ANIMALS AND ANGELS IN MARK 1.13:
Hints of the Divine Warrior in the wilderness?¹

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Resumo
Especialistas têm debatido a existência de uma tipologia Adão-Cristo em Mc 1.12-13. O objetivo principal aqui é descrever e questionar os argumentos em favor desta leitura, reafirmando a posição contrária. A associação de “animais selvagens” com oposição ao povo de Deus no AT e textos do período intertestamental será investigada a fim de demonstrar que os “animais selvagens” em Mc 1.13, em termos da redação marcana, são símbolos apocalípticos de oposição a Jesus. Por fim, como contribuição ao debate, examina-se a relação dos ‘animais selvagens’ e os anjos com Jesus neste pericope à luz da tradição do Guerreiro Divino.

Palavras-chave: Guerreiro Divino; Marcos 1.13; animais selvagens; anjos.

Abstract
Scholars have debated the presence or otherwise of an Adamic typology in Mark 1.12-13. My primary objective is to outline and critique the main arguments for such typology, restating the counter position. I will comment on the association of wild animals with opposition to God’s people in OT and Second Temple texts, and show that the ‘wild animals’ in Mark 1.13 are suggestive of danger, being in terms of Markan redaction, symbols of apocalyptic opposition to Jesus. Finally, as a contribution to the debate, I will explore the relation of ‘wild animals’ and angels to Jesus in the pericope, suggesting that it may be understood against the background of the Divine Warrior tradition.

Keywords: Divine Warrior; Mark 1.13; wild animals; angels.

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(i) The principal arguments for a Jesus-Adam paradigm in Mark 1.12-13 and some responses

Proponents of a Jesus-Adam typology or a “Jewish Adam-apocalypse” in Mark 1.12-13 link the reference to Satan tempting Jesus, and Jesus’ coexistence with wild animals in the wilderness (1.13) with Genesis 3, where, in a posited *Urzeit-Endzeit* motif, Jesus is taken as “type” and Adam “anti-type”. On this reading, Jesus’ physical proximity to the wild animals in Mark 1.13 is interpreted as indicative of eschatological reversal, whereby the postlapsarian enmity between humankind and animal is righted, in apparent fulfilment of prophetic forecasts in Isaiah 11.1-9; 65.25, and Hosea 2.18.

In support of this thesis scholars draw attention to the apocalyptic Books of Adam, claiming to find here certain parallels to the Markan narrative. Pokorný cites Eve’s dialogue with Seth in the Greek version, [Apocalypse of Moses], where humans have lost their authority over the animals because of the fall. He also mentions the Latin text [*Vita*] which presents a post-Eden Adam doing penance and fasting for forty days during which time he is tempted by Satan. Joel Marcus, in relation to Mark’s use of διακονέω in 1.13, notes that in *Life of Adam and Eve* angels worshipped the first human pair. On a different level, Hermann Mahnke defends Adamic typology in Mark 1.12-13 with reference both to the wild animals and the angels. On the basis of the use of the Greek prepositional construct μετά + genitive (‘with’) in our text and elsewhere in the Gospel (2.19; 3.14; 5.18; 14.67), Mahnke argues that Jesus’ “being with the animals” expresses a peaceful relationship between him and them. Mahnke also posits that the angels supply Jesus with food, linking this to a Jesus-Adam typology, by referring to R. Jehuda ben Tema’s statement in *b. San. 59b* where ministering angels are depicted preparing food and drink for Adam.

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3 *Apoc. Mor.* 10.1 – 12.


At first sight these arguments are impressive, not least because an Isaianic influenced Jesus-Adam typology would fit nicely into a section of the Gospel which evidently draws both explicitly and implicitly on the book of Isaiah, and particularly Deutero-Isaiah. That is to say, given Mark’s use of Deutero-Isaiah’s prophecy of an eschatological manifestation in the wilderness, it would not be inappropriate to find Adamic Urzeit-Endzeit ideas here. However, it is one thing to recognise that an idea ‘fits’ the general pattern, and another thing to demonstrate its de facto presence contiguous with authorial intention. Have those who favour Adamic typology in Mark 1.12-13 successfully demonstrated its’ presence or probable presence therein?

A closer look at the suggested evidence elicits a negative answer to the latter question. First, there is no clear indication that Mark taps into the motif found in Isaiah 11.1-9 and 65.25. Similarly, postbiblical texts cited as parallels to the Markan narrative do not withstand careful enquiry. Life of Adam and Eve has proved notoriously difficult to date to the pre-Christian Jewish situation, and while Pokorný would date the original Hebrew pre 70 CE, no Hebrew text is extant and other scholars are unwilling to share his optimism. Even if we were to leave aside these considerations regarding date, Pokorný’s appeal to the Apocalypse of Moses can just as easily work against his own interpretation, for in ApMōs 10 – 12 the beast (singular) is hostile.

Similarly Joel Marcus’ appeal to Adam and Eve 12 -15 is of limited value, for as Larry Hurtado points out, the scene in which angels worship Adam and Eve is present only in the Latin and not the Greek textual tradition. Mahnke’s appeal to later rabbinic texts is still less likely to provide us with any concrete parallel, and in any case, it is not certain that the angels in the Markan temptation story “wait” on Jesus. Moreover, repeated attempts

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8 HEIL, John Paul. Jesus with the wild animals in Mark 1.13. In: CBQ 68 (2006): 64, (footnote 4), cites the damaging verdict of Rikki E. Watts (Isaiah’s New Exodus and Mark. WUNT 2.88; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997, p. 18) who finds these parallels “simply too vague”.
9 POKORNY, The temptation stories and their intention, p. 121, Cf. Van HENTEN, The first testing of Jesus: a rereading of Mark 1.12-13, p. 355, who, writing 25 years after Pokorny, states that the circulation of traditions based on Genesis 3 and corresponding to Mark 1.13 in the first century CE “still has to be demonstrated”.
12 HEIL, Jesus with the wild animals in Mark 1.13, p. 74-75 (footnote 39), observes that the verb διακονέω has a wider or more general application than just table service, this is clear from its use in Mark 10.45, 15.41 etc. While table service is clearly in view in Matthew’s version of the temptation story, it is too much to infer that this is necessary so in Mark, particularly where Markan priority is held. That the evangelists interpreted
to prove that Jesus’ being with the wild animals in Mark 1.13 is to be construed as *Endzeit* human-animal symbiosis on the basis of the Greek construction μετά + genitive are ultimately unconvincing.

The alleged Adamic allusions in Mark 1.13 are all too elusive to merit the level of acceptance they have sometimes gained. A couple of cursory, more general remarks need to be made as we complete this initial review. First, the absence of even a faint Adamic typology at any other point in the Gospel is telling. Given that the Markan prologue, however we choose to demarcate it, functions as a determinative, setting of the coordinates for the Gospel proper, if Adamic typology were a feature here we would expect its subsequent re-deployment and development. Mark – an able storyteller – is generally fond of repetition, and other key themes and typology which figure unambiguously in the prologue, are picked up, or *recapitulated* later in the narrative.

Again, at a general level, if the alleged Jesus-Adam paradigm is supposed to represent a return to prelapsarian paradisiacal conditions, it must be asked in what sense the picture painted in Mark 1.12-13 corresponds to such a place or state. Lane notes that in Isa. 35.9 and Ezek. 34.23-28 where the wilderness is transformed into paradise, ravenous beasts will be excluded. Furthermore, as Heil points out, whereas in Genesis 3 the human pair are first deceived and then ejected from lush garden-like Eden, in Mark 1.12-13 Jesus is driven out into the arid wilderness before and not after Satan’s tempting. Jesus’ subsequent subjection to Satanic testing seems more like paradise lost than paradise regained, for the wilderness smacks of isolation and danger.

(ii) A non-Adamic paradigm: wild animals as symbols of evil and protecting angels

It is perhaps worth pointing out that the ‘wild animals’ would have included predators such as lions and panthers, and venomous creatures such as serpents and particular incidents in Jesus’ life and ministry variously is a central tenet of Gospel studies and allowance must be made for individuality in theological craft.

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16 HEIL, Jesus with the wild animals in Mark 1.13, p. 64. The term πειράζω ("tempt"/ "put to the test") does not occur in Genesis 3 MT, nor does πειράζομαι ("tempt") feature in the Greek translations of this text.
scorpions, thus, Jesus’ presence among them carries an unmistakable element of risk.\textsuperscript{17} Rather than providing him with company, the beasts of the wilderness pose an immediate threat to Jesus. Whether one were to take Mark 1.12-13 as loosely historical or even as sheer myth, this, therefore, would appear to be the most natural reading of the text.

Many commentators have taken this view of Mark’s mention of \(\theta\eta\rho\iota \alpha\) (wild animals), not least because of OT references to the threat of wild animals, particularly in the wilderness habitat.\textsuperscript{18} Some, however, go further and posit that the wild animals for Mark are in some sense in league with Satan. Heil demonstrates this with some success by drawing attention to the evangelist’s literary craft, finding a chiastic structure in Mark 1.12-13 wherein grammatical parallelism shows how Jesus’ relation to the wild animals is in pointed contrast to the angels’ relation to him.\textsuperscript{19} Heil also refers to Isa 13.21-22 LXX and Isa. 34.13-14 where wild animals are found in close association with demons.\textsuperscript{20} Anderson, in an unrelated work, notices that in Lev. 17.7 and 2 Chron. 11.15 ‘hairy goat-like demons’ inhabit desert places.\textsuperscript{21} This association is further developed in the Second Temple Jewish text Testament of Solomon where, in the context of exorcism, in unholy natural-supernatural alliance animal-like demons confront and even mock a hero (T. Sol. 10; 11).

In the discussion of the Markan temptation story many commentators mention Psalm 91.11-13 (Ps. 90.11-13 LXX) taking it as a significant formative influence.\textsuperscript{22} The Septuagint text reads:

\begin{quote}
For [God] shall command his angels concerning you,
to guard you in all your ways.
They shall bear you up on their hands,
So that you will not dash your foot against a stone
You shall tread on asp and basilisk
And you shall trample on lion and dragon.
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
17 I am indebted to Professor Maurice Reuben of the Israel College of the Bible for information regarding the wilderness habitat and wilderness dwelling animals in Ancient Israel.
18 HEIL, Jesus with the wild animals in Mark 1.13, p. 74, cites Deut. 8.15; 7.22 LXX; Num. 21.5-6; Ezek. 34.5 in this connection.
19 HEIL, Jesus with the wild animals in Mark 1.13, p. 65-66.
20 HEIL, Jesus with the wild animals in Mark 1.13, p. 74.
\end{footnotes}
Here the angels (τῶν ἀγγέλων) have a protective role, over against the sundry (hostile) wild animals mentioned in the text. The significance of the reference to anarthrous δράκοντα (dragon) in Ps. 90.13 LXX will be discussed below in (iii). Clearly, there is neither an issue with date nor any conceptual difficulty in positing this text as background to Mark 1.12-13, for both passages envisage the wilderness environment. In the former text the wilderness ambit is implied, since these are desert dwelling creatures, in the latter stated. Both passages depict an individual who is attended by angels where the threat of wild animals is in Psalm 90 LXX more or less explicit (Ps. 90.13) and in Mark 1.13 at least implicit.

Perhaps influenced by Psalm 91.11-13, a group of texts from the Testaments of the Patriarchs make similar associations.23 Testament of Naphtali, is perhaps the most important among these texts, it refers to “the devil”, “wild animals” and “angels” in sequence, where both the devil and wild animals are hostile, and the angels an allied force for God’s people.

If you achieve the good, my children,
men and angels will bless you;
and God will be glorified through you among the gentiles.
The devil will flee from you;
wild animals will be afraid of you
and the angels will stand by you.

The same three-fold association appears again in the same text, further underlining the importance of this parallel:

The one who does not do the good,
men and angels will curse,
and God will be dishonored among the gentiles because of him;
the devil will inhabit him as his own instrument.
Every wild animal will dominate him,
and the Lord will hate him.24

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23 GIBSON, Jesus’ wilderness temptation according to Mark, p.21.
24 T. Napb 8.4; 6.
For Gibson the parallelism here is “too close and curious to be accidental”. Moreover, even commentators who postulate a stylized Jesus-Adam paradigm for our passage are compelled to see in this text an “important parallel”.26

Drawing together the strands of the argument explored above in (i) and (ii), in the light of the inconclusive nature of Mahnke’s appeal to syntax, the weakness of the alleged parallels in the Jewish apocalyptic work *Life of Adam and Eve* and the lack of further Adamic typology in Mark, a Jesus-Adam paradigm is rejected here. Conversely, on the strength of the parallel provided by Psalm 91.11-13 and *Testament of Naphtali* 8.4, 6, and on the compelling nature of Heil’s literary analysis of Mark 1.12-13, in terms of Markan redaction, it seems highly probable that the mention of wild animals in Mark 1.13 is intended to highlight the element of satanic menace, thus heightening the tension and *gravitas* of the scene. Mark 1.12-13 is no picnic in the park: rather, it is a dramatic show-down in a God-forsaken and inhospitable place. On one side is God’s anointed son, the angels on hand to serve and guard him, while on the other is Satan and his forces of evil, which for Mark are associated with the wild beasts.

(iii) Mark 1.12-13: hints of the Divine Warrior in the wilderness?

It may be possible to take these considerations a step further, and suggest a further layer as background to the Markan temptation story. In the Hebrew *Chaoskampf* tradition God comes as warrior to defeat the forces of chaos and establish his rule. Building on the work of Old Testament scholarship, scholars have detected the influence of this motif on the NT and the Gospel of Mark in particular.27 In two episodes pregnant with *Chaoskampf* allusions (Mark 4.35-41; 6.45-52), Jesus is portrayed by Mark as the Divine Warrior who subdues the sea, one of the two powerful chaos symbols in Ancient Near Eastern and biblical tradition.28 Divine Warrior language is also used in relation to Jesus’ eschatological struggle with Satan, typified in the exorcisms.29

25 GIBSON, Jesus’ wilderness temptation according to Mark, p. 22.
In the Markan prologue, there are traces of this theme and commentators such as Joel Marcus read it in terms of eschatological combat. The term ‘Gospel’ can be taken in a militaristic sense and John the Baptist’s description of Jesus as ‘one stronger than I’ suggests the idea of spiritual or eschatological conflict. With regard to the temptation scene itself, Mann asserts that the verb πειράζω should be taken to mean “to wage war on”, but provides no evidence to support his assertion. More fruitfully, Marcus contends that the opening section of the Gospel draws heavily on Isaiah 40 – 55, and, following F.M. Cross, argues that the Isaianic passages have to do with the advent of the Divine Warrior making his way through the desert to win salvation for his people. On the basis of the allusion to Isaiah 42.1 (cf. 10-13) in Mark 1.11, Longman and Reid state that the Markan baptismal scene is a commissioning of Jesus as the Divine Warrior. This reading requires further justification, but is potentially supported by Lane’s observation that the distinctive language of Mark 1.10-11 recalls Isa. 63.19 where the prophet petitions God to rend the heavens (ὅνιγω) and descend ‘that the mountains might quake at thy presence’ (Isa. 64.1 LXX). The language of theophany in Isaiah 64.1 recalls the Chaoskampf motif in texts such as Psa. 46.3, but here instead of referring to the threat of chaos, it seems to refer to the earth-moving effects of the advent of the Divine Warrior, i.e. the threat of the Divine Warrior coming to judge the nations, although this is admittedly extrapolation.

To be sure, in numerous Old Testament and Second Temple texts the Divine Warrior is depicted in conflict with evil personified as chaos waters or monsters (e.g. Leviathan, Behemoth, Rahab), and a chaos monster in the Septuagint is often rendered δράκων “dragon”. If Ps. 90.11-13 LXX is believed to have influenced Mark 1.12-13, then its mention of a dragon in association with hostile animals over against protecting angels suggests that the Chaoskampf motif might form part of the background to the Markan temptation story. In this connection it is interesting to further note that the Vulgate has a reference to dragons in these texts, and that the Coptic amends both Isaiah 13.22 LXX

30 MARCUS, Mark, p. 146-149.
33 MARCUS, The Way of the Lord, p. 27.
37 ANGEL, Chaos and the Son of Man, p. 210-212 provides several references and successfully demonstrates that the LXX translators were aware of the Chaoskampf tradition.
‘ἐχινοί’ (hedgehogs) and 34.15 LXX ‘ἐχινος’ (hedgehog) to ‘ἐχιδνοί’ (snakes) and ‘ἐχιδνος’ (snake) respectively.\(^{38}\) It is just possible that Mark, who draws on both Isaiah 13.10 and 34.4 in Mark 13.24-25, and is therefore familiar with these sections of the book of Isaiah, may have known an eclectic Greek text containing this allusion to dragons or chaos monsters.

Be that as it may, that the *Chaoskampf* motif may form part of the background to the Markan temptation story becomes increasingly likely, when one considers that there is in both Ancient Near Eastern and specifically Hebrew thought a quasi-mythical dimension associated with the wilderness ambit, where it features as the second of the two potent symbols of chaos. According to Bernard Batto, where the author of Job utilises *Chaoskampf* imagery, the fearsome monster Behemoth, terrestrial counterpart to the aquatic Leviathan, is the personification of the barren desert.\(^{39}\) Certainly, the desert is the *domain* of this ‘demonic’ mythological creature.\(^{40}\) In the later apocalyptic text 1 Enoch 60.7 – 9, Behemoth is depicted as a land dwelling monster. Again, in 4 Ezra 6.51 he is associated with dry (desert) land.\(^{41}\) His defeat is part of God’s final *Endzeit* victory over evil.

The reference to angels may also hint at the Divine Warrior tradition, for in the *Chaoskampf* the Divine Warrior is head of the heavenly (angelic) armies.\(^{42}\) Significantly, as both Andrew Angel and Edward Adams have argued (albeit in different ways), in Mark 13.26-27, Mark portrays Jesus coming in judgement as the Danielic Son of Man figure.\(^{43}\) Angel notes that Mark reworks Daniel 7.2-14 (a passage in which chaos beasts are subjugated and defeated) to depict Jesus the Son of Man as the Divine Warrior and head of the heavenly armies (cf. Mark 8.38). In Mark 13.27a the Son of Man commands the angels, which further suggests that the Son of Man is identified with the Divine Warrior here, since it is the Son of Man who commands the heavenly host. Again, Angel explains the τῆς

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\(^{39}\) BATTO, *Slaying the Dragon*, p. 47.


\(^{41}\) Without wishing to trump the Jesus-Adam paradigm with a Jesus-Job paradigm, it is perhaps noteworthy that the book of Job is the OT text which contains the greatest number of explicit nominal references to Satan, who, with divine license, infamous ‘tests’ Job at the beginning of the book (Job 1.6-12; 2.1-8). Cf. POKORNY, *The temptation stories and their intention*, p. 118.

\(^{42}\) This is indicated by the use of the title ‘Lord of hosts’ in OT *Chaoskampf* Psalms (Ps. 46.11, 89.8). ANGEL, *Chaos and the Son of Man*, p. 38, 52 finds evidence of the same idea at Qumran: 1 *QM* 12.8-10; 1 *QH* 11.32-36.

‘then they will see’ in Mark 13.26a as an allusion to the heavenly court (as opposed to the disciples) witnessing the Son of Man “entering or leaving heaven”, and links this “contextually better reading” with Ps. 18.10 and Ps. 144.5 where the Divine Warrior is earthbound to engage the forces of chaos.44

If Angel’s surmise is correct, given that the desert temptation comprises a frontal confrontation with the enemy, it seems entirely reasonable to infer, as do Longman and Reid, that the angels of Mark 1.13 are not merely “emissaries of heavenly hospitality”, rather in the context of eschatological warfare they provide “strategic counsel” to the Divine Warrior Jesus, their commander in chief.45 Moreover, if the present thesis is on the mark, a somewhat awkward and frustratingly terse pericope is explained as another instance of the Markan concern to flag up a theme in the prologue (Mark 1.13) in anticipation of its subsequent development (in Mark 13.26-27).46

Conclusion

In Mark 1.13 animals and angels are not so much emblems of the renewal of creation, as combatants in the eschatological arena, where Jesus, God’s Son and Divine Warrior is thrust into a spiritual battle with Satan. For Mark at least, it is not as a second Adam that Jesus overcomes Satan in the wilderness, the exorcisms, and in the paradoxical victory on the cross, but as the ‘one stronger’ than John the Baptist: the Spirit empowered Divine Warrior.

Bibliography


44 ANGEL, Chaos and the Son of Man, p. 128.
45 LONGMAN III and REID, God is a Warrior, p. 97.
46 See above note 13.


