

RBL 04/15/1998

Zager, Werner.

Gottesherrschaft und Endgericht in der Verkündigung Jesu: Eine Untersuchung zur markinischen Jesusüberlieferung einschliesslich der Q-Parallelen

Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 82

Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996. Pp. xiv + 420, Cloth, DM 188,00, ISBN 3110152630.

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Unconvinced by the portrait of a noneschatological Jesus that is being energetically promoted in much North American historical Jesus research today, Zager examines the role played within Jesus' proclamation of the sovereign rule of God by the expectation of eschatological judgment. The first chapter sketches the shifting perspectives and paradigms in modern research (beginning with Reimarus) on Jesus' view of eschatological matters. This survey of research focuses almost exclusively on German-language scholarship (C. H. Dodd is the only English-language scholar treated). After a brief description of methodology (chap. 2), Zager provides extensive discussion of the place of end-time judgment imagery in a wide spectrum of documents from early Judaism (chap. 3). The central interest here (and throughout the book) is the interrelationship between traditions affirming the royal dominion of God and traditions picturing eschatological judgment. John the Baptizer is the bridge figure; he is the final eschatological voice considered in the chapter, and the discussion of Jesus' own message begins here with Jesus' appraisal of John.

How should one excavate the Jesus traditions in order to lay bare his view of eschatological judgment? Zager confines his analysis (chap. 4) to eschatological materials in Mark, together with parallel logia in Q. (This limited scope of inquiry means, of course, that important data, especially from Q, fall from view.) For each passage examined, Zager identifies redactional activity and attempts to reconstruct the earliest (Greek) version of the material. Applying principally the criteria of multiple attestation, coherence, and especially dissimilarity, he then decides whether or not the tradition may be traced with any confidence to the historical Jesus. In the course of this analysis, one encounters brief discussions of the meaning and significance of the passage--centering on the interplay between God's sovereign rule and eschatological judgment.

Chapter five summarizes (in a scant four pages) Mark's presentation of the relation between eschatological judgment and God's sovereign rule in Jesus' message and activity. The proclamation of God's reign, which includes the constituting of the eschatological people of God, presupposes the activity of divine judgment, whereby evil powers opposing God's *basileia* are vanquished. The chief function of eschatological judgment in Mark is to undergird parenthesis. Since persons are accountable at the divine judgment for their actions here and now, and since the timing of that accounting is known only to God, vigilance in every moment is necessary. Those burdened by wealth and power still have an opportunity to be saved in the final judgment, but only if they separate themselves now from their wealth (for the benefit of the poor). Judgment imagery reinforces such moral appeals by alternately promising and warning readers. A secondary role of eschatological judgment in Mark is polemical (6:11; 12:40): for example, those hostile to the work of Christian missionaries will eventually face the (dire) consequences.

Chapter six (in six pages) answers the question that prompted the study: Did Jesus proclaim a coming eschatological judgment? Among the passages examined in the monograph, only a handful meet the most stringent tests of (1) probably originating with Jesus himself, and (2) affirming an end-time judgment. Together with associated Q parallels, Mark 10:31 (inversion of first and last); Mark 9:43, 45, 47 (removal of hand, foot, and eye); and Mark 10:25 (the camel and the needle's eye) are all attributable to Jesus. Even such modest results, however, indicate that while Jesus accented salvation rather than judgment in his announcement of God's reign, and while he pictured that reign as a reality already breaking into the present rather than as a purely future occurrence, nevertheless Jesus did expect an eschatological judgment in which God (not Jesus) would play the part of judge. Jesus' message was therefore thoroughly theocentric. A decisive criterion in this judgment was the expression of mercy. Has one shown to others the mercy expected from God (here drawing on non-Markan passages not considered in the study--e.g., Luke 18:10-14a; Matt 18:23-34)? Zager concludes, then, that for the historical Jesus God's sovereign rule and end-time judgment were inextricably joined.

Zager ends the study where this review began, by observing the vast distance between his findings and the "non-eschatological Jesus" fashionable in North American scholarship. Unfortunately, at no point does the author engage in sustained or serious debate with this alternative approach to the question. Other omissions detract from the value of the book. The decision to limit analysis to texts present in Mark (or Mark and Q), and the strategy of reading adopted--an atomistic, diachronic reading featuring the isolation and reconstruction of discrete logia, apart from their narrative contexts--reduce both the range and the interpretive potential of the study. A certain minimalist view of Jesus' proclamation of eschatological judgment results. That is, one can affirm *that* Jesus held some such expectation, but no clear or subtle picture emerges of the meaning and significance of these affirmations in Jesus' ministry.