jesus all during the journey.

<sup>32</sup> Of course, in Nazareth Jesus was limited in terms of healing and deliverance due to their lack of faith and the fact that they did not honor him.

<sup>33</sup> Hooker, 157, who regards these similarities with Jesus’ ministry as indicating that Mark “seems to regard them as sharing his ministry”.

<sup>34</sup> Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 122. See also the excellent discussion of this issue in Geoffrey David Miller, “An Intercalation Revisited: Christology, Discipleship, and Dramatic Irony in Mark 6.6b-30,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 35 (2012), 186-189.

<sup>35</sup> See Miller, 187: “Not only is the nature of their work extraordinary, but the magnitude of their healing power approximates that of Jesus’.”

there ahead of them.<sup>36</sup> When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.<sup>37</sup>

It is only in 6:44 that we learn the true size of the “large crowd” (πολὸν ὄχλον) referred to in 6:34. As Mark explains, “The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.”<sup>38</sup>

The subsequent account describes Jesus’ travel to Gennesaret, where Mark provides us with another valuable summary in 6:53-56:

When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus. They ran throughout the whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.

While the first part of the summary (6:53-54) describes the “immense excitement” that Jesus’ arrival in Gennesaret created on this one occasion,<sup>39</sup> the second part

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<sup>36</sup> The term “ran” in v. 33 demonstrates the eagerness (or in some cases, desperation) of “many” to learn from Jesus and to benefit from his ministry of healing and deliverance.

<sup>37</sup> In the parallel passage in Mt 14:14 Jesus “healed their sick”, while in Luke’s account (Lk 9:11) he “spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing”.

<sup>38</sup> Matthew’s addition of the words “besides women and children” (χωρὶς γυναικῶν καὶ παιδίων) in both the account of the feeding of the 5000 (14:21) and the feeding of the 4000 (15:38) points to the conclusion that the crowds were huge, probably in excess of 10,000 and 8,000 people respectively; see Wilkins, *Matthew*, who suggests possible figures of “ten thousand or more” for 14:21 (p. 515) and “close to ten thousand” for 15:38 (p. 541), Keener, *Matthew*, 404, who mentions “perhaps ten thousand people” as the total suggested in 14:21, and Carson, who suggests a total of “fifteen or twenty thousand” for 14:21 (p. 342), and writes that the crowd mentioned in 15:38 “may have exceeded ten thousand” (p. 359); cf. also Guelich, 344. Writing in a high-context, collectivistic, patriarchal culture, it is not surprising that Mark mentioned only the “men” (ἄνδρες = males) as his readers would assume that female family members were also present at the gathering; *contra* France, *Mark*, 268, who views this event as an all-male “gathering of patriots with an insurrectionary motive”.

<sup>39</sup> See Lane, 240, “Though the people were not expecting Jesus, he was immediately recognized. He was well known from his ministry at Capernaum and reports of his healing power had penetrated the entire region (cf. Ch. 1:28). The presence of Jesus created an immense excitement. Mark’s picture of the people hastening from place to place as reports of his presence were received, carrying their sick on mattresses, graphically conveys the impression of determined effort to seize an unexpected opportunity for healing.”

(6:55-56) is broader, referring instead to what happened “wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside”.<sup>40</sup> People were regularly approaching Jesus for healing—though in the larger context of Mark’s account the mention of this feature represents Jesus’ ministry as a whole, which certainly includes casting out evil spirits.<sup>41</sup> Stein’s comments on this summary are well-considered and worth quoting at length:

The present summary makes no mention of the preaching/teaching dimension in Jesus’ ministry or of his expulsion of demons...Yet in an account in which the hand of Mark is so clearly present...it would have been very easy for the evangelist to have added such a reference, if he desired. Within the various summaries of Mark, we discover healing and exorcism associated (1:32-34; 3:10-11); preaching and teaching associated (1:39; 3:14-15); teaching and exorcism associated (1:21-27); teaching and healing associated (6:2, 5); and preaching, healing and exorcism associated (6:12-13). Why one or more of these dimensions may be omitted by Mark in an editorial comment is unclear. It is unlikely, however, that in so doing Mark is seeking to minimize these aspects of Jesus’s ministry, for references to Jesus’s teaching are found throughout 7:1-14:43, and two additional exorcisms by Jesus are reported in 7:24-30 and 9:14-29. Probably Mark expected his readers/hearers to assume that each of these editorial comments should be interpreted inclusively in light of what is said in the others.<sup>42</sup>

The remaining chapters of Mark’s gospel reinforce his general portrayal of Jesus’ ministry. Two deliverance accounts are included in the narrative, i.e. the deliverance of the Syro-Phoenician woman’s daughter in 7:24-30 and the boy who

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<sup>40</sup> Lane, 240, understands well the greeting Jesus undoubtedly received in this cultural context: “Whenever Jesus entered villages, cities or hamlets the report that he was coming had preceded him. He found the sick assembled in the marketplace or any open space where they could be carried in anticipation of his arrival...” The use of ὅπου ἂν with the imperfect εἰσεπορεύετο, along with the imperfect forms of ἐτίθεισαν, παρεκάλουν and ἐσώζοντο, make sense if this is indeed a description of what happened on a number of occasions.

<sup>41</sup> France, *Mark*, 274, writes, “More surprising is the lack of any mention of exorcism in the summary (contrast 1:32-34, 39; 3:7-12, 14-15; 6:7, 13), but Mark has already placed great emphasis on that aspect of Jesus’ ministry, and perhaps need not be expected to repeat it on every occasion.”

<sup>42</sup> Stein, *Mark*, 333-334.

was brought to Jesus in 9:14-29, as are three other healings—of the deaf and mute man in “the region of the Decapolis” (7:31-37),<sup>43</sup> the blind man at Bethsaida (8:22-26), and the blind man named Bartimaeus (10:46-52). There are several indications in this section of Mark that Jesus was attempting to carve out time with his disciples so that he could teach them (7:24, 36; 8:26; 9:30-31), but escaping the crowds was difficult. His fame as a teacher, healer and deliverance minister continued to spread (7:36-37), and once the word went out it was difficult to control the flow of people coming to Jesus. He continued to encounter sizable crowds (8:1; 9:14-15, 25; 10:1, 46) and, on one occasion, even initiated ministry to them (8:34).

In Mark’s account Jesus’ itinerant ministry of preaching, teaching, healing and deliverance exposes him to an ever-changing audience, with many people having conditions that require healing and deliverance. In addition, as his reputation spreads, large numbers of people are coming from increasing distances not only to hear his preaching and teaching, but also to seek healing and deliverance for themselves and their loved ones. Ultimately he is confronted by huge crowds such as those in 6:34-44 (5000 men) and in 8:1-10 (4000 men), and continued to minister to crowds of people in the subsequent chapters up until he came to Jerusalem to give up his life on the cross. No doubt his reputation brought with it an ever-growing number of requests for both healing and deliverance.

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<sup>43</sup> For a discussion of the debate surrounding the location of this healing, see Stein, *Mark*, 357-359 (who favors the area around the Sea of Galilee where Jesus performed earlier ministry). However, others (e.g. Guelich, 391-393; Edwards, 223-224), prefer the view that this healing occurred in the league of cities called the Decapolis. If the latter view is correct, then the fact that the deaf and mute man was brought to Jesus in 7:32 confirms that Jesus’ reputation as a healer had already spread into Gentile territory.

## The Continuity of Deliverance throughout Jesus' Ministry

One last point, which is critical in this analysis, is the continuity of Jesus' practice of deliverance throughout his public ministry. Several factors strongly suggest that he began to perform the ministry of deliverance very early in his ministry and continued to do so until he entered Jerusalem with the intention of giving up his life on the cross. As Hollenbach points out:

"... it is to be noted, again as very important, that Jesus practiced exorcism from the beginning to the end of his public life and that it was directly in connection with this particular activity that he drew upon himself the wrath of all the important public authorities of his time.<sup>44</sup>

What evidence in the Synoptic Gospels supports this conclusion? Jesus himself states as much in his reply to the Pharisees' warning in Lk 13:31-33:

At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' In any case, I just keep going today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!"

Jesus' response demonstrates his intention to continue his regular pattern of ministry—summarized by the words "I will drive out demons [ἐκβάλλω] and heal [ἰάσεις] people today and tomorrow..."<sup>45</sup> meaning for "an indefinite time,

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<sup>44</sup> Hollenbach, "Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities," 569.

<sup>45</sup> Stein, *Luke*, 383, points out, "The present tense of the verbs 'drive out,' 'heal,' and 'reach' in this partial summary of Jesus' ministry (cf. also 9:1-2) emphasizes this continuing aspect of his ministry". Rather than responding in fear to Herod's murderous intention, Jesus puts his trust in God both for the present (as he continues to meet the spiritual and physical needs of people), and for the future (since it is by divine necessity [δεῖ] that he, as God's prophet, must die in Jerusalem). J. Ramsey Michaels, "The Itinerant Jesus and His Home Town," in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 186, puts it more directly: "Verse 32 by itself is simply Jesus' way of telling the Pharisees, 'I'll go when I'm good and ready.' He has his own agenda of exorcism and healing, and will not have his hand forced by Herod's threats."

culminating at a definite but uncertain point.”<sup>46</sup> In short, Jesus was going to continue to do all the “wonderful things” that were delighting the people (13:17) in spite of the opposition that was building against him. Nevertheless, he leaves no doubt that he is steadfastly headed toward his goal, specifically death in the city of Jerusalem. Jesus’ words should not be interpreted to mean that all he was doing during this period of his ministry was performing deliverance and healing. No doubt his ministry at this point still involved all the major elements of his work: preaching, teaching, healing and casting out evil spirits. However, in Jesus’ reply to the Pharisees deliverance and healing are representative of the whole of his ministry before the events of the Passion.<sup>47</sup> He is simply saying that he will continue to do what he has been doing until it is time for him to go to the cross.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to Jesus’ direct statement on the matter in the gospel of Mark, several other features of the Synoptic Gospels also point to the continuity of deliverance throughout Jesus’ ministry. First, there are the individual deliverance accounts in the Synoptic Gospels. Matthew’s last recorded deliverance account is the healing of the demonized boy in Mt 17:14-18, which parallels the last deliverance account in Mark’s gospel (9:14-27). In Luke’s narrative the final

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<sup>46</sup> Marshall, *Luke*, 571, who interprets it against a Semitic background; cf. Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1247, who correctly notes that Jesus’ words must have a figurative sense since “it is clear that more than three days separates Jesus from Jerusalem”, and Green, *Luke*, 535-536.

<sup>47</sup> Mark R. Saucy, “Miracles and Jesus’ Proclamation of the Kingdom of God,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153 (1996), 291, correctly notes, “In Luke 13:32, Jesus summarized his whole ministry before the Cross in reference to exorcism and healing”; cf. Ben F., *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1979), 154, who writes, based on Lk 13:32, “Jesus thus epitomized his public career not as words but as exorcisms and cures”, and Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 1031.

<sup>48</sup> See I Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 151: This traditional statement “...speaks not so much of a journey to Jerusalem, as of a ministry which will be brought to its end in Jerusalem.”

recorded deliverance account is the healing of the bent woman in Lk 13:10-13.<sup>49</sup>

The significance of this data is limited by the fact that the arrangement of the Synoptic Gospels is not strictly chronological. However, it is clear that Jesus performed the ministry of deliverance well into his earthly ministry—at least through last deliverance accounts recorded in the Synoptic gospels.

Second, we must consider the implications of Jesus' delegation of his ministry, including deliverance, to his disciples. This includes both the Twelve (Mt 10:1, 5; Mk 6:7, 12-13; and Lk 9:1-2) and, in Luke's account, the Seventy (Lk 10:1, 9, 17). In all of these accounts Jesus delegates to these groups the ministry of deliverance, which in Mark's account of the calling of the Twelve disciples (3:13-19) is listed as one of the purposes for which they are appointed:

Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. (vv. 13-15).

Given the fact that Jesus appointed the disciples “to have authority to drive out demons” and then sends them out to do just that, it is difficult to believe that Jesus either stopped performing deliverance or ran out of good candidates for that ministry. His delegating of this ministry to his disciples suggests that he regarded it as an abiding feature of his ministry and theirs.

Third, there are the references of others, including Jesus' opponents, to his ministry of deliverance. For example, in chapter 9 of Matthew Jesus casts a demon

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<sup>49</sup> While the form of this deliverance is unusual among such accounts in the Synoptic gospels, as Annette Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness in the Gospel of Luke* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 2003), 307, observes, “... a demonic etiology is given: Jesus refers to Satan as the cause of her eighteen-year-long affliction.”

out of a man who was mute (9:32-33). In response, the Pharisees say, “It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons” (9:34). After this, the very same series of events is described in 12:22-24.<sup>50</sup> Following Jesus’ deliverance of a demonized man who was blind and mute, the Pharisees repeat the same comment (12:24). Luke’s account is virtually the same as Matthew’s in this regard (Lk 11:15), but in Mark’s account the Beelzebub controversy is triggered by Jesus’ family’s comment that “He is out of his mind” (Mk 3:21). In response to that statement, the teachers of the law claim that Jesus is possessed, and that he drives out demons “by the prince of demons” (3:22). In all of these accounts the Jewish leaders comment that Jesus “drives out demons” (plural) and use the present tense ἐκβάλλει (i.e. “is driving out”). Taken together these two factors point to the Pharisees’ knowledge of Jesus’ ongoing ministry of deliverance.

Fourth, there is the improbability that Jesus performed the ministry for some time, but then gave it up and only focused on other aspects of ministry such as teaching, preaching (and perhaps healing). Why is this unlikely? In Mark’s case it is true because deliverance functions as an indicator of Jesus’ messianic authority, and for this reason one would expect this aspect of his ministry to continue up to his final entry into Jerusalem. In Matthew’s case it is improbable that, having stated explicitly in 8:16-17 that Jesus fulfilled the role of the Servant in his ministry of healing and deliverance, he intends his readers to understand that Jesus only performed this ministry for a certain amount of time and then ceased doing it for a lengthy period prior to his crucifixion. Much the same argument can be made for

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<sup>50</sup> In this case “the prince of demons” is identified as Beelzebub.

Luke's gospel since Jesus' comprehensive ministry, including deliverance, is said to fulfill the prophecy of Isa 61:1-2. And, particularly in Matthew and Luke's gospels, deliverance is linked directly to the central theme of Jesus' teaching, namely the presence of the kingdom of God as the strong man is bound and his possessions are seized.<sup>51</sup> In fact, both Matthew and Luke record Jesus' saying, "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Mt. 12:28/Lk 11:20, with the Lukan version substituting "by the finger of God" for "by the Spirit of God). In light of the connections between Jesus' ministry of deliverance and the fulfillment of critical Old Testament themes and expectations, it is probable that Jesus' practice of deliverance continued until he arrived in Jerusalem and gave up his life on the cross.

Fifth, since Jesus' ministry of healing and deliverance was motivated by his compassion for the afflicted, it is difficult to imagine that he stopped responding to the needs of those who were suffering due to the influence of evil spirits. After all, as I argued earlier in this paper, family members traveled significant distances to bring their loved ones to Jesus as news of his ministry of healing and deliverance spread, and in the context of first century Palestine their actions are completely understandable. Green describes the predicament of common folks as follows:

Only the wealthy could afford the care of a trained physician...and village people were especially vulnerable to the abuse of charlatans

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<sup>51</sup> As Clinton E. Arnold, "The Kingdom, Miracles, Satan and Demons," in *The Kingdom of God*, eds. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 158-159, writes, "Most scholars would agree that the kingdom of God was the central and all-important message in the teaching of Jesus during his three-year public ministry."

who took what little money they had but provided little by way of a cure.<sup>52</sup>

Indeed, village and rural folk were at a disadvantage when it came to health issues.

However, even the wealthy had relatively few good options compared to modern medical care, especially in developed countries. Green explains as follows:

Even relative wealth could not certify medical competence, however. Medical treatises might sneer at root cutters, drug sellers, and purveyors of amulets and incantations, but even the best of ancient physicians understood little of the ways of the body.<sup>53</sup>

What is clear from the gospel accounts is that, in his ministries of healing and deliverance, Jesus was acting compassionately to meet the needs of desperate people. For this reason it is difficult to imagine that at some point he decided to close up shop and turn away the sick and the demonized whose family members had brought them great distances in hopes that they might be healed or delivered by this man about whom they had heard so much, and who might be a prophet or even the Messiah himself. As Kelsey writes,

His healing miracles were not done just so that men might witness them and believe; they were rather the natural reaction of his spirit to sickness and suffering in the world and his desire for God's grace to be known in those he touched.<sup>54</sup>

No doubt Jesus continued his ministry of healing and deliverance out of compassion for those in need, for clearly the stream of sick and demonized people seeking help did not suddenly stopped. If the prominence given to healing and deliverance during Jesus' "day of ministry" in Capernaum is any indication, people continued to

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<sup>52</sup> Joel B. Green, "Healing and Healthcare," in *The World of the New Testament*, eds. Joel B. Green and Lee Martin McDonald (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 340-341.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 341.

<sup>54</sup> Morton T. Kelsey, *Healing and Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1973), 99.

flock to Jesus throughout his ministry, seeking healing from various diseases and conditions and deliverance from the oppression of demonic powers.

Minor differences in terminology and emphasis are evident among the Synoptic Gospels' accounts of Jesus' ministry. However, the major features of Jesus' activity are consistent throughout the three writings; his ministry involved primarily preaching, teaching, healing and, as I have emphasized in this discussion, the ministry of deliverance. That Jesus' "typical day" in Capernaum ended with his delivering "many" from the influence of evil spirits lays the foundation for his continued ministry of deliverance. This initial impression is reinforced in the summary statements that occur throughout the Synoptic Gospels, which indicate explicitly that deliverance was a major, ongoing characteristic of Jesus' ministry. In addition, the summary statements suggest that he encountered increasing numbers of sick and demonized individuals as his reputation spread and crowds flocked from greater distances to seek his ministry of healing and deliverance. Finally, Jesus' own statement in Lk 13:31-33 establishes that healing and deliverance were vital aspects of his ministry from the beginning up until the time when he entered Jerusalem to face death by crucifixion. Jesus' own statement is sufficient evidence in support of this conclusion, but it is also supported by other data in the Synoptic Gospels.

The evidence presented above points to the conclusion that the ministry of deliverance from demonic influence and oppression was a major feature of Jesus' ministry. In fact, Graham Twelftree may be correct in drawing the following conclusion regarding Jesus' ministry based primarily on others' remembrances of Jesus:

In terms of time spent, as well as public perception, the performing of miracles [including the ministry of deliverance] probably dominated all other aspects of Jesus' public ministry....<sup>55</sup>

This leads us to ask an important question, one that is rarely addressed in the study of the Synoptic gospels: "How many people were delivered from the influence of evil spirits by Jesus over the course of over three years of public ministry? Needless to say, it is impossible to estimate the figure with any degree of precision. However, speaking conservatively given the nature of the data, if Jesus performed an average of one deliverance a day for exactly three years, he would have ministered deliverance to almost 1100 people.<sup>56</sup> However, the impression gained by studying the account of the day of ministry in Capernaum, the summary statements regarding the place of healing and deliverance in Jesus' ministry, the growth of the crowds that were coming to Jesus and the evidence for the continuity of Jesus' ministry of deliverance suggests that the figure was probably significantly higher.

### Some Implications of this Study

What are some of the implications of this research? First, the frequency with which Jesus performed the ministry of deliverance strongly suggests that he viewed demonization, not as a state that one rarely encounters, but as a condition that is not uncommon among the general populace. Such an understanding comes into direct conflict with the perspective of a majority of Evangelical interpreters, who view demonic influence requiring deliverance as a condition that is relatively rare. In

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<sup>55</sup> Graham H. Twelftree, "The Miracles of Jesus: Marginal or Mainstream?" *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 1 (2003), 123.

<sup>56</sup> In response to a rough presentation of this research at the ETS Annual Meeting in Atlanta back in 2010, Arnold, "The Kingdom, Miracles, Satan and Demons," 162, commented "It is quite possible that in the course of these three years Jesus brought deliverance to hundreds of individuals."

fact, a majority of Evangelical pastors, teachers, spiritual directors, therapists, psychologists and physicians would not even consider demonization as a real possibility unless a person is deeply involved in the occult, in the unlikely event that a person is demonstrating behavior that was inexplicable apart from supernatural influences, or in rare cases in which the person has not responded to any of the usual treatments.<sup>57</sup> Typically demonization that requires deliverance never makes it onto our differential diagnoses. This is particularly true in Western Christianity and, in some cases, in churches and denominations in the Majority World in which the influence of Western Christianity remains strong. But is this perspective correct? The evidence presented above would seem to suggest it is not.

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<sup>57</sup> While acknowledging the problems with this view (p. 127), Sydney Page, "The Role of Exorcism in Clinical Practice and Pastoral Care," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 17 (1989), 129, concludes his insightful article with the following words: "It would be advisable to give precedence to other types of therapy and turn to exorcism only when they have proved unsuccessful." Such a view implies that the percentage of people requiring "exorcism" is very low, an assumption that is stated explicitly in Sydney H.T. Page, *Powers of Evil* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 270: "Demon possession appears to be a rather rare phenomenon, but satanic trials and temptations are the lot of all believers". While Page is a New Testament scholar, this view is even more common among Christian mental health professionals, many of whom express views very much like those held by the psychiatrist Basil Jackson, "Reflections on the Demonic: A Psychiatric Perspective," in *Demon Possession*, ed. John Warwick Montgomery (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1976), 256, "I feel it is an excellent rule to follow never to look for a supernatural cause without ruling out all possible natural causes" and the psychologist Millard J. Sall, "Demon Possession or Psychopathology?: A Clinical Differentiation," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 4 (1976), 289, who notes that "...most deviant behavior may be explained by natural cause..."; cf. Paul J. Bach, "Demon Possession and Psychopathology: A Theological Relationship," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 7 (1979), 24: "In the case of an individual's problems, the church should first consider them in the context of mental illness, with possession as a consideration of the very last resort"; Gary R. Collins, "Psychological Observations on Demonism," in *Demon Possession*, 248, "I agree with those who believe that exorcism should be used as a last resort and only when demon possession seems apparent. Because of the potentially harmful effects of suggesting demonic involvement, the counselor should attempt exorcism only after every conceivable medical, psychological and spiritual counseling technique has failed" and Rodger K. Bufford, "Demonic Influence and Mental Disorders," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 8 (1989), 45, who suggests that "there is a place for exorcism" while at the same time regarding it as a "last resort". If these writers are correct in their views, the probability of running into a case of "demon possession" is very low. And if one must exhaust all other possibilities before even considering the possibility of demonic influence, then the probability of deciding that a case involves "demonic influence requiring deliverance" is so low as to become a mere theoretical possibility.

Second, the frequency with which Jesus performed the ministry of deliverance raises questions regarding the methodology employed in many studies on the nature of demonic influence in the Synoptic gospels. In many discussions of this topic, conclusions are drawn regarding the nature and “symptoms” of demonization based primarily on detailed study of the four major deliverance accounts in the Synoptic gospels, with minor input from the brief accounts and references to deliverance. To be sure those passages are significant; however, two considerations are often ignored in modern discussions of this topic. One of these considerations is that this narrow focus has often led scholars to neglect the significant diversity that exists both among these major accounts and among the brief accounts and references to deliverance that are scattered throughout the Synoptic gospels. This diversity needs to be explored in order to define more precisely the nature and “symptoms” of demonic influence of the type that was addressed by Jesus in his ministry of deliverance. For the moment, however, it is sufficient to note that while the deliverance of the Gerasene/Gadarene demoniac(s) in Mt 8:28-34/Mk 5:1-20/Lk 8:26-39 is both dramatic and impressive, it is also quite different from Jesus’ deliverance of the demonized mute man (Mt 9:32), the demonized man who was blind and mute (Mt 12:22), the bent woman who had been oppressed by a spirit for 18 years, and even the deliverance of the demonized boy who, in addition to experiencing intermittent seizures, could not hear or speak (Mt 17:14-21/Mk 9:14-29/Lk 9:37-43a). Each of these latter four cases could easily be mistaken for “normal” illnesses, especially in the context of Western Christianity

with its anti-supernatural bias.<sup>58</sup> This diversity in the “symptoms” caused by demonization as presented in these accounts, as well as the similarities between these conditions and those caused by normal illnesses, should lead to caution in naming certain “symptoms” as characteristic marks of demonization.

The other consideration is that, as I have argued above, the major deliverance accounts and the shorter references to deliverance in the Synoptic Gospels make up only a few out of the hundreds of deliverance ministries performed by Jesus during his earthly ministry. An examination of the summary statements/passages in the Synoptic Gospels makes it clear that Jesus performed a ministry of healing and deliverance that addressed a range of conditions far beyond those mentioned in the major deliverance accounts. The relevant data is as follows.

Mark’s relevant summaries:

Mk 1:32-34—“That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon possessed (πάντας τοὺς κακῶς ἔχοντας καὶ τοὺς δαμονιζομένους). The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases (ποικίλαις νόσοις). He also drove out many demons...”<sup>59</sup>

Mk 3:10—“For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him (ἐπιπίπτειν αὐτῷ ἵνα αὐτοῦ ἄψωνται ὅσοι εἶχον μάστιγας). Whenever the impure spirits saw him, they fell down before him...”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Some might also regard the Gerasene/Gadarene demoniac(s) as having a psychological or psychiatric condition, though the breaking of the chains that bound him and the irons on his feet (Mk 5:3-4; Lk 8:29), as well as the almost instant healing of the man’s condition (Mk 5:15, 18-20; Lk 8:35, 38-39) are difficult to explain based on this type of diagnosis without allowing for an additional supernatural component.

<sup>59</sup> Stein, *Mark*, 95, points out, “From this Markan summary it is evident that Jesus can heal all kinds of sickness, whether physical or demonic, and the different terms used to describe the two kinds of healing (ἔθεράπευσεν [healed]...and ἐξέβαλεν δαμόνια [drove out]...)...also indicates this”. Stein, 96, correctly observes “...that Jesus was a ‘general practitioner’ and not a ‘specialist’; cf. France, *Mark*, 109-110.

<sup>60</sup> It is important to understand the “messiness” of this situation. A “large crowd” was pressing in on Jesus, and those who had various “diseases” were trying to touch him. However, some of these “diseases” were caused by direct demonic influence, and whenever these demonized people came

Mk 6:5—“He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them (εἰ μὴ ὀλίγοις ἀρρώστοις ἐπιθεῖς τὰς χεῖρας ἐθεράπευσεν).”

Mk 6:13—“They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them (ἤλειπον ἐλαίῳ πολλοὺς ἀρρώστους καὶ ἐθεράπευον).”

Mk 6:55-56—“They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick (τοὺς κακῶς ἔχοντας) on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick (τοὺς ἀσθενοῦντας) in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed (ὅσοι ἂν ἤψαντο αὐτοῦ ἐσώζοντο).”

Matthew’s relevant summaries:

Mt 4:23-24—“Jesus went throughout Galilee...healing every disease and sickness among the people (πᾶσαν νόσον καὶ πᾶσαν μαλακίαν ἐν τῷ λαῷ). News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases (πάντας τοὺς κακῶς ἔχοντας ποικίλαις νόσοις), those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed (δαμονιζομένους), those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them.”<sup>61</sup>

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close to Jesus, the spirits reacted by falling down before him and crying out. See Strauss, *Mark*, 155, “The imperfect verb “were seeing” (ἐθεώρουν) is an iterative imperfect, indicating repeated action continuing over time, a point made clear in context by the temporal participle, “whenever” (ὅταν).” Presumably some who came for “healing” were aware that their condition resulted from the presence of a spirit, while others did not (e.g. if the only evidence of demonic influence was that they were blind or deaf). However, as the demonized people pressed in on Jesus or touched him, many of the spirits reacted strongly to his authority, thus confirming the nature of the person’s condition. However, even if they did not react in such ways, Jesus could clearly discern the difference between conditions that were the result of direct demonic influence and those that were not.

<sup>61</sup> See Davies and Allison, 1:416, “...it seems that our evangelist is concerned to present Jesus as the Messiah who heals every disease and sickness, and that this concern has to do with a desire to see Scripture fulfilled.” Keener, *Matthew*, 156, makes the following suggestion, “That he healed “all” diseases (4:23) may mean every kind of sickness rather than every sick person, since the “all” of v. 24 is necessarily hyperbole; surely suppliants did not bring *every* sick person in Syria to him...!” However, Morris, *Matthew*, 88, is more cautious: “The repeated πᾶσαν emphasizes Jesus’ complete mastery over all forms of illness, and that whether we take it to mean “every kind of” or “every case of.” In the end the best interpretation is that the “all who were ill with various diseases” in v. 24 refers, not to all the sick people in Syria (obviously!), but to “all the sick people (from Syria) who were brought to Jesus, regardless of their condition”. The sheer number of people who were coming to Jesus for healing, and the lack of evidence that any were rejected, necessarily implies that he healed a wide variety of conditions (though not necessarily all conditions that were experienced by human beings at the time the gospels were written). Joseph Zias, “Death and Disease in Ancient Israel,” *Biblical Archeologist* 54 (1991), 147, points out that “...many of the chronic debilitating diseases of antiquity are seldom seen in today’s modern clinical practice.”

Mt 8:16—“When evening came, many who were demon-possessed (δαιμονιζομένους πολλούς) were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick (πάντας τοὺς κακῶς ἔχοντας ἐθεράπευσεν).”<sup>62</sup>

Mt 9:35—“Jesus went through all the towns and villages...healing every disease and sickness (θεραπεύων πᾶσαν νόσον καὶ πᾶσαν μαλακίαν)”.

Mt 10:1—“Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness (θεραπεύειν πᾶσαν νόσον καὶ πᾶσαν μαλακίαν)”.

Mt 10:8—Jesus commands the Twelve as follows: “Heal the sick (ἀσθενοῦντας θεραπεύετε), raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons (δαιμόνια ἐκβάλλετε).”<sup>63</sup>

Mt 12:15—“Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. A large crowd followed him, and he healed all who were ill (ἐθεράπευσεν αὐτοὺς πάντας)”.

Mt 14:14—“When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick (ἐθεράπευσεν τοὺς ἀρρώστους αὐτῶν)”.

Mt 14:35-36—“And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick (προσήνεγκαν αὐτῷ πάντας τοὺς κακῶς ἔχοντας) to him and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed (ὅσοι ἤψαντο διεσώθησαν).”<sup>64</sup>

Mt 15:30—“Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others (καὶ ἑτέρους πολλούς),<sup>65</sup> and laid them at his feet; and he healed them (ἐθεράπευσεν αὐτούς).”

Mt 19:2—“Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there (ἐθεράπευσεν αὐτοὺς ἐκεῖ).”

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<sup>62</sup> Since there was no prior selection process (i.e. in which certain conditions were selected for healing, while others were told, “Sorry, I do not heal that kind of illness”), the words “all the sick” undoubtedly refer to all the sick people who sought healing, regardless of their malady. This principle is true in this and in subsequent summary statements that are cited in this section.

<sup>63</sup> There is, of course, here no indication that only certain types of conditions were healed, or that only certain types of demonic influence were resolved through deliverance.

<sup>64</sup> Davies and Allison, 2:512: “διασφίζω...is stronger than the simple σφίζω: the sick were *completely* healed (cf. Lk 7.3)”; cf. Blomberg, *Matthew*, 237, who writes, “The different word for “healed” used here...may carry extra emphasis and mean *completely healed*.”

<sup>65</sup> See France, *Matthew*, 598, “The summary of Jesus’ healings in this Gentile area is as comprehensive as among the Jews in 14:34-36, but this time it is expressed in terms of specific complaints rather than in purely general terms, though with a generalizing ‘many others’ at the end of the list.”

Luke's relevant summaries:

Lk 4:40—"At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sicknesses (ἅπαντες ὅσοι εἶχον ἀσθενοῦντας νόσοις ποικίλαις), and laying his hands on each one (ὁ δὲ ἐνὶ ἐκάστῳ αὐτῶν τὰς χεῖρας ἐπιτιθεῖς), he healed them. Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!"

Lk 5:15—"Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses (θεραπεύεσθαι ἀπὸ τῶν ἀσθενειῶν αὐτῶν).<sup>66</sup>

Lk 5:17b—"And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick (δύναμις κυρίου ἦν εἰς τὸ ἰᾶσθαι αὐτόν)."

Lk 6:17-19—"He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases (ἰαθῆναι ἀπὸ τῶν νόσων αὐτῶν). Those troubled by impure spirits were cured, and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all (δύναμις παρ' αὐτοῦ ἐξήρχετο καὶ ἰᾶτο πάντας)."<sup>67</sup>

Lk 7:21—"At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits (ἔθεράπευσεν πολλοὺς ἀπὸ νόσων καὶ μαστίγων καὶ πνευμάτων πονηρῶν), and gave sight to many who were blind."

Lk 9:1-2—When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases (ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς δύναμιν καὶ ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ πάντα τὰ δαιμόνια καὶ νόσους θεραπεύειν), and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick (ἰᾶσθαι [τοὺς ἀσθενεῖς])."

Lk 9:6—"So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere (θεραπεύοντες πανταχοῦ)."

Lk 9:11b—"He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing (τοὺς χρεῖαν ἔχοντας θεραπείας ἰᾶτο)."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Of course, the larger the crowd, the higher the probability that the sick were suffering from a wide variety of conditions, which Jesus healed.

<sup>67</sup> The concluding statement to this summary, "and healing them all," seems to lump together those receiving a miracle of healing and those being delivered as part of the "great number of people" who had come to hear Jesus and to receive healing.

<sup>68</sup> That Luke here used healing language in a very broad sense (i.e. referring to both miracles of healing and deliverance) is highly probable since it is not the cause or the symptoms of a person's condition that is important to Luke, but rather the fact that they "needed healing".

Lk 10:9a—As Jesus sent out seventy two other followers, he commanded them as follows, “Heal the sick who are there (θεραπεύετε τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ ἀσθενεῖς)...”.

A careful examination of the data above indicates that Jesus healed an amazing variety of conditions, both by performing miracles of healing and by resolving ongoing demonic influence by means of deliverance. An awareness of the fact that Jesus’ ministry consisted of *both* word and deed, of teaching and preaching as well as healing and deliverance, will enable us to perceive the opportunities the Lord is bringing our way for similar types of ministry. At a minimum people who receive healing prayer or deliverance that is performed in a caring manner will experience the love of Christ through us, but in many cases they will also experience the power of the risen Jesus to heal and to set them free from demonic influence and oppression. As in the New Testament writings, such experiences often result in an increased openness to the saving message of the gospel, which then leads them into a vital relationship with God as they are adopted as his sons through faith in Jesus Christ.